

At
HOME
in **GOD'S**
WORLD

A transforming paradigm for being human
and for social involvement

BJ van der Walt

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B.J. van der Walt



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- *In commemoration of the birth of the father of a Christian philosophy 500 years ago: John Calvin (1509-1564).*
- *In memory of the pioneers of a Christian philosophy in the twentieth century: Dirk H.Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978), Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) in the Netherlands and Hendrik G. Stoker (1899-1993) in South Africa as well as their followers around the globe.*
- *In anticipation of the 75th anniversary of the Association for Reformational Philosophy in the Netherlands (1935-2010).*
- *With the prayer that, "Deo volente", the torch of this Christian philosophy will one day be carried all over our vast African continent with its millions of Christians.*

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PREFACE

I have known Bennie van der Walt since 1965. In all these years he has matured, but kept direction. His orientation did not change – but the spectrum of his vision widened and deepened.

Bennie was always involved – in the Christian youth movement; in the spread of the Good Message; teaching Philosophy; doing research, publishing and organising conferences as director of the Institute for Reformational Studies (1974-1999); in solidarity with African Christians. Such was his whole formal career; such is his work in retirement. Over more than fifty years Bennie has shown himself involved with everyday affairs. This book does not deviate from that tradition.

Van der Walt, the philosopher, has his roots in the Neo-Calvinist tradition given foundation in the Free University in Amsterdam, but particularly Vollenhoven's encompassing covenantal approach. Being a trained theologian, Van der Walt also provides fresh exegeses of the Bible – carefully critical, avoiding Biblicism and moralism. At root he follows the directions initiated by John Calvin, but Van der Walt has no 'saints'.

The Calvinistic tradition has always shown itself in two ways: On the one hand it stresses the unity of life in Jesus Christ, which requires a wide vision and a critical attitude towards the trends of the time, for God's commandment of love touches every area and every situation we can imagine. On the other hand it is sensitive for the diversity of relationships in which God's children find themselves in this world, and it wants to promote the responsibility of each and every believer in every situation, from the kitchen to the Presidential residence. And it rejects the prescriptive casuistic approach, according to which the church and the pastor has to spell out in advance how the citizens of the Kingdom of God have to live. It also rejects other-world-liness: we must be at home in God's world.

This book aims at helping us to be emancipated citizens of God's world. To take responsibility in a difficult situation such as in Africa today. Not to flee from the world in mystical spiritualism, as so many Christian denominations instruct their members to do; not to shy away from doing our tiny bit when faced with corrupt leadership, poverty, incompetence, et cetera. And not to become too comfortable with a *status quo* that may possibly favour us.

The author tries to remind us that, even though we have difficulty to see that God is in charge, we are the torch bearers of His lordship in every area of life. Therefore we shall not withdraw from participation; we shall have to show His friendly face, even to the enemies of His kingdom.

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A RECOMMENDATION

I consider it an honour and privilege to share in the great work done by our beloved brother, Bennie van der Walt, whose wonderful work on a Christian worldview for Africa has slowly penetrated far deeper than one can ever imagine. His Christian publications are going to influence and shape the redemptive story of Africa. We are at a time when most of us are about to say: "masha!", a Venda word meaning "you have done it, its over!" But prof. Van der Walt surprised us again with this new offering: *At home in God's world: a transforming paradigm for being human and for social involvement.*

A much needed book in Africa

This book comes at the right time, a time in which some of us are saying: "It is Africa's time". There is a great awakening of Christians on the continent of Africa. Christianity is no longer a Western phenomenon, it is growing in the global South and declining in the global North. This is evidenced by the growth of churches and Christian school movements on the continent of Africa. *At home in God's world* will assist churches to contextualize the reading of the Bible from the rationalistic, individualistic outlook of post-Enlightenment northern Christianity, to the more holistic, communal worldview of southern Christianity. This book is also going to be used to nurture the mushrooming Christian schools and tertiary institutions on the continent. It will answer the many questions asked on the critical issue of a Biblical worldview.

Correcting a basic mistake of Christianity

Prof. Van der Walt, in this book and in his earlier works, clearly exposes a basic mistake of early and present Christianity – something that has also impeded the spread and growth of Christianity in Africa. The mistake is that in Africa Christianity mistook structure for direction. Religious direction suggests an antithesis between obedience and disobedience to God. Either we go in the direction of obedience or the other direction of disobedience. However, this religious direction was confused with the structure of creation. Therefore one

part of creation (the sacred) was regarded to be good by nature, while the other part (the mundane) was considered to be of less importance or even evil by nature. Such a view reduced religion to one sphere of life alongside that of art, science, politics, business, etc. The always present danger is behaving as if God is locked up in the church and is only a concern in Sunday services. Then faith has nothing to do with public life.

This dualism thus draws a line through God's creation and forces Christians to a schizophrenic existence. Dualism is a deceptive attempt to partly accept life and partly reject it. It also leads to a dual set of norms, one for Sunday and one for the rest of the week. It even legitimizes certain sins, limits the cosmic impact of the Biblical message of redemption and thus blunts the call of shalom.

The author compares dualist Christian worldviews with a chronic disease which have weakened, crippled and paralyzed Christianity for two thousand years. Such worldviews have robbed Christianity from its ability to transform the world, to bring peace and justice. These worldviews are dangerous, not only because of their detrimental consequences, but also because most Christians are not even aware that they are affected by this virus.

We are therefore faced with questions like the following: With the background of a radical Christian worldview, are we in a position to break through the dualistic worldviews? Can such a worldviewish approach make the gospel relevant to today's generation?

Bringing Christianity back into the public square

At home in God's world brings Christianity again back into the "public square". We need to understand that Christians are today standing at the cross-roads. The Western story of modernity is collapsing into what we might call post-modernity. On the other hand, the African story is fighting for its own identity and survival. This begs the question: What is the truth that will take us towards the noble goal of greater faithfulness, the truth that will be able to bring the Christian story back to the public square, that brings peace and justice into public discussion?

What we therefore badly need in South Africa, Africa and the entire world is a genuine, integral, Reformational worldview. A worldview that will be able to inspire Christians again to be fully present in this suffering and groaning world. We urgently need a salty Christianity which is capable of healing the wounded world and preventing its increasing decay.

Fully relevant and radically different

Without such an integrally Christian worldview and philosophy, in which a critique of traditional views of being human and of society is a constituent part, it is not meaningful to talk about social change. In order to make our churches and Christian schools and universities relevant, we should be both fully relevant and radically different. If we fail to be relevant, we will not be heard. And if we fail to be different, we have nothing to say. This calls us to a critical immersion in the issues of the world of our day. In our absence someone else will set and determine the agenda for us; someone else will determine our point of departure and our destination. Unfortunately, this is what is happening today.

At home in God's world is furthermore a clarion call for our institutions to become effective learning centres, places that teach and model the living, breathing gospel of Jesus Christ. We need men and women who will be able to help young people answer the following basic questions: Why do I exist? Where am I going? How shall I live? Instead of being travellers, driving towards a cul-de-sac, or wanderers to nowhere, they need to know that it is only Christ who can lead us to our final destination - which is not death but eternity. The marks of real meaning are: peace and justice, wholeness and equality, freedom and joy. Only these can provide new hope to individual human beings and societies.

I am grateful for this inspiring book. May it get wings to fly all over Africa and even beyond our continent!

Dr. Samson B. K. Makhado

Africa Director of the Association of Christian School International
Johannesburg, South Africa

AN APPRECIATION

In his introduction to this book *At home in God's world: A transforming paradigm for being human and for social involvement* the writer mentions his readers' first reaction when confronted with the title of the book. He figures them trying to reconcile the book's title with the current world crises and particularly Africa's problems. He understands his readers' situation of experiencing poverty, suffering and other kinds of evil, but contends that the Bible is full of texts leading to the conclusion that our world belongs to God and hence is our home. Based on the above fact, he rejects the "ascetic and pilgrim" approaches to the world. On the contrary, he notes that Christians are a chosen people, a royal priesthood who have to declare the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Van der Walt, however, underscores the fact that the "ascetics and the pilgrims" are acting in such a way because they are deeply influenced by their worldviews. One needs to understand the author's position on worldview in order to appreciate this statement. He conceives of a worldview as the heart or the soul of a culture. His approach to issues in this book and other publications is from a clearly Reformational Christian worldview, which he also regards suitable for Africa.

The author believes that *At home in God's world* especially meets two African Christian needs, identified by his friend, dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo: to think Christianly and to grasp the full implications of the Lordship of Christ over all areas of life. This book provides a response to these needs: it enhances the proper reading of the Scriptures, establishes a Christian philosophical view of reality, followed by a Christian view on the human being and society.

This book should be read together with professor Van der Walt's earlier publications, like *Transformed by the renewing of your mind; shaping a biblical worldview and a Christian perspective on scholarship* (2001), *Understanding and rebuilding Africa* (2003), *When African and Western cultures meet* (2006),

Transforming power (2007) and *The eye is the lamp of the body, worldviews and their impact* (2008).

As a past member of the Board of the International Association for Christian Higher Education (IAPCHE), as well as regional advisor for Africa and founding member of the Centre for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education in Africa (CPCHEA), Bennie van der Walt requested to be exempted from its leadership so that he could put his energy into writing. His books are indeed a treasure for Africa. I request all those who are familiar with his work to join in prayer in asking God to give him more strength and good health, also in the future.

I highly recommend this book to those engaged in Christian (higher) education particularly in Africa, those interested in social involvement as well as for the study of Christian anthropology and social philosophy.

Rev. Isaac N. Mutua

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Centre for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education in Africa (CPCHEA)
Nairobi, Kenya

INTRODUCTION

WHY AND HOW TO BE AT HOME IN GOD'S WORLD

The following is explained in this introduction. (1) Why this book was written – the *motive* behind it; (2) how the different chapters are linked – its *structure* or setup; (3) the fact that it cannot cover the whole field – it is *incomplete*; (4) the character of the book – it is of a *philosophical* nature.

1. The reason for the book

The title of this book *At home in God's world* also gives the reason why it was written.

1.1 It is not possible!

The reader's first reaction to this will probably be: "Surely, it can't be true! Can anyone really be at home in *this* world of today?"

Perhaps it is valid for the people in the wealthy northern world, who can afford anything: a huge salary, a house, enough to eat every day, safety, education, medical care and much more. But can one ever feel at home in Africa – the poorest continent in the world? Most people on this continent do not have at their disposal the most basic things like clean drinking water, sanitation, one meal per day, passable housing, safety, basic medical services and primary education.

However, looking deeper, the opposite may be the case. Many Western people are today perhaps less at home in God's world, because they are never satisfied, content with what they have – they always want more. In contrast (cf. Lensink, 2007), poor black Africans can be amongst the most happy people in the world. In spite of harsh conditions, they can be carefree, seemingly forget difficulties quickly, do not worry about problems of the future and simply live day by day.

The title also contains a second aspect which makes it an impossibility: "At home in *God's* world". Is it really *His* world? Most probably corrupt people, rapists, robbers, murderers, fornicators, dictators and more do feel at home here, but

certainly not Christians. God's children. And does not one feel at times as if God Himself is absent?

I understand the reader's reaction, but allow me to explain why I am convinced that the title of this book is valid after all.

1.2 A biblical confession

The Christian Reformed Church of the USA in 1986 published a "contemporary testimony" titled *Our world belongs to God* (cf. Christian Reformed Church, 1987:1019 *et seq.*) This confession refers to numerous Bible texts on which it is based and the theme ("Our world belongs to God") recurs throughout this beautiful testimony.

From the central confession that the world belongs to God – because He created it (cf. Ps. 24:1; Job 40:6-41:34), Seerveld (1997:1) further confesses: "... so, as a human being, I am at home in God's world". This confession still holds, in spite of the fall, as a result of Christ's ongoing work of redemption.

Elsewhere Seerveld (1994:468) writes: "This [confession] is what distinguishes the Biblical faith from all other kinds of religions, which are other-worldly. Christianity is historical, of the earth, and there will be a new earth some day. We are not simply passing time here until we get to where we really belong. The doctrine of a new earth tells us there will be a continuation of creatureliness, that creatureliness is good, just as we know God pronounced the original creation as very good."

The title of this book is such a confession and its contents explain this testimony.

1.3 A wrong ascetic tendency

Apart from the fact that, as a consequence of sometimes dire circumstances, there can be doubt about such a confession, there usually are deeper worldviewish reasons.

The pilgrim's progress by the Puritan, John Bunyan, is still being reprinted and many think that the only way out for a Christian, is to follow Bunyan on his lonely journey out of the world on the way to the heavenly city. A well-known South

African theologian and poet, (J.D. du Toit or Totius) also wrote a poem with the title "Die wêreld is ons woning nie" ("The world is not our home").

Such a viewpoint is still often heard even in sermons, especially with reference to texts like Hebrews 11:13 and 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:11. Churchgoers are reminded that here on earth they are merely strangers and pilgrims (KJV) and therefore they have to live like pilgrims, keeping their eyes fixed on heaven.

Unfortunately such a view is not biblical and therefore does not contain a Reformational view of reality either.

1.4 What the Bible really teaches

Seerveld (1997:1) points out that the original word for "stranger" (*ger* in Hebrew and *parepidemoi* in Greek) primarily denotes a *place of residence* (for instance in a foreign country) and not someone's *character* as a pilgrim. *Sojourner* (stranger) is therefore a better translation than "pilgrim".

Furthermore, we have to keep in mind the world or background of the book 1 Peter. It was addressed to persecuted Jewish Christians who were spread over the whole of Asia Minor (in foreign countries) in a heathen environment. "Strangers in the world" should be understood in the light of this. Even when Christians adhere to a different worldview and lifestyle from the surrounding sinful world – and are therefore rejected by the secular neighbours – such circumstances do not change their very *nature* into that of pilgrims.

The Bible, therefore, uses the word "world" apart from in the sense of a *sinful, unredeemed* world, also in another positive sense. It denotes God's creation of which He Himself says that it is *very good*. (Gen. 1:31. Cf. also 1 Tim. 4:1-5). Thus Christ can also pray to the Father no to take his disciples out of the world, but to protect them from the evil one, the *sinful* world (John 17:15).

1.5 Not pilgrims, but people who have been called to a task in the world

Later on in 1 Peter (2:9) it emerges clearly that believing Christians are not wandering Jews, Muslim pilgrims or contemporary, postmodern secular nomads. No, they are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, who have to declare the

praises of Him who called them out of the darkness – of an aimless, nomadic existence, too – into His wonderful light. In Ephesians 2:19 we are therefore reminded that we are *no longer* foreigners, but full members in God's household.

If we are prophets, priests and kings (1 Pet. 2:9), it means that we have a worldwide calling *here on earth*. *Everyone* of us – mothers and fathers, children, nurses, lawyers, teachers, untrained labourers like those who take away the refuse or sweep the streets – has a task *here on earth*.

The divine calling remains valid even if, as a consequence of difficult circumstances, it sometimes *feels* as if one is only a stranger and should rather put on one's pilgrim's shoes, take one's walking stick and say "goodbye" to everything.

Of course our greatest enemy – death – is spying on each of us every moment. But even this cannot part us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38) – He promises us (after our resurrection) a *new earth* as our final home, where everything will, as at the beginning, be very good again (Rev. 21:1-7).

Seerveld's conclusion (1997:8) therefore is: "... for me the most Biblical root metaphor for human lives which would be obedient to the Lord is for Christ's followers to be not pilgrims *en route* to heaven, but a remnant community of royal priests in the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110; Heb. 4:14-8:13), building tent cities of refuge in the very citadels of secularized culture..."

1.6 The hallmark of a Reformational view

Therefore Seerveld's opinion is "... it is wrong... to make an ascetic pilgrimage the norm for Christian living... Scripture's thrust is overwhelmingly positive, calling those for whom Christ's sacrifice was sufficient for salvation to *dwell fully in creation* and be obedient in everything so that 'fleeing sin' is swallowed up in 'doing good works' with joy". (Seerveld, 1997:4 – italics added).

A Christian's existence in this world is therefore surrounded with joy and gratitude. "Being fundamentally at home here as human creature in God's creation entails a

way-of-life focussed in a joyful thankfulness to the Lord for all God's creatural gifts" (p. 5).

After this follow the significant words: "This orientation is basic to a Reformational Christian world view". That this is indeed the hallmark of the Reformational worldview (and not merely *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, *sola Scriptura* and *solī Dei gloria* as is often claimed) becomes clear from the work of other Reformational philosophers. Marshall's book (1998) states the negative side: *Heaven is not our home*. Wolters (1985/2005) brings to the fore the positive side: *Creation regained*. Since it belongs to God, creation should be regained for Him through our cultural labour in all fields of life. And this cannot happen without the right worldviewish orientation.

1.7 Wrong worldviews

For a Reformational worldview the following attitudes held by Christians towards the world and contemporary culture are therefore unacceptable (cf. Crouch, 2009): (1) simply *condemning* it – so that one, without offering an alternative, withdraws; (2) merely *criticising* – without trying to change anything; (3) *copying* it – then the Christian's life is simply an imitation of the surrounding secular lifestyle; (4) joining up with contemporary consumer culture, to become a mere *consumer* – so that one's own lifestyle, moral values and norms have no difference to it whatsoever.

A Reformational worldview makes, on the one hand, a clear distinction between God and his creation and is therefore against the absolutising or idolising of any aspect of creation (cf. Goudzwaard, 1984) – God is the only God that deserves our absolute devotion. On the other hand, a Reformational worldview as described above, strives to maintain a threefold confession – and live accordingly in every area of life: (1) This world is God's world; (2) I am at home in this world; (3) I have a divine calling to turn the sinful world into a better place in the power of the Spirit.

These three statements hold far-reaching implications: The nearer one lives to God's suffering world, the closer you come to God Himself. The reverse is also

true: The closer to God, the more will one be involved in his creation. Also the negative applies: The more one distances oneself from his world and its problems, the greater the distance will become between oneself and God. And: the further one separates oneself from God, the more one will be separated from his groaning creation.

Worldwide there is a great need for such a Reformational worldview. As an example I here use my own continent, Africa.

1.8 The need for a Reformational worldview in Africa

As far back as 1993 a well-known Christian leader in Africa wrote the following: "For decades in Africa evangelism and missionary activities have been directed at getting people saved (i.e. spiritually) but losing their minds. Consequently we have a continent South of the Sahara that boasts of an over 50% Christian population on the average, but with little or no impact on society" (Adeyemo, 1993:4).

This is a remarkable statement, for Christianity is not something new in Africa, although it only reached certain parts of the interior a little over a hundred years ago. Oden (2007) for instance shows that the early Christian churches in Northern Africa made a significant contribution to Western Christendom.

Yet what Adeyemo says is true. The hearts of the Christians of Africa are right, but they have not really fathomed the problems of society with their minds. They are good church-going people but their influence on society outside the church walls is too modest.

Many more writers could be quoted to affirm Adeyemo's statement. Only recently Quashie (2009:3), the rector of Akrofi-Christaller Institute for Theology, Mission and Culture (in Ghana), wrote the following: "The number of Christians in Africa may have risen astronomically in recent decades and may indeed keep rising; now is the time for the quality of African Christianity to begin to make a difference in the fortunes of the continent. The phenomenal growth of Christianity in Africa is

most definitely inconsistent with the moral decay, avarice, greed, corruption, low productivity, squalor and poor leadership on the continent."

In my opinion Adeyemo also suggests the right solution. He writes: "We are convinced that an integrated Christian worldview based upon the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, is an indispensable foundation to live out an authentic Christian life in our contemporary society, hence the imperative to develop a Christian worldview within the African context" (Adeyemo, 1993:227).

Since 1994 I have attempted to answer this appeal for a broad "cosmoscope" (cf. Van der Walt, 1994) and kept it up until last year (cf. Van der Walt, 2008).

1.9 Two needs in particular

The quotation from Adeyemo goes on to specify two particular needs of African Christians: "The battle therefore, is for a Christian mind, to think Christianly and to grasp the full implications of the Lordship of Christ over all areas of life. This implies the necessity to develop a Christian anthropology and Christian social philosophy" (Adeyemo, 1993:227).

With the present book I am trying to help meet the two last-mentioned needs – a Christian view of the human being and of society. As promised in Van der Walt (2008:10) this book attempts to elaborate on a pre-scientific Christian *worldview* by means of a Christian *philosophical* view of human beings and society.

1.10 Application to the African situation

My exposition of a Christian philosophical view of the human being and of society is primarily of a systematic nature. There is, for instance, not a continual comparison or debate with all kinds of unbiblical, reductionist anthropologies. Something like this was done earlier. Van der Walt (1994:153-155) explains for instance that a human being is not merely a political animal, an economic commodity or a biochemical organism. And in the same work (1994:233 *et seq.*) the liberalist and socialist anthropologies are discussed. In later works (cf. e.g. Van der Walt, 2003) attention is also given to African communalism.

Much has been done in the West on Christian social thinking (cf. e.g. the recent book edited by Becker, 2009). Also *At home in God's world* draws primarily from the Western Reformational philosophical tradition, trusting that the readers will apply it themselves to the African context – as well as to other continents. Earlier on Africa gave much to Western Christianity (cf. Oden, 2007). Now Western Christianity gives back something to Africa!

1.11 Topicality

Leaving aside the exceptions, Africa – in spite of the highly acclaimed *ubuntu* – often does not have a very high opinion of a human being. Apartheid was not the only offence against the black people in South Africa. Black people call their political opponents “cockroaches” and “dogs”. And another African president acts as if he feels nothing for five million of his citizens who face death by famine and thousands who are dying in a cholera epidemic.

But even in the Western world, as a consequence of the worst economic depression in 75 years, people currently face insecurity and suffering. Millions of people will lose their jobs and income this year. It seems as if capitalist economy has reached its limits. Currently we are beginning to pay the heavy penalty for our greed, the extortion of fellow human beings and the environment. (cf. Goudzwaard *et al.*, 2008). In a penetrating way Fowler (2008:8-12, 47-49) describes and criticises the contemporary global commercial empire which entails a complete violation of God's central commandment of love.

1.12 Importance of a biblical Reformational contribution

From these few flashes it is clear how important it is to reflect anew on a human being as an individual and social being. And in particular doing it from a biblical, Reformational perspective. For according to this worldview a human being may not (the way some African leaders do to their subjects) be *degraded* to a thing, an insect or an animal. Neither may a human being be *elevated* (the way some African presidents regard themselves) to a semi-god. The Bible teaches us what the *true place, status and task* of a human being is. He/she is God's

representative on earth; he/she has fallen into sin, but can be restored to a new life by the redemption in Christ and under the guidance of his Spirit.

The motivation for writing this book as well as the topicality of its contents have now been explained, so that subsequently something can be said about its structure.

2. The setup of the book

Since the contents of the book was published earlier as separate articles in various journals (cf. *Acknowledgements* at the end) the coherence is briefly explained here. (The overlap sometimes occurring between chapters must please be accepted by the reader in the light of their original nature.)

As the title of this book indicates, it deals with a Christian's view of and calling in the world. (A few lines at the beginning of every chapter will continuously remind the reader of how the specific chapter can contribute to be at home in God's world.) It therefore attempts not to limit the Christian faith to individuals or churches, but to make clear its cosmic meaning. Such a broad, comprehensive view – as has transpired already – is based on God's Word, the Bible.

2.1 Section A

Therefore *Section A* contains two chapters on how one should and should not read the Bible, so that one can hear God speaking in it and can apply his Word to broader society (cf. the end of chapter 2). The two chapters elaborate on Van der Walt, 2008 (13-48). This comprehensive biblical worldview forms the basis for the rest of the book. *Section B* deals with the philosophical view of *reality* (God, his creation and his ordinances for everything created), *Section C* with the human being and *Section D* with society. Something more on the setup of these three sections follows.

2.2 Section B

After explaining the Scriptural points of departure, *Section B* takes the next step: it explains in general and simple terms what a Christian philosophy entails. That is why the first chapter (3) of this section offers an exposition of the Christian

"philosophy" or worldview of Calvin – the father of Reformational philosophy, whose birth 500 years ago we commemorate this year (2009). The second chapter (4) shows how Reformational philosophy was developed worldwide (from approximately the thirties of the 20th century) during the past 75 years. Since I myself feel the greatest affinity with his philosophy, the third chapter (5) deals with the philosophy of Prof. Vollenhoven, one of the fathers of Reformational philosophy in the Netherlands.

Vollenhoven draws a basic distinction – without separating them – between God, his creation and his laws that apply to matter, plant, animal and human beings (creation). In opposition to most secular philosophies, he therefore (like Calvin did earlier) does not exclude God from his thinking. Since, however, one cannot make God the object of scientific investigation, we have to accept with childlike faith what He reveals to us about Himself in the Bible. This is my viewpoint too. Therefore you will find no separate chapter with speculations on God or proofs for his existence in this book. At the same time God is accepted as the "greatest" Reality.

However, we do have the important task of reflecting on God's ordinations, laws or guidelines for creation. Chapter 6 of this section deals with this important issue.

While Sections A and B give the broader background, Sections C and D form the main menu of the book as indicated by its subtitle: *a transforming paradigm for being human and for social involvement*.

2.3 Section C

Section C presents a Christian reflection on who a human being is, what it really means to be human. In five chapters this section focuses on the following. The first chapter (7) contains a critical appreciation of the anthropology of John Calvin (1509-1964), who is still considered as the father of biblical anthropology by many theologians. Subsequently (in chapter 8) we investigate what should be understood under biblical concepts like "soul", "body", "flesh" and "heart". Then (in chapter 9) it is pointed out how the heart of a human being, his religious centre, was rediscovered in the Reformational philosophy of Vollenhoven and

what its implications are. Because the idea that a human being should be God's image is so central to the Scriptures, the next chapter (10) is devoted to its meaning. Since numerous people have questions on what happens to a human being at death and thereafter, this section is concluded with a reflection on this difficult issue in chapter 11.

A person's view of a human being determines how he/she associates with himself/herself and his/her fellow human beings. Stated differently: A person's anthropological points of departure determine what his philosophy of society will look like – one creates a society according to one's own idea of what it means to be human.

2.4 Section D

In *Section D* we therefore deal with the main lines of a Christian Reformational view of society. The first chapter (12) gives its biblical foundation as well as a brief historical overview of the development of this philosophy of society through the ages. The second chapter (13) contains a systematic exposition, critical evaluation and practical application of this Christian philosophical view of society. The two subsequent chapters (14 and 15) show what the implications of a Reformational philosophy of society are for the state (government and subjects) and for development in Africa.

3. The incompleteness of the book

I depart from the supposition that one's view of God and his ordinations (or surrogate gods and their guidelines for life) is determinative for one's view of a human being. In turn, as stated already, one's anthropology determines one's philosophy of society.

3.1 The connection between one's view of being human and view of society

The fact that the connection between anthropology and philosophy of society is merely *assumed* here but not *dealt with* explicitly, is unfortunately a void. However, readers will be able to make the connection between *Sections C* and *D* themselves quite easily. The following examples can be of help in this regard.

- The Bible reveals to us that a human being does not only have an individual side, but also a social one. So to see a human being merely as an individual (cf. Western individualism), or define him/her primarily as a communal being (cf. African communalism) is unacceptable.
- If an anthropology based on the Bible emphasises the multidimensional nature of a human being, an onedimensional society (that treats a human beings, for example, just as a political or an economic beings) will not be able to promote being truly human.
- If a Christian view of being human puts so much emphasis on the heart and the central role of the fundamental commandment of love (cf. chapter. 9), it is bound to lead to a more humane society – as opposed to many dehumanising tendencies in contemporary society.
- If a human being has the calling to exhibit the image of God in everything s/he does (cf. chap. 10) it pleads – against the inhumane, sometimes demonic treatment of people – for a better society.
- The belief that there is life after death (cf. chap. 11) also holds implications for society here and now. Such a view, for instance, stands in opposition to a capitalist – materialistic social order characterised by a mad rush for money and possessions “for tomorrow we die”.

3.2 The influence of society on being human

The opposite process, namely the influence of a particular social order on the individuals within it, are not spelt out explicitly in this book either, but assumed and can be worked out by the readers themselves. *Section D* therefore not only offers an alternative for current views of society. We hope that it will also be intimated that a Reformational philosophy of society is not only *built* on a Christian view of the being human, but that it can *enrich* and *strengthen* our view of being an individual human being.

3.3 Several societal relationships not dealt with

There is a third reason for the incompleteness of the book. *Section D* deals with only one human societal relationship, namely the state (chap. 14). To make good to some extent for this void, an *Appendix* has been added at the end of this Introduction (after the Bibliography). It gives an indication of the different societal issues and structures I dealt with earlier on in other writings. (I have limited these to publications in English which are still in print.) The *Appendix* first gives the different books and their abbreviations, followed by an alphabetical register of topics. I trust that readers will find it useful.

4. The nature of the book

Christian philosophical reflection is an important way to explain to believers *that* they belong in God's world and also *what* its implications are. This is such a philosophical book. Philosophy normally deals – leaving reductions aside – with the *whole* of reality.

4.1 A Christian philosophy is comprehensive

A *Christian* philosophy is of an even more comprehensive nature. While secular philosophies usually exclude God from their view, Reformational philosophy does not exclude God – the greatest Reality. God is accepted in faith as the Creator of *everything*. The *whole* creation is *His* kingdom. His ordinations or laws apply to *everything* He brought about. Human beings, too, received a *cosmic* task from Him and not merely an assignment that is restricted to the church or religion narrowly conceived: He/she has to rule over the *whole* earth according to God's will. After the fall it became a cosmic task of liberating service in *all* fields of life. No wonder that Hart (1969) calls a Christian worldview and philosophy a "cosmoscope".

4.2 A Christian life is the same and yet different

According to Reformational philosophy such a cosmoscope does not mean that the life of a Christian should be anything but creaturely. "The Christian life is not mystic, private, inner, withdrawn or reserved, but a full, open and ordinary kind of

life" (Hart, 1969:57). This means: "Life in Christ apart from communal involvement in for example the political, economic, social, educational, and other structures of human society would be a life in Christ less than what life is like" (Idem.).

Being a Christian, therefore, does not mean leading a completely different kind of life. Hart explains: "Members of the body of Christ do not have either more or less fingers on their hands than do other people, they too are likely to peel their potatoes before eating them, they enjoy sexual life, they have people they like as friends... have social lives, buy and sell in an economically responsible way, and so on" (p. 57, 58).

Living as a Christian, means a *spiritual* newness of direction within the same *creational* structures. As an example Hart uses simple, everyday activities like eating and drinking: "Eating and drinking to the glory of God is a different kind of eating than the same act done to the glory of another. Surely, it will still be eating. But a different kind of eating, spiritually different" (p. 58).

"Spiritually different" should not be misunderstood. It implies that the *direction* of one's *entire* life will be different. It does not imply a kind of separate, ghostly spiritual life *above* creation but *in* creation. If this world is called God's world, we should be concerned about and involved in *all* its facets.

To make this point even clearer, let me state it in the following way. Christ did not come to make us "Christians" – a name only given to his followers at a later stage. He came to save us from the sinfulness which affected our *total* human existence in order to be *human* again in the full and complete sense of the word in all aspects of our lives. Christ became a human being so that we as humans could visibly see what it really means to be human. Our calling, therefore, is also not merely to "evangelise" (make Christians), but to seek God's kingdom (Matt. 6:33a) by living according to his will, and in this way show the world what it implies to be a real human being again as God originally created us.

4.3 A Christian life is more than church life

Hart also draws attention to another crucial point for Christianity in Africa. Such a Christian "cosmoscope" (big picture) implies that the Gospel is allowed to speak "cosmologically", that is *comprehensively and directly to all walks of life*. It need not be *made relevant via the church or a theology*. As an example he uses *industrial life and politics*.

It is not by way of church statements, theology or by appointing clergymen ("spiritual" people) that Christians really influence for instance the field of labour, but "to live out the Gospel industrially... The problem is not one of the relation of church life or theology to industrial life, but one of industrial life biblically conceived" (p. 59). Likewise Christian politicians have to carry out *in a political way* their calling of being faithful to God's Word.

All of this may be summarised as follows: Many Christians still limit the service to God to a facet of their lives (the so-called religious). In opposition to this a biblical, Reformational worldview and philosophy says briefly and clearly: "Life is religion" (*All of life should be devotion to God*).

4.4 A Christian life as a is dynamic, normative response to God's guidelines

A last significant point that links up with this, is the view Christians have of God's ordinations for the different areas of life. "The basic principles of God's Word are *constant*. They do not change. Not that they are *static*. The commandment: 'You shall love' is constant and unchanging, but not static. Obedience to it brings a most dynamic situation... Wine of new vintage must be put into fresh containers or both will be lost. This calls for change and constancy. New wine asks for a change in container. But it does ask for a container. Old garments need to be tossed and replaced, not patched up" (Hart, 1969:60). God's central command of love takes on a new form or appearance in *every area* of life. But *in every age* it also has to be lived in a new, creative way. Our task as human beings is to positivise or concretise God's commands into directive norms for the different fields of life in contemporary, relevant ways.

4.5 An understandable and practical cosmoscope

Finally I tried to make a Christian Reformational philosophy as accessible as possible. For the ultimate object of the book is quite practical: That we – at home in God's world – will be once more *Christian* spouses, fathers and mothers, teachers, rulers and subjects, business people, sportsmen and sportswomen, farmers and labourers in numerous other areas of society.

We must be people who know how to give a unique shape to God's commandment of love in every field of life. This should replace the corruption, immorality, irresponsibility, greed, violence, murder, hatred and many other negative and shocking things we experience daily.

In particular civil society needs to get organised again. In Africa far too much is still expected from political parties, leaders, governments and their economies only. Everyone of us will have to put the shoulder to the wheel, begin to work hard, assume responsibility, organise, plan for the future, maintain infrastructure, protect the environment and render selfless service.

The wish of my heart is that this book may serve as an inspiration to its readers, captivating and liberating them simultaneously, so that Christianity in Africa – a sleeping giant – may awake.

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Appendix

INDEX OF SOME SOCIAL ISSUES TREATED IN OTHER BOOKS OF B.J. VAN DER WALT

The website www.allofiferedeemed.co.uk/vanderwalt.htm provides an annotated bibliography of all the writer's English publications. (Date of access: 10-03-2009.)

ALPHABETICAL ABBREVIATIONS OF STILL AVAILABLE BOOKS BY B.J. VAN DER WALT

- AOR: *Anatomy of Reformation; flashes and fragments of a Reformational worldview* (2nd print, 2008).
- AWC: *When African and Western cultures meet; from confrontation to appreciation* (3rd print, 2008).

- CCSS: *Transforming power; challenging contemporary secular society* (1st print, 2007).
- MAG: *Man and God; the transforming power of Biblical religion* (2nd print, 2008)
- MPG: *More precious than gold; discovering the real wealth of Scripture* (1st print 1991, to be reprinted in 2009)
- TLB: *The eye is the lamp of the body; worldviews and their impact* (1st print., 2008).
- TLM: *The liberating message; a Christian worldview for Africa* (5th print, 2006).
- TRM: *Transformed by the renewing of your mind; shaping a Biblical worldview and a Christian perspective on scholarship* (4th print, 2008).
- URA: *Understanding and rebuilding Africa; from desperation today to expectation for tomorrow* (4th print, 2008).

SUBJECT INDEX OF SOME SOCIAL ISSUES

- AFRICA(N):** URA:39-60 (see also *culture*).
- AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION:** URA:61-92.
- AGRICULTURE:** AWC:281-316.
- AUTHORITY AND POWER:** URA:275-295; AOR:245-272.
- BIBLE:** TLB:23-48; AOR:91-122.
- BUSINESS:** See *Economics*
- CHURCH:** CCSS: 105-148; AOR:257-280; 281-318; TLM:444-464.
- COLONIALISM:** URA:1-38.
- CORRUPTION:** URA:401-417.
- CULTURE, AFRICAN AND WESTERN:** AWC:157-187, 188-227; URA (many chapters)
- CULTURES, EVALUATION OF :** AWC:1-17; AOR:440-464.
- DEMOCRACY:** TLM:508-525.
- DEVELOPMENT:** AWC:47-88; TRM:43-92; URA:437-357.
- ECONOMICS:** AOR:497-530; URA:458-481; TLM:427-443.
- EDUCATION, CHRISTIAN:** CCSS:319-340; TRM:93-129; 130-166, 167-183; TLM:526-596; AOR:316-336.
- ENVIRONMENT, THE NATURAL:** URA:418-436.
- FAITH:** CCSS:11-46 (See also *religions*).

FAMILY: TLM:413-422.

FRIENDSHIP: CCSSA:47-75; TLM:400-406.

FUNERALS: MPG:85-99.

GLOBALISATION: AWC:89-122.

HUMAN RIGHTS: URA:324-348.

LEADERSHIP: AWC:123-156.

MARRIAGE: TLM:407-412; MPG:2-33.

MISSIONS: CCSS:76-104; AOR:343-360.

MORALITY: URA:218-274.

NORMATIVITY: TLB:128-166.

ORGANISATIONS, CHRISTIAN: CCSS:297-318; TLB:278-303.

POVERTY: AWC:18-46; TLB:167-188.

POLITICS, CHRISTIAN: MAG:300-315; AOR:439-458; TLM:465-468, 469-483;
484-493, 494-507; AOR:1-56, 439-458; URA:296-323.

RECONCILIATION: URA:349-378.

RELIGIONS, RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN: CCSS:149-220; AOR:1-56;
URA:379-400.

SCHOOL: TLM: 423-426.

SECULARISM: CCSS:221-296; AOR:404-416.

SEXUALITY: CCSS:378-415.

SOCIAL CALLING: MPG:161-189; LLB:251-277; URA:259-294 (See also
transformation)

SPORT: CCSS: 347-377.

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN WORLDVIEW: URA (whole book); TLB:167-188;
AOR:465-484.

TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY: AOR:273-299; TLM:259-294, 295-335 (See
also *social callings*).

WOMEN: AWC:228-280.

WORK: MPG:190-203.

WORLDVIEW: URA:39-55, 93-132, 512-552; TRM:1-42; TLB: (whole book).

YOUTH: MPG:100-139.

SECTION A

The biblical basis of a Christian worldview and philosophy

CHAPTER 1

THE DIRECTIVES OF GOD'S WORD FOR ETHICAL/MORAL BEHAVIOUR

Bible readers and preachers today often use the Word of God as a book of moral examples. Especially characters from the Bible are used as either heroes or warnings for contemporary Christians. This moralistic hermeneutic approach is questioned, both from a theological and a Christian philosophical point of view. The investigation is developed in the following five main steps: (1) The introductory section provides some examples, explains its popularity and defines moralism. (2) The second part contains a mainly theological critique of this kind of Bible interpretation. (3) Next, against the background of a Christian-philosophical multidimensional view of Scripture, the limited place of the moral aspect is indicated. (4) This is followed by a distinction between three concepts: the *ethical* (an aspect of reality); the *moral-immoral* distinction (e.g. what is normative in relationships between men and women or in friendship – “sedelike” in Afrikaans); *morality* (in the sense of the values adhered to by a community). (5) The last part contains some final conclusions about the moralistic use of the Scriptures.

Relevance to our main theme (at home in God's world):

To be at home in God's world we should not read the Bible as a mere personal moral guideline, but as a book of faith, relevant for our entire life.

* * *

1. Introduction: Popularity, examples, definition

Moralism is a persistent problem with which the church and believers have been struggling through the ages. We find it early on among the Pharisees in the time of Christ. Many of the Church Fathers read the Scriptures in this way and it remained a popular way of reading the Bible right into the Middle Ages. The sixteenth century Reformers to a great extent discarded the practice, but since

the seventeenth century it once more filtered into the Protestant churches – and is still popular today.

1.1 All through the ages

In several places in his seven volume *Levensbeschouwing (Worldview)* (cf. Popma, 1965, volume 7 the index on p. 380: "moralism") Popma presents flashbacks from history from which it becomes apparent that a moralistic philosophy existed as far back as among the Greek Epicureans and Stoics. He pays particular attention to the Stoic philosopher Seneca, follows the moralistic line through the Church Fathers, Middle Ages, Renaissance (when Stoicism was revived), Reformation, Kant's rationalist moralism, the pious moralism of some Reformed people, Freud's psychological moralism and so forth. So there are many kinds of moralism. But according to Popma they all clash with the basic message of the gospel (see 2.1 below for his critique).

1.2 Present popularity

Examples of its present popularity is not only the way people read the Bible themselves, but also how pastors, ministers and priests preach as well as the numerous booklets and even novels on Bible characters that appear regularly – in South Africa too.

Since it will help to clarify the problem (below) we give some examples beforehand of a moralistic way of reading and preaching the Bible. From these it will already transpire that holding up Bible characters as (moral) models for today is very popular.

1.3 Some examples

From the Old Testament for instance the following persons are held up as models or warnings: Abraham's lenience towards Lot, Lot's worldliness, Isaac's gentleness, Joseph's former pride (towards his brothers) and later humility, Moses's obstinacy but also his patience, David's lasciviousness, Jonathan's bravery and his loyalty as a friend, Solomon's wisdom, Daniel's integrity. All this

apart from all the female characters from the old dispensation and numerous Bible characters in the New Testament

As can be seen from this short list, the issue is not only the "do's" (the moral "heroes") which have to be followed, but also the "don'ts" (the vices of certain people) which have to be avoided today. So for instance (from the New Testament) Judas the greedy traitor and Peter the bragging weakling. Since it is calculated that there are more or less 2,930 Bible characters, they offer an almost never-ending source of moral virtues and vices!

1.4 The motive behind it

Both Spykman (1985:53) and Greidanus (1988:308 *et seq.*) call attention to the underlying problem. Moralistic readers and preachers are looking for the meaning or relevance of God's Word for today. Their intention is therefore not wrong. They would like to see people answering to God's Word in faith, trust, conversion, obedience and gratitude.

With right Spykman (1985:54), however, remarks that the Scriptures – the living Word of God – *is always* relevant – there is no need for us to *make* it meaningful. The question is not *if* but *how* it is relevant. But this does not adequately explain the popularity of this kind of hermeneutics.

1.5 Reasons for the popularity

According to Greidanus (1988:116, 216) this way of explaining the Bible (to oneself or in sermons) is so popular since (1) (especially biographical) sermons simply ignore the great divide (of thousands of years) between those times and today; (2) there are many characters available from the Scriptures to be "used"; (3) it fascinates modern-day people when they can identify with a Bible character; (4) they remember such a sermon better, while (5) it enables preachers to make a strong appeal to their listeners.

Spykman (1985:53) also mentions the fact that people identify more easily with other people from the Scriptures and are thus "drawn into" the Bible story. He further mentions the following additional reasons for moral exegesis: (6) It is the

easiest way of doing exegesis – it offers immediate results; (7) it can impress listeners who do not know better (“this preacher really derives deep things from the text”) and (8) it offers readers/listeners simple moral recipes or a simplistic programme according to which they can live.

1.6 A definition of moralism

Popma (cf. e.g. 1962:360) defines moralism as follows: When the place, scope and authority of religion (the *all-encompassing* relationship with God or idols), are identified with the ethical facet of life (please note: merely a *facet*) we can speak of moralism.

As we will see from the exposition of the author's own view of God's Word (cf. main point 3 below), the Bible also has a moral facet. The answers given by Bible characters to God's revelation also show – like our answers to it today – an ethical side. But this does not exhaust either God's Word or our answer to it.

Moralism is an –ism, a reduction. It reduces the full wealth of the gospel to moral precepts. It cannot understand or preach the *whole* Word for the *whole* of life. Since the Bible is a religious book, it affects a human being in a radical and comprehensive way. However, the religious depth and width of the Word and the religious answer given by the human being, the response from his/her heart, are narrowed down in moralism to moral codes and conduct. Religion is therefore narrowed down and thinned out to ethics. Formulated differently: the ethical takes the place of the religious.

Attention should be drawn to the fact that moralism not only occurs when reading the Bible the wrong way, but in many more fields like economics, politics, ecology, media, and so forth. Marshall (1995:306 *et seq.*) for instance demonstrates how ethics is regarded as a kind of mediator between the Christian faith and various fields of life. Examples are business ethics, political, ecological and media ethics.

The historical background of this (cf. Van der Walt, 1999:305-309) is that in Western scholarship the emphasis was on “facts”, while norms were expelled

from all other fields (except for ethics) as a consequence of this so-called neutral scientific approach. Eventually norms were only associated with ethics. Now that the lack of direction in "factual" sciences without normative guidelines are being realised, ethics and ethical norms are called in once more. However, these norms and values now become something merely added onto (like icing on a cake) that is incapable of stopping secularisation in these fields.

So what is actually needed is not an ethics of economy (or an ethical economy), an ethics of politics, etcetera, but a truly integrally Christian economy, politics and so on.

1.7 Examples of a moralistic usage in contrast to the correct usage of the Scriptures

The best way of understanding the above is explaining it further with reference to a number of actual examples.

- A very popular example is the progress of Joseph's life history from a slave to the viceroy of Egypt. If we lead a pure moral life, we will experience the same success that Joseph did. This approach is completely different from emphasising God's plan of salvation by means of Joseph (Gen. 50:20).
- Of course the story of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11-12:1-25) is another popular theme. Men should not desire other men's wives and, on the other hand, women should not be seductive. However, in the foreground of this story is the fact that disobedience to God entices one further and further into the clutches of Satan (first adultery, then lies, then murder) and that God does forgive this, but does not cancel its consequences.
- In a sermon on Mark 2:1-12 the preacher dwelt in detail on what it cost the four bearers to let down the paralysed man through the roof in front of Jesus: their sympathy, helpfulness, originality and perseverance. Therefore, today we should pursue the same virtues. However, the Scriptures themselves (cf. Mark 2:5) emphasise their faith and the forgiveness granted to the paralysed man.

- A subsequent example is the well-known story of the prodigal son, his elder brother and his father (Luke 15:11-31). To what is Jesus calling our attention here? To the fact that we should never hesitate to say we are sorry (the younger son)? That we should not be selfish and catty (the elder brother)? Or maybe that parents should always be prepared to forgive their lost teenage children (the father)? No, most probably the essence lies in the closing verse (vs. 32), where the father (=God) says that his younger son's relationship with him was not right (religiously spoken he was dead) but that he had come to life. (This also included a warning to the older brother!)
- From Plantinga (1980:70) we take the following last examples. The narrative of David and Goliath teaches us self-confidence. David's refusal to murder Saul, teaches us respect for people in positions of authority. The fact that a bear mauled the boys who jeered at Elisha, points to good manners. Saul's refusal to wait for Samuel to make a sacrifice to God and the Lord's punishment, shows us how important patience should be for a Christian.

However, what is really important in these passages from Scripture, are the following points: David took on Goliath because he *had blasphemed the Lord*. David knew that *the Lord* had placed Saul on the throne and that He would remove him in his own time. When the boys from Bethel jeered at Elisha, they *rejected the Word of the Lord* – Bethel was a centre of idolatry. And Saul ignored the difference between the work of a priest and a king – that God had *spelt out clearly*.

It should now be clearer what moralistic exegesis entails, so that we can proceed to a systematic criticism.

2. A critique of moralistic hermeneutics

The basic argument raised by most critics is that the Scriptures are not a *moral* handbook, but the Word of God for the whole of our lives, a *religious* book of faith. We now give a more detailed critique by four Reformational thinkers (first two Christian philosophers and then two Christian theologians).

2.1 K.J. Popma

As we have shown above, according to Popma moralism comes about when the width, depth and authority of the religious relationship with God is attributed to the ethical (one *facet* of life). His critique is in keeping with this definition.

- According to him moralism is a surrogate religion, a falsification of true religion (cf. e.g. Popma, 1963:194). Amongst other things it has the following consequences: (1) The deep, religious contrast between good and evil is thinned out and relativised. (2) The ethical is regarded as the highest human function and obtains a totalitarian character (the place religion should have). (3) The place of the religious relationship with God/idols is minimised accordingly – which leaves us with a religion that has been ethically narrowed down.

In addition the following points of critique emerge from the work of Popma:

- The encompassing and fundamental command of love (love for God and for the neighbour) loses its religious (central) place – it, too, is moralised.
- Love for the neighbour is not given its rightful place, for in moralism the basic issue is self-improvement, self-ennoblement and self-perfection. This ideal demands (cf. Popma, 1962:340) constant self-examination, self-admonition, self-encouragement, self-discipline, self-control, self-purification, self-humbling, self-denial, self-chastisement, self-obliteration. Behind this lies, according to Popma, the ideal of moral self-ennoblement, but at the root also selfishness and self-redemption. The latter indicates a pursuit of meritorious works and demonstrates the unattainability of the moralistic ideal.

With reference to this Popma (1962:339 *et seq.*) devotes considerable attention to amongst other things Thomas á Kempis's well-known book from the Middle Ages *De imitatione Dei* (translated incorrectly into Afrikaans in 1952 as "The following of Christ" and correctly into English in 1967 as "The *imitation* of Christ"). Besides the Bible this book is one of the most widely read books in the world. Yet it is a clear example of piety tainted by moralism.

- Popma also explores what the Scriptures mean when it calls on believers to be perfect. (Or when the Heidelberg Catechism, in answer 81, speaks about people who “desire to amend their life”) He draws attention to the fact that improving one's life is at the root a matter of *faith* (something religious) and not a mere *moral* enhancement. Although it is stated in the Scriptures that the gate to life is small and the road leading there narrow (Matt. 7:14), and therefore demand a struggle in faith (cf. also 1 Pet. 4:18), it should also be kept in mind that going through this gate is free, by grace (cf. the well-known Isaiah 55:1).

2.2 C.G. Seerveld

Seerveld (2003:28) is of the opinion that the Word of God “never gives biographical snatches to serve as ethical models”, for the Bible “is not written to solve my personal problems, but to tell me of the great things God has done”. Moralising reduces God's Word to “a mess of moralistic potage” (p. 29). The emphasis should always be on “Thus speaks the Lord”.

He further claims that the parallels drawn between Bible characters and current readers are forced. For I can never be an Abraham, a Rahab or whoever! And the Canada of today (Seerveld's homeland) can never be equated to the Palestine of biblical times. Moreover, such an understanding of the Scriptures leads to subjective casuistry: certain examples have to be imitated, while others – according to the subjective judgement of the reader – are to serve as warnings. (In this regard compare particularly the work of Troost, 1958.)

2.3 S. Greidanus

This author (1988:116 *et seq.*, 216 *et seq.*, 308 *et seq.*) pays special attention to the issue whether one may apply biblical biographical data to a current moral situation. He approaches the question from the contents and intention of the Scriptures (cf. Greidanus, 1988:216 *et seq.*). “The aim of biblical historiography is not to focus on the human agents of the redemptive drama, or to exploit their good and evil deeds for purposes of moral example or deterrent...” (p. 217). The Bible deals with God “who works for, with, through and sometimes in spite of people... The human characters appear not for their own sake, but for the sake of

showing what God is doing for, with and through them" (p. 217). The intention of the Scriptures is in keeping with these contents. It is to inspire faith and obedience to God. Faith cannot be built on sinful people, only on God who is reliable.

From this point of departure Greidanus offers the following critique (some of which re-emphasise points of criticism mentioned above):

- Since Bible characters often are not irreproachable models, a moralistic explanation mostly tends to the negative side ("don'ts") – while the gospel is something joyful and positive.
- God's place is taken by that of a human being; the Bible is read and preached in an anthropocentric instead of a theocentric way.
- In moralistic exegesis and preaching the Bible characters are isolated from the wider, more comprehensive history of revelation which emerges from the Scriptures. The history of God's Kingdom (its beginning, fall, redemption in Christ and its consummation) does not receive central attention.
- There is always a risk that the moralistic exegete/preacher could read his own subjective, contemporary moral preferences into a passage from the Scriptures.
- The huge differences between the circumstances of biblical times and today are conveniently ignored and an equal sign (=) placed between the two. (I am or I am not Joseph, Mary, John.)
- Often a mere description (a fact) is taken as a precept (norm).
- Furthermore, moralism easily leads to legalism, forgetting about God's grace.
- Moralism can never bear the full weight of a text or proclaim the full gospel, since it is by nature reductionist.

The last author to whom we listen, is:

2.4 G.J. Spykman

Much of his critique (cf. Spykman, 1985:58-61) re-emphasises what we have already found. However, it also offers a summary with which we can close our critique of the moralistic interpretation of the Bible (cf. Spykman, 1985:59 *et seq.*):

- A moralistic reading of the Bible is *reductionist* (an –ism). It overemphasises the moral facet of the revelation of God and reduces man's faith to something moral. It stresses moral precepts at the expense of the *comprehensive* message of the Scriptures (of for instance creation, fall into sin, redemption and the consummation of the whole universe).
- Since it puts the emphasis on various do's and don'ts, it also loses sight of God's *central and fundamental command of love*.
- Moralism deals with the Bible *in a fragmentary manner*. Phrases, texts and passages from Scripture are isolated from their revelational historical context.
- It goes about in an *unhistorical way*. Bible history is changed into contemporary personal case studies with universal lessons for all times. A straight line is drawn between the remote past and the present. It does not matter much whether a passage occurs in Genesis, Hosea, Luke or Revelation.
- Further the Bible is mostly interpreted *in an individualistic way*. ("I'm Joseph" or "I am not Potiphar's wife".) The message is not applied to the community of believers at large and society outside the church (social, political, economic, etc.)
- Moralism promotes, instead of emphasis on God's mighty deeds, a *human-oriented (anthropocentric) religion* – something that is more humanistic than biblical. Since it is constantly focused on the self, however, it does not foster faith but rather uncertainty.
- Finally it easily leads to the pursuit of *meritorious deeds or legalism*. God's goodness and grace is obscured by human law upon law and precept upon precept.

I would like to add to these points of critique by Spykman that a moralistic reading/preaching of the Scriptures often reveals more about the reader's/preacher's own moral values than about those of the particular Bible character. His/her contemporary values are read into those of the biblical character. Although it seems as if I am like Abraham, without one noticing it the opposite also happens: Abraham is becoming to look more and more like myself!

After all this drastic critique the question stays with one whether the Bible has anything to say for the ethical life of a human being. Is it not a case of Popma, Seerveld, Greidanus and Spykman simply throwing out the baby with the bathwater?

2.5 Further theological reflection

The crucial question to be answered here, is in what way the *wrong* (moralistic) usage is to be distinguished from an *acceptable* view of ethical biblical perspectives. After the above critique (how it may not be done), we now have to point out a positive way (how it should be done). As usual, negative criticism is easier than a positive solution. How will one make sure that, after rejecting a moralistic use of Scripture, the biblical message is still "relevant" for current readers, so that they will lead a life of conversion, faith, obedience and gratitude?

2.5.1 Suggestions by Greidanus

From the (negative) critique given above, something positive can already be inferred. A correct reading, for instance, will not be done in an unhistorical way, but the original intention of the initial authors will be kept in mind (cf. Greidanus, 1988:309). It could be asked, however, whether the author of a passage in the Bible always indicates with whom one should identify or from whom distance oneself. Several cases of positive identification can be mentioned:

Paul holds himself up to fellow-believers as worthy of being imitated (cf. e.g. Phil. 3:17). He also writes that Timothy followed him in his teaching, way of life, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecution and sufferings (2 Tim. 3:10).

Hebrews 11 is another example where numerous Old Testament Bible characters are quoted as examples for later generations. Please note they are not used as *moral* models. It is their *faith* that is presented as something worth following. The very first verse announces that the chapter deals with faith (being convinced of what cannot be seen). And all through the chapter it is repeated like a chorus: "By *faith* Abel ...", "by *faith* Enoch ...", etcetera.

Greidanus (1988:309) also has a second suggestion for restricting moralism, namely that analogies should not be made between *individuals* of biblical times and the present (cf. the individualistic trait of moralism mentioned above) but between the *community* of believers (the church) of those times and of today. This seems like an improvement, but I still do not see how it solves the basic problem.

2.5.2 Plantinga's viewpoint

This writer (cf. 1980:71 *et seq.*) states against a moralistic hermeneutics that, just as Christ was not a moral preacher, Samson was not merely a national hero or David just a good king of Israel. All the Bible characters can only be understood correctly if each one's place in God's broad plan of salvation is recognised. (This plan runs from creation, past the fall to the redemption in Christ and finally the consummation at his second coming.)

Plantinga (1980:70), however, also raises the question of how the Bible and Bible characters can have meaning for each of us in person today. For the *explanation* of the historical plan of redemption has to be *applied* in the lives of each of us. According to him there need not be tension between the emphasis on God's comprehensive plan of redemption and its illustrative character. The Bible also presents "examples" or "samples" (cf. Plantinga, 1980:71). In this connection Plantinga differentiates two kinds of "examples": those pertaining to Christ and those applicable to Christians.

Many of the Bible characters were for instance "prefigurations" of the Redeemer's work of grace and righteousness. "Certain Old Testament events and characters brought to light what Christ would accomplish" (p. 72). The bronze snake for

example was an image of Christ (John 3:14-15) and likewise what happened to Jonah (Matt. 12:40).

A second kind of application is the parallels between the Old Testament saints and believers under the new covenant. The former are often held up to the latter as warning and encouragement (cf. e.g. 1 Cor. 10:6,11; Hebr. 3:11, 19). So for instance, Esau is presented as a warning against a wicked and immoral life (Hebr. 12:16), while Sarah serves as an example of an obedient wife (1 Petr. 3:6). The history of Bible characters like Elijah can also serve as a comfort to present-day believers (cf. Rom. 11:2-5). In the well-known Hebrews 11 a large number of Bible characters remind us that God's promises for the future can be trusted.

Therefore Plantinga's criterion for applying the Bible correctly without lapsing into moralism, is how the New Testament applies the Old Testament. "The New Testament points the way in applying biblical history, for it gives us quite a number of examples of how it can be done. But in our application of the Old Testament history, we are not limited to the stories on which the New Testament comments directly. Using the New Testament examples as guidelines, we may confidently seek applications for our lives today... the facts of redemptive history are not simply written down for the sake of information... we must learn to read the Bible's redemptive history as a source of assurance, keeping our eyes open for samples of what God's renewal can and will accomplish in our lives" (Plantinga, 1980:75, 76).

Unfortunately Plantinga is not explicit on whether New Testament characters may also be used as illustrations for today. The main problem with Plantinga's "solution" is, however, that instead of dealing with the problem of *moralism*, he answers the question how the Scriptures (mainly the Old Testament) may be *applied*. The problem of *moralistic* applications is not solved.

Further one would like to know why people prefer identifying with Bible characters rather than identifying with Christ. For He is the perfect Human being and Example given to us by God the Father to follow. Could it be because He was

perfect and as human beings we find it easier to identify with the imperfect fellow-sinners from the Scriptures? Yet Christ calls on us to be his perfect followers in unbiased love towards others (Matt. 5:48). And although Christ did not preach in a moralistic way, his example definitely also gives guidance in ethical matters.

It is also possible that Protestantism – perhaps in overreaction to a *moralistic* (ethical) view of Christ – is inclined to see Him only as *Redeemer* and not as an *Example* of true humanity; Someone who paid *juridically* for our sins and not as Someone who also gives *ethical* guidance. However, Christ was also a human being like us and therefore exhibits the multidimensional traits of being human (cf. point 3).

3. A multidimensional view of God's revelation in the Scriptures and how to understand it

It is clear that theological ideas on the problem of moralism demands broader Christian philosophical reflection. Such an investigation has to begin at the beginning, namely at the question exactly what kind of book the Bible is.

3.1 A broader view of the Scriptures

It is not the first time that elements of this view are raised (cf. Van der Walt, 2008). I will summarise it in the following statements.

- God's revelation is done in *three* ways, his creational revelation, revelation in the Scriptures and revelation incarnate (in Jesus Christ).
- The Bible is not just *God's Word* (without being part of *creation*). Neither is it merely human words or experiences of God. It is the *Word of God* that has been written in *human words* or language over a period of many ages. To understand the indivisible divine-human character of revelation in the Scriptures, one may think of the revelation incarnate (Christ), who also had both a divine and a human "nature".
- Thus the Bible is a *writing*, a *book*, consisting of a large number of separate documents and genres, which nevertheless form a unity.

- As a book it is something *belonging to creation*. (God always reveals himself in and through something creaturely: in nature, a Book or a person, Jesus Christ.) Therefore the Bible is not something supernatural that deals only with "spiritual" matters. It deals with *real life*.
- Since the Holy Scripture is something creaturely, it also reflects *all facets or aspects of creation*. We here use the doctrine of modalities as developed by Vollenhoven (2005:37), Dooyeweerd (1953:93-113), and Stoker (1969:165). These three Christian philosophers do not distinguish the same number of modalities. I will only mention the following thirteen to explain the multidimensional nature of the Scriptures.

To the best of my knowledge this distinction between various facets or modalities has thus far not been applied in the Reformational tradition to the Scriptures. The intention is not – as some theologians might think – to cut up the Word of God (its creaturely side) with a philosophical scalpel, but to bring its complex structure to the attention of sometimes very one-sided theological views.

3.2 The various facets of the Scriptures

To illustrate the multidimensional character of the Scriptures, the following examples may be given (from the highest, qualifying, to the basic, the spatial):

- 13 *An aspect of faith*: The Bible calls us to faith in God and can only in faith be accepted as true and authoritative.
12. *An ethical facet*: It contains moral lessons and norms.
11. *A judicial side*: Justice plays an important role in the Scriptures.
10. *An aesthetic facet*: The various literary genres (e.g. history, poetry, psalms, gospels and letters) in which different parts of the Bible are written.
9. *An economic aspect*: The Bible is valuable to a life of faith and can also be bought or sold.

8. *A social aspect*: The Bible came into being in certain believing communities, its contents deal with social issues and it is also meant to be read not only by individuals but also in groups with others.
7. *A lingual side*: What we have in the Bible was first handed down orally, later put down in writing (in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) and afterwards translated into different languages.
6. *A historical facet*: it came into being over ages, under different circumstances, by different writers and also contains narratives from an age-old history.
5. *A logical side*: it is something that can be comprehended.
4. *A psychic facet*: it tells about the emotions of the Bible characters and it also evokes emotions (like trust) in the reader.
3. *A biotic side*: it is not a dead writing, but a living and life-giving Word which today still has meaning.
2. *A physical side*: initially it was written in ink on parchment and later printed on paper.
1. *A spatial facet*: the dimensions, font and weight of the old Dutch Authorised Version that I inherited from my grandfather, are so large that I prefer to take my Afrikaans pocket Bible when I travel!

3.3 A unique kind of book

Perhaps the reader would like to react to the above with "Then the Bible is just an ordinary book". It is indeed the case, yet not the full truth. It is a *special, unique book*.

For instance it is not a dictionary (of a lingual nature), a handbook on logic (analytically qualified), an economic textbook, a report on court cases (something judicial), a novel (i.e. something aesthetic) or a publication giving statistical data (of a numerical nature).

The Bible is qualified by the highest facet, the facet of faith (13), it is a *book of faith*, meant to evoke faith from human beings and to strengthen their faith. As a

book of faith it points above creation to the Revealer, Creator and Keeper of everything. Therefore it offers ultimate certainty.

3.4 Faith "colours" the whole of the biblical revelation

Faith as the leading or qualifying aspect *also determines the character* of all the other *facets* reflected in the Bible. Examples of these are the following:

- **The ethical:** The Bible does give guidelines for a correct moral life, but it always happens, in contrast to the usual books on ethics, in the light of obedience to God's fundamental command of love.
- **The judicial:** It strongly emphasises justice, not in the way of a legal document or a chapter on human rights, but from a religious perspective.
- **The aesthetic:** it does contain beautiful artistic passages (for instance uses different literary genres), but is more than merely good literature.
- **The social aspect** of a human being's life clearly and often emerges from the Scriptures, but the different relationships which a human being has with fellow-men, is subject to God's command of love (in its various forms). Still, the Bible does not offer a "blueprint" on how social life should be organised and/or changed. It gives a *religious* perspective on marriage, family, politics, economy, etc.
- **The lingual:** One could (as e.g. in some literary-critical methods) read the Bible in the different original languages and know their grammar in the most minute detail without understanding its message of faith!
- **The historical:** The Bible describes historical events, but in a different way from a normal history book. It offers a confessional "history in depth", uncovers what lies "behind" history: God who guides history, his covenant, his kingdom. Biblical history transcends the usual "factual" science of history.
- **The logical:** Understanding the Bible logically is important, but not the most cardinal requirement. It requires faith which precedes the logically comprehensible and also transcends it.

- **The psychic:** From what is said about numerous Bible characters, one could make some conclusions on their personalities and their emotional nature. This, however (as we have clearly seen), is not the central focus of the Scriptures. It is what God says *through* them.

It is clear that all the various facets do have a role. But all of them are "coloured" or determined by the aspect of faith. Exactly because the Bible is a book of faith it can influence and guide all the other facets of our lives.

3.5 Some examples

The above could be confirmed by numerous examples from the Bible.

- The authors of some historical books of the Bible, for instance, were in the first place interested in what a specific king's relationship with God was. Kings who lived in obedience to God received much attention even when they were not politically or economically very strong at that time. But about some other politically important kings there is only a brief mention that they lived in disobedience (without faith). If a reader were interested in the political or economic history of for instance Jeroboam or Rehoboam he could consult certain available sources himself (cf. 1 Kings 14:19, 29) – writings which of course today no longer exist.
- When Elizabeth attributes her pregnancy to the Lord (cf. Luke 1:25), it does not mean that she denies the sexual and biological side of it, but she recognises the hand of the Lord in the miracle of being able to expect a child.
- Psalm 127:1, where it says that the builders would build in vain unless the Lord built the house, does not deny that for building one needs money, material and labour. It draws attention to the fact that no form of building can endure unless it is undertaken in obedience to God and receives his blessing.
- The conquest of Canaan according to the Scriptures (cf. Num. 13:14) did not only require a well-organised military operation. It was first and foremost a matter of faith in God.

After these examples from the Scriptures we can continue our structural analysis.

3.6 The hazard of reductions

Because the Bible has a multidimensional character, it can easily – in a one-sided way – be typified or defined with reference to one of its dimensions. During the course of history, for example, it has been regarded as

- a **moral book** on how one should act in an ethically correct way;
- a **literary writing** which therefore has to be read and judged aesthetically;
- **historical documents**, which therefore have to be studied and explained according to (especially contemporary) historical criteria;
- a **logical-doctrinal** book from which theological dogma for the church can be inferred.

However, since the Scriptures are not primarily something moral, aesthetic, historic or analytical, such typifications lead one astray. One could call them "reductions" or "-isms": moralism, aestheticism, historicism and dogmatism (or intellectualism). They overemphasise one of the facets and then reduce all the other aspects of the Scriptures to that – including the crucial qualifying facet of faith. And since they do not offer the correct *view* of what the Scriptures are, they cannot *read* it correctly either. (One's view of Scripture determines one's explanation of Scripture.)

In order to understand the Scriptures correctly, one should know its unique character (a book of faith), but also that it exhibits at least 12 other facets. These other aspects are the "channels" through which faith flows to all facets of life.

3.7 One continuous narrative

Finally it is critical to know that the Bible (instead of a hodgepodge of moral lessons, lovely poetry, historical fragments or theological dogma) is *one* book with *one* message. It contains the drama of God's plan of redemption, the message of his kingdom (cf. Bartholomew & Goheen, 2004:12). But inside the one history of redemption different phases or acts of the drama may be discerned: (1) At creation God *founds* his kingdom (Gen. 1 and 2); (2) the fall into

sin means *rebellion* against it (Gen. 3); (3) redemption *begins* with God choosing Israel as his covenant people (the rest of the Old Testament); (4) redemption becomes a *reality* with the coming of the King, Jesus Christ (the Gospels); (5) the message of the kingdom is *proclaimed worldwide* (Acts); (6) at the consummation (Christ's second coming) the redemptive work of God will be *completed* (Revelation).

Having said all that goes before, the problem of the moralistic reading and preaching of the Bible still has not been fully solved, for a crucial question still has not been answered. That is what exactly is meant by the "ethical" or "moral" – the next important section of this reflection.

4. Philosophical reflection on the religious, ethical, moral-immoral and morality

So far we have used the concepts "ethical" and "moral" as interchangeable terms. But when we deal with the "moralistic" use of the Scriptures, these terms have to be more clearly distinguished. In this some philosophy can be of help.

From the critique (above) it has become clear that the risk of moralism (cf. also Marshall, 1995:310) is that it causes the differences between the various facets of life (e.g. the family, education, politics, economy) to become blurred and thus significant distinctions are levelled by placing all of them under the general category of the ethical.

4.1 The traditional views

This fact emerges clearly from most earlier and current views on the ethical and ethics (as a science). Ethics is presented as studying the practical side of life, or human conduct, or what is good, or what should be done.

It is clear that such a definition is not only very wide, but causes the ethical to have a hegemony over other fields of life (cf. Olthuis, 1968:197 and Von Meyenfeldt, 1963:30). Olthuis rejects the idea that only ethics has to do with what is good or what should be done. "'Goodness' and 'oughtness' are not such clearly marked fields. The teacher, the artist, jurist, linguist, etc. all ask what they

ought to do as teacher, artist, jurist, linguist. In none of these cases is the query specifically ethical (although it does have such an aspect). In fact it is never exclusively ethical. In the last analysis the what-ought-I-to-do question is a *total* question having various aspects, among them an ethical. It is only the ethical aspect, albeit in its indissoluble coherence with all the other aspects as they together express themselves in the totality of an act, which is the concern of the ethicist" (Olthuis, 1968:204).

4.2 The difference between the ethical and religion

The first, probably most important insight within the Reformational philosophical tradition is that the ethical facet of life should be clearly distinguished from the fundamental and all-encompassing religious life of a human being.

All Reformational philosophers see the heart as the deepest core of human existence (cf. e.g. Von Meyenfeldt, 1963:49 *et seq.*). God in his Word speaks to this religious "centre" of a human being to change and renew it. From his heart – which could be directed at God's law in either obedience or disobedience – man's whole life is determined in all its different aspects. The religious direction determines, apart from his ethical life, even the aspect of faith.

Von Meyenfeldt states it as follows: "Religion is not a certain capacity. It is the relationship between God and man in which man is engaged from his innermost parts to his fingertips. It takes hold of man in the deepest and at the same time broadest sense possible" (Von Meyenfeldt, 1963:52).

4.3 The ethical as a modality

A second important point is that the ethical is something that is restricted, only one facet of many (13 or more) aspects of human existence.

What the central moment or "essence" of the ethical facet is, cannot be logically formulated, since it is of an a-logical nature (cf. Olthuis, 1968:198). Yet it can be intuitively experienced and known by everyone.

In the Reformational tradition particular attention was given to the ethical norm. It was considered a specific form of God's central command of love (love for God

and for the neighbour). Dooyeweerd, Stoker, Mekkes, Van Riessen and Troost differ little among themselves when they describe the ethical norm as love in temporary relationships or love for the neighbour. Troost (1958:397) for instance says that ethics studies the different forms of love, like love in marriage, paternal and maternal love, child love, love among brothers and sisters (in the church), love among friends and for compatriots as well as instances where love occurs in a subject-object relationship (like love for one's fatherland or for pets).

Olthuis (1968:198) and Von Meyenfeldt (1963:36), however, are of the opinion that the command of love for the neighbour is a comprehensive law which is valid in many fields and is therefore not specifically an ethical norm. They therefore agree more with Vollenhoven, Popma and Taljaard, who describe the ethical core and also norm as "fidelity". According to Von Meyenfeldt (1963:38, 57) the typical or core of the ethical is "solidarity" which means that people can rely on one another. So this is quite near to the idea of fidelity/faithfulness.

4.4 The field of ethics as a science

In the light of the above Olthuis (1968:198) defines the province of ethics as follows: "Every human activity functions in all the law-spheres, and every thing, plant or animal has a potential object-function in the ethical. However, as a science ethics has a first and a particular responsibility to investigate the states of affairs in which the ethical aspect plays a *leading or qualifying* role, as for example in certain communal relations (marriage and the family), certain inter-communal relations (friendship) and in certain subject-object relations (love of country, love of animals, etc.)."

4.5 Subtle distinctions

We are also aided by Reformational philosophy in distinguishing between the amoral and the immoral (cf. Olthuis, 1968:202, 203). One could ask the *structural* question whether something is ethical or a-ethical (i.e. of an economic, social or some other nature). This should be differentiated from the *normative* question (about the *direction* of ethical life) whether something is ethically good or not (i.e.

immoral). Particularly the first distinction is the one that in the course of history did not receive proper attention – even in reading the Bible.

4.6 The difference between ethical, the contrast moral-immoral, and morality

Du Plessis (in Van der Walt, Du Plessis & De Klerk, 1999:34, 35) offers help in differentiating as follows between three important concepts which are often used in an over-simplified way like synonyms. They are the words “ethical”, the distinction “moral-immoral” [“sedelik” in Afrikaans] and “moral”.

4.6.1 The distinction

Du Plessis concurs with the other Reformational philosophers that the *ethical* is an aspect of being human. All people (good or bad) are amongst other things also active ethical beings or ethical subjects. People can use objects in their environment as ethical objects but the objects themselves (matter, plant and animal) cannot act ethically (right or wrong).

The Afrikaans word *sedelik* (the contrast moral-immoral) according to Du Plessis deals with a human being's relationship with his/her fellow human beings, especially with the relationship between the two sexes. (E.g. the relationship man-woman; man-man and woman-woman.) But it also emerges in the relationships parent-child and child-parent and in a friendship relationship. Here the *normative* facet is foregrounded. This relationship can be moral or immoral, good or bad, right or wrong, depending on obedience or the absence thereof to God's norms. A human being has the task of making concrete God's central command of love in a particular way, for instance as fidelity in marriage, loyalty in friendship or care in the family.

The third concept “*morality*” Du Plessis takes as denoting the moral conduct of a group of people, their common values. Morality prohibits certain forms of conduct and approves of others. Examples of the former are: deceitfulness, hypocrisy, dishonesty, untrustworthiness, etc. Examples of the latter are: loyalty, honesty, responsibility, obedience, integrity, politeness, hospitality, friendliness, etc.

4.6.2 Values

Olthuis (1968:187, 194, 195) gives a further explanation of what values are: These are facts, objects, events or acts which meet the divine norms. Therefore values do not exist by themselves. They only have meaning as answers (concretisations) to God's ordinations for life. So to avoid values being made into independent entities, it is preferable to say that something *has* value rather than saying it *is* a value.

Values are therefore fallible human formulations of the divine norms. They are only valid as long as a community judge them to be so. When a value can no longer give direction in new circumstances, such a value has lost its value. Then a new value has to be formulated concurring with God's guidelines.

5. Conclusion

Although moralistic use of the Scriptures is a complicated problem, the following conclusions can be drawn:

5.1 The Bible addresses the human being not primarily on an ethical level. It moves a human being deeply in his/her heart and demands an obedient answer in faith which also determines his/her ethical life.

5.2 From this religious *direction* of the heart (obedience or disobedience to God's ordinations) the different facets of human life (its structural set-up) is determined. Amongst other things this also includes the ethical side of his life. From God's central command of love contemporary norms can be inferred for a human being's moral [*sedelike*] conduct in marriage, the family and friendship.

5.3 However, love should not be associated with the ethical/moral only and in this way be thinned out and restricted. It is crucial always to enquire after the *specific terrain* of life to be dealt with. Is it married life, education, church, politics, economy, the relationship with the natural environment? In each of these different fields the command of love has to be embodied or applied in different ways. In the field of ethics as fidelity, in the field of education as moulding guidance, on the terrain of the church as brotherly/sisterly love, in the political realm in the form

of justice, in the case of the economy it is good stewardship and towards the environment it takes on the form of protection and conservation.

5.4 Because all the facets of life are intertwined, all the above fields exhibit an ethical dimension, although they are not ethical by nature. So, for instance, in the political field one should trust one's leaders. And an economic venture without trust (in e.g. your business partners) is almost unthinkable.

5.5 A bad political policy or wrong economics or weak ecology, however, cannot be put right by simply pouring an ethical "sauce" over it, by pleading for an "ethics" for each of these areas. Economics, politics or ecology can only be reformed when each once more meets their *own specific norms*. Ethicism, an absolutisation of the ethical, which expects redemption for other fields from an ethical "icing" laid on top, is doomed to failure.

5.6 The greatest risk of moralism is that the fundamental, central religious message of God's Word (which lays a claim to a human being's heart so that he/she can believe) is equated to and therefore thinned out to one's contemporary moral values. It is like a person seeing only his/her own reflection in a mirror. The Scriptures merely confirm your own current values, instead of querying and reforming them. While moralism attempts to make the Word of God relevant for today, it actually deprives God's revelation of its life-encompassing, renewing power.

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CHAPTER 2

HOW TO READ THE BIBLE TO HEAR GOD SPEAK AND UNDERSTAND OUR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

This chapter investigates the hermeneutical problem of how the Bible should be read and understood. It deals with the older historical critical method (still in use), the different literary-critical methods developed afterwards as well as the latest so-called "new hermeneutics" with a clear philosophical bias. The question is whether these methods can be of use to interpret the Bible in such a way that God speaks. And if they cannot, is there another way out?

The investigation develops through the following steps: (1) First the positive and negative sides of the historical-critical and literary-critical methods are investigated. (2) This is followed by a brief exposition of the "hermeneutical revolution", starting about the sixties of the previous century. (3) This development in hermeneutics necessitates a clarification of the relationship between worldview and the interpretation of the Bible. (4) In the light of the fact that theological hermeneutical methods often obstruct the access of "ordinary" believers to God's Word, the wrong as well as correct relationships between prescientific faith and scientific theology are discussed. (5) The next step is to argue in favour of a direct, theologically unmediated access to the Scriptures for "ordinary" Bible readers. (6) The final part provides an example of this pre-scientific access in showing how the metaphors of salt and light clearly indicate a Christian's calling to be involved in social issues.

Relevance to our main theme (at home in God's world):

To be at home in God's world, we should not analyse the Bible only in a scholarly way (as historical document or literary text), but regard it as God's encompassing directive for life – also for social involvement.

* * *

1 The historical-critical and literary-critical methods

The focus here is not explaining the historical-critical and literary-critical methods. Interested readers can easily come abreast with these. We are here primarily concerned with the worldviewish philosophical points of departure or presuppositions of these methods. In other words, we want to look at the methods in a critical way. In this we make use of two persons' comments in particular: Greidanus (1988) and Seerveld (2003). We start off with Greidanus, since he clearly spells out the principles or points of departure on which these methods are founded.

1.1 The criticism of S. Greidanus

First we look at how this author uncovers the presuppositions of the historical-critical method and finally we briefly mention his comments on the literary-critical methods.

1.1.1 The presuppositions revealed

The problem from which the historical-critical method departs – in my opinion the wrong question – is whether God really acted in history (as described in the Old and New Testament). Are these not merely subjective narratives of old Israel or the early Christians? In brief: Is the Bible historically reliable? (Greidanus, 1988:26).

The point of departure therefore is that the Bible is primarily a historical book (instead of a *book of faith*) as well as methodological doubt on its historical correctness. Instead of accepting in faith that it is the Word of God in human words, in other words a norm for all of life, a new norm is sought for this Norm. And then a science – which is the fallible work of humans – is taken as the norm.

So the prejudices (cf. Greidanus, 1988:35) contain two discernible elements: First God is eliminated beforehand and then the Scriptures are declared unhistorical, since God supposedly could not act and speak in them. These points of departure are rooted in a certain rationalist worldview and philosophy (cf. below).

With right Greidanus (p. 33, 34) remarks that in this way the heart of the biblical message is more or less cut out, namely that God acts in history. History is not merely a process that is restricted to this world. (In this connection I would like to recommend strongly Smit, 1987:12-48 entitled *Het goddelijk geheim in de geschiedenis – The divine secret in history*). Greidanus also notes with right that the fact that God acts in history, transcends historical scientific investigation – it can only be accepted or rejected in faith.

1.1.2 The principles of this method

The principles of the historical-critical method (cf. Greidanus, 1988:26 *et seq.*) clearly reflect the above-mentioned points of departure.

In the first instance it demands that the Bible like any other historical document should be treated critically, in other words (cf. above) with suspicion concerning its truth.

In the second place a historian can never reach fixed facts (the historical truth), but at most ascertain the probable state of affairs from the past. The results of historical investigation can vary from accurate to doubtful. The document concerned – this is how it is presented – should prove its own authenticity.

A third principle – even less convincing – is that the present is used to evaluate the past. The historical-critical method departs from the assumption that all events are alike (of the same kind). The criticism of Greidanus (1988:31) is that it is subjectivist to use one's own contemporary environment as a benchmark in evaluating the past. Besides, it also is reductionistic since it leaves no room for unique or extraordinary events like miracles. The principle of the similarity of all events precludes beforehand recognition of the unique (p.33).

The fourth principle is that this world is a closed reality in which only immanent causes and results play a role. This also applies (cf. above) to the history of this world, "a built in blind spot for divine causation in history" (Greidanus, 1988:33). History – including that related in the Bible – is a closed continuum of immanent causes and results.

1.1.3 The central problem

Greidanus (1988:35) in my opinion has his finger on the pulse when he writes: "The naturalistic historical-critical method seeks to assess the Bible from a standpoint, a worldview, grounded outside the Bible – a post-Enlightenment worldview rather than the biblical worldview. In other words, the Bible is pressed into a foreign mould and the resultant strain leads to all kinds of aberrations: historical narrative in the Bible is summarily labelled fiction or legend or myth..." This criticism is confirmed by Vander Goot (1987:62, 66).

1.1.4 The literary-critical method

Greidanus (1988:48 *et seq.*) discusses various literary methods among which the following: "source", "form", "redaction", "rhetorical" and "narrative criticism". Although these methods also have useful elements (the Bible amongst other things also has a literary side or aspect) the problem Greidanus (p. 67) has is twofold: All the methods are primarily interested in the *form* of the Bible *text* and forget about its important *contents*. (Vander Goot, 1987:55 links up with this by saying that the primary interest of the historical-critical method in the *context* within which the Bible text had its origin, deflected attention from the Bible *text* itself and its *message*.) Further the atomistic approach and the emphasis on the smallest detail leads to the unity of the Scriptures and its one, continuous message being lost.

1.1.5 Summary

Greidanus's synoptic criticism (p. 75) on these two kinds of methods is that they attempt to *rewrite* or *reconstruct* the Bible. The historical-critical method attempts to do this according to their own criteria for historical precision, while the literary-critical methods try to reach it according to current aesthetic rules.

In the light of the multi-dimensional character of the Scriptures (cf. Van der Walt, 2008:32, worked out in more detail in 2009b or in the previous chapter of this book) it can be said that these two methods do focus on some aspects of the

Scriptures (the historical and the lingual-aesthetic), but is blind to its qualifying function, namely the aspect of faith (the Bible as a religious book).

If judged in the light of its practical value for the way "ordinary" Christians live their faith, these methods, according to Greidanus (1988:76, also cf. Seerveld below), do not produce much. "... there is little which quickens the mind and nothing which touches the heart". There is a world of difference between regarding the Bible as an age-old piece of graffiti or antiquarian classic and seeing it as the eternal Word of God Himself which speaks to each new generation.

The next author we consider emphasises similar feelings towards these secular kinds of hermeneutics, but he also raises new points.

1.2 C. G. Seerveld's criticism

First Seerveld expresses his appreciation of a historical-critical and also the later literary methods.

1.2.1 Appreciation

The historical methods pay attention to the minute detail of a text and have demonstrated clearly that the Bible did not come down from heaven all of a sudden and complete. (Certain inspirational theories, like the mechanistic, attempt to present it like this.) Amongst other things this method has shown how the Word of God could have come into being as far as history, form and composition are concerned. However, the fact that probably many writers, editors and copiers were used, need not imply that the Bible is less authoritative. It rather proves that God's Word originated in creaturely, real historical circumstances.

Attention to the various literary genres is important too, for one should read the narratives, songs, conversations, poetry, genealogical registers, gospels, letters etcetera in the Bible in different ways.

1.2.2 Critique

But Seerveld's criticism drowns out his words of appreciation. On many points it corresponds with Greidanus although it may be formulated differently.

- According to Seerveld these methods are in no way neutral (no method is), but stem from a worldview which believes in the autonomy of human reason and, following the ideal of neutral scholarship, makes the Bible the object of scientific analysis. In the later rationalistic tendencies the belief in evolutionism and historicism also became dominant. Hence the interest in how the Bible originated and developed historically.
- The historical-critical method therefore mostly originated from a climate of reasoning that does not believe in God. Advocates of this method fixed their attention on the historical and literary (the *form*) and not on the (divine) message (the *contents*). In this connection Seerveld remarks: "... to treat the biblical text first and foremost as an archaeological dig in which you must discover, date and identify each fascinating piece of rubble, but neglect to get at the artefact in its integrality, is a lamentable failing of such scholarship. A person can learn a lot in following this method, but unless you use it propaedeutically as supplement, you may miss the pearl of great price: hearing God speak" (Seerveld, 2003:63).
- The norm for the truth in this case is human reason or scholarship (cf. Seerveld, 2003:33,34). Please note: the Bible itself is not the Norm. It has to be subjected to an extra-biblical norm – contemporary science – to determine whether it is (scientifically) acceptable or not.
- In this way the Word of God is turned into a problem. In many cases it leads to suspicion and scepticism (cf. Seerveld, 2003:33).
- Not only the historical-critical method but also the emphasis on the various kinds of literature could lead to a serious fragmentation of the biblical message. Like other Reformational philosophers, Seerveld also presupposes the *unity* of the biblical narrative although there are several "acts" in the "drama": creation, the fall, redemption and consummation (cf. Bartholomew & Goheen, 2004). "The

Bible is telling us humans the true story of the Lord's great deeds" (Seerveld, 2003:76).

- The one-sided focus of the historical and literary methods on minute detail further fragments and rapes the biblical canon "... the historical critical method brackets out the unifying story of the whole Bible... and leaves us with an editor's cut-and-paste puzzle of incongruous details" (Seerveld, 2003:63).
- A subsequent remark is that this kind of study of the Bible has little value for ordinary believers. "... it functions superbly in an academic theologian's study, but it does not give a man much to preach from on Sunday to the congregation of the faithful" (Seerveld, 2003:29).
- The last point of critique by Seerveld (2003:33) is closely connected with the previous point. The historical and literary methods "make the right reading of the Scriptures dependent upon the scientific judgment of the expert". The "ordinary" believer therefore does not have – like the scientific theologian – direct access to the Word of God and is not capable of really understanding it. We will return later to this very significant last point (cf. points 5 and 6 below).

It should be added here that the greatest mistake of the historical-critical method in my opinion is that the Bible is *primarily* regarded as of a *historical* nature instead of in the *first instance as a book of faith*. It does comprise – apart from many other sides – a historical *facet*, but regarding it *merely* as an historical document, entails understanding it in completely the wrong way. (See previous chapter.)

1.3 Review

In summary one could say that, although some of the above-mentioned methods contain valuable elements, the worldviewish philosophical foundations on which most of them stand clashes radically with the belief that the Bible is God's Word in human words. They cannot aid the believing Christian in hearing God speak while reading the Bible. The next issue is whether the so-called "new"

hermeneutics – no longer so new – could perhaps help us in understanding the Bible correctly.

2 The hermeneutic revolution

In order to explain why we here speak of a “revolution”, we will first say something more on the traditional methods of exegesis in especially the Reformed theological world.

2.1 The traditional exegetical approach

According to the traditional (orthodox) approach the emphasis is on the text and therefore the Scriptures themselves should offer the exegetical methods. Exegesis is done according to a number of simple rules, as for instance the following: Scripture should be compared to Scripture; parts that are difficult to understand should be explained in the light of more understandable parts; remaining parts should be left under the motto *non liquet*; distinction should be made between the old and the new dispensation, between various genres, etcetera. However, today there is a realisation that these rules, although important, are by far not sufficient.

2.2 The radical hermeneutic switch

Vander Goot (1987:43, 62, 66) demonstrates that a significant shift of attention took place already during the historical-critical method from the *text* to the *context* within which the text had its origin. In the “new” hermeneutics attention is shifted even further away from the text to the presuppositions of the *contemporary reader*. (Cf. also Silva, 1987:7.) This brought about a complete revolution, since exegesis now has to take into account a much wider spectrum of factors – something that makes exegesis still more difficult.

2.2.1 Influence of irrationalism

Irrationalist philosophy (of pragmatism, vitalism and existential philosophy) paved the way for this turning point. Naugle (2002:253) summarises the difference between the earlier rationalist philosophy (*circa* 1600-1900) and the ensuing irrationalism as follows: “In the Halcyon days of the Enlightenment, the prejudice

against any prejudice reigned supreme. The promoters of this project were concerned about epistemological infection stemming from the germs of personal biased and cultural presuppositions. They sought to apply the antibiotic of objective, scientific rationality to all serious theoretical enterprises in order to produce an uncontaminated form of knowledge characterized by mathematical precision. Despite the Herculean efforts of those who promoted this dehumanized epistemological program, the dogma of value-free ways of knowing has recently fallen on hard times.”

The new situation he then sketches as follows: “The prejudice against prejudice has been recognized as a prejudice, and the self-defeating nature of this aspect of the Enlightenment project has been exposed. In these ‘post-modern’ times many thinkers have perceived that it is virtually impossible, and indeed not even healthy to attempt to quarantine thought, and to rid all conceptual endeavours of the encroachment of personal and cultural contingencies” (Naugle, 2002:254).

The implication of this is that interpretation will always be influenced by the context. Silva explains “To interpret the biblical text... involves a contextual shift. Even when I seek merely to express what Paul meant, for example, I am constrained to do so in *my* situation: with English rather than Greek, with modern rather than ancient idioms, with Western nuances rather than Middle Eastern thought forms. In other words, all forms of interpretation necessarily include a measure of contextualization. This point is a little frightening because it appears to relativize Scripture” (Silva, 1987:23). The *wrong* way of handling the context can indeed be hazardous since it can lead to subjectivism and relativism (cf. current postmodernism).

2.2.2 A new kind of hermeneutics

Therefore, since philosophers like Heidegger and Gadamer exegesis has lost its “innocence” and simplicity. It can no longer occupy itself only with what the text says and the application of a number of logical and literary rules. The context of the contemporary reader has now become a part of hermeneutics not to be

ignored. The reader's own circumstances and especially his own worldview play a decisive role.

On the scientific level (theological exegesis included) the reader's philosophy therefore has decisive significance. Philosophical disciplines like an ontology, anthropology, epistemology and language philosophy cannot be ignored. With right Troost (2004:129) says that hermeneutics to many theologians today has become something hardly different from systematic philosophy.

2.2.3 The difference between the old and the new hermeneutics

The next two quotations clearly bring out the contrast between formerly and nowadays:

"There was a time that everything seemed so simple. With a grammar in the one hand and a dictionary in the other, a concordance within reach and armed with some knowledge of biblical culture and history, the exegete approached the text. This exegetical work resulted in the determination of the meaning of the text, with which subsequently the dogmatician and homilist could go to work. Hermeneutics was a matter of laying down a number of rules for reading ... This era is behind us forever" (Peels as quoted by Troost, 2004:125) [Tr. from the Dutch].

Over against this Troost says with reference to the work of philosophers like Dilthey, Heidegger and Gadamer: "... that our understanding of texts is not merely a question of grammar and logic but primarily ... a matter of our complete experience of reality and our view of reality, in other words: of our worldview and philosophical view of reality in total ... theological hermeneutics is much more than the application of five or ten rules for exegesis" (Troost, 2004:133) [Tr. from the Dutch].

2.3 An example

The danger involved when attempting to read the Scriptures primarily from the angle of one's contemporary worldview can be illustrated by the following case. The Dutch theologian, Kuitert, during the past fifty years developed from a Reformed believer into an atheist. How can something like this happen? Fowler

(1991:123) demonstrates that originally Kuitert's intention was to make the Bible relevant for the modern world, to give theology a place within secular Europe. Under the influence of historicism (cf. Fowler, 1991:127) however, already in 1968 Kuitert considered the Bible as a mere product of earlier times. God and his Word became the captive of old Israel or of the New Testament cultures.

Because this was a deviating, unorthodox viewpoint, initially Kuitert took refuge in a supra-historical message (*kerugma*) in the line of Bultmann. He thus tried to differentiate between the historic-cultural "packaging" and the "contents" (the essential message) of the Bible. But he could not say which criteria one should use in this distinction. In the end the Bible readers themselves have to do it (cf. Fowler, 1991:126). Kuitert's theology opened the way to arbitrariness and relativism – a way that went down-hill quickly. Van den Breukel (2003:29-31) demonstrates this clearly with reference to Kuitert's own writings after 1968:

- In 1992 already the title of a new book was "Het algemeen *betwyfeld* geloof" ("The generally *doubted* faith") in which Kuitert offered a "revision" of biblical faith. Of all the possible shocking utterances in this book we pick out the following: "We have no view of the end of our times, we do not even know whether there is such an end. We only know our own end" (Kuitert, 1992:178) (Tr. from the Dutch).
- In 1998 Kuitert wrote another book *Jezus: nalatenschap van het Christendom* (*Jesus: heritage of Christianity*). The title says it all. Jesus Christ did not really live and suffer and die for us. He is the product of the fantasies of his disciples and the first Christians. Kuitert's answer to the question whether the coming of Jesus was necessary, therefore is: "Why did Jesus have to? He did not have to and he does not have to. As a matter of fact, who would demand it?" (Kuitert, 1998:316) [Tr. from the Dutch.]
- In 2002 another Kuitert book followed, entitled: *Voor een tijd een plaats voor god*. (*For a while a place for god*). In this case, too, the title is revealing: "god" is written in lower case. God no longer exists, there is no resurrection or last judgement either. "When a person dies it is over and done with" (Kuitert, 2002:196) [Tr. from the Dutch.]

This is a distinct example of the complete spiritual bankruptcy in which a person can end up who regards his own worldview and contemporary secular context as more important than the Word and God.

However, this does not mean one should ignore a personal worldview and the broader spirit of the times. The issue is not *whether* the worldviewish philosophical role of the reader should be acknowledged, but *how* it should be done. How can we evade both the earlier rationalistic idea (which attempted to ignore the influence of the reader and his context by way of a neutral approach) and contemporary relativism (which exaggerates the influence of reader and context)? This brings us to the next section of this investigation.

3. The relation between worldview/philosophy and the interpretation of the Scriptures

Many believers still hold the opinion that a respectful and devoted attitude towards the Bible is sufficient in order to understand it correctly. One should merely read and listen to the Scriptures with a faithful attitude.

However, whether one is prepared to admit it or not, one always reads through coloured lenses and one listens with one's own ears (cf. Vander Goot, 1987:19). Reading the Bible literally (= in a neutral way) is a myth. Consciously or unconsciously the way the "ordinary" reader reads the Bible is determined by his/her worldview. The exegesis of the scientific theologian is also determined by certain (often unconscious) philosophical points of departure. (Philosophy is the scientific reflection on a worldview.)

As Vander Goot (1987:43, 62, 66) clearly shows, this fact need not be considered as something negative. The problem is, however, that the Bible is nowadays often forced into the contemporary reader's worldview that is alien to the Bible. And this while exactly the opposite should be happening: one's own worldview should be questioned and changed by the Bible message.

How can the latter be achieved?

3.1 Frank admission

First of all one should not try and hide or deny one's worldviewish interpretation of the Bible. Olthuis aptly puts it as follows: "Normative exegesis takes place when we are keenly aware of our pre-understandings or vision rather than when we try to hide them. Then we are able to let the Bible text speak in terms of the differences from and similarities with our own prejudices. Without such interaction interpreters easily, often unconsciously, trace their own visions and beliefs onto the text and then read them 'objectively' out of the text. Ironic and paradoxical as it may seem, the more aware we are of the fore-beliefs and fore-conceptions of our own visions, the more we are able to do justice to the message of the text" (Olthuis, 1987:29, cf. also pp. 86-87).

3.2 Open your own worldview to discussion

Olthuis (1987:13, 32, 46) emphasises that it is therefore no use reading certain parts from Scripture over and over (re-exegeting) when Christians differ in their viewpoints. The question should rather be asked from the angle of which presuppositions the clashing groups read the texts.

But it is not easy to lay one's own worldview on the table, for a worldview develops over a period of time within a certain group and contains the answers to the human being's deepest questions about life. Therefore, opening it for discussion leaves one in a vulnerable position.

3.3 The Word of God as criterion

A third point of importance is that in the "dialogue" between one's own worldview and the Scriptures – something that may never stop – the message of the Scriptures is the more important, should have the higher authority. The Bible reader should always be open to the possibility that his/her own worldview can be tested, weighed, supplemented, corrected and even queried by the Word of God. The x-ray test of the Scriptures is most crucial to prevent one from becoming a captive of one's own – even Christian – worldview.

3.4 Indications of a right or wrong worldview

Van der Walt (2009b) goes into the possible benchmarks one could apply to prevent one from becoming a prisoner of a worldview that is alien to the Bible. These criteria fall into three classes: (1) internal (2) external (e.g. openness, normativity, balance and liveability) and (3) transcendent benchmarks. (For lack of room they cannot be discussed here again.)

3.5 Conclusion

So the problem can be solved. There are rules – even though they cannot be as easily traced and applied as grammatical rules – to prevent the worldviewish orientation of the reader from getting so much emphasis that the end product of the exegetical process is relativism.

Therefore it is not necessary to choose between the extremes of either a dogmatic rationalist fundamentalism (granting semi-divine status to your own understanding of the Scriptures) or subjectivist irrationalist relativism (which teaches that what can be deduced from the Bible is purely of a personal and individual nature). Over against the first extreme we have to admit that our understanding of the Bible is 100% a *human* matter and therefore fallible. But over against the second extreme it has to be remembered that, however inadequate our understanding may be, we are still dealing with *God's Word*. Since the Bible is the Word of God in human language, our limited human understanding – in spite of all the inadequacies attached – can point us to the voice of God.

The question at the end of dealing with various hermeneutic methods is whether the average church member has to be or even can be familiar with all these – sometimes very intricate methods. Is it not possible for ordinary believers – especially in the light of what happened to Kuitert (cf. above) – to read and understand God's Word better without these sophisticated theologies? This brings us to a subsequent problem: the relation between theological, scientific hermeneutics and ordinary Bible reading by believers.

4. Confusing faith and theology

Since theology has as its proper field of investigation the aspect of faith of human life, theology and faith (as well as theology and the Bible as a book of faith) can easily be confused and it has indeed happened all through history. A distinct example is theologians speaking regularly about the "theology" of Moses, John or Paul. In order to deal properly with the relation between faith and theology, it will be necessary to reflect on the field of investigation of the science of theology and its relation to philosophy. However, we do not have space for this now (cf. Van der Walt, 2005:158-165).

4.1 Serious consequences

Although identifying the Bible and faith in it with theology may seem harmless, it is not at all the case. It gives rise to at least the following four problems.

- If the Bible is a theological (i.e. scientific) book, it should in the first place be studied as such. This has happened during the course of history and still happens. The Bible is approached as a *scientific* book. But since it does not meet with certain scientific theories (especially contemporary ones) it is regarded as *unscientific* and *unreliable* instead of being *prescientific* by nature. Another option is to reconcile the Bible and science – often in a forced way.

However, "*prescientific*" does not mean "*unscientific*". The Scriptures (and our faith founded on it) can only be dubbed as "*unscientific*" if one assigns the higher authority to science. "*Prescientific*" indicates that revelation and faith come *before* any science and also *determine* it. "*Prescientific*" thus implies that Scripture and the faith founded on it is something completely *different* from science.

- A second consequence of the confusion between revelation, faith and theology (or the supposition that the Bible is a theological book) is the idea that the Scriptures are accessible only to scientific theologians and not to other believers. In the light of the struggle of the 16th Century Reformation to gain accessibility to the Word for all believers, the Bible may, however, never be considered as the monopoly of any institution, group or science.

- If the Bible is a theological book, a third implication would be that it is – like any science – fallible human work, instead of the infallible revelation from God. Consequently it would also have to be rewritten regularly to keep up with the latest theological developments.
- A last consequence of this lack of a clear distinction between unlike matters – already implicitly clear from the above – is that the radical difference between *how we understand* the Bible and the *Bible itself* – God's Word – is often not distinctly noticed and acknowledged. The consequence is that time-bound, human theological results are assigned greater authority than any fallible science can ever have. Even the fact that theology can have the Bible as its *field of investigation* does not mean that it also deserves the *authority* of God's Word.

4.2 What the difference between faith and theology is not

One often hears and reads that church members are encouraged to take note of theology or even to think in a more theological way, so that theology can strengthen, improve, correct or deepen their faith. Therefore theology is seen as of a higher quality than ordinary religious knowledge based on the Bible. Formulated differently: religious knowledge is not something of a completely *different kind*, but merely a *lower level or quality* of theological knowledge (cf. Troost, 2004:399).

The danger is real that theology could be regarded as a better kind of faith. Especially in our modern Western culture, in which scientific knowledge is judged very highly, faith can easily be theologised – thereby losing its firm character as faith. If a scientific conviction, however, becomes a conviction of faith, it means nothing less than scientism or the idolisation of science (cf. Troost, 2004:357).

4.3 The true difference

However, faith is not theology – and definitely no elementary form of it. The other way round theology is not faith either, but qualitatively and structurally something completely different. For faith is no scientific theory and theology is not prescientific faith – and should not become so either. Theological knowledge is

religious knowledge deepened by theory. However it does not necessarily mean a deepening of *faith itself*.

Troost (2004:419) explains this difference as follows: "*Theological knowledge as such is ... no phenomenon of faith, but a specification, differentiation and deepening of one element of faith only, namely religious knowledge. This religious knowledge functions as a 'substructure' to faith. Theology ... remains a typically reasonable, that is a logical analytical activity, encased as a substructure in believing*" [Tr. from the Dutch].

4.4 The one not subject to the other

Fowler (1991:105 *et seq.*) discusses not only the *difference* but also the possible *ties* between faith and theology.

Faith can, as is the case in the more orthodox circles, be subjected to theology, that is often still called "the queen of sciences". (The argument for this is usually because theology has as its field of investigation God or his Word.) To this the reaction of Fowler (1991:107) is: "One of the dangers of a theologically defined faith is the intellectualisation of faith. There is the danger that intellectual assent to the right theological propositions will be seen as the beginning and end of faith".

The opposite viewpoint is that theology should be subjected as a servant to faith. As examples of this viewpoint Fowler mentions, amongst others, the Evangelical and Charismatic movements, which (in various ways) put emphasis on the personal experience of faith and are not so much interested in theological dogma.

The two viewpoints therefore amount to this that the former regard theology as a *guard and guide* to faith and the church, while the latter sees theology as a *servant* of a faith based on experience.

According to Fowler (1991:114) theology is a theoretical reflection on the covenant relationship with God. Theology should be a *scientific* reflection approached from the angle of faith and about faith. It is different by nature from *prescientific* faith. It is "one component of the response of faith to the God who

engages us with himself by his Word and through the Spirit" (Fowler, 1991:112). In the light of this the relation between the two cannot be seen as one of either master or servant.

4.5 Two ways of reading the Bible

Corresponding to this very important distinction between faith and theology a clear distinction should also be made between the reading of the Bible by "ordinary" believers and the scientific exegesis of the Bible by a theologian (cf. Troost, 2004:423, 424). This brings us to a subsequent main point:

5. Believers have direct access to the Bible

Vander Goot (1984, we here use the Dutch translation of 1987) also departs from the necessity that faith and theology have to be distinguished.

5.1 Science can kill faith

Since it is prescientific by nature, faith precedes theology which is a science. Unfortunately for the modern way of thinking (as a consequence of the sciences being extolled) exactly the opposite is the case: the science of theology today often likes to prescribe to believers how they should read the Scriptures (cf. Vander Goot, 1987:9). Often there also is a huge chasm between the *believer's* use of the Bible and *disbelieving* theological analysis of the Scriptures. (Cf. 1.1.5 above, where Greidanus said that the different scientific hermeneutics do not mean much for the ordinary faith life of believers; 1.2.2, where Seerveld said that understanding the Scriptures is often made dependent on theological experts.. and 2.3, where it was shown how Kuitert's theology ruined his own Christian faith – and that of many others?)

Vander Goot (1987:54) goes still further. Referring to certain series of commentaries (e.g. the *International Critical Commentary* and the *Interpreter's Bible*) he expresses the opinion that they merely lead to frustration, since they are "sterile". Elsewhere (p. 5) he says that modern historical exegetical methods have become the gravedigger of Christian faith.

If we look for a similar tendency in South Africa, we could refer to the theological movement which calls itself the "New Reformation". An example of this is what Müller (2006) writes about the resurrection of Christ and ourselves (cf. also the review by Van der Walt, 2006 of this book).

We will now briefly pay attention to how Vander Goot attempts to make a contribution to the living Word of God speaking once more clearly to ordinary believers. He mentions the following important matters: (1) trust, (2) the precedence of prescientific knowledge above scientific knowledge, (3) the direct accessibility to the Bible, (4) the importance of the text, and (5) the fact that the Bible contains one coherent message.

5.2 The necessity of a hermeneutics of trust

In contrast to the hermeneutics of suspicion and mistrust regarding the Word – typical of the secular methods (cf. above) – Vander Goot pleads for a return to a hermeneutics of trust. In contrast to the points of departure used by the historical-critical method (cf. 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 above) this entails at least the following (cf. Vander Goot, 1987:13): (1) the acceptance in faith that the Bible is a special kind of book, a book of faith and therefore does not present ordinary history or literature. (2) It is the sovereign God's revelation to us in human words. (3) Therefore it breaks through the cultural and historical circumstances within which it originated and still addresses us today. (4) It is a canonical, authoritative norm for the whole of life. (5) It forms a unity and proclaims one continuous message. (6) The literal meaning is the most important. For all these reasons the "ordinary" believer can approach and understand the Scriptures with trust and reverence instead of treating it with suspicion.

5.3 The significant difference between prescientific and scientific

As we did above, Vander Goot (1987:15 *et seq.*) clearly differentiates between prescientific and scientific knowledge. The former is direct knowledge gained by experience, prereflexive and holistic by nature. The latter entails a theoretical approach which abstracts only one facet from the whole and makes it into an object of study. It looks back for a second time at direct experience. Therefore

prescientific knowledge is the primary and not the scientific – as many theological exegetes regard themselves.

The Bible, too, is written in prescientific language and is therefore meant to be read and understood as such. (It is therefore wrong to speak about e.g. Paul's "theology".) Neither is prescientific language and knowledge an *inferior* kind of knowledge, which is less dependable than science. It is merely of a *different kind* and also determines scientific investigation.

5.4 The direct accessibility of the Bible to believers

From the previous point it has transpired clearly that not only theologians can understand the Bible. Vander Goot (e.g. p. 20, 97) emphasises that a human being should not in the first instance subject God's Word to his theological studies, but that it should be turned around: The powerful Word of God subjects the human being and his/her theologising. A critical treatment of the Bible (as done by secular hermeneutics) is not a prerequisite to understanding it. God with his Word addresses the human being in the core of his existence, his heart, and thus takes a claim on his whole life. *Before* any science one, therefore, has to bow in faith, trust and obedience before God's Word and subject oneself to it.

This uninhibited and direct accessibility of the Scriptures is typical of the Reformational tradition. It was one of the most important results of the struggle of the sixteenth Century Reformation against the Catholic Church which precluded ordinary church members from reading the Bible.

Vander Goot (1987:45 *et seq.*) further explains how the Bible asserts its authority in the life of every believer. When reading an ordinary novel one becomes intrigued in the story and identifies for instance with a character. Likewise one's own worldview changes to accept that of the Word of God. The Holy Spirit speaks through the Word and so recreates and renews one's whole life.

This interaction between the Bible and the believer, according to Vander Goot (p. 44 *et seq.*) may not be called a "dialogue" for that would put the Word of God and a human being's reaction to it on the same level and would debase the

radicalness and sovereignty of the Scriptures. The power of God's Word should stir a human being in his heart and overpower his intellect.

5.5 Emphasis should fall on the text

Over against various other methods that emphasise *extratextual* factors (for instance the original authors/editors or the current readers), Vander Goot (p. 22) puts the text and its internal meaning first. The text should also be understood primarily in terms of itself. It is the place of authority – not something/somebody outside, as for instance the original editor or the current reader.

Neither may we separate (cf. e.g. Bultmann) that which the text itself says and its meaning (message). The emphasis should fall on the *literal* meaning. By "literal" Vander Goot does not mean the bare, factual meaning, isolated from any context, but the natural meaning that stands to reason. The Biblical narrative deals in a realistic, lucid, and clear way with ordinary, real historical events. In this way it makes the relationship with God into something concrete in everyday life. The Bible does not deal with extraterrestrial, supernatural matters (p. 27).

Finally the emphasis laid by Vander Goot on the text itself also implies that an old hermeneutic principle is re-affirmed, namely that the Bible itself should be allowed to determine in what way it should be read.

This brings us up to a last important matter:

5.6 The Bible forms a unity with one continuous message and should be read as such

Vander Goot (1987:27) poses this principle in contrast to the fragmentation and fixation on minute detail, which is characteristic of various secular hermeneutics and which causes utter frustration to the ordinary reader of the Bible.

According to him (cf. also Bartholomew & Goheen, 2004 to whom reference was made under 1.2.2 above) the Bible, although consisting of many books and numerous literary forms, is one Book with the one continuous, central narrative of God's acts in the history of man and all of creation. This "theme" is repeated over and over in the Scriptures. It forms its dominating structure (p. 78).

In this continuous narrative we must, however, distinguish the following phases: creation, fall, redemption and consummation (cf. p. 28, 74 *et seq.*). It deals with the beginning, middle and end of world history in which every event has a place and the deepest meaning of things and events emerge. Bultmann's idea of a separate history of redemption ("Heilsgeschichte") or meta-history is therefore rejected.

Creation – the fall – redemption – consummation is not a scheme that is forced onto the Scriptures. The Bible itself indicates this order, the direction of world history. So, for instance, "the last things" (consummation) suppose the first (creation), since they entail a restoration of creation.

How do the non-narrative parts of the Bible (songs, prayers, prescriptions of the law, wisdom books and letters) fit in with this big drama? According to Vander Goot (1987:28, 31) they offer comments on the continuous drama which is enacted in the Scriptures. Since they use other literary forms (e.g. images), they help the reader to become intrigued in the biblical matter, to make it his/her own and thus understand it better.

5.7 By way of conclusion

Seerveld (2003:88) with right remarks that there is no easy "trick" for reading the Bible in such a way that one really hears God. He confirms our finding in a previous article (cf. Van der Walt, 2009a as well as the previous chapter of this book on the moralistic way of reading): "The Bible is not a fast-food outlet – it takes time to read the Bible" (2003:89).

As requirements Seerveld mentions amongst other things the following aids that one needs: you should be able to read the text (in the original languages and/or different translations); you should understand something about the historical circumstances under which the Bible text originated; should be able to distinguish between the various types of literary genres in the Bible (e.g. history, prose, poetry, psalms, letters) and, if possible, also consult reliable Bible commentaries.

He also emphasises the right, believing attitude towards God's Word: pray that it may be opened to you; read attentively and reflect; wait for God to speak to you; hear the Holy Spirit's message in the text; humble yourself before the voice of God. Finally: be prepared to obey Him.

In the final section we will apply the foregoing. With child-like faith we search in the Scriptures for an answer to the question if and how a Christian should be present in society at large. The result of this reflection is of importance for section D of this book.

6. Salt and light for the world

During the Middle Ages ordinary believers did not have easy access to the Scriptures, so that they could derive light and strength from it. It was considered the possession of the church and its offices. Fortunately this is no longer the case today. We have seen, however, how theological science is venerated today and could again block the access of ordinary believers to the Source of strength and light. Now that we have indicated that a person need not bow before this modern idol, we can feel free to listen to what God says on how we should assert our presence in his world.

6.1 The current phase of the drama of the kingdom

As we have shown above, we no longer live in the beginning (creation), during the fall or the coming of Christ. After his advent the gospel was proclaimed all over the world. At first it was accepted zealously also in the Western world. But since the 16th Century Renaissance it is increasingly ignored in the West. Today we see the unmistakable results of this in increasing secularisation. Even in Africa, where the Christian faith is still young and is growing, secularism is expanding daily.

People do not know *who* they really are and *how* they should live. (Only the Bible reveals to us *what* a human being really is and *that* the religious direction of his life should be determined by obedience to God's law.) In society too (married and family life, education, politics and the economy) the secular decline is visible.

What is the task of the Christian in the year of our Lord 2009, that is, in this period between the advent of Christ and his second coming? It is a complex era. On the one hand Christ has conquered sin and we can see signs of his restorative work. On the other hand we daily live with the awful consequences of disobedience.

If we were to sum up the cardinal moments of world history in the light of the Bible (creation, the fall, redemption and culmination) as (1) formation, (2) deformation, (3) reformation and (4) culmination, then we are currently living in the third period which calls for reformation (in the power of the redemption worked by Christ). We have to think and act in a Reformational way.

6.2 Christians should work like salt

Christ shows us our task in this dispensation by means of two simple but at the same time very lucid and powerful images: Our vocation is to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16). This passage from Scripture provides the answers to the vital problems indicated above: (1) *who* we are (our Christian identity); (2) *what* we have to do (our vocation in this world) and (3) *how* it should happen.

As described in the preceding part of this chapter in Matthew, Christ does not tell the believers of his time in the first place that they *have to be*, but that they *are* the salt and the light of this world. Through *them* – ordinary folk of that time – his gospel would be spread over the whole earth.

In the second instance He does not call on them to be salt and light in the *church*, but specifically to the *world*.

What do these two striking images imply? An enormous amount. (Cf. e.g. Van der Walt, 1991:161 *et seq.*)

It is well-known that salt mainly has the three following functions. First it prevents (as in the case of food) its decay – it acts as a preservative. This is the Christian's first task: the world has to be called back to obedience to God's ordinances for human beings and society, for this is the guarantee for a truly healthy life.

Secondly, the function of salt is to enhance the taste of food, to bring out its full flavour. From this it can be deduced that Christians should show the secular world what a person, a marriage, family, school, business or state should really be like – according to God's original intention. It points out the relevance of the gospel for the whole of life.

In the third instance, salt can be used as a cleansing substance. It can – even though it burns – disinfect a wound. From this we can deduce that a Christian should also be critically disposed towards his/her diseased environment and not merely accept everything. For instance, the contemporary commercialisation of everything should be uncovered and resisted. Christians have a Reformational vocation for a healthy society.

In summary one could "translate" the foregoing as follows: In the "mixed" world in which we live (saved in Christ but not complete yet), Christians as salt have the following three functions: (1) they *protect* and *preserve* what is still good, so that it does not decay, (2) they *improve* that which has begun to decline, (3) they *cleanse* that which has gone bad.

None of these three functions comprises destructive, negative criticism, but all have a healthy, healing intention.

6.3 Christians as the light of the world

Light, too, has three definite functions that stand to reason. In the first instance in the dark no one knows where he/she is and where to go. Light helps to orient one, to give direction.

Secondly, a light attracts – as a city on a hill would attract a lost, fatigued traveller.

Thirdly, one cannot see one's fellow human beings if it is dark around one. Light, however, makes it possible to see one another, to live in a relationship with others.

6.4 Salt and light

One could raise two questions: Why does Christ compare his followers *first* with salt and then with light? Why does he compare them to salt *and* light?

6.4.1 First salt, then light

It strikes one that Christians are not compared first with light and afterwards with salt. Could it be that Christ with this particular order wanted to remind his followers that their Reformational *deeds* should precede their *words*, that a Christian *lifestyle* speaks more clearly to the unbelieving world than a Christian *worldview*? (To believers the view as a motive comes first, but for the world it comes only afterwards, as an explanation of the deeds of Christians.)

6.4.2 Salt *and* light

Answering the second question above one could say that the image of salt denotes the *intensity* of the Christian's presence in society, while light – even a small candle can put to flight the darkness – draws the attention to the *extensiveness* of Christian involvement.

But a still deeper meaning is concealed in these two images. Not for nothing does Christ say that his followers should be salt AND light. The two images denote the two essential sides of truly Reformational thinking (worldview and philosophy) and deeds, namely the structural and the directional (cf. Wolters, 1985:72 *et seq.*).

The image of salt denotes the *structural* changes needed in the various societal relationships (marriage, family, state, etc.). However, simply changing structures – even in a revolutionary manner (as is happening in post-apartheid South Africa) – is not enough.

The image of light reminds us that – inevitably connected to the structures – the *direction* should also change. The current secular direction or spirit of society should change to obedience to God's will for every aspect of life. Christian movements for the improvement of society unfortunately often are focused on this one facet alone. Many Christians in Africa are inclined to think that prayer –

especially mass prayer meetings and large numbers of converts – will halt the increasing secularisation of their societies in an instant. Of course prayer and conversion are indispensable first steps. Stopping there is, however, not enough.

Structural change without new obedience to God's will is without direction, and the right direction without real change of structures in society is empty.

Structure and direction form an inseparable unity, for both are subject to God's will. The first to God's creational ordinances for the various fields of life, and the second to God's fundamental, directional command of love.

The following two examples will illustrate the above. Development (an important theme in Africa) can seem good, but when the deepest religious motivation (*direction*) is uncovered, it can become evident that it is inspired not by true love, but rather by egotistic self-interest (of e.g. wealthy Western countries). In the case of Christian development projects the motivation often is right (love of God and the neighbour), but the people doing the work often do not have the vaguest concept of the *structural* requirements for successful development aid.

The same applies to Christians' involvement in politics. They realise *that* this important field of life may not be neglected. But often they do not know *how* they should actually be structurally involved in it.

6.5 How to be true salt and light

Unfortunately history bears testimony to the fact that Christians are not automatically salt and light for the world.

6.5.1 Four attitudes

In the course of history we see the following four wrong attitudes of Christians towards the world around them: (1) Some Christians *cannot* be salt, for they are only formal or nominal Christians and not really convinced and devoted followers of Christ. They have lost their Christian identity. (2) There were also and still are Christians – like some white Christians in South Africa today – who, instead of being salt, withdraw into their own small world (emigration to the inside) and isolate themselves from society at large. They *do not want* to be salt. (3) Others

simply *accommodate* to secular society. Since they "do not want to offend", or want to act in a politically correct way, or maybe are embarrassed by their own Christian convictions, they prefer being sugar to being salt. (As if Christ had said: "You are the honey for the world".) (4) A fourth group of Christians do not act like true lights. They *put off non-believers* rather than attracting them.

6.5.2 Christ's warning

Christ foresaw these dangers and cautions against them. He not only does it here but also elsewhere. He delivers us from the *sinful* world, but simultaneously sends us back into the world, *his own creation* (cf. John 17:15, 18).

Christ warns against nominal Christians by reminding them that salt can be tasteless. In those days salt was extracted from huge lumps and the tasteless remainder was thrown away.

Against Christians who isolate themselves, Christ reminds them that salt can only do its work when mixing with its environment. If it stays isolated or remains in the salt cellar or in a plastic bag, it is useless. Christians who withdraw from society can clearly have no influence on it.

The opposite of this is too much salt. Then one does not *salt* the food but *spoils* it. The secret of salt (just as in the case of yeast, Matt. 13:33) is that a small amount of it changes the whole environment. In the same way Christians should not *destroy* their sinful environment by violence – like hydrochloric acid that contains salt as a basic element – but they should *renew* their environment.

The case of light is somewhat similar. To have an actual effect it may not be isolated (hidden under a pail). One could apply this image in this way that believers should not be ashamed of witnessing for their faith in public life with words and deeds.

Further it is striking that Christians are not called to be *fire* but to be *light*. It once more points to their quiet, peaceful – but powerful – influence. Furthermore it denotes the attraction that should emanate from Christians' conduct.

6.6 Secrets behind Christian involvement in society

Finally we focus on three things without which Christians cannot fulfil their vocation as salt and light: (1) it should be done *together* (2) can only be done in the *power of the Spirit*, and (3) should be done *to the glory of God*.

6.6.1 A common vocation

Christ here uses the plural "you" and not the singular "you". He is not speaking of separate grains of salt, individual Christians. Neither does He say you are the individual lights of the world, but together (you are) the light for society. (A city on a hill includes numerous inhabitants.)

From this we can deduce that individual Christians by themselves have limited influence, but that an organised Christian group can have greater impact. Christians in South Africa still have to learn to stand together, to protest, to organise, to establish Christian schools and political parties to achieve more in order to put a stop to growing secularism.

6.6.2 Only in the power from Above

Not in their own power are Christians lights in a dark world. They will only be light if they reflect God (who is called Light), Christ (the Light for the world) and his Word (the light for our path). Being tasteless salt can mean that one attempts to be involved in society in one's own strength. But this is doomed to failure beforehand. Only in the power of the Holy Spirit can Christians really be salt and light. And God gives this incredible power to everyone that prays to Him.

6.6.3 The dominant motive

In Matthew 5 verse 16 both the *result* and the deepest *motive* for Christian involvement in the world around us is given: "... that they (the people) see your good deeds – once more the emphasis on the visible, actual conduct! – and praise your Father in heaven."

Not only the sinful world must eventually praise God. Christians themselves should also be salt and light not for their own glory, but to praise their heavenly Father in this way.

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SECTION B

Christian-philosophical basics

CHAPTER 3

JOHN CALVIN (1509-1564), THE FATHER OF A TRANSFORMING CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

In commemoration of the birth of the Reformer of Geneva, 500 years ago, this is a Christian-philosophical investigation of his worldview according to the final edition of his *Institutes* (1559). The chapter develops through the following stages: (1) The introduction explains the topic and nature of this contribution as well as the method followed. (2) Secondly, it is indicated that to look for a central idea in Calvin's thought, is bound to fail. A broader Christian philosophical analysis can be an improvement. (3) The third section explains and evaluates Calvin's ontology (view of God, his laws and creation) and briefly summarises his anthropology. (4) Next, the implications of his dichotomist view of being human as well as his distinction between two kingdoms (a heavenly and an earthly) for his view of societal life are investigated. (5) The following section explores Calvin's epistemology and his view of the relationship between faith and reason, theology and philosophy. (6) A concluding section will summarise the results.

Relevance to our main theme (at home in God's world):

Calvin's Christian worldview indicated the correct direction, but has to be corrected and broadened for us to be fully at home in God's whole world.

* * *

1. Introduction: an orientation towards research on Calvin

By way of introduction answers are given to the following: (1) The topic of this investigation; (2) the importance of Calvin's philosophy; (3) whether he was primarily a theologian; (4) whether – after 500 years – there is still something new to be said about his "theology"; (5) according to which method his intellectual heritage could best be analysed from a philosophical angle, and (6) the constraints accepted for this study.

1.1 The topic of this investigation

As the title indicates this chapter deals with Calvin's worldview. By "worldview" is meant not only his view of the *earthly* reality, for as a philosopher that stays true to the Bible, Calvin never separates his view of creation from the relationship with its Creator. He sees an unbreakable bond between (1) *God* who (2) lays down his *laws* for (3) *creation*.

Apart from Calvin's ontology (worldview) his anthropology (view of being human) is very important. On the one hand it reflects his worldview and on the other hand it influences the way he sees society, his epistemology as well as the way he sees the relationship between faith and reason. Since I dealt with his anthropology earlier (cf. Van der Walt, 1983) and also in chapter 7 of this book, I will merely summarise it here.

1.2 The importance of Calvin

Few people are still remembered after 500 years. There are still fewer people whose birth half a millennium ago is today still commemorated nationally and internationally. Calvin is one of these exceptional people.

However, like all of us, Calvin was a fallible human being and a child of his times. Therefore his great input should be *acknowledged*, but never *overrated*. He did indeed take a great step forward towards understanding the Scriptures better (cf. e.g. Neuser, 1994:41-71), but in his reading of the Bible he was nevertheless influenced by unbiblical philosophical ideas of his times (cf. e.g. Van der Walt, 2008a).

In my opinion Calvin was not critical enough of pre-Christian philosophy. Although he did not intentionally advocate a synthesis between his Christian faith and ancient philosophies, he still made use some of their insights and often modified them to fit in with his Christian philosophy. However, because the pagan Greek, Hellenistic and Roman philosophers did not think in a way that was neutral as far as religion was concerned, it clashed with Calvin's own deepest

religious convictions – it led to a fundamental split which kept coming to the fore in his philosophy.

1.3 Was Calvin primarily a theologian or perhaps a Christian philosopher?

There is a long and persistent tradition that Calvin was first and foremost a theologian and that he should therefore be studied primarily by theologians. It is a common misunderstanding and becomes evident for instance when one looks through the Acta of the International Calvin Conferences (e.g. Neuser, 1976, 1980, 1984 and 1994) as well as the latest textbook on Calvin (cf. Selderhuis, 2008). Already in 1949 it was debated whether Calvin was primarily a theologian or a philosopher (cf. Henry, 1949, Le Coq, 1949 and Stoker, 1949).

Together with Calvin being regarded as a theologian, there is the misconception that his *Institutio Christianae Religionis* (abbreviated as *ICR*) is a theological work. As will transpire later (cf. 5.3.3 below) Calvin neither regarded himself as a theologian, nor the *ICR* as a kind of *Summa Theologiae*. He calls it a “Christian philosophy” (*Philosophia Christiana*) and thereby means approximately what we today would call a Christian worldview (view of reality). Klapwijk (1991:128) correctly remarked that Calvin was not a philosopher in the contemporary professional sense, neither did he write scholarly theological works. He was primarily a reformer of the church.

1.4 Can a new contribution on Calvin’s philosophy still be made today?

In the light of the literally thousands of books and articles on Calvin it is a legitimate question whether Calvin studies have not been “exhausted”. Apart from numerous biographies and translations of his works, there is a myriad of writings that looked at his whole oeuvre from different angles.

Just a few writings on my shelf on Calvin already prove that they covered his whole life span: From his first work on Seneca (cf. Hugo, 1957), his earlier ideas up to the first edition (1536) of the *ICR* (cf. e.g. Ganoczy, 1987) up to the final edition (1559). It further covers his use of Graeco-Roman philosophy (cf. e.g. Partee, 1977); his place in the Reformation as a whole (cf. McGrath, 1988) and

the relationship with other earlier and later reformers; his various writings (the more systematic, like the *ICR*, his Catechism; Bible commentaries, letters, etc.); his method of exegesis; the numerous facets of his work in the church (e.g. Duffield, 1966); his social philosophy (e.g. Graham, 1978); his personality (e.g. Bouwsma, 1988) and many more. (For a general overview of tendencies in Calvin research between 1980 and 1990, cf. Neuser, 1994:91-112.) Various printed bibliographies (e.g. Kempff, 1975 and De Klerk, 1979-1995) as well as data on the internet astound one with a mass of material. This gives rise to the question whether one can currently (2009) still make any new contribution on Calvin.

I have the impression, however, that there still are some hiatuses. One of these is that (as a consequence of the above-mentioned emphasis on Calvin's "theology") relatively little has been written on him from a philosophical angle. This also applies to research done from a specifically Christian philosophical approach. Furthermore one gets the impression (cf. below for examples) that Reformational philosophers (formerly called "Calvinist" philosophers) for understandable reasons often were not critical enough of Calvin's philosophy – they were wary of criticising their Genevan "father" so that they would still be able to appeal to him!

1.5 Two possible approaches

This investigation therefore attempts to look anew at Calvin's worldview from a Christian philosophical frame of conviction and possibly reach a more balanced result. On the one hand we do not want to run down his ideas, the way secular philosophers often do. On the other hand we do not want to gloss over the voids in it, the way his Christian followers are inclined to do.

My approach therefore differs from that of, for example, Klapwijk (1991:128) who summarises his own as follows: "I proceed on the assumption that the 'real Calvin' is not met within reiterations he made for convenience of current views among his contemporaries, but rather in the new and non-conformist insights by which he on crucial points turned against the prevalent notions of the day... picturing Calvin as striking out a new path".

My own viewpoint about foreign philosophical influences on Calvin's thought is also different from that of Klapwijk who is not so critical about these pre-Christian influences (cf. Klapwijk, 1993:99-100).

Both my own approach (emphasising the foreign, unbiblical elements in his thought) as well as that of Klapwijk (emphasising his new, biblically obedient thinking) can, however, be defended and should complement each other. When one's environment tends to canonise Calvin's ideas (my own experience), then one has the responsibility to stress the fact that he was a fallible human being. And when the tendency is to underestimate his work, it may be necessary to draw attention to his new, unique contribution.

1.6 Typifying Calvin's philosophy

The method used here is the only truly Christian philosophical historiography. It is the problem-historical method designed by D.H.Th. Vollenhoven (2005a, 2005b) which was afterwards worked out and applied in more detail (cf. Bril, 2005 and Bril & Boonstra, 2000. For an elementary introduction into the method, see chapter 5 of this book.)

Vollenhoven himself never characterised Calvin's philosophy according to his method (most probably out of piety towards this father of Reformational thinking). He did point out (cf. e.g. Vollenhoven, 1933) that Calvin thought in an antisynthetic way. Calvin's deepest intention was to break with the preceding Medieval synthesis philosophy, that blended Christian and pagan Graeco-Roman philosophy, and to think only in obedience to God's Word. With reference to what Van der Walt (1974:339-528) and others wrote about Calvin, Bril and Boonstra (2000:282-284) did try to typify Calvin according to Vollenhoven's *Schematische Kaarten* (Schematic Maps). These insights are also used here.

1.7 Limiting ourselves to the *Institutes*

Since the final edition of the *ICR* (1559) is regarded as Calvin's main systematic work, this investigation will be focused on it. By referring to secondary sources

(where available) we will also enter into discussion with interpretations and evaluations of Calvin's thought.

The quotations from the *ICR* are according to the translation of Battles (cf. Calvin, 1960). At a few of the most important quotations the original Latin will be given in footnotes to be checked. The references are indicated as follows: The specific book of the *ICR* is indicated by a Roman numeral, while the chapters and paragraphs are subsequently given in Arabic numerals (e.g. III, 2, 8). For anyone who wants to know more about Calvin's life, Parker (2007) is recommended. For a background to Calvin's idea of reformation, see Van der Walt (1991). For the influence of the spiritual trends and philosophical ideas of his time on Calvin's conception, see Van der Walt (2010a and 2010b).

The most important background questions have now been answered and we can start dealing with Calvin's worldview.

2. The search for a central idea in Calvin's work

By way of introduction to Calvin's thought we note briefly the attempts to find a central idea or leading motif in his work. In the past several researchers have made an attempt at this. Around this main theme Calvin's other ideas would show up like petals around the calyx of a flower. Those who found it hard to find only one principle fundamental to Calvin's whole system, tried to find a solution by presenting two poles or foci. Others again wanted to find the characteristic feature of his "theology" not in the fact that it is dominated by one central doctrine, but in the particular form in which it is presented or in the kind of logic applied.

2.1 Problems with one central thought

However, such a method encounters the following problems:

- The first problem is that studies on Calvin up to now were done almost exclusively by theologians. This brought to light interesting data, but was not always philosophically relevant.

- A second problem is that it has become clear it could be incorrect to look for a central point of departure in Calvin's work that dominates everything. Wendel (1963:27) for instance says: "It would be better, we think, to confess that Calvin's is not a closed system elaborated around a central idea, but that he draws together, one after another, a whole series of Biblical ideas..."

So too McNeill (1970:201): "It is not so easy to say with confidence precisely where his thought has its centre or what he would have us regard as its dominant theme... Not thinking that we should ask questions of this sort, Calvin did not answer them." (On p. 102 McNeill points out how stressing one particular idea in the work of Calvin leads to all kinds of problems.)

Especially if some claim "Calvin was a logical thinker. He emphasized system. He was convinced that there must be one central truth in the Bible, one basic principle..." (Bratt, 1958:460), the risk increases that Calvin could be forced into a predetermined scheme – unless it can be proved convincingly that Calvin did adhere to a central principle.

- A third problem is that the so-called formative or germ principle in the work of Calvin is sometimes looked for in the aspects in which he, for instance, differed with Luther. According to many Luther was supposedly more interested in soteriology while for Calvin the glory of God was predominant. An example of this is the following utterance by Warfield (*s.a.* 11, 12):

"Lutheranism, sprung from the throes of a guilt-burdened soul seeking peace with God, finds peace in faith, and stops right there. It is so absorbed in rejoicing in the blessings which flow from faith that it refuses or neglects to inquire whence faith itself flows. It thus loses itself in a sort of divine euthumia, and knows, and will know nothing beyond the peace of the justified soul. Calvinism asks with the same eagerness as Lutheranism the great question: 'What shall I do to be saved?' and answers it precisely as Lutheranism answers it. But it cannot stop there. The deeper question presses upon it, 'Whence this faith by which I am justified?' And the deeper response suffused all the chambers of the soul with praise, 'From the free gift of God alone, to the praise of the glory of His grace'."

2.2 Various suggestions

In spite of the problems the following formulations of the so-called fundamental idea of Calvin are mentioned as they have come to the fore in various investigations. (1) the sovereignty of God; (2) the glory of God (cf. e.g. De Kroon, 1963 and Waterink, s.a.: 25, 36); (3) the divinity of Christ; (4) election; (5) justification by faith alone; (6) predestination; (7) eschatology; (8) God and man and their relationship (Reuter, 1963:208); (9) creation, the fall of man and redemption – all these besides (10) two polar fundamental givens which are considered by some as the essence of Calvin's philosophy (e.g. the glory of God and peace of conscience).

As stated above, researchers in recent times have become increasingly sceptical of different attempts to systematise Calvin's thought according to one or more principles in the light of which his whole oeuvre could then be understood. The few examples mentioned above, demonstrate the diverging results that such an approach engenders. Reading one's own preconceived scheme into his work and forcing Calvin into this, indeed entails a substantial risk.

From among all these hypotheses we nevertheless briefly deal with two of the above-mentioned suggestions, namely creation, the fall and redemption as an underlying motif in the work of Calvin (cf. e.g. Runia, 1970:36-40 and Venter, s.a.: 86) and the sovereignty of God.

2.3 Creation, the fall and redemption

The emphasis on creation, the fall and redemption may tend to narrow down the meaning of the Word of God to the cosmos. However, God's Word not only reveals creation, fall and redemption of the *cosmos*, but also significant things about *God* Himself as well as his *law*. The study of the *ICR* of Calvin did not leave the impression that he attempted to limit the light of the Scriptures in a purely cosmological manner.

2.4 The absolute sovereignty of God

In my opinion the idea of the absolute sovereignty of God and a human being's task to honour the sovereign God in everything, is the best characterisation that has been given thus far of the *religious direction* of Calvin's philosophy. But one would have to investigate whether he also worked out this high ideal consistently in his *structural analysis* of creation.

3. Calvin's view of reality

Before dealing with Calvin's view of reality or "ontology", we should question the viewpoint of numerous followers of his, namely that his worldview (also called "theology") is supposedly the purest expression of biblical revelation. The (more moderate) viewpoint is also queried, namely that some less important corrections have to be made to his thought, but that it would only entail the removal of a few "blemishes" since his thinking is taken to be fundamentally pure and healthy.

3.1 The correct view

In my opinion Fowler (1984:340) takes the correct stand on Calvin that he articulates as follows: "...candid and careful examination of his writings must put a very large question mark against the idea that the only flaws in his thought are incidental blemishes that mar a work that is fundamentally pure Biblical thought. That there is a powerful and important Biblical stream in Calvin's thought is not denied, but it is suggested that mingling with this Biblical stream throughout his work there is another stream of thought which has quite different religious origins."

These two conflicting lines in the philosophy of Calvin, already pointed out by Van der Walt (1974: 339 *et seq.*, cf. also Van der Walt, 2008a), are confirmed by Fowler: "There appears in Calvin's thought a fundamental dualism that cannot be explained in terms of remnants of non-Christian ideas clinging to a basically pure stream of Biblical thought. It is a dualism that results from an attempt to synthesize two antithetical religious principles" (Fowler, 1984: 340).

3.2 Link with Calvin's use of extra-biblical philosophy

Fowler is right in claiming that the dualism goes deeper than just the fact that Calvin used extra-biblical philosophical ideas. At the same time however, it cannot be isolated from the way in which Calvin used the pre-Christian (Greek and Roman) philosophies.

Calvin received his training – unlike, for instance, Luther – not in theology but as a humanistic Renaissance thinker. This movement was tired of the Medieval synthesis between biblical faith and ancient Greek and Hellenistic philosophy, for the Christian element in it was not to their liking. They wanted ancient philosophy to be revived in a pure form.

As a consequence of his humanistic training – and not in the first place because of fundamental biblical critique – Calvin was therefore critical of Medieval scholastic philosophy. However, Calvin was not *critical enough* of Platonism, Stoicism, Aristotelianism and other pre-Christian philosophies that were being revived in his own time. The intertwining of biblical and extra-biblical ideas in Calvin's worldview has to be acknowledged.

3.3 Distinction between God and creation

Closely linked to the above-mentioned central idea of the absolute sovereignty of God (cf. 2.4), is Calvin's idea of the complete *dependence* of creation. "The absolute divine sovereignty and the corresponding absolute dependence of everything that was created, is the religious basic idea of Calvin ..." [tr. from the Dutch] (Dooyeweerd, 1925:11).

Further Calvin continuously emphasises in his *ICR* the radical *distinction* between God and that which He created: "From the beginning of his work, Calvin places all his theology under the sign of what was one of the essential principles of the Reformation: the absolute transcendence of God and his total 'otherness' in relation to man. No theology is Christian and in conformity with the Scriptures but in the degree to which it respects the infinite distance separating God from his creature and gives up all confusion, all 'mixing', that might tend to efface the

radical distinction between the Divine and the human. Above all, God and man must again be seen in their rightful places. That is the idea that dominates the whole of Calvin's theological exposition, and underlies the majority of his controversies" (Wendel, 1963:151).

3.4 Dualism nevertheless?

If Wendel here gives a correct interpretation of Calvin's viewpoint and does not read into Calvin's work his (Wendel's) own dualistic conception, it would mean that Calvin can, nevertheless, not be fully acquitted of a dualistic ontology.

The idea of the absolute *otherness* of God is a purely biblical thought. However, the idea of God as the absolute *transcendent One* is not a Scriptural view. The biblical radical (ontic) *distinction* or *otherness* between God, law and creation does not place God at a distance, but confesses in concurrence with the Scriptures that God (in a religious sense) *is near to human beings*. God is not part of creation, yet he is everywhere present in it by his Spirit. God is "transcendent" only in the sense that he is distinct from created reality. But as the living God he is not beyond our human experience, but present in our everyday world.

The whole issue of the transcendence and/or immanence of God is rooted in the pre-Christian dualistic God-cosmos philosophy (God as the transcendent and the cosmos as the non-transcendent). A wide variety of such dualistic ontologies are possible. Seeing the great influence that Plato (via Augustine's neo-Platonism but also directly) had on Calvin's philosophy (cf. Babelotzky, 1977 for the influence of Plato, and Smits, 1962 and Snell, 1968 for the influence of Augustine), his dualistic philosophy could be more accurately characterised as a Platonising form of dualism.

3.5 God as Law-giver is "above" the law

The sovereignty of God also implies for Calvin that God is the Law-giver and creation is subject to his laws, so that obedience is required from every human being. It is precisely by obeying God's law that a human being lives to the glory of God, acknowledges that God is the Sovereign One. Calvin maintains the principle of *Deus legibus solutus est*, i.e. that God imposes the law and in his rule is above the law: *supra omnes leges est eius imperium*. Calvin's scriptural idea of God further teaches that God's majesty is not only unfathomable but also faithful. Although God is above the law, He remains faithful to it.

3.6 God's sovereignty and justice both maintained

Calvin never separates the sovereignty of God from his justice. The righteous God demands that payment be made for breaking his law. After Christ has paid for it in our place, the gracious disposition of God towards us is however lasting, it offers assurance in faith. The law of God, too, given in paradise already, remains valid for the believer even after Christ has fulfilled it. In this Calvin rises above the whole issue of "law and Gospel" in the work of Luther, which is derived from Occam's distinction between nature (or Old Testament law) and grace (Gospel). Calvin's *ICR* (III, 17) speaks very clearly with reference to this. As emerges already from the previous paragraph (16), only the Old Testament ceremonial law no longer is valid for believers.

Therefore, in *ICR* (II, 7, 5-12) Calvin enumerates three uses of the law according to the Scriptures, namely (1) knowledge of a human being's condemnability; (2) restraint of the disobedient (simply because they fear punishment) and (3) the law as a directive to the believer for a life of gratitude.

3.7 Christian philosophical comment

With right Vollenhoven remarks about Calvin's view of the law: "Thus the Reformation, without being a philosophical movement itself, in its most mature representative draws from the Holy Scriptures the basic idea which helps

philosophy in finding the correct answer to one of her first questions, namely the status of the law"(Vollenhoven, 1956:65) [tr. from the Dutch].

3.8 Graeco-Roman philosophical influence on his idea of the law of nature

However, something that may be questionable in the work of Calvin is his idea of a *lex naturalis* or law of nature. Before embarking on an exposition of the ten commandments in *ICR*, II, 8 he says that what God demands in his commandments has actually been written into or impressed onto the hearts of all people as a kind of internal or natural law, and that their consciences also bear witness to this. Since the people as a consequence of their ambition, self-love, obtuseness and disobedience would not live according to this law, God also gave his law in written form, so that everything that was obscure in the natural law, would become clear.

Exactly what does Calvin mean by this natural law? Is it not a remainder of the Stoic *logos* speculation? Wendel says the following about it: "Calvin expended a great deal of skill in presenting a coherent doctrine of natural law, which was an attempt to reconcile the Pauline texts with the definitions of the Roman jurists. And he did, no doubt, partly succeed... Yet one cannot help feeling that this element in his theology is somewhat of a foreign body, assimilable to it only with difficulty; and that its existence alongside divine law that is expressed in the Decalogue is hardly justifiable" (Wendel, 1963:208).

3.9 The same as God's creational ordinances?

On the other hand Klapwijk (1972:18) is of the following opinion: "With his appeal to this 'internal' or 'natural law' Calvin ... did not attempt to adapt himself to the Stoic doctrine of natural law. He was not speculating about the natural moral law as a consequence of the so-called world *logos*. He merely wanted to emphasise that God engraved in the nature or conscience of every human being a number of basic concepts of justice and fairness and that it was only on account of this that the Stoics could speak of a *lex naturalis*" [transl. from the Dutch].

3.10 Distinct Stoic influence

It is therefore also possible that Calvin here, albeit in the terminology of the Stoics, is pointing to a Scriptural idea, namely the so-called creational ordinances of God or of his will for created things which he gave "in" the creatures (cf. 3.12).

If this is the case, the way in which Calvin voices the idea is still not satisfactory and carries with it the not imaginary danger that Calvin's Scriptural orientation in the end might be once more obscured. Considering his direct references to and predilection for Augustine and Stoic philosophers (like Cicero and Seneca) as well as other Christian philosophers (like Chrysostomos, Justinus and Tertullian) who were strongly influenced by the Stoics, there can be no doubt about the origin of the concept *lex naturalis* (which is closely linked to his ideas in connection with *semen religionis* and *conscientia*).

The Stoa saw the *logoi spermatikoi* as germs of reason or germinal powers of the Logos or deity immanent in creation. By means of the *logoi spermatikoi* the Logos or Deity reveals himself in the cosmos. Considering the close link between the *logoi* and the *Logos*, according to the Stoics, knowledge of the deity can be obtained with the aid of human reason from the (apriori) germs of reason.

These Stoic notions saw a renaissance at the very time of Calvin. He makes ample use of Stoic terminology when speaking of the germs (of for instance religion) which are planted into, pressed onto, engraved on, fastened in, trickled into, strewn out or inborn in a human being by God. As a result of these engraved signs he can claim that the soul is equal to God or that God is present in the soul; that the human conscience is nothing but the presence of God; that it can be said "in a pious way" that nature is God or that all creation is the mirror of God.

In spite of the fact that Calvin elsewhere again stressed that human beings and God may not be mixed, his idea of natural law resulted in relativising the radical distinction between God and that which He created. Further the laws of nature not clearly enough distinguished from the things to which they apply. Thirdly (under the influence of Stoic philosophy) Calvin ascribed to God's creational ordinances a primarily logical or rational character.

3.11 A two-factor ontology

In summary it can be said about Calvin's ontology that he made a distinction between God and his creation, but that he did not yet give to God's natural law a clear identity apart from creation. He holds a dualistic, two-factor ontology (God and creation) and not a three-factor ontology (God, law, creation) as was later advocated by, for instance, Vollenhoven.

3.12 Later expositions of the idea of God's creational order

Calvin's idea of the law was, however, worked out in further detail by his successors. Chapter 6 shows how it was developed further since Calvin by amongst others Kuiper, Bavinck, Dooyeweerd, and Vollenhoven. This chapter (6) also deals with critical voices on the idea of creational ordinances from Reformational philosophy itself and describes in detail the critique by one of its representatives (H. Hart). I also presented a historical survey of the development of the idea of the law in Western philosophy from the early Greek philosophers up to contemporary postmodernism (cf. Van der Walt, 2008b). In the same book I further explained briefly what should be understood under God's creational order.

After this short exposition on the basic contours of his "ontology", we will now say something briefly on Calvin's view of the human being.

3.13 A summary of Calvin's view of the human being

As mentioned already, Calvin's anthropology is dealt with elsewhere in this book (see chapter 7), so that we can merely summarise it briefly here.

Calvin's dualistic ontology was clearly a decisive factor in the way he regarded the human being. A human being according to him consists of two entities of which the higher soul (*anima*) or spirit (*spiritus*), the heavenly part of a human being, is regarded as the most important, noblest, eternal and immortal part. The lower body, the earthly part of a human being is the less important, temporary prison of the soul. Originating from the transcendent (divine) world, created into the body by God Himself (Calvin thinks in a creatianistic way), the soul is not completely at home in life on earth, but stretches itself out above it and after the

death of the body returns to its heavenly fatherland. The human being is therefore regarded by Calvin as semi-divine, since God dwells in the soul by way of amongst other things *semen religionis* and *conscientia* (cf. 3.10 above). For the same reason he speaks about a human being as *imago Dei*.

Calvin's anthropological views can therefore be labelled as dichotomist. Since there are many similar anthropologies, his dichotomism can be typified more accurately as semi-mystic. The *semi*-(half) denotes that not the human being as a whole, but only his transcendent part (soul) is of divine (transcendent) origin and is united once again (after death) with God. From Calvin's view of being human it further emerges that he holds a certain interpretation of partially universalism combined with a macro-microcosmos theory. God is the (universal) Macrocosmos and the human beings are the (individual) microcosmoi.

This viewpoint is rather unusual. Usually we do not find a macrocosmos-microcosmos theory among purely cosmological thinkers like Calvin, but rather encounter this theory with cosmogono-cosmological philosophers. While the partial universalism of the first group is of a *vertical* nature, the last group propose a *horizontal* partial universalism, leading to an analogous relationship between the transcendent and the non-transcendent world. (For details cf. Brill & Boonstra, 2000:354-356.)

While Calvin's ontology was determinative for his anthropology, his anthropology again determined how he saw the life of human beings in society. This brings us to the next section of this investigation.

4 Calvin's doctrine of the two kingdoms and his philosophy of society

Reformational philosophers had an incessant struggle against the division of creation into a natural realm (more or less neutral) and a supernatural realm of grace (which would be Christian by nature). They not only wanted to modify this age-old dualism (which is still thriving even in Reformed theologies), but rejected it *per se*. They were convinced that a human being should live his *whole* life

coram Deo (in the presence of God). Kuyper's well-known words that there is not one centimetre of creation that does not belong to God, became their slogan. Perhaps this is explanation why most Reformational philosophers wrongly acquitted Calvin of a Medieval scholastic doctrine of two realms or a Lutheran doctrine of two kingdoms.

4.1 Calvin too easily acquitted?

This *communis opinio* transpires for instance from the following: According to Vollenhoven (1933:296-301) Calvin does use the word "nature" but then to indicate the nature of something and not in the Thomistic sense of "realm of nature". A contrast does not exist between grace and nature, but between God's grace and sin.

Dooyeweerd explicitly states: "The scholastic motive of nature and grace is not found in Calvin's thought, nor is there any trace of the spiritualistic contrast between the divine Law and the Gospel, found in Luther" (Dooyeweerd, 1953:517).

The same opinion is held by Young (1952:23) who writes the following about the theme of nature-grace in the work of Calvin. "This scheme is swept away out of Calvin's Scriptural world of thought. The true nature of man cannot stand in opposition to grace. Nature, corrupted *in the root* by the fall, is by God's grace in Christ restored, or as Calvin expressed it more pregnantly, *renewed*."

Young seems to forget that in the doctrine of the two realms nature and grace usually do not stand over *against* one another, but that the realm of (perfect) grace usually stands *above* nature (which is the stepping-stone towards grace).

A next Reformational philosopher defends Calvin when he claims the following: "... that Calvin rejected the Medieval division between a realm of nature, that has been scarred and wounded by sin yet is not wicked down to the root, and a realm of the supernatural, that was lost at the fall, but would be given back to us by the infusion of grace through the sacraments of the church (*gratia infusa*)" (Klapwijk, 1972:15) [tr. from the Dutch]. In a more recent article Klapwijk (1991:137) writes

the following: "... Calvin has no recourse to ontological categories (two realms of being), he thinks in relational, religious categories (two relationships between God and humankind). Calvin juxtaposes not nature and grace, but sin (as a broken relationship) and grace (as a restored relationship)."

My question to Klapwijk would be whether Calvin's doctrine of the *dona naturalia et supernaturalia* which emerges clearly from his anthropology (cf. Van der Walt, 1983:246-248 as well as chapter 7 on his view of being human) is not clear proof enough that he was unable to distance himself completely from the two realm doctrine.

It is clear that it is not easy to say what exactly Calvin's viewpoint was. Perhaps he himself vacillated, because Klapwijk (1991:128) writes that Calvin "suddenly reverts to the natural-supernatural dichotomy", while he elsewhere states that "Calvin largely freed himself from... the medieval scholastic dualism of nature and supernatural grace" (Klapwijk, 1991:131).

A last example is the statement by Venter (s.a. 85): "Calvin's standpoint towards Thomas is ... repudiating. He reproaches him for attempting a reconciliation between the Scriptures and Aristotle, and sees the dualism of nature and grace as the very outcome of this attempt at synthesis. He reacts harshly to the antithesis of natural and supernatural... There is no doubt that the dualism, that during the previous sixteen centuries constantly hampered the full development of Christianity was first surmounted in principle by Calvin." [Tr. from Afrikaans.]

Venter's statement does not satisfy. It is not true that Thomas Aquinas advocated an *antithesis* between nature and grace and Calvin a *synthesis*. Thomas actually preached a synthesis or harmony between the two realms! Furthermore it is not clear either what is meant by Venter's statement that Calvin surmounted the two realm doctrine *in principle*.

It could be that Calvin did break through the Thomistic two *realm* doctrine, but did not succeed in freeing himself from the Lutheran doctrine of two *kingdoms*. This is the viewpoint of amongst others Van den Berg (1961:23-25). Just like Luther, Calvin did not want to intermingle the two kingdoms (see 4.3 below), although

Calvin (according to Van den Berg) did more justice to the unity of the two "regiments" than Luther did.

4.2 Not completely free from dualism

It is not clear whether Vollenhoven, Dooyeweerd, Young, Klapwijk and Venter interpreted Calvin in this way so that they could appeal to him for their own Calvinist viewpoint. In my opinion there are – as will become clear – distinct indications that the two realm doctrine (or a doctrine of the two kingdoms that has been greatly influenced by the two realm doctrine) is to be found in the work of Calvin. Someone would possibly prefer to call it merely faint echoes, since it did not dominate Calvin's whole philosophy in a decisive way. However, the fact remains that it is present in the *ICR* and that the above-mentioned Reformational philosophers should have formulated their statements with greater care.

I would therefore rather concur with Fowler (1984:347, 348) who says that for Calvin something completely different is at stake than the biblical distinction between a creation that fell into sin and a redeemed creation. "In Calvin the distinction is of a very different character. It is a distinction that belongs to the *very nature of things by creation*. It is not sin that causes earthly things to be separated from the Kingdom of heaven. By *their very nature*, as created by God, they can have no place in the Kingdom of heaven." (Cf. once more 3.1 above, where Fowler stated that a *fundamental dualism* appears in Calvin's philosophy.)

As has been said, I find the first proof for a two realm doctrine or a doctrine of the two kingdoms in his anthropology, in which Calvin distinguishes between natural and supernatural gifts (*dona naturalia* and *supernaturalia*). The second proof comes to the fore in his distinction between earthly and heavenly matters to which we will subsequently turn our attention.

4.3 Earthly and heavenly matters in the work of Calvin

In ICR II, 2, 13 Calvin draws the following distinction: "... that there are one kind of understanding of earthly things; another of heavenly. I call 'earthly things' those who do not pertain to God or his Kingdom, to true justice or to the blessedness of future life, but which have their significance and relationship with regard to the present life and are, in a sense, confined within its bounds. I call 'heavenly things' the pure knowledge of God, the nature of true righteousness and the mysteries of the Heavenly Kingdom. The first class includes government, household management, all mechanical skills, and the liberal arts. In the second are the knowledge of God and of his will, and the rule by which we conform our lives to it"¹.

In my opinion this distinction of Calvin's is a clear and infelicitous aftermath of the two realm doctrine from Medieval philosophy that had persisted in his way of thinking and does not correspond with his deepest intention which was the sovereignty and honour of God *in all realms of life*. According to the Scriptures the kingdom of God should be given form in the present, earthly life. The kingdom of God should be realised now already (even though not perfectly) also in the realm of politics, family life, science and technology and is not limited to the life hereafter. The biblical expression "kingdom of heaven" (the same as "kingdom of God") does not denote the *destination* but the *origin* of the eternal kingdom, namely that it cannot be realised by human beings, but only by God.

According to the Scriptures, therefore, to a believer there are no matters that "do not pertain to God and his kingdom", as Calvin states. The knowledge of God's will, too, is not limited to the so-called "heavenly matters". It is crucial in all fields of life that human beings should align their will with the will of God and in this way conduct themselves to His glory. Calvin's distinction to my mind leads to a

¹ "... esse aliam quidem rerum terrenarum intelligentiam, aliam vero caelestium. Res terrenas voco, quae ad Deum regnumque eius, ad veram justitiam, ad futurae vitae beatitudinem non pertinent: sed cum vita praesenti rationem relationemque habent, et quodammodo intra eius fines continentur. Res caelestes, puram Dei notitiam, verae justitiae rationem, ac regni caelestis mysteria. In priore genere sunt politica, oeconomia, artes omnes mechanicae, disciplinaeque liberales. In secundo, Dei ac divinae voluntatis cognitio, et vitae secundum eam formandae regula." (II, 2, 13.)

schizophrenia in the life of the believer. We have to state that all of life and not only liturgical or church services should be an all-encompassing service of worship (religion) to God.

4.4 An inherent part of Calvin's worldview

It is clear that Calvin's distinction between earthly and heavenly matters is not a coincidental "lapsus" but a direct consequence of his dualistic ontology and his dichotomist anthropology according to which the soul is regarded as the immortal, heavenly part and the body as the earthly part.

This dichotomist anthropology also forms the background to other utterances by Calvin which point to a *duplex ordo* or doctrine of two kingdoms:

"... let us first consider that there is a twofold government in man: one aspect is spiritual, whereby the conscience is instructed in piety and in reverencing God; the second is political, whereby man is educated for the duties of humanity and citizenship that must be maintained among men. These are usually called the 'spiritual' and the 'temporal' jurisdiction (not improper terms) by which is meant that the former sort of government pertains to the life of the soul, while the latter has to do with the concerns of the present life – not only with food and clothing but with laying down laws whereby a man may live his life among other men, holily, honorably, and temperately. For the former resides in the inner mind, while the latter regulates only outside behavior. The one we may call the spiritual kingdom, the other the political kingdom. Now these two, as we have divided them, must always be examined separately; and while the one is being considered, we must call away and turn aside the mind from thinking about the other. There are in man, so to speak, two worlds, over which different kings and different laws have authority".²

² "... primum animandvertamus duplex esse in homine regimen: alterum spirituale, quo conscientia ad pietatem et ad cultum Dei instituitur alterum politicum, quo ad humanitatis et civilitatis officia, quae inter homines serranda sunt, homo eruditur. Vulgo appellari solent jurisdictio spiritualis et temporalis, non impropriis nominibus; quibus significatur, priorem illam regiminis speciem ad animae vitam pertinere, hanc autem in his quae praesentis vitae sunt versari non quidem in pascendo tantum aut vestiendo, sed in praescribendis legibus quibus homo inter homines vitam sancte, honeste modesteque exigit. Nam illa in animo interiori sedem habet haec autem externos

4.5 Comment

These words of Calvin can be interpreted as a reaction against the Medieval confusion – and therefore continuous struggle – between state (emperor) and church (pope). He is correct when he defends the independence of each of these two societal relationships, each with a different task. However, the critical remarks made with reference to the previous quotation from Calvin (regarding earthly and heavenly matters) is also applicable here. In addition the following comments:

In the first instance it is evident that Calvin uses the scheme outer-inner (or outward-inward) that correlate with that of body-soul, earthly-heavenly, temporary-spiritual or civil-spiritual. The decisive influence of his anthropology, therefore, clearly emerges once again.

In the second place it strikes one that Calvin speaks about a twofold governance (*regimen*), jurisdiction (*jurisdictio*), kingdom (*regnum*) or world (*mundus*). This language elicits the question whether at this point Calvin perhaps stands closer to the Lutheran doctrine of two kingdoms than to the two realm doctrine of Medieval Scholasticism.

In the third instance it is striking that Calvin states that a human being can also live a holy life in the temporary life. It seems therefore as if he (just like Luther) either did not want or could not separate the two kingdoms completely. However, this then clashes with the final part of the quotation in which Calvin (once again like Luther) states explicitly that the two realms may not be intermingled. Each should be considered on its own. When you are busy in the civil realm, you may not think of the spiritual realm. (For more on the views of Luther, cf. e.g. Schuurman, 1965.)

It is important to point out once more that Calvin with his distinction between earthly and heavenly matters can seriously impair or even cancel his basic

mores duntaxat componit. Alterum vocare nobis liceat, regnum spirituale alterum, regnum politicum. Hae autem duo, ut partiti sumus, seorsum singula dispicienda semper sunt et dum alterum consideratur, avocandi avertendique ab alterius coitatione animi. Sunt enim in homine veluti mundi duo, quibus et varii reges et variae leges praeesse possunt" (III, 19, 15).

biblical idea of God's sovereignty over *everything* and his glory that should be pursued in *everything* (cf. 2.4 above). It can result in the secularisation not only of politics but of all of life outside the church. We will, however, only look at what he says on the state.

4.6 Calvin's view of the state

After dealing in great detail with the church in the first nineteen chapters of *ICR*, IV Calvin closes the fourth book of the *ICR* with a short exposition on the state in chapter 20. Calvin's views on this starts as follows: "Now, since we have established above that man is under a twofold government, and since we have elsewhere discussed at sufficient length the kind that resides in the soul or inner man and pertains to eternal life, this is the place to say something also about the other kind, which pertains to the establishment of civil justice and outward morality".³

That it is still the unscriptural, dichotomist anthropology of Calvin's that lurks behind this view, becomes clear from the following: "But whoever knows how to distinguish between body and soul, between the present fleeting life and the future eternal life, will without difficulty know that Christ's spiritual Kingdom and the civil jurisdiction are things completely distinct".⁴

In the same way that Calvin differentiates between body and soul, the two governments also have to be distinguished. Calvin warns against the aberration of some who attempt to intermingle these two kinds of government.

Here it emerges clearly that Calvin was still influenced by the two realm doctrine, according to which the church belongs in the realm of grace versus the government that belongs in the realm of nature. His dualistic point of departure made it difficult for him to develop a Scriptural view on the realm of political life. In

³ "Porro, quum duplex in homine regimen superius statuerimus et de altero illo, quod est in anima, seu interiori homine positum, aeternamque vitam respicit, satis multa verba alibi facerimus, de altero etiam, quod ad instituendam civilem duntaxat externamque morum justitiam pertinet, nonnihil ut disseramus, locus hic appetit" (IV, 20, 1).

⁴ "At vero qui inter corpus et animam, inter praesentem hanc fluxamque vitam et futuram, illam aeternamque discernere noverit, neque difficile intelliget, spirituale Christi regnum et civilem ordinationem res esse plurimum sepositas" (IV, 20, 1)

the course of history after Calvin Reformational philosophers, however, did develop a more integral Christian philosophy of society and the state (cf. e.g. Spykman, 1976.) Also chapters 12 and 13 of this book deal with a Reformational philosophy of society, while chapter 14 provides a Christian view of politics and the state.

4.7 The distinction "general-particular"

One last facet of the thought of Calvin has to be pointed out from which it further emerges that he held a doctrine of two kingdoms, influenced by the two realm doctrine. It is Calvin's predilection for the distinction "general-special". In his view on being human he differentiates between a general (indelible) image of God and a special image of God (destroyed by sin). He also distinguishes between general and special grace (*ICR*, II, 2, 17. Also cf. Kuiper, 1928 and Douma, 1966), general and special calling (*ICR*, III, 24, 8), a general and special relationship with God, general and special religion, election, promise, etcetera.

It is not claimed that all these instances are evidence of the presence of a double order (of nature and supernature) in the work of Calvin. But in some instances it clearly is the case. Van der Linde (1956:63) with reference to this speaks about a dualism in the work of Calvin, but calls it only a "theological dualism" and does not want to go as far as calling it a "metaphysical dualism". In my opinion, however, it is no mere theological distinction made by Calvin. It is rooted in his anthropology and determined by his ontology.

4.8 A reflection on the relationship between the kingdom of God and the world

By way of concluding this section a principal reflection on the doctrine of the "two kingdoms" is crucial. The Bible clearly distinguishes between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. Calvin, however, localised them in two societal relationships, namely the church and the state. But the encompassing kingdom of God may not be associated with the church only. Neither is the state *ipso facto* the kingdom of darkness (cf. Troost, 1969:12 *et seq.* and 1971: 12 *et seq.*).

The Scriptures never localise the kingdom of evil to a certain part of creation. The Scriptures do use the word "world" (apart from the meaning of God's good creation or cosmos) to denote the whole of the fallen and rebellious creation. The antithesis between the two kingdoms may therefore, according to the Bible, not be seen as a delimitation between two *realms* or *societal relationships* into which creation is mistakenly divided. The antithesis concerns the *direction* (for or against God) of *all* the life expressions of *each* person in *every* realm of life. Because the fall was radical, good and evil permeates creation completely.

A more "mixed" judgment is therefore needed. This does not mean blurring the antithesis, it rather provides a sharper view. It prevents the schizophrenia in which one lives when attempting to localise the antithesis.

We also deliberately connect good in creation with redemption by Christ, to dissociate ourselves from the idea that what is good is a kind of remnant or residue of the former good creation that remained intact and is indestructible in spite of man deserting God. (Cf. once more Calvin's distinction between *dona naturalia* and *supernaturalia* of which the first is the more or less unblemished part.)

When it is claimed that everything created now have a "mixed character", and therefore are simultaneously redeemed and bear scars of sin, it also does not mean that redemption and sin are placed on the same level or that sinfulness is relativised. Sin remains an alien invader in God's creation.

Therefore "church or world" is a false dilemma – even in Calvin's work. Since many Christians in the past and nowadays did not realise that it is a false problem, they had to choose. In choosing, some emphasised more "being in the world", others again "out of the world", while a third group – to whom Calvin also belonged – looked for the middle of the road: both *in* the world but not *of* the world – the see-saw had to be kept in balance!

Hereby we have concluded the section on Calvin's two realm or two kingdom doctrine (philosophy of society) and we can now proceed to the next aspect of his worldview.

5 Epistemology, faith and knowledge, theology and philosophy

First something is said on Calvin's epistemology and subsequently more detailed attention is given to how he saw the relationship between faith and knowledge, theology and philosophy.

5.1 Epistemology

Although the reformer from Geneva made no explicit statements on his epistemology, something about it can be inferred from the *ICR*. Looking at it from an anthropological angle, he accepts the Aristotelian distinction between intellect and will and the Platonic concept of five senses by means of which knowledge is acquired (cf. I, 15, 6.).

Further it is very significant that Calvin's epistemology (cf. e.g. *ICR* I, 1, 1 and 2) follows a more direct route than for instance the consistently empiricist, according to which knowledge can only be reached via abstraction of the essence from the sensory. Calvin, linking up with a more Platonically coloured inconsistent empiricist epistemology, emphasises beholding directly the divine seeds in things (cf. the *logoi spermatikoi* in 3.10 above). In this he leans very much towards both the Platonic teachings of anamnesis and illumination. (Compare Brill & Boonstra, 2000:197 as well as Babelotzky's extensive discussion, 1977:161-224.)

5.2 Faith and knowledge

What was Calvin's viewpoint in the age-old problem of the relationship between faith and knowledge (science), which is still an issue for many today?

5.2.1 His view of faith and reason

Valuable research has already been done on Calvin's (and also Calvinism's after him) view on reason and faith and their mutual relationship (cf. e.g. Partee, 1983 and Hoitenga, 1983). Several positive remarks can be made about Calvin in this regard. Parker (1952:100-116; cf. also Jones, 1942) demonstrates by means of a careful analysis of Calvin's use of concepts like *notitia*, *cognitio*, *scientia* and *fides* that he uses these words in their biblical meaning. Concerning reason or the mind, it is important that as a consequence of the fall, Calvin ascribes only a

restricted role to it (cf. Nixon: 1971:240-242). He also contests the idea of the autonomy of reason – as will be seen clearly below when we deal with his view about Christian philosophy.

5.2.2 Faith as knowledge and certainty (trust)

There also is a striking difference, between the concept of faith in the work of Calvin (cf. for this Dee, 1918 and Graafland, 1961) and that of, for instance, Thomas Aquinas. According to Calvin faith is not (as often in the Middle Ages) a *nuda persuasio, frigida notitia* or a matter of penetrating reflection. Although Calvin opposes such an intellectualist view on faith, it does not mean that he may be accused of "fideism" (as amongst others Fritz, 1913 does), for he does not accept the scholastic idea of a *fides implicita* either, but stresses that faith also entails insight and knowledge (cf. e.g. *ICR*, III, 2, 3). This comes out clearly for instance in the definition Calvin gives of faith: "Now we shall possess a right definition of faith if we call it a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit".⁵

In order not to be misunderstood (in the sense that he puts too great an emphasis on the element of knowledge and insight in faith), Calvin explicitly says elsewhere (conclusion of *ICR* III, 2, 14) that, since that which we understand in faith is not visible, the knowledge of faith lies more in certainty than in (complete) understanding.

5.2.3 How one can know that the Bible is God's Word

Calvin's way of treating the problem of how one can know that the Bible is the Word of God, is dealt with here by way of illustrating how he saw the relation between faith and reason or knowledge. During his time this was an important issue for Christians and many theologians were looking for reasonable proof to confirm the credibility of the Scriptures. As could be expected, Calvin deals with

⁵ "Nunc iusta fidei definitio nobis constabit si dicamus esse divinae erga nos benevolentiae firmam certamque cognitionem, quae gratuita in Christo promissionis veritate fundata, per Spiritum sanctum revelatur mentibus nostris et cordibus obsignatur" (III, 2, 7. end)

the problem early on in Book I of his *ICR*, namely in chapters 7 to 9. Chapters 7 and 8 are particularly important.

5.2.4 The authority of the Scriptures should not be made to depend on human beings

In chapter 7 Calvin challenges the Roman Catholic doctrine in particular, since it made the authority of the Scriptures dependent on the church. According to him Scripture itself shows its own truth, as white and black objects show their colour and sweet and bitter things their taste. The authority accredited to the Scriptures is not, according to Calvin, dependent on the stipulation or resolution of human beings. The highest "proof" of the truth of the Scriptures is derived from God Himself who speaks in them. Repeatedly Calvin points out that those people who try their best to prove the irrefutable credibility of the Scriptures are going about it in the wrong way: "We are not looking for evidence or probabilities on which we could found our judgment, but we subject our judgment and insight to something lying outside the uncertain chance afforded by (human) appraisal" (*ICR*, I, 7, 5). According to him this conviction is requiring no argument. In this issue we are taught by the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit that is surer than any argument.

5.2.5 Nevertheless evidence is not negligible

However, from chapter 8 it transpires that Calvin did not succeed in breaking radically with the problem of how we know that the Bible is the Word of God: "Unless this certainty [provided by the testimony of the Holy Spirit – B.J. v.d.W.], higher and stronger than any human judgment, be present, it will be vain to fortify the authority of Scripture by arguments, to establish it by common agreement of the church, or to confirm it with other helps. For unless this foundation is laid, its authority will always remain in doubt. Conversely, once we have embraced it devoutly as its dignity deserves, and have recognized it to be above the common sort of things, these arguments – not strong enough before to engraft and fix the certainty of Scripture in our minds – become very useful aids".⁶

⁶ "Haec nisi certitudo adsit quolibet humano iudicio et superior et validior frustra Scripturae auctoritas vel argumentis muniatur, vel Ecclesiae consensu stabiliatur, vel aliis praesidiis

5.2.6 Faith first, then knowledge

Apart from using the word aids (*adminicula*) here, Calvin also speaks cautiously about reasons for probability (*probationes*) and pointers or indications (*indicia*). The difference with, for instance, Thomas Aquinas on this point is that Calvin does not, the way Thomas does, give reasonable proof *beforehand* for the authority, credibility and certainty of the Scriptures, but *in the end* does assign value to them. In this respect too, it seems that Calvin thinks in an Augustinian way: faith first and then the knowledge (*credo ut intellegam*).

5.2.7 Various proofs for the truth of the Bible

All the evidence for the authority of the Scriptures offered by Calvin cannot be dealt with in detail (cf. for those Dowey, 1952:90-124). With reference to the Old Testament he points out amongst other things the sublime character, the great age of the books, the honesty of the writers, the miracles, the fulfilled prophecies and the miraculous conservation of the text in the course of history. Concerning the New Testament he draws attention to the capacity of uneducated people to explain heavenly mysteries, the intact transmission of the various books, the common consent of the church and the blood of so many martyrs who died for the truth of the Gospel.

5.2.8 A risky undertaking

However, how unconvincing such "evidences" are – even though in Calvin it is not in the foreground – becomes clear from what Dowey says about some of them: "These arguments are of uneven value, and some of them have become quite useless, at least in the form Calvin gave them... For example, in the argument from antiquity Calvin asserts that the Scripture is the oldest of all books and jokes about the Egyptians whose false chronicles extend their own antiquity to a point beyond the creation of the world. Correspondingly, the mere survival of the books is not so impressive today as it was to Calvin. The arguments from

confirmabitur: siquidem, nisi hoc iacto fundamento, suspensa semper manet. Sicuti contra, ubi semel communi sorte exemptam religiose ac pro dignitate amplexi sumus, quae ad eius certitudinem animis nostris inserendam et infingendam non adeo valebant, tunc aptissima sunt adminicula" (I, 8, 1).

predictive prophecy are mechanical and go rather too heavy on the traditional dating of the Pentateuch, Deutero-Isaiah, and Daniel, to serve us now without refurbishing, and the chronicles of patriarchal disgrace might well be construed as examples of human honesty rather than proof of divine inspiration. Others, such as the sublimity of the matter when contrasted with even the greatest non-Biblical writers, the consent of the church, and the price willingly paid by the martyrs cannot fail to impress a reader, although none of them leads necessarily to conclusions about the divine origin of Scripture" (Dowey, 1952:113, 114).

But Dowey also points out that the "evidence" for the authority of the Scriptures in the work of Calvin does not – as it does in Medieval Scholasticism and in the works of post-Reformational Protestant Orthodoxy – precede the belief in Scripture, but was only *afterwards* used as aids for the sake of human weakness. He demonstrates how Calvin actually shifted the authority of the Scriptures from human beings to the Author, God Himself, because he was unwilling to make the authority of Scripture depend on such poor arguments. Contrary to this, some followers of Calvin's elevated the *indicia* again to a level of significance that had to prove *beforehand* the authenticity of the Scriptures – something that does not comply with Calvin's intention at all (cf. Dowey, 1952:114-116).

5.2.9 The role of reason obscure

Finally it has to be mentioned that the role of the mind (reason) in the work of Calvin is not always very clear. On the one hand, according to him, it is capable of guiding a human being in the earthly sphere (cf. II, 2, 13) and to distinguish between good and evil (cf. I, 15, 8). On the other hand he criticises the philosophers for overrating it (cf. I, 15, 7), because they do not realise that the mind has fallen into sin. Therefore the intellect should subject itself to the Holy Spirit and so become enlightened (cf. e.g. III, 2, 24 and III, 7, 1).

As a consequence of the fact that the mind belongs to the *dona naturalia* and faith to the *dona supernaturalia*, faith in Calvin's thinking also becomes an *addition* to the natural order, so that it cannot – as it should – take the *leading* role in the whole of life – also in the case of apostate belief. However, since the

work of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd, the central role of one's faith (religious direction) in all of life was recognised.

5.2.10 Appreciation for non-Christian culture

Because Calvin viewed the human reason as merely damaged but not totally corrupted, he often expressed great appreciation for non-Christian philosophy and culture in general. Since Klapwijk (1991:131-140) has explained Calvin's viewpoint in this regard in detail (like the issues of total depravity, sparks of light in pagan thought and general grace), we will not discuss it again. According to Klapwijk (1991:140) Calvin did not simply reject nor accept non-Christian ideas or tried to accommodate them in a synthesis with the Bible. He listened to them openmindedly and critically (cf. also Klapwijk, 1973).

Subsequently we look at the possible implications that Calvin's viewpoint on the relation faith-knowledge has for his view of theology and philosophy.

5.3 Theology and philosophy in the work of Calvin

Calvin produced no philosophy of science, and did not use the words "philosophy" and "theology" as technical terms in their present-day meaning. "As far as we know there is no comprehensive formula to be detected in his *Opera* that has stated in proper scientific terms Calvin's assessment of the relation between theology and philosophy. Even *termini technici* are not found in his work" (Potgieter, 1939:257 – translated from Afrikaans).

5.3.1 Calvin read in the light of later views

Nevertheless Potgieter (1939:252, 262, 269) attempts a description of how Calvin saw the fields of research for theology and philosophy. However, one gets the impression that he read his own viewpoint concerning the task of the two disciplines into Calvin's work. Calvin steps into the background when Potgieter formulates the relation of philosophy and theology in the language of later theologians like Kuiper, Bavinck and especially his promotor, Hepp! Therefore we will subsequently look carefully at the few places in connection with this subject that could be detected in the *ICR*.

5.3.2 True wisdom his goal

Calvin is concerned in the *ICR* with true wisdom – evidence of this is the very first sentence of the first book. However, this is a wisdom obtained in the light of the Scriptures. Elsewhere Calvin states beautifully: “For our wisdom ought to be nothing else than to embrace with humble teachableness whatever is taught in sacred Scripture.”⁷

Seeing that Calvin is concerned with wisdom, it is understandable that (as far as could be ascertained) nowhere in the *ICR* does he speak about theology but of *philosophia nostra* or *philosophia christiana*. According to Kuyper (1909:189) the very title of Calvin’s main work is insightful, since it is not called *Epitome Theologiae* or something similar, but *Institutio Christianae Religionis*. According to him Calvin consistently avoids the word “theology” in the *ICR*. (Cf. also De Koster, 1964:478-383, where all Calvin’s statements on “philosophy” are given.)

Of course Calvin did not attach the same meaning to “philosophy” that we do today do. It is therefore difficult to determine exactly what Calvin meant by “Christian philosophy”. In his writings it sometimes simply means the “Gospel of grace” or “the Christian faith”.

5.3.3 About the same as a Christian worldview

From most of his statements on this it is, however, clear that the concept “Christian philosophy” should be taken in a broad sense and indicates a prescientific Christian worldview founded on the Scriptures. As far back as 1950 Bohatec (1950:251) understood it in this way and I concur.

Particularly when the historical background of the concept “Christian philosophy” in the work of Calvin is researched, this specific usage emerges. According to Bohatec (1950:251) Calvin in his idea of a Christian philosophy associates himself with Augustine, Budé and Erasmus. Reuter (1963:53, 54) also mentions the names of Calvin’s contemporaries, Cop and Bucer. (Further cf. Partee, 1974:360 *et seq.*)

⁷ “Nam sapere nostrum nihil aliud esse debet quam mansueta docilitate amplecti, et quidem sine exceptione, quicquid in sacris Scripturis traditum est.” (I, 18, 4, end)

5.3.4 A long tradition of Christian philosophy

In order to understand Calvin's use of the term "philosophy", we need to go back as far as the ancient Greek philosophers. All through ancient times *philosophia* (in the works of both the Greeks and the early Christian philosophers who followed the Greeks) had a *comprehensive* meaning. It included all human knowledge about the gods, the world, human beings and their place in the cosmos. In other words, all the *most crucial* questions and answers about life. Finding the right answers to these questions, meant wisdom (*sophia*). The intellectual activity that led to these answers, was called the search for or love of wisdom (*philosophia*). Further it was important that philosophy had to lead to the *ideal life*. Therefore, in several ancient philosophical schools, the ideal of philosophical redemption or (self)salvation was alive.

This meaning of "philosophy" in ancient times made it easy for the early Christian thinkers more or less to equate "conversion to the Christian faith" to "conversion to philosophy" or to see the Christian faith as the highest level (culmination) of all philosophy. Hence the Church Fathers referred to the Christian faith as "philosophy". To early Christian thinkers this (Christian) philosophy also retained its original comprehensive meaning: a search for the answers to all the most important issues of life, that is a view of reality or a worldview.

One already finds the term "Christian philosophy" in the work of an early Christian thinker like Tatianus who – ironically – was somewhat allergic to pagan philosophies. After him also in Minucius Felix (third century) and in Aurelius Augustine. According to Augustine Christian philosophy means wisdom or insight based on faith, and therefore it was higher than any other wisdom. A philosophy not based on faith, according to him, is doomed to error. The ultimate aim of a Christian philosophy is also to find true bliss. It is a well-known fact that in many respects Calvin associated himself with Augustine's ideas (cf. above), so that it comes as no surprise that he also took over the term and its substance from this Church Father.

In passing we can therefore say that the idea of a Christian philosophy did not *originate* in the thirties of the twentieth century with writers like Vollenhoven, Dooyeweerd and Stoker. Their endeavours simply meant the *revival* of an almost 2000-year-old ideal!

5.3.5 A significant breakthrough

Although under *philosophia Christiana* not the same is understood that we would mean with the term today, but rather a prescientific Christian worldview, it is of particular significance that Calvin advocated a *Christian* philosophy. The mere fact that he could speak of a *Christian* philosophy, indicates that the influence of the two realm doctrine (cf. point 4 above) was not completely determinative in his thinking. If he had consistently applied the theme of nature-grace, there would have been in his work (as in e.g. that of Thomas Aquinas) only mention of a Christian *theology* and not of a Christian *philosophy*. According to Calvin philosophy too has to be practised in the light of the Scriptures: "This, indeed is that secret and hidden philosophy which cannot be wrestled from syllogisms. But they who's eyes God has opened surely learn it by heart, that in his light they may see light (Ps. 36:9)".⁸

5.3.6 Contesting the autonomy of reason

It is particularly important as well that Calvin, in keeping with his obedience to Scripture, contested the idea of the autonomy or absolutisation of reason in his Christian philosophy. Also in this sense he could be called a reformer! (cf. Klapwijk, 1987:15). We quote him in detail: "O, how much has that man profited who, having been taught that he is not his own, has taken away dominion and rule from his own reason that he may yield it to God! For, as consulting our own self-interest is the pestilence that most effectively leads to our destruction, so the sole haven of salvation is to be wise in nothing and to will nothing through ourselves but to follow the leading of the Lord alone.

⁸ "Haec quidem secreta est absconditaque philosophia, et quae syllogismis erui non potest sed scilicet eam perdiscunt quibus oculos aperuit Deus. ut in suo lumine lumen videant" (III, 20, 1)

"Let this therefore be the first step, that a man departs from himself in order that he may apply the whole force of his ability in the service of the Lord. I call 'service' not only what lies in obedience to God's Word but what turns the mind of man, empty of its own carnal senses, wholly to the bidding of God's Spirit". (Original text included in footnote 9.)

Subsequently Calvin criticises former philosophers: "While it is the first entrance to life, all philosophers were ignorant of this transformation, which Paul calls 'the renewal of the mind' (Eph. 4:23). For they set up reason alone as the ruling principle in man, and think that it alone should be listened to; to it alone, in short, they entrust the conduct of life. But the Christian philosophy bids reason to give way to, submit and subject itself to the Holy Spirit so that man himself may no longer live but hear Christ living and reigning within him (Gal. 2:20)".⁹

At the same time we have to keep in mind once more (cf. 5.2.9) that on this point there are two lines in Calvin's thinking: Apart from the above-mentioned Scriptural line that contested the autonomy of reason, Calvin also had great appreciation of it in the "natural realm". Klapwijk (1987:17) therefore correctly concluded that, while Calvin did not *ban* the human intellect from his "Christian philosophy", he definitely *removed* reason (an absolutised intellect) from its throne.

5.3.7 A Christian philosophy requires threefold humility

Finally we point out Calvin's emphasis on humility or submissiveness as an essential prerequisite for a Christian philosophy (cf. further Marcel, 1959:21 *et*

9. "O quantum ille profecit qui se non suum esse edoctus, dominum regimenque sui propriae rationi agbrogavit, ut Deo asserat! Nam ut haec ad pendendos homines efficacissima est pestis, ubi sibiipsis obtemperant, ita unicus est salutis portus, nihil nec sperare, nec velle per seipsum, sed Dominum praeautum duntaxat sequi. Sit hic itaque primus gradus, hominem a seipso discedere, quo totam ingenii vim applicet ad Domini obsequium. Obsequium dico non modo quod in verbi obedientia iacet, sed quo mens hominis, proprio carnis sensu vacua, se ad Spiritus Dei nutum tota convertit. Hanc transformationem (quam renovationem mentis Paulus appellat (Ephes 4 f 23)) quum primus sit ad vitam ingressus, philosophia omnes ignorarunt. Solam enim rationem homini moderatricem praeficiunt, hanc solam putant audiendam, huic denique uni morum imperium deferunt ac permittunt; at Christiana philosophia illam loco cedere, Spiritui sancto subiici ac subiugari jubet ut homo iam non ipse vivat, sed Christum in se ferat viventem ac regnantem (Galat 2 d. 20)" (III, 7, 1 end).

seq.): "A saying of Chrysostom's has always pleased me very much, that the foundation of our philosophy is humility. Augustine pleases me even more: 'When a certain rhetorician was asked what was the chief rule of eloquence, he replied: 'Delivery'; what was the second rule, 'Delivery'; what was the third rule, 'Delivery'; so if you ask me concerning the precepts of the Christian religion, first, second, third and always I would answer 'Humility'."¹⁰

Klapwijk (1991:131) writes that with this kind of *humilitas*, Calvin had much more in mind than mere humbleness towards others. It is the unfeigned submission of our heart (*ICR*, III, 12, 6), a deep humility before God. "Calvin sets humility over against human pride and self-conceit: humility relinquishes all presumption and vainglory..."

Summarised, Calvin mentions the following conditions for a Christian philosophy: (1) it does not reject reason, but the autonomy or absolutisation of reason; (2) obedience to God and his Word has to take the place of deified reason; (3) it is a philosophy in which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the human mind is totally renewed (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23); (4) it should be characterised by sincere humility towards God and fellow human beings.

Here Calvin teaches all philosophers an important lesson – including Reformational philosophers. Especially the last-mentioned – who have the privilege of practising their philosophy in the light of God's infallible Word – should always keep in mind that even they will never have said the last philosophical word. What Calvin said elsewhere about the church, namely that it will be deformed unless it constantly reforms, also has to be applied to contemporary Christian philosophies: *philosophia Christiana semper reformanda est*.

10 "Semper sane nihi vehementer illud Chrisostomi placuit, Fundamentum nostrae philosophiae esse humilitatem (Homil. de profectu Evangelii); magis etiamnum illud Augustini, Ouemadmodum, inquit, rhetor ille rogatus quid primum esset in eloquentiae praeceptis respondit pronuntiationem quid secundum, pronuntiationem quid terium pronuntiationem; ita si me interrogas de religionis Christianae praeceptis, primo, secundo, et tertio et semper respondere liberet humilitatem (Epis. 56 ad Dioscorum)" (II, 2, 11.).

6 Conclusion: summary of the main contours of Calvin's Christian worldview in his "Institutes"

As we explained out above, in the *ICR* Calvin is concerned – even though he calls it a "Christian philosophy" – with a Christian worldview or view of reality. In this final section the main contours of his worldview are briefly summarised.

The problem-historical method of Vollenhoven (2005a, 2005b) distinguishes between the *trend* (spiritual climate) in which a philosopher lived and thought (his specific view of law or of normativity) and the *type* of philosophy (view of the ontological structure of reality) that he propagated. The trend thus indicates the religious *direction* of a philosophy, while the type contains the philosopher's view of the *structure* of things. In a simplified form one could say: the latter facet is concerned with what *is* and the former facet with what *should be*.

6.1 The direction of Calvin's worldview

About the "spirit" or direction of the Reformer's philosophy there need not be any uncertainty. His deepest motive was to obey God, his Word and his laws. Therefore he did not attempt (like the Church Fathers and thinkers from the Middle Ages before him) – at least not deliberately - to reach a *compromise* between the pre-Christian (Graeco-Roman) philosophy and the Scriptures, but to allow only the Bible to speak clearly and unambiguously once more. So he thought in an *antisynthetic* way. In this he concurred with the humanist philosophers of his time. But they broke with former synthetic thought for a different reason than Calvin did. They did not like the biblical element in it, but strived to revive the Graeco-Roman thought.

6.2 Calvin's type of worldview

From the foregoing it has transpired that there are "two lines" in the worldview of Calvin. Sometimes he could make God's Word speak in a remarkable way. At other times he was unable to wrest himself completely from the unbiblical influence of his predecessors and contemporaries. This led to a tension in his

worldview. It becomes evident from the following summary of his type of philosophy.

6.2.1 His idea of God

Although Calvin did not – with right – want to philosophise about God, to him – in contrast to the case with many other philosophers before and after him – God was inherently part of his worldview. The recurrent theme of the *absolute sovereignty* of God not only implies the complete *dependence of the created reality* but also *God as the Law-Giver* to everything He brought about. By obeying God's laws a human being lives to the glory of God. In Calvin's worldview we thus find an echo of the biblical message of the distinction as well as the coherence between (1) the sovereign *God* (2) *creation* that is dependent on God and (3) His *law* that is valid for creation. Unfortunately this profound biblical perspective was not always consistently worked out and applied in his thinking (cf. 6.2.5 below).

6.2.2 A breach with purely cosmological philosophy

Since Calvin knew God's Word, he did not explain the origin of everything in a mythological way. Neither did he as biblical thinker completely accepted a purely cosmological viewpoint. In what he designates as his "Christian philosophy" he does not restrict himself exclusively to reflecting on created reality. In his reflection he also involves God and his law. Therefore he begins his *ICR* by putting the knowledge of God in the foreground: A human being cannot know himself/herself and creation correctly unless he/she first knows God.

6.2.3 Partial universalism and the doctrine of a macro-microcosmos

From Calvin's anthropology especially it can be inferred that he does not think in a universalistic way (the universal aspect is primary) or in an individualistic way (the individual side of reality is primary), but in a partially universalistic way. In his partial universalism he does not use the form-matter doctrine either, but the theme of macro-microcosmos. He probably did not realise that this is an unusual combination. (The macrocosmos-microcosmos theory usually goes together with

partially universalistic *kosmogono-cosmological* philosophies. Cf. Bril & Boonstra, 2000:354-356.)

6.2.4 Reflections on the law of nature

Besides God's laws, as revealed in the Scriptures, Calvin also gives extensive attention to the "law of nature" (*lex naturalis*). The fact that Calvin claims that the laws of nature, like germs or seeds, were engraved into, planted into, pressed into or fixed into things, denotes foreign Stoic influence. In this way the law (seen as a germ or seed) is reified or subjectified, since it no longer is considered something of a *different nature* than the created things. This is also clear in the fact that Calvin ascribed to God's creational ordinances (what he called *lex naturalis*) a primarily *logical or rational* nature, viz. a feature of created reality. Seen in a Scriptural way, the nature of God's laws is not vested in their "*being things*", but in the fact that they *hold or is valid* for all created things.

6.2.5 A dualist "ontology"

Up to now we have explained how Calvin accepts God as Reality in his worldview; how he sees the universal and the individual; and how, as a consequence of Stoic influences, he fails to distinguish clearly between God's laws of nature (later in the Reformational tradition called creational ordinances) and the things (creatures) to which they apply. However, saying this, we have not yet given a complete picture of Calvin's worldview.

Clearly he is no supporter of monism which claims that the variety in reality originated from an initial *unity*. Under Platonic and Augustinian influence Calvin departs from a basic *twoness* (a dualistic reality), namely God as the transcendent and creation as the non-transcendent. While Calvin's tendency towards a three-factor worldview was appreciated (cf. 6.2.1 above), this dualistic tendency has to be rejected. Monism is in conflict with the Bible, since it can only be true if we erase the distinction between God and creation, often leading to pantheism. However, dualism also is not in harmony with Scripture, since it proposes two ultimate sources of reality, whereas God's Word indicates God as

the only, one Origin of everything. A dualistic viewpoint often encourages a deistic worldview.

6.2.6 A dichotomist anthropology

Although Calvin's anthropology was not dealt with fully here, there is no doubt that his dualistic worldview led to a dichotomy in his view of being human. A human being consists (not according to an *inner-outer* scheme, but according to a *higher-lower* scheme) of soul and body. The higher part of a human being (soul/spirit) originates from the transcendent God, while the lower part (body) is of a non-transcendent nature. Such a type of dichotomy can be classified as Platonising semi-mysticism. (For details, see chapter 7.)

6.2.7 A doctrine of two kingdoms

As a result of his dichotomist view of being human, Calvin holds that in the cosmos (or nontranscendent world) two realms or kingdoms should be distinguished. The investigation into his use of the idea of a twofold government, empire or world, as well as his distinction between heavenly and earthly matters, and his usage of the scheme particular-general, made this clear. Our research, however, also brought to light that this doctrine of two kingdoms is not followed through as consistently in the writings of Calvin as, for instance, in that of Thomas Aquinas (a two-realm doctrine) or Luther (doctrine of two kingdoms). On certain points his scheme of two kingdoms is shattered by a more Scriptural view according to which service to the glory of God is possible in all areas of life.

6.2.8 Epistemology

Calvin's philosophy does not yield a clear epistemology. He could probably best be typified as an inconsistent empiricist. Consistent empiricists limit themselves to the study and knowledge of visible reality. However, in the work of Calvin enlightenment and direct observation (a Platonic trait) play an important role, so that, according to him, knowledge is not restricted to empirical (visible) reality, but can also include the transcendent or God.

6.2.9 Faith and knowledge

In the Thomistic tradition knowledge precedes faith (*intellego ut credam*). On this point, however, Calvin clearly stands in an Augustinian tradition which reverses the order: faith first and then knowledge (*credo ut intellegam*). According to him the mind cannot with reasonable proof open up the way for faith; reason can only as an aid afterwards confirm one's faith.

This insight of Calvin's – that faith determines knowledge (science) and not the other way round – is of crucial significance. In the twentieth century this important insight was developed further by Reformational philosophers in their campaign against a so-called neutral science (cf. e.g. Dooyeweerd, 1953-1958). While doing this they also emphasised that faith is not only important – as still presented by Calvin – in so-called heavenly/supernatural matters, but that it points the direction in all areas of life.

6.2.10 Theology and philosophy

In his "philosophy of science" in so far as it touches on the relation between theology and philosophy, Calvin operates in an age-old tradition that has not yet made a clear distinction between the two disciplines. He prefers calling his *ICR* a "Christian philosophy" and not a "theology". By this he simply means that which today one would call a Christian worldview. Particularly significant matters that Calvin stresses in this connection, are the following: (1) that a philosophy can be *Christian*; (2) that in a Christian philosophy the *autonomy of reason* has to be contested (for faith determines the direction of science); (3) that in the light of God's Word and under the guidance of his Spirit the mind should be renewed; (4) that even a Christian philosophy, since it is fallible, should always be practised in *the deepest humility*.

6.3 Summa summarum

In my opinion Fowler (1984:352) summarises the meaning of Calvin's worldview in a balanced way because he points out both its strength and its weakness, the uniquely Christian element as well as the fact that his thinking was sometimes

still caught up in both age-old and contemporary non-biblical ideas. He says the following: "The advances he made on the thought of those who preceded him were so great that it would be expecting of him something more than one ought to expect from a man to break free of the entanglement of Renaissance humanism [and other pre-Christian philosophies – BJvdW] any more than he did. At the same time, it would be a serious indictment on us, his successors, if we do not learn from his failure to develop a radically critical attitude and method in scholarship."

This lesson that Christian philosophers can learn even today from Calvin's "Christian philosophy" Fowler explains as follows: "The one great lesson we ought to learn from the study of Calvin... is the imperative of a truly Biblical, radically Christian, criticism of the thought of our day, including the heritage in which we have been nurtured. Without this we will be caught as Calvin was in the uncritical attempt to integrate non-Christian thought, and anti-Christian thought, with our Biblical faith, and we will not be able to excuse our failure as we can Calvin's" (Fowler, 1984:352).

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CHAPTER 4

AN OVERVIEW OF THE GLOBAL PRESENCE OF A CHRISTIAN REFORMATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND SCHOLARSHIP

To have a good perspective on the philosophy one is practising, some knowledge of its history is a prerequisite. A history of Reformational thought is of equal importance to inspire generations of the future. A beginning was made in 2006 to document the history of the movement for a Reformational Philosophy, started nearly eighty years ago (1935) in the Netherlands. However, it was a very brief overview. Neither does it include a history of this trend of philosophy in South Africa, regarding it more or less as a Dutch "export". This chapter will not be able to fill this gap. It is not of a historiographical but of a bibliographical nature. The intention is merely to collect some of the original sources or building blocks for an eventual historical evaluation. Apart from an introduction (about the need and the method), it will be done in the following four steps: (1) Something briefly about the cradle of Reformational Philosophy in the Netherlands. (2) The origin, development and representatives of this movement in South Africa (confined to two centres, viz. Bloemfontein and Potchefstroom). (3) Its global geographical dissemination and theoretical application in a variety of disciplines. (4) Since an eventual history will include, apart from the past and the present, also the future, the challenge of the contextualisation of a Reformational philosophy for the African continent concludes the chapter.

Relevance to our main theme (at home in God's world):

The various contributions of Christian philosophers and other Christian scholars can help us to understand the world in which we live, be part of it, and grasp what our calling in this world entails

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1 Introduction: The need and *modus operandi*

Although not everybody agrees, history is important. Stellingwerff (2006:7) even claims that a culture cannot be maintained without its history. Not only is it important for the present generation, but also for the future ones.

1.1 Needed for the present

With right Stellingwerff (2006:7) says that to have a good perspective on the work one undertakes, at least an elementary knowledge of its history is needed. Put into images, one could say one needs a map of the existing landscape to be able to find one's way through it. Or, we could say: To be able to drive forward safely, one not only needs a clean windscreen, but also a rear-view mirror to enable one to look back from time to time. If this is true about other fields of study, all the more so of a fundamental discipline like philosophy.

1.2 Needed for future generations

Allow me to illustrate the importance of this point by referring to the questions of a post-graduate student in Philosophy (Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University).

"Up to now I have only heard of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. Were they the only Christian philosophers?" (The student was surprised to hear about South African Christian philosophers like Stoker.) "Is such a Christian approach limited to Potchefstroom?" (Once more the student was surprised to learn that for many decades several Christian philosophers have been working at the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein.) "Since I do not want to learn about them in a second-hand way, I would like to read their works myself. If you could help me with the names, I'll look up their books myself in the library. (This was gladly done.) "It would be very interesting to investigate to which extent they agree for instance on the basic points of departure, and on which points they differ." (I explained that in the Reformational tradition different people sowed but they did not all use the same seed – even Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven differ! However, their worldviewish points of departure were more or less the same.)

"Professor, I find Reformational philosophy inspiring and liberating. I hope it is not limited to the Netherlands and South Africa." (I could assure him that it has already spread internationally.) "As you know, I did my undergraduate studies in Physics. There are other student friends of mine with subjects like art and economics who are also interested in philosophy like myself. So my last question is whether it is only philosophers who have a Reformational approach and whether there are maybe some other scholars who think from this perspective." (Fortunately the professor could answer this question positively too, and refer the student to some writers and sources – see 4.2 below.)

That day, and also at other similar occasions, I realised that there is a need among the younger generation. And also that I (as a member of an older generation who is more or less abreast of Reformational philosophy in general as well as its different representatives) have a responsibility towards such young people to introduce them to a rich tradition. To do it in classes naturally is the first option, but curricula and time do not always permit it. So maybe I should start unpretentiously by simply naming some Christian philosophers and what they wrote about.

1.3 A lacuna

At the commemoration in the Netherlands of the seventieth year of the existence of the Vereniging voor Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte (Society for Reformational Philosophy, formerly called "for Calvinistic Philosophy") in 2005 Stellingwerff (2006) wrote a short history of this movement. Since it was discussed elsewhere (cf. Friesen, 2006) it need not be done here – except for two remarks of importance for the South African context.

In the first instance only 15 lines of the whole book (2006:151) consisting of 240 pages are devoted to South African Reformational thought and it only mentions H.G. Stoker, J.A.L. Taljaard, N.T. van der Merwe, B.J. van der Walt, M.E. Botha and J.J. Venter – all from Potchefstroom. The only one of the scholars from Bloemfontein mentioned is D.F.M. Strauss. So while his book discusses quite a

number of other Christian philosophers outside the Netherlands, it seems as if South Africa has not really produced much worth mentioning!

In the second instance the impression is created that the South African Reformational movement is merely a consequence (an "export product") of the Netherlands. Historically this is not completely true. Already in 2008 South Africa was able to commemorate the 75th year of an indigenous Christian philosophy, if it is kept in mind that H.G. Stoker (for a bibliography of his works see Taljaard, 1957:13-19) as early as 1933 wrote about Christian philosophy in the Netherlands (Stoker, 1933a) and in the same year gave an exposition of his own Philosophy of the Creational Idea (Stoker, 1933b). This happened two years before the publication of Dooyeweerd's *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee*. (In the translation of this book as *A new critique of theoretical thought* he calls his own philosophy the *Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea*). So it would have been more correct to say that Vollenhoven, Dooyeweerd and Stoker *together* worked on the founding of a Reformational philosophy. (Work is, for instance, in progress to publish the correspondence between Stoker and Vollenhoven.) And long before Reformational philosophy from the Netherlands was practised in other parts of the world, it was known in South Africa.

The conclusion is simple: If a more detailed history is to be written, we in South Africa will probably have to take up the responsibility for it ourselves.

1.4 Approach

I will not go into the question of who has to do it and in what way. I merely propose a humble beginning, a first building block: a list of the names of the different generations of Reformational philosophers in South Africa. Since it is impossible in one chapter to give full bibliographies of their works (although here and there reference will be made to some), we will concentrate on the commemorative volumes (*Festschriften*) dedicated to them. In these there usually are, apart from a biography and other detail, relatively complete lists of their writings. This seems to me to be a viable beginning that can also be of help to later researchers on the history of the Reformational movement.

1.5 Set-up

Because it is important to keep in mind the whole tradition from its origin, something will be said by way of introduction about the Netherlands. And to answer the student's question (cf. above), reference will also be made to a number of individuals from different parts of the world who apply or have used Reformational philosophy as a starting point in a variety of disciplines. The set-up will therefore be as follows: (1) at the cradle in the Netherlands; (2) on South African soil; (3) the geographical and inter-disciplinary global influence, and (4) a final part on the need for spreading and contextualising Reformational philosophy to the rest of the African continent. (Where it is available, the names of the philosophers are accompanied by their dates of birth and, if applicable, their death. Unfortunately it was not possible to do so in every case. Bril (in Vollenhoven, 2005) also provides brief but valuable information about these Reformational philosophers who already passed away.)

2 At the cradle in the Netherlands

It is good to keep in mind that Reformational philosophy was not born all of a sudden in the Netherlands. It also had "ancestors" – even though they may not have been full-blooded philosophers. Van der Walt (2000:151-152) sums up the origins as follows: it started in Africa, was revived in Switzerland and awakened again in the Netherlands.

2.1 A short preliminary history

Usually the cradle of Reformational philosophy in the broadest sense is attributed – curiously enough – to an African, namely Aurelius Augustinus (354-430 AD). Or in any case to John Calvin (1509-1564) from Geneva. When this is not done, the name of A. Kuyper (1837-1920) is mentioned. Stellingwerff (2006:10) therefore says: "Looking for a long line one could take it from the Gospel via Aurelius Augustinus, John Calvin and Abraham Kuyper to Reformational philosophy." [Translated from the Dutch.] Unfortunately, after Calvin Reformational thought declined into Protestant Scholasticism. His followers did not work out his idea of a

Christian philosophy (cf. chapter 3), but focused on a theology based on biblically foreign philosophies.

Two persons who did make a considerable contribution (although they were in the first place theologians) were A. Kuyper (1837-1920) as well as Herman Bavinck (1854-1921). Klapwijk divides the history of philosophy at the Free University in Amsterdam (up to 1980) into three periods, viz. (1) that of philosophical *exploration* (2) philosophical *systematisation* en (3) philosophical *extension* and treats Kuyper and Bavinck under the first period (cf. Klapwijk, 1980:530-542 and 546-551). In passing he also deals with other individuals from this period like Jan Woltjer (1849-1917) on p. 542-544 (for more on Woltjer, cf. Van der Laan, 2000) and G.H.J.W. Geesink (1854-1929). Another person – an ordinary teacher –, who did important preliminary work, but got little acknowledgement, was A. Janse (cf. Van der Walt, 1989 and 2004b). Although all these people were interested in philosophy, they did not specialise in the field and therefore did not work out in detail their own Christian philosophical system. That would become the task of the next generation.

Van der Merwe (1969:102 ff) divides the history of Reformational philosophy into three phases: (1) the time of Kuyper and Bavinck, when especially the relationship between worldview and philosophy was investigated; (2) the time of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd, when the basic disciplines of philosophy was developed; (3) the time of the followers of the two “fathers”, when specific disciplines (like the philosophy of history, art and language) were worked out as well as detailed critical studies of fellow Reformational thinkers and outsiders were done.

Three basic ideas were thus far developed: (1) the idea of revelation (Bavinck), (2) the cosmogenic idea (Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd) and (3) the idea of creation (Stoker). Van der Merwe (cf. 1969:104,105) especially emphasises the value of the following ideas in Reformational philosophy: (1) the inherent religious nature of human beings; (2) their earthly task; (3) the doctrine of modalities in analysing the complexity (coherent diversity) of every created thing.

In what follows below, the names of four generations of Christian philosophers in the Netherlands will be mentioned, beginning with the two "fathers" of this movement. Details about some of the publications of the Dutch Christian philosophers as well as Christian scholars in other disciplines can be found on the website of Steve Bishop: www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk (e-mail: stevebishop.uk@gmail.com)

2.2 The "patres Philosophiae Christianae"

About the work by Dirk H. Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978) and Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) valuable data can be found in Van Dijk, Stellingwerff *et al.* (1961:43-112), which also includes the writings of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd up to date. Klapwijk (1980:554-560) also gives a short description of the contribution made by the "fathers". Besides, the different volumes dedicated to them also offer useful material. For instance, Zuidema and Popma (1951) – which unfortunately does not contain much on Vollenhoven himself. The special volume of *Philosophia Reformata*, edited by Bril, Hart and Klapwijk (1973) does contain (on pp. 215-222) Vollenhoven's most important works. Further mention has to be made of Stellingwerff's biography (1992) of Vollenhoven as well as the forthcoming book by Tol (2009). It should also be mentioned that during the past years a few books of Vollenhoven were published in English (cf. Van der Walt, 2006a or chapter 5 of this book) In the case of Dooyeweerd the volumes edited by De Gaay Fortman *et al.* (1965), McIntire (1985) and Verburg (1989) are valuable (and have bibliographical data on Dooyeweerd). Some contemporary reflections on Dooyeweerd's philosophy are given in Strauss & Botting (2000).

The founders of a Reformational philosophy also established an organisation, called De Vereniging voor Reformatorische Wijsbegeerte (Society for Reformational Philosophy) which published through the years the well-known *Philosophia Reformata* and other journals. (Contact the Centre for Reformational Philosophy, P.O. Box 3206, 3760 DE Soest, The Netherlands e-mail: office.reform.philos@planet.nl Consult their website for more information: www.christelijkefilosofie.nl)

2.3 The second generation

Although the different generations overlap, to this generation can be counted the names of Dutchmen like J.P.A. Mekkes (1898-1987), S.U. Zuidema (1906-1975), K.J. Popma (1903-1986), H. van Riessen (1911-2000), M.C. Smit (1911-1981), J.D. Dengerink (born 1921) and A. Troost (born 1916) (cf. Klapwijk, 1980:570 *et seq.*). Van Dijk, Stellingwerff *et al.* (1961:113-176) give valuable information about the first-mentioned four philosophers as well as bibliographies (up to 1960). For Popma a *Festschrift* was published with a list of his publications (cf. Popma *et al.*, 1974) as well as for Zuidema (cf. Van Riessen *et al.*, 1972) and Van Riessen (cf. Blokhuis *et al.*, 1981). I here omit the names of other Dutch scholars who will be mentioned below (under point 4.2) because they made significant contributions in specific disciplines from a Reformational philosophical perspective. (www.reformationalpublishingproject.com/rpp/paideia-books.asp is the Paideia website providing some valuable information about both the first and second generation in the Netherlands.)

2.4 The third generation

Here we can mention the names of H.J. van Eikema Hommes (1930-1984) – who was a legal philosopher but also wrote a book on Dooyeweerd, J. Klapwijk (born 1933), J. van der Hoeven (born 1932), H.G. Geertsema (born 1940), A.P. Bos (born 1943), S. Griffioen (born 1941), G. Groenewoud (born 1940), B. Kee (born 1942), A. Tol (born 1943) and R. van Woudenberg (born 1957). Most of them have already retired (cf. Klapwijk, 1980:574 *et seq.*).

2.5 The new (fourth) generation

Among those who now have to carry the torch further are thinkers like G.J. Bujs, J. Hoogland (born 1959), R. Kuiper (born 1962), G. Glas, M.J. Verkerk (born 1943), M.J. de Vries and H. Jochemsen.

The Netherlands was truly privileged to have so many scholars who thought in a Reformational way over four generations and during a period of nearly 80 years!

3 Reformational philosophy on South African soil

As we have mentioned – although there are/have been a few Reformational philosophers at secular institutions too – we here limit ourselves to two institutions where Reformational thinking had a greater impact, viz. Bloemfontein and Potchefstroom.

3.1 Bloemfontein

At least the following four generations could be distinguished:

3.1.1 The first and second generation

The pioneer here was E.A. Venter (1914-1968) who wrote about the history of philosophy (cf. Venter, *s.a.* (a)), systematics (cf. Strauss, ed. *s.a.*) and social philosophy (cf. Venter, *s.a.* (b)).

More or less simultaneously H.J. Strauss (1912-1995) also worked on developing a Christian approach to scholarship (cf. Strauss, 1964). More particulars about him (unfortunately no bibliography of his writings) can be found in a memorial volume dedicated to him (cf. Wessels, ed. *s.a.*).

E.A. Venter was succeeded as philosopher at the University of the (Orange) Free State by P. de Bruyn Kock (1913-1977). For particulars on his writings compare Kock (1970 and 1972). For biographical and bibliographical data cf. Smit, Strauss and Strauss (1992).

3.1.2 The third and fourth generation

Among the third generation we could name J.H. Smit (born 1941), D.F.M. Strauss (born 1946), J. Visagie (born 1948). The first-mentioned of these has already retired and the Festschrift dedicated to him contains a short biography as well as a list of his writings (cf. Lategan, Strauss and Van der Merwe, 2001:141-145). Prof. D.F.M. Strauss is still writing, and was honoured by a memorial volume in 2006 on his 60th birthday (cf. Lategan and Smit, 2006).

J.C. Van der Merwe (born 1968), assisted by other lecturers could be called the "fourth generation of Bloemfontein". Besides there are several other scholars at

the University of the Free State in other disciplines (like D.J. van den Berg in History of Art, A.W.G. Raath in law and several in education) who practise their disciplines from a Reformational philosophical approach. Others (like L.O.K. Lategan) are attached to other institutions in Bloemfontein.

During the last 44 years an independent organisation Die Vereniging vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys (The Society for Christian Higher Education) published many contributions on Christian philosophy and scholarship in general in its quarterly journal *Tydskrif vir Christelike Wetenskap* (Journal for Christian Scholarship). Contact address: The Society for Christian Higher Education (VCHO), P.O. Box 1824, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa (e-mail: vcho@mjvn.co.za).

3.2 Potchefstroom

At the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (since 2004 the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University) we can also distinguish four generations.

3.2.1 The “father”

As we have mentioned above, H.G. Stoker (1899-1993) was the founder of a Christian approach to philosophy and scholarship in general. As long ago as the beginning of the thirties of the previous century he already wrote about it. He became one of the best known (Christian) philosophers. In the volume dedicated to him (cf. Stoker, 1971) a *curriculum vitae* as well as a list of his publications (up to 1970) are given. His main works are the two-volume *Oorsprong en rigting* (Origin and direction, 1967 and 1970) as well as the book *Beginsels en metodes in die wetenskap* (Principles and methods in science, 1961). His publications recently also became available in electronic form. (It can either be ordered on CD from the VCHO at Bloemfontein: vcho@mjvn.co.za or from the Administrative Buro of the Reformed Churches of South Africa: bestellings@gksa.co.za.)

3.2.2 The second generation

To this generation at Potchefstroom belonged J.A.L. Taljaard (1915-1994) and N.T. van der Merwe (1932-2004) and (for some time) P.G.W. du Plessis (born 1932). For biographical data as well as a bibliography of Taljaard, cf. the volume dedicated to him by Conradie, Van der Merwe *et al.* (1975) as well as Van der Walt (1984). To the bibliography of 1975 will have to be added Taljaard (1976) since this can be reckoned as his *magnum opus*. The special edition of *Koers*, edited by Van der Walt (2006) and dedicated to N.T. van der Merwe, offers a biography and a list of Van der Merwe's writings.

3.2.3 The third and fourth generation

Here we can name M. Elaine Botha (born 1938) and J.J. Snyman (born 1947) who were both attached to the Department of Philosophy for some time. Further there are B.J. van der Walt (born 1939), J.J. Venter (born 1945) and M.F. Heyns (born 1961). The fourth generation includes inter alia R. Coletto, Helena Hoogstad, Ananka Loubser and Leandri Kleinhans. (Information on the publications of Van der Walt is available from the Ferdinand Postma Library of the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University, Potchefstroom 2520, South Africa. For an annotated bibliography of his publications *in English*, cf. the website: www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/vanderwalt.htm)

Important contributions on a Christian philosophy and scholarship in general were published in the journal *Koers* (Direction) during the last 70 years. Contact address: *Koers*, Bureau for Scholarly Journals, (Internal Box 251), Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom 2520, South Africa (e-mail: Susan.Lourens@nwu.ac.za)

4 Worldwide geographical and interdisciplinary dissemination of a Reformational philosophy and practice of scholarship

Fortunately Reformational thought is not limited to the Netherlands and South Africa. So next we give some examples of its global dissemination – first geographically and then in different fields of study.

4.1 Worldwide geographical dissemination

The Reformational ideal had an impact on especially two places in the USA and three in Canada.

4.1.1 The USA

At *Calvin College* (Grand Rapids, Michigan) H. Evan Runner (1916-2002) played an important role in inspiring numerous students (from the USA as well as from Canada) with a Reformational approach. Two *Festschriften* have been dedicated to him – cf. Kraay & Tol (1979) and Van der Goot (1981). In the field of Reformational theology G.J. Spykman also made a significant contribution. (For the background history as well as Calvin College's own history, cf. Bratt, 1984 and Timmerman, 1975.)

At *Dordt College* (Sioux Center, Iowa) J.C. vanderStelt (born 1934) worked in the Department of Philosophy. On his retirement he was presented with a *Festschrift* edited by Kok (2001). He was succeeded by amongst others J.H. Kok (born 1948, who did his doctoral thesis on Vollenhoven, cf. Kok, 1992) and R.D. Henderson (who – cf. Henderson, 1994 – did a doctoral thesis on Dooyeweerd). Like-minded scholars to be mentioned are the educationist J. van Dijk and the political scientist R. M. McCarthy. (For the history and perspective of Dordt College, cf. Vanden Bosch, 1990, Haan, 1992; Hulst, 2005 and Kok, 2004.)

4.1.2 Canada

The following three institutions should be mentioned:

At the *Institute for Christian Studies* (at 229 College Street, Toronto, Ontario) quite a number of scholars have been working who deserve to be mentioned. Among them are B. Zylstra (1934-1986), C. Seerveld (born 1930, cf. the *Festschrift* dedicated to him in 1995 by Zuidervaart and Littikuizen, eds.), H. Hart (born 1935), J. Olthuis, P. Marshall, H. Fernhout en D. Blomberg – to mention only the older generation. (For a general history of the ICS, cf. Vander Vennen, 2008.)

At *Redeemer University College* (77 Garner Road East, Ancaster, Ontario) we have to mention A.M. Wolters, who wrote the excellent book *Creation regained* (1985) – translated into many languages – on a Reformational worldview, as well as T. Plantinga (who died in 2008) and M. Elaine Botha (already mentioned under 3.2.3).

At *The King's University College* (in Edmonton, Alberta) H. Fernhout (formerly from the ICS) is currently president and although, as far as I know, there is no Reformational philosopher, there are quite a number of lecturers who think on Reformational lines in their specific disciplines. For instance H. van Belle (emeritus) and J.L. Hiemstra.

4.1.3 Australia, England, South Korea

In Australia S. Fowler did much to make known Reformational philosophy (cf. the *Festschrift* edited by Blomberg, 1996). Other names to be mentioned are H. van der Laan (born 1932 and passed away recently), D. Blomberg (currently at the ICS in Toronto), D.L. Roper and T. Fackerell.

For England we can mention D. Hanson and for South Korea Bong Ho Son and Sung Soo Kim.

4.2 Worldwide interdisciplinary dissemination

Without an attempt at being complete I offer by way of illustration a number of fields of study with the names of persons who worked/are still working in the specific field. (Some names already mentioned are repeated here, while the names of a few Dutch scholars who did not appear in the foregoing overview are now given here.) For more details cf. Van Woudenberg (1996).

- **Labour Relations:** H. Antonides (Canada).
- **Biology:** J.H. Diemer (1904-1945), J.J. Duyvené de Wit (1909-1965) both Dutchmen and U. Zijlstra (Canada).
- **Economy:** B. Goudzwaard (the Netherlands) and G. Monsma (USA).
- **Aesthetics and History of Art:** H.R. Rookmaker (the Netherlands), C. Seerveld (Canada) and D.J. van den Berg (South Africa).

- **Ethics:** A. Troost (born 1916, the Netherlands), J. Olthuis (Canada) and H. Jochemsen (the Netherlands).
- **Physics:** M.D. Stafleu (born 1937, the Netherlands).
- **Religious Studies:** A. Helleman (Tanzania).
- **Historiography and Philosophy of History:** K.A. Bril (born 1932), M.C. Smit (1911-1981) and C.T. McIntire (Canada).
- **Natural Sciences:** M.D. Stafleu (the Netherlands) and D.F.M. Struass (South Africa).
- **Education:** J. van Dyk (USA.), D. Blomberg (Canada), S. Fowler (Australia) and J.L. van der Walt (South Africa).
- **Political Sciences:** B. Zylstra (Canada), R.M. McCarthy (USA.), J.W. Skillen (USA.), J. Chaplin (England) and H.E.S. Woldring (the Netherlands).
- **Psychology:** H. van Belle (Canada), G. Glas and W.J. Ouweneel (the Netherlands).
- **Law:** H. van Eikema Hommes (the Netherlands, 1930-1984)
- **Sociology:** B. Breems (USA.), M.E. Botha (Canada and South Africa) and S. Griffioen (the Netherlands).
- **Linguistics:** P.A. Verburg (1905-1989).
- **Technology:** H. van Riessen (1911-2000), E. Schuurman (born 1937, the Netherlands) and M.J. de Vries (the Netherlands).
- **Theology:** J.W. Tunderman (1903-1942), G.J. Spykman (USA), A. Troost (the Netherlands) and J.C. vanderStelt (USA.).
- **Philosophy of Science:** R. Clouser (USA.) and W.J. Ouweneel (born 1944, the Netherlands).

Although this list is incomplete, it proves that Reformational philosophy can be used productively in various disciplines and for topical issues. (For more details consult the website of Steve Bishop mentioned under 2.1 above: www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk)

Thus far we have investigated the past and present of Reformational reflection. Seeing that history will encompass the past, present and eventually also the future, we must finally glance at the future too.

5 Extending and contextualising Reformational thought for Africa

From the preceding pages it is clear that a Reformational philosophy and practice of scholarship in other disciplines already have a long, rich history. It was and still is a beacon of light in secularised Western culture, which may not be hidden under a bucket; a valuable tree which may not be planted in Western soil only. Our own continent urgently needs this kind of worldview and philosophy. (See *Introduction* to this book.)

5.1 Three levels

Philosophy however, does not descend like a bolt from the blue. It grows organically from a specific environment. As in the case of a tree, one has to distinguish between the roots, the trunk, branches and fruit. The "root" is some religious conviction, like the Christian or secular faith. The "trunk" is a certain worldview and lifestyle. The "branches" is the philosophy with its various sub-disciplines. The "fruit" is the application of the philosophy in different disciplines and to various issues outside philosophy.

So a Christian philosophy and Christian approach in other sciences have to be "nourished" by the roots of a specific religion and worldview, otherwise it cannot develop. (If the religious and worldviewish roots are no longer alive, the philosophy also dries out and comes to a standstill.) This could be clearly seen in the origin of Reformational philosophy in the Netherlands. Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd were privileged to be able to build their philosophies upon an already existing Christian worldview.

In Africa we have (with the exception of a small group of people) a completely different situation. People have been converted and many churches were founded, but a clear Christian worldview – especially an explicitly Reformational

worldview – is still missing (cf. Adeyemo, 1993, Fowler, 1995 and Shaw, 1986). Development will therefore have to start on this level – otherwise a Reformational philosophy would be an artificial product stuck on the outside, which hangs in the air and has no vigour. (More about this under 5.4).

5.2 The need pointed out

As examples I mention two scholars only who in the past have pointed out this great need of Reformational thinking in Africa

5.2.1 From the Netherlands

Klapwijk (1987) emphasised at the International Symposium of the Society for Reformational Philosophy (1986 in Zeist, the Netherlands) that Reformational Philosophy – after 50 years – had to be contextualised. For that was the secret of the “fathers” (Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd) that from their own local context they spoke to the hearts and minds of many Dutch people.

He wrote for instance: “Transformational philosophy taken in the Christian sense presents itself in all modesty as a philosophy *in loco*: a philosophy ‘at the spot’. It does not install itself beforehand in some supposed process of universal culture or of western development... It takes the concrete historical cultural situation, including its intellectual heritage, as its hermeneutical starting point and the creational-messianic perspective as its transformational guideline. It strives purposefully for a general philosophical view of reality, but seeks to attain this primarily via a mastering of philosophical problems as they come up in ‘local’ Western, Oriental, African, Latin American and other situations, and secondarily via an encounter of these cultures along the difficult path of cross-cultural communication.”

He closes with the following: “In future Christian philosophizing cannot be a Western affair. And the future in question has already begun!”

Therefore with a view to its own mission worldwide – and for the sake of its own dynamics and fertility – Reformational philosophy has to be developed in various forms. At the same time those who practise it all over the world are joined

together by a common religious worldviewish perspective and motivated by a common calling.

5.2.2 From South Africa

At the same International symposium Van der Walt (1988) from South Africa emphasised exactly the same issue. And at the subsequent International Symposium of the Society for Reformational Philosophy (at Bovendonk, the Netherlands) he repeated this call even more urgently (cf. Van der Walt, 1994).

However, twenty years after 1986 Stellingwerff (2006:180) states that no reaction has followed on the call by Klapwijk (and therefore also by Van der Walt). Just as we will have to write our own history (cf. above), we will also have to shoulder the responsibility to prevent Reformational philosophy from being restricted to South Africa, and to help spread it to the rest of Africa.

5.3 The context

Consistent with the emphasis by Klapwijk on contextualising Reformational philosophy, we have to keep in mind that nowadays we live in a completely different spiritual climate from the one in which our predecessors thought, wrote and lectured. Van der Merwe (1969:103), for instance, identified the different spiritual trends during the three previous generations of Reformational philosophy. At the time of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven historicism and pragmatism became dominant schools of thought. And round about the sixties of the previous century existentialism and later developments in analytical philosophy was in the air. Today we have to take cognisance of new philosophical and social currents, like postmodernism.

It is almost superfluous to mention, but just think for example of the following new tendencies of our times: (1) An increasingly secular society. (In Africa not only the secularisation of traditional African religion and culture, but now also of Christendom.) (2) Post-modern relativism. (3) A neo-liberal, neo-capitalistic free market economy, which because of globalisation not only spreads geographically over the whole world (including Africa) but – even more dangerous – leads to the

commercialisation of all other domains of life which are by nature not economic. (4) New forms of pietistic (inwardly turned) Christendom and churchism. All these factors – and many more – today evoke completely new questions, which demand completely new answers from a Christian perspective.

5.4 How to go about the challenge

Conforming with what was stated under 5.1 above, the writer would like to recommend that we come to grips with this great task on the following three levels:

5.4.1 The religious level

Although there are millions of Christians in Africa – and they increase every day – the “glasses” through which they read the Bible are often “blurred”. By this we mean in the first place that they often still see the Bible as a Western book, which therefore can offer little to them in their own cultural context. In this regard great progress was made with the recent publication of the *African Bible Commentary* (cf. Adeyemo, 2006).

In the second instance the Bible is often read only for encouragement in personal faith and not with a view to the implications of the Gospel for a wider scope of life outside personal faith and the church. (Most of the time the Word of God is read with the double focus glasses of some form of the nature-grace dualism).

Africans therefore should be helped on the first (religious) level with material that studies the Bible with broader, Reformational “glasses”. One example of such a work is the one by Bartholomew & Goheen (2004) – it describes the “drama” of the Bible from the perspective of God’s all-encompassing kingdom.

5.4.2 The worldviewish level

To move to this level there are currently numerous works available in English. I merely mention the following: Goudzwaard (1984), Marshall & Gilbert (1988), Naugle (2002), Walsh & Middleton (1984 and later reprints), Wolters (1985 and reprints). Van der Walt (2004a and 2008) is specifically focused on Africa. The Institute for Reformational Studies in Potchefstroom also did much (until it was

closed in 1999) for Africa on the Christian worldview level. (A complete list of IRS-publications is available as an appendix at the end of www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk/vanderwalt.htm)

5.4.3 The (elementary) philosophical level

Since it would be a pedagogical blunder on this level to confront novices with for instance Dooyeweerd's *A new critique of theoretical thought* or Vollenhoven's *Isagoge Philosophiae*, one would have to use simpler introductions at first. Examples of these are: J.M. Spier (1902-1971) *An introduction to Christian philosophy* (1966), L. Kalsbeek (1903-1995) *Contours of a Christian philosophy* (1975) or D.F.M. Strauss *Man and his world* (1990). A useful elementary introduction to the philosophy of Vollenhoven as well as a short overview of the history of Western thought is given in the work of Kok (1998). The valuable introduction by Van Woudenberg (1992) is unfortunately only available in Dutch.

Finally two things have to be borne in mind. In the first place on all three levels the concrete problems with which Africa has to contend have to be taken into consideration. If Africans realise how valuable a Reformational reading of the Bible, worldview and philosophy can be to give direction in the practice of daily life, they will more readily be drawn to it.

In the second instance not everybody need become philosophers (third level). When someone has been helped to merely the first or second level, a lot has been reached. Popma once said that Christians can – fortunately – even without a Christian philosophy, lead a life that pleases God!

6 Review

This investigation began with the *past* – the history of the origin of Reformational thought in the Netherlands and South Africa. Gradually it progressed to the *present* – it was shown that on a wide front (geographically globally and theoretically in many disciplines) a Reformational philosophy and a Reformational approach in other subjects are being developed. Finally the *future* was also touched – the urgent need was stressed for this broadening and liberalising kind

of Christian thinking to get wings to the rest of Africa. May this ideal be realised one day!

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CHAPTER 5

A NEW PARADIGM FOR DOING CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY:

D.H.Th. VOLLENHOVEN (1892-1978)

This chapter would like to make a modest contribution in restoring acknowledgement of Vollenhoven's contribution to the Reformational philosophy. (1) It will, firstly, do so by providing information on existing and more recent literature on Vollenhoven's philosophy in general. (2) Secondly, literature on his problem-historical method of philosophical historiography will be reviewed. (3) Thirdly – as an appetiser to encourage African scholars to get interested – it will give a brief, elementary introduction into Vollenhoven's method of studying the history of philosophy.

Relevance to our main theme (at home in God's world):

Vollenhoven's Christian historiography of philosophy explains to us how reality (God's world) was conceived by different Christian and secular thinkers of the past and present and in this way assists us to understand Western cultural development. His systematic philosophy indicates how a biblically true view of God's world looks like as well as how we should live in his world according to his ordinances.

* * *

1 Introduction: Revived interest in Vollenhoven's philosophy

Both Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) and Dirk H.Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978) are regarded as the Dutch founders of a Christian-Reformational philosophy during the first half of the previous century. Dooyeweerd, however, is internationally the best known of the two. An important reason may be the fact that his *opus magnum* (published in the thirties in Dutch) was translated (already in the fifties) in English as *A new critique of theoretical thought*. Vollenhoven's works went out of print, were not translated into today's *lingua franca* and thus

they were not accessible to Christian scholars who could not read the original Dutch.

Proponents of a Christian approach in philosophy should be grateful that this unfortunate situation is slowly changing since 1992 – the year of the commemoration of Vollenhoven's birth a hundred years ago. Not only are key texts of his *oeuvre* republished, but they are also translated into English, apart from various introductions by his students (in both Dutch and English) to his philosophy.

2 Material on Vollenhoven and his philosophy in general

Vollenhoven has been known as the historian and his brother-in-law, Dooyeweerd, as the systematic philosopher in the Reformational tradition. The greater part of Vollenhoven's time and energy has indeed been devoted to his study of the history of philosophy. Less well-known is the fact that he has also given – in his own distinctive way – attention to systematic philosophy. Bril, Hart and Klapwijk (in their dedication to the 1973 volume in honour of Vollenhoven) even stated "... the very manner of his approach to history betrays him to be a systematician at heart. For his involvement in the history of philosophy has been primarily for the sake of further positive elaboration of systematic insights..." Because his historiography can not be separated from his systematic philosophy and vice versa, it is appropriate for this chapter to first review some sources about his philosophy in general.

2.1 Bibliographies of Vollenhoven's publications

During his long career Vollenhoven has published much. A first requirement to research his contribution has been to ascertain what he wrote, when and where it was published. Groen (1961), Bril (1973), Petersen & Derksen (1976) and Bril, Derksen & Kok (1979) did important groundwork in providing researchers with lists of Vollenhoven's publications. For publications of Vollenhoven available on the internet, see bibliography at the end of this chapter under "Vollenhoven" for the website.

2.2 Biographical contributions

Kok (1992) clarified Vollenhoven's early development and philosophical insights prior to 1926 (when he became professor of Philosophy at the Free University in Amsterdam). In the same year Stellingwerff (1992) enriched the Reformational community with a biography on Vollenhoven. This book enables contemporary readers to know more about the life and times of Vollenhoven and in this way also helps to understand his philosophy.

2.3 Publications in honour of Vollenhoven

At two occasions Vollenhoven was honoured with "Festschriften". The first (cf. Zuidema, 1951) was published at the occasion of his 25th year as professor at the Free University. The second volume (cf. Brill, Hart & Klapwijk, 1973) appeared in commemoration of his 80th birthday. Both these volumes contain valuable material for Vollenhoven-research.

2.4 Republications and translations of Vollenhoven's systematic philosophy

Tol (in Tol & Brill, 1992:13-214) has rendered an important service when he selected for republication ten key articles in which Vollenhoven explains his viewpoint on different systematic issues. In each of the ten chapters Tol starts with an own introduction, followed by the text from Vollenhoven and concludes with additional explanatory notes.

The most recent contribution is by Kok & Tol (2005) who translated Vollenhoven's brief exposition of his systematic viewpoints in *Isagôge philosophiae* (Introduction to philosophy) of 1945 (reprinted 1967). In his forward Tol (cf. Kok, 2005: iii-xxxii) informs the reader about key elements of Vollenhoven's systematic philosophy (ontology). While this work does not adequately represent Vollenhoven's later developed ideas, it nevertheless touches on the central themes of his thought. Therefore: "No serious study of Vollenhoven can afford to ignore this text" (p. iii). (A bilingual edition – Dutch and English – is also available.)

As stated above, Vollenhoven is especially remembered for his distinctive contribution to the study of the history of philosophy. It is therefore important to be aware of the material available for research on this particular aspect of his work as a Christian philosopher.

3 The basic sources on Vollenhoven's problem-historical method, their republication and application by his students

Firstly, the main original sources for the study of Vollenhoven's method will be mentioned. Secondly, information will be provided about their recent republication. It will, thirdly, be followed by the works of his students, either explaining or applying his method of historiography.

3.1 Vollenhoven's own explanation and application of the problem-historical method

The following four original sources are indispensable for a study of this method: (1) Vollenhoven (1956) first *applied* his method in an introductory course for students in which he gave a survey of the history of Western thought. (2) In only one article he (cf. Vollenhoven, 1961) *explained* his method. (3) A year later (cf. Vollenhoven, 1962) his *Schematische Kaarten* (schematic maps) appeared. In a bird's-eye view they provided a *survey* of the philosophical conceptions and their interrelatedness of Western philosophers from antiquity to the 20th century. (4) Finally, from 1959 to 1964 Vollenhoven became a contributor to the fifth edition of the *Oosthoek's Encyclopedie*, responsible for religion and philosophy. In this capacity he wrote articles on many of the major Western philosophers and philosophical problems. It provided the opportunity to *add more "flesh"* (detail) to his very brief discussion of different philosophers in his study guide for students (of 1956) as well as his "skeleton" survey of conceptions (of 1962).

These four publications complement each other and should be studied together to get a full picture of Vollenhoven's method. In summary it consists of two basic lines. On the one hand it gives the types of philosophy (the ontological differences and similarities), on the other hand the successive time-currents

(climates of opinion), which moulded, modified and revitalised the ontological conceptions. Also a thinker's dependency on his predecessors, the interrelation with his contemporaries and his influence on subsequent generations became visible in Vollenhoven's survey – especially in his schematic charts (1962).

3.2 New additions to and editions of the basic texts

Following his retirement (in 1963) Vollenhoven continued with so-called private lectures (*privatissima*) to interested students in which he continued to explore the history of philosophy, along the way elaborating and modifying his method. These final developments in his method were edited after his death by Tol (cf. Vollenhoven, 1979) and Bril (1982).

Since 1992 the process of the republication of Vollenhoven's writings on the problem-historical method gained momentum. Bril (in Tol & Bril, 1992: 303-346) edited two texts. This was followed by Bril & Boonstra (2000) who edited a new edition of Vollenhoven 1962 (Schematic maps) with many valuable notes to enhance its accessibility. Then Bril (2005b) followed with a republication of Vollenhoven 1956 and 1961 as well as selections from Vollenhoven 1962. The most recent is the republication in one volume (473 pages) edited by Bril (2005c) of all the articles on philosophers and philosophical problems which Vollenhoven contributed (during 1959-1964) to the *Oosthoek's Encyclopedie*.

Hopefully all this indispensable, original material for an in-depth study of Vollenhoven's method will one day be translated into English. From the next section it will, however, be evident that quite a few explanations and applications of Vollenhoven's method are available in languages other than Dutch.

3.3 Articles and books by followers of Vollenhoven, explaining and applying his method

Vollenhoven's method fascinated many Christian philosophers around the world. Because of the complexity of two thousand years of Western philosophy, his method may be difficult to follow. (For educational purposes his students have mostly tried to simplify it). At the same time this method, developed from a

distinct Christian perspective, provides much deeper insight into the patterns of the Western mind than most other methods. The following are a few examples of the world-wide interest in this method.

- **The Netherlands.** the expert on this method is undoubtedly Bril. More than anyone else he has contributed towards continued interest in and knowledge about it after Vollenhoven's death. Apart from his contributions mentioned already, Bril (1986) explained and applied the method in his own dissertation *Westerse denkstructuren* (Western patterns of thought). Recently he (cf. Bril, 2005a) again provided an easily comprehensible introduction into Vollenhoven's method. It is highly recommended for English-speaking beginners.

A second expert on Vollenhoven in the Netherlands is Tol (cf. 1993). His forthcoming dissertation (preliminary title: *Philosophy in the making; the emergence of Reformed philosophy in D.H.Th. Vollenhoven*) will discuss the early Vollenhoven (1918-1930) and will be published by Dordt College Press, Sioux Center, Iowa, USA.

- In **Canada** the contributions of Hart (1965a, 1965b), Seerveld (1973, 1975 and 1993) and Wolters (1970, 1979) should be mentioned.
- In the **United States of America** Runner (1958/1959), Van Dijk (1969/1970) and Kok (1998) explained and/or applied the problem-historical method.
- For **Australia** see Van der Laan (1967 and 1973).
- In **South Africa** Taljaard (1955) applied Vollenhoven's method in his dissertation on Franz Brentano. He also translated Vollenhoven's survey of the history of philosophy (1956) into Afrikaans (cf. Vollenhoven, 1982). In a book on his own systematic philosophy (cf. Taljaard, 1976) the influence of Vollenhoven's method is evident. The present writer contributed articles on the method in Van der Walt, 1969/1970, 1973, 1978, 1986 and 2008. The method is also applied by South African philosophers who have not published on the method as such. For example, Venter of the School of Philosophy at the Potchefstroom Campus of the

North-West University, employs a simplified version in his courses on the history of ideas.

The preceding survey (section 2 and 3) indicates continued interest in Vollenhoven's contribution to systematic philosophy from a Reformational perspective. This giant in the Reformational tradition is not forgotten. Returning *ad fontes* (to the sources) of our tradition is never a waste of time.

Simultaneously the renewed interest in Vollenhoven's very original method of studying the history of philosophy is evident. The aim of the next section of this article is to provide – especially for (South) African readers – a brief, elementary introduction into this method. (Since ample attention has been given to the sources which can be consulted, no further references will be given in this section.)

The writer is of the opinion that not merely philosophers should take cognisance of this method. As philosophical presuppositions determine every scientific discipline, the method (with modification) could be used by scholars from different other fields of study. (In Canada, for instance, C. Seerveld employed the method in his studies on the history of aesthetics, while H. van Belle used it in his to be published book on the history of psychology.)

4. A simplified introduction into Vollenhoven's method for the historiography of philosophy

The history of Western philosophy often makes one think of a dense forest with a rich variety of fauna and flora. To follow a footpath at whim or at random will not be advisable. One needs a good guide in order not to get lost hopelessly.

4.1 Introduction: Why study the history of philosophy?

Before going into a consideration of *how* one should study the history of philosophy, there is a need to answer a proceeding question: *Why* one should deal with the history of philosophy?

Many people regard history as something that is merely belonging to the past. History has been described as being what Macbeth has called life: "... a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing ..."The study of history is thus seen by some as digging up the debris of the past. Why not rather leave the old philosophers in peace? The answer is very simple: It is because they will not leave you in peace!

4.1.1 Everybody starts from a heritage

As a tree cannot free itself of the soil in which it is growing, or as man cannot extricate himself from his ancestry, because he carries within himself hereditary factors which determine his being, one cannot extricate oneself from one's past history. The past is also present today. No person can start at the very beginning – which privilege belonged to Adam and Eve alone. Everyone starts with a particular background, a certain tradition, and an idiosyncratic personal history. Even somebody who rebels against his heritage still lives by it – and he needs it as a springboard to get on.

If then one cannot be freed from the history of philosophy because it will not let one go, what purpose is to be found for an involvement in it? At least two additional reasons can be mentioned.

4.1.2 One can learn from one's predecessors

In the first place every human being is confronted by the mystery of his being and of the world as a whole. He/she has to find answers to fundamental questions, such as: Who am I? What is the sense of my existence? Who is God? What is my relationship to him? What are the yardsticks by which I should live? What is good, and what is evil? How can I find true knowledge and wisdom on which I can trust and build?

These are the most profound and troubling questions humans wrestle with. But at the same time the answers to these problems determine one's whole life. The history of philosophy tells how the greatest minds in history have grappled with these fundamental issues and how they found answers to them. Their answers

can not be regarded as final solutions – even though many of them thought so at the time. Their struggles, however, were not in vain. To listen to the accounts of their struggles, provides some sort of schooling in one's own quest for answers.

4.1.3 One can attain a broader perspective

In the second place one can see further and wider if one knows the history of philosophy. One then becomes like a toddler sitting on his father's shoulders. By sitting on the shoulders of the giants of the human search for wisdom, one can broaden one's own perspectives. One does not live any more merely in the present, surrounded by the fashionable philosophy of the day. One can compare and sift, and arrive at a more accurate vision. It can also help one to evade some of the pitfalls that one's predecessors have fallen into.

But is philosophy not mere speculation, theoretical reflection, abstract intellectual games? Does it really have practical relevance for daily life?

4.1.4 Philosophy has practical consequences

The division between theory and practice implied by such a question does not exist. Scientific and philosophical views can have deadly implications. Some views in, for example modern philosophy, psychology, biology and political philosophy can really kill people. If these concepts originate, on the other hand, in the light of the Word of God, they can become liberating means of promoting peace, sanity and spiritual health.

Behind the machine gun there is a pen, impelled by the revolutionary convictions of men. Philosophical views infiltrate and march throughout history. The Bible rightly maintains that man's struggle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual and evil powers. This spiritual battle is also waged in the field of philosophy with great fervour.

The conclusion is that knowledge of the history of philosophy is not only worth while, it is almost indispensable. It is essential for anyone who does not want to go through life with blinkers.

4.1.5 Value in non-Christian philosophies for Christians

An often asked next question is whether a Christian philosopher can also learn something from a secular philosopher.

The reply is that one must understand the non-Christian's way of thinking because one's own times have become permeated by unchristian ideas. If you do not do that, you would not be able to understand the spirit of your own time. Then you would also not be able to bring a message of redemption for your time.

One can learn something from all the great thinkers. Through the grace of God the lie has not fully captured the world. There are moments of truth, fragments of clarity in any philosopher's life. Augustine recommended Christians to do what the Israelites did in their exodus from Egypt: They had to take along the gold and silver (of the heathen Egyptians) to construct a temple for the Lord, but they had to leave behind the idols. One might be critical about this statement of Augustine, yet the image he uses is very useful in pointing out that without the thought of pagan and secular thinkers Christians would be poorer.

Let us return to my metaphor of the indigenous forest at the beginning. In the course of history one giant of the forest after the other has either been toppled, or cut off for the saw mill and the factory. But they are still of value. One has the task to study the various kinds of wood. Each is different. From their colour, texture and (when they are cut up) fragrance this becomes clear. In this way one also has to look at the greats in the field of the human intellect in the light of their heritage (writings) to determine of what "wood" they were carved. For this, however, one needs a good method because the history of Western philosophy is old (2,500 years) and complicated.

4.2 Requirements for a method to study the history of philosophy

A method presupposes amongst others an *aim* to (for example a survey of and insight in a specific field), careful *planning* to enable one to reach the goal, *execution* of the plan by a *person* (or apparatus controlled by a person) with due consideration of the *material* that has to be processed, and the *means* that he

has at his disposal. A method (both scientific and pre-scientific) rests on assumptions or presuppositions and it can therefore not be neutral.

This leads to at least two requirements for a method by means of which the history of philosophy should be studied:

- *It should truly be built out "in Your light"* (Psalm 36:10), which means that one cannot just use an existing (secular) method and graft onto it the Christian approach. The light of the Word has to be incorporated in it in such a way that the method should enable one to penetrate to the core of the history of philosophy.
- *It should be a truly philosophical method*, by which is meant that it has to fit the material which has to be worked with, which is the history of philosophy. A non-philosophical method may not simply be imposed on the field of study. The method has to tie in with the field of study. Seeing that the field of study of philosophy is a very wide one (the whole spectrum of reality) and not a particular facet (as is the case in other disciplines), the method would also have to be comprehensive.

It is important to determine now already that the problem-historical method constitutes a method, not necessarily the *only* method of philosophical historiography, by means of which only certain facets are taken from the rich field of study. The method may therefore not be accused of leaving unexplored other facets which it does not intend to cover. The name of the method clearly indicates its potential and also its limitations.

This method will now be tested by the already-stated double criterion: Is it truly developed "in His light", and is it truly philosophical? The answer to the first of these questions will receive more attention to be able to indicate that Vollenhoven provided Christian scholars with the first integral Christian historiography of philosophy in history.

4.3 Is the method developed in the light of God's revelation?

Vollenhoven in his method uses the Bible as a determining touchstone. How does he, by means of insights gleaned from the Bible, determine the kind of "wood" used to carve a certain philosopher? According to the Bible Vollenhoven distinguishes three realities: God, his laws and the cosmos (which is subjected to God's laws). He therefore tests each philosophy on three levels. He looks carefully at the *colour* of the philosophy, he sees the wood and smells the special *fragrance*. He planes the wood and touches its unique *texture*.

4.3.1 The "colour" is the spirit or religious direction emanating from a particular philosophy

Vollenhoven puts a direct question to each philosopher: "What have you done with the Word of God?" This is not a purely formal question. Vollenhoven does not merely wish to know whether a specific philosopher knew about the Scriptures, but also whether his philosophy has been given shape and content according to the Scriptures. From the history of philosophy he receives the following three answers:

- *The Greek and Roman philosophers of antiquity* (500 BC – 100 AD) answer that they did not know the Bible or the God of the Bible at all.
- *The Patristic and the Medieval philosophers* (200 to 1400 AD) reply that they could not listen only to the Word of God, because they also had to keep account of the important philosophical heritage of Antiquity. They therefore tried, in their synthetic philosophy, to serve two masters at the same time.
- *The philosophers during the period of history from the Renaissance and the Reformation* (1500 and after) do not like the spirit of compromise of the Middle Ages. This is, however, as far as they agree. Renaissance man (and all his many followers in Western history) does not like synthesis, because the Christian elements encompassed in it offend him. However, the Reformers (and their small number of spiritual children) want to get rid of the pagan element in synthetic

philosophy in order to be able to listen to the unadulterated Word of God once more.

These three replies, which lay bare the deepest religious direction of philosophers, cause Vollenhoven to divide the history of Western philosophy into *three main eras or periods*:

- the *pre-synthetic thought* of Antiquity (Greek and Roman philosophy);
- the *synthetic thought* of the Church Fathers and the Middle Ages;
- and the following *post- or anti-synthetic (secular) thought* (Modern philosophy).

In anti-synthetic philosophy he makes a distinction between anti-synthetic left or secular (those who broke with the Scriptures) and anti-synthetic right (those who kept in mind the Word of God).

The general accepted division of the history of philosophy into Antique, Medieval and Modern philosophy is, according to him, not very sensible. Are the Middle Ages merely a middle period, and who determines what is Modern? Vollenhoven not only substitutes this with something that makes more sense, but he also succeeds in doing this in the light of God's Word. This is the first facet of his method which allows the light of Scripture to plumb the depths of a philosopher's thought: he is either a *pagan* thinker (before the coming of Christ), or he is a *half-hearted Christian*, or a (modern) *secular* philosopher who rejects Christ, or an *integral Christian* who, in his whole life – also in his philosophy – tries to follow Christ.

The fact that Vollenhoven includes God as part of his Christian philosophy (God-law-cosmos) is an important step. It, however, does not imply that God became an object of philosophical study. A Christian philosopher accepts His existence in faith.

4.3.2 The "fragrance" of a philosophy is the particular concept of law held by each philosopher

The Word of God clearly reveals that (1) *God* is there, that He has called (2) *creation* into being, and that He has subjected *creation* (including human beings) to (3) various *laws*. For (non-human) nature these laws are imperative, but for man they are indicative: they tell him what he *ought to do*. The central law applicable to man is the commandment of love (Matthew 22:37-40).

Vollenhoven does not merely ask the *formal* question (viz., what a particular philosopher's attitude towards the Word had been), but he also asks questions about *content* (with reference to *what* the Bible reveals to us). It is not because Vollenhoven wishes to judge people unjustly (such as the Greeks who could not know the Bible), but because he is convinced that only the light of the Bible can supply answers to ultimate questions.

Therefore the second question that each philosopher has to answer according to this method is: Where did you seek and find direction? How did you determine what is right or wrong, true or false, ugly or beautiful? (Apart from what *is/exists*, every philosopher also has to answer the question: what *ought* to be done.)

In Greek thought already this question revealed some interesting facets. As pagans the Greeks did not know that *God* had given laws to direct all creatures on earth. For that reason they sought laws either inside (within the subjects or in their qualities) or outside the *cosmos*. Furthermore, they also did not know the central commandment of love. In the third place the law was confused with the universal. (Universal-individual is one of the fundamental traits of all created things and not the same as the distinction law-subject. Cf. 4.3.3 below.)

Vollenhoven found three different replies to his second question: a subjectivist, an objectivist and a realist answer.

- **Subjectivists**

Subjectivist thinkers did not distinguish clearly enough between creatures or subjects and the laws, norms or principles which they had to obey. The basic reason for this was to be found in the fact that they did not know God as the Giver of the laws. Therefore they could not distinguish between the nature of subjects which *are* and the nature of laws which are *valid*. They thus identified the law with something of the cosmos. The result was inevitably that some part of creation now became its own law and was consequently absolutised.

Initially these subjectivised laws were still sought in something creatively outside the human being. Man, however, soon became the yardstick for all things (cf. Protagoras of Abdera). There was no other guideline from "above".

Unnecessary to say that such subjectivism (often accompanied by individualism, relativism and pragmatism) ultimately opens the door to anarchism and even nihilism. Each individual has his own principles and determines for himself what he regards as true, right, good and beautiful. The direction and the certainty that one seeks so urgently, the subjectivist could not find.

Of the three views about the law, it was subjectivism which eventually (with the Greeks already) gained the upperhand and which still – even in different forms – dominates Western thought. Both modernism (rationalism) and contemporary post-modernism (irrationalism) are clear examples.

- **Objectivists**

The objectivist thinkers developed a viewpoint to include another interesting facet of creation, viz., the qualities of concrete things such as colour, sounds, sizes, etc. The qualities of things determined to a large extent what things could do or what could be done with them. Our daily actions are influenced by what we see, smell, hear and feel. An artist, for instance, has to seek for the right materials with the right qualities in order to create the work of art he has visualized.

This has the unfortunate effect of seducing the objectivist to seek firm ground, basic certainties and guidelines for life in these objects. The objects have now

become the laws for the subjects. An object, for example the seductive fragrance of one's girl friend's perfume, may well influence one's actions, but may never become the norm for you behaviour.

The objectivist too seeks for basic direction somewhere in creation, so that objectivism, looked at carefully, does not offer any advantage over subjectivism – certainty keeps eluding both.

- **Realists**

The great Greek philosopher Plato (427 – 347 BC) gave a third reply to Vollenhoven's question about law. Because he realized that neither subjectivism nor objectivism offered sure direction, he visualised the law *outside* the cosmos. The law is according to him a *thing* (Latin *res*, from which "realism"), which exists independently outside the cosmos, and indicates to us how we should live in terms of what is true, good and beautiful. (In this way Plato became the first Greek thinker who acknowledged two separate modes of being.) According to him we can know these laws by way of our reasoning power.

The great Plato too, however, missed the point. According to the Scriptures God's law is not a "thing", something either above or behind creation. It is also not independent, apart from God, the Law-giver. Furthermore, it is not just an example to us, discovered by reason, which we can follow. According to the Scriptures man has to stand in the correct relationship with God in order to know his law, and then one has no option but to bow in obedience.

As mentioned above, the subjectivist concept of law (especially as a result of the emergence of the a-priori theme, which located the laws in the human mind) came out of the struggle triumphantly. This state of affairs has lasted to the present day. The point of contention which, after the Greeks, gave rise to different philosophical trends centred mainly on smaller details, while they all showed similarities in their rejection of both objectivism and realism. The struggle today, for instance, between rationalism and irrationalism (or between modernism and post-modernism) is merely a storm in the same teacup, an internal fight between factions of the subjectivist viewpoint.

With this division into a variety of trends Vollenhoven indicated how, as a result of their communal conception about norms – in spite of systematic differences – there can be a communal bond between philosophers. A trend, time-current or a philosophical school links together different philosophers into a historical unity. These consecutive trends of thought constitute an important cause for the dynamics of Western philosophical history.

A comparison of Vollenhoven's method with a variety of other methods of historiography, like the chronological, genetic, conceptual, comparative and psychological-nationalistic methods (cf. Van der Walt, 1973:163), clearly reveals that in this way he probes much deeper into the history of philosophy.

4.3.3 The "texture" is the unique way in which each philosopher views reality

The way in which each philosopher has given shape to his views about reality can be felt from his philosophy as one feels texture. Vollenhoven has gained a sufficiently clear touch from the various philosophical "woods" to distinguish clearly all the different types.

Philosophers are questioners. They do not have the answers to the questions – as is generally assumed. One could rather say that they have questions about all the answers. There are certain basic questions (as Vollenhoven has discovered) which each philosopher asks and provides answers to.

Such questions include: Where does reality come from? What did it look like originally? Each philosopher is also absorbed by the mysterious relationship between the universal and the individual: What makes an oak an oak, a syringa a syringa and a peach a peach? Why do we call them all trees? How is that we are all people and yet each remains a unique being?

Throughout the ages human beings have also wondered about themselves. Where does he/she come from? Does he/she consist of body and soul? What is the sense of his/her existence, and what is his/her destiny? How does he/she have to live with others? How does he/she attain true knowledge?

Vollenhoven now asks – in the light of the Scriptures – what each philosopher's answer to these basic questions had been. It is impossible to give all the answers here. Only a few of the "textures" that he discovered will be outlined.

- **The origin of reality**

As regards the question about *origin* there are those who have called on myth (the result of fantasies of faith) to explain the origin of reality. These tinkers are characterized as *mythologizing*. Others have rejected this explanation. Vollenhoven calls them *non-mythologizing*. Within this group there are also differences: the *purely cosmological* philosophers completely evade the question about origins and they philosophize only about the cosmos as it exists, while the *cosmogono-cosmological* philosophers do not disregard the question of origin.

- **Original unity or diversity**

As regards the question about *how the cosmos looked like originally*, there are mainly two points of view. The one group of philosophers maintains that it had been a unity, so that the diversity that one observes in the cosmos is of a secondary nature. The other group feels that the diversity (usually a duality, consisting of a transcendental and a non-transcendental part) existed from the beginning. They are thus confronted by the problem of where the unity of the cosmos came from. Vollenhoven calls the former group *monists* and the latter group *dualists*. The basic point of departure of these groups also determines how they will see the human being: a unity or a duality (of, for example, soul and body). And if he/she is to be seen as a duality, what then is the relationship between his/her higher and his/her lower component? A whole range of anthropological theories is offered as possible solutions.

- **Universal and individual**

To the question as to what the *relationship between the universal and the individual* is, history offers fascinating theories. Vollenhoven distinguishes between *universalism* (which regards the universal of primary importance and puts the individual in the second place), *individualism* (which does the exact

opposite) and *partial universalism*, which follows a middle road. Among the partial universalists Vollenhoven distinguishes two subtypes, viz., those who hold to a *macro-microcosmos theory*, and those who accept the doctrine of *form and matter*.

Vollenhoven therefore indicates how philosophers have given incorrect answers to all three of the questions mentioned (origin, original condition and individual-universal), because they did not know the Scriptures or did not wish to acknowledge the Scriptures fully. His own view, gained in the light of the Bible, is not a choice for one of the solutions produced by history, but it brings to the fore something quite different. In this respect too it is clear that Vollenhoven does not offer a method that is Scripturally bound in name only.

4.3.4 Summary

In conclusion one could say that Vollenhoven has through his method devised the following means to determine a philosopher's stance:

- *era or period*, which is determined in the light of a philosopher's attitude to *the Word of God and the God of the Word*;
- *trend of time-current*, which indicates a philosopher's view of *law*; and
- *type*, which emerges from the philosopher's view on the *cosmos*.

In inverted order one could say that Vollenhoven's zoom lens lifts out in succession three "levels" of a philosopher's conception. The focus first falls on the specific philosopher's *view of the cosmos (type)*. Then a deeper facet is brought to light when it is directed at the philosopher's *concept of law*, that in which he seeks his security and direction (*trend or time-current*). Because the law is an important link between the creation and the Creator, a even deeper level is reached, viz., the specific philosopher's *relationship to God and his Word (era or period)*

Vollenhoven's own systematic philosophy, with its basic distinction between God, law and cosmos, clearly influenced the way he understood the history of philosophy.

The first and major question (as to whether Vollenhoven's method was really constructed in the light of the Scriptures) can therefore be answered affirmatively. The second question set at the beginning, viz. as to whether this method does justice to the field or investigation can be dealt with briefly.

4.4 Does Vollenhoven's method do justice to the history of philosophy?

The requirement set above, was that an alien method should no be imposed on a field or investigation. Stated in positive terms there should be compatibility between the nature of the method and the prospective field of study. This is an important requirement.

4.4.1 A caricature of the method

People have accused Vollenhoven of "raping" the history of philosophy by his method. He has also been accused of being guilty of a pigeonhole-type of schematism. He would then have gone around like a Sherlock Holmes and arrest every philosopher he encountered, label him and shove him into a cell previously prepared. The mesh imprisoning the philosopher would be woven of type and trend, and the man would be guilty as charged until he had proved the opposite!

4.4.2 A reply

Such criticism could only emanate from people who have no knowledge of what Vollenhoven was trying to do. In the first place he did not formulate his method fully before he turned to the history of philosophy. His method grew gradually on the basis of what he discovered in the history itself. (It was only in 1948 that he formally named his method.)

In the second place Vollenhoven was always willing to adapt his method, to correct it and to make it more accurate and encompassing. These continual adaptations were often the cause of great despair among his students, but also clear proof that he did not attempt to force the history of philosophy into a steel corset. By means of his terminology he wished to distinguish small details and differences in the patterns of thought of the various philosophers.

In the third place it is also not true that Vollenhoven tried to pigeonhole philosophers in one of only a few pigeonholes. This is rather true of many of the current textbooks of philosophical history which have no more than three or four labels at their disposal. Vollenhoven's method allows several thousand possibilities. If his method has to be called a prison-house for philosophers, then it is rather a liberal prison-house.

4.4.3 The two sides of the method

In philosophy one deals with the *basic problems* that each philosopher wrestles with anew, but never fully chews. One could say that the ever-recurring problems point at the *constant* element. As every other history, the *history of philosophy* is *dynamic*, ever-changing. As a result of the quest for direction (especially in terms of norms or laws), which never comes to rest, the history of philosophy remains in motion.

Vollenhoven thus wishes to do justice to the field of investigation by giving attention to both the problematic and the historical. (This explains the name of the method.) Emphasis purely on history is not sufficient. On the other hand history will disintegrate into small fragments when only the philosophical issues are lifted out.

The emphasis on the close link between these two facets of the history of philosophy ensures that the philosophical historiographer sees the problems as they originate, or as they developed in the course of history. This prevents, for example, that one should anachronistically superimpose one's own problems on a previous era and, for example, refer to Socrates as an existentialist.

Vollenhoven was not the first to develop a problem-historical approach. In his well-known *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Windelband also indicated the need for a "problemgeschichtliche" method according to which emphasis should be on the "Hauptprobleme" (main problems) and "Hauptrichtungen" (main currents or directions). Windelband, however, did not consistently stick to his problem-historical method.

Therefore Vollenhoven's method is sometimes called the *consistent* problem-historical method. One or the other form of problem-historical approach (history of ideas) is quite popular today. Vollenhoven's special merit, however, lies in the fact that, decades ago already, he *consistently* treated philosophical *problems* in their *historical context*.

In conclusion an affirmative reply can be given to the question as to whether Vollenhoven's method does justice to the field of investigation. This does not mean that it should be regarded as the final and perfect method. Each method has its inherent limitations and weaknesses.

Before, in conclusion, a few arguments against and in favour of the problem-historical method are discussed, a synopsis of the method in the form of a diagram may be helpful.

4.5 A diagrammatic resume

In a simplified way the problem-historical method boils down to the following:

- Philosophers A, B and C's philosophical conceptions do not only differ as regards to *trends or time-currents* which they subscribe to (subjectivism, objectivism and realism), but also as regards the *type* of philosophy that they adhere to: they hold to different viewpoints regarding the origin of reality. Their deeper relationship emerges, however, in the fact that they are all Greek philosophers from the same *period* preceding synthetic philosophy.
- Philosopher D, although from a completely different *period* (synthetic philosophy) most probably underwent influence from philosopher C – even though he was a pre-synthetic thinker – because they hold to identical *types* of philosophy. Systematically speaking they have "family" ties.
- Philosophers D and E, while they do differ as to the *type* of philosophy that they adhere to (the "texture" in the terms used earlier) are probably related in terms of *era* because they have been placed in the same *trend* (the "fragrance" of their philosophy is the same).
- Philosopher E was a dynamic thinker. He did not keep to the same point of view all his life. First he changed from a monistic (E1) to a dualistic concept (E2). Then he maintained his dualism, but a changed viewpoint on the law shifted him into a new trend (E3).
- Philosophers F and G agree strongly as to the "texture" of their philosophies, but the "colour" (religious direction) differ in both cases. F has broken with the Word of God, and G wants to use the light of God's Word in his philosophy. Although philosopher G's attitude is right, he does not yet think radically in biblical terms. Also the texture of his philosophy still has to be reformed in the light of the Scriptures.
- Philosopher H is a truly Reformational thinker. (For that reason he stands totally outside the diagram.) The colour, the fragrance and the texture of his philosophy are clearly determined by the Word of God.

4.6 Arguments against and in favour of the problem-historical method

As is the case with any method this method too has its limitations and its strong points. The objections that have already been aired in the course of the article, such as for example the objection that Vollenhoven imposes his own preconceived ideas on the material, will not be repeated.

4.6.1 Objections against

As far as possible a response will be given to the following objections – which of course does not mean that some of the objections are not valid, pointing out real weaknesses in the method.

- **The method does not represent the biographical details concerning a philosopher.** It is true that biographical information is not given in Vollenhoven's *Schematische Kaarten*, but there is nothing to prevent one from giving this elsewhere – as Vollenhoven himself has done in his survey for students and in his articles for the *Oosthoeks Encyclopedie* (cf. Brill, 2005c).
- **The method does not allow the philosopher himself to become visible** – he disappears behind his abstract philosophical conception. This method is not in the first place concerned with philosophers as people but with their patterns for thought. If a philosopher's personality were to be of special interest for a true understanding of his ideas, attention can be given to this aspect.
- **The true influence of important philosophers can not be indicated by means of this method** – the dwarf stand on the same line as the giants from the history of human thought. This is once again true if one were to identify the method with the schematic charts of Vollenhoven. Those who know more about this method, are aware that Vollenhoven's method succeeds in showing the immense influence of great philosophers through the ages. And the so-called dwarfs are not included in his charts without reason – they are included because they have also contributed in an important way to the history of Western philosophy.

- **The method is very selective.** This is true, but each method is selective. The question is whether *one* method could be found to cover and exploit the entire field.
- **The reasons for the changeover from one trend to another, are not given.** Vollenhoven did (in, for example, the short survey of 1956 for his students) pay attention to this "struggle of the intellects".
- **Are there not more similarities (and also more differences) between philosophers** than merely the ontological (type) and historical (trend)? That might well be possible. These (the what *is* and the what *ought* questions) are however, the two most important ones.
- **The method is fleshless and bloodless** – it merely offers the skeleton of a philosophy. This is true, but if it were to offer more, certain strong points (such as, for example, the broad survey that it offers) will have to be sacrificed.
- **The method is difficult to comprehend.** Usually the reference in this respect is to Vollenhoven's compact style and terminology. He does not, however, introduce new terminology purely for the sake of the terminology, but in order to be able to distinguish more clearly. Scientific accuracy prevents Vollenhoven from – as many textbooks in the history of philosophy – using vague terms, such as "the Greek vision of the world", "the Medieval ground motif", "modern Anthropology" or "the conception of Aristotle". (Aristotle did not have one conception only, but a long and complex philosophical development – which can only be described by means of accurate terminology.) Each method has its own terminology. Scientific "jargon" is the "shorthand" by which scientists communicate.
- **The method is time-consuming and therefore not very useful.** This is true. Vollenhoven worked with it and on it his entire academic career. One does not gain anything which is worthwhile, especially in the field of philosophy, in one day. Digging – in history too – demands sweat and devotion. Most people, however, do not have to know the *whole* of history *in detail* or to write books

about it. The method remains useful in the analysis of only one thinker or one trend.

4.6.2 Arguments in favour of the method

The following points highlight the value of this method:

- It is the **only truly Reformational, biblically-founded method** of philosophical historiography so far.
- It was also pointed out already that this method – as far as can be judged – **does not wilfully force the history of philosophy into a pre-conceived, restrictive scheme.**
- It offers a **useful overview** of the whole of Western philosophy.
- Apart from the **unity** of the history of philosophy it also allows one to see the **great diversity**. (Not only the "wood", but every individual "tree" receives the right amount of attention.)
- At the same time it offers insight into the **pattern** (colour, fragrance and texture) of each philosopher's thoughts.
- It has **an eye for the development of specific thinkers** and disposes of the apparatus to be able to describe the development. That for which in the past Vollenhoven was ridiculed, viz., that in various thinkers he often indicated a course of development and thus change of conception, would seem today to have been one of his great strengths.
- It is possible, by means of this method, to **indicate clearly the differences and relations between various philosophers.**
- At the same time the method lends itself to **indicate where and how philosophers have influenced each other.**
- The method has not been developed only recently. It has been tried out by Vollenhoven's students and **has already yielded some surprising results.**

- The possibility of the **application of the method in other fields** than the purely philosophical is not excluded. Theology (especially the history of dogma) is an obvious example, but philosophical presuppositions influence every field of study.

An important factor which in the past rendered this method unpopular, among especially young students of philosophy, is perhaps to be found in the fact that it was presented in a pedagogically unsound manner. Therefore it is of the greatest importance that his method should be offered in a simple and comprehensible manner. This article has been a modest effort in this direction.

5. Conclusion

The perceptive eye, sensitive nose and appreciative hand of the expert can help one to discern the great variety of "woods" from the history of philosophy. Each has its own colour, fragrance, and texture. Some are rough-grained, some are fine-grained. Some are dry while others have their own oil. In some one can discern the rings of growth very clearly, in others not.

Vollenhoven was such an expert, who could see from precisely what kind of "wood" a philosopher have been carved. His method brings us to the core of many "trees" in the history of philosophy. He left us a precious heritage which can be used fruitfully and should be explored more fully in future.

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* * *

CHAPTER 6

GOD'S ORDINANCES:

PROVIDING DIRECTION IN A CRISIS OF NORMS AND VALUES

As indicated in the previous chapter, apart from answering the question *what is*, a second fundamental question to be answered by everyone is *what ought to be done*. This chapter tackles this difficult problem. It is generally accepted today that we are experiencing a radical and world-wide normative and value crisis. In comparison with similar crises of the past, the present one seems to be deeper-going and far-reaching. This philosophical reflection is an effort to trace the underlying or root causes for this crisis. It also tries to find a solution from a Christian philosophical perspective. To do so the following steps are taken: (1) the first part consists of a brief historical survey to indicate how this crisis gradually developed during the past 2500 years of Western thinking. (2) It is followed by a systematic exposition of how the Reformational philosophy of the previous century tried, by way of its doctrine of God's creational ordinances, to overcome the normative crisis. (3) Because some contemporary representatives of a Reformational philosophy do not fully agree with their predecessors, their critical questions about a creation order are reviewed. (4) While the preceding sections deal with the problem of a deviation in direction, the last part asks the question how a new course can be opened up in this crisis of norms and values.

Relevance to our central theme (at home in God's world):

To enjoy a good and blessed life in God's world, we have to obey God's guidelines, laws or ordinances, revealed in creation and Scripture.

* * *

1 Introduction: the problem and the approach

By way of introduction attention is given to two matters: (1) *what* the problem entails and (2) *how* it will be approached.

1.1 The problem

More than ten years ago already someone wrote as follows: "... our normative environment, together with codes of conduct, understanding of values ... is presently in a crisis. Such a ... crisis gives rise to ... the gravest sort of anxiety. In such a context the very normative ground on which one stands is uncertain. The old answers... are no longer convincing, and ultimate questions... are reopened. Such reopening is usually horrific. Everything seems to slip: our landscape, our institutions, our values, our way of life..." (Walsh, 1995:22)

Later on Walsh speaks about a radical disorientation: the old orientation no longer offers a direction, while a new one has not yet been found. This is typical of a crisis where a problem seems to be so difficult that there is no unanimous solution to it.

In post-1994 South Africa it has become clear that principles, norms, values and morals can change fast and profoundly. Most South Africans – white as well as black – currently live with the gnawing uncertainty that what they used to hold dear is simply swept along in a wave of secularism.

At the same time one has to resign oneself to the realisation that nothing can withstand the ravages of time. It simply has to be accepted as a fact that even people's ideas of what is normative change. The question is, however, whether the direction of the new norms – for norms point in a specific direction – is the right one.

An even more difficult question (linked to the previous one) is whether there is a more steady ground on which we can build our norms than merely the *dynamic* course of time. For if norms simply *originate* in history, they will also *fade away* with history. Can one appeal to something more lasting and steadfast that will not be mown down by history? Can a new direction be found in the crisis and how? The idea of a creational order occupies a strategic place within Calvinist Reformational philosophy (Cf. Griffioen, 1995:52; Hart, 2000:137 and Spykman, 1994).

From a recent interview with Glas (2009:4), chairman of the committee who will organise the International Symposium (15-19/09/2011) of the Association for Reformational Philosophy (the Netherlands), we derive the following information. This conference (to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the Association) will again discuss the idea of creational order. Glas states that the idea of law, order, creational ordinances, principles and norms have been at the heart of Reformational Philosophy from its very beginning. God rules by creational laws, the natural and social world reflect these laws and human beings have to respond by positivising or concretising them.

Glas, however, mentions that today especially from two sides the idea of a fixed or pre-given world order is challenged. From the side of biology, especially developments in evolutionary theory, it is argued that, if any order exists, it is a permanently changing order – the contingency of the process of natural selection. This evolutionary concept of “order” not only affects biology but also anthropology.

On the other hand the social sciences are strongly influenced by historicism and postmodernism. They suggest that there are no pre-given laws, norms or structures – they are simply the product of human construction and subjective interpretation.

A renewed reflection on the Reformational idea of God's ordinances for creation is thus of vital contemporary relevance.

1.2 The set-up

The issue will be tackled as follows. (1) First an investigation into history will research the cause of the normativity crisis in Western thought. (2) Then follows an explanation of how early Reformational philosophers responded to the crisis. (3) Subsequently attention is given to the criticism by contemporary Reformational philosophers of the solutions offered by their predecessors. (4) Finally we look into the possibility of regaining direction in this crisis.

2 Developments in normativity in Western thought

Since the problem-historical method of Vollenhoven (cf. Bril, 2005 and chapter 5 of this book) offers a global review of the 2500-year history of Western philosophy we use it here as a guideline (cf. also Van der Walt, 2000:285-294).

2.1 The two basic elements of every philosophical conception

Appealing to the Scriptures, Vollenhoven states that a complete ontology or reflection on reality would bear in mind three realities, (1) God, (2) that which He created and (3) the laws He lays down for creation (cf. Vollenhoven, 1992a:55).

According to Vollenhoven (cf. Bril, 2005:23-38) every Western philosophical conception (in which God was mostly ignored) thus consists of two elements: a view of the (earthly) reality (called the *type* of philosophy) and a view of the laws/norms for reality (the philosophical *trend*). Although there are many types of philosophies, it offers the *consistent* element because it can occur (as a result of their influence on one another) in different times with various philosophers. The viewpoints on *structure* (the way things are) are limited. Philosophical trends vary all the time and are not repeated. Reflection on the law, which points out the *direction* of life, therefore gives the *dynamic* element to Western philosophy. Norms are therefore not something static that applies to all people at all times.

2.2 Turning the law into a subject

The way the place and status of norms have shifted, will become clear from this concise overview (cf. Kok, 1996:27 *et seq.* for detail and Bril, 2005:92 for a synopsis). Taking a bird's-eye view it can be described in the following six main steps.

2.2.1 Subjectivism as far back as the Ancient Greeks

Early in the history of Western thought (500 BC) a philosophical tendency dominated which Vollenhoven denotes as "subjectivism". This means that certain ancient Greek philosophers associated the laws with the things – which should

actually be subjected (therefore be subjects) to the laws. Put simply: the law becomes a thing and the other way round the thing is regarded as a law. Reformulated again: that which *is*, becomes that which *should be*.

A contemporary example would be that economic development is regarded as a norm, while it should be evaluated normatively itself. Or that, since abortion is accepted as *normal*, a *fact* in modern South Africa, it should also be the *norm*.

From ancient Greek philosophy the dark tracks of this subjectivism runs through all Western thought. As will become apparent later, it merely takes on different forms depending on what element in creation is elevated to the status of law/norm.

2.2.2 The apriori theme arising in Hellenistic philosophy is the next significant step in the development. Although the law was subjectivised before, it was never internalised, but always sought outside man. Now, however, the source of regularity and normativity becomes the human mind. The laws are transferred to human cognition as apriori concepts (in other words lawful concepts preceding any experience). This way the subjectivisation is carried a step further. The laws for all of reality are narrowed down epistemologically. If individualism also plays a role (i.e. that the laws can be different for every human being) it emerges clearly that law and normativity no longer have a firm foundation.

2.2.3 During the time of the synthesis philosophy (reconciling pagan Greek philosophy with biblical ideas) in **Patristic and Medieval philosophy** the idea of God and his law is brought back into philosophy. But it is done in terms of the Neo-Platonic doctrine of ideas and the logos speculation of the old Stoic philosophy. (For more particulars about the logos doctrine e.g. in the works of Philo of Alexandria, Justinus, Clemens, Origines and Augustine, cf. Van der Walt, 1974:148-152 *et seq.*, 154 *et seq.*, 161 *et seq.*, 177 *et seq.*) According to this viewpoint the law (or the universal) existed *ante rem* (before matter) in the divine intellect or logos. God creates it *in rebus* (in the things of creation). The laws are then known by means of the human mind *post rem* (after the things). Thus:

rational examples in God, rational seeds in the things and rational knowledge in human beings. The differentiation between nature and grace is a further attempt to vindicate God's laws in the supernatural (spiritual) field.

2.2.4 Anti-synthetic, secular rationalism (about 1600-1900) rejects the differentiation between natural and supernatural, and God as Law-giver once more disappears from philosophy. The apriori theme of Hellenism is also expanded. The mind (containing the apriori laws) now becomes reason (Latin: *ratio*, hence "rationalism"). Reason is a deified mind, for it is regarded as autonomous (its own law-giver). The absolutised reason, human intellect or logic capacity now prescribes the laws for reality! Since normativity indicates direction (cf. above), reason also becomes the guide to an alleged wonderful future.

2.2.5 Irrationalistic philosophy (from as early as 1900 but especially since about 1950) however brought a turn. The wonderful dream of rationally determined, autonomous human norms was shattered (inter alia because of two devastating world wars). Without abandoning the basic idea of man as a rational being (if that should happen the irrationalists would be unable to write down their ideas logically) it is merely restricted. In stead of the logocentrism of the rationalists the norms now become practical usefulness (in pragmatism), power (in the philosophy of life) or freedom (in existentialism). However, it is clear that in this way the direction to be given by norms become still more uncertain: It could be useful to commit murder; power can be employed for terrible things; freedom can mean doing what you like! (For an excellent Christian-philosophical evaluation of (later) rationalistic and the different trends in irrationalistic philosophies, cf. Van der Merwe, 1969:77 ff.)

2.2.6 In postmodernism the West is currently passing through yet another trend or view of normativity. In many respects it is similar to the preceding irrationalism. For instance, it is firmly geared towards historicism. This means a denial that reason is independent, elevated above history and can therefore offer universally valid norms for all times. Norms and values are the products of specific times and circumstances and are therefore relative – everything goes!

It would therefore seem as if postmodernism attempts to do away completely with the last bit of "certainty" that rationalism could afford and which was already restricted by irrationalism. Since no-one can, however, consistently live without norms, new norms are smuggled in by the back door. Typical of contemporary subjectivism is its absolutisation (to the status of norms) of things like economic wealth/prosperity (production and consumption) or technological development.

2.3 The root of the uncertainty

After this brief and simplified overview it is clear where the current uncertainty or normative crisis originates. Its deepest root is an incorrect ontology or view of reality. God has no place therein and the law is turned into a subject. An idea of the law that elevates *things* to *laws*, changes what *is* into what *should be*, is the fundamental cause of the crisis.

This way one becomes a prisoner of one's own circumstances. When applied consistently, it means that one has to be resigned to the *status quo*, that conservatism is the ideal. There is no new direction to be taken from one's own historically determined circumstances. Actually it matters little whether reason (according to rationalism) or history (irrationalism and postmodernism) is the law-giver.

This brings us to the second, very important section dealing with the way Reformational philosophers of the previous century addressed this crisis. What would their solution be to the dilemma of, on the one hand rationalistic absolutism and, on the other, irrationalistic historicist relativism?

3 Creational ordinances according to the Reformational philosophy of the twentieth century

In the foregoing Western philosophy the true God was (to the Greeks) still unknown or was considered as insignificant (by rationalists and irrationalists). Thus Western philosophers were aware of a pattern of order, but (within presynthetic Greek thought) did not know about a transcendent Law-giver or did

not want to recognise Him (in anti-synthetic, secular thought), since they desired to be law-givers themselves (autonomous).

Actually the solution given by Reformational philosophers of the previous century was quite simple. Their solution was once more to give God, as the Law-giver a place in their philosophy. In this way the law itself could be anchored "outside" creation, transcendent in God, instead of in the human fallible mind (rationalism) or making it dependent on historical circumstances and practical applicability (irrationalism). Their solution lies in what they called cosmic law or creational ordinances.

This important section (1) first presents something about some earlier Calvinist philosophers up to Bavinck; (2) then it concentrates on Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd and (3) closes with how in the work of the subsequent Reformational philosophers a gradual change in opinion regarding the traditional view of creational order took place.

3.1 Creational ordinances from Calvin to Bavinck

"I would suggest the real hallmark of Calvinism (is): a deep respect for the God who commands, who through his law-words calls things into being, a deep respect for God's sovereignty" (Griffioen, 1995:52). These words of Griffioen will be confirmed in the short review that follows.

3.1.1 Calvin (1509-1564) may be regarded as the father of the Reformational tradition. His idea of the law contains both biblical and extra-biblical philosophical elements. Since he was profoundly influenced by Augustine (who in turn linked up with the Stoic logos doctrine – cf. 2.2.3 above), we recognise elements of the logos speculation (in a Neo-Platonic form) in his work. Van der Walt (1974:397) therefore says that Calvin, although still in the terminology of the Stoa, already points to God's creational ordinances. (Cf. also chapter 3 above.)

From here we take a leap to Calvinistic philosophers at the Vrije Universiteit (Free University) of Amsterdam during the 19th and 20th centuries.

3.1.2 Kuypers (1837-1920), according to Klapwijk (1980:534, 542) holds a medieval scholastic view of reality, combined with the antique logos doctrine of the Stoa and Platonic-Augustinian realism. Once more the law is archetypically situated in the divine Reason, and ectypically in the things from which the human mind has to infer it (cf. 2.2.3 above). With right Klapwijk raises the question whether Kuypers does not regard the creational order too much as logical order and man as a rational being. Apart from this Kuypers also is (cf. Klapwijk, 1980:540) under the influence of the contemporary romantic faction of neo-idealism (a tendency within later rationalism). The organistic philosophy of romanticism in Kuypers's work leads to an idea of progress. The divine creational order allegedly unlocks itself in history and reaches a peak in Calvinism. In stead of differentiating between historical fact and norm, history therefore gets a normative meaning – which of course cannot always be the case.

3.1.3 On Woltjer (1849-1917) Klapwijk says (1980:543) that he too fully understands the creational ordinances of God in the light of the age-old logos doctrine. The eternal ideas or thoughts of God (as archetypes) lay ectypically in things and can be traced by the reason of man (cf. again 2.2.3). This leads to Woltjer extolling the human intellect and rational science (cf. Klapwijk, 1980:544).

3.1.4 Geesink (1854-1929) also paid special attention to the creational order and wrote a work in four volumes *Van's Heerens ordinantiën (About the Lord's ordinances)* (1908). In his work we also find a synthesis between the Scriptures and the logos doctrine (cf. Klapwijk, 1980:544). The primacy he assigns to the intellect of God (as Logos) and man (who has to trace the divine creational order) also gives his philosophy an intensely intellectualistic character (cf. Klapwijk, 1980:545).

3.1.5 Bavinck (1854-1921) is no exception, for (cf. Klapwijk, 1980:549) he too holds a christianised logos doctrine, which (just as with Kuypers) is modernised in the light of the romantic branch of neo-idealism (Klapwijk, 1980:548).

Neo-Platonists placed the Platonic ideas (or models for reality) in the intellect of their god. These thoughts were christianised by the above Christian philosophers:

the ideas or ideal examples for creation (laws) are placed in the intellect of the true God. Combining the logos doctrine of the Stoa (*logoi spermatikoi* or divine seeds of reason in creation) and rationalism's emphasis on the reason (which states the laws), the preceding Calvinist philosophers could therefore construct a full ontology of the law. The laws as archetypes exist first in God's intellect. According to these examples He then creates the (rational) ordinances in things. Finally man is able by means of his intellect to trace this divine order. In 2.2.3 we already indicated that this was not a new but typical Medieval idea.

Although this synthetic idea on God's creational ordinances was held for a long time, the successors to the preceding thinkers finally broke with it.

3.2 Dooyeweerd (1894-1977)

Early on in his main work Dooyeweerd (1953:94) says that he was struck by the great role the idea of a "divine world-order" played in philosophical thought through the ages. It forms the basis of every philosophical system – of his own, too.

He therefore calls his own philosophy the "Philosophy of the Law Idea". Later on, to express more clearly the close connection between the law and creation which is subordinate to the law, this was changed to "Philosophy of the cosmomic idea" (cf. Dooyeweerd, 1953:99).

Emphasising the law he attempts to express the sovereignty of God over all created things (cf. Dooyeweerd, 1953:99, 108). Thus the law is "the *universal boundary (which cannot be transgressed)* between the Being of God and the meaning of his creation" (Dooyeweerd, 1953:99).

Dooyeweerd explains that the law as a "boundary" between God and His creation does not seek to isolate God in a deistic manner from creation, but merely points to the difference between God's relationship to the law and creation's. God is not subject to his laws – which does not mean that He is a whimsical God. He remains faithful to his laws, while "subjectedness" typifies the whole of creation.

Further Dooyeweerd is of the opinion that his view of the laws or creational ordinances of God could serve as a solution to the historicism and irrationalism of his time, which attempted to deny or relativise any laws in God, the things or the human intellect.

Enough has now been said on the main lines of his reflection on the law by the first founder of Reformational philosophy in the twentieth century. The second father of this movement was Vollenhoven.

3.3 Vollenhoven (1892-1978)

The following four facets of his reflection on law are significant:

3.3.1 Three realities

Vollenhoven (cf. 2005:14) begins with three questions: (1) Who is the Creator? (2) In what relation to Him are the created things? (3) Where is the border between the two? He answers as follows: (1) The Creator is the living God, the Sovereign One in the absolute meaning of the word. (2) Creation is completely dependent on God, fully subject to his sovereign law, revelation and guidance. (3) The "boundary" between the two denotes that on the one side of the line there is God only and on the other side is everything that was created.

Elsewhere he summarises it as follows: A threefold existence must be differentiated: that of God, the law and the cosmos. The relationship between them is as follows: God is sovereign; he creates the world and lays down his ordinances for it. Consequently the law exists as a boundary between God and the cosmos (cf. Vollenhoven, 1992a:55).

3.3.2 His idea of the law

In various subsequent remarks Vollenhoven further explains that the relation between God and creation may not be formulated in terms of either similarities or differences. With this distinct differentiation between three realities (God, law and creation) Vollenhoven attempts to prevent the extremes of both pantheism (which merges God and creation) and deism (which separates God and creation).

Further he (cf. Vollenhoven, 2005:15) makes a significant remark about the law as a "boundary". "Boundary" may not be understood in a spatial sense, for the spatial is something typical of creation only and not of God or his laws.

About the law (creational ordinance) he says the following: "... this demarcation is the law of God, which is permanently posited by God for that which is created. For the only being who sovereignly gives laws to the cosmos and maintains them is God; on the other hand, all that which is created is subjected to his laws. And it continues to be subjected because God's activity in the cosmos since the creation is never coupled with a violation of the law. Accordingly it is impossible to mention anything divine that stands under the law or anything created that stands above the law" (Vollenhoven, 2005:15).

The nature of the law is that it *is valid* for the things: The law also is valid *without exceptions* for the whole creation – even in the case of normative laws. The fact that man can transgress them, does not mean they are no longer valid (cf. Vollenhoven, 2005:16).

3.3.3 Various types of laws

According to Vollenhoven (1992a: 55 *et seq.*) there is a great variety of laws. He differentiates in the first place God's law that we have to love Him and our neighbour. This commandment is of a pre-functional nature, it speaks to one's heart.

Apart from this numerous functional laws are distinguished in connection with the different aspects or sides of reality (the doctrine of modalities).

Dealing with these modal laws Vollenhoven also differentiates between non-normative and normative laws. A physical law is non-normative. But in the higher facets of life (from the analytical upwards) man himself must formulate God's laws in norms or principles (cf. Vollenhoven, 1992a: 56 *et seq.*) He does point out, however, that these human formulas do not offer more than what a *human being* can understand of God's law. They can therefore also be incorrect and they

are – in contrast to God's laws – not unchanging, but have to be revised constantly.

3.3.4 Laws for society

Vollenhoven (cf. 2005:70) also distinguishes a third kind of law, which is especially significant for human societal relations. The bearers of authority in a specific relationship should formulate laws for a specific time and circumstances, keeping in mind the qualifying function of the particular relationship. These are called positive laws. For instance, in the case of the state (which is juridically qualified) the rulers would have to take care that, in the light of the commandment of love, impartial justice is done to all.

In this connection it has to be mentioned that the idea of God as the Sovereign One and his creational ordinances has also led to the Reformational philosophy of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd constructing their own societal philosophy according to the principle of "sphere sovereignty". This means that each societal relationship (marriage, family, church, state, business, etc.) is subject to specific norms, has its own task and authority and therefore may not be dominated by other relationship(s) like the state (cf. Spykman, 1976 and for details chapters 12 and 13 below).

In summary one could say that Vollenhoven (since 1959) differentiates between threefold laws: (1) the commandment of love *between* God and man; (2) the structural laws (or modal laws, according to which the creational structures are built up) *in* creation; (3) the positive laws, which are not *between* God and man or *in* creation, but form a *bridge* between the first two laws.

3.4 A gradual change of viewpoints on the creational order

After Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven we get both enthusiastic followers and other persons with a more critical approach.

3.4.1 Followers

We mention only two examples – there are many more. Taljaard (1976:42 *et seq.*) in his philosophy builds on Vollenhoven and differentiates even more kinds

of laws. Spykman (1992:60, 65, 74 *et seq.*) uses Vollenhoven's ontology as a basis for his own theology. He calls it a "three-factor worldview": "God, his mediating Word and the world" and adds "... God's Word stands as both the boundary and the bridge between the Creator and his creation" (Spykman, 1992:75). The Word, law or creational order, therefore, is both a boundary, which implies restriction, and a bridge, which expresses a relationship between God and creation.

3.4.2 Critical voices

The following are some instances of Reformational philosophers who, after the two founders, did pose critical questions about their ontology and doctrine of creational ordinances.

Instead of just principles also ends?

Klapwijk (1995b:210 *et seq.*) is of the opinion that evil sometimes affects the meaning of everything in such a demonic way that much more is necessary than merely discovering laws and maintaining them. What is more, laying all emphasis on principles or laws, causes a backward view, and causes conservatism, which is blind to the suffering and dynamics of creation. As a result of the Messianic vision of the future held by the biblical prophets, our vision should also be directed to the future. "We have to decipher the end goals, the eschatological symbols, in order to understand the principles, the protological ordinances. And vice versa!" (Klapwijk, 1995b:211).

An impersonal boundary between God and creation?

Fowler (1991:25 *et seq.*) poses two important questions: (1) Are the only ties between God and his creation impersonal laws? (2) Does the idea of the law as a "boundary" between God and creation do justice to the full wealth of the many-sided Creator-creation relationship? With these questions he is not attempting to reject the distinction between God and creation. However, he does not see the law (like Vollenhoven) as a separate entity.

To the first question he answers: "... this boundary (law) is best conceived as the living interface where God, in the living presence of his Word and Spirit, interacts with his creation. It is not a boundary drawn around the borders of creation, keeping God apart from creation, but an interface that is present throughout creation, maintaining creation in a continuous interaction with God." (Fowler, 1991:26).

His answer to the second question runs as follows: "While the Word of God is law for creation, it is very much more than law. As the many-sided divine Word it can never be exhausted by any single concept, or group of concepts. Light, life, love, reconciliation, are just some of the other concepts used in Scripture to describe the relation of the Creator with the creation. There is no obvious reason to single out 'law' as the key factor in the Creator-creation relation" (Fowler, 1991:26).

Does the law have a divine and a creaturely side?

Troost, who is an enthusiastic champion of Dooyeweerd (cf. Troost, 2005) criticises Vollenhoven, who makes a clear distinction between three realities (God, law and creation – cf. above).

Troost (1992b:17) once more states the ontological problem (already touched upon by Fowler), namely whether the law is divine or creaturely. There are four possible answers: (1) it is divine; (2) it is creaturely; (3) it is both; (4) it is neither of the two. According to Troost Vollenhoven holds the latter standpoint (the law is neither divine nor creaturely) and Dooyeweerd holds the third possibility.

In this Troost cannot agree with Vollenhoven. According to him creation – even though Vollenhoven acknowledges a connection between God and creation – inevitably gets an independent character next to God. Out of reaction against the pantheism of his time (which merged God and creation) Vollenhoven could slide into deism (which separates God and creation). Without ignoring the distinction Troost attempts (just like Fowler) to emphasise the close alliance between God, law and creation. The idea of a boundary therefore does apply in the direction of creation to God, but not the other way round, viz. in the direction from God to creation (Troost, 1992b:127).

He therefore differentiates between a divine and a creaturely side of the law. The law comes from *God* and is simultaneously *creation's* inner capacity to exist (Troost, 1992b:121).

In a previous article (cf. Troost 1992a:28,29) Troost already said that Reformational philosophy has to begin acknowledging the mystery of the two "natures" of the law (the divine and the creaturely). The law as a "boundary" has a "part" in both God and man; it is the unity of the divine and the creaturely. This mystery is rationally unfathomable, not logically analysable and can therefore merely be respected in faith and be recognised and taken up in Christian philosophy.

Like Fowler, Troost further emphasises that the law is not only an expression of God's sovereignty, but also of his faithfulness, love, care, providence and more. The law is therefore also gospel! (cf. Troost, 1992b:119, 129). He also says that the law not only is *valid* as Vollenhoven teaches, but also has other functions, as for instance to appeal, point direction, prevent evil, and punish evil (cf. Troost, 1992b:123).

Are the creational ordinances static?

Since criticism is sometimes expressed that God's creational order is something static and unchangeable, we briefly give the word to Dengerink (1986). According to him it is true that the creational ordinances are valid for things, direct them, and lay down boundaries for them, but even in the case of the things of nature the ordinances have some latitude. (Even things of the same kind each exhibit its own character.) The structural laws are therefore merely the conditions of existence, frameworks or ways along which the natural events take place (cf. Dengerink, 1986:172, 173).

According to this Reformational philosopher the creational ordinations participate in the dynamics of the divine creative Word. They are not fixed; immovable entities above historic reality, which (as different philosophers claimed) are only applicable to reality by way of imitation, projection or deduction. No, they are an omnipresent, dynamic force. By means of his laws God asserts his healing

presence. His laws are thus not meant to limit his creatures or suppress them, but to facilitate their meaningful development (cf. Dengerink, 1986:177 and also Stellingwerff, 2006:157-159).

The inherent dynamics of the creational ordinances further has the effect that various situations demand various responses to them. Unless this happens, what is regarded as justice today may in other circumstances mean injustice (cf. Dengerink, 1986:177).

In Dengerink's own words: "So-called super-temporal, eternal and as such unchangeable and static principles or laws do not exist. All principles are indeed ... fixed, constant, but by virtue of the same creational word taken up in the encompassing dynamics of the creation event. Understood in this way, we could speak of a *constant dynamics*. Every eternalising of specific ordinances or principles is in fact an absolutisation, while every absolutisation... leads to ... fossilisation..." (Dengerink, 1986:178) [Tr. from the Dutch]

In the light hereof history may not be used as a norm either. Dengerink (1986:188) warns against various forms of historicism. Both the *traditional*, which infers the will of God from history (of which there may be traces in the work of Dooyeweerd) and the more *actualistic* historicism, which regards change as renewal and therefore normative, or attempts to find the norm *in* the historic revolution itself.

From the foregoing exposition it emerged clearly that the philosophers who came after Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven both built on their thoughts and were also critical of certain facets of their ideas about creation ordinances, including their broader ontologies. The following section (4) will show that the critical voices steadily increased in intensity.

3.4.3 Development through four phases

This critique is understandable if it is kept in mind that Reformational philosophy is not something static, but has gone through several phases in the course of more than seventy years. Stellingwerff (2006) offers an interesting overview of its

history and the differences between the various philosophers over at least four generations, but he does not divide the development into definite periods. Kuiper (2007:256-7) attempts to differentiate at least the following four: (1) During the first phase (1930-1945) Reformational philosophy came into being within a neo-Kantian and a phenomenological and existential intellectual climate. Over against this logical subjectivism and perspectivistic historicism the Christian philosophy of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd emphasised a cosmic order ordained by God, but they still do it in a logical, rational manner. Kuiper therefore calls it the *transcendental epistemological* phase. (2) After the Second World War the second phase (1945-1970) started in which much more stress was put on the constructive possibilities of Reformational philosophy and therefore on the fixed structures or order of reality – the *structural ontological* phase. (3) During the third phase that followed (1970-1980) the dynamics of creational reality is emphasised, stressing the response character of philosophy. (4) According to Kuiper the fourth phase (1980 and on) could possibly be characterised by the structural moment of created reality being connected with values and virtues. Thus throughout the whole history of Reformational philosophy the issue of order, law, norm and value has a role in one way or the other.

4 Criticism of his predecessors' ideas about creational ordinances by a contemporary representative of Reformational philosophy

In this section we will dwell on the development of one philosopher (Hart) from an enthusiastic champion to an outspoken critic. Subsequently a whole volume (the publication of a special conference on creation order) will be discussed in which a number of Reformational philosophers participate in the debate.

4.1 Two phases in the work of Hart

Christian philosophers are also children of their times, who live and think in the spirit of their age and contemporary philosophical trends. (Cf. e.g. Kuiper and his contemporaries treated above.) This proves also to be the case in the generation

after Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd. One clear example is Hart. In earlier works (cf. Hart, 1966, 1968 and 1984) he still thinks clearly in line with the three-factor ontology of Vollenhoven. His later works (cf. Hart, 1989, 1995a, 1995b, 2000) however, give clear evidence of a turn.

4.2 The earlier Hart

As an example of Hart's earlier viewpoint (more or less in line with Vollenhoven) we could take the following quotations from his work on ontology: "... all that is known or can be known must be either the *world*, the *order* of the world, or the *origin* of the world. Nothing else is real or can be known" (Hart, 1984:361- italics added).

His view is explained in greater detail to point out both the difference and the connection between the three realities: "... Creator and creature are fully distinct and have nothing in common. There are no analogies. God is God and only God... God is not a creature in any way and is not *like* a creature in any way... even though we may hear God speak in this manner. And no creature is god or divine in any way." (Hart, 1984:345).

Subsequently he describes the relationship as follows: "God and creatures are, however, in relationship. They are there for each other. God fully determines all things. All creatures are out of God, for God, through God, and unto God. They relate to each other in Word and Spirit, both of whom are divine and creaturely" (Hart, 1984:345).

The "link" between God and creation, therefore, is the Word and the Spirit. From the following quotation it emerges clearly how this has to be understood: "Word and Spirit relate world and origin. World and world origin have no properties in common. But Word and Spirit are both creaturely and divine. This creates a genuine relationship between origin and world. Only the world is subjective, and only the world order is normed condition, law... the world is subjective because it is subjected to order. And the order is law because it holds for the world. The order does not hold for the origin, which is the origin not only of the world but also of its order. These three – origin, world order, and ordered existential world – can

be known only in relation to each other. Nevertheless, they can not be reduced to each other" (Hart, 1984:362).

From this citation it emerges amongst other things that already in 1984 Hart, like Troost later on (cf. above) differentiated both a divine and a creaturely side of the law. Elsewhere he says: "Order *for* subjectivity becomes evident in structure of subjectivity, that is, in patterns of regularity which are themselves subjective" (Hart, 1984:366).

4.3 The later Hart

We here take a look successively at Hart, 1989, 1995 and 2000.

4.3.1 Hart's critique of an intellectualistic exegesis

Hart's book of 1989 clearly shows him wrestling with understanding the Bible within the Reformed tradition. His criticism is mostly levelled at a rationalistic way of dealing with the Scriptures (searching for data to construct a pure doctrine) as well as a moralistic way (the search for moral perfection by legalistic prescriptions allegedly founded on the Scriptures). He puts great emphasis on the human response to God's laws and therefore the possibility of various interpretations (cf. Hart, 1989:164, 165). His rejection of rationalistic absolutism, according to him does not mean that he stumbles into the other extreme of irrationalistic relativism (Hart, 1989:208, 209). He rejects subjectivism (man is the yardstick for everything) and individualism (my norms need not be yours).

However, it is at this stage already obvious that Hart has serious questions about the modernist, rationalistically coloured philosophy of his predecessors. Probably he already feels more drawn towards postmodernist irrationalism.

4.3.2 Hart on an ethos of compassion

In his lecture for the important conference of 1992 Hart (1995a) expands on the book of 1989. He once more reproaches the Reformational tradition for intellectualism and legalism. This tradition is too profoundly influenced by a logocentric or rationalistic view of reality and of God's laws. It leads to an eternal, unchangeable, rigid idea of the law (cf. Hart, 1995a: 69 *et seq.*). Such an idea of

order according to him promotes abuse of power and also conservatism (cf. Hart, 1995a:72, 79).

In his own view the following is emphasised. God's laws (in line with the Scriptures) are merely means to move man to love, which is also the yardstick of the law. Therefore, over against the great emphasis on order in the preceding Reformational tradition, he stresses compassion (Hart, 1995a:76) – something that transcends law and order.

His "relativisation" of the significance of the law (at least in traditional sense) is coupled with a new view of the Law-giver. Instead of stressing God as King (to whom authority and obedience is due), we should rather emphasise his Fatherhood that gives and asks love (cf. Hart, 1995a:88).

4.3.3 Hart's critique of Dooyeweerd's "rationalism"

In Hart's contribution (2000) to a volume on the philosophy of Dooyeweerd he showed that Dooyeweerd, in spite of his criticism of rationalism, himself was not wholly free from it.

This extra-biblical philosophy especially influenced Dooyeweerd's view of the divine creational order or his cosmonomic idea. The law is rationalised to something logical and also absolutised to something which is supposed to be unchangeable (cf. Hart, 2000:135). The creational order is wrongly regarded by Dooyeweerd as the unchangeable will of the sovereign, unchangeable God. Such an order smothers love – which is the core of the law (cf. Hart, 2000:136).

Here, too, his critique goes further than merely the idea of law or order and also touches on the current idea of God as the Unchangeable. According to Hart (2000:145) there is no reason why God – the way it was in the preceding Reformational tradition – should merely be regarded as sovereign Ruler, Law-giver or King. According to the Scriptures God also is the One who creates, maintains, leads, loves and more. Why then apply only the one metaphor of ordering to Him?

Hart is also of the opinion that much more emphasis should be put on the contemporary realisation (positivation) of God's commandments.

Criticism of Hart's criticism

Although brief, this survey of the development in the philosophy of one figure nevertheless offers sufficient background to proceed to the volume edited by Walsh, Hart and Vander Vennen (1995). The volume contains *inter alia* the papers which were read in 1992 at a conference in Toronto concerning a strategic facet of Reformational philosophy, viz. the creational ordinances or God's laws for creation. Hart's paper (1995a:67 *et seq.*) entitled "Creation order in our philosophical tradition: critique and refinement" was (apart from the one given by Olthuis on homosexuality) one of the papers that caused the greatest stir at the conference.

Here are some of the main points of critique on Hart's ideas. Hare (1995:102 *et seq.*) mentions the following:

- What is it that causes one to show compassion? Is it not God's law which prescribes it? Therefore Hare sees no conflict between order and love. We should indeed always think of God's commandments in terms of love which forms the core of it.
- Accepting a creational order need not necessarily lead to conservatism. From history (cf. e.g. the work by Kuyper) we know that many people resisted the *status quo* on the basis of God's ordinations.
- Hare also is of the opinion that he (and others) cannot simply exchange God's Kingship for another "metaphor" without being unfaithful to an important facet of the Scriptures themselves.
- The fact that we can only partially understand God's ordinances need not lead to our questioning any access to them.

The Chaplins (1995:226 *et seq.*) agree with Hare on three points:

- First they also put the question to Hart (who claims that compassion goes further than order) whether we would ever be able to notice suffering if there was no order that was transgressed and caused the suffering.
- In the second instance it is not true that a well-ordered life means nothing – especially to people living in a state of chaos and disorder. This links up with Hare's statement that order does not have to imply suppression and conservatism.
- Thirdly the Chaplins also concur with the last point made by Hare above by asking where the border lies between God's order and man's interpretation of it. (The tension between conservatism and relativism depends on how much emphasis is put on man's responsibility in giving form to God's laws – an issue which will be discussed later on.)

For the full debate the reader is referred to the volume under discussion. More significant than going into the *specific* questions asked to Hart, is the *general* critique on the idea of a creational order which emerged during the conference.

5 Major issues related to the idea of a creational order

We first give a synopsis of the main points of critique given by the different referents. Subsequently follows a short discussion of what evidently was one of the main issues, namely the relationship between law and love.

5.1 The main points of critique

Wolterstorff (1995:64 *et seq.*) mentions among other things the following:

5.1.1 Legalistic intellectualism

God is not only Law-giver, and man is not only an obedient subject of the law. Gratitude comes *before* obedience. The law should be stressed as a gift rather than an assignment. Van der Hoeven (1995:112) concurs with this. Man should admire God's creational order, be grateful for it and sing his praises. As far back as the law of Moses God's grace was the most prominent feature.

5.1.2 The law is not the only solution to the brokenness of creation

Above (cf. 3.4.2) we have already referred to Klapwijk, who says that the brokenness of creation can sometimes assume such proportions that an appeal to law and order is insufficient. Wolterstorff touches on the same point: The lost state of creation is sometimes more than just the consequence of hearts being wrongly directed or the transgression of God's laws. Think for instance of incurable diseases, suppression, divorce and death. The Chaplins (1995:227) also point out that the suffering in the world may not be fully understood only in terms of rebellion against God or disobedience to his laws. Undue emphasis on the creational order, therefore, can blind one to suffering which seems senseless (disorderly).

5.1.3 Where is Christ in the creational order?

According to Wolterstorff the redemptive work of Christ is not adequately accounted for in the doctrine of creational order. The Chaplins (1995:227) concur with this. Emphasis on creation – a firm strain in Reformational philosophy – could cloud one's view of the fall and redemption. (While Barth was accused of "Christomonism", Reformational philosophy may be blamed of "Creatiomonism") Hart (cf. 1995a:79) whole-heartedly agrees with this. (Cf. also Klapwijk above under 3.4.2.)

5.1.4 It leads to legitimising suppressive power

With right Wolterstorff (1995:61) claims that "order" has often been used to suppress people and condoning the *status quo*. In this he concurs with Hart (1995a:72, 90) who says that the logocentric view of creational order puts too much emphasis on control, rule and power and in this way promotes conservatism. The Chaplins, too (1995:227) mention the same risk of suppressing structures.

5.1.5 A cheerless life of duty and feelings of guilt

This critique by the Chaplins (1995:27) links up with what was already mentioned under 5.1.1 above.

5.1.6 Uncertainty on giving the right form to the creational order

Many comments raise the point that a clearer distinction should be made between *God's* will and *human* formulations thereof. Concurring with this is the question how we can know that the form we give to God's law is correct. Wolterstorff goes as far as claiming that there are no definite norms (as Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd teach in their societal philosophy) for the state and other relationships. All we can do is asking whether what happens in the various relationships promote *shalom* (peace). (But with right the Chaplins ask of Wolterstorff whether *shalom* should not be subjected to norms as well, and therefore has to meet the requirements of certain laws.)

5.2 The relation between law and love

At this point we select only one problem to be discussed further: the relation between law and love.

As has been explained, according to Hart love (compassion) transcends the law. But according to his partners in this discussion law and love cannot be separated – the creational order culminates in love! What is the right relation? First we give the word in some detail to Hart himself (1995b:122) where he formulates his viewpoint more distinctly.

5.2.1 Hart's viewpoint

Hart explains his view as follows: "... love, grace and truth were indeed *intended* from the beginning to be the meaning revealed in the law. Here I agree. The law, however, did not *in fact* become a vehicle of love in the life of Israel. Faced with sin, the law condemned. But Jesus did reveal the intended love fully, by giving his life in love. And in that sense there is a contrast... and important contrast I maintain... How do I construe this as love (or compassion) *transcending* the law?... at least in two ways. One is that love *goes further* than the law ever did, goes beyond the law. The other is that though the law was intended as *vehicle* of love, that is not a matter of love being *limited* by the law. There are other vehicles, the cross of Christ being the most dramatic one... Law as limit reaches

its own limit when we go beyond the law in transgressing it. Only love can still reach us there, if indeed love is not limited to and by the law" (Hart, 1995b:122).

Hart (1995b:127) states the relation between law and love even more sharply in the following statement: "Love is the core of all the law... Love is not an element next to others, but rather what all the law pursues. Obedience to the law is meant as a road to love. But not in such a way that whenever we obey we love... When Jesus interprets the law as 'in sum' God's call for love, I take that to mean that love is the proto-call of the law. The law is therefore relative to love. Whatever requirement does not lead to love cannot be God's law. Love is the 'test' of any law. In the same way that justice goes beyond what is legal, so love goes beyond what is lawful."

In the following words the distinction between law and love emerges even more clearly: "Love does not replace law or is not contrasted with law. Love tells us what law is and is always more than law. Law condemns transgression, love covers it... No law prohibits love nor is love against any law... Order which does not channel love is disorder... No order, in fact, is sufficient to the love that is called mercy, grace, and compassion... love transcends order" (Hart, 1995b:127).

5.2.2 Gilkey confirms Hart's view

Since this is such an important matter, we now give the word to Gilkey (1995:214 *et seq.*) who supports Hart and further explains the issue.

"... it is God alone who fulfils and justifies God's own law, and God does so precisely by going beyond the law in the atoning work of Christ and in God's sanctifying and justifying grace to us. Order is fulfilled... not by its denial but by transcendence and transmutation in mercy and love, and only thus can it remain order, God's order" (Gilkey, 1995:214).

Later on he puts it as follows: "Order and law are sacred but not *God*. Hence both can, because of sin, become demonic unless God's grace infuses order with love, law with a higher compassion" (Gilkey, 1995: 215). According to the

Scriptures law without grace means the revenge of the Lord (Rom. 4:15), it puts to death (Rom. 7:10-11), it discloses and promotes sin and is damning.

According to him (cf. Gilkey, 1995:222) love and compassion therefore should not be added to order; love should be an element of order for order to prevail.

In the last instance Gilkey (1995:215, 219) points out that not only disobedience to divine laws, but especially the human distortion of order causes it to become an instrument of suppression and destruction of life. This happens when people associate their own laws with God's laws. This has to do with the fact that nowhere in history do we meet the divine order itself, mostly only warped or distorted forms of it.

This whole debate has definitely contributed to a more distinct picture of the Reformational view of the law. In the next final section we will investigate how new direction may be found in the crisis of laws, norms and values.

6. How direction can be restored to the crisis in norms and values

In this section the following will be discussed further: (1) That norms and values are not unchangeable. (2) That our knowledge of God's ordinances is limited. (3) How Reformational philosophy points versus absolutism and relativism to a third way. (4) What the distinction is between norms, values, morals and taboos.

6.1 Norms and values are not unchangeable

Reformational thinkers should refuse to accept historicism, a view in which "God's law, especially also the law of love, is pulled down within the world, subjected to it and thereafter or therefore – these two can go together – explained in terms of history" (Vollenhoven, 1992b:141). While thinkers like Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd teaches that God's ordinances *hold for* all created reality – including history – modern historicism believes that a law/norm/value *is* itself historical.

If one do not want to look *up* (to God and his revelation), you have to look *down* (at creation, for example, your own reason), *back* (at tradition), *around* yourself (at different other created things) or look *ahead* (as in the case of liberation and evolutionistic thinkers who look forward to a utopia as norm).

However, Klapwijk (1995a:16. Cf. also Klapwijk 1995b) with right warns that the emphasis on God's creational order may not lead us – because we are so much aware of God's laws being absolute – to expect Reformational philosophy to take a stand for the immovability of all norms and values. Even Christ repeatedly had to say to the people of his time: "You have heard ... but I tell you" (cf. Mat. 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 42) and then to formulate God's laws in a new way.

Although norms shift in the course of history, it does not mean that relativism is true. Emphasis on history only leads to normative relativism when one ignores the difference between the human formulation of the foundational norms (God's laws) and the foundational norms themselves.

According to Klapwijk (1995a:29) it is vital to differentiate between the incorrect idea that man himself *creates* the norms versus the (Reformational) view that man can only *apply* or *give form* to them.

Fowler concurs with this by pointing out that throughout Western philosophy there was the hope – erroneously also among Reformational philosophers? – that man would be able to penetrate to the last principles, the most profound building blocks of reality. Especially ancient and modern secular (rationalistic) philosophy held the opinion that nothing is out of reach of human reason and science. Fowler (1991:32) claims that this expectation was futile.

6.2 Knowing in part

Over against this Fowler stresses a second vital matter: "...the law for creation remains on the Godward side of the God-creation interface. It is known by us, who remain always on the creaturely side of the interface, only in its ordering effects on the creation. We know the order of creation but not the law of the creative Word by which it is ordered" (Fowler, 1991:31, 32).

Spykman (1994:41) explains the same matter as follows: "The Word of God for creation, God's good order for creation, is in itself transcendent. It is beyond our reach. Thus we cannot get at it directly even by means of scientific investigation. All our knowledge of God as Creator is reflexive, responsive. We gain such knowledge by observing carefully how God's creations respond to the holding power of his Word – each 'after its kind'". An example is how a farmer knows to plough, sow and harvest – according to Isaiah 28:23-29 he infers it from God's creational order.

Two things are therefore significant: (1) We can merely *get to know* the orderly functioning of creation – never *create* it ourselves – and never divine order *itself*. (2) Man has to attempt *inferring* laws/norms from the orderly functioning of created things.

6.3 Two steps

In this process of forming norms Klapwijk (1995a:29) distinguishes two steps. In the first place *explication*. This means that the norms formulated by man (as understood from God's lawful order) have to be constantly honed, refined and deepened. (Since norms tend to become fixed, history itself may therefore not be directive.) Secondly, *application* which means that the formulated norms have to be applied in a relevant manner to specific current circumstances. This brings us to a third important point:

6.4 Both relativism and absolutism can be overcome

In the light of the foregoing two most vital lessons are to be learned. It is that Reformational philosophy need not bow down to either earlier rationalistic absolutism or current historicist postmodern relativism. It is exactly these two errors that the Reformational tradition seeks to avoid. In the words of Schrottenboer (1994:71): "One mistake is that we tend to equate our positivized form with the divine orders themselves. This is a form of pride. The opposite danger is that we see these positivized forms as only so many human constructions and then dismiss the idea of the underlying (divine) order to which

they give expression. This is an example of throwing the baby away with the bath water”.

Fowler (1991:28) formulates it very well: “On the one hand... the laws that we formulate in our knowledge are not arbitrary impositions of order on the world. We are not free to order the world in any way we like. One set of conceptions of the world is not as valid as any other. The world is a law-governed world and any valid formulation of laws, any set of conceptions, will need to respect this law-governed character”. Hereby relativism claiming that “anything goes” is rejected.

“On the other hand, the laws we formulate can never be the governing principles, the ordering laws of the world. They can only be creaturely formulations of the lawful order of creation that is subject to the ordering law of the Word of God. In our experience of the lawful order we do indeed experience the ordering authority of the Word of God, but always on the creaturely side of the interface” (Fowler, 1991:28, 29). In this way rationalist absolutism is refuted.

6.5 The right focus

This clear differentiation binds Christian philosophers to be both confident and modest. On the one hand confidence, for in our research of creation we will discover patterns which can be formulated in laws/norms. We are not locked up in our own convictions but live in and study a creation governed everywhere by God’s order.

On the other hand there should be modesty, for the status of our knowledge is always one of a “response” by a creature to the “Word” (laws) of God and may never be endowed with the authority of divine infallibility.

6.6 A third way

According to Wolters (1994:55) there need not be a contradiction between on the one hand God’s stable cosmic order and on the other hand human changeable history. For it is man’s assignment to develop creation according to God’s order. In order to do this people have to make God’s creational ordinances intelligible or formulate them for their own times and circumstances. It should always be done

for a specific issue or societal relationship in the light of the central commandment of love (Matt. 22:37-40). Wolters (1994:59) is also of the opinion that by this a third way is followed, for: "It rejects both the assumption (about the laws) of supra-historical metaphysical entities... and the relativist denial of all constants".

Thus in the Reformational tradition great emphasis is laid on human responsibility. It is therefore no easy way. Norms cannot be taken cut and dried from God's scriptural revelation or from his creational revelation. Especially in the case of the normative creational order (God's laws specifically meant for human beings) there is always the risk of subjectivism (namely that the view of the one who formulates the norms is determinative). For how can one be certain what the norms are for thinking, language, art, etc.? Are they self-evident (compare Rom. 1:20 and especially Rom. 2:14, 15)? Does one have to rely on one's intuition? Can the light of the Scriptures help one to discover them?

6.7 Norms, values, morals and taboos

Finally it is important to make out what the difference is between the various levels of human formgiving to God's order. We begin with something more about the divine creational ordinances.

6.7.1 Divine creational ordinances and commandments

God reveals Himself and his order for the world in creation (cf. Ps. 19:4, 5, 8-12; Rom. 1:19, 20). Because of the fall of man he "republishes" it in lingual form in the Bible, especially the core of the law, the commandment of love and its implications. (Cf. for instance Exodus 20:1-17, the Sermon on the mount in Matthew 5 to 7, as well as themes in Bible books, for instance love in marriage in Song of Solomon, or love for the neighbour in 1 John, and of course Matthew 22:36-40.) His revelation culminates in the Word incarnate, Jesus Christ. Christ shows us in a visible manner what the life looks like of a human being who perfectly obeys God's creational order.

From the orderly nature of creation we can *formulate* laws, in the Scriptures we can *read* them; in the life of Christ we can *see* them!

An important contribution made by Reformational philosophy was its differentiation between various (about 15) modalities, aspects or law contexts in reality, ranging from the numerical to the aspect of faith (cf. Kalsbeek, 1975:95-103). Normally a differentiation is made between the lower laws *valid* for matter, plants and animals (from the numerical to the biotic) and the higher laws which apply to man and have a *demanding* character – it demands conscious obedience (a choice) from man (cf. 3.3.3 above).

6.7.2 Norms

As we explained earlier, man has to formulate norms from the orderly functioning of created things in the light given by the Scriptures. Norms come into being on the human level when the commandment of love is given form in a specific domain. Examples are justice in the domain of the state, fidelity in marriage, stewardship in the economic domain, etc.

The love for God and the neighbour – which was stressed earlier (cf. 5.2 above), however, determines the direction or religious focus of the above-mentioned norms. Thus it can be ascertained whether they are good or bad, true or false, moral or immoral, *etcetera*.

A simple illustration will show that even in the numerical field a distinction has to be made between good and evil. Eichman calculated *correctly* how many Jews he could kill daily in the gas chambers and ovens of Dachau during the Second World War. It was, however, no deed of love, but demonic racial hate. Examples of good calculations is that of the poor widow donating two small coins (Mark 12:41-44) or the missionary budget of a church.

As we have shown earlier, norms do not have the same validity as God's laws and commandments, for they are human formulations and therefore tied to time and place. The norms of the Old Testament patriarchal society according to

which men dominated women and polygamy was practised, are no longer valid today.

6.7.3 Values

As the word "value" denotes, something of value originates when norms and finally God's laws are met. Values therefore are mostly – in contrast to norms – things, characteristics or virtues (subjects with a normative power). They are one step more removed from God's law, and therefore have still less validity than norms.

Values mostly originate in a specific cultural context and are therefore not commonly valid. They are therefore even more tied to time and place than norms. Thus they should be constantly tested by asking to which norms they appeal. And another step back: whether they are in accordance with God's creational order or his commandment of love.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22) namely love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control may in the light of this be regarded as Christian values. So also the virtues of Philippians 4:8.

With reference to the different aspects or modalities distinguished in Reformational philosophy the following values could be discerned for the different domains of life (cf. Van der Walt, 2000):

- *Values of faith:* faith, trust, devotion, surrender, reverence, piety;
- *Moral values:* fidelity, integrity, honesty, modesty, forgiveness;
- *Political-judicial values:* justice, justness, fairness, law-abidance, respect for authority;
- *Aesthetic values:* eloquence, evocativeness, harmony, beauty;
- *Economic values:* stewardship, sobriety, thrift, compassion for the poor;
- *Social values:* respect for others, co-operation, unselfishness, goodwill, friendliness, loyalty, trustworthiness;

- *Language or communicative values*: truth, clarity, meaningfulness, dependability, credibility;
- *Logical values*: distinction, validity, persuasive power, clarity;
- *Psychological values*: (emotional) balance; sensitivity, self-control, fortitude, perseverance;
- *Biological values*: respect for life, health, vitality;
- *Physical values*: appreciation of and respect for physical things;
- *Numerical values*: accuracy, precision, responsibility (in the use of numbers and statistics).

From the above it becomes clear that values are found in all domains of life. They may therefore not be associated in a one-sided way with morals or ethics only. This is a serious point, for often more ethics is regarded as a solution to the current crisis in norms and values. For each domain ethics is allegedly required, like medical ethics, ethics of the environment, business ethics and much more. Van der Walt (2000:307 *et seq.*) points out that in this way ethics is completely overrated and therefore such projects are bound to end in disappointment.

6.7.4 Morals

Morals are customs, practices or conduct regarded as good or normal by a specific nation or group. They often have an ethical character.

An example of such a moral is the custom among certain nations in Africa (and elsewhere) that a woman should provide evidence by a premarital pregnancy that she can give birth to children before a marriage is concluded. (This rests on the value that marriage is primarily meant for procreation versus the current prevalent norm that marriage is about mutual support or even just sexual pleasure.) Morals also play a role in the way a marriage is solemnised (traditionally, in the church or before an official of the state).

One could probably also place taboos under the category of morals. Taboos are characterised by their negative or prohibitive nature, they concern things one avoids because of religious convictions, morality or personal taste.

It is clear that morals are still further removed than norms and values from the laws, commandments or creational ordinances of God. They are more local, personal and subjective.

6.7.5 Practical relevance

The above can be summarised in the following scheme:

(1) God's *ordinations* (in his three-fold revelation) summarised in his commandment of love.

↓

(2) Human *norms* – normativity.

↓

(3) *Values* and

↓

(4) *Morals* denoting normality.

The above sequence may not be reversed (to 4, 3, 2 and 1). One cannot deduce from what is accepted as *normal* (4 and 3) that it should also be the *norm* (2) and still less that it is the will of God (1). However, this often happens nowadays. What the majority accept as normal, is often regarded as the norm.

Another incorrect viewpoint is that a specific aim becomes the norm. However, the principles or points of departure should determine one's goals – otherwise the means may easily justify the ends.

7 Review and result

Finally, what is the way we have come and what has it rendered?

7.1 The investigation started with the *crisis* in the current awareness of norms and the question what the underlying *cause* could be. It transpired that the deepest cause lies far back in the subjectivistic idea of the law held by Western

philosophy. Such an idea of the law could have originated from ignorance of the true God as Law-giver or (later) because his existence was expressly denied.

7.2 Subsequently it was investigated how the earlier Reformational philosophers, reacting to the historicist and irrationalistic relativisation of norms and values, looked for normative certainty in God as sovereign Law-giver and his consistent creational order which is valid for all of creation. It became clear that the status or authority of laws, norms and values is not determined in isolation from one's view of reality or one's ontology

7.3 In the subsequent section however, it became apparent that there remained a number of unanswered issues with which later Reformational philosophers would have to wrestle. Initially these were more ontological and later on more epistemological issues. For instance how one should see the relationship and difference between God, his lawful order and ordered creation. Is the law truly a boundary and if so, what is meant by this? Is it not a case that in this way God is isolated from his creation in an unbiblical way? Can the distinction between a godly and creaturely side of the lawful order solve the problem?

7.4 The next section discussed even more probing questions. Postmodern philosophy created awareness among the younger Reformational philosophers that "law and order" could not fully address the problems of suffering and brokenness in creation. So what then is the proper relationship between law and love or compassion? In the light of the irrationalistic tendency of late modern philosophy the question is also raised whether the fathers of Reformational philosophy – in spite of their criticism of it – were not influenced by earlier modernist rationalism in their thinking about God's creational order. It could have triggered an unintentional legalistic bias with too much emphasis on duty and obedience in stead of joyful gratitude. Should we not – instead of the typical Reformational stress on creation and creational order – stress more firmly God's work of salvation in Christ? Nowadays there also is a clearer awareness that even the idea of a *divine* order can be abused for suppression. The

epistemological problem of postmodernism (the knowability of any order) cannot be ignored either.

7.5 Thus the concluding section addressed the epistemological problem of how a Christian philosopher can evade two extremes. On the one hand the extreme of modernist rationalism (which could have influenced earlier Reformational philosophers), which led to a dogmatic approach. On the other hand the extreme of postmodernism, tainted by irrationalism (which most probably left a scar on some of the younger Reformational philosophers), which exhibit definite relativistic tendencies. Our own conclusion was that norms, values and morals are indeed the fallible, time-bound *work of humans*, but at the same time they are a response to *God's words of law*. This should lead Reformational philosophers to both modesty and confidence. Such a view of normativity could bring new direction to the current crisis in norms.

The wonderful vision of Ezekiel 47:1-12 could then begin to be fulfilled. In this passage God's Spirit and his word or law are compared to a stream of water that flows from Him (in the temple) into the barren desert. The "water" has particular properties. It does not gradually seep away into the barren earth, but becomes fuller, stronger and deeper. It also gives new life to the sterile water of the Dead Sea, so that it can once more maintain life. In the formerly dry environment alongside the river green trees now grow which not only provide shade and fruit – twelve times a year! – their leaves also have medicinal power. When we accept God's ordinances as our directives we will experience life in its fulness!

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SECTION C

A multidimensional Christian view of being human

CHAPTER 7

JOHN CALVIN'S STRUGGLE TO ATTAIN A TRULY BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE HUMAN BEING

During the past 450 years scholars have both canonised and crucified John Calvin's ideas. In the introductory part to this chapter we therefore first look at a more balanced way of viewing the intellectual heritage of this reformer from the sixteenth century. We also investigate how Calvin utilised preceding (pre-Christian) philosophical insights in his anthropology. It is then indicated how Calvin's views will be analysed according to a Christian-philosophical method. Lastly the introductory part indicates that the focus of this investigation will be on his main systematic work, his *Institutes*.

The rest of the chapter on Calvin's view on the human person is developed through the following main stages: (1) being human as being religious (an encompassing, directional relationship towards God); (2) Calvin's structural analysis of the human being as consisting of body and soul or spirit; (3) his idea of an immortal soul/spirit; (4) his view of man as the image of God; (5) his distinction in man/woman between a natural and a supernatural part; (6) a concluding section which will provide a summary as well as a lesson to be learned.

* * *

Relevance to our central theme (at home in God's world):

Calvin clearly indicated our inseparable relationship to God, but did not fully understand that we belong to this world. To be really at home here, we have to realise that we are earthly creatures with a task here and now, instead of longing for heaven.

1. Introduction

This chapter is a follow-up on a previous chapter (3), which discussed Calvin's worldview in general and only summarised his anthropological views very briefly. What has been said about Calvin's ideas and Calvin research in chapter 3 will not be repeated here. We will confine ourselves to remarks on the following: (1) a balanced view on Calvin's intellectual heritage; (2) Calvin's use of pre-Christian philosophies; (3) the method according to which his anthropology will be analysed; (4) the focus on his *Institutes*.

1.1 A more balanced view of Calvin's thinking

When reading this chapter one's reaction could easily be that it is quite easy to criticise a thinker of 450 years ago in the light of twenty-first century anthropological insights. It is furthermore extremely unfair to do so. For the following reasons, however, this evaluation of Calvin's view of the human being is necessary.

In the first instance *philosophical* – especially *Christian*-philosophical-appraisals – of Calvin's ideas are not common. Protestant theologians have taken Calvin to be primarily a theologian to be studied by theologians.

Secondly, because of the fact that Calvin was regarded as a Christian theologian, the underlying, often unbiblical philosophical elements of his views were not detected or were glossed over.

1.1.1 Calvin canonised

A third reason is the following: Because Calvin was an excellent Bible expositor, Calvinist thinkers often tended to canonise his ideas as being equal to Scripture itself. Breen (1973:24), for instance, says: "The Catholic who thinks criticism of the *Summa* [of Thomas Aquinas] calls the gospel into question would be as wrong as the Calvinist who equates criticism of the *Institutes* with doubt in faith".

Oberman (1976:373) again compares the interpretation of Calvin with that of Luther: "... not unlike the German phenomenon in the field of theology when a reference to Scripture is replaced by a quotation from Martin Luther, the classical

school interprets Calvin with the pretence of presenting the word of God itself. Valid theology is the reiteration of the positions described – and hence prescribed! – by Calvin”.

However, when one views Calvin's heritage in this way, you disregard the fact that he was a child of the 16th century. He was not only *confronted* by the many philosophical trends of his day, but was also *influenced* by them (cf. Van der Walt, 2008 for details). Foreign, pre-Christian ideas often influenced his reading of God's Word on being human.

A fourth reason for this chapter is that even today dichotomist anthropologies, similar to that of Calvin, are still flourishing in popular books for believers and even in some theological publications.

1.1.2 A more balanced view

However, this chapter endeavours to provide a more balanced view on Calvin. It will try not to underestimate his heritage (like secular philosophers), nor will it overestimate it (like some of his followers). We will not deny him the honour of being called the father of the Reformational tradition, but at the same time we will have to honour his motto of *semper reformanda* (continuous reformation) by applying it also to his own ideas. As every Reformational thinker of the past, he tried to be faithful to the Gospel, while in other aspects he was still trapped in foreign, unbiblical ideas.

1.2 Calvin's use of pre-Christian philosophies

Calvin was ahead of his times since his deepest intention was to break with the synthetic thinking of the Church Fathers and the Middle Ages.

1.2.1 Antisynthetic in a positive meaning

Vollenhoven (2005a:157-159 and also 2005b) distinguished the following three main eras in the history of Western thinking: (1) the presynthetic thought of the ancient Greek, Hellenistic and Roman philosophers; (2) the synthetic thought from about 100 to about 1500 AD; (3) postsynthetic or antisynthetic thinking, starting with the Renaissance and Reformation (16th century). During the first era

(before Christ) the Bible was still unknown outside Israel and philosophy was pagan. During the second (synthetic) period, for different reasons, a compromise between Ancient philosophies and the Gospel was proposed – something which, due to their two opposing religious foundations, could not last. Therefore, about the 16th century the Medieval synthesis gradually starts falling apart till postchristian thinking became the dominant trend in Western culture. This secular form of philosophising broke with the preceding mixture of ideas, because it rejected the Biblical element in favour of reviving the Ancient philosophies. In contrast, the 16th century Christian reformers intended to purify their thinking from foreign philosophical elements to be obedient only to God's Word and laws (cf. Van der Walt, 2008:203-205; 220-225).

As indicated above, John Calvin (1509-1569) was a representative of Christian antisynthetic thinking. In his *Institutes* (1559:II, 2.4) he, for instance, criticises the Church Fathers by saying that "... many of them have come far too close to the philosophers... they strove to harmonize the doctrine of Scripture halfway with the beliefs of the philosophers...".

This biblical religious orientation (the direction of Calvin's thinking) should be appreciated. Unfortunately – as will be indicated below – this *religious direction* did not function critically enough in his *structural analysis* of the human being. His anthropology was partly influenced by unbiblical ideas based on a different (pagan) religious orientation. This state of affairs resulted in a basic tension in his view of being human.

It has to be mentioned by the way that Reformational philosophers evaluate non-Christian philosophies differently. Klapwijk (1973:61 and 1991) reveals a greater appreciation and therefore regards Vollenhoven's distinction between synthetic and anti-synthetic thinking as "facile". According to Klapwijk the correct attitude is revealed in 2 Corinthians 10:5. For a Christian it implies both *opposition* towards non-Christian philosophies ('to demolish arguments and any pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God') and *openness* ('to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ'). Klapwijk holds this viewpoint because he

believes that, in spite of arrogance and distortion, God's Spirit also worked in non-Christian philosophies.

1.2.2 The extent of pre-Christian influences

Mooi (1965) provides details of the thinkers quoted by Calvin as well in which of his works Calvin referred to them.

An important question in Calvin research is *to what extent* did these people influence Calvin's thinking. Two extreme answers to this question are that the one overemphasises while the other underestimates the unbiblical influences. The first, for instance, portrays Calvin as a complete Platonist, while the second denies any foreign influences, try to cover them up or regard them as merely "formal" influences, for example as only the use of Platonic expressions. (Cf. the position stated above, viz. that Calvin was only influenced by the Bible.) A clear example of the second way of interpreting Calvin is the denial of Platonism on his anthropology. Between these two extremes we – luckily – have more balanced studies like that of Van der Merwe (1982) and Babelotzky (1977).

The last mentioned author (cf. Babelotzky, 1977:1-4) on the one hand indicates that, at the time of Calvin (due to a revival also of Platonism), Plato was regarded as *the* authority in Christian Theology. Nobody, therefore, felt ashamed to be known as a "Platonist". (Babelotzky devotes a whole chapter from p. 5-52 to possible Platonic influences during the young Calvin's formative years.) Babelotzky also clearly indicates that Calvin was not merely a Neo-Platonist, but that he was directly influenced by (some of) Plato's ideas. (Cf. Babelotzky, 1977:53-76 where he discusses in detail Calvin's references in his *Institutes* (1559) to different works of Plato.) He furthermore shows (cf. p. 138 et seq.) cogently that the Platonic influences were not of a merely *formal* nature (e.g. Calvin's use of Platonic *expressions*), but also of a *material* nature (e.g. Platonic *ideas*).

On the other hand Babelotzky also clearly indicates the basic differences between Plato's and Calvin's anthropologies (cf. p. 137 et seq.). His conclusion is

that it would be untrue and unfair to simply regard Calvin as a Platonist. Such an interpretation would presuppose a relationship of master and student between the great Greek philosopher and the great reformer of Geneva. Calvin, however, was not Plato's epigone, who *propagated* his teacher's thinking. He merely *used* Platonic concepts and ideas as needed.

This is more or less also the viewpoint of Nixon (1964). He summarises Calvin's use of classical philosophy as both dependency and distance (rejection).

In the light of the above, I think it will be correct not to describe Calvin's anthropology as Platonic or Neo-Platonic, but rather as Platonising.

1.2.3 Two lines in Calvin: a directional and structural

Partee (1977) provides more information about *how* Calvin employed Ancient, pre-Christian philosophies. According to him Calvin never tried to give a systematic *defense* of any of these philosophies, including Platonism. He *used* them in an *eclectic* way as *examples* in the exposition of the Christian faith.

We can agree with Babelotzky, Nixon and Partee, except for the fact that Calvin could not *use* Greek and Stoic philosophy without at the same time being *contaminated* in his own thinking. These three writers, as well as other theologians, give the impression that Calvin merely used foreign, unbiblical concepts in a *formal* way. However, such a separation between *form* and *content* is debatable – concepts are not empty containers without any content or meaning!

Calvin's ideal of thinking antisynthetically was not realised fully. He, for instance, did not always realise that he should not merely reject the *implications* of Greek-Roman philosophies, but also their deeper *presuppositions*. His correct antisynthetic attitude did not fully challenge the apostate *faith* underlying ancient anthropologies.

To summarise the preceding, we may say that two "lines" can be detected in Calvin's thinking: a basic biblical *religious direction* which is intertwined with a *structural analysis* of the human being, sometimes borrowed from unbiblical philosophies.

1.3 The method applied to Calvin's thought

On the one hand the danger always exists that one's method can be forced upon a writer's thinking. On the other hand no one can "read" another thinker in a *tabula rasa* way, without his/her presuppositions playing a role.

1.3.1 Two basic questions

Every philosopher has to answer at least two basic questions: what *is* (the structure of something) and what *ought to be* (the direction of human life). Vollenhoven's problem-historical method (cf. Vollenhoven, 1992; 2005a and 2005b as well as Bril, 2005 and chapter 5 of this book) therefore distinguishes in the conception of a philosopher between the historical *trend* (his idea of *normativity*), which influenced the philosopher and his/her *type* of philosophy (how he/she viewed the *structures* of reality). Every philosophy represents a certain normative *tradition* and a specific ontological *type*.

We have already indicated the *trend*, tradition or spiritual direction of Calvin's thinking during the time of the 16th century Reformation. He wanted to accept God's Word and his ordinances as the normative direction for his thinking.

1.3.2 Calvin's type of philosophy

Interestingly Vollenhoven never gave an indication of Calvin's *type* of philosophy. I have, however (cf. Van der Walt, 1974:339 et seq.), employed Vollenhoven's method to typify Calvin's thinking. Bril & Boonstra (2000:282-284) in turn used my research as well as other philosophical Calvin studies to "plot" Calvin's position. (For more details see chapter 3 of this book.)

A brief preview of the results is the following. In line with a dualist view of reality (God and creation as its transcendent and non-transcendent parts) Calvin adhered to a dichotomist anthropology. Amongst the great variety of dichotomist anthropologies, his viewpoint may be described as a Platonising semi-mystic type. While some dualists believed that only the transcendent is divine, others (like Calvin's) proposed that a *part* of the human being (the soul/spirit) also

participates in divinity. God himself creates the human soul/spirit into the body, originating from the parents. Unlike complete mysticism (in which the whole human being at death is again united with his transcendent Origin), according to semi-mysticism only the spirit is immortal and returns to its divine Origin.

1.4 Focus on the “Institutes”

Of course Calvin has written much more than his *Institutio Christianae Religionis* (to be abbreviated as *ICR*), but we will confine our appraisal of his anthropology to the final edition (1559) of his main systematic work, with only a few references to his *Psychopannychia* of 1534 (cf. Calvijn, 1969). Relevant secondary interpretations of his viewpoint will be included in the discussion.

The quotations from Calvin's *ICR* are according to Battles' translation (cf. Calvin, 1960). In the cases of long quotes, the original Latin is given in footnotes, taken from Calvin's *Opera Selecta* (cf. Calvini, 1967, 1968, 1962). References to the *ICR* are indicated in the following way: II, 15, 3, of which the Roman figure indicates the book (in this example book 2), the second Arabic figure the chapter (e.g. chapter 15) and the last figure the paragraph (e.g. third paragraph).

We are now ready to review Calvin's anthropology in detail. The first important facet is:

2. Being human as being religious

The deep Christian religious character of the Reformation in a positively Christian sense is also revealed in Calvin's view of man. Religion is not regarded by him as a subjective, introvert piety but is taken in the sense that man in the core of his being is aligned to God and that this religious alignment control and determines his whole being. In this religious relationship man does not occupy the foremost position but God, who has placed man in a covenant with him.

Calvin not only uses the concept *religio* (cf. the Latin title of his *Institutes*) but also the word *cultus Dei*. A comparison of how Calvin uses these concepts reveals

that they are used as synonyms. Furthermore, with these two terms Calvin does not have in mind private worship or church worship only, but rather the service of God in all areas of life.

Schroten (1956:48, 58) rightly remarks that Calvin's anthropology was religious in nature, as he was not primarily interested in man-in-the-cosmos, but in man *coram Deo*. Man's relationship to God was for him the most important aspect of being human.

2.1 Self-knowledge dependant on knowledge of God

Already in the opening words of the *ICR* it is evident how much importance Calvin attaches to the religious relationship between God and man especially in the knowledge of the self. "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other is not easy to discern. In the first place, no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God, in whom he 'lives and moves'. For, quite clearly, the mighty gifts with which we are endowed are hardly from ourselves; indeed, our very being is nothing but subsistence in God"¹

The beginning of the second paragraph presents the opposite side of the picture: "Again, it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face, and then descends from contemplating Him to scrutinize himself"²

¹ Total fere sapientiae nostra summa, quae vera demum ac solida sapientia censi debeat, duabus partibus constat, Dei cognitione et nostri. Caeterum quum multis inter se vinculis connexae sint, utra tamen alteram praecedat, et ex se pariat, non facile est discernere. Nam primo, se nemo aspicere potest quin ad Dei in quo vivit et movetur, intuitum sensus suos protinus convertat: quia minime obscurum est, dotes quibus pollemus, nequaquam a nobis esse; imo ne id quidem ipsum quod sumus, aliud esse quam in uno Deo subsistentiam." (*ICR*, I, 1, 1). In *ICR* I, 15, 1, Calvin even makes the statement that "... God can not be clearly and thoroughly known to us unless knowledge of one's self accompanies this". ("... non potest liquido et solide cognosci Deus a nobis nisi accedat mutua nostri cognitio.")

²"Rursum, hominem in puram sui notitiam nunquam pervenire constat nisi prius Dei faciem sit contemplatus, atque ex illius intuitu ad seipsum inspicendum descendat." (I, 1, 2).

2.2 Appreciation

Before going into the problems that are latent in these statements, allow me first to make a more positive remark. In my opinion a clear proof is found in these quotations that Calvin's thinking is not secular or purely cosmological in nature. Because he does not narrow down his ontology to a cosmology, he can begin immediately with God. He does also not deduce the existence of God via creation as was done in Medieval natural theology. He does not make the knowledge of God dependent on the knowledge of creation, but states emphatically that self-knowledge is not possible without knowledge of God. The visible does not determine the invisible, but vice versa.

2.3 A problem

The problem in these statements of Calvin is, however, seated in the fact that he also maintains that self-knowledge can lead to knowledge of God. This standpoint of Calvin has already led to much controversy. That self-knowledge would lead to knowledge of God is doubtful. Taima (1882:25), for instance, says that Calvin overlooked the fact that knowledge of our sinful situation can only lead us to God when we already know him. One cannot claim that self-knowledge as *such* will lead to the knowledge of God.

Others have seen in this viewpoint the clear influence of Augustine on Calvin, considering that Augustine also saw the gist of wisdom in both self-knowledge and knowledge of God. (Cf. *inter alia* Augustine's well-known statements in *Soliloquia*, I, 7 and II, 4: "Deum et animam scire cupio. Nihil plus? Nihil omnino", "Deus semper idem, noverim me, noverim te.") The influence of Augustine on Calvin was indeed great. (Cf., for instance, the works of Smits, 1962 and Snell, 1968.)

On this point Calvin would then show the clear influence of Augustinian Neo-Platonism. According to Battenhouse there can be no doubt about this: "The Neoplatonists regard intuition, the interior apprehension of the divine within the self and of the self in the light of the divine, as knowledge. They would advise man to begin with a study of himself, since in coming to know himself he must

come to know God. If man will but survey his own talents, says Calvin in the opening paragraph of the *Institutes*, he will see that they are 'as it were so many streams conducting us to the fountainhead', God. The metaphor clearly suggests the Neoplatonic concept of emanation" (Battenhouse, 1948:453).

2.4 Towards an answer

What has already been said about the deep religious nature of Calvin's anthropology may offer a solution. We refer again to Schroten (1956:56) who says that Calvin is not interested in the first place to explain the human being's composition (body and soul), or his/her relationships to others, or whatever may be the case. He does not follow the ancient philosophers' ways to self-knowledge (cf. *ICR*, I, 15, 16). They focused on the human being as such, as an independent, autonomous being without a relationship to God, while Calvin primarily viewed man/woman *in relationship to God*. He cannot image the human being apart from immediately having also God in mind.

If we therefore interpret Calvin correctly, his statement does not mean that we must first get to know ourselves before we can know God. The introductory words of the *ICR* state emphatically that knowledge of self and knowledge of God take place as it were simultaneously and that the one cannot take place without the other. Viewed in the light of the religious relationship between God and man, as defined in Holy Scripture, this is correct, for only he who knows and acknowledges God and His Word, will know himself; and only he who (in the light of the Word) knows himself as a child of God, will acknowledge his Father.

The second citation quoted above (*ICR*, I, 1, 2) reveals something more about Calvin's worldview and philosophy. In this citation his dualistic ontology becomes apparent when he says that man *descends* from his view of God to himself. From God as the transcendent man descends to the lower level of being, viz. man as part of the non-transcendent world.

2.5 Worked out in more detail

Calvin's idea of man/woman as a religious being became an important idea to be worked out in more detail and applied to the different domains of life in the Reformational philosophy of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd, starting from the thirties of the 20th century. In agreement with Calvin they taught that religion is not merely a *part* of life, but that life *as such*, as a *whole* is religion. This also applies to people who do not believe in the God of the Bible. Only the *direction* of their religious life is away from the true God, in disobedience instead of obedience to his ordinations.

3. Man as soul and body

Calvin's view of the religious or *directional side* of the human being has to be appreciated. His analysis of the *structural side* is, however, not so impressive any more today.

If uncertainty should still exist as to whether Calvin actually accepted a dualistic ontology, this does become clear in his anthropological views. Calvin's doctrine of a heavenly soul (because it originates from a transcendent God) and an earthly (i.e. non-transcendent) body reveals that he links up with an age old tradition.

3.1 Already his viewpoint in 1534

As far back as his first writing after his conversion to Protestantism he treats the structure of man as consisting of body and soul. The *Psychopannychia* (1534) combats the idea of the soul in a sleep of death, in the case of deceased who have been believers. (According to Calvin's "Foreword" the inventors of the theory were certain Arabs – evidently Averroes especially, who taught that souls had no individual existence after death as they returned to the super-individual spirit.) A comparison of this work with what Calvin later formulated in *ICR*, I, 15 shows that he remained faithful to his earliest views. Consequently the *ICR* is mainly followed in our exposition and the *Psychopannychia* is only referred to when it provides more detail. (References to the *Psychopannychia*, abbreviated as *Ps*, will be according to the pages of the 1969 Dutch translation consulted.)

3.2 Soul and body in 1559

According to Calvin it remains undoubtedly a fact that man consists of two parts, viz. a heavenly soul and an earthly body. In the opening words of *ICR*, I, 15 & 2 he says: "Porro hominem constare anima et corpore, extra controversiam esse debet". And in the *Ps.*, p. 14 it is propounded that man is divided into two parts of which the body has been taken from the earth, and the soul displays the image of God. Also on p. 35 he propounds that the heavenly soul must be distinguished from the earthly body.

3.3 The body as the prison of the soul

Calvin is also assured that the body is the incarceration (*ergastulum*) of the soul. It is clear in *ICR*, I, 15, 2, where it is expressed twice that the soul is (at death) released from the imprisonment of the body and in *ICR*, III, 9, 4 where the liberation of the body as if from a prison is discussed. See also *Ps.* p. 5 (The soul, as the best part of man is held fast by his earthly dwelling); p. 30 (The soul, as the better part, is kept confined by the bonds of flesh and released by death); p. 34 (The body is a prison and foot-shackles for the soul) and p. 42 (The body is a burden to the soul).

3.4 Contempt of earthly life and longing for heaven

The body is viewed as the lower part of man, the less important, so that Calvin does not devote further attention to it, but gives all his attention to the soul as the noblest part of man. The soul is the real man, the body happens to be incidental and, according to Calvin, practically a fortuitous evil. Calvin already implies this when he calls the body a prison or jail.

It is even clearer when he states in *ICR*, I, 15, 6 that man has undoubtedly been created for the purpose of contemplating heavenly life, but especially in chapters 9 & 10 of Book III where he treats the contemplation of future life and the utilisation of this earthly life. Here the consequences of his dichotomist view of man become apparent in contempt for earthly, corporal life. He says for example: "For this we must believe: that the mind is never seriously aroused to desire and

ponder the life to come unless it be previously imbued with contempt for the present life" (*ICR*, III, 9, 1). Later on he continues: "Indeed, there is no middle ground between these two: either the world must become worthless to us or hold us bound by intemperate love of it. Accordingly, if we have any concern for eternity, we must strive diligently to strike off these evil fetters" (*ICR*, III, 9, 2).

Such statements may, of course, be interpreted that Calvin merely follows biblical revelation. In the Bible we also encounter the tension between sinful present life and a renewed future life. In the next paragraph (3) Calvin correctly states that contempt of this life is not synonymous with hating life and showing ingratitude to God. But, when we read further, the basic tension (as a result of his mixing of biblical and unbiblical ideas) becomes clear.

3.5 Surely not a biblical viewpoint

In the following paragraph (4) it is evident that Calvin says something different from Scripture. It becomes clear from this paragraph that unbiblical influences are responsible for his contempt of life in this world. He states that present life compared to future life must be completely despised. For if heaven is our fatherland, what is the earth other than a resort of exile? If passing from this world is synonymous with entrance to life, what is the world then other than a grave? And what is living in the world other than lying in death? If release from the body entails being brought into complete freedom, what is the body then other than a prison?

In my opinion these ideas of Calvin are definitely not in accordance with Holy Scripture. His views in this connection are, however, understandable when seen against the background of his dualistic ontology of a transcendent (heavenly) and a non-transcendent (earthly) sphere. However, Holy Scripture reveals that man as a creature of God is an inherent part of this (earthly) creation and – in spite of his fall – is domiciled here. For this reason the Bible also speaks of a new *earth* which shall be man's fatherland.

3.6 Death biblically speaking an enemy, punishment for sin

Calvin's dichotomist anthropology in which the soul is kept imprisoned by the body, necessitates an unscriptural longing for death, for through death the soul is freed from the body. According to him (cf. *ICR*, III, 9. 5) there should be a longing for and no fear of death, for then we get rid of the "unstable, crumbling, corruptible, dilapidated, transitory tabernacle of our body" and the soul is recalled to its actual heavenly fatherland. He even suggests that no one has made good progress in the school of Christ if he does not look forward to the day of his death with joy. As the result of his dichotomist anthropology Calvin no longer espies anything terrifying in death or emphasises that according to Scripture it is God's punishment on sin. Death is actually a friend, as it releases us from the body and it does not affect the immortal soul – which is the actual human being.

3.7 Comments by others

Battenhouse (1948:468) draws attention to the unscriptural background of Calvin's anthropology in the following words: "But one point, I think, is clear: that both the Neoplatonists and Calvin base their thinking about man on the premise of a dualism between soul and body. The soul is associated to the body yet ideally detached; the world is but a vestibule to heaven... The other-worldliness of Calvin, it seems quite clear, is more Greek than Hebrew. A fundamental dichotomy is set up between the inner man, who is concerned for eternal life, and man's external conduct, which concerns civil justice."

Babelotzky (1977:132 et seq.) gives a detailed exposition of Plato's anthropology and concludes that Calvin was especially influenced by Plato's idea of the body as a prison as well as Plato's view of what happens at death.

From a Christian-philosophical point of view Stellingwerff (1965:20) has the following critique: "This dualistic anthropology of Calvin does not honour the unity of the human being; it clashes with what God reveals about humankind; leads to all kinds of false dilemmas as well as contempt of God's creation. His (Calvin's) doctrine of the human being consisting of two parts, an immortal soul that lives in a bodily prison, is of Greek and not Biblical origin. Calvin tries to prove the

immortality of the soul from places where Paul speaks of the immortality which the *whole* man will receive at his resurrection. Calvin, therefore, regards the soul as immortal from the *beginning* (creation), while it will only be given as God's gift to human beings at their *recreation*. The resurrection of the body has wrongly become of secondary importance to Calvin" [Translated from the Dutch].

3.8 The relationship between soul and body

Calvin's dichotomist anthropology is also revealed in the fact that he describes the soul as an incorporeal being which has been placed in the body in which it lives as if in a house which it manages (*ICR*, I, 156). A variation on the image of the house (body) and its occupant (soul) is that of the body as a tabernacle.

That such a viewpoint is not without problems is evident from the following words of Calvin: "... now we must add that, although properly it (the soul) is not spatially limited, still, set in a body, it dwells there as in a house..." According to the Reformational philosophy developed in the twentieth century, everything in creation – also man as a whole – is spatially bound. Therefore the soul cannot be *in* the body and at the same time not spatially qualified. It would, however, be unfair to labour this point, because Calvin did not have the philosophical insights at his disposal which we have today.

Calvin defines the soul as follows: "I understand by the term 'soul' an immortal yet created essence, which is his nobler part" ("... atque animae nomine essentiam immortalem, creatam tamen intelligo, quae nobilior eius pars est," *ICR*, I, 15, 2.) He adds that soul is equivalent to spirit (*spiritus*). However, if the words "soul" and "spirit" are used concomitantly, they have different meanings. A remarkable argument which only reveals Calvin's embarrassment when he tries to fit the different anthropological concepts of Holy Scripture (and the philosophers) into his dichotomist anthropology, in which there is room for only *two* components in man!

Calvin also stresses (as was also apparent from former citations) that the soul or spirit is the "master" which directs the body. See especially *Ps.*, p. 31. (The soul, as the life of the body is such a mighty power that it maintains the material

substance of the body, keeps it in motion and propels it); p. 41 (The soul gives man motion, feeling, the ability to reason, intellect and will) and p. 42 (The soul sets the body in motion and maintains it).

3.9 Conclusion

In the light of Holy Scripture these anthropological views of Calvin cannot be accepted. Man, according to Holy Scripture, is not a combination of two different parts, viz. soul and body but an indivisible "unity" of extraordinary complexity. (The word "unity" is actually incorrect, because it presupposes a monistic ontology in which the original unity splits into different parts.) To go into all Calvin's proofs from Scripture, is impossible at the moment as it would be within the compass of a new treatise. For this reason reference is made to chapter 8 of this book for contemporary literature on biblical concepts like "soul", "body", "spirit", "flesh" and "heart", which in the opinion of the writer reveals an interpretation more in accordance with Holy Scripture than that of Calvin.

4. The immortality of the soul

Attention must particularly be directed to the fact that the soul is an immortal being (*essentia immortalis*). Calvin lays great stress on the fact that the human being has an essence (*essentia*), viz. the soul, as well as the fact that this is an immortal essence. For example in *ICR*, I, 15, 2 attention is seven times drawn to the fact that the soul is something "essential". From other statements it appears that "essence" and "substance" is used by him as synonymous. And although he calls the soul itself the essence of man, he says later that the divine seed is engraved in the soul. Interesting research may await the person who would endeavour to trace the influences of Scholasticism and Stoicism on Calvin's thought in this respect.

4.1 Proofs for an immortal soul

Calvin produces various proofs that the soul is an *immortal* essence. For example the conscience, which can distinguish between good and bad, is an indisputable proof of an immortal spirit. Furthermore the fact that the soul can have knowledge

of God proves that it is immortal. All the excellent gifts of the soul, the mobility with which it can examine heaven and earth as well as the fact one's intellect can comprehend the invisible, like God and the angels, are also used as proofs. According to Calvin something must be hidden in the body which is differentiated from it, for even in sleep, which seemingly renders man unconscious and deprives him of life, man can have dreams of present and future matters.

After these reasonable "proofs" Calvin further tries to confirm his belief in an immortal soul with "proofs" from Holy Scripture. Especially in his *Psychopannychia* Calvin substantiates with many "proofs" from the Bible – in opposition to the proponents of the soul in a death sleep – the immortality of the soul after death. The reason is that the soul has originated from another world and is not quite at home in this world. It ascends above this world: "The very knowledge of God sufficiently proves that souls, which transcend the world, are immortal" ("...iam ipsa Dei cognitio satis coarguit, animas quae mundum transcendunt, esse immortales..." *ICR*, I, 15, 1).

4.2 The soul as something transcendent

It therefore looks as if the soul is something transcosmic which carries only temporarily in the cosmos (human body). In any case it is clear that the background of Calvin's dichotomistic thought that the soul originates "from another world" and transcends this world to a certain extent, is seated in his dualistic ontology: the soul is something from the transcendent sphere in the non-transcendent world. Calvin expressly also says that "something divine is engraved" in the soul. (*ICR*, I, 15, 2).

It is with statements like these in mind that we typify Calvin's anthropology as a (Platonising) semi-mystic dichotomy (cf. 1.3.2 above). The implication will be that Calvin did not clearly distinguish between the transcendent God and the human being.

The difficulty here – as throughout this whole chapter – is *how serious* such statements of Calvin should be taken. Does he simply utilise the common language of his day to say something about the human being, or should such

statements be regarded as a deliberate effort towards an explication of a biblical anthropology? To put it differently: Was Calvin fully aware of the fact that he uses expressions with a long tradition and often unbiblical philosophical background?

4.3 The difference between God and man maintained

Calvin will be misunderstood if he should be accused of not wanting to distinguish between God and man. He actually criticises those (like the Manichees and Servetus) who think that the soul is a shoot from the divine being, as if a part of the infinite godhead should have flowed into man: "All these things one must attribute to God's nature, if we understand the soul to be from God's essence, or to be a secret inflowing of divinity. Who would not shudder at this monstrous thing? Indeed, Paul truly quotes Aratus that we are God's offspring, but in quality, not in essence, inasmuch as he, indeed, adorned us with divine gifts"³.

He subsequently refutes, in a reasonable way, the idea that man would be an effusion from the being of God. The being of God certainly cannot be torn apart so that each creature possesses a part!

As will be evident below, Calvin wishes to call man the image of God although not implying by this an equality of being between God and man. Man can only be a mirrored reflection of God, owing to the fact that he is "divine" on a small scale.

4.4 Creatianism

Calvin also grapples with the old dilemma – a false problem, resulting from a dichotomy – to choose between traducianism and creatianism. The question was where the human soul comes from. The traducianists believed it originated from the father or both parents, while the creatianists said that God created every soul. Creatianists will have a problem with original sin: does God create sinful souls? According to Talma (1882) it seems as if Calvin, in his doctrine of original sin, thinks in the traducianistic way (cf. Talma, 1882 foot-note 1, p. 51), but that he

³ "... que omnia Dei naturae ascribere conveniet, si recipimus animam esse Dei essentia, vel arcanum divinitatis influxum. Quis ad hoc portentum non exhorreat? Vere quidem ex Arato Paulus nos dicit esse Dei progenium (Act. 17 f. 28): sed qualitate, non substantia, quatenus scilicet divinis nos dotibus ornavit" *ICR*, I, 15, 5).

does not, in doing so, accept traducianism (because Calvin says in his commentary on John 3:6 that his doctrine of the *peccatum originale* does not conflict with his creatianism (cf. p. 97). Talma also ascribes the fact that Calvin does not offer any rounded off doctrine on original sin to the fact that he (Calvin) vacillated between traducianism and creatianism (cf. p. 104). According to Den Hertog (1937), however, Calvin was indeed a creatianist. His creatianistic viewpoint concerning the origin of the soul (the soul comes directly from God and not from the parents, as in traducianism) clearly confirms the semi-mystic dichotomy in his anthropology.

4.5 Different interpretations of Calvin's idea of immortality

According to Schroten (1956:61,62) Calvin simply indicates the continued existence after death when he speaks of the immortality of the soul, for Holy Scripture proclaims eternal death (i.e. the God-forsakenness) of the unbelievers and it would not be possible if the souls ceased to exist after the death of the body. The soul that sins will die, because life can only exist in communion with God. "Immortality", according to Calvin, thus primarily means the eternal life of the redeemed with God.

If Schroten's interpretation of Calvin is correct, then Calvin's thinking is decidedly more in accordance with Holy Scripture than it would seem at first glance, for Holy Scripture uses the concept "immortality" (except for God) in the case of the believer only of his state *after* resurrection (cf. Snyman, 1961).

The question of course still remains as to whether, according to Holy Scripture, man as such (set in dichotomistic terminology: body *and* soul) does not die and rise from death and that only then can mention be made of the immortality of *man* (as against the second death of the unbelievers). This problem will be discussed in detail in chapter 11 of this book.

Wendel maintains that the immortality of the soul, according to Calvin, is a gift of God which He can withdraw from man, so that it can cease to exist just like the body. In Calvin's viewpoint the soul does thus not possess a natural immortality. In this connection Wendel quotes from Calvin's *Treatise on freewill* against

Pighius which he translates as follows: "For likewise we do not agree that the soul is immortal of itself. What is more, that is the teaching of St. Paul, who ascribes immortality to God alone. We do not therefore believe, however, that the soul is mortal by its nature, for we do not estimate the nature of the same by the primary faculty of the essence but by the perpetual state, that God has put into his creatures" (Wendel, 1963:175).

Oberman (1994:141) even states that already in his *Psychopannychia* Calvin denied that the soul is immortal in and of itself, as if it could exist without God's grace: "We learn from experience that it is the might of God, and not our human nature, that allows us to last in eternity".

According to these statements of Calvin it seems that in using the expression "immortality" he wishes to express the biblical idea that man as a result of God's mercy is an imperishable being, so that even the second death which the unbelievers die, does not entail the destruction of man.

The question still remains, however, why Calvin speaks only of the immortality of the soul. In spite of all attempts to defend Calvin here, it is clear that certain effects of unscriptural ideas can be discerned. This becomes even more evident in Calvin's viewpoint about the human being as the image of God, to which subsequent attention will be paid.

5. Man as the image of God

Calvin arrives at the idea of the image of God by introducing it as one of the proofs that the soul is an immortal being. To him it is a foregone conclusion that the actual seat of the image lies in the soul. (In *ICR*, I, 15, 3 he repeats it time and again. Cf. also *Ps.*, p. 12, 13.)

5.1 A divine image

Arising from the fact that he employs the word seat (*sedes*), it appears that he sees the state of being an image of God as there being something *in* man. That this "something" is considered to be divine or heavenly is also evident from his criticism of Osiander who applies the idea of the image of God without distinction

to body and soul. Calvin's criticism is that in this way heaven and earth get mixed up.

It is surely not necessary to draw attention once more to the dualistic background of these ideas in the mind of Calvin. He wishes to make a distinction between heaven and earth, or the transcendent and the non-transcendent. The soul is clearly regarded by him as something transcendent. Compare the following paragraph as well (I, 15, 4), where he maintains that man rises above other creatures or is separated from them as a result of being endowed with a transcendent soul.

5.2 Images, sparks and traces of God

Calvin wishes to apply the idea of the image of God also to the body, but not without reservations and differences: "And although the primary seat of the divine image (*divinae imaginis*) was in the mind and heart, or in the soul and its powers, yet there was no part of man, not even the body itself, in which some sparks (*scintillae*) did not glow. It is sure that even in several parts of the world some traces (*lineamenta*) of God's glory shine. From this we may gather that when his image is placed in man a tacit antithesis is introduced which raises man above all other creatures and, as it were, separates him from the common mass"⁴.

Calvin is, of course, correct that the human being is different from the rest of God's creatures by being his image. But the way he expressed the idea is found in the writings of many early Christian and Medieval thinkers and are typical of a hierarchical structure of being. The human soul comes from heaven and therefore from God himself (the transcendent) and is thus the image (*imago*) of God. In the body, which is the lower (non-transcendent) part, only sparks

⁴ "Ac quamvis primaria sedes Divinae imaginis fuerit in mente et corde, vel in anima eiusque potentiis: nulla tamen pars fuit etiam usque ad corpus, in qua non scintillae aliquae micarent. Certum est in singulis etiam mundi partibus fulgere lineamenta quaedam gloriae Dei: unde colligere licet, ubi in homine locatur eius imago, tacitam subesse antithesin que hominem supra alias omnes creaturas extollat, et quasi separet a vulgo" (*ICR*, I, 15, 3). It is interesting to note that Calvin in this statement apparently uses the concepts "mind", "heart" and "soul" as synonyms.

(*scientillae*) of his divinity glow. In the different parts of the rest of the world merely some traits (*lineamenta*) of God glitter.

Torrance (1952:35-42) rightly avers that in Calvin a distinction should be made between *imago Dei* in its general meaning (God is reflected by the whole of creation as if in a mirror) and *imago Dei* in the narrower meaning in which it applies only to man (specifically his soul).

5.3 Imago as ontological similarity with God

The fact that Calvin says that man is called the image of God because "he is equal to God" ("...deinde in re ipsa nulla est ambiguitas quin Dei imago nominetur homo, quia Deo similis est," *ICR*, I, 15, 3) or that God "made himself perceptible in the form of an image by means of engraved marks of likeness" ("... in quo seipsum velut in imagine repraesentaret, propter insculptas similitudinis notas") shows that Calvin regarded *imago Dei* as something ontological, a kind of *analogia entis* between God and mankind.

That this entire train of thought is intimately linked up with his philosophical view of law (*logoi spermatikoi*) as a divine seed implanted in creation (for details cf. chapter 3 on his ontology) is also apparent from the fact that he does not regard man alone as divine. He does not only regard nature as divine but "in pious sense" says that nature itself is God (*ICR*, I, 5, 6)!

5.4 Human beings as "smaller" gods

Calvin's doctrine of the *imago Dei* becomes even clearer when he asserts (cf. *ICR*, I, 5, 3) that it is not necessary to go outside one's self to find God, as man finds God within himself hundreds of times. Also the fact that some philosophers have designated man as a microcosm (the world on a small scale) meets with Calvin's approval.

Calvin's ideas about man as microcosm in his *Institutes* are not very clear. It is possible that he used the concept more or less "innocently", to explain to his readers in an illustrative way something about the difficult problem how man could be the image of God. The other possibility is that Calvin was more "serious";

that his utilization of the idea of man as microcosm describes exactly his own viewpoint about the *ontological* (instead of, to my mind, *religious*) relationship between God and man. What is offered below is therefore merely a preliminary hypothesis.

In accordance with the classical macro-microcosmic theory (amongst cosmogono-cosmological philosophers) the macro- and micro-cosmos were respectively the universal and the individual. The universal and the individual, according to this type of partial universalism, look exactly the same and differ only in size.

Vollenhoven (2005b:73) indicates that in synthetic philosophy the macro-microcosmos theme was often connected to man as the analogous image of God. He also mentions that the same theory again became popular amongst partial universalistic thinkers during the Renaissance, in other words at the time of Calvin.

Possibly owing to ignorance of the classical theory of macro-microcosm, or because he wished to adapt the original theory to fit into his thinking, Calvin (with purely cosmological tendencies) accepts partial universalism with a macro-microcosmic theme, whereby God is seen as the macro- and man as the micro-cosmos. The idea that the macrocosmos (the world on a great scale) and the microcosmos (world on a small scale) are identical irrespective of size, is retained. Hence he could say that man on a small scale is divine or displays the image of God. (For details about the theory of macro-microcosmos, cf. Bril & Boonstra, 2000:354-356.)

5.5 Some comments by others

A lot has been written on Calvin's ideas about *imago Dei*. See for instance the articles by Faber (1960) and Prins (1972). Most of them agree with the following two authors. Den Hertog's (1937:139) conclusion regarding this aspect of Calvin's anthropology is that, in spite of his efforts to listen to the Bible, he was nonetheless influenced by unbiblical ideas.

Wolmarans (1932:108) avers that Calvin's view of man inclined more to Plato than to the Bible. Elsewhere he says: "As in the case of Tertullian, Calvin is prone to be inclined to attack philosophers sharply, but he is just as ready to accept much more from pagan philosophers than could be brought to tally with Holy Scripture. His anthropology is actually Hellenistic and reveals a great number of anti-Israelitic elements... it must be concluded, in particular from his love of Plato, that humanism exerted great pressure on Calvin..." (Wolmarans, 1932:104 [translated]).

5.6 Conclusion

Wolmarans is correct in his assessment. Calvin's idea that the soul alone constitutes the image of God tallies with his semi-mystic dichotomist view of man in which the soul is regarded as the divine, godly or better part of man.

As already stated, this form of dichotomy does not find any substantiation in Holy Scripture. Furthermore, Holy Scripture does not teach that *something in man*, viz. his soul, is the image of God, but that *man* was created in the image and likeness of God. After the fall and redemption in Christ, man is not any more automatically the image and likeness of God, but man *has to be* His image and likeness by obeying God's laws. (It would also be wrong to speak of man as the image *bearer* of God, considering that it creates the impression that man, irrespective of his state of being man, yet has an *additional* attribute which renders him the image of God.)

Although it is to be appreciated that Calvin expresses no desire to call the soul "a shoot from divine being" (cf. 4.3 above), it still remains an open question whether

he has succeeded in his ideas concerning the image of God in maintaining the *radical* difference between God and man. In the writer's opinion the danger of a relativism of being is no longer imaginary when the image is seen as something divine in the human soul. (For more about the biblical meaning of *imago Dei*, see chapter 10 of this book.)

6. Nature and supernature in man

Calvin's view of the image of God was furthermore strongly influenced by the Patristic and Medieval distinction between nature and grace (or supernature). In Book I, chapter 15, paragraph 4 of his *ICR* Calvin says that merely by saying that the soul is the reflection of God's glory, one has not yet given a complete indication of the image of God. Calvin then agrees with Paul who sees the image of God as knowledge, righteousness and holiness, from which Calvin deduces that in the beginning the image of God existed in the light of the intellect, uprightness of the heart and the soundness of all its parts. Everything related to his spiritual, eternal life is included in this idea of the image of God.

6.1 Two images of God

On the one hand the *imago Dei* is correctly taken (according to Holy Scripture) as knowledge, righteousness and holiness. But on the other hand Calvin links it with human nature. ("Nature" understood here as the essence or soul of each human being.)

For the latter he appeals to Plato who, according to Calvin, finds the image of God in the soul (cf. *ICR*, I, 15, 6). The image of God is then connected with reason and with the seed of religion (*religionis semen*), which is engraved in reason. He accepts Plato's five senses and apparently the theory of knowledge which is concomitant. (For the similarities between the epistemologies of Calvin and Plato, cf. Babelotzky, 1977:161-224.) Later he also brings in Aristotle and accepts that there are two parts in the human soul, viz. intelligence (*intellectus*) and will (*voluntas*).

6.2 Confusion

Calvin's argument is clearly eclectic and also gives the impression of uncertainty. He says that he gladly leaves it to philosophers to deal with the faculties of the soul more soundly. He agrees with Plato's classification of the faculties of the soul or at least regards it as probable, and says that anyone who wishes to classify them in any other way, may do so, as far as he is concerned. On the one hand he condemns Aristotle for splitting hairs and on the other hand he admits that Aristotle spoke the truth. Eventually the reformer of Geneva falls for the division of the soul into two faculties viz. mind (or reason) and will and is able to embroider further on them both.

Talma (1882:43) already noticed the change that occurred when Calvin treats of the *animae facultates*: the style becomes less lively, loses regularity and gives the impression that Calvin does not feel at home in the material discussed. His basic uncertainty, to my mind, is caused by the fact that he could not fully realise in his *structural analysis* of the human being the antisynthetical intention (the correct *religious direction*) of his thinking, resulting in an effort to combine different biblical and unbiblical ideas about man into one conception.

6.3 Natural and supernatural image

Calvin's view of the soul as the image of God therefore consists of two components of which the one originates from Holy Scripture and the other from pagan philosophy.

From Book II, chapters 1 and 2 of the *ICR*, which treat of the fall of man, it appears that Calvin sets out the two parts as the natural as opposed to the supernatural (cf. the end of *ICR*, II, 1, 7 and the middle of *ICR*, II, 1, 9). In Chapter 2, however, he explicitly says: "And, indeed, that common opinion which they have taken from Augustine pleases me: that the natural gifts were corrupted in man through sin, but that his supernatural gifts were stripped from him" ("Ac illa quidem vulgaris sententia quam sumpserunt ex Augustino, mihi placet, naturalia dona fuisse corrupta in homine per peccatum, supernaturalibus autem

exinanitum fuisse" III. 2. 12). Augustine's distinction between natural and supernatural is thus adopted by Calvin.

According to Klapwijk (1972:15) Calvin usually makes use of the distinction between natural and supernatural only in the sense of natural life (birth from earthly parents) and spiritual rebirth. However, in my opinion, Calvin, by distinguishing *naturalia-supernaturalia*, did not here have the difference between an unconverted and a converted person in mind. Calvin clearly divides the *dona* of the image of God into *naturalia* and *supernaturalia*. The *naturalia* consists of the qualities which make man man (*facultates animae*), and the *supernaturalia* consist of those qualities that constitute a Christian (knowledge, righteousness, holiness). (Later Calvinistic thinkers would appeal to this distinction for their own distinction between formal and material image, *imago essentialis et accidentalis* or image in wider and narrower sense.)

According to Calvin the supernatural image was lost with the fall of man, but the natural image was only corrupted. For if it was lost, man would cease to be man – man without mind and will does not exist. Torrance (1952) and Talma (1882:64, 65) give a clear exposition of Calvin on these *dona naturalia* and *dona supernaturalia* and they rightly shows that there is not a great difference between Calvin's view and that of Roman Catholicism, according to which the fall of man entails merely the loss of supernatural endowments without any considerable change in the nature of man.

6.4 His viewpoint on the effects of sin

This distinction explains why Calvin sometimes says that nothing good was left in man after he fell into sin (cf. *ICR*, II, 1, 9 and II, 3, 1) and why on other occasions he apparently contradicts himself when he mentions so many good gifts in (sinful) man (cf. *ICR*, II, 2, 16).

It is also apparent how Calvin's anthropology could impede him in seeing the fall of man in all respects as radical. Battenhouse (1948:469) remarks: "... I think it may be remarked that the loss of this 'image' seems to be for Calvin... a more central concern than man's loss of God. That is, fallen man's formlessness rather

than his loneliness receives chief attention: the corruption of his nature as man more than the disruption of fellowship with his Creator”

The natural image in the soul (the mind and will) is in a certain sense unaffected by sin. In this way, however, Calvin succeeds in preserving man from pride as well as passivity, for if anything is left of the image of God man still remains responsible. This also makes it possible for him to be able to justify a certain *semen religionis* in man after his fall from grace.

6.5 Implications of a double image

In *ICR* II, 2 and 3 (in which Calvin deals with the fact that man is subjected to pitiful bondage and that from man's depraved nature nothing but the damnable comes forth) time and again the fact that something good remained in man comes to the fore. In paragraph 13 of chapter 2 he differentiates between earthly and heavenly affairs. In earthly affairs man is still capable of attaining something, but not in heavenly affairs (the pure knowledge of God and the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom). Man's reason in spiritual matters is blinder than a bat.

To the first group (earthly matters) belong government, home life and the various arts and sciences. Man is capable of living in a state and in a family because “the seeds of law are implanted in all human beings”, “in all people a certain seed of civic order is strewn” and no man is deprived of “the light of reason”. (See again chapter 3 of this book for detail about Calvin's idea of law.)

Calvin stresses in particular natural law (*lex naturalis*). In *ICR* II, 2, 22 he links it to conscience (*conscientia*), which acts with the force of law as it distinguishes between good and evil. Conscience is therefore evidently something unscathed in man, a part of the residual, natural part of the image of God. (In *ICR*, II, 2, 24 he speaks of the testimony of conscience which persuades man.)

Finally, in *ICR*, II, 3, 3 Calvin explicitly draws the conclusion that human nature cannot be entirely sinful. He relates it to the grace of God – not to purify depravity but to keep sin under control. Also in II, 2, 17 he speaks of God's (general and particular) grace in this connection.

Hence Calvin can express appreciation for the works of pagan writers and the excellence of various sciences (cf. *ICR*, II, 2, 15). He is compelled to acknowledge the excellence of their works and the little drops of truth (*veritatis guttulae*).

We are confronted here with the problem of the "elements of truth" in pagan thought. Possibly the problem should not be seen as *whether* man after his fall into sin could exercise arts and sciences but *how* he did so, what direction he took (e.g. to the glory of God or with the aim of self-glorification). For a detailed exposition of Calvin's viewpoint in this regard the reader is referred to Klapwijk (1973 and 1991).

6.6 Conclusion

The Reformational philosophy of the twentieth century (especially the Vollenhoven line) distinguished between the *structures* of creation, which was not affected by sin (a human being remained a human being even after the fall and did not change into something else) and the *religious direction*, which did change from obedience to God's laws to disobedience (obeying idols in God's place). It is possible that Calvin also wanted to express this basic idea, but did it in the wrong way of a natural and supernatural image.

But it still remains regrettable that Calvin accepted the age-old doctrine (Christianised by thinkers during Patristic and Medieval times) of secular and religious or nature and supernature in his anthropology and consequently also in his philosophy of society (see chapter 3). In this way his emphasis on God's sovereignty over *all* areas of life and on man as a religious being, who has to obey God in *everything*, was severely weakened.

The basic mistake of this two-realm or two-kingdom doctrine is that it ascribes an *ontological* status to the *spiritual* antitheses for or against God. Accordingly some areas of life (e.g. the church) are *by nature* good, while others (e.g. politics) as *such* are not so good or even evil. Sin and redemption, however, influence *every* area of life and cannot be *localised*. God's grace, therefore, does not stand *against*, *next to* or *above* nature (creation), but intends to *renew* his *whole*

creation. (Grace is not the opposite of *nature*, but of *sin* in creation. And the opposite of God's grace is his wrath.)

7. A synthesis and a lesson

Having arrived at the end, the sense of writing a chapter like this can be queried by the reader. Would it not have been more appropriate to concentrate on the positive aspects by bringing out what is unique in Calvin's view of the human being? There were surely facets in his view of man in which he broke with tradition. We mentioned, for example, at the beginning the deep religious character of his anthropology.

Calvin has, however, been quoted from his own works and as far as possible not been judged by any contemporary, secular philosophical anthropology. (In any case it would be unfair to condemn anyone in such a way 450 years after his lifetime.) An attempt based on Holy Scripture – which Calvin also regarded as the final authority – has been made to show that a large part of his anthropology cannot stand the test of new insights in God's Word.

7.1 Synthesis

The anthropology of Calvin could finally be characterised as follows according to the consistent problem-historical method. It is a dichotomist view of man rooted in a dualistic ontology. In dualistic ontologies two types of anthropologies can be differentiated. According to some, man has an entirely non-transcendent nature. Such views are indicated as dualism without an anthropological dichotomy. Others – and of these Calvin's anthropology is a clear example – believe that man is not purely of a non-transcendent nature, but in his "composition" also contains something transcendent (usually the soul or a part of it). Man thus consists of two different parts. Hence the term dichotomy for this type of anthropology over against the first mentioned type which does not see two different "parts" in the human being, because s/he is in that case wholly of a non-transcendent nature.

Amongst the different kinds of dichotomies Calvin's is mainly of a Platonising nature and may be described as semi-mystic, because only the soul or spirit comes from and (at death) returns to God.

Because of the above Calvin often did not clearly enough distinguish between God and human beings. This is evident from the immortal soul as part of the divine, his ontological interpretation of man as the image of God and as macrocosmos compared to God as the Macrocosmos. In this way Calvin sometimes arrives on the brink of pantheism or panentheism.

Because Calvin also accepted the unbiblical distinction between the natural and supernatural (grace) he could torpedo his own biblical ideas about the radical nature of sin as well as of life as all-encompassing religion. In this way Calvin could not offer a safeguard against the secularisation of certain (so-called natural) parts of life.

7.2 A lesson

The lesson to be learned at the end is that no discipline – not even theology – can be practised without starting (deliberately or unaware) from philosophical presuppositions. This exploration, therefore, does not blame Calvin, because he employed philosophical ideas – he could not do otherwise. Philosophy *as such* is not dangerous to a Christian. (Such an idea originated in the unbiblical two-realm theory of nature-supernature, according to which the natural realm, to which also philosophy belongs, can not be Christian.) Our complaint was that Calvin used *prechristian* (pagan) philosophies and often did so in a too *uncritical* way. Because in his times no integral Christian philosophy was available, our criticism may be regarded as somewhat unfair. (For this reason one should have appreciation for Klapwijk's (1991) approach to Calvin's thought. Instead of critique on Calvin's entanglement in non-Christian ideas, he expressed his appreciation for Calvin's new ideas in comparison to those of his contemporaries.)

Today – through the grace of God – we live in a different situation. About 75 years ago D.H.Th. Vollenhoven and H. Dooyeweerd (in the Netherlands) and H.G. Stoker (in South Africa) started to develop a Christian-Reformational philosophy.

Since then it found many followers worldwide. This philosophy did not only build on valuable insights of Calvin, but also enabled us in this chapter to be critical about his ideas and to develop beyond his insights.

Calvin still had to depend on pre-Christian philosophical ideas. With a genuine Christian philosophy available today, we need not depend on contemporary post-Christian, secular philosophies.

Reformational philosophers should, however, never claim to be infallible. Like Calvin they are children of their own times, fallible human beings whose thinking should continuously be reformed. At the same time it can be to the benefit of Christian scholars to take notice of the intellectual labour of Reformational thinkers in their different fields of study.

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CHAPTER 8

THE BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON BEING HUMAN

During many years a considerable amount of valuable research has already been done on biblical words like "soul", "body", "spirit", "flesh" and "heart". In spite of that many – perhaps most? – Christians still believe that the human person consists of (at least) two components, viz. soul/spirit/heart and body/flesh. However, such a view of being human leads to unsolvable theoretical problems regarding the origin, present existence and future life (after death) of the human being. Furthermore, a dichotomy in one's anthropology holds many serious practical implications for the everyday life of Christians. Against this background the need for a renewed investigation of some key biblical anthropological data is evident.

The set-up of this exploration is as follows: (1) First the problem to be investigated is explained. (2) Then the current Christian (usually dichotomist) views of being human as well as their problems and practical implications are briefly explained. (3) The third (main) section investigates the real meaning of the above anthropological words in the Bible. (4) The results are summarised in the next section. (5) The last section asks a final question, viz. whether a monistic anthropology should be preferred above a dualistic one.

Relevance to our central theme (at home in God's world):

To be at home in God's world, we have to understand the real, biblical meaning of words like "soul", "body", "flesh", "spirit" and "heart" in order to know who we as humans are.

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1. Introduction: the current state of affairs

We have to mention beforehand that bibliographical references are omitted in the first two sections of this chapter. The reason is the following: Although what is offered in these sections affords important background knowledge, at the same

time it can be taken as well-known to the experts – at least to people pursuing an academic career.

It is not difficult to ascertain that most Christians are still stuck in age-old and moreover unbiblical ideas about being human. This can easily be illustrated by referring to what is preached at funerals as well as by numerous popular publications on life after death.

1.1 Funeral sermons

Since I am no longer young, I have attended numerous funerals. On such occasions the bereaved are "consoled" with for instance utterances like the following (My doubts are expressed in brackets.)

- The devastation of death is reasoned away. Actually, it is normal to die. (Then why are people sad and even cry when faced with someone's death? Besides, the Bible teaches that death is not a blessing, but God's punishment for sin, and that it is our enemy. Cf. Rom. 6:23a and 1 Cor. 15:26.)
- It is alleged that the deceased merely "passed on from the temporary to the eternal". (However, Scripture clearly teaches that only God is eternal. Man is a *time-bound* creature – now and hereafter.)
- Today we are merely burying the "mortal remains", the less important "part" of a human being. His/her "immortal soul" is untouched by death. (This is contradicted by the fact that nowhere in God's Word mention is made of something like an "immortal soul" and even less of "mortal remains". In Gen. 47:29, 30 Jacob does not request that they should bury his mortal "remains". He speaks about *me* (myself). Just as his ancestors – real people – were buried there (Gen.49:31).)
- Be happy that the deceased has now been released from this sinful, earthly vale of tears. (The question may be asked if life on earth as *such* is bad and sinful.) He/she now leads a completely different kind of existence. In this life we are actually merely "apprentice angels" who have to prepare ourselves for our

proper heavenly destination in the hereafter. (But the Bible knows no such discontinuity, only a clear continuity. It promises a new *earth* as our final home.)

1.2 Popular publications

Utterances on the human being like the above are not limited to funeral services. Publications on life after death (the "intermediate state") are always good sellers. But in many of these people are consoled with unbiblical, speculative ideas. The result is that often justice is not done to the central biblical message of our resurrection at the second coming of Christ.

1.3 No doubt about the resurrection

This chapter will not continue with the issues about death and beyond (see chapter 11). None the less we have to be clear about the following.

Christians have to *think* about death. In this way we also serve God with our minds (Matt. 22:47). The churches should also allow for different interpretations of the Scriptures on this difficult issue. Our intellects, however, are fallible and limited. Quite correctly Glas (1996:124) remarks that, just as the creation of the human being is God's secret, also his/her death is and will remain an impenetrable mystery.

In spite of the fact that we cannot know what happens at death and afterwards, God's Word is very clear about our final resurrection from the grave. Read, for example, the following: Daniel 12:12,13; Matthew 22:31; Luke 23:37, 38 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

In the light of God's revelation in the Bible one also does not have to be concerned about the so-called intermediate state between death and resurrection. Christ told Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25,26). According to Romans 8:38 not even death will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And in the same book (Romans 14:8b) it is confessed that in life and death we belong to the

Lord. Finally 1 Thessalonians 4:14 promises that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep (died) in him.

1.4 One's view on being human determines one's whole life

It is tragic that the results of years of research on biblical concepts like "soul" and "body", "spirit" and "flesh", "heart" and so forth evidently have not reached the theological training of ministers, pastors and priests – and seldom the "ordinary" believers.

An unscriptural view of being human does not only surface at funeral services. It also determines one's everyday life here and now as well as one's philosophy of society (cf. chapters 12 and 13). Therefore it is essential that one take a new look at what the Bible itself means by certain anthropological concepts.

1.5 The Bible is no scientific manual, yet nevertheless indispensable for understanding human beings.

The Word of God in Scripture has authority for our whole life, but it is possible to ask *too little* of it or *too much* from the Bible.

One expects *too little* from it when claiming that (inter alia as a result of its age and character) it is not relevant to a view of being human. However, as divine revelation it offers certain data on man which could not be obtained in other ways (like scientific investigation). For instance, that the human being (in contrast to the rest of creation) was *created* by God *in his image*, fell into *sin*, but can also be *redeemed* in Christ. It also reveals what happens to human beings after *death*. All this information can only be accepted in faith or rejected, since it is not accessible to scientific research. (He, who does try to do so, is merely speculating and not engaging in scholarship.)

On the other hand one expects *too much* from the Scriptures when one attempts to turn it into a scientific manual with a fully rounded anthropology. The Bible is not a *textbook* for any science (in that case it would have to be updated every few years!). It is a book of *faith* about man's relationship to God (or idols in his place).

Therefore one cannot expect the Bible to use words like "soul", "body", "heart" etc in an unambiguous, technical and scientific sense.

1.6 A hypothesis

What was said about human beings by Berkouwer (1962:195, 196, 197) and De Graaff (1979:98) is here taken as a hypothesis and is tested below with reference to various detailed studies. Both these persons say two significant things.

The first important point is that, when the Scriptures use concepts like "heart", "soul", "flesh," "body," "image" etcetera, it is always describing the *whole* human being from a *specific* angle. The second is that the Bible never gives a neutral, independent analysis of a human being, so that we could know his/her components, how his/her structure is composed. As a book of faith the Bible never pictures man on his own, i.e. *in isolation from God* – not even when he disobeys God – but as a religious being. In summary the Scriptures always teach (1) the integral unity of the different facets of being human (2) in relationship to God, in other words the religious direction of his/her life.

1.7 A warning

Before we continue an important warning should be heeded. Hart (1995:82) correctly states "... ultimately we are a mystery to ourselves and others... So our full self is a mystery... receding before our rational-theoretical enquiries..." Hart continues by saying that a (philosophical) anthropology will therefore always be partial and provisional, a temporary fragment of knowing ourselves. It will be distortive when pretending to say all. "We will run the risk of losing our-selves in who we *think* we are. But who do we think we are when we think that we can *think* who we *finally are*?" (p. 84).

2 Dichotomistic Christian views of being human in the past and present

We have to make it clear beforehand that what follows implies generalisation. Even among Christian theologians there are hundreds of kinds of views on being human. (Many of them are unfortunately the consequence of a synthesis with contemporary, but non-biblical philosophies.) And I will speak about a dichotomist view of being human (man consists of two separate basic components), although there are also trichotomist views (man for instance consists of body, soul and spirit/mind). Dichotomists usually appeal to texts like Genesis 35:18; Matt. 10:28 and Luke 23:46, while trichotomists use 1 Thess. 5:23 as proof from the Scriptures. (For examples from the early church fathers, cf. e.g. Gousmett, 1993.)

2.1 The core of the matter

Thus, although there are many variations and the relationship between body and soul can be understood in different ways (for instance in the doctrines of priority, parallelism or interaction theory), we will confine ourselves to saying that a dichotomist anthropology accepts that man is made up of two substances, namely an immortal, reasonable soul (the higher and more important part) and a mortal, material body (the lower, less important part).

This becomes evident from the following riddle you may have come across already. A house stands on two pillars. It has a door and on both sides of it windows of which the shutters are closed at night. Guess what is the house? (Answer: the body) Who lives in the house? (Answer: the soul.)

However, the following problems show that this view is not tenable.

2.2 Questions about man's origin

Man's view on his origin influences his view on his existence and continued existence (after resurrection) and the other way round. Let us first have a look at a dichotomist view on his origin.

Usually there is no problem about the origin of the body – it comes from the parents. But where does man's soul (something invisible and immortal) come from? Some (the generationists or traducianists) claimed that it comes from the parents. Others, (called creatianists) were of the opinion that God creates each person's soul in the body. (Their point of departure is the difference between Spirit and matter. God is a spiritual substance and creation is material substance. The exception is man, who receives his spirit/soul from God and is therefore a combination of spirit and matter.)

Both viewpoints read an unbiblical view of being human into the Scriptures which leads to all kinds of (false) problem statements for which "solutions" have to be found. (The reader should therefore note that even Bible translations are not always dependable, since the translator cannot eliminate his own view of being human.)

Creatianists, for instance, struggle with the following (unsolvable) questions. According to them a human being is only truly a human being when God has created his/her soul. But when does this happen? An answer to this question has to determine for instance whether the abortion of the human foetus up to a certain stage can be considered as permissible (in other words not as murder). A next problem: Does God then work together with adulterers and rapists by "willingly" supplying a soul for their sinful deeds? Furthermore we could ask whether such a view of being human does not clash with God's revelation in Genesis 2:2 that He had finished his creational work – including man. A further problem creatianists are faced with is how to explain the sinfulness of human beings. Does God create sinful souls or should sin be confined to the body?

2.3 Continued existence after death

While a dichotomist view of being human has problems with how man comes into being, it can easily come up with answers on what happens with a person at death. This is most probably a reason for the popularity of dichotomist views of being human among Christians through the ages. This enabled them to show that when man dies he does not altogether fade into nothingness.

At death man is simply "disassembled" according to the dichotomists. The tie between body and soul is simply undone with the result that the body (the lesser component) dies. The immortal soul, however, somehow lives on. At the resurrection it is not the *human being* that rises again (as in the Nicene Creed), but only the *body* (compare the Apostolic Creed) which is reunited with the soul. The resurrection of the body therefore is of no essential importance, but actually an additional matter.

2.4 Implications for our existence here and now

The implications of a dichotomist view for man's existence here and now are even more important than for the view of man's origin and continued existence (after death). It has disastrous consequences for the *whole* of life. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate the practical consequences for everyday life.

- The so-called higher, spiritual things are more important than the so-called lower, bodily ones. Therefore only "spiritual" occupations (like ministers or missionaries – called "soul shepherds") are in direct service of God, while other occupations are regarded as more or less "secular".
- Man's whole existence is divided into two: food for the body versus fare for the soul; material versus spiritual wellbeing; physical and spiritual diseases and so forth.
- The Word of God is important for the saving of our "precious" souls and does not have meaning for life in its fullness. (One's view of being human therefore also determines how one reads the Bible.)
- Such an anthropology also determines one's social philosophy. Applying the gospel is firstly concerned with saving "souls" while social involvement is of secondary importance to Christians. The kingdom of God, therefore, is something "spiritual" which does not encompass the whole of life.
- This viewpoint has a tendency to regard man on earth as a stranger and to stress life hereafter. Also when concerned with the existence after resurrection, emphasis is placed on heaven instead of on the new earth (compare 1.1 above).

- In the field of science a difference is made between arts and natural sciences; in education between spiritual and physical education; in singing and music between spiritual and “ordinary” (secular) songs/music, etc.

Thus not only man himself is composed in a dichotomous way, but as a result his whole life is dualistic. S/he leads a schizophrenic existence. An integrated life in the service of God is impossible.

De Graaff (1979:107) says about most of the anthropological models among Christians: “Almost all models... end up depreciating man’s physical, organic and sensitive ways of functioning. As a result, these dimensions of human functioning are usually regarded as man’s lower nature, which is then considered to be irrational, seductive, unbridled, base, dangerous, the occasion for sin, etc., and which must therefore be controlled and directed by man’s higher, rational, moral nature. Thus, these conceptions... often result in an inability to cope with and integrate in a positive manner our physical, sexual functions and feelings and our emotional reactions in general. These persistent trends within orthodox Christianity give rise to strong neurotic tendencies and hinder the free acceptance of our creaturely functioning as created *very good* by God and, although subjected to sin, essentially redeemed and renewed in Jesus Christ”.

2.5 Conclusion

A good test for the truth of a view of being human is whether one can live with it to its full consequences. In the light of the above the dichotomist view of being human fails this test. (Just as in the case of a monistic, materialistic-evolutionistic view of being human it offers no viable implications.)

Subsequently we subject this view of being human to a still more probing test: Does it tally with what God’s revelation in the Scriptures says about man?

3 The true meaning of biblical concepts about human beings

In this main part of the investigation earlier as well as more recent investigations into biblical “anthropological concepts” will be looked into. Certain basic concepts will be researched one by one: soul, body, flesh, matter, spirit, and heart. (Please

keep in mind that when I use the term "biblical *concepts*" – instead of "words" or "data" – I do not have in mind *theoretical* concepts.)

3.1 Fallible yet progress

From the start it has to be said that the studies referred to naturally cannot be exempted beforehand from the risk of eisegesis-exegesis (the well-known hermeneutical spiral). Just like the dichotomist anthropologies of the past they can be fallible, because they read their own ideas into the Scriptures and subsequently – with biblical sanction – extract them again from the Bible (cf. section 5). Nevertheless I am of the opinion that research in this field can bring Christians nearer to the biblical message on humans.

3.2 Works giving overviews

If one wants to come abreast quickly with the present state of research, one can for biblical concepts in the Old Testament consult the well-known (already fifteen volume) *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* edited by Botterweck & Ringgren (1977-2007) . For the meaning of the anthropological concepts in the New Testament there is the (ten volume) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (cf. Kittel & Bromiley, 1964-1976). The following concepts are discussed in it (cf. Pitken, 1976): "body" (vol. 6:166-167; 7:1024-1094), "dust" (9:472-479), "flesh" (7:98-151), "heart" (3:605-613, 7:548-559), "image" of God (2:381-397; 5:191-198), "immortal" (3:22-25; 9:93-106); "spirit" (6:332-451 and 9:6) and "soul" (9:608-660).

Older works like the one by Pedersen, (1940) and Ten Boom (1948) also offer considerable information. The work by Ridderbos (1975:115-121) discusses the concepts body, spirit, heart and soul in Paul's writings in clear non-dichotomist terms.

Even Paul's distinction between inner and outer man (e.g. in Rom. 7:22; 2 Cor. 4:16 and Eph. 3:16) may not, according to Ridderbos, be understood as dichotomist as if the outer man is less important and the inner the essential part of man. Man does not *have* two parts but exists both inwardly and outwardly (Cf.

Ridderbos, 1975:115). Further Vonk (1963:109) points out that Paul's distinction between "man inside" and "man outside", since he uses adverbs, not adjectives, could rather be translated by man "inwards" and man "outwards". Man directed inwards or outwards then denotes a specific way of looking at *man as a whole*

According to Vollenhoven (cf. 1992:184-194) the concept "soul" should not be identified with the psychic (a *facet* of the human being) and "body" should not be identified with the organic (another *aspect* of being human). When the Bible uses the word "soul" in connection with the human being, it indicates the heart or center, which has a directional function. The human heart determines the direction of one's life in obedience or disobedience of God's fundamental commandment of love. The heart as the "inside" determines the "outward" behaviour of the entire human being.

Since translations are not always reliable, in this investigation we will concentrate on a detailed investigation into the different biblical concepts in the original languages of the Old Testament and New Testament. Emphasis is laid on what the various writers have to say while my own comments are kept to a minimum.

3.3 The concept "soul" (*nephesh* in the OT and *psyche* in the NT) according to the Scriptures

A careful study in the original languages of the Old and New Testament already renders surprising results on this first concept.

3.3.1 Surprises

A deceased person for instance is called a soul (Lev. 19:28; 21:1; 21:11; 22:4 and Num. 5:2; 6:6,11). (Cf. Vonk, 1963:64.). Food we take satisfies the soul (Ps. 78:18). A man enjoins his soul to eat and drink wine (Luke 12:19). Or the blood is called the "soul" of man (in Deut. 12:23). In all these cases the soul is equated to the body – in complete contrast to the dichotomistic view of being human. A bodily way of existence is regarded as the normal one in the Scriptures (cf. Fowler, 1991:4 and 2004:3,4).

3.3.2 Various studies

According to Fowler the “two component theory of the human person” is an unbiblical idea that was read into the Scriptures by the Christian tradition under the influence of pagan Greek philosophy. The Bible talks about the “soul” as the whole person and not part of him/her. According to the Bible man is a “single, indivisible entity” (Fowler, 2004:5). Formerly we ourselves also spoke about so many “souls” in the church and by that simply meant so many *people*. The Bible does the same (cf. e.g. Rom. 13:1).

Becker (1942) did a detailed investigation on the concept *nephesh* in the Old Testament. Apart from the fact that according to him “soul” can simply mean a person, human being or some-one, it is also used in the meaning of life or a living being. Therefore it is even used in connection with animals – something that would not be permissible according to a dichotomistic view. Becker (1942:116) summarises the result of his research as follows: “*Nephesh* is everything that is present in a living being in general, and in the human being in particular, in motion of life – manifested in the breath, and residing in the blood – and the motion of the soul – manifested in desire, and that moreover ... makes and characterises the possessor as a living being, or a person as the case may be” [Transl. from the Dutch] (cf. further also Kuitert, 1963/1964: 37 et seq. and Pop, 1958:361-378).

With the following statement Von Meyenfeldt (1964:55) explicitly rejects the idea that the soul could be something separate within man “... *nefesh* deals with the concrete, earthly personality for whom breathing and the circulation of blood are most important, and who lives intensely emotionally. It indicates the man of this world... man is in every inch ‘soul’, and soul is in every inch man”.

Ridderbos (1975:120) says basically the same: “*Psyche* in Paul is neither, after the Greek-Hellenistic fashion, the immortal in man as distinct from the *soma*, nor does it denote the spiritual as distinct from the material. *Psyche* stands in general for the natural life of man (cf. Rom. 11:3; 16:4; 1 Thess. 2:8 – to give his ‘soul’, that is, his life to someone...)”.

In a more recent work Green (2004:186) shows that the word *nephesh* occurs about 800 times in the Old Testament in the meaning of life (vitality). The concept "soul" is thus also applied to animals. "When used anthropologically, its typical use is with reference to the entire human being, and not to some portion of the person." Thus man does not *have* a soul but *is* soul, a living being.

In conclusion Vollenhoven (cf. 1992:185,186) says that "soul" in the Bible has two basic meanings. Firstly, it indicates creatures (animals and human beings) that breathe through their noses, in other words *living creatures*. Secondly (as already indicated under 3.2 above), the word "soul" indicates the religious center or the *heart of man/woman*. In stead of a dichotomy (of a higher and lower component) Vollenhoven, therefore, prefers to look at the human being from the perspective of an inner-outer distinction.

3.3.3 An immortal soul?

Why then do Christians cling to a dichotomist soul? There are three possible reasons: In the first instance to be able to show that a human being is more than a physical, bodily being. Secondly, because it then is easy to show that human existence does not end at its physical death – the soul is immortal. Vonk (1963:55,56) points out a third reason, namely that earlier theologians (like Kuyper) needed the idea of a separate soul to explain certain doctrines (like the doctrine on being born again).

Apart from the fact that the soul is not a (sub)division of man, it does not have immortality (*athanasia*) either. The research done by Snyman (1961) in this respect is still valid, so that we give the word to him: "The specific issue (in the NT) is not the immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the body. Not *athanasia* but *anastasis* is the specific New Testament word ... The word *athanasia* occurs only twice in the whole New Testament, viz. 1 Cor. 15:53 and 1 Tim. 6:16, while *anastasis* with its verb and the related word "raising up" forms quite a considerable list. It is notable too that that the word *athanasia* is not connected with the soul in any of these passages, but once with God Himself, of whom it is said that only He has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16). There is no evidence of

the immortality of the human soul in the Platonic sense, namely that the soul has immortality in itself. In the other instance *athanasia* is connected with the body in close context with *anastasis*, namely when the body is clothed with *athanasia* (1 Cor. 15:53, 54). The difference between Greek philosophical thought and that of the New Testament cannot be put more incisively." (Snyman, 1961:422-423.)

An essential moment of the Good News, therefore, is not immortality but resurrection. Resurrection, however, demands greater faith than the immortality of the soul. In ancient times the Jewish Sadducees could not believe it (Mark 12:18-25 and Acts 23:8), neither could (according to Acts 17:32) the Stoics and the Epicureans (Greek philosophers). Even contemporary, so-called Christian theologians deny the resurrection (cf. the review by Van der Walt, 2006:643-649 of a recent work propagating such a viewpoint.) Even though it is theologically and philosophically incomprehensible, the resurrection should be adhered to in faith.

Green (2004:193) confirms Snyman's version with reference to Scripture passages like 1 Cor. 15 and 2 Cor. 5:1-10. They "... affirm that... immortality is the *consequence* of (not the *preparation* for) resurrection. That is, nothing in the created human being is intrinsically immortal" [My italics].

Vonk (1963:49-160 as well as Vonk, 1969) also goes into the belief in immortality in detail and amongst other things points out the following:

- That this belief is of pagan (Oriental, Greek and Gnostic) origin, because people could not accept that death is God's punishment for sin (Rom. 6:23a). It also attempted to mitigate the horror and seriousness of death (our enemy according to 1 Cor. 15:26). According to the belief in an immortal soul death does not wipe out the most essential part of man.
- Such a viewpoint, however, clashes directly with the Scriptures according to which God explicitly warned Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:17 and 3:3) that disobedience would be punished by death. It rather accepts the lie told by Satan (Gen. 3:4, 5) claiming that God had lied!

- Proponents of this view rely on something of the *human being* (his "immortal soul") instead of on God's firm promise that He will raise us from death.
- A further very serious implication is that the death of Christ (and his resurrection) was not really significant: something of man can escape death without the atoning death of Christ. This idea clashes for example with 1 Cor. 15:3, 4, 14.
- According to Vonk the whole of man dies – the dead is truly dead! Not in the sense that death is the final end of man, but in the sense that the human being does not have a continued existence in a kind of "interim state". At death God's words (Gen. 3:19b) are fulfilled in the sense that man returns to dust.
- Man dies and knows or thinks nothing. For the dead there is no passage of time in a waiting period (intermediate state). For the one who dies, the moment of his death and resurrection are simultaneous. One closes one's eyes as a dying person and – as far as one's awareness goes – one opens them immediately and simultaneously as a resurrected person. (This viewpoint of Vonk will be discussed in detail in chapter 11.)

3.4 The meaning of the concept "body" (*sooma* in the NT) according to the Scriptures

It is striking that the Old Testament does not have a separate word for "body". The New Testament word does not denote a separate (lower) part of man either.

3.4.1 Two meanings

The body, that is the whole human being, belongs to God and is raised again. "...*sooma* is to Paul the most adequate expression for the concrete living person ..." (Kuitert, 1963/64:44. Also cf. Pop, 1985:267).

According to Kuitert (1963/64) the word *sooma* in the New Testament has mainly two meanings. In some cases it means more or less the same as "flesh" (*sarx*) which can denote sinful man (not the body as sinful *part* of man). In other instances the word means almost the exact opposite from that which Paul

denotes with "flesh". (Also cf. Van Peursen, 1958, 1970 and Thuijs & De Valk, 1951).

This tallies with what Ridderbos (1975:116) also finds about Paul's use of "body". The concept in the writings of Paul has the comprehensive meaning of man in his totality. It does not denote a "subdivision" of man. Ridderbos, too, points out that it is often used in the same meaning as "flesh". He writes the following: "... 'body' and 'flesh' ... are not thought of as the external 'constituent part' of man, as the material casing of the real, inner man, but rather denote man himself according to a certain mode of existence... Paul frequently speaks of the body as the concrete mode of existence, co-extensive with man himself." Subsequently he stresses (p. 117) that the *whole* human being *is* body, not *has* a body. Also Vonk (1963:109, 110 and several places in Vonk, 1969) shows that "body" denotes the whole human being in his/her concrete appearance.

3.4.2 The "worldliness" of man

In this regard what Fowler (2004:19-25) writes about the "worldliness" of the human being is significant. Our worldliness is part of the good way in which God created us. To attempt to escape our created nature would therefore mean that we despise our being human. The essence of Adam and Eve's sin was exactly to break away from their worldly existence in an attempt to be like God (Gen. 3:5).

However, Adam was made out of the earth (cf. Gen. 2:19). Therefore a human being should live *on* this earth and not *outside* it. We do not draw nearer to God the less we are involved in this world!

The sinful world may therefore not be identified with God's (earthly) creation. There is a worldliness (sinfulness) that we should *shun*, but also a worldliness (creatureliness) that we should *confirm*.

In this connection Fowler also points out the meaning of Christ's resurrection from death. This great event was God's recognition and confirmation of our being human. "In that event God affirmed the glory of being human in all the fullness of the bodily human existence... When Jesus Christ rose it was not an ethereal spirit

that rose but a human being. He did not leave his body in the grave. It was specifically the human body that rose never to perish. God the Son came to earth to share our bodily existence, not just for a period of thirty-odd years, but forever... Jesus Christ did not come to deliver us from our humanity. He came to rescue our humanity from sin so that we are free to be fully human" (Fowler, 2004:24,25).

3.5 The meaning of the word "flesh" (*basar* in the OT and *sarx* in the NT)

As with other biblical concepts both *basar* and *sarx* can have a number of meanings.

3.5.1 "Flesh" in the Old Testament

Helberg (1953:64-69) differentiates no less than seven meanings. However, the most significant is that the concept does not (as among dichotomists) denote a *lower part* of man, but the *whole human* being seen from a *particular* angle. The flesh of man characterises him/her as frail, transient and mortal. *Basar* therefore depicts the whole human being from the point of view of his weakness compared to God's omnipotence and immortality.

3.5.2 "Flesh" in the New Testament

According to Lindijer (1952:7,8) mainly two meanings of the word *sarx* can be distinguished in the writings of Paul. (1) As flesh, body, the whole human being and (2) as sinful man. So in the work of Paul the word not only indicates man's frailty and transience, but also his incapacity to live the way God wants him to. It is significant what Schep (1964:31) writes about the first-mentioned meaning: "There is... nothing wrong with flesh as such... either before or after the fall... when it is involved in sin, it is man himself who sins... he is the real culprit, not his flesh as such."

3.5.3 Flesh as opposed to spirit

In the second meaning "flesh"/"fleshly" is often contrasted with "spirit"/"spiritual" (cf. Gal. 5:17). Even then it is not used in a dichotomistic sense. Janse (1938:104, 105) explains it as follows: "Fleshly" in the Scriptures means relying

on oneself, following one's own evil heart, living in rebellion against God. "Works of the flesh" are not only (bodily) sins like adultery, but include idolatry, sorcery, enmity, quarrelling, etc. (cf. Gal. 5:20).

On the other hand "spiritual" in the Bible means being led by the Holy Spirit on the way of obedience to God. Therefore doing the "works of the Spirit" does not mean being busy solely with so-called "spiritual" matters. It actually means that you practise your occupation conscientiously, open your purse to God's work, show charity to the needy, look after your own health, etc.

3.6 The meaning of "matter" (*aphar* in the OT)

In the light of the distinction made between spirit and matter by the age-old dualistic philosophy, it is understandable that this biblical concept is also usually misunderstood, viz. as the lower component of the human being (more or less the same as the body). Kuitert (1963/1964:39) however, once more calls it a characteristic of the *whole* human being. He draws attention to the fact that in Genesis 2:7 it does not say that God made the *body* out of the dust of the earth, but He created the *human being* from it.

That man – *adam* (man) and *adamah* (earth) belong together – was made from the ingredients of the earth, further means in the Old Testament that (just as in the case of *basar*) the human being is insignificant and frail. *Aphar* is therefore also associated with death and mourning. (A well-known sign of mourning was to throw dust on one's head.)

3.7 The meaning of "spirit" (*ruach* in the OT and *pneuma* in the NT)

Scheepers (1960) devotes a voluminous thesis to this concept. Once more this biblical concept too comprises a variety of meanings, like the seat of emotions, life, power, breath. In summary Scheepers (1960:91) says about *ruach*: "...it is that invisible and non-bodily part of the human being which is ... the principle of its life and motion." When he, however, says that the spirit comes from God and returns to Him at the time of death, it sounds like a kind of non-biblical semi-mysticism.

3.7.1 The whole human being according to the Old Testament

While Scheepers sometimes still seems to say that the human spirit is a separate component of the human being, Pop (1958:14) says "The spirit of a human being is the human being himself/herself as a living, thinking, acting, reacting, planning, decision-making ... being." [Transl. from the Dutch] And Kuitert (1963/1964:45) adds to this: "Someone has *ruach*, but he is at the same time to such an extent typified by his *ruach* that in many cases we may read his *ruach* as: he himself." [Transl. from the Dutch]

3.7.2 Meaning in the New Testament

Respecting the New Testament concept *pneuma*, Waaning (1939), like Scheepers, differentiates between the Spirit of God and the spirit of creatures. In creation itself a difference can be made between evil spirits and the spirit of the human being. As far as the human being is concerned, *pneuma* does not have an unequivocal meaning but a wealth of shades of meaning. All of them, however, point to the unity of the human being (cf. Waaning, 1939:166 and Crump, 1954).

This is also confirmed by Ridderbos when writing: "... there is no trace of the spirit as a supersensual divine principle inherent in man. Accordingly when Paul says... the grace of God be with 'your spirit' (Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; Phlm. 25), this means the same thing as 'with you' (Rom. 16:20; Eph. 6:24 *et al.*)" (Ridderbos, 1975:121). Ridderbos thus also rejects the trichotomist interpretation (man consisting of three components, namely body, soul and spirit).

3.7.3 God gives the spirit of life

But what then does one do with texts like for instance Psalm 31:6, Ecclesiastes 3:21 and 12:7; Luke 23:46 and Acts 7:59? In these the Word of God says clearly that the spirit of man returns to God at one's death. Or at your death you surrender your spirit to God.

According to Vonk (1963:121-125) such utterances on *ruach/pneuma* links up with what is said as early as in Genesis 2:7, namely that God gives to people the

breath (of life) and can also take it back from them. People thank their lives to the Spirit of God – the source of all life. (Remember that the Bible is always describing human beings in their relationship to God.) So “spirit” simply means life and not something *separate* which is *added* to the body (or material part). Gen. 2:7 does not say that God created the *body* from dust and then *added* the spirit/soul, but that He made a *human being* that received his breath of life from God. Christ (Luke 23:46) and Stephen (Acts 7:59) at their death surrendered their spirits, that is their lives, to God who had given it.

3.8 Heart (*lev/levav* in the OT and *kardia* in the NT).

As far as Paul is concerned, Ridderbos (1975:119) says that to him the heart is the very essence of human existence: “The heart of man is the real center of his being”. Von Meyenfeldt agrees but offers in three different writings much more on this important biblical concept.

3.8.1 The heart as the representative

The thesis of Von Meyenfeldt (1950) on the concept “heart” in the Old Testament first differentiates between the concept “heart” not in man (but in God, animals and in a spatial sense) and then he distinguishes two meanings in the human being: the non-religious and the religious use.

In a non-religious sense the word is also used in different meanings, as for instance in biotic, emotional, noetic and ethical connotations. The characteristic meaning of the heart is, however, the representative. Thus it does not indicate a bodily or spiritual “part” of man, but it represents the whole human being.

The representative can be distinguished but not separated from what it represents. The totality of being human is concentrated in it. Therefore the heart is not the “double” of man (cf. Von Meyenfeldt, 1950:152). Elsewhere he says: “... the heart is not a reduction of the human person to a core from which the bask – the body – can quite easily be unpinned” (Von Meyenfeldt, 1951:63). Later on he repeats that the heart of a person can be distinguished from the person as a whole but they cannot be separated. “Man is like a world with deepenings. He

who is able to penetrate into the deepest depth (the heart) comes to know himself thoroughly" (Von Meyenfeldt, 1964:51).

At the end of his thesis he summarises the above as follows: "... the fundamental meaning is not to be sought in the heart in the biotic sense as the restless, beating organ... *leb* (*lebab*) in the Old Testament is the nucleus of something, in the sense of the most important constituent in which it is completely represented" (Von Meyenfeldt, 1950:221).

This meaning we can still understand very well today. When one has given one's heart to someone (e.g. in an engagement to be married) one has given oneself in total to that person. This also applies in one's relationship to God or a substitute god.

3.8.2 A comparison of heart and soul

Above it has been pointed out that the soul denotes the real concrete person. Von Meyenfeldt (1964:55) compares heart and soul as follows: "... 'heart' is man *properly* speaking, and 'soul' is man *concretely* speaking". Or as follows: "... 'heart' is man in a nutshell, the whole man, not only the seat of his activity, but its summary. The 'soul' is the whole man in his full concrete development, his total appearance".

3.8.3 The religious meaning of "heart"

Out of the about 854 times the word "heart" is used in the Old Testament, it is used 318 times in a second (religious) sense. Statement 1 in Von Meyenfeldt's thesis (1950) says that "heart" in the Old Testament reaches its deepest sense as the focus of religion (cf. also Von Meyenfeldt, 1964:51).

He explains it as follows: The heart is the real person and "religion stirs man in his essential existence ... One could say: If you want to understand a human being, you should know him in his religion, but one could also say: if you want to understand a human being, you should know his heart" (Von Meyenfeldt, 1951:59) [transl. from the Dutch].

Later on he puts it even more explicitly: "Religion is not a certain capacity. It is the relationship between God and man in which man is engaged from his innermost parts to his fingertips. It takes hold of man in the deepest and at the same time broadest sense possible... Religion is not one of man's many capacities. No, religion is a matter of the authentic, unadulterated man; in other words: religion is a matter of the *heart*" (Von Meyenfeldt, 1964:52, 53).

This religious meaning of the heart is also confirmed by Vollenhoven (cf. 1992:186) and Becker (1950:12), who calls the heart the central organ of the true service of the Lord. Pop (1958:215-221) comes to the same conclusion. He points out that it is of cardinal importance who rules one's heart, for he who possesses one's heart, possesses the whole being. Therefore one should guard over one's heart diligently: "Above all else guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." (Proverbs 4:23, also cf. Matthew 15:18-20).

3.9 The Bible read with new eyes

Readers who up to now have accepted a dichotomist view of being human as biblical as a matter of course – for which many (older) Bible translations can be blamed – will at this stage have many questions on the above. The most serious question will probably be how one should understand the passages from the Scriptures which were formerly read through dichotomist lenses. Does not the Bible teach in these passages that man is a two-fold being?

The limited length of this chapter does not permit me to go into such passages here – it would justify a separate chapter and even a book in itself. To help the interested reader we can provisionally mention two examples of how the most important texts (which are usually cited as evidence for a dichotomistic view of being human) can be read with new eyes. These are the above-mentioned works by the theologian Vonk (1963 and 1969) and the work of a Christian philosopher, Popma (1961:190-235).

The latter has amongst other things, severe biblical criticism on Answer 57 of the Catechism of Heidelberg (Lord's Day 22) which answers as follows the question what comfort is afforded by the resurrection of the *body* (please note: not of the

human person): "Not only my soul will be taken immediately after this life to Christ its head, but even my very flesh, raised by the power of Christ, will be reunited with my soul and made like Christ's glorious body." Seen in the time in which the Catechism originated (Reformed Orthodoxy or Scholasticism) such a dichotomist wording is understandable. Yet today, in the light of more recent insights into God's Word, it is no longer acceptable. The way we read the Bible has to be tested and reformed all the time.

4. The result

Since the Scriptures are not a scientific manual, we can expect each one of the biblical concepts to have diverse meanings. Highly simplified, the main contours of the biblical view of being human could be summarised as follows:

4.1 The essential meanings of the different concepts

"Soul" denotes man as a living being. "Body" denotes man in his concrete earthly form. "Flesh" indicates that man is frail, transient, mortal. (Sometimes it also denotes man as a sinful being.) "Matter" has more or less the same meaning as "flesh". "Spirit" denotes the life that man receives from the Holy Spirit and (at the time of death) surrenders into God's hand again. "Heart" is the essence or religious focal point of the human being, the important centre in which his whole humanity is concentrated and represented and which also determines the direction of the whole life.

4.2 Not structure but direction

As a second conclusion the hypothesis from the beginning (cf. 1.5 above) is confirmed, namely that the Bible does not deal with the composition of man, neither offers a structural analysis of being human. The various biblical concepts provides light on the *whole* human being from *various angles* or perspectives. In every case it is done in the light of the religious *relationship* (of dependence) with God or some other ultimate certainty.

Differently formulated, one could say that the emphasis in the Bible primarily falls on the *direction* of a person's life and not on the human *structure* (exactly how

man is "composed"). The human structure should be studied by *inter alia* different sciences. Since human structure and direction may be differentiated, but not separated, studying the human being should always be done *in* the light of the Scriptures. I emphasise "*in* the Light" to make it clear that one cannot just collect texts about the human being from the Scriptures and then obtain a complete view of man.

In my opinion one of the real problems from the past and the present is that Christians departed from the supposition that the Bible would reveal to us how man is structurally "made up". The Bible does, for instance, mention that the human being is a biotic, thinking, social, economic etc. being. But, as a religious book, it is not its main focus. To know the human being structurally, one has to study God's creational revelation.

4.3 A structural analysis of the human being by a Christian philosophy

The structural facet of being human was worked out in the Reformational philosophy (of which D.H.Th. Vollenhoven, H. Dooyeweerd and H.G. Stoker were the fathers in the previous century) by means of a doctrine of modalities. According to the latter man displays the following aspects or facets: an arithmetic, spatial, physical, biotic, psychic, logical, historical, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, juridical, ethical, and faith aspect. Man is viewed as a multidimensional being and not merely two-dimensional as taught by the dichotomist views of being human. Neither is the human being – as claimed by numerous contemporary anthropologists – merely a chemical-biological being. All such views are reductions of the multifaceted human existence.

We have to bear in mind furthermore that the various modalities or functions are merely *facets* of being human. Therefore they may not be classed together as a lower *group* (e.g. the arithmetic to psychic) versus a higher *group* (e.g. the logical to faith) so that man once again consists of two *components*.

Apart from that a Reformational anthropology differentiates structure (the dimensional) from the religious (the directional) without separating them. Being religiously directed (towards God or idols) is determinative for the various

dimensions of man's life (cf. Vollenhoven, 1992:189 and De Graaff, 1979:108,109). There is no such thing as a neutral scholarship or economic or juridical actions. All the activities of a human being – even when he/she is not conscious of the fact – are religiously coloured. Man as a *religious* being differentiates him from the rest of creation (matter, plants and animals).

4.4 Questions remaining

We have not nearly answered all questions about the human being. These basic points of departure of a Reformational view of being human will have to be worked out further in the various fields of study. For the "man in the street" one question could be what happens to the human being after death, if according to the Scriptures (cf. 3.3.3 above), there is no such thing as an immortal soul. Are the opinions of for instance Vonk (1963 and 1969) acceptable? It is a serious question indeed, but the answer to it will have to wait for a following chapter (11).

This brings our investigation to a last issue:

5. Is a monistic anthropology an improvement on the dichotomistic?

Earlier on (cf. 3.1 above) the risk was indicated that one could read one's own presuppositions into the Scriptures. Even translations of Scripture are not immune against one's anthropological pre-understandings! This became evident in the case of the traditional dichotomist views of being human. (In this respect various passages in the New Afrikaans Bible translation of 1983 is an improvement on the Old Translation of 1933.) The awkward question now is to what extent it may also be the case with the numerous writers who in section 3 above gave their views on soul, body, etc. Is it not perhaps the result of a contemporary tendency to emphasise the unity of man and to read the Scriptures according to a monistic paradigm ?

5.1 A contemporary tendency towards monistic views of being human

Although most ordinary Christians and theologians still hold dichotomist views of being human (some call them "dualistic"), especially natural scientists today have a propensity for what are labelled "monistic" views (cf. Glas, 1996:01). Since the

compendium edited by Jeeves (2004) is a good example of this tendency, it is briefly discussed here in order to answer the question whether a monistic view entails an improvement on dualism or not.

Several writers in this volume demonstrate how the physical-chemical composition of the human being is of decisive significance for all of being human. It has for instance been ascertained neurologically that capacities which were formerly attributed to the human soul/spirit, are merely the results of neurophysiological processes in the brain. These facts point to man as an integral unity. Therefore most of the writers in this work query the traditional dichotomist and trichotomist views of being human. According to contemporary neurological and related research there no longer is room for something like a separate "soul" or "spirit" (cf. Jeeves, 2004:32, 33).

5.2 Complicated issues

Such a physicalist view of being human brings Christians face to face with complicated issues like the following: Traditionally it was accepted (in dichotomist views) that his/her soul/spirit differentiates the human being from the rest of creation. But what differentiates the human being from an animal when one favours such a monistic-physicalistic view? Are there still ethical norms that are valid for man, or should he simply follow his physical urges? When does a human being actually become a human being? Does he/she stop being a person in a case where his brain functions are impaired as a result of e.g. an accident or Alzheimer's disease? Can there be any talk of life after (physical) death?

5.3 The proposed "solution"

In an attempt to solve such problems various writers in the volume by Jeeves (2004) propose *non-reductionistic* physicalism. In contrast to the normal physicalism which reduces all of reality to the physical, they want to make room for something they call "mind", "spirit" or "souliness". They then describe the human being as an "embodied soul" or "embodied spirituality" (cf. e.g. Jeeves, 2004:74, 230, 245). The influence of the physical-chemical part of man on his "spirit" and vice versa they explain as (mutual) interaction (cf. e.g. p. 240, 245).

After having worked through this insightful book the question still remains whether such a monistic anthropology does not finally again amount to a dichotomist one. Are the writers of the book not inconsistent to plead for monism and then speak about an "embodied soul" which is yet again a duality?

5.4 Ontology determines anthropology

The writers in Jeeves (2004) are, however, not inconsistent when one realises that their view of being human is the consequence of underlying ontological points of departure. The problem-historical method of Vollenhoven (cf. Vollenhoven, 1950, 2005a, 2005b and Bril, 2005) explains that we have to distinguish between two views of reality, namely dualism and monism.

Dualists claim that the diversity in reality can be retraced to a basic duality: a transcendent one (most often the godly/divine) and a non-transcendent. (This ontology can be represented by a line dividing the higher, transcendent and the lower, non-transcendent.) The implications of this ontology for anthropology depends on where the line is drawn between the transcendent and the non-transcendent. For some philosophers man also possesses something transcendent, usually his soul or spirit. (Cf. e.g. creatianism above under 2.2, which teaches that God creates the soul as something semi-divine in man.) Other philosophers again, teach that the human being as a whole belongs to the non-transcendent world.

Over against the dualists, the monists depart from the original unity of reality. However, then they should offer an explanation for the great diversity. (The word "unity" in itself presupposes a plurality!) According to them the plurality is the result of a splitting off from the primeval unity. (Represented diagrammatically: a point from which one arrow points 45 degrees upwards and a second arrow 45 degrees downwards. Cf. De Graaff, 1979:100.) In the case of the human being the higher usually is the soul/spirit and the lower the physical or bodily part.

A following question that awaits an answer is what the relationship is between the higher and lower part in the human being in the case of both the dualistic and monistic ontologies. In the latter case Vollenhoven amongst others distinguishes,

for example, the doctrine of priority, which teaches that the soul influences the body; parallelism, which is of the opinion that the two function independently; an interaction theory which accepts mutual interaction between soul and body. Some of the writers in the book by Jeeves adhere to the latter type of anthropology.

De Graaff (1979:104) therefore is quite right when saying that both dualistic and monistic ontologies in the end lead to a dichotomy in man. Therefore the answer to our question (whether a monistic view of being human is better than a dichotomist one) is in the negative. I am therefore of the opinion that also the proposal of Cooper (1989) to accept a "holistic dualism" will not solve our anthropological problems.

5.5 Man seen from a biblical view of reality or philosophical ontology

It is clear that to elaborate a valid view of being human in the light of the Scriptures we cannot succeed with a mere semasiological (semantic) study of certain biblical concepts. We need a Reformational worldview and philosophy.

Instead of a one factor ontology (of monism) and a two factor ontology (of dualism) Vollenhoven poses his own three factor ontology in the light of the Scriptures. In line with Genesis 1 verse 1 he differentiates between (1) God and (2) creation. (3) God's creational ordinances are again not to be identified with God or his creation. They apply to matter, plant, animal and the human being. There is a radical difference between God, creation and his laws for creation. At the same time they are closely connected. In creation itself there is great variety (cf. e.g. the doctrine of modalities – 4.3 above).

Such a broad view of reality also leads to a totally different view of the human being from the two-dimensional perspective of both monism and dualism. Apart from this, the human being - the only one of all God's creatures – is created in his image (Gen. 1:27) and (after the fall) has to be renewed into the image of Christ. God's image depends on the direction of man's life, in other words to what extent s/he obeys God's central commandment of love in all domains of life (cf. Vollenhoven, 1992:187, 202).

What this new view of being human looks like can, however, not be explained here – it justifies a separate chapter (9).

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CHAPTER 9

THE HUMAN HEART REDISCOVERED IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF D.H.Th. VOLLENHOVEN

This chapter builds on the general introduction (in chapter 5) about Vollenhoven's philosophy and provides a summary of his anthropology. Such a synopsis is needed because Vollenhoven (1892-1978) himself never worked out his view of being human in detail. The "fragments" from his different writings as well as some books about his philosophy are therefore collected in order to clarify the basic contours as well as uniqueness of his viewpoint. This is done in the light of the fact that many Christians even today are still influenced by all kinds of unbiblical anthropological ideas. The investigation develops through the following steps: (1) An introduction indicates the need and topical nature of the research. (2) This is followed by an explanation of Vollenhoven's historical and systematic approach as well as the development of his own anthropological views. (3) It is then indicated how he (with his problem-historical method) analysed the great variety of anthropologies throughout history. (4) The next section contains a systematic exposition of his own views on being human. (5) This is followed by an indication of its contemporary relevance. (6) The concluding section consists of a review and final evaluation.

Relevance to our central theme (at home in God's world):

Vollenhoven's rediscovery of the biblical concept of the heart as the center of the human being, from which all our activities originate and are directed, explains how we can serve God in every domain of his world.

* * *

1. Introduction: A crucial gap

By way of Introduction we briefly touch on the following points: (1) the crucial role of a view of being human; (2) the existing void because the fathers of Reformational philosophy did not work out in full their anthropologies; (3) the

possible reasons why Vollenhoven did not elaborate on this aspect of his philosophy.

1.1 The underlying role of an anthropology

Besides one's view on reality in total (in philosophy called "ontology" – which also determines one's view of the human being – one's perspective on the human being (called "anthropology") is foundational to the understanding of all other facets of life. For instance, it determines one's view on the structures of human society. For the way one sees a human being, determines how one *treats* him/her/them. If a human being were no more than a physical-chemical being (cf. section 5 below), it could be treated like a thing. Should s/he be regarded (as in the case of evolutionism) as a mere biological being, it would not be necessary to treat her/him better than an animal. If he should judge himself as primarily economic in nature – another contemporary example of the reduction of true humanity – production and consumption will probably become his aim and object in life and also that of broader society (cf. modern-day capitalism). It is therefore essential and relevant to reflect on how one sees human beings.

1.2 The present void

This chapter attempts to fill a void within Reformational philosophy, namely that its founders offer no fully worked-out anthropology. Two of the fathers of this Christian philosophy, H. Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) and D.H.Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978) left us at most the main lines of a view of being human that is true to the Bible.

Dooyeweerd in a number of statements (cf. Dooyeweerd, 1942) gives only the main lines of his view of being human and later promises (cf. Dooyeweerd, 1949:13) that he would publish a second and third volume of which the last would contain his complete anthropology. (This promise is also reiterated in Dooyeweerd, 1957:781.) However, it was never realised. But he did set out the main lines of his anthropology in two short pieces of a later date (cf. Dooyeweerd, 1960 en 1961).

Vollenhoven, too, left little on his view of being human. Mostly it is limited to flashes and fragments in various writings. Hence this chapter. It is an effort at bringing together what is spread over various sources and thereby making more accessible his significant contribution to anthropology – especially to people who are not conversant with his philosophy.

We focus on Vollenhoven only since Dooyeweerd is more well-known and accessible because his works were translated into English earlier on. Much has also been written on his view of being human (cf. e.g. De Graaff, 1977 and 1979; Fernhout, 1975; Ouweneel, 1984, 1986 and Stafleu, 1986). Glas (1996:95-112) not only reviews Dooyeweerd's viewpoint, but (p. 113-124) also the anthropologies of Vollenhoven and Popma as well as some later developments.

1.3 A possible reason for the void in Vollenhoven

The question why Vollenhoven did not work out his anthropology further, could be answered in various ways, like, for instance that he did not have the time to do so, that his study of the history of philosophy was a greater priority to him, and so forth. I surmise that also the struggle between the churches that lasted for years and in which Vollenhoven also became involved, could have withheld him from working further on his anthropology. Vollenhoven himself says that the differences on philosophical anthropology should not divide the church (cf. e.g. his letter to Schilder in De Vries, 1992:43). This disagreeable tussle can be followed in more detail in Stellingwerff (1987 and especially 1992) as well as De Vries (1992).

1.3.1 Anthropology the main point of contention

Seeing that this struggle (besides being a reason for the void) also explains the context in which Vollenhoven had to work out his own view of being human, it is summarised briefly. Although the argument was also about other matters (like the human nature of Christ), the debate about the human being formed an important part of it.

The Reformed thinkers of the time – especially the theologians – mostly adhered to a dichotomist anthropology. According to this, a human being is made up of two separate substances, namely a body and a soul, which are somehow connected. (Sometimes a trichotomy was proposed instead of a dichotomy. It would then mean that man consists of body, soul and spirit.) The soul was not only considered as the higher and more important “part” of a human being, but also as the immortal component, which after the resurrection would be reunited with the body.

1.3.2 J. Waterink

Waterink (1890-1966), Vollenhoven's colleague at the Free University of Amsterdam, was a representative of such a Christian (in this case trichotomist) anthropology. Vollenhoven, however, had serious objections to Waterink's book *De oorspong en wezen der ziel (The origin and essence of the soul)* of 1930 (cf. Stellingwerff, 1987:187-201). As early as 1929 Vollenhoven criticised the idea that psychology studied the “soul” (instead of merely the psychic aspect of a human being). According to him the idea of soul and body as separately existing parts of a human being is an unbiblical idea coming from pagan Greek philosophy (cf. Stellingwerff, 1992:94).

1.3.3 Reformation by A. Janse

After his promotion (in 1918) close contact was established between Vollenhoven and A. Janse (1890-1960). Stellingwerff (1992) repeatedly points this out. In articles in journals Janse objected to the above-mentioned dichotomist and trichotomist views of being human (cf. Janse, 1940:3) and opposed them in the light of the Scriptures (cf. Janse, 1934, 1938 and 1940).

This new anthropology of Vollenhoven and Janse was however regarded by many people in the Reformed world of the time (in the ecclesiastical press and other publications) as revolutionary, contrary to the confessions and theology of the church, and even to the Scriptures.

1.3.4 Accused at the Synod

The accusations against Vollenhoven and his supporters led to the Synod of the Reformed Churches of 1936 appointing a committee to test these accusations in the light of the Scriptures and the confessions. (Cf. De Vries, 1992, footnote 39 for the members of the committee).

But while the committee was busy with its proceedings one of the members, V. Hepp (1879-1950), began a series of brochures entitled *Dreigende deformatie* (*Imminent deformation*) in which he accuses some of his fellow committee members (amongst others Schilder and Vollenhoven) of "deformation". It became a long-drawn-out saga. As a consequence of the unfounded accusations in public Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd later on felt compelled to table their own separate report before the synod of 1939 (cf. De Vries, 1992:181, footnote 105). The whole issue was never solved in a satisfactory manner – besides being delayed further by World War II.

This short overview not only brings out the context in which Vollenhoven's reformation of Christian anthropology had to take place and how "holy" people can consider their own view of the human being, but may have been one of the reasons why Vollenhoven did not publish more on his anthropology. Reformation in this field was not easier at that time than today!

1.4 Lasting significance

However, Stellingwerff (1992:255, 256, cf. also Stellingwerff, 2006:46 *et seq.*) at the end of his book on Vollenhoven remarks that, although the circumstances are different today, Vollenhoven's programme of reformation remains relevant. He even calls Vollenhoven "a philosopher of all times" (Stellingwerff, 1992:255).

In my opinion this is justified. Just listen to sermons (especially at funerals), read the numerous popular articles and booklets on what happens to a human being at death, even study more scientific theological publications and you will soon realise how many Christians are still influenced by an anthropology that is not truly biblical.

What Stellingwerff (1992:256) advises, namely that the younger generation should rediscover Vollenhoven's Christian philosophy, also applies to his anthropology. We are here following up Stellingwerff's hint. Like a tracker on the scent we will walk on Vollenhoven's footsteps. Gradually it will become evident that his anthropology led especially to a rediscovery of the biblical concept "heart". One finds the first "forerunner" of this idea already early in the work of Vollenhoven (1950:26), where he writes that the heart as the seat of religion was not noticed by any Greek or Hellenistic philosopher. "The depth of human life... escaped paganism." [Transl. from the Dutch.] This statement also applies to our contemporary secular anthropologies.

In preparation for this quest, however, we must first say something more on his philosophy in general.

2. Vollenhoven's philosophy in general

First something has again to be said (cf. chapter 5) on the close connection between Vollenhoven's historiography of philosophy and his systematic philosophy, then something on his own philosophical development.¹

2.1 The connection between systematics and history in the work of Vollenhoven

As early as 1933 Vollenhoven emphasised that without a thorough knowledge of the history of philosophy one cannot reach an own sound (systematic) viewpoint. On the other hand one cannot approach the history of philosophy without a (preliminary) view of one's own. "In dealing with a philosophical issue it is impossible to form a sound judgement unless systematics and history have also put in a word" (Vollenhoven, 1933:10). [Transl. from the Dutch] Kok (1996) later on followed up this advice by publishing a popularised version of both

¹ Several publications (in English) of and about Vollenhoven are nowadays available on the internet. (Cf. the first entry under Vollenhoven in the **Bibliography** below. Besides there is a Vollenhoven Archive at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, the Netherlands as well as a Vollenhoven Foundation (the e-mail address of the Secretary, dr. K.A. Bril, is ka.bril@planet.nl).

Vollenhoven's overview of Western philosophy and Vollenhoven's own systematics in one volume.

2.1.1 The problem-historical method

For his study of the 2500-year-long history of Western philosophy Vollenhoven over the years developed his problem-historical method and published its first fruits in Vollenhoven, 1950. This hefty volume only covered Greek philosophy prior to Plato and was therefore merely the beginning of an ideal to "chart" the whole labyrinth of philosophical concepts that initially seems so obscure (Vollenhoven, 1950:6). From the exposition of his method presented here it once more emerges how closely his historiographical method was linked to his own ontology or systematic philosophy. The further course of the history of Western philosophy Vollenhoven could merely summarise in his *Kort overzicht van de geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte* (*Short overview of the history of philosophy*) (1956) (recently republished in Vollenhoven, 2005a and 2005b). To the uninitiated Bril (1986 and 2005) and Tol & Bril, (1992) offer a good Introduction to this method. Some more will be said on this method when we point out below how Vollenhoven applies it to anthropology.

2.1.2 Vollenhoven's own systematic philosophy

According to Vollenhoven (cf. 2005d and 2005e) a Christian philosopher has to provide answers to the following three basic questions: Who is the Creator? What is it that he created? Where is the border between these two? In his own systematic philosophy (ontology) he therefore differentiates – without separating – the threesome *God, creation* (cosmos) and the *law* as the "border" between the first two. Vollenhoven's distinction is not meant as three ways of existence in the ontological sense, for neither God nor his law can be included in an ontology – the ontological merely concerns creation (cf. Vollenhoven, 2005c:301). It is important to add here – although we cannot go into it further – that Vollenhoven not only *differentiates* between God, law and creation, but also works out the *relationship* between them. Creation cannot exist on itself, but is sustained from

moment to moment by God. Vollenhoven also strongly emphasises the religious relationship between God and man (see 4.3 & 4.4).

This view of reality Vollenhoven poses over against dualism, that accepts an original duality (a transcendental and a non-transcendental) and which according to him leads to deism. (God is not involved with the cosmos.) However, he also rejects monism, which accepts only one reality or existence, from which flows (in a secondary way) the plurality. According to Vollenhoven monism can lead to pantheism (everything is divine).

This basic point of departure of Vollenhoven (the radical difference between God, law and cosmos) has significant implications for his anthropology as will transpire below. It is, for instance, excluded beforehand that there could be something semi-divine (e.g. his soul) in the human being.

2.2 Vollenhoven's own development

As with most philosophers, Vollenhoven's anthropological philosophy also exhibits a certain development. It emanates clearly from the following.

2.2.1 Doctrine of priority

By about the twenties (after his promotion in 1918) he still adhered to a dichotomy (a divide) in his anthropology. According to this a human being is a special synthesis between a physical substance (the body) and a psychic substance (the soul) (cf. Kok, 1992:37). The relationship between the soul (the higher) and the body (the lower) is that the former does influence the latter somehow, while in itself it experiences no influence from the lower body. Vollenhoven himself later on characterises such a view as a "doctrine of priority" (cf. Vollenhoven, 2000:373). According to the forthcoming dissertation of Tol (2009) it was not an ennoetistic but occasionalistic theory of priority.

2.2.2 Theory of interaction

Later on Vollenhoven is of the opinion that a particular version of the theory of interaction does more justice to the actual state of affairs regarding a human being. It was the same anthropology that Vollenhoven's tutor, J. Woltjer,

advocated in his later life. (Cf. Van der Laan, 2000:243, 244.) What Vollenhoven would later designate as the *pneumatistic* theory of interaction is then still called the *energetic* theory of interaction. (Cf. Bril, 1982:13 and Vollenhoven, 2005c:441.) However, this does not mean that the pneumatistic theory of interaction (further on abbreviated as ptoi) is a reflection of Vollenhoven's own view of a human being. For such a kind of anthropology is the consequence of a monistic ontology which cannot be regarded as a Scriptural viewpoint – cf. 2.1.2 above. (Cf. further 3.5 and 3.6 below.)

2.3 The influence of A. Janse

For the origin of his own more biblically true view of the human being Vollenhoven probably was much indebted to the pioneering work of Janse in this field (cf. 1.3.3 above). Bril mentions (in Vollenhoven, 2005c:202,440) that even in his last years Vollenhoven busied himself with Janse's *De mensch als 'levende ziel'* (*Man as a living soul*) (1934).

In this book and in his other publications Janse in the light of the Scriptures contradicts the idea that a human being is a dichotomist combination of matter and spirit. A human being does not *have* a soul, but the (whole) human being *is* a soul, a living being. Neither does the Bible know an immortal soul. It is not the immortality of the soul, but God Almighty who sustains man through death. Janse does not query a life after death. He emphasises the *unity* of a human being in this life, the fact that in death he is *broken*, and his *resurrection* at the second coming of Christ. (For more particulars on Janse and his view of being human, cf. Van der Walt, 2008a:202-206.)

2.4 Subsequent set-up

We have now offered sufficient background to proceed to the next two sections of this investigation. First we deal with how Vollenhoven by means of his problem-historical method "charted" the great variety of anthropologies in the course of history and which of these came nearest to the truth. Secondly the contours of his own anthropology (in the light of God's revelation in nature and Scripture) are described.

3. Vollenhoven's historiographical evaluation of Western views of humankind down the ages

Since Vollenhoven's problem-historical method has been explained by himself (cf. e.g. Vollenhoven, 1950:11-21 as well as 2005a and 2005b) and by others (cf. Bril, 2005; Van der Walt, 2006 – republished as chapter 5 of this book - and 2008b), there is no need to go into detail here. Only the most essential points are explained to understand his view of a human being.

3.1 Trends and types

As already explained in chapter 5, Vollenhoven divides the whole history of Western philosophy into three main periods or eras: the pre-synthesis philosophy (of the Greeks and Romans), the (Christian) synthesis philosophy (of the Church Fathers and the Middle Ages) and the post-synthesis philosophy (since the Reformation and the Renaissance).

Within these three eras there also occur a large variety of philosophical currents or tendencies. Tendencies or trends denote the particular "spirit" or "direction" of an age, for it offers an answer to the question which law(s) or norm(s) should govern a human being's life. It therefore unites a group of philosophers within a certain period. Since one's view of the normative changes, tendencies continually change and cause a dynamic element in the history of philosophy. (For all the various currents, cf. Vollenhoven, 2005a:157-160).

However, not all philosophers within a certain philosophical current/trend hold exactly the same view. Except for answering the question "What should I do?" or "How should I live?" every philosopher also has to answer the question "What is reality like?" In other words what the essential structure of things (matter, plant, animal and human being) looks like. The answers to these questions lead to different types of philosophy – the consistent element right through history. (Cf. Vollenhoven, 2005a:161-163 for the great variety of types.)

Therefore every philosopher's conception is described by means of the tendency within which he/she works and the type of philosophy (ontology) he/she supports.

For the sake of simplicity we will henceforth concentrate mainly on the types of philosophies and anthropologies and not on the philosophical trends within which they occur. This does not mean that philosophical tendencies are immaterial to anthropology. Anthropologies from the pre-synthesis, synthesis and anti-synthesis philosophy, for instance, exhibit marked differences. A new trend may transform an old type. Ontological types and normative trends *together* determine the specific view of a human being. (Cf. below under 4.1.)

3.2 Different answers to the issue of origin

A first crucial question that a philosopher has to answer, is about the origin of reality. Some philosophers use myths (religious fantasies) to answer this question – even about the origin of the gods. Vollenhoven therefore calls them mythologising philosophers. Over against this, another group think purely cosmologically – they do not speculate on the origin of things, but restrict themselves to what exists. A third group think along cosmogono-cosmological lines – they do not evade the question on the genesis (development) of the cosmos.

Although Vollenhoven regards the latter viewpoint as the best of the three (cf. Bril in Vollenhoven, 2000:399), as a Christian philosopher he differs with it. For the issue of origin cannot be answered in a scientific-philosophical manner. It can only be accepted in faith that the God of the Bible is the Origin (Creator) of everything – also of the human being. He who does not accept this in faith, inevitably falls into mere speculation. It is not possible to ascertain in a scientific way how reality began, or what life after death is like. For knowledge of such issues a human being is completely dependent on God's revelation in the Scriptures.

3.3 Monism and dualism

A subsequent question which has to be answered philosophically is how reality is composed or structured, how its unity and diversity can be explained.

Monistic philosophers were of the opinion that originally there was only one entity or being from which the diversity emerged by means of vertical divergence. (Depicted schematically: a point from which exit two arrows, one 45° upwards and the other 45° downwards, representing the higher and lower branches of the primeval unity.)

Over against this dualistic philosophers hold the viewpoint that originally there was a duality (a transcendental and a non-transcendental). The unity is explained by some or other form of correlation between both. (Depicted schematically: a straight line with the transcendental above the line and the non-transcendental below it.)

If he had to choose, Vollenhoven felt nearer to monism. However, his own viewpoint (cf. 2.1.2 above) is not monistic. Instead of monism and dualism he distinguishes God (the Creator) who laid down his laws for creation (cf. 2.1.2 above).

3.4 A great variety of views of humankind

Both a monistic and dualistic ontology give rise to a great diversity of anthropologies at which we cannot look in detail here (cf. Vollenhoven, 2000, 2005a and 2005b).

The fact that dualists differ on precisely where the border should be between the transcendental (often the same as the divinity) and the non-transcendental also has anthropological implications. A human being can be regarded as a purely non-transcendental being or can possess something transcendental (like a soul).

Monistic philosophers can characterise the *nature* of the higher and lower branches (for instance between soul and body) from the original unity in different ways. Furthermore they can also denote the *relationship* between the two in different ways. Examples of these are parallelism (which teaches that the two exist more or less independently), the doctrine of priority (which claims that only the higher can influence the lower and not the other way round), and the theory of interaction (which accepts mutual interaction between the higher and the lower

components). Vollenhoven (in Tol & Bril, 1992:344) explains these three viewpoints by means of diagrams.

With the theory of interaction (toi) – on which we will focus from here – there also are different options. Vollenhoven (2000:414) distinguishes seven types, among which the anthropological, zoological, hedonistic, phytological and pneumatistic toi. Of all these types we look only at the last-mentioned (ptoi). According to this anthropology the central part of a human being is the *pneuma* (breath, spirit or spirit of life), which influences the other part of a human being (the body), while the opposite also happens.

3.5 Nearest to the true state of affairs

We focus on the ptoi for, among the great diversity of views formed over the age-old history of reflection on a human being, this is, according to Vollenhoven, the most acceptable. (Cf. 2.2.2 above.) Bril (in Vollenhoven 2005c:440) says "Vollenhoven was of the opinion that, in comparison with other types, this line did most justice to the givens of created reality, *without being a supporter of it*". [Transl. from the Dutch, my italics].

The italics is added to this quotation because Klapwijk (1973:61) gives the wrong impression that Vollenhoven *fully agrees*, not only with Gregory of Nazianze, but also with Anaximenes, a pre-Christian Greek proponent of the theory of interaction. From this Klapwijk draws the conclusion that, in spite of his antithetic attitude towards pagan philosophies, Vollenhoven – inconsistently – still appreciated their insights.

The quotation above is followed by the significant words that give an indication of Vollenhoven's own view. "It is only when one sees the inner side of a human being that one gets into view a Scriptural anthropology" [Transl. from the Dutch]. (Cf. also Bril, 1982:111 and Bril in Vollenhoven, 2000:231, 271 and 399.) This remark is an indication of the uniqueness of Vollenhoven's own anthropology – his rediscovery of the human heart – which will be explained below.

Supporters of the pto were, amongst others, Gregory of Nazianze (329-390 AD) while in the 19th century it was worked out in modern spirit by Lotze and later by Spencer, Mach, James, Husserl and Whitehead (Cf. Stellingwerff, 1992:237 as well as Vollenhoven, 2000 for the complete conceptions of all these philosophers.)

3.6 Gregory of Nazianze

Since Gregory of Nazianze (Greek: Nazianzos) was the first Christian theologian who, according to Vollenhoven was a representative of the pto, it is crucial to get to know something more about this relatively unknown figure.

For the writings of this early Christian Greek philosopher one can consult Schaff & Wace (1955:203-482), Van Unnik (1958:302-303) and Altaner (1960:345-351) offer some basic biographical and bibliographical data. (To interested readers an electronic web site search will render more recent books and articles.)

According to Vollenhoven Gregory falls within the period of the Christian synthesis philosophy in a trend (no. 38) which was greatly influenced by Neo-Platonic anti-realism (cf. Vollenhoven, 2000:231). It corresponds with the insightful work of Reuther (1969, especially p. 130-154) to which we refer the reader for more detail on the philosophy underlying the theological thinking of Gregory.

In brief it amounts to the following: Reuther clearly demonstrates that and how Gregory (in line with amongst others Origines) tried to reconcile – without really succeeding – pagan Greek philosophy with the Scriptures (cf. e.g. Reuther, 1969:154, 155).

As far as his ontology is concerned, he clearly thinks on monistic lines. Reuther (1969:149) does speak of “dualism”. But it does not refer to Gregory’s ontology, rather to a dichotomy in his anthropology. According to Gregory a human being consists of lower, visible matter (a body) and a higher, invisible, immortal part (spirit or soul). In his soul the human being exhibits a relationship with God, he bears God’s image. The spirit or soul is the real human being. Therefore a human

being's ultimate purpose is to return to unity with God (deification) by way of catharsis (asceticism, purification, contemplation).

A human being can actually only serve God in the "spiritual" field, since everything bodily is more or less evil in itself. For instance, Reuther demonstrates how Gregory tried to live ascetically *as if* he had no body. His advice is that in marriage (since sexual intercourse is regarded as inferior) one should live *as if* one is not married. One has to take part in public life (e.g. politics) *as if* one is not really involved in worldly things.

3.7 Why Vollenhoven could not identify with Gregory's viewpoint

In my (limited) studies of Gregory I could not find clear indications that he also adhered to a pneumatistic theory of interaction (ptoi). What did become clear is why Vollenhoven – although sympathetically disposed towards ptoi – could not adopt Gregory's viewpoint as his own.

Vollenhoven most probably felt that – among all the numerous anthropologies – the ptoi came nearest to the truth on human beings, for it emphasises the directional influence of the human spirit (*pneuma*) on bodily or visible life, without denying the opposite influence of the chemical-biological on spiritual life (Vollenhoven, 2005d/e:104).

But for the following reasons Vollenhoven could not agree with this view of being human: (1) Vollenhoven is not a monist. (2) He does not think in a dichotomous way about the human being and sees no tension between spirit and body the way Gregory does. (3) As will transpire lower down, according to Vollenhoven in most views of being human – also in Gregory's – the heart as centre of a human being is lacking. Therefore in his own anthropology Vollenhoven replaces the (vertical) interaction between spirit and body with the relationship inside-outside (inner-outer) of the heart and the cloak of functions (4) Vollenhoven would also reject Gregory's attempt to reach a synthesis between unbiblical Greek philosophy and the Word of God. Amongst other things it was the root cause of Gregory's evasion of the world and his longing for heaven. According to Vollenhoven one's religious life involves one's *whole life* here on *earth*. It is a *genuine, bodily,*

everyday walk with and service to God. "Longing for heaven" is a false religion (cf. Vollenhoven, 2005d/e:105).

We have now sufficiently demonstrated how Vollenhoven analysed in a problem-historical way the views on humankind through the ages. For further particulars about Vollenhoven on this type of conception, compare Bril (1982:124) and for the key concepts "theory of interaction" and "pneumatistic theory of interaction", Bril (in Vollenhoven, 2000:9 and 414) and Vollenhoven (2005c:440).

However, this does not conclude the tracking. The next section of this quest on Vollenhoven's footsteps is on how he describes a human being in his own philosophical systematics.

4. Vollenhoven's systematic insights on being human

In this systematic summary of Vollenhoven's anthropology we depended mainly on data from Vollenhoven (1933, 2000, 2005d and 2005e), Bril (2005), Kok (1996) and Tol & Bril (1992). We will consider the following points: (1) human structure and (2) direction, (3) religion and the image of God, (4) death, immortality, interim state and resurrection.

4.1 Structure and direction

Above it was shown that Vollenhoven characterises every philosophical position in two ways: (1) how it sees the *structure* of things (*type* of philosophy or ontology) and (2) the normative *direction* it takes (before, during or after the synthesis philosophy, as well as the various tendencies within each of these three periods) If we approach it in an anthropological way, the first (type) answers the question: "Who am I?" and the second (trend) answers the question: "What should I do?" The *Sein* and *Sollen* go together in every philosophy. We look at Vollenhoven's answers to both questions.

4.2 Human structure

Concerning the structure of a human being Vollenhoven differentiated early on already (1933:31) between the following fourteen aspects, functions or modalities of a human being. (1) the arithmetic, (2) spatial, (3) physical, (4) organic, (5)

emotional or psychic, (6) analytical or logical, (7) historical, (8) lingual, (9) social, (10) economic, (11) aesthetic, (12) juridical, (13) ethical and (14) faith. (Cf. also Vollenhoven, 2005d and 2005e:25, 26 for a more detailed exposition and for the historical aspect also p. 139 and following) There is a close connection between these modalities as a consequence of various anticipations and retrocipations (cf. Vollenhoven, 2005d/e:36-49) which we cannot discuss in further detail here. One thing, however, that emerges very clearly here is that a human being is a very complex creature.

Vollenhoven's doctrine of modalities, for instance, shows very clearly that a human being is completely different from matter, plants or animals. Matter exhibits the first three modalities only, plants the first four, animals the first five, while human beings exhibit all fourteen aspects.

His multi-dimensional anthropology therefore offers a much wider view of a human being than many of the earlier and accepted views of being human, which only give a one-dimensional or two-dimensional view of the human being. For instance, they define a human being as a physical-chemical, rational, emotional or economic being and reduce the other aspects to the one/two sides of being human. (At 5.3 below such a one-sided view of being human – the physicalistic – will be dealt with.)

Vollenhoven in the first place warns against a functionalistic dichotomy. This means that the higher functions (from the psychic to that of faith) are regarded as a separate substance (i.e. as a pseudo-thing, called "soul"), over against a classification of the lower modalities (the arithmetic to the organic) into something separate (called "body").

Secondly he is of the opinion that, even though a human being exhibits more functions or aspects than the rest of creation, a human being is still more than a mere functional being (cf. Bril, 2005:79). The human being is not only a "higher", but also a "deeper" being than an animal. This brings us to the second side of being human mentioned above: the directional.

4.3 Human direction

We have now reached the "heart" of Vollenhoven's view of being human – his rediscovery of the biblical concept "heart". (Cf. also what was already said under 3.8 of chapter 8 about this biblical concept.) Ancient (pre-Christian), Christian and modern (post-Christian) philosophers sometimes did notice some of the modal aspects of a human being, but not the heart or core, the religious centre of the human being. (Cf. 1.4 above where we have shown that Vollenhoven, 1950:26 discovered this void in the works of the Greeks.)

Above (cf. 3.5) it was mentioned (cf. again Bril in Vollenhoven, 2005c: 404) that, although the role of the spirit (*pneuma*) in the ptoi did more justice to the real state of affairs regarding a human being, it is only noticing the inner man (heart) that can lead to an anthropology that is true to the Scriptures. In opposition to the anthropology of the ptoi (which distinguished between a higher and lower part in the human being), Vollenhoven therefore proposes the distinction of "inside-outside" or "inner-outer". He says for instance (cf. Vollenhoven in Tol & Bril, 1992:201) that in the human being – in contrast to other created things – a distinction should be made between the modal and the non-modal or the functional and the non-functional heart or soul. The last-mentioned is the pre-functional or "inner" side of the human being. ("Inner" and "outer" should not be understood in a spatial sense, but as two different perspectives on the total human being.)

The place of the heart, however, is not *before* the functions or (as in the work of Dooyeweerd) *above* the functions (supra-temporal), but *within* the cloak of functions, i.e. pre-functional (cf. Vollenhoven, 2000:293). Already in 1933 Vollenhoven (1933:44) uses the word "funksiemantel" (translated by Kok into English as "cloak of functions") with reference to the earthly garment or tent of 2 Corinthians 5:1-4, and distinguishes between the heart and cloak of functions (cf. also Vollenhoven, 2005d/e:62).

In Vollenhoven's short introduction to his systematic philosophy (*Isagoge Philosophiae*) this directional role of the heart is explained further. As has been

said already, a human being is not merely a modal being (cf. Vollenhoven, 2005d/e:61, 62), for the direction of his/her life can be good or bad, that is, it may meet the requirements of God's law or it may not (cf. Kok, 1996:216 *et seq.*). So there has to be something more in a human being, something that lies "before" or "behind" the various functions, directs the functional life (e.g. the psychic, economic, juridical) for better or for worse. (Compare once more Vollenhoven's sympathy with the pneumatic toi!) According to Vollenhoven this "something" is the heart. (In this regard he refers to Proverbs 4:23; Matt. 12:34b-35; 15:18 and Luke 6:45.) Instead of "heart" he sometimes uses "soul" or "spirit". (For an excellent exposition on the various meanings of the concept "heart" in the Scriptures – including this religious meaning – cf. Von Meyenfeldt, 1950, 1951 and 1964:40 *et seq.*)

The relation between the pre-functional heart and the functional body or cloak of functions (cf. Vollenhoven, 2005d/e:62) is not that of a higher group of functions versus a lower group. The heart (as the inner) determines the direction of the whole, actual bodily life. Obedience or disobedience to God's fundamental law of love determines this spiritual direction.

4.4 Religion and the image of God

From the fore-going the close connection between heart and religion already transpired. Von Meyenfeldt (1964:53) thinks on the same lines when he writes: "Religion is not one of man's many capacities. No, religion is a matter of the authentic, unadulterated man; in other words: religion is a matter of the heart". Vollenhoven (2005d/e:78) gives a concise description of religion as follows: "... religion is the relationship of humankind to the God of the covenant in obedience or disobedience to his fundamental law of love" (Vollenhoven here refers to Deut. 6:5 and Matt. 22:37).

4.4.1 The human being as a religious being

A human being is, in contrast to the rest of creation, by nature a religious being – even in his disobedience to God's commands or in his denial that God exists.

Further man's religious life, according to Vollenhoven's anthropology, is not limited to the higher part of his existence (the soul or spirit), but becomes evident in his *whole* (bodily) existence, in *all* its functions. In *every* activity the religious direction determines whether it is good or bad, whether it honours God or discredits Him. This tallies with what the Bible teaches: in everything a human being either serves the true God or idols in his place. Therefore Von Meyenfeldt (1964:52) can write: "Religion is not a certain capacity. It is the relationship between God and man in which man is engaged from his innermost parts to his fingertips. It takes hold of man in the deepest and at the same time in the broadest sense possible".

4.4.2 The human being as the image of God

The above also influences Vollenhoven's understanding of the biblical revelation that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26, 27).

In a long Christian tradition (cf. e.g. Gregory of Nazianze above) up to today it was taught that the soul is ontologically related to God and therefore the human being bears the image of God in his soul. Man is therefore a semi-divine being. It was therefore also considered that being in the image of God is something that cannot be lost.

In contrast to this Vollenhoven, in line with his clear distinction between God and creation, including human beings, teaches that it is wrong to speak about God's image *in* a human being. It is more true to the Scriptures to say that a human being *should be* the image of God, or *exhibit* it. This does not happen when a human being is united with the divine (cf. Gregory's pursuit of deification), but when one obeys God's fundamental command of love. Together with his rediscovery of the human heart, Vollenhoven also once more emphasised the heart of the law, namely love – something which got lost in most of Western philosophy. By loving one shows the image of God and lives in the right direction on which God's blessing will be given.

So man either *is* the image of God or *not*. It is not impossible to lose the image. (Cf. e.g. Calvin's ideas in chapter 7, section 6 that the natural image of God was spoiled, but not eradicated – later on a common idea in Reformed theology.) The image of God, according to the Scriptures and Vollenhoven is a trait of being human that one can lack as a consequence of disobedience to God. As a result of the brokenness caused by sin, even those who are the image of God exhibit it to a greater or lesser degree (cf. Vollenhoven in Tol & Brill, 1992, and Brill in Vollenhoven, 2000:279 *et seq.*)

4.5 Death, immortality, interim state and resurrection

On these matters, too – on which people of all ages posed questions – Vollenhoven early on (1933) took a clear stand.

4.5.1 Death

He does not consider death, like many Christians in the past (cf. e.g. once more Gregory and also Calvin, discussed in chapter 7) as something to be desired, since then the soul will be freed from the incarceration by the body to be united with God. Death is, according to the Scriptures, God's punishment for sin (cf. 1 Cor. 15:21 and other texts). Death also means a severing of the ties between a human being and his environment (cf. Job 14:10-14). This "laying down of the body" is a secondary element, which is evident from the fact that it only happens at the first death. At the second death the heart or soul has already been re-united with the body (Rev. 20:12,13). Please note: "Body" is not understood here as the "animal part" of a human being, but all the human functions which Paul (cf. again 2 Cor 5:1-4) compares with a mantle or tent dwelling.

In line with the Scriptures Vollenhoven (1933:44) therefore distinguishes a twofold death. The first death befalls all people – those who do not believe in God as well as believers. The second death coincides with the eternal punishment that comes on those who have not been saved in Christ (Rev. 20:14 and 21:8 in contrast to Rev. 2:11 and 20:6). For more detail, compare Vollenhoven, 2005d/e:121, 122, 133, 134, 139.

4.5.2 Immortality

While (under the influence of pre-Christian philosophers) the Christian tradition of two thousand years (cf. e.g. once more Calvin and Gregory above) up to the time of Vollenhoven – and even today – believes in the immortality of the soul, this idea is queried by Vollenhoven in the light of God's Word.

Immortality (not to be subject to the power of death) is only taught about God in the Scriptures. Nowhere does the Bible mention an immortal part (for instance the soul) in connection with a human being. (Such an idea was *read into* certain parts of Scripture.) A human being is not immortal before the first death. Immortality is only applicable to *people* (not souls) who belong to Christ after their resurrection at his second coming.

4.5.3 Interim state and resurrection

On the so-called interim state the Scriptures, and therefore Vollenhoven too, say very little. Above (under 3.2) we have already said that Vollenhoven is of the opinion that the *origin* of creation and the *continued existence* of a human being after death cannot be investigated scientifically, but what God Himself reveals about it has to be accepted in faith (cf. 1 Cor. 2.9).

While dichotomist anthropologies among Christians usually taught (under the influence of Plato and others) that at death a human being is dismantled or taken apart so that the body is buried and the soul returns to God, the Epicureans in the time of Paul (cf. Acts 17:18,32) believed that at death a human being is *destroyed*, it means the end of his/her existence. In contrast to this Vollenhoven teaches (cf. 4.5.1 above) that death does not entail the destruction of a human being. It should rather be said that at death a human being is *broken* or severed from the ties with his/her environment. But as usual he formulates his viewpoint (cf. Vollenhoven in Tol & Bril, 1992:190) very concisely: "Ontologically speaking we may say that at death, at the grave, it is not the end, and Christologically speaking we may say that we belong to the Lord" [Transl. from Dutch].

As a result of his holistic view of being human, Vollenhoven prefers the Nicean Creed to the Apostolic Creed, since the former confesses the resurrection of the *dead* instead of (like the latter) the resurrection of the *body* (cf. Briil in Vollenhoven, 2000:293).

As far as the resurrection is concerned, Vollenhoven refers to 1 Corinthians 15:44 which reveal that a "spiritual body" will be raised from the "natural body". (Here again *pneuma* is important.) For those accepting a dichotomy between body and spirit, such a biblical expression ("spiritual body") does not make sense. According to the Scriptures, however, it means that the human being – in contrast to the present sinful dispensation – will be led by the Spirit of God to full obedience.

Hereby we have sketched the main lines of Vollenhoven's Reformational anthropology. In the light of the preceding we may call him "the philosopher of the heart". But we can pose the question whether his anthropology is in any way still relevant for today.

5. The significance of Vollenhoven's Scriptural anthropology for today

To illustrate the lasting actuality of this Christian philosopher's view on the human being, we concentrate on only one recent anthology: *From cells to souls – and beyond; changing portraits of human nature* (2004) edited by Jeeves. The central problem in this work is whether and how modern scientific knowledge on the human being can be reconciled with what Christians have always believed and which (according to them) is taught by the Scriptures.

5.1 The background

Research in the fields of neurology, neurobiology, neuropathology, neuropsychology, psychiatry, genetics and other subject fields has brought to light that the human brain or the chemical-physical-biological "side" of persons influences their whole existence. This research inter alia showed that biochemical processes can have a great influence on one's experience of what are right and

wrong, sin, guilt and love. Alzheimer's disease (cf. Jeeves, 2004:81), for instance, leads to a radical change in a person's identity and can even contribute to a person having great difficulty to keep on believing, or to experience God's presence. Genetic defects (cf. hereditary depression) too, can influence a human being's religious experiences (cf. p. 119). Scientists therefore today find it increasingly difficult to maintain the difference made earlier between physical and mental illnesses (p. 124).

Such discoveries evoke serious questions like the following, especially for Christians: When does a human being start being a human being? When does a human being stop being a human being or a person? (cf. Jeeves, 2004:13). What role does the brain play in being human? Has a person whose brain has been seriously damaged also lost his humanness? Is there something that differentiates a human being from an animal, and if there is, what is it? Does this mean that Christians have to take leave of the idea that a human being consist of a body *and* a soul? This last suggestion occurs right through the book (cf. p. 33, 58, 60, 179). The human being as merely a bodily being is very prominent in the book.

5.2 The "solution"

The above-mentioned problems (e.g. when a human being *starts* or *stops* being human) are false problems, the consequences of a dichotomist anthropology which believes that a human being needs a separate "part", namely a soul in order to qualify as a human being over against animals. The authors in this volume with right try very hard to reject a dichotomist (they call it a "dualistic") anthropology.

All the writers are more or less unanimous that a monistic view of being human can solve the problems. The search for an invisible, separate something like a "soul" is, according to them, doomed to failure (cf. p. 32, 33). For it has been proved convincingly that all the capacities formerly ascribed to a soul, are actually the results or consequences of neurophysiological processes in the brain (p. 58).

5.3 Reductionist physicalism

The above viewpoint is usually labelled as "physicalism" (or naturalism). The only thing that exists, is the physical (a clearly monistic ontology). Crick (1994:3) for instance reduces a human being's mental and spiritual life to the physical-biological in the following words: "... you, your joys and sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of identity and free will, are in fact *no more than* the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules". [Italics added to emphasise reductionism in the work of Crick.]

5.4 Non-reductionist physicalism as the Christian answer?

The Christian authors in the volume edited by Jeeves (2004) find a materialistic/naturalistic anthropology like that of Crick hardly acceptable because of its far-reaching implications (cf. e.g. p. 63, 173, 180). Amongst other things it would lead to determinism, i.e. a rejection of human freedom and responsibility; there would no longer be an essential difference between man and animal; human life would then no longer be holy – especially when the brain is no longer functioning normally; ethical and other norms either become uncertain or are rejected outright; belief in a life hereafter would be doubted, and a lot more.

Quite a number of the authors in the Jeeves volume therefore replace the reductionist physicalism of Crick *et al.* by a viewpoint which they denote as "non-reductionist physicalism" (cf. e.g. p. 63 *et seq.*, p. 184 *et seq.*, p. 214 *et seq.*). This viewpoint is described as follows: "Nonreductive physicalism holds two theses simultaneously: First, it holds that functional properties (thoughts, intentions, fears etc.) cannot be reduced to physical properties. Second, it holds that causality is nonetheless physical" (Jeeves, 2004:214).

The question is whether these two theses are not in contradiction to one another. A physicalist viewpoint cannot be non-reductionist/reductive! However, this is not the place to enter into a discussion with the authors in Jeeves (2004). We would rather point out how Vollenhoven can help us in understanding such a viewpoint.

5.5 Evaluation in the light of Vollenhoven's anthropology

It is clear that the different authors in the volume of Jeeves see a monistic ontology as the only solution to the problem with which current scientific knowledge on the human being confront Christians. Therefore the unity of a human being is also significant to them. But whoever uses the word "unity" thereby already supposes a plurality.

Among these writers, too, there is a divergence between something higher and something lower in the original unity. It is explicitly stated that "duality without dualism" is recognised (p. 241, 242) or they speak of "the dual aspect of monism" (p. 244). The higher part of a human being is designated by various names like "mind", "spirit" and "souliness" (e.g. p. 67).

Asked where this higher aspect originates (something that Crick denies), they answer that it develops from the lower aspect (cf. p. 74). The other way round the lower (e.g. brain chemistry) influences the higher. (A kind of circular, chicken-egg argument?) In this way the results of modern secular science can be accepted by Christian scholars!. Parallelistic anthropologies (cf. above) are therefore rejected in favour of a kind of theory of interaction (cf. p. 240, 243). In this way the "soul" is saved and a human being can be called an "embodied soul" or "embodied spirituality" (cf. p. 74, 123 and 245). In the work of some authors the Scriptures are even evoked to support this viewpoint (cf. p. 186, 187). They even claim that the Old and New Testament also teach a monist view of being human!

While the writers in Jeeves try to defend a (modified) monist anthropology, another writer, Cooper (1989), proposes a "holistic dualism"!

5.6 A true answer

Vollenhoven could not take cognisance of these current (non-)reductionist physicalist anthropologies (he passed away in 1978 already). From this brief rendering however, it transpires that Vollenhoven would have been both sympathetically and critically disposed towards them.

On the positive side he would have been able to appreciate the efforts made in Jeeves since, according to him, from among all the possible views of being human a monist (pneumatic) theory of interaction comes closest to his own viewpoint concerning the human being (cf.3.5 above).

In the second instance, however, it is also clear that the views of the human being presented by Christian authors in the book by Jeeves, cannot represent the full truth on human beings. Vollenhoven would have been able to bring them much closer to the truth.

Concerning the structure of being human, Vollenhoven's distinction of thirteen other different modalities besides the physical in human beings (cf. 4.2 above) could contribute to a much broader perspective on the human being. Moreover, the anti- and retrocipations which he demonstrates between the various human functions or modalities, could explain why the chemical-biological aspects of a human being can influence his/her feelings, thoughts, ethical conduct and even faith, while the opposite also takes place. This apart from his emphasis on the heart as the religious centre of being human.

5.6.1 Explained by Geertsema

Vollenhoven could probably confront the authors in the book by Jeeves with similar problems as those posed by Geertsema (2008) to another writer wrestling with the same issue: To be consistent, scholars who claim that human thought, will and belief originate from neurophysiological processes in the brain, should also apply this claim to their own viewpoint!

It is more important that Geertsema (even though thinking in line with the philosophy of Dooyeweerd) also attempts to find answers to how it is possible that too much wine affects one's thoughts, or why certain chemical remedies can influence one's spirit, like medication for psychiatric conditions. Brain damage clearly also has wider consequences. *That* it happens, is not to be denied. The problem is *how* it is possible.

In line with the doctrine of modalities Geertsema regards this "interaction" not as a *causal* relation (of cause and effect), but as a *structural* relation. It is made possible by the complex mutual intertwining of all the different facets of being human. These facets differ the one from the other, so that they may not be reduced to one another in a reductionistic way. At the same time they can only be distinguished, but never separated from one another.

This implies that the human brain is not merely something physical-chemical-biological. It is part of the complexity of a human being. Reformulated: it is a *human* brain. The human heart is expressed in *all* the different facets. It is *I* who think, choose, believe, etcetera and not my *brain*. *I* experience pain and not simply my *body*! Formulated the other way round: I do not cry, because my eyes produce tears; I do not laugh, because of the shape of my mouth!

5.6.2 Explained by Glas

Glas (1996:101, 102) uses another example to explain the same, viz. when one blushes because of shame or anger. When one's face turns red, it is not simply a *biological* phenomenon, but the *whole* person, for instance his/her emotional, logical and social life is involved.

The same can be said about the human brain. It is not something that can be viewed and analysed independently from the rest of the human being – with the result that the emotional, mental and other functions of a person is regarded as mysterious epiphenomena of a chemically-biologically reduced brain. It is not a substantialised brain that feels, thinks, prays, etc., but the integral person (cf. Glas, 1996:102-104).

Elsewhere Glas (1995:69) provides the following illustration. A chair (of wood, iron or plastic) has *subject*-functions up to and including the physical aspect. Its functioning, however, is determined by its social *object*-function: People use chairs to sit on to do their work or spend time together. This social function of the chair is not something *external* or *added* to it, but a property of the chair which is expressed *in* and *by means of* its physical structure. The organisation of the physical material is qualified by its social function.

In a similar way the human brain should be viewed. It functions subjectively (actively) in the physical-chemical-biotic. Thinking, feeling, praying, etc. are not object-functions which are arbitrarily and *externally linked* to the human brain. On the contrary: the organisation of the brain as a biologically functioning organ is *intrinsically determined* by such activities.

Glas (1995:69) summarises the value of such a perspective: It discards both the idea that it is the brain itself which feels, thinks, prays and so on, as well as the view which transforms all these activities into ghost-like, disembodied phenomena, which are only accidentally related to the brain. "In this way both biologicistic reductionism and the mind-body dualism are rejected" (p. 69).

6 A retrospect and evaluation

We close this investigation with some final thoughts.

6.1 The way we have come

We have come a long way: (1) From early Christian philosophy (Gregory) to (2) Woltjer (Vollenhoven's tutor), to (3) the views of being human current among Reformed theologians during the time of Vollenhoven (Waterink, Hepp), to (4) Vollenhoven's own Reformational viewpoint in contrast to the foregoing, to (5) an example of contemporary Christian thinkers propagating a monistic theory of interaction (Jeeves *et al.*).

6.2 The result

Critics could remark that Vollenhoven did not really make a contribution to a better understanding of being human. Did he not merely replace the earlier, dichotomist philosophy (a higher-lower distinction) with his own – also dichotomist scheme – of inside-outside, inner-outer or heart-cloak of functions?

Vonk (1963), for instance, is of the opinion that Janse (cf. Vonk, 1963:75 *et seq.*), Vollenhoven (his idea of a cloak of functions, cf. Vonk, 1963:87, 143) and Telder (cf. Vonk, 1963:160) did try very hard to overcome a dichotomist anthropology, but could not really succeed. Especially since all three of them believed that at the death of a human being something (the soul/heart/spirit) still continues to

exist. Vonk is of the opinion that (formulated in dichotomist language) the human being *in total* dies and is resurrected from the dust. So death does not divide a human being in two. Death is death!

However, Vollenhoven did not want to see the human being from the angle of a monistic ontology. Furthermore, he did not see the higher functions of a human being taken together as a separate component (e.g. soul) versus the lower group of modalities (called body).

The criticism of Vonk further does not acknowledge Vollenhoven's significant contribution to an integral view of being human, which comes out clearly in his integral, radical and total view of religion – nothing is excluded from one's relationship with and service to God, even if misdirected towards idols.

In the last instance Vollenhoven also emphasised that death is something abnormal and should therefore be considered as something secondary. It does not belong to the original creational structure of a human being, but is a (temporary) punishment of sin by God. So one should not, working back from the broken state at death, bring a twoness (dichotomy) into a human being's existence here and now.

Therefore tracking Vollenhoven's footsteps, that of his predecessors and those that followed, was worth while after all. It has emerged clearly that a Reformational anthropology based on the Scriptures is possible and can have great value.

As a result of the doctrine of modalities it affords a *broader* view of being human. It also affords a *deeper* view of the human being. Vollenhoven again discovered the heart of the human being and love as the heart of God's law. Such an anthropology is *liberating*. It eradicates age-old dualisms like spirit-body, sacred-secular, church and world, preaching the gospel and social involvement, faith and science, since the life of a human being is religiously determined from his heart up to his fingertips! Life is religion!

6.3 The limitation and value of scientific knowledge about human beings

However, Vollenhoven is the last person to regard his own view of the human being as the final one. For instance, he started a lecture on philosophical anthropology (cf. Vollenhoven, 1963) by admitting that, of all the many riddles, the riddle of one's own humanity is certainly the most difficult. He further says (cf. Vollenhoven, 2005d/e:17) that any science can offer only limited knowledge. Reality – especially the human being – is not to be fully understood by means of our intellect. A friend or a fiancé, for example, is not a concept, but a reality. All of reality – including human beings – exists even without the science that studies it.

Also another Reformational thinker, Glas (1996:113) warns that who I am is a profound secret. It is a hidden treasure in Jesus Christ, because he will unite his name with my new name and acknowledge it before his Father and his Angels (Rev. 3:5. Cf. also Isaiah 56:5; 65:15; Rev. 2:17 and 3:12).

Nevertheless, an attempt to unravel the secret of being human in a scientific way is not pointless. While Christians sometimes still think that a Christian philosophy could be dangerous – or at least is a useless enterprise – its value has become clear from the above. Stellingwerff (1992:255, 256), therefore, was right when he commented (cf. 1.4) that Vollenhoven is a philosopher for all times and recommended that he should be discovered anew by the younger generation.

6.4 Modesty

However, the task of the younger generation would not be to canonise Vollenhoven, but to elaborate on his work. Only then will justice be done to the modesty and amazement about creation that was so characteristic of this “philosopher of the heart” This transpires clearly from what he says about the task of a Christian philosopher: “For a philosopher who believes that God created the cosmos proceeds every time again from the presupposition that the wealth in that which is created will be much greater than has been ascertained up to that time. For such a reason, such a (Christian) philosopher can never say, ‘I am ready, look here, a closed system!’ On the contrary, her result, though acquired

systematically, is always a provisional one, for she remains filled with expectation, attuned to new surprises that... will usually alter earlier findings" (Vollenhoven, 2005d:17 and 2005e:17).

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CHAPTER 10

IMAGING GOD IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

This chapter is an effort to determine the meaning of the Biblical revelation that human beings were created in the image and likeness of God and to do so from a Christian philosophical perspective. The following is an outline of the investigation: (1) The introduction is a reminder that one's view of reality (ontology) and view of being human (anthropology) is decisive for how one would understand the meaning of *imago Dei*. It is illustrated (2) firstly in the older essentialist (or ontological) viewpoints, which explained the image of God in man analogically, in other words as similarity and difference between the divine and human natures. (3) Next it is indicated that the more recent relational viewpoints on the image of God cannot really indicate its full richness either. (4) The next section provides an exposition of how a few Reformational philosophers understood this mysterious Biblical expression about the human being. It is indicated how their viewpoint about human beings can solve many misconceptions connected with the *imago et similitudo Dei* and also open up new and wider perspectives. (5) The concluding part will summarise the results of the investigation.

Relevance to our main theme (At home in God's world):

We can only be fully at home in God's world and serve him when we are renewed in the image of Christ by obeying God's central and foundational commandment of love.

* * *

1 Introduction: The issue and the way to enlightenment

According to numerous writers (cf. Bibliography) the fact that the human being is called the image and likeness of God as early as Genesis 1 verse 26, 27 simultaneously entails a mystery (for the expression is not explained) and something most significant, without which the human being cannot really be understood. No wonder that only in the past 2000 years at least a library full of

books have been written on this crucial mystery. (Although published as far back as 1969, the anthology edited by Scheffczyk offers a good introduction on the biblical foundation of man as God's image, as well as its historical development and systematic reflections.) Writing about it once more may seem like superfluous good deeds!

However, it clearly emerges that this is not the case if one considers the lingering questions surrounding this biblical expression. Both the older (more ontological) and the later (more relational) explanations of "image and likeness" pose problems. By way of illustration the following: The ontological views hold that the image of God in the human being has been scarred, but not completely lost. But how can such a viewpoint be reconciled with the (Reformational) idea that the fall of man was comprehensive and radical? The newer, relational views, which consider the image as a relationship between God and human beings, can more easily claim that man has lost the image of God, since he broke the covenantal relationship. But would it imply that people (like non-believers for example) have thereby lost their humanity? After falling into sin, people have indeed not changed into something else.

Reflecting anew, therefore, is no superfluous luxury. This Christian philosophical quest for greater clarity entails the following steps: (1) By way of introduction it is emphasised that one can only reflect on this topic in terms of the worldview and view of being human of oneself and of one's own time. This emanates from (2) the ontological and (3) relational views that are treated briefly. An exegesis of the two concepts ("image" and "likeness") takes us a step further. (4) However, the main question is whether the worldview and view of the human being held by Reformational philosophy could not offer greater clarity on this essential mystery concerning a human being. (5) In the concluding section the results of the investigation are summarised.

2 Ontological and anthropological points of departure are decisive

It is a simple fact – although not always acknowledged – that one's view of man's being created in the image and likeness of God is coloured by one's own worldvish and philosophical points of departure, which are to a great extent determined by the current philosophy of one's time. Especially one's view of reality (ontology) and the view of the human being cannot be ignored in this context.

2.1 Ontological points of departure

The views of reality or ontologies used in the past were mostly of a dualist nature. Only two "realities", namely God and creation were acknowledged. Nor was the radical *difference* between God and man acknowledged. This view also determined the *relationship* between them.

Current scholars are more inclined to think not in a dualist way, but monistically (cf. e.g. different essays in Jeeves, 2004). Instead of two original realities, only one exists. (The variety in creation is explained as divergences from the primordial unity.)

Vollenhoven (2005a:161-163) shows that both the non-Scriptural views of ontological dualism and monism occur right through the history of Western philosophy. The critique delivered on these viewpoints by Fowler (1991:8) is: "Dualism is not in harmony with Scripture since it proposes two ultimate sources of reality, whereas Scripture reveals God as the one origin of all there is. Monism, on the other hand, is in conflict with Scripture, because it can only be true if we erase the distinction between God and creation".

Earlier theologies saw the relationship between God and the earthly reality – especially the human being – in an ontological way – a kind of essential continuity between God and creation. Since the second half of the previous century the influence of particularly irrationalism caused a movement away from essentialism to relationalism. Consequently the image of God was sought primarily in a relationship with God.

However, neither of these viewpoints is satisfactory. In the *analogia entis* philosophy of the essentialist view the radical distinction between God and the human being is blurred. The relational view still has to explain what kind of relation the fact of the image entails – for there are many kinds of relationships – and what its implications are.

Therefore the preliminary hypothesis is that a broader and more Scriptural view of reality could shed more light on the fact of man as a being created in God's image. Such a cosmoscope would depart not from two realities only (God and creation), but from three (God, law and creation).

Hart (1984:361) propagates such a "three factor" (instead of a two factor) ontology. "... all that is known or can be known must be either the *world*, the *order* of the world, or the *origin* of the world. Nothing else is real or can be known".

Between Creator (Origin) and the world there is a (religious) bond but also a clear (ontological) distinction. In the words of Hart himself: "God and creatures are... in relationship. They are there for each other. God fully determines all things. All creatures are out of God, for God, through God, and unto God" (Hart, 1984:345). The (ontological) difference he defines as follows: "Creator and creature are fully distinct and have nothing in common. There are no analogies. God is God and only God... God *is* not a creature in any way and is not *like* a creature in any way... even though we may hear God speak in this manner. And no creature is god or divine in any way" (Hart, 1984:345).

2.2 Anthropological points of departure

The earlier dualistic worldviews led to a dichotomy in the view of being human. God is Spirit and creation is matter. However, a human being is a kind of interfigure made up of both spirit and matter. His soul/spirit comes from God and returns to God (at the time of death). His body comes from the earth (his parents) and returns to dust (after his death). In his spirit/soul a human being is therefore "related" to God, for it is his "divine part". It is also this "part" of a human being that bears the image and likeness of God. Some theologians also taught that the

image of God is limited to the soul, while others (inconsistently) wanted to extend it to the body.

More recent scholars, however, think (in line with their monistic ontologies) in a monistic way about a human being. The book we mentioned by Jeeves (2004), for instance, demonstrates how many scientists today are of the opinion that a human being is nothing more than a physical body and that a human being's spirit is merely a function of his brain cells (cf. also Fowler, 1991:3). Various chapters in the work by Jeeves point out how difficult it is, when accepting such a type of anthropology still to speak about the image of God.

The hypothesis in this case is that a human being cannot be regarded as a dichotomy. Nor as a "unity", for the unity of monism supposes a higher and a lower divergence of the original unity. Neither a dichotomous nor a monistic anthropology offers a Scriptural view of being human. According to God's revelation a human being is (as will become clear later on) a much more complex, multidimensional being. (Cf. previous expositions in chap. 8 and 9.)

3 Some historical flashes on the ontological view of a human being as the image of God

Concerning the ontological (analogical) view of man as the image, Van der Walt in his thesis (1974) followed this tradition up to the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (of 1658) in detail, with full bibliographical references, so that we will merely refer to a few figures.

3.1 Justin Martyr (110-165 AD) uses the Stoic *logos* doctrine of his time to understand reality and the human being. The only difference from the Stoa is that the *Logos* (Reason) now is the God of the Bible, who creates germs of reason (*logoi spermatikoi*) in the created things – in the human being as well, who thereby becomes God's image. In spite of the difference between God and man, an analogical similarity between them is accepted (cf. Van der Walt, 1974:152 *et seq.*).

3.2 Clemens of Alexandria (obit 212 AD) He, too, clearly holds a dichotomist anthropology of a higher, reasonable soul versus a lower, material body. Further he continues the logos speculation: A human being is the image of God, for his reasonable soul shares in the divine logos, and is an image thereof (Van der Walt, 1974:154 *et seq.*).

3.3 Origen (182-233 AD) and Tertullian (150-223 AD) They pursue the same ontological trend of thought as their predecessors, namely relationship of being – and therefore a relativism of being – between God and human beings. Origen taught that the human soul, because it shares in the Divine Reason (*Logos*), bears the image of God (cf. Van der Walt, 1974:161). According to the latter Church Father, too, the divine *logos* is innate in the human, reasonable soul (cf. Van der Walt, 1974:170 and Scheffczyk, 1969:133 *et seq.*).

3.4 Augustine (345-430 AD)

Although in the works of this important Church Father the terminology changes (the *logoi spermatikoi* are replaced by *rationes seminales*) it is still a continuation of the ancient logos doctrine. According to a hierarchy of being everything in creation exhibits a *likeness* to God, but only the human soul exhibits the *image* of God (cf. Van der Walt, 1974:179 *et seq.*) Augustine regards the three human parts of the soul as analogous (i.e. different yet similar) to the divine Trinity (cf. Vollenhoven, 2005c:59). Once again it is clear that the image of God is seen as something divine in part of the human being. This train of thought about the reasonable law (*logos*) in God, in the things and in human reason is taken over and developed in Medieval philosophy.

3.5 Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

This important Medieval thinker likes to use the image of an artist creating a work of art according to the idea in his mind. Likewise, according to the plan (*exemplar*) in his reason God creates things as likenesses, portrayals or copies (*similitudes*) of Himself. (This idea is a forerunner of the well-known archetypal-ectypical way of thinking found in Reformed Scholasticism after Calvin.) The nearer to God, that is, the higher up in the hierarchy of being, the clearer the *similitudo*, and the

further off the vaguer, less divine. Therefore Thomas differentiates between a human being who exhibits the image (*imago*) of God (because – like God – he has an intellect) and the other creatures that bear only the footprints (*vestigia*) of God (cf. Van der Walt, 1974:255 *et seq.* and Scheffczyk, 1969:206 *et seq.*, 260 *et seq.* and 292 *et seq.*).

Thomas also reads a dualism between nature and grace into the biblical expression “image and likeness” (Van der Walt, 1974:269). According to him “image” therefore denotes the reasonable, human nature that is common to all people, while “likeness” denotes the particular supernatural gift of grace which entails communion with God. While the fall resulted in the loss of the supernatural likeness, the natural likeness remained, since the human reasonable nature was supposed to be something semi-divine and therefore indelible. Therefore even non-believers remain the (natural) image of God.

3.6 John Calvin (1509-1564)

Even this important reformer's thinking was influenced by the reviving neo-Platonism and Stoicism of his times, as well as by his leaning on the philosophy of Augustine. From Plato he inherited a dichotomist view of the human being, taking the soul as the most important versus the body as a prison. From the Stoics he took over the age-old logos doctrine. (For details, see chapter 3 and 7.)

3.6.1 Dichotomy

The human soul comes from heaven, from God Himself (the transcendent) and therefore contains the image (*imago*) of God. In the body (the non-transcendent) – which cannot really be the image of God – merely a few divine sparks (*scintillae*), are glowing, while in the rest of creation, which is still further removed from God, merely a few traits (*lineamenta*) shine (cf. Van der Walt, 1974:411).

3.6.2 A God in miniature

In the light of the macro-microcosmos doctrine (the transcendent, universal and the non-transcendent, individual look alike but differ in size only), Calvin could even say that a human being is God on a small scale (*microtheos*) or bears his

image (Van der Walt, 1974:412). Once again – as in the foregoing tradition – the image of God is understood as something ontic and, as a result of the relativism of being, as something divine *in* the human being (especially his soul).

3.6.3 Twofold image

Besides there are clear Medieval, scholastic influences in the work of Calvin. When treating the image of God, he differentiates in the line of Thomas (cf. Van der Walt, 1974:416, 689 *et seq.*) between natural and supernatural gifts (*dona naturalia* and *dona supernaturalia*). The former gifts consist of the characteristics which make a human being into a human being, like his intellect (*facultas animae*), and the latter of those that make a human being into a Christian, like faith, knowledge, righteousness and holiness. The supernatural gifts were lost with the fall, but the natural gifts were merely spoilt – if they had been lost altogether, the human being would have ceased to be a human being. In a certain sense the natural image therefore is inviolable or can at least not be lost altogether. Therefore murder is an infringement of God's image and thus is wrong. His distinction between the natural and supernatural image enables Calvin sometimes to emphasise the numerous good (natural) gifts which also occur in non-believers, while in other cases he emphasises that nothing good (of the supernatural gifts) have remained in the human being, since the fall was so radical.

3.7 The Reformed tradition after Calvin

The above tradition (especially the philosophy of Calvin) is also reflected in the Reformed confessional creeds. So, for instance, in the Belgic Confession (article 14) where "small remains" of the excellent gifts of God are mentioned and the Canons of Dordt (3/4:4), which speaks about the "glimmerings of natural light".

This tradition was also resumed by important Reformed theologians in the previous century. Klapwijk (1980:529 *et seq.*) points out how in the works of Kuyper, Bavinck and Woltjer, although newer influences like neo-idealistic romanticism also play a part, the age-old logos speculation in its Medieval

Scholastic form still influences their view of reality, their anthropology and therefore also ideas on God's image.

Kuyper's distinction between general and particular grace (and the double image based on it) is built on a dichotomist view of being human and according to Klapwijk (1980:539) is nothing other than the result of the Thomistic two realm doctrine of nature and supernature (grace).

Klapwijk (1980:550) also says that Bavinck's view of being human is in line with Thomistic Scholasticism and therefore teaches nothing but the ancient Aristotelian anthropology of soul and body as separate substances. But since Bavinck repeatedly makes an effort to reach a more Scriptural view of the human being, he later on teaches that not only the soul, but the whole of man – including the body – was created in the image of God. However, we do find in his work again the above distinction between a natural and a supernatural image – he merely calls it by different names, namely image in wider and image in more restricted or narrower sense (cf. Bavinck, 1928:515).

These ideas run through to many theologians from the previous century. Heyns (1978:127) and König (1999:188-190), for instance, are still of the opinion that the image denotes something analogous between God and man. And according to Wentsel (1987:623-628) there is no essential, but nevertheless an existential analogy between God and man. Other theologians still differentiate (according to the Thomistic tradition) between a natural and a supernatural image, but merely use other terms like (Bavinck's) image in a wider and in a more restricted sense, formal and material image or structural and functional image.

3.8 Summarising review

From the foregoing brief historical overview *inter alia* the following emerge: (1) Christian theologians mostly depart from a dualistic ontology (only the distinction and relation between God and his creation) so that God's will (as laid down in his laws) at most play a covert and therefore not crucial role in their view of God's image. (2) The dominant anthropology (within which they attempted to fit the fact of the image) was of Greek and Stoic origin and of a dichotomist nature. The

image of God was mainly connected with the (reasonable part of the) human soul. (3) Thus the image of God was looked for in something ontic, in an equality between God and the human being. (4) A human being, therefore, does not differ radically from God, but only in an analogical way. (5) According to the unscriptural two realm doctrine of nature and supernature a dichotomy was (since the time of Thomas Aquinas) also brought into the image itself. The so-called natural image was regarded as indelible (or merely scarred), while the supernatural was lost and is only restored in Christians. As mentioned already, this evokes crucial issues like the following: Does not the "inviolability" of the natural image conflict with the radicalness of the fall? Have unbelievers lost their humanity as a consequence of the fall?

Having reached this point, we can now proceed to more recent reflections concerning the image of God.

4 Some flashes on more recent relational views on a human being as the image of God

Especially since the second half of the twentieth century scholars became negatively disposed towards rationalist speculations on the being of both God and human beings. This spiritual climate also influenced the ideas on the human being as the image of God. Cf. for instance the volume *Homo respondens* edited by Buijs, Blokhuis, Griffioen and Kuiper (2005), in which the human being is primarily seen in a relationship of respondent to God – especially the introductory chapter of Geertsema, (2005:25-45). Once again many volumes have been written on these new viewpoints (cf. e.g. the extensive bibliography in Van Wyk, 1993:98-112). The following two theologians will serve as an illustration of this view.

4.1 The dogmatic view of G.C. Berkouwer

In the reflection about *imago Dei* by Reformed dogmaticians one of the milestones was surely the work of Berkouwer (1957 and 1962).

4.1.1 His contribution

In contrast to the preceding tradition he taught amongst other things the following: (1) the image of God is not something ontic in a human being, but rather a relationship with God; (2) the fact of the image is not something static, but dynamic; (3) it concerns the human being as a whole.

Berkouwer does realise, however, that seeing the image merely as a relationship remains vague: "... the question naturally arises as to just what sort of relationship is meant... it is clear that the term 'relation' can, by itself, throw little light on the uniqueness of the actuality of man's being and nature, since there are so many 'relations' in which man is placed" (Berkouwer, 1962:35,36).

Berkouwer discusses the views of many other theologians while his own view is not spelt out clearly. It seems as if he sees the image primarily as a relationship in which a human being represents God. "Being the image of God refers to ... representation" (Berkouwer, 1962:114).

In my opinion representation is more a *consequence* of the image than the image *itself*. Berkouwer possibly came nearest to the truth about this relationship when he wrote the following: "It is clear enough from Scripture that its concern is with the whole man, the full man, the actual man as he stands in God's sight, in the religious bond between the totality of his being and God" (Berkouwer, 1962:31). This idea that the image points to the religious nature of a human being, was further expanded by Reformational philosophy (see sections 5 to 8 below).

4.1.2 Critique on Berkouwer

Spykman (1992:51,52) indicates that "relationalism" is a central motif in Berkouwer's philosophy. Berkouwer himself calls it the "correlation motif". This motif has to serve as a bridge in his dualist ontology of God and creation (particularly the human being). It is, for instance, meant to keep together (on the one hand) God's grace and (on the other hand) a human being's answer of faith. This "hinge on which all of Berkouwer's dogmatics turns" is the "ever present

religious pivotal point of man's encounter with his Maker and Redeemer" (Spykman, 1992:52).

However, this motif does not satisfy. Spykman (p. 52) is of the opinion that the correlation motif "continues to oscillate back and forth as though caught in the bipolar tension of a two-factor theology". The emphasis falls now on the "objective" pole (God) and then on the "subjective" pole (the human being) while the correlation motif remains hanging in the air like a power line between the two poles.

Since the Berkouwer's work is widely known and discussed, we will not go into his view any further. After his dogmatic view, we now look into the exegetical study on image and likeness by Kruyswijk (1962).

4.2 The exegetical study of A. Kruyswijk

This writer concurs with Berkouwer on many points, but also offers new perspectives.

4.2.1 A double enigma

In the Old Testament the fact that the human being was created in the image of God is seldom mentioned (cf. Gen. 1:26,27; 5:1, 9:6 and indirectly in Ps. 8:5-8). Moreover, its exact content is not disclosed. Another mystery is why in Genesis 1:26 mention is made of "image" and "likeness". In other places in the Scriptures only one of the two concepts is used. Do these concepts differ or do they emphasise the same fact? Kruyswijk sees a difference.

4.2.2 Image and likeness

According to Kruyswijk, at the time of the origin of Genesis it was a common custom in the ancient East for a king to erect a statue of himself in remote parts of his kingdom. The idea behind this custom was that in this way a king was actually personally present and exercised his power and authority (Kruyswijk, 1962:199). (Cf. also the ancient custom that rulers had images of themselves imprinted on coins – Matt. 22:15-22.)

Kruyswijk (p. 194), therefore, is of the opinion that a human being is called God's *image* because of the divine power that acts on him. Being his image, a human being remains dependent on God – just as a mirror image is dependent on that which is mirrored. *Likeness* denotes the direction in which God's power moves a human being, the fact that a human being acts like God (p. 196).

The two facets are explained in detail by him as follows: God's power enables a human being to act as God's representative on earth and in this way to mirror his rule. The rule (a consequence or result of being God's image) however, is an activity of the human being for which he himself bears the responsibility of doing it according to God's will (Kruyswijk, 1962:200). In his obedience a human being is holy – like God. "Likeness" therefore means opening up to God's power and the way this happens, is a life of obedience to God's commandments.

Elsewhere (Kruyswijk, 1962:206) he summarises it as follows: As the image of God a human being exercises the power of God. The divine power that acts on him enables him to live in a relationship of being a child to God and to represent Him in a holy way of life, while ruling over the rest of creation.

4.2.3 Implications

From this it would seem as if there are two sides to a human being as God's image and likeness: A *gift* (of being allowed to be God's *image* by his power) and an *assignment* (to exhibit God's *likeness* in a holy way of life).

Formulated in philosophical language one could say that "image" points to the way a human being was created by God (his *nature* or *structure*), while "likeness" denotes the way a human being should live correctly, according to God's will (the *direction*). This significant idea will be worked out in more detail below.

4.2.4 The possibility of forfeiting the image

Kruyswijk's view of the image implies that it can be forfeited on the following grounds: (1) The image does not exist as something ontic in some part of a human being; (2) unless a human being opens up to the power of God, God withdraws his power and man can no longer be his likeness (p. 207); (3) although

the Old Testament does not state explicitly that the image and likeness have been lost, the New Testament teaches it implicitly when so much emphasis is laid on the fact that a human being should be renewed in the image of Christ.

According to Kruyswijk the fall entails the loss of *imago Dei*. Adam and Eve rebelled against God, were unwilling to live according to his commandments, but desired to be their own law-givers (autonomous) – in other words like God Himself (Gen. 3:22), instead of being only his representatives and likeness.

Up to now we have been looking at what was thought about the image of God from a theological angle down the ages. In the next section we look at what the contribution could be from a Christian philosophical perspective.

5 Christian philosophical reflection on a human being as the image and likeness of God

This overview starts with one of the founders of Reformational philosophy in the Netherlands, namely D.H.Th. Vollenhoven, and subsequently it shows how the reflection on the subject was enhanced in the work of Christian philosophers after him.

5.1 D.H.Th. Vollenhoven on the image of God

Even though this Christian philosopher did not write much on the subject, his view gives new direction to the reflection (cf. also the previous chapter 9).

5.1.1 A wider view on reality

In contrast to most of the preceding Christian thinkers, Vollenhoven in the first instance offers a broader ontology. He rejects all dualistic and monistic ontologies (cf. Vollenhoven, 2005a:161-163 and 2005c:116-117) as being unscriptural. Instead of only God (the transcendent) and the cosmos (the non-transcendent), he differentiates between three realities: God, creation and his laws for creation (cf. Vollenhoven, 2005b:14). This distinction does not mean that God, law and creation are taken together in one ontology. "Ontology" only refers to the cosmos (cf. Bril & Boonstra, 2000:349). Should we still use the term "ontology", one could

state it as follows: In the light of the Scriptures Vollenhoven emphasises both the radical *ontological distinction* between God, his creation and the laws the Creator laid down for creation, and their *religious bond*. As a consequence of the recognition of the *radical* ontological distinction it is therefore excluded that the image of God could be understood in an ontological sense (essential equality or *analogia entis*) as explained above.

5.1.2 The importance of the religious direction

Apart from the *structure* of things (how matter, plants, animals and human beings are modally built up), Vollenhoven also emphasises the distinction between good and evil, or the religious *direction*, which after the fall affects the whole of creation – including human beings (Vollenhoven, 2005b:xxix). God's law points the *direction* to be followed.

5.1.3 Man as a religious being

Vollenhoven does not think in a dichotomist way about the human being, but sees the human being as multidimensional (cf. his doctrine of modalities). The human heart – in which a human being's direction is determined – renders the human being unique among all creatures (Vollenhoven, 2005b:61,62). In contrast to the rest of creation, a human being *is* and *will always be* a religious being – even in disobedience to God. His orientation towards God or away from God (oriented to idols in his place) determines his life as a *whole*.

The importance Vollenhoven (2005b:77,78) attaches to God's law, emerges from the following: "Religion is the relationship of humankind to the first and great commandment: 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your might'... Therefore, religion is the relationship of humankind to the God of the covenant in obedience or disobedience to his fundamental law of love".

The importance he attaches to a human being as a religious being, emerges from the fact that after this, while he usually writes briefly and concisely, Vollenhoven

explains in detail the history of the covenant and religion in creation, fall and re-creation.

5.1.4 The image is “forfeitable”

To Vollenhoven the image of God therefore simply means living according to God's commandments. And since he does not think in a dichotomist way, the whole of a human being can be the image of God. But, since Vollenhoven sees the fact of the image particularly in the positive religious orientation or the right relationship in accordance with God's law of love, a human being can fail to exhibit the image of God (cf. Bril & Boonstra, 2000:279). However, because Vollenhoven does not have an ontological view of the image, he does not use the expression that the human being forfeits the image of God. The image, according to him, is not something external (as in the expression “bearer of the image”) neither merely an addition. According to him a human being does not *have* God's image, but either *is* it or *is not* his image.

Vollenhoven (1992:101,102) summarises his view in the following words: “Nowhere [in the Scriptures] does one find that the soul or the heart is God's image in a human being. As a matter of fact, the Scriptures give no theory on ‘the image of God’ at all. On the other hand they do know the expression ‘to be God's image’ ... we are the image of God, or we are not. But we have to add immediately: if we are it, we are it to a greater or lesser degree. For the image of God in the Scriptures is a characteristic of human life that man can lose by not living according to God's commandments. It is not something divine in the human being, or semi-divine, neither a subdivision of human being. The issue is to be or not be the image of God, one could say to *exhibit* the image of God ... God maintains his law as the Law Giver, and the person that obeys the law as a creature, exhibits the image of God ...”. [Tr. from the Dutch.]

5.1.5 Difference with other philosophers, including Dooyeweerd

Vollenhoven (e.g. 2005c:59-61) clearly demonstrates how different philosophical anthropologies also determine what one's view of the image of God would be. This also applies to his colleague, Dooyeweerd. On the one hand Dooyeweerd's

view shows some affinity with the doctrine of *analogia entis* (a relationship of being between God and human beings), but on the other hand he repudiates it. What is clear, however (cf. Vollenhoven 2005c:60 and Bril & Boonstra, 2000:278-280), is that Dooyeweerd still thinks in *ontological terms* (the image is looked for somewhere in the *structure* of the human being), while Vollenhoven connects it with the *religious direction* of the human being (obedience to God's ordinations).

5.1.6 In conclusion

Vollenhoven's contribution is located in that (1) he sees the image of God not as something ontic, but as a *relationship* with God, (2) more accurately defined as a human being's *answer or response* to God's covenantal word. (3) The image of God is therefore not situated in something of the human being, but concerns the *whole human being*. (4) As a consequence of his wider view of reality, in which God's law is explicitly included, the relationship with God can be defined more clearly as one of *obedience* to God's ordinations, summarised in the commandment of love. (5) The image of God is therefore linked to the *religious nature* of every human being. (6) However, if a human being's answer to God's covenant (the human being's religion) is acted out in disobedience to his will, directed negatively, away from God to idols, he *cannot be God's image*, but exhibits the image of surrogate gods.

If I understand Vollenhoven correctly, his view of *imago Dei* could be summarised as follows. Like a coin it has two sides. In the first place it points to the inherent *structure* of all people, namely that they were created by God, in contrast to the rest of creation, as religious beings. (One could call it the *divine gift*.) Vollenhoven describes the structure of a human being by means of fourteen modalities (cf. Vollenhoven, 2005b:37). The human being consists of a pre-functional heart and a cloak of functions or modalities (cf. previous chapter). In the second instance *imago Dei* also denotes the *direction* in which religion can develop, namely that after the fall it can be acted out in obedience or disobedience to God's law. (One could call this the *human task*, response or responsibility.)

5.1.7 Further development

Because Vollenhoven says so little on the image of God, it is important to take a look at how other Reformational philosophers developed it in more detail. We will look consecutively at the following Reformational philosophers: Fowler (1991 and 2004), Spykman (1969, 1985 and 1992), Walsh & Middleton (1984), Middleton & Walsh (1995) and Walsh (1992). The different philosophers are treated separately to point out the significance of the contribution of each one.

6 S. Fowler's contribution

Before looking at the way Fowler developed the meaning of *imago Dei*, we first have to explain his anthropological views. It is important to bear in mind (cf. chapter 8) that the biblical concepts like "soul", "body", "spirit", "flesh" (1) always denote man as a *whole* seen from a specific *perspective* and (2) that a human being in the Scriptures is never described in isolation from his *relationship to God* (cf. Van der Walt, 2000:335, 336). These concepts therefore do not denote subdivisions of a human being (cf. Ridderbos, 1975:114-121). De Graaff (1979:98) regards this "rediscovery of the whole man, in the unity of its various dimensions inseparably related to God ..." as one of the most important insights during the twentieth century. Fowler thinks along the same lines. We first take a look at Fowler's biblical points of departure before looking at how he considers the image of God.

6.1 The meaning of biblical anthropological concepts

Fowler (2004:3) begins by stating clearly what Genesis 2 verse 7 says. It does not say that God first made a *body* and then breathed into it the breath of life (spirit or soul). It says that God made a *human being*, a lifeless being, from the dust of the earth. When God "breathed into" the still lifeless human being, it did not *receive* a soul either, but *became* a living soul. Thus the Scriptures do not give any intimation of a dichotomist human being. A human being *is* soul and the soul *the* human being.

6.1.1 Surprising data on the human being

To confirm this further, Fowler (1991:4 and 2004:3,4) offers the following surprising data: In the Scriptures (e.g. Lev. 19:28; 21:1; 22:4 and Num. 5:2; 6:11) a dead person is called a "soul". Further (in Ps. 78:18) the food we eat is called a pleasure for the soul. Or it mentions a man who instructs his soul to eat and drink wine (Luke 12:19). Or (in Deut.12:23) the blood is called the "soul" of a human being. In all these cases therefore the soul is associated with one's physical existence. The bodily mode of existence is regarded as the normal way in the Scriptures.

Fowler's conclusion (2004:4) is: "The more we explore the biblical text the more clearly we are compelled to conclude that the two component theory of the human person is an unbiblical idea that has been read into the Scriptures in the Christian tradition... Its presence in Christian teaching is due to the contagion of pagan Greek philosophy".

6.1.2 Texts teaching a dichotomy?

But what about texts like Matthew 10 verse 28 – the *locus classicus* for a dichotomist view of the human being? Fowler's answer is that this text does not contradict the idea that the Bible mentions the "soul" as the (whole) human being and not merely a part of the human being. Death means the end of the bodily mode of existence but a human being or person according to Fowler keeps on existing in a different way. (Depending on the type of anthropology, there are numerous views on what happens at the time of death and thereafter. Cf. the insightful overview by Brill & Boonstra, 2000:291-294 as well as chapter 11 of this book.)

A similar text which mentions the soul *in* a person, is for instance Psalm 42:5. Even such a part of Scripture does not dictate a dichotomist view of being human (Fowler, 2004:4, 5). His conclusion is: "The picture that emerges from a comprehensive study of what the Bible has to say about humanity is that the human person is a single, indivisible entity" (Fowler, 2004:5).

6.1.3 Reasons for a dichotomist view of the human being.

Apart from the influence of pagan Greek philosophy there were two other reasons in particular why Christians in the past preferred a dichotomy in the human being. In the first instance they wished to demonstrate that a human being is more than a biotic being like the animals. The second was that Christian theologians wanted to prove that human existence does not end with physical death. (The physical existence is not terminated, but is merely suspended temporarily or interrupted, for the Bible teaches the resurrection of the body.) With right Fowler points out that a dichotomist or trichotomist anthropology is not needed to uphold these two biblical truths.

6.1.4 False distinctions

What is more, a dichotomist view of being human gives rise to all kinds of false distinctions and even contradictions in the life of Christians. Examples are physical and mental illnesses, material and spiritual well-being, food for the body and – more important – nourishment for the soul, care for the body versus salvation of the soul, social involvement versus preaching the gospel.

About Christians holding such a view, Fowler says: "Their daily priorities, their career choices, their social and recreational activities, their reading habits, their biblical exegesis, their dietary preferences, and, very often, their guilt complexes are shaped by these distinctions which are taken as axiomatic... The whole pattern of life changes if we reject this false dichotomy and accept the integrity of the human person" (Fowler, 2004:6).

6.1.5 Man as an earthly being

In accordance with a biblical view of being human Fowler further emphasises the creatureliness or "worldliness" of the human being. We must waive the negative attitude towards the world "recognizing that worldliness belongs to the goodness of our humanity. God created us for this world. To lose our worldliness is to lose our humanity" (Fowler, 2004:19).

6.1.6 A dualistic ontology rejected

Not only does Fowler reject a dichotomist view of being human, but also the ancient idea of an analogy between God and man. The following statement clearly spells it out: "... the Scriptures never speak of the divine and the creaturely as merging. God is intimately involved with and yet always distinct from creation. This ineradicable distinction between God and creation is a fundamental dividing line between Christianity and all forms of paganism. The God who lives within us by his Spirit is always distinct from us and we from him. He is God and we are his creatures... God has affirmed the value of the human, not by making us divine, or participants in divinity, but by God himself becoming human flesh" (Fowler, 1991:5).

Now that we have stated Fowler's biblical points of departure regarding the relationship God and cosmos (his ontology) as well as his view of the human being (anthropology) we can investigate how he understands the image of God.

6.2 The human being as the creaturely image of God

The first issue that Fowler emphasises is that the image should always be distinguished from that which it mirrors. "To be human is to be the *creaturely image* of God, not to be God or to have Godness as part of our human nature" (Fowler, 1991:5).

In this connection it is significant that God did not *transfer* his image to a human being or *impress* it on him. "God created humankind, in the wholeness of humanity, as the image of God. Humankind, male and female, is the image of God" (Fowler, 2004:6). Therefore it is wrong to look for something *in* a human being – like something a human being possesses or bears, certain qualities or components – which are supposed to be the image of God. The *whole* of the

6.3 "Image" denotes the unique relationship between the human being and God

A second significant point is that the fact that the human being was created in the image of God, distinguishes him/her from all other creatures. "The distinctiveness

of the human person is his/her God-relatedness. It is the God-relatedness that sets the human person apart from all other creatures" (Fowler, 1991:4).

Just as an image can only exist in relation to what it depicts, in the same way being human only has meaning in relationship to God. The idea that a certain part of one's life is supposedly "secular" is therefore a lie. "No area of human life can be isolated from the God-relationship because human life, at its very core, is the God-relationship. Human being and existence are defined by the relationship to God" (Fowler, 2004:7).

6.4 It is a central, integrally religious relationship

A following significant insight is that the image of God is one of the biblical ways of expressing that a human being is a religious being. "... to be human is to be religious" (Fowler, 1991:6).

The religious relationship with God is not only the most important, but also the central, directional relationship which gives meaning to all other relationships. Serving God is not merely the first priority. *Everything* one does is either service to God or to surrogate idols.

The heart is the religious centre in which the whole of human life is integrated. Fowler (1991:8) says: "It is the centre of our humanness where God encounters us and we encounter God to embrace him in love or to turn from him in, often disguised, hate" Bible texts like 1 Samuel 12:20, 24 and 16:7; Proverbs 3:5 and 7:3; Psalm 14:1; Ezekiel 36:22-28; Luke 16:15; Romans 8:27 and 10:9; Ephesians 1:18 and 3:17; 2 Corinthians 4:6 and 2 Peter 1:19 all indicate the central meaning of the heart as the "source" of religion.

6.5 It is an encompassing religious relationship

Right at the beginning of his book (Fowler, 2004:1) states that the image of God may not be identified with a part of the human person. It belongs to the *whole* of being human.

So to claim that the human being is a religious being, does not mean the same as that all people take part in cultic activities, like prayers and other religious rituals.

Many people do practise such activities as an expression of their religiousness. But in a secular world this often no longer happens. This does not mean, however, that people who live "without faith" have become less religious. Saying that to be human means to be religious, means something much more fundamental than that people practise cultic rituals (cf. Fowler, 1991:6). Religion is not a mere dimension of human life. It is its heart and soul.

Fowler (2004:8) explains it as follows: "The God-relationship is the single integrating principle that integrates all the activities of human life. It is true that there are certain kinds of human activities, cultic activities, where religion is given explicit expression, but religion remains just as much the directing principle, though implicit, in all other human activities. Activities outside cultic activities are just as much religious activities, even though religious faith is not made explicit in them, as in cultic activities".

Biblical examples of the religious nature of "ordinary" activities are the following: harvesting (Lev. 19:9, 10), trading (Lev. 19:35,36), eating (Deut. 14:21 and 1 Cor. 10:31), acting in politics (Deut. 17:14-20) and even going to the toilet (Deut. 23:13, 14). These activities are of no lesser importance than cultic matters like prayer, singing and sacraments. These are also ways in which the Lord is served. As *such* they are of a religious nature. They do not *obtain* a religious character only when accompanied by cultic activities like prayer. Therefore Paul can call on believers to offer their bodies as holy sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1).

6.6 The religious relationship can have two directions

The human being has to answer to God's covenant. But when a human being turns against God as a consequence of sin, it does not mean that he stops being a religious being living in a relationship to God. It now becomes a negative one. The relationship merely changes direction: from faith to unbelief, from obedience to disobedience (cf. Fowler, 1991:6).

But this religious change of course has tremendous implications. "Because the God-relationship is the central integrating principle of human life, sin, by which humanity has rejected that relationship, shatters the integrity of the human

personality in a thousand ways by destroying the focus of human life, turning humanity away from its one point of rest in God and setting it adrift on a shoreless sea of falsehood where, unless it is turned back to God, it must ever wander restlessly in search of a place of rest and find none" (Fowler, 2004:9).

6.7 The relationship must be regulated by love

As already became clear from the work of Vollenhoven (cf. 5.1.3 above), the integral, encompassing and radical religious relationship of a human being with God may not be acted out according to one's own discretion. It should be guided by God's central commandment of love (Matt. 22,36-39) in order to be obedient and to his honour.

Love of God is not only the most important love in the life of a human being. It also is the love without which no other love can exist. However, the second commandment of love for the neighbour is not of secondary importance. The second commandment is not only *on the same standing* as the first but should also look *like* the first: It should be a reflection of one's love of God.

God Himself is love and the human being, as his image, can only reach true humanity by love in all his relationships with fellow human beings (cf. Fowler, 2004:7). This love does not consist of being drawn to somebody or a feeling of affection. It consists of giving oneself for the good of others – even of one's enemies (Matt. 5:44).

6.8 Ruling and taking care

Finally it has to be mentioned that Fowler – in contrast to what is normally done when treating the image of God – says nothing explicitly on the image in connection with ruling over nature and taking care of it. Probably he regards it more as *consequences* or *results* of humans' being the image of God.

Other Reformational philosophers have, however, developed this facet in more detail. As far back as 1995 already Goudzwaard and De Lange's *Beyond poverty and affluence; towards an economy of care* was published. Ten years later Van der Wal and Goudzwaard (2006) were editors of *Van grenzen weten; aanzetten*

tot een nieuwe denken over duurzaamheid (About knowing the borders: exhortation to a new philosophy on sustainability). In this book it is demonstrated how the human being's drive to rule and consume surpasses the capacity of the earth with a factor of two to three – it cannot possibly be sustainable. The only way out is therefore less consumption and taking more care of nature. It need not imply poverty for the wealthy Western and Northern world. Lower consumption – thus less affluence – could rather mean greater well-being for humans: less pressure to perform, rushing about, stress, burn-out and short-lived, superficial contact with others. In 2007 a third important work on this crucial matter was published, in which Goudzwaard was once more a co-author: *Hope for a troubled world*. This, too, deals with the environment, climate change and unnecessary poverty as seen from a Christian Reformational perspective.

6.9 Far-reaching practical implications.

Therefore the image of God or the religious nature of the human being has tremendous implications. With right Fowler (2004:10) remarks: "We will... have to work hard at developing an understanding of the religiousness of all these activities that we have been accustomed to call 'secular'. To see eating and drinking as a way of expressing our love for God, not by means of accompanying words of grace, but by the act of eating and drinking itself; to know that a commercial career can be as rich an experience of serving God as a career in theology; to experience a visit to the toilet as an act of holy prayer".

The reason why it is so difficult to speak about physical activities as religious in nature is that we live in a secular world today, a world in which religion has been reduced to a small "spiritual" corner of life. But seeing (all of) life as religion is the only way of being faithful to God's Word stated in the light of the central theme of this book: As Christians to be fully at home in God's world. It also is the only way of experiencing for yourself – while showing it to the world as well – the meaning of the wealth of human life for which Christ redeemed us.

6.10 The importance of Christian philosophical points of departure

Once more it emerges how important one's view of being human is (cf. 6.1) for understanding correctly the image of God. When one is caught up in a dichotomist anthropology the distinction between material and spiritual, physical and mental, body and spirit is a matter of course. Such divisions, however, are not only meaningless, but simply fallacies. However, Christians have become so accustomed to them that they form an inherent part of their worldview and culture. The road to reformation – living free from such fallacies – will not be an easy one.

Therefore Fowler (2004:9) emphasises once more the following three crucial points of departure for a view of the human being to be truly Scriptural:

- A human person is an indivisible whole, whose whole life in this world is a physical way of existence. There are no human activities that are not also physical by nature.
- All human functions and activities are focused and directed by the religious relationship to God that forms the heart or core of human life.
- This central and integral religious relationship is expressed in *all* (physical and other) activities. *All* human activities are religious activities.

6.11 Enriching insights

Statements like these made by Fowler may sound unorthodox – or even heretical – to the average Evangelical or Reformed Christian. But they point the way to a truly Reformational understanding of what it means to be God's image and likeness. Already it is clear that the reflection of Reformational philosophy, if compared to the foregoing theological tradition, can be particularly enriching.

Since he not only confirms the foregoing, but since he also brings to the fore new insights into the human being as the image of God, a following Reformational philosopher now claims our attention.

7. The contribution of G.J. Spykman

Spykman and Fowler emphasise similar points, so that not everything already found in Fowler will be repeated here.

7.1 Ontological points of departure

Spykman (1992:60), instead of the age-old dualistic philosophy in the Christian tradition (such as is still the case with Berkouwer), chooses for a "three-factor ontology" of God, his creation and his Word (law) for creation. Since, apart from a *religious tie*, a radical *ontic difference* between God and creation has to be emphasised, the image of God cannot be something (ontic) in a human being. "Being human therefore means being responding, mirroring, echoing, imaging creatures. But not in some semi-divine sense. The idea of *imago Dei* may not be construed as to bridge the Creator-creation distinction. Imaging God means at a creaturely level being all we were meant to be. The image of God should, therefore, not be thought of as some ontic quality in man which corresponds to a similar ontic quality in God. Much discussion concerning the so-called 'seat' of God's image in man has pushed us into that corner" (Spykman, 1985:37).

He then resumes with the correct view: "The very procedure of seeking to identify the *imago Dei* by looking inside ourselves is very questionable. It must be viewed *ad extra*, not *ad intra*. We discover what imaging God means by looking outside ourselves. It is a referential idea. It speaks of a living set of relationships" (Spykman, 1985:37).

As will transpire later on (cf. Spykman, 1992:228), Spykman's emphasis on God's law also takes an important role in his view of the image of God. Exhibiting the image of God means obeying his will.

7.2 Anthropological points of departure

Spykman's anthropological points of departure (1992:233 *et seq.*) concur with those of other representatives of Reformational philosophy like that of Fowler treated above.

He demonstrates in detail how Christian thinkers through the ages have look at the human being through bifocals (i.e. in a dichotomist way). "... we have been reading Scripture with bifocal lenses. Such malpractice is bound to create visual images of the dualist sort. Such distorted impressions reside, however, in the eye of the beholder, not in the (biblical) text. Once we realize this, we can leave those conventional dualist views of man behind as optical illusions. We are then free to replace these worn-out bifocal glasses with unifocal ones. Scripture is certainly open to this possibility" (Spykman, 1992:237).

Subsequently he shows how different biblical concepts of the human being point to the "unity" of the human being. One should rather think of man as a whole seen from various perspectives when concepts like soul, body, flesh, spirit, etc. are used. He further indicates (p. 239) how even everyday experiences do not tally with a dichotomist view of the human being. A human being is not merely an "embodied soul" or a "souled body".

Now that Spykman's ontological and anthropological points of departure are clear, we can ascertain how he understands a human being as the image of God.

7.3 Only the human being the image of God

According to Spykman a human being is called to reflect, mirror or echo the will of God at a creaturely level. In this aspect man is unique – different from God and also different from the rest of creation. Other creatures (matter, plants and animals) were made "according to their kinds" (Gen. 1:24,25) but only the human being "in God's image and likeness" (Gen. 1:26).

Since only the human being is and should be the image of God (cf. also Fowler above), God in the second commandment (Ex. 20:4-6) forbids the making of other images of Him. "For God has the exclusive right of establishing an image of Himself. That He has done in creating man. We must resist every temptation to 'play God' by imaging Him in any other way than He has willed" (Spykman, 1985:38). Making other images (than ourselves) of God not only entails estrangement from God, but also implies estrangement from or the infringement of our most profound humanity.

7.4 The image concerns the human being as a whole

Thus Spykman (1985:37) emphasises just like Fowler that we should not think of the image in terms of *ontic categories*, but in terms of a *religious relationship*. Since it is not an ontic but a relational matter, it cannot be static either, but denotes a dynamic interaction between man and God. The expression "bearer of God's image" is therefore incorrect, since it gives the idea of a choice – to bear the image or not. Furthermore, the expression has an external connotation, while the image of God is an integral part of the human being (Spykman, 1985:37).

7.5 The heart is the religious centre of the human being

Like Fowler, Spykman (1992:219 *et seq.*) stresses that the heart is the point at which this religious relationship with God is concentrated. In the heart, which lives either in obedience or disobedience to God's commandments, the *direction* of a human being's life is determined. "Imaging God is doing his will." (Spykman, 1992:228). He who gives his heart to the Lord, simultaneously gives his *whole life* to the Lord (compare Proverbs 23:26) – like the spokes of a wheel which radiate from the axle (as the centre) in all directions.

7.6 Structure and direction

Spykman differentiates between structure and direction (1992: 109, 197) and it would seem as if he wants to see the image of God particularly in the right direction of a human being's life. (We will explore this matter further below.)

He therefore puts great emphasis on the *renewal* to the image of God in which Christ's redemption plays an important role. "Christ, the last Adam, stands as the perfect and ultimate revelation of the redeemed and redeeming image of God. As the God-man He exemplifies all the imaging God was ever meant to be (Colossians 1:15-16, Hebrews 1:1-3). In his life-renewing mission lies the re-imaging power which enables us to put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its Creator (Col. 3:10)" (Spykman, 1985:40).

Elsewhere, too (Spykman, 1969:29) he stresses that Christ – the perfect man-God – is important for us to understand ourselves. Not only is He the image of God (Col. 1:15) so that Christ could say "He who has seen me, has seen the Father" (John 14:9). He is also like us in every sense (Heb. 2:17). In his life we therefore have the perfect model that we should mirror in our own lives.

7.7 Status and task or office

In conjunction with the foregoing Spykman defines the image further as status and task. For instance he draws the following line: "... life is religion; religion is service; and imaging God is serving him and our fellowmen" (Spykman, 1992:228. Also cf. 1985:40).

He also links the status to the *authority* contained in the image. (God's assignment to rule and take care in Genesis 1 and 2). So it is notable that Spykman (both in 1985:40 and in 1992:229), directly after dealing with a human being as the image of God, goes on to an exposition of what it means to hold an office, to exercise authority and bear responsibility. This tallies with what he said earlier: "Imaging God means fulfilling our callings, tasks, and offices in life" (Spykman, 1985:37, 38).

All Christians hold the (prefunctional or foundational) offices of prophet, priest and king. As prophets they have to speak in the name of God, preach his Gospel. As priests they have to pray and sacrifice themselves in love for others. As kings they have to serve Him and conquer the world for Him (cf. (Spykman, 1969:82-84).

However, these three basic offices obtain different forms in the different societal relationships. In the family as parents, in business as managers, in the state as rulers and so forth. The nature of these offices and their authority is determined by the qualifying modality of the specific societal relationship. In the family it is of an ethical nature, in business economic and in the case of the state juridical authority and power. (For details see chapter 13.)

7.8 Review

In the foregoing overview of Spykman's view the Reformational line of thought on this topic has been re-confirmed: (1) Rejection of the theo-ontological speculations on the image. (2) The image concerns the human being as a whole. (3) It consists of a religious relationship of obedience to God's commandments. Furthermore new insights have emerged from his work, for instance that Spykman points out that the image of God implies authority and office. Being in the image of God therefore has important practical implications. Augustine already drew the following line: (1) A human being serves either God or an idol. (2) One increasingly resembles the God/idol one serves. (3) One creates a society (marriage, family, school, state, etc.) according to one's own image of what is entailed in being human.

8 The contribution made by J.R. Middleton and B.J. Walsh

These two philosophers do not put so much emphasis on the ontological and anthropological points of departure. But implicitly they also reject a dualist ontology and dichotomist view of being human (cf. e.g. Walsh & Middleton, 1984:50).

They can therefore (in agreement with Fowler's viewpoint) write the following: "... the image consists in our *bodily* representation of God. The whole person, and not some inner, spiritual part is created in God's image. We reflect God's glory and represent him on earth by our total, physical presence. Indeed, visibility is of the essence, for we are to make the invisible God visible by our lives. In the whole range of our cultural activities we are to demonstrate Yahweh's loving rule" (Walsh & Middleton, 1984:64).

The particular contribution of these philosophers – the reason for dealing with their work here – is located in that they trace the meaning of *imago Dei* in the course of the historical line of creation, the fall, redemption and consummation. Beforehand, first something vital that they report about the ancient Eastern context of Genesis 1:26 ,27.

8.1 The context of Genesis 1:26-27

Both Walsh (1992:18-24) and Middleton & Walsh (1995:115 *et seq.*) regard the ancient Eastern context in which Genesis probably originated as vital for understanding the fact that the human being was created in the image of God. According to them Genesis originated when Israel were exiles in Babylonia and was written to restore their low self-esteem by reminding them of their own identity and in this way encourage them. (We will not discuss the issue whether Genesis was written in Babel. In the Reformed tradition it is usually taught that only the final editing of Genesis, as written by Moses, took place much later.)

According to the Babylonian worldview there were two kinds of people: the elite who were the image of the gods and the rest who were slaves. In contradiction to this, Genesis brings a radically different view: "In the context of Babylonian exile this text (Gen. 1:26, 27) says that it is not the elite, the rich and the powerful in Babylon – those who hold the key to sacred knowledge, those who wield political power – who are the image of God. Rather ordinary human beings, men and women ... image God in the creation" (Walsh, 1992:21). Therefore the Israelites are not slaves, mere cheap labour, subjects of strange gods and people without an identity, who have to ask "Who are we?" No, they are no less than children of the only God, who bear his image.

According to Walsh the image of God means that the Israelites (of course not only they) receive a special *gift* but also an urgent *assignment*: to be stewards of God's creation, carry out a cultural mandate (p. 22). It does not mean, according to him, *lordship* in the first place, but *service*.

Christ must be the Example for us to learn to serve. Middleton and Walsh (1995:136) call Him the paradigmatic man, who exhibited the fullness of God's image and glory (2 Cor. 4:4-6; Col. 1:15; Hebr. 1:3). Walsh (1992:23) explains: "From Jesus we learn that our dominion, our rule, is not a matter of grasping at power, nor is it a matter of controlling reality and making reality serve us and our insatiable consumer appetites. No, this Jesus, though he was the very form and

image of God 'did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant...' (Phil. 2:6-9)".

Babel therefore taught the Jews that they were dispensable *slaves*. Genesis teaches that they are *viceroys* of God. Jesus Christ teaches that this elevated position (of being God's image) over creation should be carried out in the form of humble *service*.

As we have said already, another contribution by these writers is contained in their tracing of the image of God through the three acts of the biblical drama (creation, fall, redemption). Something more about this follows.

8.2 The human being as the image of God at the time of creation

To the question "Who am I?" Walsh and Middleton (1984:52) reply that the human being was created as God's image. This means that the human being does not only have to govern the earth (p. 53 *et seq.*), but also has to take care of it (p. 58 *et seq.*) The human being is God's steward on earth.

These two ideas are summed up as follows: "The biblical idea of stewardship... balances authority with servanthood. This strikes at the heart of humanity. Although we are indeed lords of the earth, we are also servants of God. We are called to exercise our rule in obedience to Yahwe's ultimate sovereignty" (Walsh & Middleton, 1984:59). The image of God can therefore not be understood in isolation from God's law – as already indicated in case of previous Reformational philosophers.

8.3 A wider and a more restricted image?

Walsh and Middleton (1984:53) still work with the old distinction between the image in a broader and a more restricted sense. According to them the former denote humanity as such and the latter a human being when God's law is complied with. Formulated in a different way: "Our creation in the image of God is related to two important biblical notions: our dominion or rule over the earth, and the religious choice of serving God or idols... These two notions... are in reality intertwined..." (Walsh & Middleton, 1984:53).

Walsh and Middleton are therefore not lapsing into the earlier idea of a twofold (natural and supernatural) image. They are applying the well-known distinction in Reformational philosophy between structure and direction to the image of God. Structurally (ontologically) the human being after the fall remained a human being, but the religious direction changed from obedience to God's will to disobedience. However, with right they remark that the two facets are intimately intertwined: the direction is not without effect on the structure (cf. e.g. Fowler, under 6.6 above).

8.4 The human being as God's image after the fall

Walsh and Middleton (1984:62 *et seq.*) claim that, although after the fall a human being remains a human being, i.e. retains his nature as a being that creates culture, the emphasis now falls on his disobedience as manifested especially in idolatry. This emphasis on idolatry can be regarded as another new contribution by the two authors.

As a result of his intrinsically religious orientation, a human being cannot help worshipping something outside (more important than) himself/herself. All kinds of idols – things in creation which are absolutised – are therefore devised. Idolatry is not wrong because it attempts to make God visible (Walsh & Middleton, 1984:64, 65) – which actually is the human being's task as the image of God. The fault in idolatry is that it attempts to make God visible in the wrong way. In stead of representing God in everything we do and making Him visible in our life, this responsibility is projected onto idols: "Idolatry is... the illegitimate alternative to the genuine human task to image God. It is equivalent to living a life so distorted by false worship that it ceases to reflect God's standards" (p. 65).

The crucial insight here is that only the human being may be the true image of God. God decided: You, human being, will be my image and not the idols. Idols therefore not only take God's place, but also that of the human being. For it contradicts God's rightful kingship over creation as well as a human being's fundamental vocation to serve Him in his/her daily activities by obedience – to mirror Him.

With reference to this perspective, Walsh and Middleton reject any dualism that differentiates between secular (neutral) and sacral (religious) fields of life. (The religious *direction* between good and evil may not be defined *ontologically*.)

8.5 The image in the redeemed

While, as a consequence of the fall and the resulting idolatry, in the Old Testament not many references are found to a human being as the image of God, it is different in the New Testament. But then the emphasis is not on the *creation* in the image of God, but on the *restoration* thereof. In the first place it emphasises the *imperative* to be renewed in the image of Christ and in the second place that it is *made possible* by the power of the Holy Spirit.

A human being's "portraying" task, to "reflect" the rule of God in the whole of life, is the same as to become conformed to the likeness of Christ (Rom. 8:29). In the same way that Christ during his life on earth fully represented and obeyed God, Christians (the body of Christ) now have to manifest Christ's presence in a visible way here and now.

This theme, already found in the work of Spykman, is worked out in further detail by Walsh and Middleton as follows: "The New Testament refers to him (Christ) as *the image of God par excellence* (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:4-6). Although these passages could be taken to refer to Christ's unique status as God, they also refer to his perfect humanity. Christ is the perfect image of God, the paradigmatic man who completely represented God and mediated God's presence in the full range of his earthly, human life. Hence the classic statement in John 14:9, 'Anyone who has seen me, has seen the Father', could just as easily refer to Christ's humanity as his deity. In fact, the Gospel of John is full of statements concerning Christ's perfect obedience and oneness of purpose with the Father, an obedience and oneness we are called to imitate" (Walsh & Middleton, 1984:83).

As said above, we are enabled to fulfil this task by the Holy Spirit. "He (Christ) lives in us by his Spirit, who conforms us to his image" (Walsh & Middleton, 1984:84).

Since God's law is also considered to be crucial by Walsh and Middleton, they mention as one of the fruits of the influence of the Spirit the fact that the Spirit guides a human being to discern God's will (Eph. 1:17; Col. 1:9-10). To be able to exhibit the image of God, one not only should know his revelation in creation and the Scriptures, but also needs the Spirit to make one sensitive to God's ordinations and willing to live according to them. All this implies a transformation of one's life in total, a completely new human being.

8.6 How to image Christ

Walsh and Middleton (1984:88, 89) explain how a human being, guided by the Holy Spirit, should differentiate between good and evil. It should not be done, as happened in the history of Christendom, in an ontological way. The situation is then reached that certain facets or areas of life are taken to be good as a matter of course, while others are depreciated or even associated with evil as such. This age-old dualism between the profane and the sacred is an unbiblical idea.

The two authors use the simile of a bunch of electric wires of different colours to depict the rich diversity of *structures* in creation. Initially (before the fall) the electric current moved through the wires in the right *direction*. But after the fall it started moving in the opposite direction.

In the same way God created all things good. Sin is not something inherent to creation. But after the fall, as a consequence of disobedience to God's ordinations, the religious direction of a human being's heart moved in the wrong direction. Therefore not the created *nature* of things have changed or must change, but their *direction*. This is also valid for the image of God (cf. above under 8.3). Man cannot escape his inherent relationship to God and what ensues from it (stewardship, service, etcetera). But the direction has to be rectified. Once more God's law is the guide towards moving in the right direction.

We close with the following statement by Middleton & Walsh (1995:141), which spells out the task of Christians amid modern culture – which in many respects is an oppressive one. Since the metaphor "mirroring God" is too crude and too passive an expression of the *imago Dei* to render its inclusive, abundant and

active nature, they use the metaphor of a prism to explain this wonderful gift and assignment: "Humanity created in God's image – and the church as the renewed *imago Dei* – is empowered to be God's multifaceted prism in the world, reflecting and refracting God's brilliant light into a rainbow of cultural activity and historical action that scintillates with the glory of the Spirit and manifests Christ's reign."

8.7 Review

These two scholars, too, resume the Reformational line on some points, but at the same time they put forward new facets of the image of God. Among these are: (1) That, against the background of the Babylonian culture in which ordinary people were regarded as of no worth, they highlight it as a liberating and elevating perspective for the human being. (2) They deal with the meaning of God's image during creation, fall and redemption. (3) Their view of imaging God in the wrong way in idolatry. (4) Their emphasis on Christ as both the image of God *par excellence* and the paradigmatic human being. (5) Their use of the distinction between structure and direction instead of the old natural-supernatural distinction.

9 The results of the investigation summarised

In conclusion we first take a brief review of the way we have come and then summarise the most important results.

9.1 Review

It was stated in the introduction *that* one's ontology and anthropology determine one's view of the image of God. In dealing with different thinkers, it was demonstrated *how* this happens. In the first (more historical) part it was demonstrated how theologians (from the early Christian church fathers up to about the beginning of the previous century) incorrectly understood the *imago et similitudo Dei* (departing from a dualistic ontology and dichotomist anthropology) as an *ontic* relationship or relationship of being between God and the human being. Subsequently we briefly looked at more recent theological views during the twentieth century that viewed the image of God as a *religious* relationship between man and God. Since the wealth of this biblical expression not nearly

emerged, subsequently in the second (more systematic) section the view of some Christian philosophers of the human being as God's image was dealt with. Apart from Vollenhoven (one of the fathers of Reformational philosophy), we also listened to some other thinkers in this tradition. Once more it transpired how decisive a wider, more Scripturally true view of reality (ontology) and view of the human being are for understanding the full, rich meaning of the human being as the image of God.

9.2 Result

The investigation rendered both negative and positive results in the sense that it was pointed out how being the image of God should *not* be understood and how it actually *should be* understood.

Negatively, from the first (more theological-historical) section it became clear that "image and likeness" may not be understood in any analogical-ontological way (a relationship of being between God and man). Further that the image of God does not denote some subdivision (soul or spirit or whatever) of the human being, looked at in a dichotomist way.

Stating the positive results would mean repeating more or less the whole of the second main section of the investigation. Foremost is that a more Scriptural philosophical ontology and anthropology can lead to a much fuller or richer view of the human being as the image of God. To mention only a few:

- As shown above, Genesis contains parts which are clearly aimed against pagan beliefs of that time. A human being may not worship birds, animals or heavenly bodies as gods, the way it was done in surrounding countries – they are ordinary creatures of God. God also forbids images of Himself. According to his decision the human being may be the only image of Himself. In contradiction to the ancient Eastern way of thinking of that time, according to which ordinary people were judged to be of no worth and could at most be slaves, *God in Genesis 1:26, 27 grants the human being a high status in creation* – something that demonstrates who the human being really is – a fact that can offer new hope in poor, oppressing, dehumanising circumstances.

- *Only a human being* is the image of God and should mirror or exhibit this in visible, physical ways.
- The *complete* human being is the *creaturely* image of God and shows this also in his *physical life*.
- Being in the image of God does not imply *kinship*, but a *relationship to God*. It is the result of the human being's answer to God's covenant.
- It is no mere cultic relationship, but an integral, comprehensive *religious* relationship.
- It is a relationship characterised by *obedience* to God's will, especially his central commandment of love. It is therefore a sin to desire to be one's own lawgiver (autonomous), that is, to be *like God*.
- In this relationship the *heart* or "centre" of the human being is of cardinal importance.
- The image of God is on the one hand a *gift* of God. He gives the status and the strength for it.
- On the other hand, it installs a human being in an office and offers an *assignment* to serve and honour God in everything in a holy life, that is, in line with his law. (Being the image of God is therefore 100% a gift of God and 100% the human being's responsibility.)
- Some of the implications of the human being as image of God are dominion, care-taking, stewardship, and loving service to the neighbour and the rest of creation. In short: a *comprehensive cultural mandate*. It further implies that the human being was appointed by God to the office of prophet, priest and king. This threefold office leads to a *variety of offices and kinds of authority, power and responsibility* in the various human societal relationships.
- The human being was *created* in the image of God, "lost" it as a result of the *fall*, and through the *redemption* in Christ it can be restored.

- At the fall the human being did not "lose" his *humanity* (that is, he does not cease to be in a religious relationship to God), but the *direction* of the relationship changed. His disobedience to God's assignment to mirror only Him (in obedience to his commandment), leads to (1) elevating something of creation to god/s in God's place, (2) himself resembling these gods more and more and (3) also creates a society that mirrors his view of god and his own view of humanity. In this way the human being searches *inside* creation for security without ever reaching final certainty.
- *Restoring the image* is only possible in the power of the Spirit and by attending to the paradigmatic man, Jesus Christ, who was the perfect image of God *on earth*.
- Finally: Only as visible images of God can we be fully at home in His world – especially in a contemporary increasingly secular world!

* * *

The plain words at the beginning of the Bible that God created the human being in his image and likeness, therefore contain an immeasurable wealth on who the human being really is. In the preceding reflection we have only scratched the surface of this crucial mystery of being human. Yet this Christian philosophical reflection can make a contribution to a *deeper* and *wider* view of the human being. Being *imago et similitudo Dei* not only touches the human being *deeply in his/her heart*, it also has *world-encompassing* implications for all of our life on earth.

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CHAPTER 11

EVEN DEATH CANNOT SEPARATE US FROM GOD AND HIS CREATION

Dear God, here's a poem:

I love you

Because you give

Us what we need to live

But I wish you

Would tell me why

You made us so

We have to die.

Daniel (age 8) (Hample & Marshall, 1991)

This chapter investigates the question of what happens to human beings at death and afterwards. It is focused on a few theologians and philosophers in the Reformed tradition. The following viewpoints are discussed: (1) John Calvin's Platonic anthropology. (2) The influence of a dichotomist anthropology on the three confessions of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and South Africa, as well as on their preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism. (3) Two Reformed systematic theologians, K. Dijk and G.C. van Niftrik, who adhered to a dichotomist view of being human and an "intermediate state" between death and resurrection. (4) A. Janse and J.A.L. Taljaard, two Christian philosophers, who, on the basis of the Scriptures, rejected the idea that man/woman consists of an immortal soul and a mortal body. (5) This is followed by two Reformed ministers, B. Telder and C. Vonk, who applied the insights of Janse and furthermore rejected the traditional ideas about after-life and a so-called intermediate state. Of the two, Vonk most consistently applied the view of the human person as an integral entity to what happens at death and afterwards. (6) The chapter is concluded with a summary of the results.

Relevance to our main theme (at home in God's world):

The fact that one day every one of us will die is, according to Scripture not something normal, but God's punishment for sin. A longing for heaven, world-flight and depreciation of earthly things – God's world – is unbiblical. According to God's Word after our resurrection we can again expect to live on a renewed earth.

* * *

1. Introduction

By way of introduction something must be said on (1) the problem; (2) its ongoing actuality; (3) the limitations of this chapter, and (4) how it is organised.

1.1 The problem

The issue under investigation could be divided into three important questions: What happens to a person when he/she dies? Is there an "interim state" between death and resurrection? What is entailed in resurrection and thereafter?

1.2 Ongoing actuality

Of course these questions are as old as humanity itself. From the earliest times in all the old civilisations of the East (Egypt, Babylonia) and in the West (e.g. the Greeks) people have thought about the mystery of death and thereafter – without being able to solve the problem.

As a result of my study in the Netherlands (1968-1970) and my interest in this topic, there are for instance the following writings on my own bookshelf on this topic. Boetner (1956), Boliek (1962) Cullmann (s.a.), Dahl (1962), De Bondt (1938), De Ligne (1968), Dijk (1955), Heyns (1959), Jager (1962), Kuitert (1968), Pieper (1969), Ridderbos (1968), Schep (1964), Semelink (1962), Streeker (s.a.), Van der Leeuw (1955), Van Leeuwen (1957) en Van Niftrik (1970) – these apart from numerous other earlier and later published sources which will be mentioned.

The fact that the problem – in South Africa too – has not lost any of its actuality is proved by the numerous writings (of varying views and quality) which keep on appearing about the topic. As an example, see the publication in one year by the

same publisher of at least three works on the topic (Bothma, 2006; Conradie, 2006 and Müller, 2006) Another example are the books by Burger (2007, 2008a, 2008b) of which the first was reprinted sixteen times within four years (100,000 copies) as well as translated into several languages.

While a dichotomist anthropology (man consists of a mortal body and an immortal soul) formerly was wide-spread, today more and more emphasis is laid (especially as a result of the research in the field of chemical biology) on the "unity" of man. While the former dichotomist view had no problems with the continued existence of the human being (his soul), more recent (*inter alia* neurological) research (cf. e.g. Jeeves, 2004) reduces man mainly to his/her bodiliness and is inclined to teach that the dead is really dead – man dies like an animal. Does a Christian have to choose between these two views – dichotomy or monism – or is there a third way out? (Cf. e.g. Cooper, 1989 who proposes a "holistic dualism")

1.3 Two limitations

Since a chapter like the present could never cover the whole area and all possible views (cf. Brill & Boonstra, 2000:291-294 to get a glimpse of how a variety of anthropologies give rise to many viewpoints on death), we have confined ourselves to some figures in the Reformed tradition. Within this tradition the point of departure usually was that concerning death and what follows it, one could only depend on what God reveals in his Word.

However, because every person inevitably reads the Scriptures according to his own worldvish presuppositions (which include a certain view of being human) there is no consensus on what the Bible actually says about death and beyond. A careful study of the different figures (who will be discussed below) shows that their exegesis (explanations) were not done without eisegesis (their own input) either. So it would be no use to read the numerous passages from the Scriptures over and over. An analogous example is the controversy – that has been reigning for more than thirty years – in the Gereformeerde Kerke (Reformed Churches) in South Africa on women in office in the church. The relevant passages from the Scriptures have been repeatedly "exegeted" without reaching consensus. The problem will

only be solved once the different parties put their anthropological assumptions on the table.

In the light hereof it was decided (our second limitation) not to concentrate on Bible verses in this investigation, although where necessary reference will be made to them. The focus will fall on different viewpoints of being human.

1.4 Set-up

In the exploration the following figures will be examined (not all of them in equal detail). (1) First (by way of background) something on Calvin (1509-1564) and (2) the Reformed confessional creeds. (3) Then we deal with Dijk (1955) and Van Niftrik (1970), as representatives of a dichotomist anthropology in Reformed Dogmatics. Subsequently attention is given to (4) Janse (1937, 1938 and 1940) and Taljaard (1976) who reject from a Christian-reformational philosophical perspective a dichotomist view. After this, two Reformed theologians claim our attention: (5) Telder (1960, 1963a and 1963b) radicalises the critique of a dichotomy, while Vonk (1963 and 1969) takes it one step further. He is of the opinion that, if one presupposes the integral "unity" of man, it must be accepted that at the time of death man dies in totality. (6) In a final section the results will be summarised briefly and some conclusions will be drawn.

1.5 A warning

Before we embark on this investigation, the following warning by Glas (1995:77) is appropriate: "... just as God's acts in the creation of man cannot be reconstructed, so... death cannot be theoretically conceptualized... Ultimately death is a miracle, a boundary of our understanding."

2. John Calvin's view of man and death

No-one writing on the Reformed tradition can afford to omit Calvin, since he is usually regarded as the "father" of this persuasion (cf. chapter 3 of this book). Unfortunately he can, however, not be regarded as the founder of a view of being human that is actually biblically justified. About the Church Fathers he says that they came nearer to the (Greek) philosophers than befitted them. They did their

best to reconcile the Scriptures with the teachings of the philosophers (cf. *his Institutes*, 2,2,4). Thus he does not condone the synthesis philosophy of the preceding Church Fathers and the men from the Middle Ages. But he was unable to free himself completely – no-one can – from the philosophies of his time.

2.1 Various philosophical influences

Van der Walt (2008a:209 *et seq.*) points out what the most influential tendencies were in the time of Calvin. As far as his anthropology was concerned, the influence of particularly (neo-)Platonism was very evident. Babelotzky, (1977:77-160) and Van der Walt (1988b:228 *et seq.*) wrote about this in detail, referring to Calvin himself as well as to numerous secondary sources. Therefore there is no need to repeat it. We will merely provide a summary.

2.2 A Platonic anthropology

Apart from valuable insights to be gained from this great reformer, we point out the following: He was greatly influenced by the Platonising philosophy of Augustine and thus accepted a Platonising, dualistic ontology or view of reality.

This dualism (reality originally comprised two parts, a transcendent God and a non-transcendent creation) led to a dichotomist anthropology. Man consists of something divine or transcendent and something earthly or non-transcendent. The transcendent part of man is his soul, which is created into the body by God (creatianism). Since it is the divine part of the human being, it naturally is immortal (cf. Van der Walt, 1988b:239-242). For more details, see chapter 7 of this book.

According to Calvin the soul is incarcerated in the physical body. Death, however, frees it from this prison. Then the soul (the non-transcendent component or substance of man) returns to its divine, transcendent Origin. Since this privilege is only granted to the soul and not to the whole person, the dichotomist view of being human of Calvin can further be labelled as a kind of semi-mysticism (cf. Brill and Boonstra, 2000:284).

2.3 Falling back into Scholasticism

As will become evident below (cf. 3.2) this Platonising dualism in the view of reality (ontology) and the dichotomy (in the anthropology) was replaced soon after Calvin – from as early as Beza (1519-1605) – by the Aristotelising dualism and dichotomy of Protestant orthodox scholasticism. However, thereby Reformed theology did not come any nearer to a biblically founded view of being human. Unfortunately this anthropology also influenced the Reformed confessional creeds of the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

3. Scholastic influence on the Reformed confessional creeds

First we take a look at what is confessed in these writings and then some reactions to them will be given.

3.1 The texts

We are here only giving attention to the creeds which are accepted by the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA, Dutch Reformed and HK) and not to Reformed creeds of other countries.

3.1.1 The Apostolic Creed and the Nicean Creed

These two ecumenical creeds close as follows: "I believe ... in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting" and "I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come." Take note that the Apostolicum speaks about "the body", while Nicea speaks about "the dead" who will rise again.

3.1.2 The Belgic Confession (1561)

This confession (drawn up by Guido de Bres) offers one sentence only in this regard in its last article (37): "For all those who died before that time will be raised from the earth, their spirits being joined and united with their own bodies in which they lived."

3.1.3 The Canons of Dordt (1618-1619)

In this confessional creed it is merely confessed that death is the wages of sin (Par. 3 / 4:2) and (in chapter 2, 2.5) that everyone who believes in Christ, will not

be lost but will have eternal life. In other respects (cf. the studies by Sinnema below under 3.2) there are, however, definite scholastic influences to be detected in this confession.

3.1.4 The Catechism of Heidelberg (1563)

In reply to the question (57) how "the resurrection of the body" comforts one, this confession answers as follows: "Not only my soul will be taken immediately after this life to Christ its head, but even my very flesh, raised by the power of Christ will be reunited with my soul and made like Christ's glorious body."

Since out of all the confessions this answer is the most detailed on what happens to a person at death, it has also received considerable critique. Before going into the critique, we must first say something about the setting in which these creeds originated.

3.2 Reformed Scholasticism

As was shown above, Calvin's anthropology was greatly influenced by Platonism (which experienced a revival in his lifetime) and that he holds a dichotomist anthropology. Moreover, after Calvin (with Beza already) Reformed theology lapsed into Scholasticism, which did nothing to better the situation. Plato's philosophy was merely substituted by some theologians by that of Aristotle – especially his logic – as the foundation for Protestant theology.

Van der Walt (1988a) deals with the reasons for the lapse into Scholastic theology, the transitional figures (Beza and Melancthon) and also mentions the most important representatives from Reformed and Lutheran Orthodoxy from the seventeenth century with numerous references to the sources. (For more literature, cf. Van der Walt, 1984:369; 1990:282-288 and Brill & Boonstra, 2000:281.)

Sinnema (1975, 1982, 1985 and 1986) focused his research on the Scholastic influences on the Synod of Dordt. With reference to all these studies today, there is little doubt that the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordt and the Catechism of Heidelberg were influenced by a scholastic anthropology. The people who compiled these writings were children of their times. The prevailing philosophy of

those times therefore played an important part in the way they read the Bible and presented it in their confessions.

Seeing that a dichotomist anthropology is most evident in the Catechism of Heidelberg (Answer 57) we will concentrate on it in what follows.

This kind of anthropology is already evident in his commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism of Ursinus (1956:310), one of the writers of this confession. He writes that the immortal soul survives death and is able to feel, understand, etc. without the body during an intermediate state. He calls the soul in characteristic Aristotelian terminology a substantial form and the body the material part of the human being.

3.3 Sermons on the Catechism of Heidelberg

It will now be shown how this dichotomist anthropology also influenced the preaching based on the Catechism in the Reformed churches.

3.3.1 De Bruyn (1997:145) says that at the time of death the soul is set free from the body as also happened with Christ. At his death he surrendered his soul or spirit (these two are equated) into the hands of his Father. To De Bruyn the soul is "something" of man which comprises the deepest being of his total humanity.

3.3.2 Dijk (s.a.:162) amongst other things preaches the following: At the time of death body and soul are separated, the body turns to dust and the spirit (=soul) returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Therefore when we die, mention can only be made of the salvation of the soul. Yet he says that the resurrection of the body is demanded by the salvation of the soul (because the person is not yet complete).

3.3.3 Hoekstra (s.a.:314) very explicitly states his viewpoint "It is a horrible and pernicious doctrine to abolish this distinction [between soul and body – BJvdW] According to God's word a human being consists of body and soul." [Transl. from the Dutch.]

3.3.4 Praamsma (1959:134) also clearly accepts the dichotomy: The body is separated from the soul to decompose, while the soul goes to Christ. (As evidence

he quotes once more Ecclesiastes 12:7 as well as Phil. 1:23 where Paul says that he longs to depart and be with Christ.)

3.3.5 Wielenga (s.a.:527, 528) attempts to recognise a twoness without dualism. One should picture the twoness as follows: "... one has to think of two different substances. It is exactly in this that the power and wisdom of God is revealed. In the human being God simultaneously separates and unites matter and spirit. He makes the extreme opposites into one unity." [Transl. from the Dutch.]

3.3.6 Veldkamp (s.a.:306) explicitly says that from the two parts in man the soul is the most important. He "proves" it by appealing to the words of Christ (Mat. 10:28) cautioning that people should not fear those that kill the body but cannot kill the soul. They should rather be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. The soul is taken up to Christ directly after death and enjoys salvation – the body is not needed for one to experience this salvation (p. 310).

After these glimpses from a few volumes of sermons on the Catechism (Lord's Day 22) which simply approve of the dichotomist view of being human, we can now look at a Christian philosopher who could not accept such a viewpoint.

3.4 Critique on the Catechism of Heidelberg

Although there are others too (like Telder, 1960 and Vonk, 1963) to whom answer 57 of the Catechism is unacceptable, we confine ourselves now to the critique expressed by Popma (1961). We first look at his criticism and then at his own viewpoint.

3.4.1 The Catechism does not present the truth about human beings

Popma (1903-1986) is quite outspoken: This confession does not tell the truth about death (Popma, 1961:218). Elsewhere (p. 219) he says that it does not *exhaust* the doctrine of the Scriptures but *goes against* it. By tacitly propagating a dichotomist view, the comfort that should flow from answer 57 is toned down.

Popma claims that in answer 57 we have a clear scholastic separation of human nature into soul and body. This is clear from the words "that ... my very flesh ... will be reunited with my soul" with the supposition that the soul escapes death.

Popma (cf. 1961:192 and 210), however, rejects the idea of body and soul as separate substances. For the idea of a substance indicates something independent, something existing on its own and resting in itself. But human life can only be ascribed to God. Man has no life (e.g. an immortal soul) in himself.

Popma has no problems with the Catechism saying that the body will be resurrected (in other words with the resurrection). But if it is followed by "reunited with my soul", the resurrection is obscured (Popma, 1961:219). One gets the impression that "raised by the power of Christ" and "reunited with my soul" denote two separate events. *First* the body is resurrected and *afterwards* it is reunited with the soul. What is the "resurrected body" apart from the union with the soul? If the resurrected body is a human being, then why is it necessary for it to be united with the soul? And if the reuniting with the soul first leads to being human, then what is the resurrected body? If it is not a human being, then what is it? Evidently only the "homeless" soul is the real human being.

Summarised: "We get the idea of a flesh/body that has no part in the continued existence of man, subsequently comes alive, but still is not man but only becomes man by the reunion with the soul. And this soul, that, apart from the fact of the separation, is not affected by death, is it in its separation actually man?" [Transl. from the Dutch.]

What would be Popma's own viewpoint from which he launches this criticism?

3.4.2 Popma's own viewpoint

According to Popma both continuity and discontinuity have to be maintained concerning the human being after death.

Two views rejected

He rejects the extremes of both former and contemporary views (cf. Popma, 1961:212). Formerly people adhered to the idea of substance (an immortal soul) and in this way continuity between death and resurrection could be maintained. More recent views, however, reject the idea of soul and body as substances. Consequently death means the destruction of man and discontinuity. At most it can

be said (quite probably Popma is here positioning himself over against the view of Telder) that the human being continues to exist in the memory of God, that He remembers the name of the deceased. Representatives of this viewpoint therefore argue that God does not need something remaining of the human being at death for Him to raise the person.

Popma also rejects the idea of a "sleep of death" (cf.1961:198), for such a view is not free from dichotomy. (There is not much difference whether the soul stays awake or sleeps while the body decomposes). But even if such a theory does not rest on a dichotomous view, it has according to him no validity.

What the Bible teaches

What then, according to him, is the correct scriptural view about death and resurrection? He emphasises that death affects man as a whole. "The whole of man on dying goes into death" (Popma, 1961:218). "Death affects the whole of man, man as a unity, in body and soul." [Transl. from the Dutch.] But, he adds immediately, that this unity should not be seen as consisting of two incomplete substances, but in the light of the scheme of centre (soul) and circumference (body). Thus, instead of a higher-lower anthropological scheme, we have an inside-outside viewpoint. Popma says that although even such an anthropology is not without problems, at least it does not regard death simply as dismantling soul and body – which actually leaves the soul unaffected. It does justice to the Biblical idea of death as the punishment for sin, as something frightening.

Man after death

What happens to man after death he formulates as follows: " ... the deceased continues to exist. Although we have no idea how, he continues to exist as a dead human being, i.e. he goes the way of being dead ... Nowhere the Christian faith is as mysterious as it is here: God is not a God of the dead but of the living" (Popma, 1961:196). [Transl. from the Dutch.]

The part of Scripture to which Popma is referring here is Matthew 22:31,32. Vonk's viewpoint will be discussed later on. However, he does not agree with Popma's

exegesis of this text. According to Vonk (1969:94) Jesus here defended the resurrection of the dead against the Sadducees who argued that there is no resurrection. He is not saying that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were not really dead. Someone who is not really dead, does not need the resurrection!

Popma, however, adheres to the continuity between death and resurrection. But not a continuity in the pagan sense of a soul that is by nature immortal. "The power of God, by which everybody lives before Him, maintains itself right through dying and keeps working in a way we cannot imagine in the years and ages during which some-one keeps existing as a deceased human being and yet lives before God. This does not mean that God only remembers his name, for that would entail his discontinuity and non-existence" (1961:202). [Transl. from the Dutch.]

Still a hidden dichotomy?

The question was probably put to Popma whether his view of being human does not in the end amount to a duality in man, for he says (cf. Popma, 1961:205) that the fact that one goes into death and *simultaneously* is with Christ, does not point to a dichotomy. The issue is rather the limits to our knowledge and imagination.

Finally it has to be mentioned that Popma takes more or less the same stand as the one that Janse (cf. 5.1 below) earlier took over against a dichotomist anthropology. Indeed he often refers to Janse and in part 6 of his book *Levensbeschouwing* (cf. Popma, 1963:168) he expresses his appreciation for Janse as follows: He was the only one who formulated perfectly clearly the unity of the human nature.

This concludes the short overview of the Reformed confessional creeds. Subsequently we take a look at two representatives of Reformed Dogmatics.

4. K. Dijk en G.C. van Niftrik as representatives of Reformed Dogmatics

We concentrate on these two figures and not on earlier, maybe more important persons (e.g. Kuyper and Bavinck), to make it clear that the views which we found in the Reformed confessional creeds above were maintained up to the middle of

the previous century and even later. (Bavinck's viewpoint of what happens at death is clearly summarised in Brill & Boonstra, 2000:291)

4.1 K. Dijk

From his book *Tussen sterven en opstanding (Between dying and resurrection)* (1955) it transpires that Dijk was already conscious of the critique (by amongst others Janse and Vollenhoven) of a dichotomist view of being human and especially of an immortal soul. On the very first page (p. 8) he admits that Platonism also greatly influenced Christian theology. Surprisingly this is directly followed with a detailed version of the Church Father Irenaeus's "evidence" for an immortal soul!

4.1.1 Positive notes

Two pages lower down (p. 10) he says once more that, if one wants to have a good understanding of the death and resurrection of the human being, one should get away from Plato and every other philosophical idea and simply ask what the Scriptures say about these mysteries. (What a naive statement!) Therefore he quotes 1 Tim. 6:16 where it says that God alone is immortal and that man cannot be immortal in his own power. (He only becomes so after resurrection.) He even says (p. 13) that the *whole* of man is mortal.

4.1.2 Nevertheless an immortal soul

After these encouraging pages, however, a few pages further on Dijk slips back into a dichotomy. He says (p. 15) that man/woman, although created as a unity by God, has a two-fold existence. As proof from the Scriptures he refers to the well-known *locus classicus*, Matthew 10:28. Suddenly he now once more speaks about the immortality of the soul (p. 16), for only the body returns to dust. (As "evidence" follow *inter alia* Ecclesiastes 12:7 and Philippians 1:23.) Speaking of an "immortal soul" is generally accepted, therefore it cannot be heresy (p. 17).

Over against this one could set the excellent article by Snyman (1961) which shows that the concept "immortal" in the New Testament is only applicable to God and to the *human being* (please note: not only the soul) only *after* the resurrection.

In the light of this Dijk's immortal soul is a fabrication, the result of his synthesis of biblical and unbiblical ideas.

4.1.3 What happens at death

From here onwards Dijk explains what happens to the human being at death. The duality of man (that he consists of spirit and dust) becomes a dividedness (p. 17). The tie (exactly what is this tie?) between the immortal soul and the mortal body is severed. The state after death moreover does not so much concern the body, but more specifically the soul.

Where does the soul find himself/herself? Does it have a conscious life before resurrection? In the rest of Dijk's book questions like these and many others on the so-called intermediate state of the souls are answered. Texts from the Scriptures are read in such a way that they justify his speculations.

4.2 G.C. van Niftrik

This author writes considerably later (1970) and also in a more captivating style, yet no less dichotomously and speculatively.

4.2.1 Continuity or discontinuity?

He wrestles – like Popma – with the problem of continuity and discontinuity between life now and afterwards. He is mainly concerned with the identity between man here and after death. But, he says, identity is not the same as continuity. "We stand before the paradoxical fact that death is a complete *discontinuity* and that still *we*, who have lived and died *here*, will stand before the Lord *there*. The identity encompasses both *discontinuity* and *continuity*" (Van Niftrik, 1970:27). [Transl. from the Dutch.] Later on too (p. 45) he once more emphasises – to my mind correctly – that although life hereafter will be totally different since everything will be made new, it will be *the same* person who will be changed (2 Cor. 5:17).

4.2.2 God guarantees continuity

In chapter 4 (p. 96) the discussion of the problem of discontinuity and/or continuity is resumed. In spite of the great interruption which death brings, continuity is still preserved. However, Van Niftrik does not ascribe it – quite rightly – to an inherent

characteristic of man himself (e.g. an immortal soul), but to the fidelity of God alone (pp. 97, 105). The continuity can be seen from the fact that our own bodies will be raised at the resurrection.

4.2.3 Back to Plato

But what about the soul? He does not want to Christianise the Platonic immortal soul, but still ... And then he points out verses like Luke 23:46 and Acts 7:59, where it says that Christ and Stephen at their death surrendered their "spirit" to God. (As if "soul" and "spirit" meant the same in the Bible.) He subsequently appeals to the view of Gregory of Nyssa (335-390) – an obvious representative of the synthesis between biblical faith and Platonism!

Later in his book Van Niftrik does again emphasise (cf. p. 115-117) that the continuity between the here and the hereafter is not situated in man, but in the Spirit of God. Most probably one should understand it in this way: that the human spirit, which is given over to God at the time of death, is taken up or conserved in God's Holy Spirit. For instance, he says (p. 124) that the Holy Spirit already dwells in the bodies of believers as his temple. This temple is destroyed by death, but the temple (the spiritual part?) is kept right through death by the Holy Spirit. At the resurrection the body of flesh becomes a spiritual body, permeated by the Spirit. (Meaning that the spiritual component is returned?) Thus at the end he describes man in a typically neo-Platonic way: "Analogous to the *existence* of God" (p. 124). [Transl. from the Dutch.]

All this tallies with Van Niftrik's sympathy for Gregory's Platonic anthropology and his appreciation (earlier in his book) of Calvin. The "spirit" of the human being is his transcendent part (originating in the transcendent God) that after death returns to the transcendent Spirit. Just as in the work of Calvin (cf. chapter 7 of this book), we here have a semi-mystic form of a dichotomist anthropology. (Only the soul and not the body, has a transcendent nature.) Just as in the work of Dijk we find in the work of Van Niftrik a mixture of biblical and unbiblical ideas. Together with his Platonism he confesses, for instance, that in life and death we belong to the Lord (Rom. 14:8) and that our lives are hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).

4.2.4 Differences with other theologians

While Dijk probably favours a more Aristotelising dichotomy, Van Niftrik holds a more Platonising anthropology. However, neither of them could shake off the (pagan) Greek philosophical influence and offer a consistent Christian anthropology.

Van Niftrik also differs from Dijk and other Reformed theologians in this respect that he does not accept an "interim state" (between death and resurrection). There is no period between one's death and one's resurrection (p. 111). "For those who belong to Christ, the resurrection takes place at the time of death. The believer at death does not reach an interim state but the end state" (Van Niftrik, 1970:114). [Transl. from the Dutch.]

4.2.5 Where the deceased are

To the question where the deceased find themselves directly after dying, he gives the following answers (p. 120-188): in the grave, the cemetery, the earth, heaven, with Christ, in the heart of reality, in paradise, in the presence of God, at home in eternal bliss. What he has in mind with so many places is difficult to say. If Van Niftrik does not recognise an intermediate state (according to him the individual's resurrection begins directly after death) how can he say that they are in the grave, cemetery and on earth? And how can the "dead" be in all the above-mentioned places at the same time? "In the heart of reality" and "in the presence of God" can, perhaps, be well explained in the light of his Platonising theology according to which the individual human spirit after death is reunited with God (the Universal Spirit).

He is honest when admitting: "We could not express all that is contained in our eschatological expectations otherwise than by using a representation, words and concepts that remind us of Platonic dualism." (Van Niftrik, 1970:169). [Transl. from the Dutch.]

4.2.6 Theological naivety

Like many theologians he therefore thinks – very naïvely – that words and concepts from pagan philosophy are like empty vessels that have no content (meaning) and therefore can be used in Christian theology without doing any damage. His naivety emerges for instance from the fact that he is of the opinion that he can make a distinction between a principial (probably Platonic) and a non-principial dualism or dichotomy. "The use of words and concepts that sound Platonic by far does not mean the recognition of a principial dualism. It is precisely because we reject a principial dualism that we have situated the complete salvation of God in the heart of reality ..." (p. 169). [Transl. from the Dutch.] Without realising it, with these words Van Niftrik not only uses Platonic *language*, but the *content* of the anthropology he proclaims is Platonic!

4.2.7 Critique cannot be permitted

However, this does not complete the confusion stemming from his synthesis theology. To retain the eschatological tension " ... one would of necessity in theology have to express oneself in a 'dualistic' way to some extent. But then the fervent contemporary crusade against the 'Greek' philosophy seems so foolish. Not only foolish but risky as well" (p. 169, 170). [Transl. from the Dutch.]

According to Van Niftrik it is risky for a Reformed theologian to be critical towards the pre-Christian, pagan Greek philosophy! Most probably it was because the Christian philosophy (of e.g. Janse, Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd) clearly indicated how risky a synthesis with Greek philosophy really is for Christians. And more so since these Christian philosophers pointed out in the light of the Scriptures that both the Aristotelian-tainted anthropology of Dijk and the Platonising version of Van Niftrik should, in the light of the Scriptures, not be acceptable to a Christian.

Therefore in the next section of this exploration we will investigate how two of these Reformational philosophers saw the human being in the light of the Scriptures.

5. A. Janse and J.A.L. Taljaard

Since I have already dealt with the views of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven elsewhere (cf. Van der Walt, 2008c – republished as chapter 9 of this book – and Brill & Boonstra, 2000:292-294), we focus here on two less well-known figures, namely A. Janse (1890-1960) and J.A.L. Taljaard (1915-1994).

5.1 A. Janse (1890-1960)

For the life history of Janse, his writings and his campaign against the Reformed scholastic anthropologies of his time, we can refer to Van der Walt (2008b). His most crucial works were only published later on (cf. Janse, 1934, 1938 and 1940), although he had previously been wrestling with a Biblical view on being human and published articles in journals.

5.1.1 A new view of the human being

According to Janse man is different from what the theologians of his time taught: Not the twofoldness of an immortal soul and a mortal body, but an integral entity. Man does not *have* a soul but *is* soul and *is* body. The word "soul" in the Bible most of the time merely means "living being" (cf. in particular Janse, 1934).

In the Scriptures there is no mention of an immortal *soul*, but (after the resurrection) of an immortal *human being*. (Only God is by nature immortal.) Therefore it is not a divine immortal soul that sustains man through death, but the almighty God alone. Neither is it a case that only the body ("mortal remains") is buried and not the *human being himself*.

The fall of man into sin, however, has the consequence that at the time of death the indivisible unity is *broken*. Death is therefore not something normal, but something horrible. It is not merely a case that the tie between soul and body is severed or that the two substances are taken apart. In summary Janse emphasises the *unity* of the human being during his/her lifetime, his *brokenness* at death and his *resurrection* at the second coming of Christ.

5.1.2 What happens at death

What happens, according to Janse, when a human being at the time of death is not merely *dismantled*, but *broken*? Is it not again a matter of him/her once more being broken in two? Janse's answer is: "The breaking of death and the return ... to the earth and of the spirit to God – all this does not take away the unity of the human being, who is buried and is with the Lord" (1940:63). [Transl. from the Dutch.]

To answer the question how it is possible that the deceased can be in the grave and with the Lord simultaneously he uses (with reference to what Ecclesiastes 12:6 says about death) the image of an urn or a vase (cf. Janse, 1940:64). It forms a unity but is still breakable. And when the vase breaks, it does not become two vases – the unbreakable unity of the work of art is still there. The broken vase was a unity and *stays* a unity – even in its brokenness. This also applies to a human being: "It is specifically the person who confesses the unity of man according to the Scriptures, who can understand the brokenness caused by death correctly as brokenness. A dichotomy that only takes 'the soul' for 'the person himself' and the dead body for *not-the-person*, has only seen the breaking of a tie ... According to the Scriptures we have to adhere to: / will have to go down into the grave ... and / will be with the Lord. That is not one person becoming two ... Just as little as one broken vase becomes ten or as Paul when outside his body, had become two" (Janse, 1940:66). [Transl. from the Dutch.]

Instead of the higher-lower scheme of a dichotomist anthropology, Janse (just like Popma) thinks in terms of an inner-outer human being. At death the former (the spirit) returns to God and the latter (the body) returns to dust (cf. Ecclesiastes 12:7). The breaking in two at death (something abnormal) however, should not be projected back to the present existence. However, as will become evident later on, Janse probably could not completely evade a dichotomy.

5.2 J.A.L. Taljaard (1915-1994)

As will transpire from the following exposition, this South African philosopher was probably influenced by the anthropological views of Janse and especially Vollenhoven (1892-1978). (Cf. again chapter 9 of this book.)

5.2.1 The human being is indestructible

Taljaard (1976:160 *et seq.*) emphasises (like earlier writers discussed above) that death is God's punishment for sin and is therefore something horrible. However, death does not mean the destruction of a human being – how could it then be a punishment? No, the human being is indestructible, keeps on existing for ever. (By this he does not mean that a human being is eternal like God – he is and always remains a time-bound creature.)

He differentiates according to the Scriptures between death of a two-fold nature: the first that strikes down all people and the second (cf. Revelation 20:13-15), that will only apply to unbelievers. Neither does the second death entail the destruction of a human being. After the (first) death comes first the resurrection, and after the judgment the second death.

5.2.2 What death entails

What happens to a human being at death, is according to Taljaard a difficult question that can only be answered in the light of God's revelation in the Scriptures.

According to him death means a *separation*. At the first death a human being is separated from his environment, from the world in which he had to carry out his vocation. At the second death the human being (unbeliever) is also finally separated from the grace of God. However, the separation (first death) happens in such a way that the deceased is simultaneously buried and yet lives (John 11:25-26). Taljaard explains it as follows: "If man cannot be destroyed, death does not mean that it is the end of his subjective identity. In man himself, therefore, separation must take place. This separation however is of secondary importance, although the horror of death becomes plain through this separation. Separation in this sense can best be described as a laceration, as is clear when one reads 1 Chronicles 13:10 and 11" (Taljaard, 1976:162).

This is followed by the Scripture passage in which it is said that the Lord caused Uzzah to die because he tried to steady the ark. In the second verse it says that

David was moved because the Lord "had made a breach upon Uzzah" (KJV) or "had broken out against Uzzah" (NIV). Therefore David called the place Perez Uzzah (the breach of Uzzah, according to the KJV).

5.2.3 The whole of man dies

According to Taljaard this laceration is what happens to all people at the time of the first death: they are not only torn from their environment, but also separated from themselves. (However, they can never be separated from the religious relationship to God.) "Man is broken up in death and we bury man as body whilst man lives although he has died. That which we do not bury represents man in his totality, as a whole but deprived of the body" (Taljaard, 1976:192).

Take note that – just as in the work by Janse – the *human being* is buried as body and the *human being* (not merely the soul) is with the Lord. Thus the part of a human being that gets "torn off" from that which we bury, represents the human being in totality. (According to Taljaard, p. 163 it is also indicated in the Scriptures as soul, spirit or heart.) He points out that Christ promised the murderer on the cross next to him "today you will be with me in paradise". This signifies the totality of their being human.

It has to be mentioned by the way that Vonk (for details of his view see 6.2 below) understands Luke 23:43 different from Taljaard. According to Vonk (1969:57-60) Christ's words "... *today* you will be with me in paradise" cannot be used as proof for the so-called intermediate state between death and resurrection. If the human being (in his totality) really dies, he cannot have any experience of time. Man closes his eyes at death and as it were simultaneously opens them again at his resurrection. "Today... in paradise" therefore refers to the future (after the resurrection), when Christ returns and when the whole earth will be once again (like the Eden of Genesis) a paradise.

5.2.4 A further explanation

At the end of his exposition Taljaard states it even more clearly what this tearing apart of a human being entails exactly. "What one buries can be compared to a

cloak, and what remains alive can be called heart or soul or spirit. During life they are in an intra-individual relation to each other, but during the first death they are torn apart. Now the relation, if any, could be indicated as inter-individual. With the resurrection of the body, the cloak is again taken up, the tear is mended and the intra-individual relation is restored, man is placed again upon the earth, a new man on a new earth because Christ makes everything new" (Taljaard, 1976:164).

From this quotation it transpires that Taljaard, apart from influence from Janse and maybe Popma, was definitely also influenced by his teacher, Vollenhoven (cf. chapter 9). For instance, like Vollenhoven he uses Paul's image (in 2 Cor. 5:1-4) of a mantle or a tent dwelling when he speaks of the body as a "cloak". Just like Vollenhoven he therefore prefers the scheme of an inner-outer man to the higher-lower dichotomy.

6. Telder's and Vonk's radicalising of the Reformational philosophical view of a human being at death.

These two Reformed theologians partly agree with Janse (and implicitly with Taljaard), but are of the opinion that he (and therefore also Taljaard) did not go far enough or did not consider the full implications of his own viewpoint. Janse teaches that a human being at the time of death and before the resurrection is *at the same time* in the grave and with God. If considered logically, however, the integral unity of a human being would entail that he/she dies in totality before God raises him/her as a complete human being.

6.1 B. Telder (1897-1980)

The views of Telder had quite some repercussions (cf. e.g. Schulze, 1963; Wiskerke, 1963 and Wolff, s.a.). As was the case much earlier with Vollenhoven (cf. chapter 9, section 1.3.4), Telder's viewpoint was condemned by the Synod of the Reformed Churches (Vrijgemaakt) in 1965 at Assen, the Netherlands as heresy against the Bible and the Reformed Confessions. We will therefore elaborate amongst other things on the following: (1) how, according to him, the Scriptures should be used in a Christian view of being human; (2) Telder's critique on an

unbiblical longing for heaven; (3) his joining up with amongst others the Reformational philosophy of A. Janse and D.H.Th. Vollenhoven; (4) what man looks like before death; (5) why he/she has to die and what happens at the time of death; (6) that he rejects the so-called interim state; (7) that a human being's resurrection therefore actually takes place when he dies; (8) Telder's critique on the Catechism of Heidelberg ; (9) his commentary on certain views of Popma, and (10) finally a question on Telder's own viewpoint.

6.1.1 The meaning of the Bible for a view of the human being

Telder (1963:30,31) says with right that a biblical anthropology in the strict sense of the word does not exist, since anthropology is a philosophical discipline and the Bible is not a textbook for any science.

Nevertheless a Christian view of the human being is impossible without the Scriptures, since it offers pre-scientific data or perspectives of faith on the human being without which he/she cannot be understood properly. Examples are the creation of man, his being the image of God, the fall, death, salvation, resurrection, etc. How man originated (creation) and what happens to a human being after death can only be known from the Scriptures. It can not be ascertained by any science – not even theology. So if one wants to reflect on it in a scientific way – instead of accepting it in faith – the result will simply be speculation and no real scholarly work.

Even though he does his exegesis according to his own view of a human being, it is important to mention that Telder (1960:45-122) discusses more than thirty passages from the Bible and later (Telder, 1963a:131-167) once again explains some twenty applicable texts.

6.1.2 Critique on the longing for heaven

Telder (1960:15-44) devotes a major part of his first book to the longing for heaven which is still today the ideal of many Christians. Many people believe that – especially little children who die young – at their death become angels who live in heaven. According to Telder this is an unbiblical idea. God gave us a dwelling

place here on earth (Ps. 115:6); Christ (Matt. 5:5) promises the meek a (new) earth; the Bible ends in Rev. with the vision of a new earth. According to Telder the focus on heaven is not without risks for our lives here and now: he who lives by an idealised heaven, can also run the risk of living on an idealised earth (p. 41).

Telder's warning is still relevant. Over against the contemporary materialism, Christians often react by way of an opposing spiritualism. Some of the readers may have heard a sermon on Matthew 6:19-21 on how one should gather riches for oneself in heaven. In my opinion this text simply warns that one may not in one's calling *on earth* make an idol of or absolutise anything in creation. (Only God is worthy of absolute devotion.) Therefore one collects riches by living according to *God's will here on earth*. These are "heavenly riches" that will one day be taken into the New Jerusalem of God, i.e. coming from heaven (Rev. 21:24-27). In this connection reading Marshall & Gilbert (1998) is also worthwhile. The basic biblical message is not that we are going to heaven, but that heaven will descend on earth!

6.1.3 Joining up with previous philosophers

Telder (1963b:9) admits that he benefited from the Reformational philosophy of among others Janse and Vollenhoven, as well as their view of the human being. It is clear that he did not favour the dichotomist viewpoint within the Reformed theological circles of his time. However, as we have already mentioned, he also differs from Janse (cf. above) in this respect that he wants to pursue an integral, "holistic" anthropology right through to death itself.

6.1.4 What man looks like in this life and what happens when he dies

Since it is not the topic of his books, he does not say much about the structure of a human being before death. Still, it has importance for his view of death. He regards the heart as representative of the whole human being (cf. Telder, 1963b:106,107). That is why the Lord asks us for our hearts (Prov. 23:26). Further he says that indivisible man is a "soulish body" ("bezielde lichaam") or "a bodily soul" ("lichamelijke ziel"); the whole human being is a bodily, living soul (p. 107). Elsewhere (Telder, 1963b:17) he formulates it as follows: "In the Scriptures man is always an integral unity. He is a living soul, a bodily soul ("een lichamelijke ziel,

een lijfelijke ziel"). He lives because the Lord gives him spirit, vitality, the breath of life, through which he is soul of his body and can live bodily." [Trans. from the Dutch.]

At death however, the following happens: "When man dies, he gives up the spirit, and the spirit returns to God who gave it (Eccl. 12:7). He then ceases to be soul of his body, a living human being. Then the body is devoid of the soul ("ontzield"). He no longer is a living person" (idem). [Transl. from the Dutch.] But one could ask whether such a view of a "soulish body" or "bodily soul" does not betray signs of a hidden dichotomy.

6.1.5 Why a human being must die and what it entails

According to Telder (1963a:35 *et seq.*) the human being was not created in such a way that he/she had to die. Death is, according to the Scriptures clearly God's punishment for sin (cf. Gen. 2:17; Rom. 5:12; 6:23) and may not be seen as something normal, which leads to an improper longing for heaven.

As we have already seen (cf. also Telder, 1960:26-29), a human being simply surrenders the spirit of life that he received from God (Gen. 2:7. Cf. Acts 17:28) to God when he dies. (Please note: "spirit" according to him is not the same as "soul".) Telder (1963b:10) summarises his viewpoint as follows: "... that, according to the words of Eccl. 12:7, at death the dust returns to the earth as it formerly was and the spirit returns to God who gave it; that therefore at death believers may commend their spirit to God and to the Lord Jesus, who is Lord of the living and the dead (Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59; Rom. 14:9); that it is true about believers that , even when they have died, their lives are hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3)". [Transl. from the Dutch.]

This does not mean that Telder does not believe in the resurrection. He says (on the same page) that even death cannot part one from the love of God in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:38, 39).

6.1.6 There is no intermediate state

Telder (1963a:75 *et seq.*) discusses several views on the so-called intermediate state between death and resurrection. He also discusses (cf. Telder, 1963b:25-30) the six basic texts (Luke 16:19-31; 20:38; 23:43; John 11:25, 26; Philip. 1:23 and 2 Cor. 5:8) on which the belief in the "interim state" is usually based. But he comes to the conclusion that they cannot be taken as evidence.

In addition to this he also says (cf. Telder, 1963b:21) that the three Reformed doctrinal standards or creeds (cf. above under 3.1) do not teach an interim state. That which is said in devotional literature and theological writings (e.g. that the believers as "souls" enjoy heavenly bliss and heavenly joy or rejoice before God's throne) goes further and attempts to say more than that which is professed in the confessions.

Elsewhere (Telder, 1960:39) says that nowhere in the Bible is a statement made about human existence without a body, of "souls" who can see without eyes, can rejoice without voice, are conscious without a brain or can recognise one another without a bodily appearance. The idea that part of a human being (his "soul") is not subject to death, can evade it, is an idea completely foreign to the Scriptures (Telder, 1960:29).

Telder (1963b:5) therefore feels compelled to reject the notion of an interim state (an uninterrupted, continued life of souls between death and resurrection). He says (Telder, 1963b:12) that one need not worry on *how* the Lord continues a person's identity between death and resurrection. The Scriptures do not reveal it. It is God's secret. Not the *how*, but the *fact that* is certain is important. To be hidden in God with Christ, is enough.

6.1.7 The resurrection not queried

It has already become clear that Telder does not reject the resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15:16-19). However, it does not take place in *heaven* – God calls the dead from their *graves* to new life. The comfort for believers is not their faith in an immortal

soul and the temporary bliss of the soul in heaven (during an interim state), but the resurrection of the human being (Telder, 1960:30).

Telder (1963a:129) also warns against "spiritual selfishness" and "heavenly egotism" in people who are only interested in what will happen to them at death. This can lead to a slackening in their work on earth and in their expectation of the second coming of Christ.

Since Telder does not accept the traditional "interim state", the question could be put to him when the resurrection will take place. In his answer (cf. Telder, 1963b:27) he concurs with what Kuyper said (in his *Dictaten Dogmatiek, locus de consummatione saeculi*, p. 241) that the second coming of Christ dovetails immediately with the death of a human being. He also agrees with Vonk (cf. below), who says that the moment of death coincides with that of the resurrection.

6.1.8 Critique on the Catechism of Heidelberg

The formulation of answer 57 (Lord's Day 22) of the Catechism of Heidelberg to which Telder (1963:10-12) objects, was quoted above (cf. 3.1.4). According to him (cf. Telder, 1963a:89) the three passages from the Scriptures to which this answer refers as evidence do not confirm the existence of bodiless "souls" or the statement that they will be "taken ... to Christ". According to Luke 16:22 – which is anyway just a parable – not the soul of Lazarus, but *he himself* was carried by the angels to the side/bosom of Abraham (not of Christ). Similarly in Luke 23:43 nothing is said about a soul being taken up, but of being in paradise with Christ. In Philippians 1:21,23 Paul does not long for his soul, separated from his body, to be taken to Christ. He longs "to break up" and so as a martyr to become like Christ in his death (cf. Phil. 3:10).

The people who compiled the Catechism therefore held a dichotomist viewpoint, following a scholastic anthropology rather than that which we find in God's Word (Telder, 1963b:9, 10). Elsewhere he adds: "They were children of their times and spoke according to the viewpoints of those days. But when they avail themselves of ideas that are clearly derived from an unbiblical anthropology, we may not say that in this they echo the Scriptures" (Telder, 1963a:89). [Transl. from the Dutch.]

6.1.9 Comments on Popma's views

Above (under 3.4.2) we already got to know Popma's views, so that they need not be repeated here. Telder (1963a:108 *et seq.*) amongst other things objects against Popma's view that the resurrection is a process which starts now, is continued through death and will one day be perfected. Furthermore Telder is accused (without Popma mentioning his name) of the doctrine of the "sleep of the soul", because Telder does not believe in the *conscious* continued existence of a human being after death. Telder's response to this is that both the view that the soul continues to exist consciously and the viewpoint that it sleeps, are rooted in a dichotomy – which is exactly what he (Telder) rejects. By implication he therefore accuses Popma of a (hidden) dichotomy.

From Popma's representation of a double way of existence after death it transpires that the possibility just mentioned cannot be excluded completely. He is of the opinion that the whole human being can go into death and *simultaneously* live consciously in an interim state. To Telder (1963a:121, 122) this makes no sense. The Scriptures teach that the dead are in the grave from which they will one day be called (John 5:28, 29). Indeed, Popma himself admits that his own viewpoint is "unimaginable".

As we explained above (cf. 3.4.2), the continuity of the human being (between death and resurrection) is important to Popma. It would therefore seem as if precisely his emphasis on the continuity and identity of a human being causes him to slide back into a kind of dichotomy. With right Telder (1963a:121) says that not the human being or a substance in/of a human being is a condition for continuity. It is the Lord that constitutes a human being and can also retain him/her – right through death. He is the one that sustains our existence and continued existence. Will not He, who called non-existent things into being, also rise up our bodies that have returned to dust?

Telder (1963a:121), however, makes it quite clear that he disagrees with Van der Leeuw (1957) when he claims that God does not need the "being" (existence) of a human being to raise him/her. According to Telder the dead do not cease to exist

to begin a totally new existence only at the day of the resurrection. The dead are in God's hands. Christ rules over the living and the dead. His rule would have had no sense if the dead did not exist! Finally he quotes 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 where Paul – without fleeing to a two-fold existence – explains the resurrection with the image of the seed that has to die to be able to live.

6.1.10 Telder not completely clear either

Telder concisely summarises his own view in the following words: "Man lives as a whole human being. Man dies as a whole human being. Man rises from death again as a whole human being ... He rests in the grave until the day of the blissful resurrection, one day to rise glorified from the grave and inherit eternal life in immortality on the new earth" (Telder, 1963b:32). [Transl. from the Dutch.]

One could call it the main line in Telder's three publications. But the issue could be raised whether he consistently kept to this. How does it tally with his idea (cf. 6.1.5 above) that a human being at death surrenders his spirit to God, while he gets it back in the resurrection? In history we find a similar view as far back as the Greeks that taught that at death (while the body decomposes in the grave) the individual, human spirits return to or are taken up into the supra-individual, universal (divine) spirit. This is called semi-mysticism. How does Telder's viewpoint differ from this ancient idea?

A further issue therefore is whether Telder, in spite of his criticism of Popma mentioned above, does not in the end himself accept a double existence (a human being in the grave and in/with God). For instance, Telder (1960:77) says with reference to the well-known words uttered by Christ at his death (Luke 23:46): "And his Father to whose hands He had commended *his spirit, the continuation of his life*, and who would once more infuse Him with this spirit on the third day, took care that Christ's *soul* was not given over to the 'underworld' ...". [Author's italicisation. Transl. from the Dutch.]

From the work of Vonk (1963:138, 139) it becomes clear that I am not the only one who has questions on Telder's standpoint. First Vonk expresses his great appreciation to Telder, because Telder in his books takes death seriously instead

of merely "romanticising" it with a blissful interim state. Yet it seems to Vonk as if in the end Telder himself again adheres to theories on an immortal soul, an heavenly intermediate state, etc. – ideas which Telder rejected. According to Vonk, Telder is not consistent when he teaches that the whole of the human being dies, but actually does not die, since his spirit still lives with God.

This brings us to the view of the last person to be discussed:

6.2 C. Vonk (1904-1993)

On many points Vonk agrees with Janse and Telder. He rejects the idea for instance, of an immortal soul, since it is of pagan (Eastern and Greek) origin and via Gnosticism was incorporated (by Roman Catholics, Lutherans and Protestants) into Christendom (cf. Vonk, 1963:44 *et seq.*). Besides, the concept of an immortal soul occurs nowhere in the Bible. He points out several texts in the Bible where "soul" simply means living being or person and that it is therefore even possible for the Scriptures to speak of "dead souls". Vonk (1963:65) also concurs that this unbiblical idea is echoed in Lord's Day 22 of the Catechism of Heidelberg. He has appreciation for the efforts of both Janse and Telder to emphasise the seriousness of death, instead of transforming it with a gilt brush of romanticism into a friend, a "brother of sleep".

6.2.1 Critique on Janse and Telder

But apart from concurring, he also criticises Janse and Telder and implicitly Taljaard and Vollenhoven as well. We mentioned above that according to him Telder was inconsistent. Vonk (1963:63 *et seq.*) calls Janse's effort too weak, his opinion entailing a contradiction, an inconsistency (p. 76, 77). It consists of Janse saying that at death the "human being inside" goes out of "the human being outside", after which the human being is without his "functional cloak" (body). Or that Lazarus is in the grave and yet (in an interim state) with the Lord. Vonk (1963:77) is of the opinion that J. Ridderbos was right when he said that Janse could just as much be called a dichotomist as he (Ridderbos) himself!

6.2.2 The intermediate state a fabrication

According to Vonk (1963:90) the so-called interim state is a second fabrication built on the first fabrication of an immortal soul. In his view the death of a human being and his resurrection occur simultaneously, since a human being in death has no sense of time. (Cf. especially Vonk, 1969:52-56.)

From among the numerous passages from the Scriptures discussed by Vonk (1963:93 *et seq.* as well as in Vonk, 1969) we focus our attention here only on Ecclesiastes 12:7 (which was such a significant text also to Telder). Vonk (1963:118) claims that this text concurs with Genesis 2:7 and Ecclesiastes 3:21. God does not add the breath of life as something *separate and substantial* to a human being. He can also take it back, then man dies. Then (cf. Gen. 3:19) the whole of man – not merely his body – turns to dust again. A human being “gives up his spirit” and not an (immortal) “soul”.

6.2.3 Man inside and outside

Vonk (1963:109) not only rejects a higher-lower dichotomy. Even the expression “human being inside” (inner man) and “human being outside” (outer man) which often occurs in the Scriptures (cf. e.g. Rom. 7:22; 2 Cor. 4:16 and Eph. 3:16), may, according to him not be understood dichotomously. He points out that not adjectives, but adverbs are used here, so that they literally say: “man inwards” and “man outwards”

Such an anthropological scheme (also favoured by the other Christian philosophers above in line with the Bible) seems to me much better than the higher-lower model. The latter vision of a human being leads to the higher soul/spirit (and consequently also so-called spiritual matters) always being regarded as much more serious than ordinary bodily matters. Eventually it results in a dualism or disunity that pervades the *whole life* of a human being. On the other hand the inside-outside model of a human being explains that man's *total* existence is determined from the centre, the religious direction of his heart – nothing we do, is insignificant to God!

The higher-lower model can be represented diagrammatically with a circle divided horizontally while the inner-outer anthropology can be visualised with a circle with a point in the middle. From this centre arrows may be drawn in all directions to the circumference of the circle, indicating the different facets of human life directed from the center or heart (cf. Vollenhoven, 1992:189).

6.2.4 The seriousness of death

One could therefore regard Vonk's anthropology as a radicalisation of those of his predecessors. He wants to carry their viewpoints to its full implications. He therefore takes death much more seriously.

God explicitly said (Gen. 2:17) that man would die if he disobeyed. Man, however, fell for the temptation by Satan who said it would not happen (Gen. 3:4). Even today people are inclined to agree with Satan by clinging to something "immortal" in the human being. According to Vonk nothing may be detracted from the seriousness of death as the punishment for sin (Rom. 6:23, James. 1:15) and as our enemy (1 Kings 15:26). God punishes the whole human being and not merely the body! For sin comes primarily from the heart. So why then punish only the body? The human being is 100% dust and returns 100% to dust (Vonk, 1963:144). The Scriptures very clearly teach that death really is death. Vonk (1963:154) refers to many texts from which it transpires that dead people know nothing and do nothing, as for instance Job 14:21; Psalm 6:6; 115:17; 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; John 9:4. (One could perhaps add here Daniel 12:13 and Acts 2:29.)

6.2.5 Far-reaching consequences

Vonk was quite right when he claimed that when death is not recognised in its full seriousness and extent, it has far-reaching implications. In the first instance God's commandment is not taken seriously, neither the transgression thereof (sin) nor the punishment. "He who detracts from death, relativises sin" (Vonk, 1963:143).

The second consequence is still more drastic: it also relativises Christ's death and our deliverance. May one elevate something (soul, spirit, a supra-temporary heart, or whatever) above death, withdraw it from death, so that thereby death is foiled –

without Christ? "If all people had an immortal soul, we would not have needed a perfect Saviour! That is the worst!" (Vonk, 1963:159). [Transl. from the Dutch.]

A third consequence is that even our faith in the resurrection is relativised. We have already pointed out above that a "blissful interim state" can cause the expectations Christians have of the second coming of Christ and man's resurrection to fade.

6.2.6 What is the meaning of "the dead is dead" ?

But Vonk (1963:145) warns that his viewpoint that the dead are truly dead should not be misunderstood. It is misunderstood when it is used to mean that after death there is nothing more, everything is past, the human being disappears into nothing for good. It can, however, also be pure scriptural language to say "the dead is dead". For Vonk also believes that Christ annihilated death completely (2 Tim. 1:10). He believes in the resurrection of the dead at the second coming of Christ (John 5:28, 29).

6.2.7 No "germ of life" remains

But, we could ask Vonk, is there no continuity between dying and resurrection? Formulated differently: If a human being is 100% dead, what then remains that can be raised? Vonk (1963:158) replies to this that the human being will be called from the grave, not because something of him (soul, spirit, heart or I myself) still lives, but because God is more powerful than even death. For God everything is possible (Matt. 19:26). Christ's resurrection of at least three dead persons and his own resurrection proves this.

In this respect Vonk refers to the well-known chapter on the resurrection by Paul (1 Cor. 15). There, too, someone asks (verse 35): "But *how* are the dead raised?" Paul's reply is: "It is a silly question!" And then he explains it with the simple image of seed that has to die first in order to bring forth a plant. (Thus both continuity and discontinuity. The plant and the seed are related yet different.)

6.2.8 Summary

One could summarise Vonk's viewpoint as follows: The human being really dies. (Full stop.) The human being will one day be raised from death! (Exclamation mark.)

7 Recapitulating review and result

Some readers may at this point be somewhat frustrated and ask: Have you really achieved anything on the previous pages? Is the traditional dichotomist anthropology not still the best option? Since the above was a long account of various views, a review will recapitulate the main thread as well as the result.

7.1 No doubt about the resurrection

One point has to be clarified at the onset. Above (cf. 1.1) it was said that the issue of death and what follows can be divided into three questions: (1) what happens at death; (2) whether there is an "interim state" between death and resurrection, and (3) what resurrection and beyond entail. Although we did not discuss the last question explicitly it was clear that none of the theologians and philosophers with whom we dealt doubts the resurrection.

The resurrection of Christ is a central message of the Bible and a guarantee of our own resurrection. Christ's resurrection not only has individual but cosmic meaning: By raising him from the death, God indicated his desire to save his whole creation.

However, as far back as two thousand years ago there were among the Jews the Sadducees who rejected the resurrection. They attacked Christ (cf. Matt. 22:23-32) as well as Paul (cf. Acts 23:6-9). But also to some Greek philosophers, the Epicureans and the Stoics, it was a ridiculous idea that a human being could one day rise from death (cf. Acts 17:30,31).

After 2000 years there still are people – even Christians – who doubt the resurrection. In South Africa too, nowadays there are Christian theologians (cf. e.g. Müller, 2006) who find it difficult to believe in the resurrection of Christ and human beings.

The thinkers that were dealt with here, however, do not doubt their own or Christ's resurrection, since they adhere to the unambiguous biblical revelation about this. The disciples bore testimony to the empty grave of Christ; they saw him after his resurrection as a real, bodily human being (John 20:20,27); when they had to elect a new disciple in the place of Jude, they set the requirement that he had to be a witness of Christ's resurrection (cf. Acts 1:21,22); Paul is a witness that he saw the living Christ; in the book of Acts it is throughout a fundamental part of the gospel that was spread (Acts 9:3-5); likewise in the letters (cf. e.g. the well-known 1 Cor.15).

The central position of this belief becomes evident, for instance, from Romans 10:9: "... if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved". And elsewhere Paul says: "Always remember that Jesus Christ ... was raised from the dead. This is the gospel that I proclaim" (2 Tim. 2:8).

Inseparably connected to the faith in Christ's resurrection is the confidence that it will also happen to us. "... if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile ... Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men." (1 Cor. 15:17-19).

One facet of this pitifulness transpires from Hebrews 2:15: those who all their lives are held in slavery by their fear of death. From the previous verse (14) it emerges that Satan uses man's natural fear of death to turn people into his slaves. Since Jesus Christ conquered death, believers are also freed from this kind of slavery that is sustained by fear (cf. Rom. 8:15). What had made death into something terrible, Christ removed by his own death.

By right the Catechism of Heidelberg asks (question 42) with reference to the death of Christ why a human being then still has to die. (Cf. also the poem of little Daniel at the beginning of this chapter.) The answer to this is: "Our death does not – can not – pay the debt of our sins (in other words as a punishment). Rather it *puts an end* to our sinning and is our entrance into eternal life." Believers can

therefore bear witness with Paul that NOTHING – not even death – can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:38).

We now give a recapitulating review:

7.2 Review

The historical-systematic line of this chapter ran as follows:

7.2.1 The pre-Christian Eastern and Greek philosophers (who did not yet know the Bible) could not acquiesce in the transience of the human being and so thought up something (an immortal soul) which would be able to escape death. These ideas, that are foreign to the Bible, were read into the Scriptures by Christian theologians during the time of the Church Fathers and the Middle Ages, with the result that the true biblical message about human beings was obscured up to the present day.

7.2.2 Although Calvin was not in favour of this kind of synthesis philosophy and was therefore cautious when dealing with the philosophical tendencies of his time, not even he could develop a view of being human without it being tainted, especially by Platonism. Shortly after the sixteenth century Reformation Calvin's partial breach with the synthesis was weakened when Reformed theologians reverted to Scholasticism (as the philosophical basis for their theology). Especially the influence of Aristotle became prominent in these times. The Reformed confessions, which originated in the time of Calvin and later on in the seventeenth century, were also written in the anthropological language of their time. Therefore up to the 20th century Reformed preaching on the Catechism and Dogmatics (cf. Dijk and Van Niftrik) was done in dichotomist terms.

7.2.3 With the pioneering work of Janse a new reformation was started in the field of anthropology in the Reformed world. He showed that biblical concepts like soul, body, flesh, spirit and heart mean something completely different from what synthesis theology had made of them under the influence of pagan Greek philosophy. These concepts do not denote *components* of a human being, but the *whole* of a human being seen from *different angles*. The work done by Janse would

later in the previous century be confirmed by numerous exegetical semasiological studies (cf. Van der Walt, 2009, republished as chapter 8 of this book). But his answer to what happens to a human being at death (like a vase breaking in two) did not satisfy his successors.

7.2.4 Vollenhoven (for particulars on his anthropology, not dealt with here, cf. Van der Walt, 2008c, translated as chapter 9 of this book) as well as Popma and Taljaard after him built on Janse's insights. Although their point of departure again is man as an integral entity, they are also faced by a twoness at his/her death. (The "human being inside" is torn away from the "human being outside" or vice versa.)

7.2.5 Telder attempts to apply the view the of the human being held by Janse and Vollenhoven to death and what follows and reaches the conclusion that an intermediate state (between death and resurrection) – on which people like Dijk and Van Niftrik speculated so freely – is fiction. But, since Telder was of the opinion that a human being's spirit returns to God at death, while his body is in the grave, he is still suspected amongst others by Vonk of a hidden dichotomy. The latter is of the opinion that the whole human being dies and returns to dust. There is no "interim state". Since the dead no longer live and they therefore have no realisation of time either, their death and resurrection – at least for the dead themselves – occur simultaneously.

7.3 The result

"Has anything been reached after all these pages?" This is what a frustrated reader could again ask at the end. What difference does it make whether a human being at death is merely *dismantled* (the scholastic theological dichotomist view), is *broken or torn* (Janse, Taljaard and Telder), or as a whole person *decomposes* in the earth (according to Vonk)?

7.3.1 Philosophical questions can indeed make one despondent. (Some-one said once that philosophers do not know the answers to all the questions, but pose questions on all the answers that stand to reason.) These are, however, some of the most serious questions that move us deeply. But they are – like the question on what happens at death – at the same "borderline" questions. Such questions bring

us to the borders of our limited human knowledge, to problems that cannot be fathomed. Glas (1996:124) correctly states that both the creation of the human being and what happens to him/her at death is and will remain God's secret.

7.3.2 Yet one's involvement with borderline problems is not in vain. While wrestling with them, one does understand a little more – even if one only realises that one is erring. In this exploration at least it transpired clearly that dichotomist views of the human being, and all the speculations on the interim state which are built on them, can no longer be accepted in the light of the Scriptures. Besides it has emerged that (if it is not again dichotomously understood) a view of being human as "centre" (heart) and "circumference", or "man inside" and "man outside" (cf. 6.2.3 above) is a more scriptural viewpoint.

7.3.3 At the conclusion of this long chapter the reader can expect to be informed about the writer's own viewpoint about death and beyond.

From all the Christian theologians and philosophers discussed, to my mind the last one (Vonk) thus far succeeded the best to understand God's revelation about this difficult issue. Vonk's exegesis is mostly convincing – there are many parts from Scripture to support his viewpoint. At the same time it seems as if other Bible texts do not substantiate his position. In future I would therefore like to have a thorough look at all the relevant biblical texts. (As indicated in 1.3 above, the main focus of this chapter was not exegetical in nature.)

For the present I feel myself mostly at home in Vonk's viewpoint that, when we close our eyes in death, we rest in the earth from which God created man at the beginning. We are really dead. Because the dead are really dead, they do not exit in an intermediate state or have any experience of time passing on. When they close their eyes, they "simultaneously" open them again at their resurrection on Christ's return. However, those still alive, experience the death of their beloved differently, as they are fully aware of the passage of time.

K.A. Brill remarks (in a personal communication on 10-03-2009) that the concept "intermediate state" can thus be used in two different ways. While the interim period is so to speak "timeless" for those who have already passed away (because

they are not aware of anything), for those still alive it indicates the *time* since the death of their beloved. Brill therefore suggests a distinction between intermediate *state* in the first sense (of the deceased) and intermediate *time* (for those still alive). Telder and Vonk and also I myself will deny an intermediate *state*. No one, however, can object against the use of the expression "intermediate *time*".

7.3.4 We have said already that death and thereafter are in the last instance God's secret. Most probably He revealed so little about it in the Bible to direct our attention at our vocation here and now on earth. Furthermore the Scriptures are very clear that after the day of resurrection we can expect a renewed (not demolished) earth from God's hand. This gives hope to persevere today.

7.3.5 Finally we came to the insight that regarding death and beyond, our reason should be silent, while faith should take over and confess: "If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that He might be the Lord of both the dead and the living." (Rom. 14:8,9).

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SECTION D

A Christian social philosophy

CHAPTER 12

THE BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF A CHRISTIAN PARADIGM FOR SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT

This chapter is structured in the following way: (1) The introduction asks the practical question why Christianity has such a small impact on contemporary society. This topical question is partly answered by indicating that most Christians lack a worldviewish framework or social philosophy to inspire them to get involved outside their churches and do so correctly. (2) A brief explanation of the possible solutions to this problem indicates (in the second section) that Reformational social philosophy may offer some help. Christian theology and Christian philosophy should mutually assist each other in this important endeavour to shape a Christian worldview, including a perspective on social life. (3) The third section indicates how such a philosophy for social life can be firmly based on God's Word. (4) In the light of the fact that this social philosophy is not well-known, the last part of the chapter provides a brief historical survey of how this kind of societal philosophy originated and developed during more than a century.

The relevance to our main theme (at home in God's world):

According to God's Word to be fully at home in God's world, Christians should not only lead a pious personal life and be a committed church member, but should also be involved in different social relationships outside the church.

* * *

1. The issue

1.1 A topical problem

The problem of the relationship between Christendom and culture is as old as Christianity itself. The final word on this has not yet been spoken so that it remains a topical problem. Part of this broad issue is the question how Christians and

churches should view society in its broadest sense (social life, politics, economy, etc.) and how such a worldviewish vision should guide them to be actually involved in all domains outside the church in a practical way. An answer to this could make a contribution to solving the problem of Christians and churches having such an insignificant influence on society.

Unfortunately it is a fact that most churches, Christians and theologians have no or just a very vague view of involvement in society – a statement which is confirmed by numerous publications. Only a few persons will be quoted in the limited space at our disposal.

1.1.1 A false dualism

In a few words Fowler (1985:1) from Australia unveils the false dualism which is still found among many Christians: "It seems very sad that personal piety and social concern are often regarded among Christians as a matter of either/or. Where there is deep concern for personal piety and devotion, all too often there is only the most superficial attention given to the social meaning of the gospel. On the other hand, where there is a deep social concern, all too often the development of personal piety is neglected... The result is a serious one-sidedness in the reading of Scripture".

With right he then states that according to Scripture a Christian need not choose between the two, or set these two activities in a dualistic way opposite or alongside each other. Scripture teaches that the Lord should be obeyed and served personally and in a social context – in all domains of life.

1.1.2 The consequences of the dualism

Adeyemo (1993:4) points out the consequences of such a dualism in practice: "For decades in Africa, evangelism and missionary activities have been directed at getting people saved (i.e. spiritually) but losing their minds. Consequently we have a continent south of the Sahara that boasts of an over 50% Christian population on the average, but with little or no impact on society".

Van der Walt (2002:259) agrees that most Christians in Africa live in two worlds: a "spiritual" one (where the laws of Christ apply) and a "worldly" one (where we have to find our way ourselves).

Then he points out the worldvewish implications of this: "Therefore most Christians strongly believe that the Gospel provides spiritual clothing and footwear, but when it comes to socio-political clothes and shoes, the Gospel cannot provide. Because we cannot go naked and barefoot in public, Christians then buy socio-economic-political clothing at the secular market ... and walk in clothes and shoes that do not really fit them as Christians."

1.1.3 A symptomatic approach is not adequate

Confronted by various problems of society like poverty, crime, violence and corruption, many Christians are moreover inclined merely to apply superficial "first-aid". Therefore McCarthy *et al.* (1981:13) from the USA remind us: "The crisis is one of structure and design. It concerns the way various institutions in society are organized and function". Therefore one has to dig down deeper for the solution to problems in society: "The time is ripe for the consideration of a new paradigm, a new way of looking at persistent problems, seeking a renewal by means of structural change".

This need – to name a last example – is also confirmed from Korea. Son (1999:180 *et seq.*) likewise first draws attention to the dualistic way of thinking among Christians in his country. Preaching, establishing churches and (later) theological training was not only the primary but even the only aim of most Christians, while they forgot about an integral Christian life in society, faith and life being considered as two separate domains. Therefore he calls on churches to reflect again. For emphasising only the relationship with God, while Christians' social responsibility is neglected, means that they lose their unique relevance for society.

His solution agrees with that suggested by McCarthy *et al.* above. What Christians need – unless they want to get involved *ad hoc*, without any guidelines – is "an effective theoretical support for their social actions" (p. 186), in other words, a clear, directional view of society.

The above does not imply that a lack of a Christian worldview (part of which is a view of society), or even a Christian philosophy (scientific reflection on one's worldview) is the only cause of the slight impact that most Christians have on society. One could mention a legion of other factors. What is suggested, however, is that the worldviewish and philosophical void could be an important additional reason and therefore should here be investigated further.

2 In search of possible solutions

In the course of history (cf. Niebuhr, 1951 and Wolters, 1990) the following five basic attitudes of the Christendom have repeatedly come to the fore: the Christian *against* culture; the Christian *equal* to culture; the Christian faith *perfects* culture; the Christian fills a position *alongside* culture and the Christian should *transform* or *renew* culture. These same viewpoints are also valid with regard to the more specific problem of how Christians view society (theoretically) and are involved (practically) in it.

2.1 Four unacceptable views

If (according to the first view) the Christian *dissociates* himself in principle from society, there is no need for a view on society. When (according to the second view) there is no *essential difference* between the Christian and the surrounding culture, there is no need to have his/her own Christian view of society either.

The third view (the Christian *perfects* culture) is the classical Roman Catholic view which amounts to churchifying society. According to this the Christian faith is limited to the church – a broader biblical perspective of God's all-encompassing kingdom is lacking. (Church and Kingdom are regarded as one and the same.) Society (politics, economy, etc.) can only be Christian when it has been "stamped" (condoned) or "baptised" (made perfect) by the church. In the scientific field it means that the field of theology is so broad that it has to supply solutions to almost everything.

This viewpoint is called the principle of subsidiarity in the Roman Catholic philosophy of society. For a full exposition as well as Reformational comment on

this view of society, cf. Sadowsky (1986), Skillen & McCarthy (1991:137-228, 275-277, 377-396, 398-400) and Chaplin, (1994:81-100).

The fourth viewpoint, (the Christian *alongside* society), offers no answer either, since it is also inherently dualistic. It does not entail that no criticism is uttered on society, but it is mostly superficial – a more probing analysis of the structures of society is absent. The criticism there is often founded on fragmentary parts from Scripture instead of on a comprehensive, coherent worldview.

2.2 Transformation as a solution

The fifth viewpoint – that of the *renewal* or *transformation* of culture and society – holds promise. Wolterstorff (1983:43) characterises this viewpoint as “world-formative Christianity” and under this group he places the views of society held by liberation theologies and Reformational (Calvinistic) philosophy.

2.2.1 Liberation theologies

The various liberation theologies (popular during the second part of the previous century) indeed is an example of a deeper Christian analysis of society (cf. Wolterstorff: 1983:42-53 for a short overview). However, this movement has in the meantime more or less disappeared from the scene. Skillen and McCarthy (1991:115-136 and 369 *et seq.*) analyses the societal view of liberation theology in detail. In contrast to the unjust, oppressing past and present, these theologians call for a future of freedom. It is clear what they reject (the injustice of the past and present) but it is unclear what their principal theoretical guidelines are for a better society in future (p.373).

Since liberation theologians make use of (neo-) Marxism in their social analysis (cf. Wolters, 1991:229 *et seq.*) one could ask whether such a view of society can truly be regarded as an integral Christian view. Spykman *et al.* (1988:232) personally investigated the situation in Latin America and hold in high regard the important biblical motives which the liberation theologians put in the foreground. But they, too, pose the question whether the liberation theologians can set themselves apart from the materialistic principles of Marxism. (For scientific methods are not neutral.) It

even gives rise to the following question: If Marxism is chosen to free a society from individualistic capitalism, is there any guarantee that it will not deteriorate into collectivist oppression?

2.2.2 A Reformational philosophy of society

According to Wolterstorff (1983:43) the second kind of world-transforming Christian faith is that of neo-Calvinism. It comprises "a penetrating analysis of our contemporary social world combined with a comprehensive Christian vision of society". It would seem as if this viewpoint, which has survived the wear and tear of history, is worth investigating further.

2.3 Two challenges

To render such an investigation convincing, the following two stumbling blocks which are closely linked would have to be removed: there is a need for clarity on (1) the relationship between theology and philosophy, and (2) the biblical foundations of a Reformational philosophy of society.

2.3.1 The relationship between theology and philosophy

Many Christian theologians are – with right – skeptical towards philosophy since most philosophies are of a secular nature. Unfortunately it has led to Reformational philosophy and philosophy of society also being unknown to most Christians and Christian theologians – in South Africa too.

This attitude of reproaches, competition and even mutual enmity between two disciplines – sorely needing one another in a secular society – should be replaced by close mutual co-operation. (Cf. Van den Brink *et al.*, 1997:4.) No longer should there be talk of *regina* (a queen) and *ancilla* (a servant) but of *collegae* (colleagues or partners). "A Christian philosophy cannot avoid an ongoing biblical and systematic theological reflection ... Just as the other way round a biblical and systematic theological reflection cannot avoid philosophical knowledge and considerations." (Van den Brink *et al.*, 1997:41). Elsewhere it says: "Theology in her antithetical discussions sorely needs philosophy, especially the analyses that it offers, and in which the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea excels". (p.107)

The point on which this mutual co-operation can focus, is on shaping a Christian worldview: "We desperately need each other in reflecting on a Christian worldview that can investigate the intellectual demands and challenges of our times adequately, authentically and convincingly" (Van den Brink, 1997:44).

This call from the Netherlands is supported by Adeyemo, who complained above about the trifling influence exerted by Christians in Africa on their societies. He, too, sees a solution in being equipped with a Christian worldview, part of which is a Christian philosophy of society: "We are convinced that an integrated Christian worldview based upon the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, is an indispensable foundation to live out an authentic Christian life in our contemporary society, hence the imperative of calling all Christians to develop a Christian worldview within the African context. The battle therefore, is for the Christian mind, to think Christianly and to grasp the full implications of the Lordship of Christ over all areas of life. This implies the necessity to develop a Christian anthropology and Christian social philosophy" (Adeyemo, 1993:227).

2.3.2 Biblical foundation

Some theologians doubt the use of philosophical insights in their subject field. This doubt can often be ascribed to the fact that the particular philosophy of society is not (or not explicitly enough) founded on the Word of God. Although a Reformational philosophy of society cannot (solely) be built on texts from the Bible (see the reason lower down), there is no reason to doubt its explicit Christian character. However, in this contribution special attention is given to its biblical foundations.

3 Biblical foundations of a Christian Reformational philosophy of society

By way of introduction we first give a very brief characterisation (for details see the excellent summary of e.g. Spykman, 1976:164-169) of a Reformational view of society before explaining how this idea is founded on God's Word in the Bible.

3.1 In a nutshell

This pluralistic vision of society (clearly to be distinguished from both individualism and collectivism) departs from the basic biblical idea of the absolute sovereignty of God over everything and all human activities. The well-known statement by Kuyper (cf. Kuyper, 1998:488) runs as follows: "... there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over *all*, does not cry: 'Mine!'"

God maintains his sovereignty by constant creational ordinances or structural laws (for details, see chapter 6 of this book). According to these ordinances each societal relationship has its own, God-given identity, authority and calling or field of work which differs from that of all the other relationships. In accordance with this principle of sphere sovereignty (or diversified responsibility) one relationship may therefore not take over the task of another. The office, authority, power and responsibility of the bearers of authority in different societal relationships are qualified and therefore limited. Yet at the same time the different relationships do not exist in isolation from one another, but has to cooperate in God's all-encompassing kingdom.

In his famous speech on sphere sovereignty (at the opening of the Free University in 1880) Kuyper explained this idea by means of an image (cf. Kuyper, 1998:467, 468). In a clock each cog has its own place and turns on its own axle (= the different societal relationships). Should a cog get stuck or comes loose from its place, the clock cannot work. But the clock (=the whole of society) cannot function either without the necessary interaction between the different cogs.

This image clearly shows that the principle of sphere sovereignty does not have merely a negative purpose, namely to prevent one societal relationship from neglecting its own task or interfering in the domain of another relationship. It wants to attain the positive goal that every relationship fulfils its own calling and as a result society as a whole flourishes (cf. Dengerink, 1996:211).

Because God's creational ordinances for social life are sometimes understood incorrectly, it is also important to stress that they are not static, but dynamic

principles or powers by means of which God guides life. The creational order therefore has to be realised constantly as history proceeds. With right Dengerink (1996:211) emphasises that the specific task of a family, church or state cannot be defined once for all times – circumstances alter cases. Therefore there is a definite difference between the *nature* (determined by God's creational order) of a societal relationship and its specific *task* (as it has been realised by people) in particular circumstances. The first is constant – not static – while the second varies all the time.

Together with this *structural* pluralism the Reformational vision also stresses *confessional* (or religious) pluralism. It means that different religious groups should have the right to give structural form to their deepest convictions in organisations (like a Christian political party) and institutions (like a Muslim school).

3.2 Revelation in creation and in the Word

Before investigating what the Bible offers by way of material for a philosophy of society, it is essential to explain the Reformational tradition on God's revelation. This is desirable since there are two particular reasons why some Christians cannot develop a biblically founded philosophy of society (compare points 1 and 2 above). The first is that they *privatise* the Scriptures, and the second that they *monopolise* the Bible. We will now explain why both these viewpoints are unacceptable. At the same time we will explain our own viewpoint of the Scriptures – which does open the door for a philosophy of society.

3.2.1 Expecting too little from the Scriptures

The first group of Christians who privatise the Scriptures, are of the opinion that God's Word pertains only to personal life and life in the church, and not to public life (broader society). The Reformational tradition holds that in this way *too little* is expected from the Bible.

Man's *whole* life is religiously determined, it is a comprehensive answer (being obedient or disobedient) to God's revelation. As a religious book the Scriptures

appeal to our life as a *whole*. So the question is not *whether*, but *how* the Scriptures provide light on societal life.

As a pre-scientific book the Bible may not be used as a scientific manual for devising social theories. (That would be expecting *too much* from the Scriptures.) It does speak about politics (e.g. in Rom. 13:1-7) but not in a political way; about marriage (e.g. Eph. 5:22-32) but not in psychological terms; about bringing up children (e.g. Eph. 6:4) but in a different way from that of an educational expert; about social issues (e.g. Eph. 6:5-9) but not in sociological terms. In all these human relationships the Scriptures usually emphasise an aspect of the central commandment of love for the neighbour.

So God does not give complete precepts for the structuring of society in the Scriptures. The reason is (cf. below) that He also reveals his will to us in creation. We have to study creation itself (family, state, business, etc.) to discover God's order for creation, so that we can educate, rule, do business, et cetera in the right way.

This brings us to the following point:

3.2.2 Expecting too much from the Scriptures

The second reason why a societal philosophy is lacking in many Christians, is that they monopolise the Scriptures, and attempt to deduce everything from the Bible alone. They maintain that also the guidelines for society have to come straight from the Bible (often by means of a fragmentary appeal to isolated texts). In this way too much is expected from the Scriptures and one lapses into Biblicism (cf. McCarthy *et al.*, 1981:152).

Therefore the Reformational tradition stresses that the Scriptures are not God's first revelation, but the second. Long before his Word had been committed to writing, He had already revealed Himself in and through his creation – and still does. In this revelation He deals mainly with his will for creation. (Cf. e.g. Ps. 19:8-10 which speaks of God's wordless, non-lingual revelation as his commands, precepts,

demands and stipulations.) This creational word of God not only called all things into existence, but also maintain them and govern them according to his will.

Every human being answers (as a religious being) this creational word either in obedience or not. For – in contrast to the revelation in the Scriptures – God's revelation in his creation speaks to believers and non-believers. Every person can for instance learn from it that God's will for marriage is mutual faithfulness and his directive for the state it is justice for all.

The conclusion is that society with its different relationships does not function all by itself, or is the creation of autonomous people. It is dependent on God and bound by his creational ordering.

McCarthy *et al.* (1981:151) formulate it as follows: "There is a constancy to the creation order that holds for the social order. The life of a community cannot unfold arbitrarily or capriciously. The structural options open to mankind in ordering society are not infinite; the boundaries are circumscribed, and a community gives shape and form to its social order within them."

Unfortunately it happened in the past that God's creational ordinances was misunderstood and even abused (as in the justification of apartheid). Such wrong use even led to some theologians to doubt whether there are any guidelines from God for societal life and they lapsed into relativism. It is wrong to identify God's ordering with our inadequate understanding of it. Likewise it is also wrong to deny the close link between the two. (As human beings we have to positivise God's order for society.) See again chapter 6 of this book for details.

3.2.3 The correct viewpoint

Two extremes are clear: to expect too much from the Scriptures leads to Biblicism. But to work only with God's revelation in his creation, can lead to secularism. What then is the relation between the two forms of God's revelation?

After the fall of man, man became "deaf" and "blind" for God's creational revelation, so that it was no longer sufficient. It was not God's revelation that failed, but man's

answer to it – he suppressed and replaced it (Rom. 1:18, 23) In his endless mercy God “republished” in a lingual form his revelation in the Bible.

“Scripture was given as a corrective, reinforcing the original revelation upon our minds, redirecting our attention to the meaning of it all, refocusing its intent and purpose” (McCarthy *et al.*, 1981:152). Elsewhere the same authors formulated it as follows: “Scripture is a representation of God’s will, representing his new initiative calling the social order back to its intended design... The Bible is the second revised edition of God’s Word, but it is still at heart the same Word. God’s will for life in this world is constant” (McCarthy, 1981:153).

Briefly formulated: since the structural norms of society as a result of man’s sinfulness no longer answer to God’s will for society, God in his revelation in the Scriptures corrects our wrong answers to his creational revelation.

To explain how careful one should be in studying God’s revelation in the Scriptures, one more remark. In creational order we discover the “objective” or constant will of God. His revelation in the Scriptures gives the “subjective” side, it tells us how in the past people (rightly or wrongly) reacted to his creational ordering. These human answers are enacted in a specific time, circumstances and culture. What is written in the Scriptures can therefore not be applied without any change to society today (Biblicism). In the light of the *forms* of previous times (as it emerges from the Scriptures) the *norms* for today (i.e. God’s original creational order) must be inferred. In formulating such contemporary norms for society, God’s foundational command of love should take form for a specific societal relationship in specific circumstances.

Finally it has to be acknowledged that the above also applies to the Reformational philosophy of society: It is a subjective, culturally and temporally determined answer to God’s objective creational revelation in the light of his Scriptural revelation under the guidance of his Spirit. At the same time we are of the opinion that this viewpoint is a serious attempt to respect the God-given norms for society. It can, therefore, also be used in a non-Western, e.g. African, context.

3.3 Important biblical perspectives as building blocks for a societal philosophy

Now that we have shown that the Scriptures are not God's only revelation, and also how his two-fold revelation forms a unity, we can return to the question we posed earlier, namely whether the Bible provides any light on societal life..

The three biblical perspectives that follow, naturally do not exhaust the message of the Scriptures for human society. They merely serve as examples of how it is possible to use broad biblical perspectives for developing a societal perspective of one's own.

3.3.1 Gradual structural differentiation

At the beginning of creation not only was there *confessional* unity (Adam and Eve obeyed God alone), but also *structural* unity (an undifferentiated society). The whole of society was more or less centred in the (extended) family.

According to God's cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28 and 2:15) man, however, received a calling to develop the potential of creation and the riches latent in it. Already in the story of Adam and Eve we find an expanding diversity of callings: marriage and family life, to till the earth (agriculture), to look after the garden (government), name the animals (to obtain knowledge) and to walk with God in the garden (religious calling). Every task is unique and cannot be deduced to another. Life in and after Paradise was therefore a life ordered by God.

After Adam and Eve further diversification occurred. Cain became a cultivator and Abel a herdsman, Nimrod a hunter, Jabal another herdsman, Jubal someone who developed the esthetical (music) while Tubal-Cain was a smith or a worker of metals. From the history of Moses, too, it emerges that one person cannot fill all offices – his father-in-law advised him to delegate certain tasks.

Gradually in the Old Testament we find greater differentiation between the three offices of prophet, priest and king (originally vested in one person). So for instance King Saul and Ussa were severely punished because they did priestly work. It also

emerges in the case of *king* David who was rebuked by the *prophet* Nathan in the time of the *priesthood* of Abiathar.

In the New Testament, too, various offices in the church developed from the original office of disciple and apostle, like deacon, elder and preacher. We also read about government and subjects, men and women (marriage), parents and children.

Thus the Bible tells us how God's norms for society (given in his creational revelation) in the course of history were given form by people in various societal relationships. And although this historical development may not be a norm for all times, it does reflect a pluralistic society as the ideal, guided by the principle of sphere sovereignty.

It is important to acknowledge human responsibility in the establishment of a variety of relationships. God did not found the first church, but created humans as a religious beings to do so themselves. Likewise he has created man with a political aptitude so that he created various forms of government. Schools – that originated much later in history – are only possible because God made woman/man an educating and teaching being and also laid down certain norms for this calling.

3.3.2 Differentiated love

God's command of love for the neighbour is not something general or vague, for it has to be lived specifically and concretely in various human relations. Realising or giving form to neighbourly love therefore depends on a variety of domains (cf. Van der Walt, 2002:264,265). In marriage love acquires the form of mutual fidelity; in the family it emerges as the love of parents and the love of children; in the political sphere as justice; in the economic field as stewardship; as health care in the medical field and in the academic domain as careful, systematic thinking – love of one's field of study.

All these kinds of love are unique. The one is not more important than the other. All are needed for a healthy society. Such a society, therefore, is a differentiated society.

3.3.3 Confessional pluralism founded on the Scriptures

The previous two points showed that *structural* pluralism is the correct philosophy of society in the light of the Scriptures. We will now show that *confessional* pluralism also is justifiable according to the Scriptures.

According to the Scriptures man/woman after the fall serves either the true God or (something in creation as) an idol. In the second place man reflects the image of God or of something in his place that is absolutised. In the third instance man creates a society according to his own image of what it means to be human. Summed up: One's opinion on God/a god determines one's view of being human (including oneself), and this view of being human in turn determines the view of society one supports. (Klapwijk, 1995 demonstrates how decisive one's view of being human is for one's views of society. Also secular philosophers like Stevenson, 1974 and Campbell, 1987 clearly point out the connection between anthropology and social philosophy.)

The three steps can also be followed in reverse order. (3) From the way a certain society looks like, can be inferred (2) how people see themselves (which resulted in such a society), and (1) in the end what kind of god they serve.

A simple illustration is that (1) when Mammon is served, (2) man becomes a greedy materialist and (3) wealth at all cost is the most important norm in all the societal forms he creates. The contemporary capitalist commercialisation of the whole of society is a clear example.

This perspective explains that the structures (societal relationships) cannot be separated from the religious direction of a society – the direction influences the structure. It is impossible – the way secular governments nowadays attempt to do – to ban religious convictions (so-called private matters) from public life (the so-called public domain). A better solution is to give them the place they deserve in, for instance, Christian, Jewish and Muslim schools. The Reformational principle of confessional pluralism attempts to do justice to religious diversity or confessional pluralism.

3.4 Review

Up to now (1) the problem of the lack of a Christian philosophy of society was stated, (2) the Reformational view of society was recommended as a candidate and (3) it was shown how this social philosophy is based on the Scriptures. What we still lack is a short historical survey to explain where this view of society comes from (it has a long, tried and tested tradition), as well as which Christian thinkers have helped to develop it further.

4 A brief historical review of the origin and development of a Reformational philosophy of society

Although the idea goes back a long way, it took four centuries before the Reformational philosophy of society reached maturity. Everyone of the thinkers in the long history not only built upon the work of their predecessors, but also took the basic idea a step further. (Spykman, 1976:170 *et seq.* provides a review of the following thinkers: Calvin, Althusius, Groen van Prinsterer, Kuyper, Bavinck, Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven, Van Riessen, Veenhof, Vos, Bouma and Meeter. Cf also Griffioen, 2002:652 ff.) Key figures in this process were the following:

4.1 John Calvin (1509-1564)

A complete exposition of the different facets of Calvin's social thinking is available in Spykman (1976:185-208). See also section 4 of chapter 3 of this book. We only highlight a few aspects.

The prevailing vision of society in Calvin's time was the Constantinian-Thomistic (Medieval). According to the scheme of nature and grace society was divided in two domains, namely the state and the church, while all the other relationships were considered as being either secular (state) or religious (church).

In principle Calvin broke with this Medieval vision. Since he took as a point of departure the sovereignty of God over everything, he taught that God's Word is no less normative for the so-called secular domain than for the church. Both state and church were ordained by God and have to obey his will each in their own domain.

The relationships which were seen as parts of state or church, are also domains in which Christians have to fulfill their divine calling (cf. McCarthy *et al.*, 1981:42-43).

Therefore Calvin criticised the state absolutism of kings, who according to him assumed too much power and authority for themselves. At the same time he rejected the church's rule over all of life. On establishing the Academy of Geneva he therefore did not consider it necessary to get permission from either the pope or the emperor.

It is true that although in principle he broke with the prevalent view of society, it was not carried through to its full consequences. This becomes clear from the fact that, for instance, he still used concepts like "two empires", "two jurisdictions" etc. (See again chapter 3, section 4.)

Spykman (1976:207-208) concludes his review on Calvin as follows: "We find in Calvin a decisive departure from earlier Constantinian-medieval views of society, based upon the nature-grace dichotomy, and structured along the lines of the principle of sphere-subsidiarity with church and state alternately pressing their sovereign claims on other institutions in society... Calvin gave us a breakaway from the scholastic principle of sphere-subsidiarity toward the Reformed principle of sphere-sovereignty. All that remained was to develop a more consistent follow-through." McCarthy *et al.* (1981:42) comes to the following conclusion: "The direction of Calvin's thinking is clear, however, pointing towards structural pluralism". Like most of his contemporaries, he never thought of confessional pluralism (cf. the case of Servet).

The Presbyterian form of church governance (the equality of the offices) had its origin in the work of Calvin. The basic principles which form the ground for this view, would only be applied to the societal relationships outside the church by Calvin's successors. This brings us to the contribution of Althusius.

4.2 John Althusius (1557-1638)

His main work, *Politica Methodica Digesta* (1614) makes it clear that Althusius (1932, 1964) too, grounded his philosophy of society in the sovereignty of God over

everything that He has created. Earthly sovereignty (authority) is dependent on and emanates from that of God. God gives each relationship its own but limited sovereignty (cf. Spykman, 1976:185).

He, however, progressed further than Calvin did by rejecting the teaching of two kingdoms or empires (state and church), as well as the idea that other human relationships are merely subdivisions of these two. According to him a clear difference should be made between the state, natural relationships (like marriage and family) and various collegial associations. Each one of these societal relationships has its own calling and authority and they may not interfere with one another's affairs.

He therefore challenged the idea, prevalent in his time, of political sovereignty (e.g. the divine authority of monarchies) and taught that political sovereignty is dependent on God's order, is limited, demands accountability and has to acknowledge the full rights of other social relationships.

It is clear that Althusius progressed much further than his predecessor, Calvin: "Althusius has been credited with providing the systematic climax of the reformational social thought of the sixteenth century, and with formulating the first statement of the complementary principle that in later Calvinist tradition came to be known as sphere sovereignty and sphere universality" (McCarthy *et al.*, 1981:46).

4.3 F.J. Stahl (1802-1855)

The point of departure of this (later Lutheran) thinker is also the sovereignty of God over everything, including human society. In his main work *Die Philosophie des Rechts nach geschichtlicher Ansicht* (1830-1837), he further emphasises the right of the different social spheres of life over against the prevalent idea of his time of the sovereignty of a nation. According to him the state derives its power and authority not from the will of the nation, but from God. Criticism of his viewpoint (cf. Dengerink, 1948:266) is that he allotted normative meaning to the historical development of society (a form of historicism). However, Stahl is important also on account of his influence on Groen van Prinsterer.

4.4 G. Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876)

The view of this Reformational thinker is dealt with in detail amongst others by Van Dyke (1989) and Dengerink (1948:69-94 and 266-267). While Skillen and McCarthy (1991:53-78) offer important English passages from his main work *Ongeloof en revolutie* (Disbelief and revolution) (1847), Van Dyke (1989:293 *et seq.*) contains a complete English translation of this work. He was the first person to use the term "sphere sovereignty". However, he mainly applies it to the relation between church and state (cf. Dengerink, 1948:266 and Skillen & McCarthy, 1991:368).

As we have said before, he was substantially influenced by Stahl and consequently Groen's thought falls short in that he tends to regard the societal forms which came into being in the course of history as normative. His viewpoint on sphere sovereignty is further weakened by his great emphasis on the (Dutch) nation (nationalism).

4.5 Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) and Herman Bavinck (1854-1921)

Kuyper's view of society is contained in his *Antirevolutionaire Program* (Anti-revolutionary Programme) (1873) and *Souvereiniteit in eigen kring* (Sphere sovereignty) (1880) (cf. Skillen & McCarthy, 1991:235-298 for English translations.) Veenhof (1939) and Dengerink (1948:131-161) offer a detailed explanation of his viewpoint, while valuable shorter versions can be found in Spykman (1976:182-185), Skillen & McCarthy (1991:235-242) and McCarthy *et al.* (1981:46-49).

Kuyper states his own perspective over against that of the individualistic and collectivist tendencies of his time. Both of these lead to totalitarian political systems, which dominate other societal relationships. According to Kuyper they replace God's sovereignty with their own human sovereignty. For this reason they cannot guarantee freedom.

Kuyper's own solution is briefly summed up by McCarthy *et al.* (1981:48,49) as follows: "God's creating Word is the law for ordering our life relationships in all spheres of human endeavor. Each sphere has its own, unique, inviolable, delegated authority. No sphere – not even the two great social institutions that tend

to make imperialistic claims, the church and the state – may suppress or tyrannize or draw parasitically upon others. Each should be as a partner with all the others. In a just society there is no room for hierarchies of power and authority. Within each coordinate sphere man must exercise his divinely given office and calling, and men together must honor the rightful roles of each sphere in community life...”

Not only was Kuyper a champion for *structural* pluralism. His struggle for worldview-oriented education, and the freedom of parents to choose suitable schools for their children according to their own religious convictions, demonstrates that he also propagated *confessional* pluralism.

Yet Dengerink (1948:268) points out two lines in Kuyper. The one is the Reformational and the other the old dualism of nature and grace, which clearly emerges from his teaching on general and particular grace. Fortunately his successors built on the first, more biblical line.

In spite of this Kuyper's influence should not be underrated. His philosophy of society is still followed in different parts of the world. So for instance in the study by Bolt (2001), who attempts to apply Kuyper's "public theology" to contemporary American society and Van der Walt (1999a and 1999b), who regards it as relevant for Africa.

The following words by Son (1999:181) could be read with assent by many Reformational Christians all over the world: "The principle of sphere sovereignty is undoubtedly the most creative idea which Abraham Kuyper has contributed to Christians all over the world in their critical analysis of the existing situations and the creative formulation of their future projects. It is, at the same time, sufficiently practical that it could be implemented directly in concrete politics. Also it has turned out to be applicable for the pluralistic society of today."

Because of the similarities between the viewpoints of the two Dutchmen, Kuyper and his contemporary, Bavinck, the latter will not be discussed (see Spykman, 1976:179-182).

4.6 H. Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) and D.H.Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978)

These two founders of Reformational philosophy in the Netherlands further developed the societal philosophy of Kuyper and his predecessors. Dooyeweerd did it mostly in his *A new critique of theoretical thought*, volume 3 (1957:157-626), but also in Dooyeweerd 1962 and 1986. Vollenhoven very briefly summarises his societal philosophy in Vollenhoven, 2005(1945) and 1992 (1950). Popularised versions of their views on society can be found in works like that of Hommes (1982), Kalsbeek (1970 and 1975), Spier (1966) and Spykman (1976:171-172).

The basic points of departure of these two thinkers (e.g. on God's sovereignty, which applies to society by means of his creational ordinances) are the same as that of their predecessors. But they differ for instance from Kuyper, who uses the principle of sphere sovereignty only in a *sociological* sense. By means of their doctrine of modalities of reality (see next chapter) sphere sovereignty now became a broader *cosmological* principle – it is not merely applicable to human society.

This doctrine of the aspects, functions or modalities of reality enabled these two Christian philosophers to distinguish even more finely between different societal relationships and their mutual relations. Every relationship has both a foundational and a leading or qualifying function. It is also pointed out how social relationships are intricately interwoven. In this way Reformational societal philosophy was developed a step further.

The work of Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd more or less rounds off this societal philosophy. Their successors (cf. the next chapter) limited themselves mainly to its application in various domains as well as critical questions on certain details.

4.7 In retrospect

Even from this brief historical review two matters clearly come to the fore. On the one hand that, although it took a long time to develop to its present form, a Reformational view of society neither was nor is a static dogma. It developed dynamically through the ages and received an increasingly rich content. It had a

message for every age and it is still relevant for our pluralistic and simultaneously globalising contemporary world (cf. Son, 1999:184-189).

On the other hand one notices (especially as a result of the biblical foundation of this view of society) a remarkable continuity in the ideas of the various representatives discussed. Certain basic points of departure are constantly maintained and run through its long history. For instance, the idea of God's sovereignty started with Calvin and runs through to the present day (cf. e.g. the subtitle of Taljaard, 1976). So also the view that God rules society by different creational ordinances, resulting in a variety of societal relationships (a pluralistic social philosophy).

5 Summary conclusion

The issue with which this investigation started, was that many Christians approach the societal matters of our time with either no societal philosophy, a very vague one or even one that is foreign to the Bible. The above investigation has shown that it need not be like that: a Reformational societal philosophy is available. Although this view of society has not yet been set out systematically (see next chapter), its contours has become clearly visible.

We can therefore aptly close this contribution with the following appreciation of such a Scripturally based societal philosophy: "An original idea with the solid support of Scripture is difficult to produce, and it is still more difficult to have one that can be applied fruitfully to concrete situations. The principle of sphere sovereignty, though not entirely free from weaknesses, is one of the most important treasures bestowed upon the Reformed communities of the world today. It is consistent with the characteristic teachings of Calvinism and, at the same time, very pertinent to the spherical pluralism of today. We should be grateful to God for it" (Son, 1999:189). This philosophy of society is thus not merely of theoretical importance. Griffioen (2009) recently indicated that this is the dominant social philosophy in the Dutch cabinet.

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CHAPTER 13

A SYSTEMATIC EXPOSITION AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF A TRANSFORMING CHRISTIAN SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

The problem to be discussed in this chapter (already explained in detail in the previous chapter) is that many Christians, churches and theologians are often guided by no or merely a very vague (worldviewish) perspective on social life. Sometimes they are even inspired by unbiblical methods (e.g. earlier Marxism and contemporary neocapitalism or postmodernism) in their social analysis. This may be an important contributing factor for the sad fact that Christians often have very little impact on the broader social domain (the "public square") outside their personal and church life. Therefore this chapter looks at a possible solution in the following steps: (1) It begins with a comparison between the three basic philosophies of society, viz. individualism, collectivism and pluralism. (2) Then it provides a systematic exposition of a Christian Reformational pluralistic social philosophy as a possible candidate. (3) To indicate that a Reformational social philosophy neither wants to pretend, nor wants to be regarded as a static dogma or ideology, the next section reviews some points of critique voiced by its sympathetic proponents. (4) The fourth section investigates how this social view may inspire social *change*. (5) Following the preceding, more theoretical exploration, it discusses possibilities for its practical application. In this way a complete answer (both theoretical and practical) is given to the urgent problem indicated at the beginning, viz. the little influence of Christians on the so-called public sphere.

The relevance for our main theme (at home in God's world):

A biblically-based social philosophy can be of great value to teach Christians how to view office, authority, power and responsibility in different social relationships as well as how to change society in order to improve life in God's world.

1 Introduction: approach, contents and terminology

By way of introduction the following have to be explained:

1.1 Approach

Since Reformational social philosophy is relatively unknown in the churches and in theological circles and the idea is to make it accessible for a wide reading public, we will avoid unnecessary technical/intricate explanations and source references. The exposition is done according to the writer's own understanding and is set out in a way to be comprehensible to the uninitiated.

1.2 Contents

In the previous chapter the biblical grounds for a Reformational social philosophy were accounted for and a brief account was given of its development in the course of history. This chapter offers a detailed systematic exposition. Finally it is pointed out how this view of society could be applied successfully in practice in various ways.

1.3 Terminology

This last introductory remark explains the term "Reformational" since it may be misunderstood. It is not understood here as referring to a church, like a certain group of churches (e.g. the Reformed Churches). Neither is it meant in the confessional sense (with the connotation of a certain number of creeds dating from the Reformation in the 16th century). These two meanings are not completely excluded. The third meaning in which it is used here, however, denotes a Reformational or transformational worldview. "Accordingly, it stands for a cultural perspective that calls for the renewal of peoples and the reformation of society in keeping with biblical principles for our life together in God's world – a vision that Reformed Christians share with many Christians from other traditions" (Spykman *et al.*, 1988: xiii-xiv).

The uniqueness of a Reformational societal theory shows up all the more clearly when compared with current societal philosophies. Therefore, we first compare three main viewpoints.

2 The three basic social philosophies

According to most writers (cf. e.g. Griffioen, 2002:664-667 McCarthy *et al.*, 1981:13-40; Marshall, 1994 and Skillen & McCarthy, 1991:2 *et seq.*) apart from minor variations and mixes there are three basic social philosophies only. They are (1) the individualistic, liberalistic or atomistic, (2) the collectivist, holistic or organicistic (which include e.g. socialism, communism and communalism) and (3) the pluralistic. At the root of these diverse social visions we should distinguish diverse anthropologies. For an exposition, for example, of the anthropological grounds of liberalism and socialism, cf. Klapwijk (1995a) and Van der Walt (2002:223-237).

2.1 A concise typification of liberalism and collectivism

The main traits of these two social perspectives can be summarised in the following points.

2.1.1 Individualism

- The individual is the most concrete reality, the foundation of society and the seat of authority.
- Social institutions or societal relationships are merely collections of self-determining individuals organised to reach a common goal.
- Societal relationships have a contractual character and only exist as long as it pleases the individual members and their individual rights are not infringed.
- Therefore social relationships are of human making, do not have a transcendent (divine) origin and are regulated according to human discretion, since no divine norms come into play.

An example to illustrate this: The state receives its authority from the individual subjects. The elected government is contractually bound to protect the inalienable (individual) rights of the citizens. When individual freedom is threatened, the government may be dismissed.

2.1.2 Collectivism

The main traits of *collectivism*, *communalism* or *socialism* are the following:

- The collectivity (tribe, political party, nation or state) is the primary reality and therefore the seat of authority.
- The individual finds his meaning only within this all-encompassing whole which is also more than the sum of its constituent parts. (Exactly the opposite of individualism.)
- All human relationships are merely means towards the goal of the greater whole. It is the greater entity, and not individual members, that has rights.
- Here, too (just as in the case of individualism) society is given its form by human beings (the group) as it seems fit.

An example to illustrate this: The state is an all-inclusive, absolutely sovereign societal relationship which organises individuals and other societal relationships (family, school, business, etc.) for its (political) goal. It can delegate certain powers and rights to individuals and groups, but inherently these do not belong to them.

2.2 A Critique of these two models

The following comments can be given from a pluralistic point of departure:

2.2.1 Individualism

Individualism does contain a moment of truth, a correct insight, for the individual is important. However, it is incorrectly elaborated, for the individual may not be overemphasised. Individual rights are not absolute, neither are people their own legislators (autonomous) and the inherent social character of the human being may not be denied.

Individualists also cannot maintain their viewpoint consistently. A human being needs social institutions to fulfil all his/her needs. And although individualists regard the state as a mere contract, as a result of considerations of usefulness it

eventually becomes the most important institution in society and threatens the freedom of the individual. Even a democracy can become totalitarian!

2.2.2 Collectivism

The moment of truth in socialism or communalism (both collectivist) is that human communities and social unity is important. The fallacy is that no societal relationship may be a megastructure and the standard for the rest of society. That way it is given a soteriological, redemptive value whereby it is absolutised and deified. The borders between the state and other societal relationships are ignored and erased and their diverse responsibilities wiped out. The results are predictable: absolutism of the state, lack of freedom, and finally tyranny.

Briefly summarised: individualistic liberalism overestimates the individual and underestimates the community, while collectivist socialism does exactly the opposite. Both present a distorted image of the identity of being human and society. The former absolutises the autonomy and intrinsic value of the individual, while the latter deifies the autonomy and absolute value of one societal relationship.

2.2.3 A scriptural perspective

Both these viewpoints therefore are a denial of the gospel. For the Scriptures teach that man is not autonomous, but has to obey the law of God – who is the only One with absolute authority. The meaning of man and the community therefore lies in obedience to God.

Further, both communality and individuality are mere dimensions of being human and can therefore never fully typify man – not even jointly. Since individual and universal are only qualities or aspects of man, it is more correct to say every person *has* an individual side than to say he *is* an individual. Or: every person *has* a social dimension, rather than saying he *is* a social/communal being.

Being a complete and healthy human being thus supposes that both the individual and communal aspect of being human (which are not the only facets of being human, cf. 3.3.1 below) have to be developed. For neither is insignificant.

Indeed, the Bible recognises both the unique individuality and the social ties of man, knows no tension between the two, neither does it prefer the one to the other. In the Scriptures God deals with individuals and communities. He demands individual as well as communal accountability.

These ideas are worked out systematically in a Reformational pluralistic societal philosophy – the next section (3) below.

2.3 Some features of contemporary society

Limited space only allows us to mention a few basic characteristics of our complex contemporary society (cf. Fowler, 2008:8-12).

- It is a society dominated by the *neocapitalist ideology*, in which the so-called selfregulating market has become a divinity in itself. Societal relationships not economically qualified, are regarded and managed as business units. Today Mammon (materialism) decides on everything (cf. Van der Walt, 2006c:97-112 for detailed critique on the neo-capitalist market economy).
- Our society is becoming more and more *bureaucratic*, dominated by a managing elite who supposedly knows everything. In actual fact they are simply multiplying forms, procedures and controls, making it difficult to get the real job done.
- *Neopragmatism* could be a next qualification. The older pragmatists still believed that if an idea is true it will have good results. Contemporary pragmatism is more relativistic in nature. It does not believe any more in true objectives. The means easily becomes the end. Therefore every new fad is welcomed.
- When something relative is absolutised, power usually becomes the only way to solve issues. No wonder that in our age *social Darwinism* is growing. In fierce competition only the powerful survive. Where power is the only norm, corruption flourishes.
- Lastly we are living in a vulgar *hedonistic* world where personal desires and wants have become needs. At least for the rich enjoyment, pleasure and

indulgence are the norms. A superficial entertainment society of celebrities and sport hero's are becoming the daily TV menu of both rich and poor.

Against this background a Reformational view of social life has to be developed.

3 A Reformational philosophy of society

"Pluralism" can mean many things to different people – Reformational pluralism is not the only voice in the field of this kind of philosophy of society. For lack of space we refer the reader for the other pluralistic voices to McCarthy *et al.* (1981:30 *et seq.*) and Skillen & McCarthy (1991:3 *et seq.*). We will restrict ourselves here to a simple point for point typification of the Reformational model of society. It contains the following main points: (1) the basic points of departure, (2) its implications for office, authority, power and responsibility in the various societal relationships and (3) a modal structural analysis of societal relationships.

3.1 The basic points of departure

A Reformational social philosophy can be summed up in the following points:

- It is not a synthesis or a compromise between the other two models (individualism and collectivism). It offers a completely new, third possibility.
- It neither stresses separate individuals nor collective society, but pursues the ideal of a diversity (plurality) of *equal* relationships standing *next* to one another.
- In this view a societal relationship is not seen as a mere human invention or a social contract, but as a capacity built into creation by God and also subject to his norms.
- Every societal relationship has within its own sphere particular competence and its own kind of authority and power, but it is *restricted* or *limited* authority and power. (Only God has absolute authority and power over man and society.)
- Therefore a Reformational or pluralistic social philosophy rejects a scheme of higher-lower, according to which one relationship (e.g. the state or church) has a higher status than the others.

- For the same reason part-whole-schemes are unacceptable according to which one societal relationship is the encompassing or overarching and other relationships are mere subdivisions. For instance, in stead of a *state* university or *state* school, a Reformational social philosophy prefers a *free* university or *free* school – even if it is financed by state support.
- To show what a Reformational social philosophy looks like, we could use the following illustration: different circles standing *next* to one another. The centre of every circle symbolises the unique, divine norm for the particular relationship. Bearers of authority in particular should know what the norm is for the particular relationship in which they have authority, so that they can lead the whole relationship and its members in the direction of the fulfilment of its specific task. (In the state the norm is public justice, in marriage mutual fidelity, in the church common faith, etc.) The fact that the societal relationships stand next to each other, does not mean isolation, fragmentation or even polarisation. The different relationships also have to co-operate. (In the diagram two-way arrows can be drawn between all the different circles.) Unless this happens, the existence of the individual living in the various relationships is fragmented and she/he experiences tension between clashing loyalties.
- A pluralistic model of society is therefore built on the principle of sphere sovereignty. Just as matter, plant, animal and human beings each is subject to their particular laws, so likewise human societal relationships. Every one has its own norm and thus its own authority and sphere of activity. This implies the following : Formulated in the negative a relationship may not (1) neglect its own task or (2) infringe on or interfere in the terrain of another relationship. Positively seen it has to (1) fulfil its own calling as a relationship and (2) promote the harmonious development of the whole of society in mutual coherence.
- If a certain relationship neglects its own task and calling or infringes on that of another, it can be reprimanded by the members of the relationship or by another relationship. Such a reprimand by a different relationship is not a violation of the principle of sphere sovereignty .

- Office, authority, power and accountability have a unique character in every societal relationship. (This will be elaborated under 3.2.2.)
- Finally it has to be mentioned that a Reformational social philosophy apart from *structural* pluralism also supports *confessional* pluralism. Apart from recognising a variety of societal relationships, it is also important that a variety of religious convictions are honoured. The confessional diversity can take on structural form in, for instance, Christian, Jewish, Muslim and secular schools or universities. For all religious and "secular" groups should have the right to be treated equally. Practice has proved that it is no use denying religious diversity, or suppressing it or regarding it as something "private", for in the end it will be smuggled into the "public arena" in various ways.

The implications of the foregoing for bearers of authority has already been intimated but will now be spelt out further.

3.2 Office, authority, power and responsibility

By way of introduction the stand of a Reformational viewpoint on authority has to be differentiated clearly from two other current perspectives.

3.2.1 The hierarchical and egalitarian views

Two dominant views on office, authority and power are the hierarchical and the egalitarian.

The **hierarchical view** usually is accompanied by elitism: only certain persons may hold an office and exercise authority. They also have higher and greater authority than the "lower" offices. In practice they have a lesser – if any – responsibility "higher up", while the lower offices have to give account to the whole hierarchical bureaucracy above them. It is clear that this elitist, hierarchical view could easily lead to tyranny, in other words to an absolutisation of office, authority and power.

On the other hand the **egalitarian view** could easily result in a lack of respect for office and authority. In this view the point of departure is that every person disposes of the same or equal authority. Where the risk in the former view of

authority was that of dictatorship, here there is the risk of anarchy. Simply formulated: in the former case too much authority, and in the latter too little.

In my opinion both these views on office and authority (the hierarchical and egalitarian), in spite of the differences between them, basically make the same mistake. They see office and authority as something undifferentiated and consequently ask the *quantitative* question, viz. how much authority someone or some societal relationship should be allotted, instead of asking the *qualitative* question, namely what kind of authority goes with each office.

Besides neither of these two viewpoints – not even the egalitarian - carries any principal guarantee against totalitarianism. In the case of the former the elite dominates and in the latter case the masses dominate – often in spite of a nice word like "democracy".

3.2.2 The Reformational view

For the sake of brevity we summarise the Reformational view on office, authority and responsibility in twelve statements (For a more detailed explanation cf. Fowler, 1991:10-16; 1993:20-32; Schouls, 1972; Van der Walt, 2000:399-404, 2002:282-294 and 2006b.)

- **Offices are not the exclusive right of individuals, limited to certain positions of leadership, status and power.** According to the Scriptures there is a universal calling to fill offices (e.g. that of prophet, priest and king), in other words to serve.
- **There also are specific calls to a variety of offices.** God calls every human being, but not all to the same office.
- **Offices are not there for the suppression of subordinates, but to enable them to fulfil their calling in the particular relationship.**
- **The specific office qualifies authority in every relationship.** So the issue is not the *level* or *quantity* of authority, but the *kind* or *nature* of authority. Authority is the right to fill an office and this is different for every societal relationship.

- **Office and authority are inextricably connected, but still have to be distinguished.** An office cannot be properly executed without the necessary authority (the right to fill an office). It is also possible that an office may be filled as a result of alleged competence, mere popularity, seniority or even a self-willed appropriation of the office. In that case the office is without (lawful) authority.
- **Authority consists of insight and obedience.** Authority is not the same as power, although power is necessary for executing it. Authority presupposes (a) *insight* into the specific task of the societal relationship in question (according to the norm of God) ; (b) willingness to *obey* the norm and (c) readiness to *grow* daily in insight and obedience.
- **A societal relationship recognises the authority and institutes someone in an office or a position of authority.** The personal conviction of someone that he is able to serve in a certain societal relationship does not mean that he will automatically fill an office. The members of the relationship (the particular community) must (a) *notice* his/her competence or gifts, (b) *recognise* them and (c) *elect, institute* or *appoint* him/her.
- **Therefore authority is not deduced or transferred.** Being *instituted* in a position of authority does not mean that authority is *transferred* to a person. The members of the relationship do not each individually transfer their authority to the office bearer, so that he can exercise authority over them on their behalf. That is a typical individualistic, egalitarian view of authority. There is authority attached to every office by virtue of God's creational order – there is no need for it to be transferred.

Also the hierarchical idea that human authority is *deduced* from God's is problematic. Authority is *given* (to the offices) by God and all a societal relationship can do is recognise it. Authority is not delegated by God, so that a person should rule in God's name. (God delegates his authority to no one, except to Christ.) The authority that people exert, is that of a *creature*, a human being. Human authority may therefore not be deified. For then all control over authority

is excluded, because criticism of the execution of authority or resistance against the abuse of power may easily be regarded as rebellion against God Himself.

- **In each societal relationship a distinction should be made between the bearers of authority and those who are subject to authority.** A state, for instance, consists of government and subjects or rulers and citizens. The government is not the state, neither the citizens alone.
- **In order to exercise authority (the right to an office) power (the capacity) is needed.** A particular societal relationship authorises the office bearer or enables him/her to exercise his/her office and authority. Amongst other things this means that they *recognise* his/her right to do it, *make room* for it and supply the necessary *means*. The power given to a certain office may not be *too little*, for then the office cannot be managed effectively. However, it may not be *too much* either, for it could easily lead to abuse of power. From this it emerges that power, just like authority, is unique in every societal relationship and is therefore always limited.
- **In decision-making within a societal relationship all the members of the relationship are involved and the opinions of all are treated with respect.** Everybody has to be involved and everyone's contributions have to be taken seriously. In stead of a *majority decision*, *consensus* should be sought. The task of the office bearers is not to see to it that a certain pressure group wins, but to make a joint decision on what would be best for fulfilling the divine calling of the particular societal relationship.
- **Office bearers are answerable to the members of the particular societal relationship and to God for the way in which they execute their office.** This duty of giving account is necessary for transparency and for keeping authority in check.

These diverse offices and kinds of authority, power and responsibility can be further elucidated by means of a modal structural analysis of the different societal relationships.

3.3 A modal structural analysis

After Kuyper (cf. previous chapter) the Reformational social philosophy was given greater depth by Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd. In the work of Kuyper the principle of sphere sovereignty was primarily a *sociological* principle with *regional* meaning (the delimitation between various societal relationships). In Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven (cf. e.g. Dooyeweerd 1957, 1991 and Vollenhoven, 1992:39-45 and 2005:69-76) sphere sovereignty is broadened to a *cosmological* principle of different modalities according to which man and society function. (Klapwijk, 1980:557 explains in detail this difference, namely a shift from sphere sovereignty of societal relationships to sphere sovereignty of modalities.) By means of its doctrine of modalities or aspects of creation the Reformational social philosophy is given greater depth too, since it enables a meticulous structural analysis of each societal relationship. We now give in our own words in comprehensible terms what such a structural analysis entails.

3.3.1 The different modalities

Since there are differences of opinion on the modalities to be distinguished, only Dooyeweerd's fifteen are mentioned here. (cf. Kalsbeek, 1975:100). They are the following: the (1) arithmetical, (2) spatial, (3) kinematic, (4) physical, (5) biotic, (6) psychic, (7) logical, (8) historical, (9) lingual, (10) social, (11) economic, (12) esthetical, (13) juridical, (14) ethical and (15) confessional.

These *modalities* are *aspects* or *facets* of all created things (matter, plants, animals and human beings). Material things participate in only the first four modalities, plants in the first five and animals in the first six, while human beings participate in all fifteen. Therefore also human societal relationships function in all fifteen modalities.

3.3.2 Foundational and destinational functions

Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd and their followers show that although all fifteen modal aspects occur in each societal relationship, two modalities are especially important. They are called the foundational and the leading, qualifying or

destinational functions. In marriage and the family the foundational function according to Dooyeweerd is the biotic. Since most of the other societal relationships developed in the course of history as a result of man's cultural labour, the historical is for them the foundational function. The leading or qualifying function is the most important, since it denotes the unique character and task of every societal relationship and thereby differentiates it from the others.

3.3.3 Examples of a structural analysis

This abstract exposition can be made more comprehensible by means of a structural analysis of two relationships as examples.

The family:

We use the family as our first example. The concrete matters (right hand column) serve as examples of how all the aspects of reality (left hand column) occur in the family:

Aspects of reality

religious
 ETHICAL
 juridical
 esthetical
 economic
 social

 lingual
 historical-cultural
 logical
 psychic
 BIOTIC
 physical
 spatial

Concrete matters

family devotions
 family loyalty
 parental authority
 typical style of a family
 family budget and finances
 family entertainment,
 games, parties
 family nicknames, family idioms
 family planning, education
 family opinions, discussions
 family feelings, homesickness
 blood-ties
 family traits (children look like parents)
 home or space in which family lives

numerical family as a unity

Although the family participates in all the facets of reality, it has two points of orientation (indicated in capital letters): the ethical (tie of fidelity) – the qualifying function / aspect – and the biotic (blood-ties) – the foundational facet.

The church

When applied to the church, the structural analysis looks like this:

FAITH	confessions of faith
ethical	love for brothers and sisters
juridical	church order or church law
esthetical	style of church building or style of devotional service
economical	congregational budget and finances
social	fellowship of believers
lingual	typical church language
HISTORICAL	church organisation, power and education
logical	church teaching (dogma) and the way people in the church argue
psychic	feelings or emotional experience of various activities
biotic	the church as a living community
physical	various material things the church needs for its existence
spatial	the geographical area of a congregation or the building where they meet
numerical	local church and unity with other churches of the same confession

Such a structural analysis makes it clear that the church is historically founded,

but that it is led or qualified by faith (again indicated in capital letters). Faith also "colours" or determines all the other modalities which a church as a societal relationship reveals. The way it conducts itself socially, economically and juridically, is totally different from, for instance, the state. (For detail cf. Van der Walt, 2007b:122-124.)

More widely applied:

Similar structural analyses can be made – to mention just a few examples – of e.g. a club (socially qualified), a business (economically led), an art society (aesthetically determined) and the state (with a juridical destination). Cf. Dooyeweerd (1986:73) for his classification of the diversity of, institutions, organisations and societal relationships. (For a similar structural analysis of the state, see section 3 of chapter 14.)

Great value

Both the abstract scientific and the concrete practical value of such analyses stand to reason. In the midst of vagueness and confusion (cf. Skillen & McCarthy, 1991:358, who show how various social philosophies fail to make clear the identity, tasks and rights of different relationships) it can be an aid to determine *what* the unique vocation or task of a specific relationship is and *how* it should take form in concrete, social life. This apart from the fact that such an analysis can be used with success to unravel the complicated mutual relationships (called "encaptic interwovenness") between the different relationships – an aspect that cannot here be investigated further.

4 A critical evaluation

Klapwijk (1980:585) with right remarks that Kuyper's call for "architectural criticism" of society echoes in the work of his followers like Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd. They expanded his ideas (as explained in the previous chapter) to a system, a Reformational social philosophy. After this preliminary rounding off the response to Kuyper's call, however, lagged behind – while the need for a Christian social philosophy is greater than ever. New contributions in this field

coming from Reformational circles were mostly confined to repetitions and smaller corrections of subdivisions rather than an ambitious further systematic expansion thereof.

4.1 Criticism indispensable

Yet critical reflection is significant for two reasons. In the first place it helps to further shape this social philosophy. Secondly it reminds one that a Reformational social philosophy does not intend to be static and therefore should not be regarded by others as a fixed ideological construction.

The points of critique mentioned here do not cover the whole field, but do touch on some important points. The problematic issues are the following: (1) how the creational order should be understood; (2) the normative character of social differentiation and (Western) progress; (3) whether "sphere sovereignty" is the best terminology; (4) whether promoting confessional pluralism causes division in society; (5) the need for and value of Christian organisations and institutions being queried; (6) the question whether the structural analyses of certain societal relationships tally with reality. We will go into each of these problems briefly.

4.2 The debate on the creational order

Since this issue was already discussed in detail in chapter 6 of this book, it will be dealt with here only briefly.

Already Calvin was convinced of the existence of a divine order for creation, normative for our entire life (cf. Spykman, 1976:195-8). As is already known, according to Kuyper these creational ordinances are derived from the absolute sovereignty of Christ (Mat. 28:18). God spreads his authority over different societal relationships to prevent concentrated authority in the hands of sinful human beings.

Criticism on Kuyper

This biblical idea according to Klapwijk (1980:534-5) has, however, been too much tainted with the unbiblical ancient Stoic logos doctrine and Platonic-Augustinian realism. According to Kuyper the reasonable ideas first exist in the

mind of God, while he creates images of it (=the creational ordinations) in the human mind. The order of creation is therefore a logical product of the Divine Reason. With right Klapwijk poses the question whether man is not viewed by Kuyper too much as a rational being and the creational order one-sidedly as a logical order.

The viewpoint of Dooyeweerd

In Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven's social philosophy too the creational order plays a key role. In this way they attempt to express that, in spite of the human disobedience, nature and society are still subject to God's creational will. This conviction they set over against historicism that was prevalent in their time. This philosophy regards everything – including every societal relationship – as historically determined and therefore prone to change and relative. Historicism consequently undermines faith in a divine creational order. Only time and culturally bound human values exist.

Dooyeweerd (1991:292-3) also criticises Barth who puts all the emphasis on salvation in Christ and (out of reaction to the wrong use of it) refuses to recognise God's creational revelation and ordinations. But according to Dooyeweerd the fall of man changed neither the *nature* of created things nor God's *will* for them, only the religious *direction* of man's heart. A denial of this leads to the unbiblical viewpoint that the fall allegedly tainted the *structure* of creation. This could imply that sin gets an autonomic existence next to God – a viewpoint which would credit Satan with too much power and rob God of his all-inclusive sovereignty.

Criticism of Dooyeweerd

Later on Dooyeweerd had to defend his teaching of creational ordinations against philosophers like Van Peursen (cf. Klapwijk, 1980:566-568). It seems that Van Peursen was not concerned with the existence of creational ordinances, but with the way human beings understand them. In his opinion Dooyeweerd made too narrow a connection between God's ordinations and man's subjective, preliminary, sometimes faulty understanding of them. In defence of Dooyeweerd's it must be stated that he does regard God's creational ordinations

as *constant* but not as *static*. Seen from the human side, he also stressed that man has to *give form* to (positivise) God's laws for his own time and circumstances.

A Reformational philosopher like Klapwijk (cf. 1995b:209 *et seq.*), however, still feels uncomfortable with the way in which Dooyeweerd regards the creational order and wants to put more emphasis on the Messianic or redemptive message of the Scriptures. (His so-called "creational messianic" motive.) He wants to do this because evil has sometimes tainted the meaning of a facet of creation in such a demonic way that more is needed than just "discovering law and order in a sovereign sphere" (p. 212). He puts it as follows: "We must decipher the *end things*, the eschatological symbols in order to understand the principles given in the *beginning*, the protological creational ordinations. And vice versa" (p. 211) [translated from the Dutch]. It has to be discovered from the future what God's intentions with the original creation and the present violated one are.

Enduring actuality

In our contemporary postmodern, relativistic times this debate on a creational order has lost none of its actuality – much rather it has gained in importance. The debate on it has not ended yet, but what has become clear is the following: An attitude of absolutism, which over-estimates our human, limited comprehension of God's creational ordinances and almost equates it to his will, is wrong. But a relativist attitude, which maintains that God's creational order cannot be known or even does not exist, is equally unacceptable. The truth probably lies between the two extremes: Although *human* and fallible, it remains *God's* ordinances which have to be discovered.

4.3 Social differentiation and progress

This point links up closely with the previous one. As Griffioen (1995:147) remarks with right, for two reasons Dooyeweerd attaches great value to the gradual differentiation of different social relationships during the course of history. In the first instance differentiation is a criterion for measuring the extent of obedience to God's creational order. Secondly Dooyeweerd sees it as a sign of

modernisation and progress. Therefore to him differentiation itself has normative significance and is not, the other way round, judged normatively. Western culture more or less forms the climax of this historical differentiation process.

Griffioen (2002:641-644) and Mouw en Griffioen (1993:17) corrected this one-sidedness in Dooyeweerd by distinguishing three kinds of diversity or pluralism. Apart from structural (or associational) diversity and religious (or directional) diversity in society, they also consider cultural (or contextual) diversity as important when constructing a Christian social philosophy. It should, therefore, not be applied in exactly the same way all over the world. The African context is, for example, totally different from the Dutch cultural context.

Criticism of Kuyper

Before dealing with Dooyeweerd any further, we have to remark that similar questions were put to his predecessor, Kuyper. Klapwijk (1980:540 *et seq.*) shows how Kuyper's view of history was influenced by German Romanticism and Idealistic philosophy. As a result he believed in the progress of history (cultural evolutionism) – with Calvinism as the apex.

So in the work of Kuyper the border between "it is written" (the Bible and God's order) and "it happened" (cultural development) becomes vague; that is between the normative authority of God's Word and the factual development of Calvinism. It seems as if Kuyper accepts that the creational ordinations will unlock themselves in the – sometimes dubious – development of human history.

Criticism of Dooyeweerd

Griffioen (2003:149-179) has serious problems with Dooyeweerd's ideas about progress. Similar questions are also put by Klapwijk (cf. 1995b) to Dooyeweerd: Does there actually exist a universal historical process of unfolding (progress)? What about all the civilisations that disappeared without a trace? Can one speak about the normative development/unfolding of societal relationships? Aren't there just as many examples of decay or degeneration? According to Klapwijk (p. 219) Dooyeweerd's view of history is probably to a greater extent determined by the

German Idealistic philosophy of his time than by the Scriptures. Moreover, it smells strongly of Eurocentrism. (Klapwijk himself prefers taking the cultural context as a point of departure and being led by a creational messianic perspective – cf. 4.2 above). In spite of Dooyeweerd's criticism on historicism (cf. once more 4.2 above) it seems as if he did not succeed in avoiding the same trap.

Primitive and modern queried

Vrieze (1977:167-204) had similar critique even earlier. According to Dooyeweerd's idea of an unlocking, unfolding culture earlier societies should be regarded as "primitive" because they were still undifferentiated, while current societies (especially Western ones) are typified as "modern". (Differentiation is the norm.)

Even superficially considered such a viewpoint sounds somewhat arrogant. More important is the question about the *criterion* for evaluating a culture or a society. Surely it cannot be taken from the culture/society itself, but needs a norm from outside one's own and other cultures.

According to Vrieze Dooyeweerd also does not give sufficient account of the religious character of societies and their relationships. Vrieze does agree that the so-called primitive societies were not yet differentiated and static. However, this is not the most important factor, while their religious direction is. Since in such a society no distinction is made between different relationships and everything is absorbed into an undifferentiated whole, Vrieze (p. 177) calls it a religiously totalitarian-directed pseudo-society. However, it is not only among "primitive" nations that a comprehensive societal order is deified. According to Vrieze (201, 202) present-day American society also qualifies as "primitive", since the technical-economical dominates all the different other relationships in the USA!

4.4 "Sovereignty" queried

This point of critique is also connected to the one on the creational order (4.2 above). The critique is not directed at the contents of the principle of sphere-

During the second half of the previous century, however, these Christian organisations / institutions were fiercely criticised especially in the Netherlands. It was alleged that such Christian political parties, labour unions, schools and radio

Turnabout

Since Reformational social philosophers were convinced that confessional diversity may also take structural form in public life, numerous Christian organisations and institutions were set up, especially in the Netherlands but also in other places in the world. (Klapwijk, 1995d describes the right and wrong motives behind this as well as the different types of organisations. Klapwijk, 1995c also explains why para-church organisations are not the best solution to Christians' involvement in society.)

4.6 Christian organisations and institutions

Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd in their social philosophy merely differentiated between two kinds of pluralism, namely between the structural diversity and the religious direction of the social relationships. As mentioned already, Mouw and Griffioen (1993:1019) add a third important element, namely the contextual. They distinguish the following (p. 17, 18): "directional (religious) pluralism, associational (structural) pluralism, contextual (cultural) pluralism". In the rest of the book the two writers show how these three kinds of diversity in society are inextricably bound up with one another and exert a mutual influence. Thus in their view of social life they purposely attempt to give attention to cultural differences as well. This is an important correction on Dooyeweerd who, to a great extent (cf. 4.3 above), thought in a Eurocentric way.

His followers who came after him, however, did just that (cf. e.g. McCarthy *et al.*, 1981:38-40). They do not regard the principle of confessional pluralism as something that divides society, but as essential for doing justice to all religious groups.

Progress after Dooyeweerd

sovereignty, but at the terminology (name) to be used. Volleghoven (1992:44 and 2005:72), for instance, says that his predecessor, Kuyper, did not differentiate clearly enough between the sovereignty of God and sovereignty in the principle of sphere sovereignty. It seems that Volleghoven is of the opinion that the word "sovereignty" can only be applied to God and not to human relationships. "Sovereignty" to him carries too much of the unbiblical idea of human autonomy (in other words that man is supposed to be his own lawgiver).

This could be the reason why later Reformational philosophers abandoned the well-known expression: "sphere-sovereignty". Klapwijk (1995b:210) prefers to speak of the "own responsibility and competence" of the different societal relationships. Wolters (1992:83) suggests the term "differentiated responsibility". Previously Spykman (1976:166) mentioned the following alternatives: "sphere-authority", "sphere-responsibility" and "sphere-stewardship".

Kok (1997:227-8) provides the following further terminological clarifications. Firstly he distinguishes between sovereignty and (relative) autonomy. The first has to do with *modal* differences, the second with *individual* differences. States, for instance, have the same sovereignty, namely juridical sovereignty. However, with respect to each other, they are not sovereign, but relatively autonomous. Secondly Kok emphasises (see Volleghoven above) that relative autonomy should clearly be distinguished from autonomy as we find it flaunted in the history of philosophy, namely in the sense of the self-sufficiency declaration of human beings with respect to God. Thirdly, relative autonomy is also different from autarchy, the attempt on the part of any societal relationship to be self-sufficient. Relative autonomy realises that there are other legitimate social relationships. Each of them must be given due respect.

4.5 Confessional pluralism elaborated

Quite possibly because of the time in which Dooyeweerd lived (at the time the current conflict between different religions and cultures was not yet such a burning issue in his country and in Europe), he did not stress confessional pluralism so much.

stations promoted "pillarization", in other words had divisive results (cf. Hiemstra, 1997:4 *et seq.*).

A significant contribution to civil society and against secularism

Since then this reaction has, however, been replaced in the opinion of some people by renewed appreciation (cf. e.g. Buijs *et al.*, 2003). The reason is the growing multi-religious character of societies worldwide. By allowing religiously oriented organisations (like Christian, Muslim etc.) justice could be done to all citizens in such mixed societies. The renewed appreciation is also linked to the insight that such confessional organisations could form an important part of the advancement of a civil society in many countries (cf. Blokhuis and Hielema, 2006). Besides Van der Walt (2007c) maintains that Christian organisations could be an effective way of combating the growing secularism in society. As opposed to other ways of effecting change in society this should be given much more attention, also in South Africa.

4.7 Structural analyses queried

A last example of ongoing reflection in the Reformational circle raises the question whether the structural analysis of certain societal relationships was correct. Vrieze (1977:161 *et seq.*) for instance differs with Dooyeweerd's analysis of marriage and family (cf. 3.3.3 above).

Marriage analysed in a different way

According to Vrieze marriage is not biotically and sexually founded (the viewpoint of Dooyeweerd). The relationship does not consist in the first place of a biotic event. Furthermore such a biotic founding fails to appreciate the human being's existence as man and woman. He explains it as follows (Vrieze, 1977:163): Behind the view of marriage as a biotic way of existence lies the reduction of the sexual difference to a mere difference in biotic functioning. This implies a confusion of individuality and modality. Man and woman function in the biotic way of existence because he is man and she is woman. The particular way of functioning does not *cause* them to be man or woman, it *follows from it*. The

sexual difference cannot be denoted modally (biotic), since it is pre-modal by nature. Since marriage is founded on a fundamental sexual difference within humanity (being man and woman) it cannot be characterised by means of a foundational and destinal function (i.e. modally).

A different look at the family

Vrieze also differs with Dooyeweerd on his typification of the family as a "natural" community, since families (like marriages) according to him have to be *formed* and *maintained*. According to Vrieze (1977:166, 167) the family is an orientating and anchoring community in which young people have to learn to respond to God's various callings, in other words they must learn to find direction in life.

These two examples remind us that the Reformational structural analyses of various relationships, however valuable they may be, may not be canonised. The question should always be whether it tallies with reality. Furthermore the contextual (or cultural) element (cf. Mouw and Griffioen, 1993 above) should be an inherent part of such structural analyses, since societal relationships do not originate or exist in a vacuum but within a certain culture.

This brings us to the end of a very short and therefore incomplete critical evaluation. It has to be kept in mind that corrections and the necessity for further reflection do not detract from the value of a Reformational social philosophy. Its value can be seen from its applicability in various domains – which forms the concluding part of this investigation.

5 Practical applicability

One could call the practical applicability the final test of this social philosophy. For indeed a *view* of society is worthless unless it can make a contribution to *change* in society. Wolters (1992:74 *et seq.*) and Van der Walt (2002:295-335) e.g. discusses various possible ways of changing society, motivates why they chooses for the Reformational model and points out how society can be renewed according to this model. Harinck (2007) and Griffioen (2009) indicate the practical relevance of Dooyeweerd's social philosophy for the contemporary multicultural

Netherlands. The present Dutch cabinet is called a "Dooyeweerd Cabinet", because apart from the premier and vice-premier, also other ministers are members of the Society for Reformational Philosophy!

As we have already argued, structural and confessional pluralism are not *separated* in Reformational social philosophy. However, in what follows below the two are discussed separately in order to determine the value of each for contemporary societal renewal.

5.1 The value of structural pluralism

The particular value of structural pluralism, constructed on a modal analysis of the various societal relationships, is that it opens one's eyes to all kinds of "isms". An ism denotes the absolutisation of one aspect of reality or one relationship in society to the disadvantage of all the others. Apart from individualism and collectivism (already discussed) materialism, biologism, economism and historicism are examples of this.

5.1.1 The danger of isms

Any ism is an attempt to reduce everything to one facet/relationship. Such a reduction means a grave distortion of reality. In the societal domain it leads to totalitarian ideologies. Reformational social philosophy therefore is a means of noticing such ideologies and attempting to counteract in practice the distortion they cause (cf., for example, Goudzwaard, 1984).

5.1.2 Examples

Here are a few examples of Reformational philosophers applying the above.

- **Political domination** is resisted by Zylstra (1968) and Runner (1974).
- **Scientification and technisation of society.** Seen from a pluralistic societal viewpoint forty years ago already Van Riessen (1970:68 *et seq.*) described how science and technology are going to dominate society in future. In the time of Schuurman (1980) the contours and threats of such a society emerged more

clearly and in his latest writing (cf. Schuurman, 2005) his warnings become even more urgent and incisive.

- **Commercialisation.** Technisation today goes hand in hand with neo-capitalist economism or the commercialisation of all of society. Even societal relationships like the family, church and university, which are not economically qualified, are regarded and treated as economic units. As far back as thirty years ago Goudzwaard (1979) incisively analysed this capitalistic ideology – accepted without criticism by many Christians – and warned against it. At the time Vrieze (1977) also warned that progress should not be understood and measured in a technical-economic sense only. In his view (p. 202) it leads to a society that is no less totalitarian than in the case of a political tyranny: The family, education, science, art, entertainment and even politics are seen as mere subdivisions of economic life and their value is judged only according to material criteria (of production and consumption in particular). Recently Simons (2007) pointed out the harmful consequences of this growing technicism and economism for agriculture worldwide.

- **Globalisation.** The neo-capitalist ideology today is a global phenomenon. Multi-national business concerns and financial markets are so strong and influential that they can threaten the autonomy of a poor country and cause its economy to collapse. World markets dominate national governments and all the other walks of life like family life, education, science and even religion. With right Son (1999:187) remarks that today it is not enough to campaign for social pluralism within a particular country unless these international economic giants are taken on. According to him there is no reason why the old principle of sphere sovereignty could not be applied on a global scale. He gives examples of non-governmental organisations (NGO's) which successfully addressed serious world-encompassing problems. His question is why Christian organisations cannot in the same way co-operate internationally towards a variety of goals.

- **Group rights.** The debate on human rights is often concerned merely with individual rights (resulting from the influence of an individualistic social viewpoint).

Reformational social philosophy however (cf. Zylstra, 1991) also recognises the rights of groups and societal relationships and can therefore help in broadening the dialogue on human rights – also in South Africa. With reference to the broad distinction made by Mouw & Griffioen (1993) mentioned above, one would have to differentiate at least institutional, religious and cultural rights.

- **Strengthening civil society.** The concept "civil society" is defined in diverse ways (cf. Blokhuis & Hielema, 2006). One of the most common definitions is that it is the societal space between personal life (of e.g. marriage and family) and public life (e.g. politics and the economy). This "middle terrain" consists of numerous institutions and organisations brought about by civilians with a variety of goals. Civil society could therefore be called the social cement which bonds a society. However, there are many countries where a "civil society" has not developed or has been violently suppressed. Since a Reformational social philosophy in principle justifies and in practice supports the establishment of such civil organisations, it can make a significant contribution in this respect. So, for instance, Son (1999:184 *et seq.*) shows how NGO's in Korea were powerful antipodes against state absolutism. In his excellent essay Buijs (2006:19-41) sees great potential for the involvement of especially Christian civil organisations/institutions in current societies.

- **Poverty and other social issues.** Finally it should be mentioned that there is almost no social issue which does not necessitate a structural analysis. Kuyper (1991) already showed (in 1891) that, for instance, poverty cannot be solved with superficial remedial work. It is a structural problem. Poverty – like excessive wealth – is "built in" into the structures of society. Therefore it can only be solved by change in the societal structures. Van der Walt (2006a and 2007) therefore pleads that the churches' symptomatic social welfare work should be replaced by more radical forms of social welfare (which also analyse and address the structures).

Apart from structural pluralism, confessional pluralism, too, has great value in contemporary society – a second asset.

5.2 The value of confessional pluralism

One of the great issues in the world today is that almost nowhere a homogenous religious society is to be found – most have become multi-religious, they have to accommodate a diversity of religious convictions.

The bogus solution of private-public

Governments with secular-liberal constitutions (some more religiously neutral and others openly anti-religious) attempt to solve the problem of clashes between different religious groups by means of a distinction between private and public. Religious convictions then are regarded as something personal or private and may not play a role in the public sphere of education, economics, politics, etc. – it allegedly harms (especially political or national) unity.

Not only is this an artificial division (where exactly does private terrain stop and public begin?) but it is not honest, just or practical either. It is not honest, for all the other religions are banned from public life, so that their place can be taken by the religion of secularism. It is not just, because secularists may practice their religion in public, while this right is not granted to other religions. Finally it is not practical either, for – as we have already shown – societal structures cannot be severed from their religious direction. The consequence is that the religious differences can never be really suppressed and people will attempt in various ways – even unacceptable ones – to assert their deepest convictions.

The Reformational solution

Reformational confessional pluralism which takes structural form in religiously oriented schools, political parties, labour unions, etc. cuts across the prevailing private-public dualism in a principial and a practical way. Instead of a denial and suppression of religious differences, it recognises the confessional diversity and also gives structural space for it to be freely put into practice. Unless this happens, religious groups may even use violence to be recognised. Numerous examples can be mentioned. Since this right to express one's religious

convictions in public is not limited to a certain group (e.g. Christians), the Reformational solution also meets the central political norm of impartial justice.

5.3 Changes in society

At the beginning of this section it was stated that a worthwhile societal *view* should also lead to *changes* in society. *How* exactly it can be done, has now become clearer. While many Christians want to exert an influence on society only by way of prayer, their personal witness and deeds or through their churches, the Reformational social philosophy offers a third, more powerful means in Christian organisations and institutions. For lack of space it is not possible to go into the detail of problems surrounding such organisations/institutions as well as their value. (For particulars cf. Buijs *et al.*, 2003, Klapwijk, 1995d and Van der Walt, 2002:325-335 and 2007c). We can only state here that there is great potential for the improvement of society in organised, structured Christian action. This potential has not nearly been explored.

6 Summary review

We have come a long way. In the previous chapter it began with the problem why so few Christians today are really involved in society. A partial answer to the question was that they do not have an integral Christian societal view. Reformational social philosophy was identified as a possible candidate to fill this void. To qualify, however, it was first tested Scripturally and historically. Further it was (in this chapter) not only explained systematically, but also critically evaluated. Finally it was shown that it is not an abstract ivory tower philosophy, but can be applied in practice. The question with which the investigation started was therefore answered in the end – albeit provisionally.

To use an image, Christians not only need clothes for church and the home. They also need other clothes to appear with confidence in so-called public life. We hope that this Reformational social philosophy will offer Christians the necessary “clothes” to get involved in society outside the confined circle of their personal and church lives with conviction, enthusiasm and a willingness to serve.

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CHAPTER 14

TOWARDS A NORMATIVE POLITICS

This chapter has a two-fold aim. It first investigates the political message of the Institute for Reformational Studies (IRS) at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education during the period of approximately 1976 to 1996 as well as its relevance for the contemporary political dispensation in South Africa and, I am sure, also in other countries. Secondly, for the purpose of future research, it provides the results of bibliographical research about IRS-publications on politics and related issues.

The first (systematic) part starts with the Christian worldviewish foundations for a perspective on politics. Then the value of a structural analysis of the state is explained in detail. Finally a few guidelines for political action are given. In the second (bibliographical) section the material is arranged (in order to follow the historical development) in chronological order (according to the date of publication) and (with a view to further research) the different IRS series are given in separate bibliographies

Relevance for our central theme (at home in God's world):

Political life in the state (government and citizens) is an inherent part of our life in God's world and can serve our wellbeing if conducted according to God's norm of justice for everyone.

* * *

1 Introduction: development, problems, goals, methodology and set-up

The IRS was in existence at the Potchefstroom University for CHE from 1962 to 1999. For overviews of the whole period from its origin to its eventual closing Van der Walt (2006 and 2008) and Van Eeden (2006) in *Bibliography* 6.1 may be consulted.

This investigation is limited mainly to the period 1976 to 1996, since this period is known in history as the turbulent transitional phase from an apartheid or minority rule to a more democratic constitution. Especially in this period the IRS had to offer *new*, normative guidance to South African politics.

1.1 A remarkable development

Three steps taken in history (1976, 1996 and 2008) show a remarkable development.

- In 1976 the Afrikaanse Calvinistiese Beweging (The Afrikaans Calvinist Movement, later renamed the Reformational Movement of Southern Africa) organised a conference which had unprecedented repercussions. It dealt with "Justice in South African Society". The IRS published the papers and resolutions (cf. Heyns, 1976 in *Bibliography* 6.4) and therefore came in for some of the criticism. This voice from Potchefstroom pointed out that the government of the day was not fulfilling its primary task, namely justice for all.
- Twenty years later, in 1996 (cf. *Orientation*, 1996 under *Bibliography* 6.5), the IRS could, however, organise an international conference under the theme "Christianity and democracy in South Africa". In the opening address the director of the IRS could therefore refer to a new voice from Potchefstroom (cf. once more above-mentioned *Orientation*, p. 1-8). (For more on "The voice from Potchefstroom in South African society", cf. Van Eeden, 2006:485 *et seq.*) The struggle against apartheid was replaced by a democratic dispensation.
- If we take another step of somewhat more than ten years after 1996, we reach the year 2008. The remarkable thing is that – a mere three decades after the first conference mentioned above – a new conference on "Justice in South African society" would not be out of place. Increasingly the question is raised whether the democracy (the vote for all and a multi-party system) which South Africa enjoys since 1994, is really capable of doing justice to all. It would seem as if majority rule does not inevitably meet this primary norm of politics.

One could summarise it as follows: South Africa needs a new directional vision for society in general and for politics in particular. The deepest unfulfilled need is for a Christian *normative* vision. Because norms set boundaries, point direction, tell us what is good and right and what should be avoided as bad and wrong.

1.2 Some current problems by way of illustration

Before 1994 the courts in South Africa did not really have a substantial right of testing. Political power was vested in the party (or coalition of parties) that had gained the majority in parliament (the Westminster system). After 1994 (cf. the Constitution of 1996) the RSA became a constitutional state or constitutional democracy. The Constitutional Court can now test political activities against a sovereign constitution with a charter of human rights.

But questions like the following have to be asked: Can a constitutional court – especially on the long run – be politically neutral? To what extent has a democratic form of government taken hold among the broader population? Many people most probably have more loyalty towards a particular party and its leader than towards a constitution. Does South Africa merely have a *formal* constitutional state or in *actual fact* also a constitutional state which in practice results in justice? Does the ANC-government really believe in the independence of the judiciary?

However, it would be unfair to level the critique only at the ruling ANC party and government. Are other parties more capable of answering basic questions on politics? Don't they also concentrate in a pragmatic way on various less important current points of contention?

The questions we have in mind here – which should be asked by a normative politics – are, for instance, the following:

- Why is there something like a state?
- What is the relationship between the authorities (government) and the citizens (subjects)?
- Where do political parties fit into this picture as a whole?

- Does the state have a specific, restricted mandate, or can it act in all spheres of life and even dictate?
- Should political authority and power be limited and how can it be done?
- What is the relationship between the state and other societal relationships and spheres of life like the school, church, economy, technology, media and so forth?
- Can (a charter of) human rights really guarantee impartial, common justice?
- How may and should citizens act to vent their dissatisfaction with the policy and practice of government in an effective way?
- Is democracy (government by the "people") the best form of government?

These questions imply a fundamental reconsideration on politics (state, government, citizens, etc.). Such questions and others like them entail an appeal: back to the most basic points of departure.

The question is to what extent the intellectual legacy of the IRS – it had to give political guidance during a difficult transitional period – could perhaps offer answers to such and other serious political problems.

1.3 A double aim

Therefore this investigation focuses on two points: a systematic and a bibliographical one. Explaining these two aims is important.

1.3.1 The first, systematic section

Staff of the present Potchefstroom campus of the North-West University have begun tracing and recording the "intellectual legacy" of the old Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. Internationally, too, efforts were recently launched to research and exploit for the future the Reformational legacy of certain institutions under the theme "stewarding our heritage".

The legacy of the IRS forms part of this greater heritage. This also applies to the field of politics. The IRS commented and attempted to give guidance during a

turbulent era in South African political history both by theory (by means of research and publications) and in practice (e.g. by conferences and their resolutions). Of course many of the IRS messages of the time are products of their age. But apart from the historical element, they also contain enduring, principal insights which are still relevant today. The first (systematic) section of this investigation attempts to highlight the most significant elements of such a normative perspective from the IRS material.

1.3.2 The second, bibliographical section

However, the historical element is not completely insignificant. On the contrary, the history of the IRS is a reflection on a small scale of the political developments that took place on a large scale in South Africa. Since it is important to note how the continuous comment given by the IRS developed (for instance from a pro-apartheid to an obvious anti-apartheid organisation), the bibliographical section at the end (6.2 to 6.5), instead of in the normal order according to authors, is given chronologically and consequently the IRS series are also separated. The bibliographical section shows the future researcher *which* publications on politics were published by the IRS (something that is currently difficult to ascertain, since they are catalogued under various authors, editors and subject fields); also *when* they were published, and in which *series* of the "Scientific contributions of the PU for CHE" they are to be found.

1.4 Methodology

In order to achieve his aim within the restricted space of a chapter, the author had to impose the following limitations on the systematic section:

The chapter offers a *synthesis* of the most important characteristics of a normative view of politics – it does not aim at a *critical* treatise. It, therefore, is not aimed at *new reflection* either, but attempts to highlight elements of value for today. Consequently lesser differences of nuance between the various writers on the subject are not dealt with either. Besides, in contrast to normal custom, no bibliographical references are given in the text. Hundreds of references to numerous authors could be very impressive, but would leave the chapter much

less readable as well as excessively long. (All this while the chapter is meant as an appetiser to encourage the reader to delve further into the IRS-material.) Another limitation is that the length of a chapter does not allow for each important point to be made applicable to the present political situation – the informed reader will be able (also in the light of 1.2 above) to make the connection between then and now for himself/herself.

A last facet not treated here, is the question – difficult to answer – of what the true impact of the IRS was on the political situation in the RSA. *The fact that* it did have an influence on its 3,000 members, many other readers and conference attendees is clear from the regular letters of appreciation, reviews, resolutions and newspaper reports on its conferences. It can for instance be assumed that the resolutions by the IRS conferences (published in *Orientation*) were a factor that contributed to the admission of students from other population groups than whites at undergraduate level and in the university hostels of the PU for CHE. Exactly *how great* the political impact of the IRS was is just as difficult to ascertain as in the case of any other organisation or institution in South Africa or outside.

1.5 Set-up

The systematic section consists of two main parts: the vision and the practice. Under the first (1) the worldviewish points of departure are given and (2) its philosophical implications are investigated by means of a structural analysis of the state. In applying the vision in practice (1) emphasis is laid on political education; (2) it is pointed out how politics can be influenced at different levels, and (3) finally the requirements for successful political pressure groups are looked at.

2 Christian worldviewish points of departure for a societal philosophy and political perspective

The political vocation of a Christian will not be very clear if only a few isolated Bible texts are dragged in as support. A Christian worldview, based on the

Scriptures, offers a more comprehensive framework within which the political vocation can be explained. Important elements of such a worldview – with which we do not deal here but on which a number of IRS publications can be found – are a Christian anthropology and a view of society.

According to the central biblical themes of creation, fall and redemption, IRS-writers emphasise the following:

2.1 Creation and politics

The state is often depicted in the Bible by means of two metaphors: a *shield* and a *sword*, because it should *protect* its citizens and territory (on the positive side) but also, where necessary, should *punish* (on the negative side). The positive side (of taking care of good relationships between government and citizens) is the foremost. So, although it cannot be denied that the state has a serious function to fight evil, it does not exist as a consequence of sin. It therefore is no "necessary evil".

2.1.1 Cultural mandate

According to the Scriptures the human being from the time of his/her creation has the assignment of taking care of nature and fellow human beings, to protect and develop them (Gen. 1:28; 2:15). It is customarily called the comprehensive cultural mandate given to humanity by God: To rule as "viceroy" in his name and according to his will. In obedience to God's norms the human being should "reflect" God, exhibit his image.

2.1.2 Different forms of love

In this call to serve a human being is subject to God's fundamental norm, his law of love. The neighbour has to be served in all the ways in which love can be expressed: by taking care of nature, by creating arts, by being faithful in marriage, by acting as a responsible steward in the economy, by pursuing justice in the political sphere and many more. Politics therefore is also a vocation to a specific form of caring service to the fellow human being.

2.1.3 Office

Defined from a different perspective one could say that every person – whether a believer or not – fills an office. Office does not primarily mean a position of authority, but in the first place of service.

Formulated in yet another way: a human being is by nature a responding being. His life in every field contains a response – whether it is given in obedience or not – to the mandate given by his Creator. Being a responding being also implies responsibility.

An office is, however, not merely filled individually (e.g. that of prophet, priest and king). When people multiply, a degree of social organisation and institutionalisation becomes necessary for living in harmony. When one reads the Bible carefully, one sees how different societal relationships gradually develop during the course of history. In conjunction with this a differentiation of offices takes place.

2.1.4 Authority

When people live together in societal relationships, authority is indispensable. This is the *right* to decide how such relationships will carry out their different callings or tasks. God has ordained that there will be bearers of authority, but they are chosen by people for a specific office.

So while office means *service*, authority is the *means* to make this service possible. Formulated in a different way: it is the *channel* which makes it possible to obey the specific divine norm for the particular relationship so that the people within the societal relationship can flourish.

Therefore authority is always *specific* and, since it is valid for a specific area of life, it also is *restricted* and not comprehensive (totalitarian). Thus it is wrong to ask *how much* authority office bearers (e.g. a government) should have. The correct question is *what kind of* authority a government should exercise.

2.1.5 Power

Power in itself is not something evil. In order to carry out a specific office *power* is needed. It is the capacity due to the authority of the office. Power is founded on a human being's cultural vocation. Jurisdiction, for instance, is the competence of a government office to form justice.

Just like authority power is always *of a particular kind* and *limited to a specific* societal relationship. The power parents have over their children, for instance, differs from the power of management over its employees or the power of a government over its subjects.

Power is not a *norm*. Further power is not something by itself, just for the sake of power. As the capacity to fill an office it should be a *means* to service. Formulated in a different way: power should be *exploited* for a specific kind of (caring) service in a specific societal relationship.

This insight from IRS publications is particularly significant and of current interest, because having power entails a huge temptation for any person or instrument of state, namely gradually to increase that power and make it permanent. And of all kinds of power political power (since it is so far-reaching) is the most vulnerable to degenerate into a bid for omnipotence.

2.1.6 Responsibility

Office, authority and power imply, as suggested above, responsibility towards those who put the person in the office, but in the last instance also towards God who ordained different offices. In the present political dispensation in South Africa this should receive special emphasis.

From what was said above it is also clear, that responsibility is not something general, but always *specific*. One could call it *diffused* or *differentiated* responsibility. No single societal relationship can be responsible for everything. (Being responsible for *everything* could boil down to *no* responsibility.) Every bearer of authority has only a restricted and specific responsibility. This also applies to the state.

In the Reformational tradition this view was formerly called the principle of sphere sovereignty. Each societal relationship also has its own, limited authority, power and responsibility. Thus the one may not interfere in the other's sphere without very good reason. It may not neglect its own task either.

Apart from sovereignty (self-government and particular responsibility) *between* different relationships, the principle also applies *within* the same societal relationship. For instance, it is crucial that the three-fold authority of the state (legislative, executive and judicial) should function *separately* and *independently*.

2.1.7 Structural and confessional pluralism

Thus a Reformational view of society is in principle anti-totalitarian or pluralistic. It defends two kinds of plurality. In the first instance structural pluralism as we have just described it, namely that different societal structures exist independently *side by side*. No relationship *comprises* the other or is a *subdivision* of a greater entity.

In the second instance confessional pluralism is also supported. By this is meant that every societal relationship should have the right – in the so-called public sphere as well – of giving form to the deepest religious convictions of a group. Jewish, Muslim, Christian and atheist parents should, for instance, have the right to found schools according to their own religious convictions. Confessional pluralism prevents both religious anarchy and totalitarianism.

2.1.8 A third way

Such a pluralistic philosophy of society very clearly differs from the dominant Western liberalist philosophy which departs from the absolute authority or autonomy of the individual. According to this viewpoint societal relationships would be purely human creations. They originate as a consequence of a mutual social contract between individuals which transfer their autonomous authority to the elected office bearers. These bearers of authority then rule on behalf of those subject to authority. This viewpoint is sometimes also named "*popular*

sovereignty" or "democracy" (in contrast to *legal* sovereignty). The state exists solely for the sake of the citizens.

One of the IRS authors contrasted this popular view and the biblical view of the state as follows: (1) The state exists by virtue of a decision by the people – the state exists as a result of God's will; (2) the state is a servant of the people (citizens) – the state is God's servant in the first place; (3) the state may do anything to which the people (citizens) concede – the state may only do that for which God appointed it; (4) the state will ensure a healthy society – the state cannot contribute more to a healthy society than the limited role given to it by God.

A Reformational philosophy of society not only differs from an individualist one, but also from the collectivist idea of state sovereignty according to which the final authority is due to the coordinating state. While (according to liberalism) the state is there for the sake of the citizens, in this case the citizens exist solely for the sake of the state.

Both individualism and collectivism erroneously look for the final authority in the human being (the individual or the societal relationship). But absolute authority is due to God only. For the same reason Reformational philosophers are also critical of the current popular philosophy of human rights – it is founded on nothing higher than the human being's own dignity (cf. 3.8 below) and therefore rests on a very precarious foundation.

2.2 The fall and politics

To be informed about the consequences of the fall for political life one can simply read the daily paper or follow the daily news on radio or television. Nevertheless we say something more about it.

2.2.1 Abuse of office, authority and power.

If we test modern-day South African politics for the above-mentioned normative perspectives the result is hardly encouraging. A political *office* today to many people does not mean selfless service to others, but more often the self-service

and self-enrichment of the elite. *Authority* is confused with power and becomes authoritarian. *Power* is abused for manipulation and oppression. Even *violence* has become something commonplace. *Responsibility* and transparency are lacking and negligence and corruption are rampant. In summary one could say that the task of the state – because it does not meet the above-mentioned normative perspectives – is being neglected with dire consequences for society as a whole.

2.2.2 Confusion on a large scale

As a consequence of the limitations of human insight it often happens that some important political matters are no longer clearly differentiated. For instance, there can be confusion about the following four:

- The government is not distinguished from the state. This could, of course, easily lead to tyranny by a government.
- The citizens are regarded as on equal footing with the state, for the state simply has to carry out their wishes. This could degenerate into populism.
- When there is no differentiation between government and citizens, it could mean that a government once elected can proceed almost indefinitely without regularly reporting to and consulting with the citizens (e.g. by means of elections).
- The other way round if citizens and government are regarded as equal, the result is more or less the same: After an election the citizens merely become passive spectators of what the government does.

These instances of confusion are not solely of theoretical interest. The state is comprised of government and subjects. All three of these have their own kind of responsibility. If they are not clearly differentiated, their responsibility (which is in a class of its own) is blurred by being taken over by another. So we may not refer vaguely to “the responsibility of the state”. Being responsible for *everything* could boil down to no responsibility.

2.2.3 Current topicality

Here are some flashes to demonstrate how topical the insights mentioned above still are for today: (1) it is often heard that the will, power and authority of the "people" will determine what justice is; (2) the fact that the ANC again (since the end of 2007) wants to be a revolutionary liberation movement and a government simultaneously; (3) the fact that a state often – even in its highest courts of law – serves a political party; (4) the fact that governments (in the past and nowadays) interfere in numerous non-political spheres and thereby violate the fundamental principle of (structural and confessional) pluralism; (5) the fact that our *constitutional* state (according to the South African Constitution of 1996) can degenerate into a *power state*.

2.3 Redemption and politics

Christians differ with one another on the relationship between creation and redemption so that there also are different views on the role of the message of salvation and of Christians themselves in politics.

2.3.1 Different views

Various authors of IRS publications, distinguish the following five positions:

- The Christian *contrasted to* politics.
- The Christian *in a tense relationship* with politics.
- The Christian *elevated above* politics:
- The Christian "*baptises*" politics, in other words, accepts it as it is.
- The Christian has to *transform* politics by the power of the Gospel.

For lack of space we cannot discuss all five views with illustrations of each. On the whole authors of IRS publications prefer the last model. The first four views lead at most to evangelisation, moralisation and "churchifying" in the sphere of politics. While the four views also do not prevent secularisation of the political sphere, Reformational philosophers are convinced that a Christian also has a

vocation in the sphere of politics, to work for renewal and reformation of both theory and practice.

2.3.2 A normative approach

Up to now it has already become clear that the citizens and the government or their authority may not be the norm – they *all* should meet a norm. The first and most important step in the right direction is, according to Reformational thinkers, that the idea of human autonomy or self-legislation (cf. above “the will of the people”) has to be rejected as unscriptural. God – not a human being – sets the norm for the state. It is subject to transsubjective guidelines. Therefore the human being may not act – even in the sphere of politics – the way he/she thinks best. *All* human activities are subject to divine norms and have to be measured by them. Also in politics the main aim may not merely be social control or a power game .

For the sake of clarity it has to be stated that a normative approach does not entail that IRS authors propose a Christian *state* – which is impossible in a multi-religious society. However, they do offer a Christian *view of* the state, in other words how *any* state should fulfil its task.

A second remark is that the Reformational philosophers in IRS publications do not infer from their definition of “politics” what the state should be like, but follow the opposite route. By means of a structural analysis it is determined what the task of the state is and from that it becomes clear what political activities should be comprised of. On this we will subsequently focus.

3 A philosophical structural analysis of the state as a societal relationship

When is something a matter which needs the attention of the state and when is it more an economic, social, moral or religious matter? This is a hard question with which a government and also the citizens are often faced. The structural analysis made by Dooyeweerd, Vollenhoven and their numerous followers (cf.

Bibliography 6.6) and taken over in IRS publications (cf. *Bibliographies 6.2-6.5*), can be an aid to clarify such difficult questions.

3.1 An analysis according to the doctrine of modalities

As indicated already in the previous chapter (section 3.3), according to Reformational philosophy, human societal contexts, relationships, institutions and organisations exhibit all the facets that a human being exhibits. About fifteen of these facets, aspects or modalities are usually distinguished: the numeric, spatial, physical, energetic, biotic, psychic, logical, historical, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, juridical, ethical and the aspect of faith.

The following are examples of how the state also reflects these different facets:

- The *numerical*: comes to the fore in the unity of the state and all the citizens.
- The *spatial*: the geographical region taken up by a specific state and over which the government has authority.
- The *logical or analytical*: the public opinion on political affairs.
- The *cultural-historical*: the power of the state exerted by legislation, police and a defence force.
- The *economic*: collecting taxes and the internal economy of the state
- The *juridical*: passing laws and maintaining public justice.
- The *confessional aspect of faith*: What the state (implicitly or explicitly) regards as its foundation, for instance a charter of rights and/or a constitution.

That all these facets are not equally important, can be seen from the following:

3.2 The qualifying or leading facet

Just like the state all other human societal relationships also have a juridical side. Yet there is a difference. In the case of a family the parents make the rules. A school, too, has its internal regulations. Even a church has a church order according to which discipline is upheld. But in all three these cases the juridical facet is not of *primary* importance. The primary or qualifying function in the case

of the family is fidelity to the family (something ethical) and in the case of the church it is faith (cf. 3.3.3 of previous chapter). This determines how the rules, order or discipline function in each of the two relationships in their own particular way. If the juridical had been the foremost facet, life in the family and the church would have been seriously warped.

However, in the case of the state the juridical is the leading aspect, which gives this relationship its unique character but also its limitations. Every other aspect (cf. the 15 modalities listed above) is "coloured" or qualified by the juridical. Therefore Reformational philosophers – as indeed also non-Christian philosophers – prefer to speak of a "constitutional state" and to regard the state as a statutory community of government and citizens.

3.3 The founding facet

The structure of a societal relationship is determined, however, not only by its leading function. Its founding function is also contributing. A family, for instance, is qualified ethically (by the tie of fidelity between members of the family) but biotically founded (in the blood-tie) – compare again chapter 13 (3.3).

In the case of the state the founding aspect is the cultural or historical. It is a relationship brought about by the formative power (organisation or even military power) of human beings.

3.4 Both facets crucial

Both the founding and the leading facet of a societal relationship – and therefore also of the state – are crucial. Together they determine whether a state is truly a state.

May one still call something a state which does not have at its disposal a defence force to defend its borders or a police force to protect its citizens? And when the juridical qualifying function is weakened or disappears, may one then still speak of a "state" or is it more a band of robbers?

The greatest hazard, however, is that a societal relationship could be reduced to its founding facet. Instances of this are the impoverishment of one's view of the

family to something merely biological; the reduction of a business concern to material gain; and political life narrowed down to a power game.

It is therefore crucial that the power of the state (its foundation) *is used* for and *developed in* justice (the leading facet). Unless this happens, the state becomes a closed, oppressing relationship. It is then no longer a servant, but a tyrant.

So, although (in 2.1) we referred to the state as a "sword", it should not be associated with violence. Violence is the illegal, non-permissible use of force and is not permissible for any person or societal relationship. However, force is sometimes necessary. (If a burglar wants to rape your wife/daughter or soldiers murder children, one cannot just look on.) The state, too, sometimes has to act forcibly as a consequence of evil. The two most important conditions are however (1) that it must be the last way out; and (2) that no more force than is needed should be applied in fighting violence, for then the force itself degenerates into violence.

3.5 A preliminary definition of the state

In the light of the preceding overview of IRS publications one could define a state more or less as follows: "It is a societal relationship of citizens under a government who by virtue of a constitution has statutory authority over a certain geographical region that enables its government to enforce laws and thus protect this region and its inhabitants." (Because this essay only gives a general overview, we do not go into the finer distinctions between for instance the sphere of *public* justice, *civil* private law and *non-civil* private law.)

3.6 Intermezzo: the sphere of political sciences

From the foregoing structural analysis it also emerged in passing what the meaning is of the concept "politics" and what the field of investigation should be of Politics as a science according to Reformational philosophers.

"Politics" is derived from the word *polis/politea* that in the Graeco-Roman world indicated the state. "Political" therefore is not a *modal* adjective, like "social", "juridical", "aesthetic" and so forth (cf. 3.1 above). It is an *institutional* adjective,

indicating a certain entity, a societal relationship, the state. And the state exhibits all the facets of reality (cf. again above).

Thus it is wrong (the way various schools in the political sciences do it) to reduce the field of investigation of Political Science to the biological, social, historical (power) or the economic. Then it offers a very one-sided view of what politics really is. Political science is no monomodal science (like e.g. biology, economy, aesthetics, etc.) that concentrates on one facet only. It is a multimodal science.

After completing the structural analysis of the state above, one important issue remains: What is the central norm that should direct all political activities?

3.7 Public justice as the norm

God's revelation (in creation and the Scriptures) denotes justice as one of the most crucial norms for life as a whole. Therefore it is one of the most critical tests whether a societal relationship – especially the state – really fulfils its divine vocation and task, measures up to its God-given office and responsibility. But what exactly is justice?

3.7.1 Justice as a general norm

Summing up justice in a definition is impossible. It is just as impossible as saying what exactly the ethical, esthetical or faith is. Moreover justice has to be realised or given form in diverse circumstances. However, normative politics is impossible without an idea (i.e. not complete understanding) of what it entails.

Love and justice

We have already stated above that a human being's vocation is to be serviceable to God and fellow human beings according to God's commandment of love. This service of love can take on various forms as I have explained already. Thus justice does not oppose love – as is often taught. It is rather a form or expression of the fundamental commandment of love in a specific domain of life.

A definition

Expressed from the perspective of the traditional views of what justice is (what is *due* to one, what one *deserves* and what one *needs*) one could say in the light of the foregoing on the idea of office (cf. 2.1.3 above): "Justice is what is due to one, what one deserves and needs in order to execute one's calling and office in a responsible way." Authority therefore has to be a means to service (the law should promote justice) and power, too, should be guided by justice.

3.7.2 Public justice as the political norm

The state cannot be responsible for *all* justice – that would imply a totalitarian state. (The "good deeds" spoken of in Romans 13 verse 3 are *specific* good deeds and likewise the bad ones.) It is responsible for a particular kind of justice, namely the general, or public justice. In what way does it differ from something private?

This question brings one to the sphere of legal philosophy (cf. e.g. Dooyeweerd, 1997 and Hommes, 1972 in *Bibliography* 6.6) comprising numerous intricate issues with which we will not deal here. We therefore merely make a basic distinction.

The difference between private and public law

A private law (for a non-statal societal relationship) is also subject to the broad norm of justice, but structurally it differs from that of the public legal order of the state. A private law applies to the members of a non-statal relationship (e.g. a family, school, business, church) and its character (cf. above) is determined by the qualifying facet of the particular relationship.

Since the state does not comprise all the other societal forms or (formulated differently) these societal forms do not exist by the grace of the state, the government of a constitutional state can at most give *judicial recognition* to the juridical space that is due to each relationship *in its own right*.

For public justice the state has to create a legal order of its own which amongst other things entails the following: (1) *Each* person or institution within the

territorial borders of the state is subject to it regarding both *rights and duties*. (2) The state should fulfil its office as administrator of justice towards *every* person or societal relationship in an *impartial way*.

Huge spheres of life therefore are of a non-political nature. Think, for instance, of decisions a family takes about its budget, a church about discipline or a business about production. Normally none of these decisions affects everybody in the country. They may be unfair, but such injustice only concerns the state when it becomes public, that is, when they have consequences which reach outside the particular relationship and affect a larger group of people or the whole population. Of course it is not always easy to determine when the border between private and public has been crossed.

The state as the “balance wheel”

One could therefore say that in the midst of all other forms of human social life the state is the *integrator, coordinator and the one to maintain balance* in justice. This means, first, negatively, that it has to prevent one relationship from interfering in the sphere of another or taking over its task. On the positive side it also entails that the state has to set and maintain conditions which would ensure the healthy development of all other institutions and relationships, so that each in their own sphere can render meaningful service and can promote a facet of human welfare.

So it is clear that the state does not have the competence to deprive other societal relationships of their authority and power, but has to regulate matters so that they all meet the norm of a just society. (One could say – in a very simplified way – that the authority of the state *ends* where the authority of other relationships *begins*.)

No mean task

Not only is the task to regulate such a comprehensive order of justice an important one, it also is difficult. When is a matter a political issue (a case for the state) or rather an economic, social or religious matter (to mention but a few

possible examples) For instance, is it a political issue when Afrikaner people in Orania wish to live separately? Probably not, but it would if it implied some kind of discrimination against others. Likewise the relationship between a man and his wife or relationships within the church are not state matters, but could become so.

It also is an intricate matter to balance the diverging interests of different human institutions. On the one hand it is not the task of the state to rectify everything that is wrong, while on the other hand it is involved in life as a whole. Therefore great sensitivity and special care and wisdom are needed to avoid the extremes of a lack of involvement as well as over-involvement.

3.8 The state and human rights

From the foregoing it has emerged that normative politics is much more than human rights politics. However, the popular human rights theories nowadays have often become the only way – also in South Africa – in which something normative is still broached in secular politics. (For the rest the political scene is dominated by pragmatism, materialism and technicism – see later). However, it is a question whether the much acclaimed human rights do offer a guarantee for a healthy state.

It is impossible in this chapter at this point to trace the history, the different kinds of rights and so forth. We keep it to a definition from a Reformational perspective from which subsequently (from various IRS publications) a number of points of critique will be given on current views of human rights.

3.8.1 A preliminary definition

In the light of the exposition above on office and responsibility various IRS publications define human rights more or less as follows: "Rights (guaranteed by a political constitutional order) should create the necessary individual and social space for each person and societal relationship to be able to fulfil its divine vocation, office and responsibility."

However, the following questions indicate numerous unsolved problems.

3.8.2 The basic issue

Probably the most difficult problem is the one about the *foundation* of most secular theories on human rights. These theories depart from the free autonomous will of individuals. They voluntarily enter into a social contract and transfer certain inherent rights to the state who rule on their behalf and protect their rights. These rights are founded on certain inherent characteristics (like freedom, equality, dignity) *of a human being*.

The question raised by Reformational philosophers is whether such a view of human rights is not built on quicksand. Why would the free autonomous person keep himself/herself to their agreement and not impair the freedom of others? For binding their own will would mean not being free. A right can, however, only have a firm footing if its foundation is *outside* the human being. Formulated in a different way: rights will only have a firm foundation when recognition is given to *divine* obligations (calling, office and responsibility) – compare the definition above.

Reformational philosophy therefore does not deny the existence of human rights. However, the Reformational viewpoint differs from the current theories in several respects: (1) its foundation is different – in God's calling; (2) its contents are not determined by the desires and interests of people, but by what God gives to a human being and demands from him; (3) the state does not create these rights, but can merely recognise and protect the rights of the other societal relationships.

3.8.3 Additional problems

Among the other problems with which the ideal of human rights confronts countries worldwide, the following also emerge from the IRS literature:

- Too much emphasis is laid on *individual* rights and too little on the rights of societal relationships and (ethnic) groups.
- Rights are regarded too much as *general, universal* guidelines for everyone. They should rather be inferred from the *specific* calling of each societal relationship. (So, for instance, the rights of children should be inferred from what

the calling of a family is. Labourers' rights depend on what the task of a factory is.)

- Rights cannot be *invariably* and *absolutely* valid – they are man-made fabrications and not something divine.
- Not all rights are *equally important* – priorities will have to be set. Especially since poorer countries like South Africa cannot meet all possible rights.
- Yet one right may not be pursued *at the expense of another*. As far as it is viable all should receive attention simultaneously.
- *Rights and obligations* are like the two sides of the same coin and should therefore always go together and receive the same emphasis. (What is one person's right, is the other one's duty.)
- *Human rights* (in particular the more individualistic ones) contain the risk of *self-centredness* and could therefore promote division in a community.
- It can also harbour a *legalistic* attitude – all problems between people are reduced to the juridical and have to be solved by the courts.
- A good bill of human rights (as a part of the constitution) does not of necessity do away with *deeper lying political differences*.
- Finally, it is clear that human rights can be a *means*, but are still no *guarantee* that the state will fulfil its primary obligation, namely public justice. Therefore rights may not be the absolute, final norm. They too have to be subjected to the higher, god-given norm of public justice. Formulated in a different way: justice should be the first matter of importance, since it implies rights and not the other way round.

As promised initially, we finally have to investigate which factors can jeopardise a normative view of politics as summarised above from IRS publications.

3.9 Current threats to a healthy political life

IRS material also takes note of the various ways in which a state can be warped or contorted into something it should not be. We here only pay attention to three such "isms" or contortions: politicisation, commercialisation and technisation.

3.9.1 Politicisation

From what precedes it is clear that for Reformational scholars politics is not everything, nor is everything politics. A pluralistic view of society is anti-totalitarian and can therefore not allow one relationship (the political one of the state) to dominate or obliterate the rest. In this way the variety of divine callings and tasks are narrowed down to only one of them. Or, formulated differently, the whole of society is painted with a monochrome political "paint". But the state does not include the rest of society or encompass it; it is merely a subdivision of society as a whole.

Seek first the political kingdom

Once again this is not a mere theoretical issue. In South Africa and also in other countries it is often thought that once one has found the political kingdom, one will receive all the other things as a matter of course into the bargain. The state – especially a democratic one – is still too much overrated as the big "father"/"mother" who has to take care of everything. However, it has been sufficiently demonstrated above that unnecessary interference by the state can cause infinite damage. (This not only applies to the present South Africa but also to the old apartheid dispensation which was an example of this state of affairs.)

Depoliticisation

Absolutising politics, expecting man's salvation from it, down through the ages has only resulted in misery. In such a situation of politicisation of society the task of the citizens is to pursue depoliticisation of society in all possible ways.

A second hazard is:

3.9.2 The commercialisation of the state

In this case the non-qualifying aspect of the state (the economic) ousts the qualifying/leading facet, namely the juridical (cf. 3.2 above).

Economism

Every societal relationship – including the state (cf. again 3.1 above) – has an economic facet and therefore also an economic responsibility. Even a family or a church cannot do without money. However, only in the case of a business the economic is the leading facet and not in the case of the state. Thus it cannot be expected from the state (or government) to bear economic responsibility for society as a *whole*. Therefore the success of a government may not be judged exclusively by its economic prowess – a requirement which is commonly set nowadays.

The wrong norm

Here the same risk threatens the state as today it does the rest of society: It is being judged by the wrong norm, a norm (the material one) which is alien to the particular relationship.

In the case of a commercialised university students are transformed into “clients” and lecturers into “consultants”, who have to deliver the necessary “products” for the market as speedily as possible. Even churches today do not wholly escape from these economic distortions. And the globalisation of the capitalist economy makes it almost impossible for governments to take independent economic decisions regarding the economy of their own countries. Everything is swept along in the raging torrent of service to Mammon.

Ruling according to strictly economic criteria is much easier and more popular – it books success – than accepting the challenge of public justice. To a great extent today their economic policies determine whether governments win or lose at the poll. The norm should however not be success (pragmatism) but obedience to God's call for justice.

Simultaneous realisation of all norms

We do not suggest that politics and the economy can be separated in a watertight fashion. Political resolutions should also be economically responsible resolutions which meet the norm of good stewardship. Restricting the commercialisation of politics does not of necessity mean to fail economically. The state participates in all the facets of reality. Apart from being led by the main norm of justice, it should at the same time obey all the other norms (for e.g. the biological, social, economic). Once more, this entails no mean assignment.

Finally, something about the third hazard:

3.9.3 The technicisation of the state

Several IRS writers point out that people today to a growing extent live in a "technical society" of which the state often forms the centre. The modern state has degenerated into a "technocracy".

A bureaucracy

Of course technological development as such is not necessarily bad or evil. But if it ousts the norm for a healthy political life and even displaces it by technical progress and efficiency, red lights start flashing. One of the consequences is a bureaucracy.

Technocracy

IRS writers point out that democracy can become a joke when so much power centres in the hands of civil servants and technocrats who broaden and enhance the power of governments. As a result of this citizens in everyday life are burdened with a load of red tape for something as simple as getting an identity document. (Of course other factors like incompetence and negligence also play a part in South Africa.)

* * *

This concludes the first part of this investigation, a synthesis of the most significant facets of a Reformational political view, as spelled out in numerous

IRS publications in much more detail (cf. *Bibliographies* 6.2 to 6.5). The second main section of the investigation deals with the way this view can be implemented, how it can become reality.

4 From theory to practice

Before dealing with what has to happen in practice, we have to remind the reader of the different Christian views of politics (cf. 2.3.1 above), since theory determines practice.

4.1 View determines practice

Christians who are of the opinion that politics is not a vocation for them, but a kind of forbidden land for Christians, will not take the trouble to reflect on it and will therefore be even more reluctant to be actually involved. This, however, is a conviction not held by the writers in the different IRS series. They are of the opinion that it is possible to live one's faith in politics too. Here are some of the suggestions they make on how Christians can fulfil their political vocation and can in various ways be responsible citizens of an increasingly secular political dispensation.

4.2 Worldviewish political education

Many Christians in South Africa and elsewhere still seem to think that mass prayer meetings are the only way in which the gospel can influence politics. Of course God can do miracles and convert people. But the normal way is that members of a societal relationship have to take responsibility for the functioning of the particular relationship. For that knowledge and insight into the *specific nature* of the relationship is needed. Uninformed people will therefore not achieve much. Commencing a political meeting with Scripture reading and prayer or giving a "sermon" in parliament, is important but far from sufficient. Testimony should be given in a *particular* (political) way. The Reformational view set out above contains the worldviewish and philosophical elements needed for a truly politically relevant "testimony".

What should therefore be emphasised in the first instance is the necessity of Christian political education. (The only way of being politically involved is not only every five years at the polls.) Much more reflection, thinking, discussion, study and training in the political sphere on fundamental matters is needed than is currently taking place in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent.

4.3 Involvement at various levels

Although there are some positive signs (cf. e.g. the Trade Union Solidarity) South Africans (especially whites) have not nearly availed themselves of all the possible avenues of influencing government – they have become non-protesting Protestants! Government legislation and policy can, however, be influenced in the following ways:

4.3.1 Crusades by *individual citizens*, like letters to the press or political leaders, and signing petitions.

4.3.2 Often the political task of Christians is left to their *churches*. However, it is not the primary task of the churches. Normally church leaders also do not have the political skills needed so that their actions do not avail much. But churches should encourage and support their members who do have the necessary political insight to become politically involved. It is also essential for Christians to be cured of narrow denominationalism, so that there can be cooperation in the political sphere across church borders. Minority groups are more easily ignored by a government.

Since civil society in South Africa is for the greater part still fast asleep, we also mention the following:

4.3.3 Group protests like demonstrations, boycotts and strikes.

4.3.4 Christian political parties which can operate either inside or outside government.

4.3.5 Political pressure groups which can be organised locally, regionally, nationally or even internationally and which can concentrate on specific matters or pursue more comprehensive political aims.

4.4 Requirements for successful pressure groups

Since different kinds of pressure are some of the most successful political methods (it has more power than individuals or the voice of the people) we finally air some thoughts on it.

4.4.1 Skills

A very important prerequisite for effective pressure groups is the necessary political skills. Among these we could mention the following: (1) a thorough knowledge of and insight into the political scene in general; (2) an understanding of the "philosophy" of the ruling party; (3) a sense of the limitations of one's own influence – do not expect immediate results or try to reach the impossible; (4) keep in mind the existence of other pressure groups and the power play involved; (5) strategic thinking means knowing on whom, when, where, why and how to apply pressure; (6) it should be positive and (7) purposeful. Some remarks about the last two requirements are important.

4.4.2 Constructive pressure

Effective pressure would present politicians with positive, constructive suggestions. Negative pressure restricted to critique of government rulings, without suggesting solutions to problems, seldom succeeds. (Just like other people, politicians do not like critique either.) Unfortunately one gets the impression that much of the pressure brought about by other parties (and by Christians) on the ruling ANC is negative most of the time. (For instance: anti-pornography, anti-abortion, anti-crime and anti-corruption.) Acting in such a way might in some cases temporarily obstruct unwanted legislation or policy, but contributes little to a future healthy political life. It furthermore gives the impression that Christianity is basically a negative religion.

4.4.3 A specific focus

Purposefulness, too, is crucial. Which means that pressure should be exerted for a specific cause. Of course this requires specialisation, the necessary expertise. Unless you have this your requests can – with right – be ignored as irrelevant.

A final remark is that: pressure groups inspired by Christian ideals should be motivated by much more than the particular interest of a certain group. Their concern should be service to fellow human beings (cf. what was said above on office), obedience to the highest norm for the state (justice for all) and the well-being of a whole society.

4.5 When peaceful measures fail

Not many IRS-publications explicitly discuss the problem of what a Christian should do when the above peaceful measures to influence a government are unsuccessful. When may Christian citizens resist an unjust government? Can it be done in violent ways? One of the writers of the IRS who discusses the issue (in light of the Bible and the Christian tradition) is B.J. van der Walt in *Anatomy of reformation* (1991:439-457, reprinted in 2008 by the Institute for Contemporary Christianity in Africa).

5 Review and conclusion

Since we have come quite some distance, a review as well as a brief summary of the results could be valuable.

5.1 Looking back

The foregoing systematic section attempted to pinpoint two things from the IRS legacy: what the common, normative political *view* is which can be distilled from its publications, and how the writers propose that the view be *realised* in practice. The bibliographical section of the investigation (which follows below) provides the detail on the sources from which this synopsis was composed.

5.2 Result

Although much of the "political legacy" of the IRS is a product of its time, and although the principal insights could not always be applied to the current situation in South Africa or elsewhere but (for lack of space) was left to the reader, it nevertheless has become clear that the "excavation" did not boil down to "raking up old stories". What was written at the time can still today give normative direction to the mainly pragmatist and opportunist South African

political life. It can help Christians to focus on the primary task of the state instead of criticising trivial matters – as still often happens.

It even is possible that those who do not support a Reformational school of thought also learned something new from the above. For Christians from diverging convictions and even people from other religions have to cope with the same political realities and norms. Seeing public justice as the primary norm for the state is not the prerogative of Christians alone. In the course of history there are examples of atheists who had to remind Christians to obey this norm!

We close this chapter with the wish that it may serve as a stimulus for researching the intellectual legacy of what was published during 37 years by the IRS – not only on politics but also on other areas. In this way we could help building a better future on the good things from the past.

6 Bibliographies

Since one's philosophy of society determines one's view of the state, this bibliography is not limited to publications treating only purely political matters.

As mentioned and motivated initially (cf. 1.4), the works are also not given *alphabetically* according to authors, but *chronologically* according to dates of publication. We have already explained why the various IRS series have been presented in separate bibliographies. In the last bibliography (6.6) some works are added in alphabetical order which have not been published by the IRS itself, but have had a detectable influence on some of the IRS writings.

Up to the beginning of the eighties the name of the IRS was the Institute for the Advancement of Calvinism (IBC in Afrikaans). For studies by the IBC before 1980 the following source may be consulted: Van der Walt, B.J., ed. 1980. *Die inslag van die Calvinisme in Suid-Afrika; 'n bibliografie van Suid-Afrikaanse tydskrifartikels; volume 4: maatskaplik en staatkundig*. Potchefstroom: IBC. (*The impact of Calvinism in South Africa, a bibliography of South African articles in journals, volume 4: social and political.*) Before all the publications on political and

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6.5 "Orientation; international circular of the PU for CHO"

6.5.1 For a list of International IRS conferences (from 1983 to 1995)

Orientation, no. 75-78, Jan.-Dec. 1995, pp. 613-621 may be consulted.

6.5.2 For resolutions taken by the IRS conferences (as well as the political situation in South Africa at the time) the same number (75-78) of *Orientation* gives particulars in which previous numbers of the journal the resolutions were published.

6.5.3 Special editions of "Orientation"

The following two bulky editions of the IRS publication "Orientation; international Circular of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education" are dedicated in full to political matters:

- ***Orientation*, no. 75-78, Jan.-Dec. 1995 (621 pages)** was published under the title *Confessing Christ in doing politics; essays on Christian political thought and action*. It consists of 32 chapters with contributions by writers from South Africa and various other parts of the world on different facets of the state and politics, including four chapters on human rights seen from a Christian perspective. At the end (pp. 606-612) it also offers a "Bibliography on Christianity and politics".
- ***Orientation*, no.79-81, Jan.-Dec. 1996 (297 pages)** was published under the title *Christianity and democracy in South Africa; Christian responsibility for political reflection and service*. It consists of 30 chapters by various local and foreign writers who lectured at the IRS conference on the same theme in 1996. Contributions of lasting value (i.e. not restricted by their time of appearance) are amongst others the following:
 - The opening speech on "Christianity and democracy" by P. Marshall (pp. 14-23).
 - Experiences of democracy in Africa (Gitari, D.M., pp. 85 *et seq.*), the USA (Skillen, J.M., pp. 101 *et seq.*), England (Chaplin, J., pp. 112 *et seq.*), Europe (Rouvoet, A., pp. 135 *et seq.*) and Korea (Shin, W.Y., pp. 146 *et seq.*).
 - Under political strategies the following contributions are insightful:

- ~ "Confessing Christ in politics – How? by J.W. Skillen (pp. 150 *et seq.*)
- ~ "Does the end justify the means?" by B. Goudzwaard (pp.179 *et seq.*)
- ~ "What kind of strategy should a Christian use when he/she is member of a secular political party?" by J.P. Balkenende (pp.189 *et seq.*)
- ~ "What kind of strategies will be applicable in a Christian political party?" by E. Schuurman (pp. 202 *et seq.*)

- Dr. C.F. Beyers Naude closed the conference with "A vision for the future".
- Apart from a full report on the conference the publication also contains a "Bibliography for further study" (pp. 278-283).

- **Orientation, no.83-86, Jan.-Dec. 1997 (377 pages)** was published under the title *Signposts of God's liberating kingdom; perspectives for the 21st century* (Vol. 1). Amongst others it contains a valuable contribution by A.M. Cameron: A reformational perspective on law and justice (pp. 189-204).

- **Orientation, no.87-90, Jan.-Dec. 1998 (443 pages)** was published under the title *Signposts of God's liberating kingdom; perspectives for the 21st century* (Vol. 2). It contains five important chapters on politics among which the following:

- ~ "When religion and politics mixed in America: what went wrong?" by R.A.Wells (pp. 19 *et seq.*)

- ~ "Chances for Christian politics in a God-less society" by A. Rouvoet (pp. 29 *et seq.*)

- ~ "The revelatory and anticipating character of politics" by J.W. Skillen (pp. 59 *et seq.*)

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CHAPTER 15

A PARTNERSHIP MODEL FOR TRANSFORMING DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION IN AFRICA

The problem to be investigated is whether development co-operation between especially the rich Northern part of the world and the African continent (including South Africa) is necessary or advisable. This question can be divided into the following three sub-questions: (1) Does Africa need development aid? (2) Will help from outside produce the needed results? (3) How can such co-operation be structured in the most efficient way? The three answers to these questions are: (1) Without outside help Africa will not be able to escape from its poverty trap. (2) In spite of the fact that development co-operation is at the moment experiencing a "mid-life crisis", both practical and Christian principal reasons do not allow its termination. (3) Many weak points in the existing forms of development co-operation may be overcome with the application of a genuine partnership relationship.

The relevance to our central theme (at home in God's world):

As the African continent and its people is part of God's world, development co-operation between the rich, northern world and poor African countries is biblically necessary and may help needy Africans to feel more at home in a world that can provide enough for everyone.

1 Introduction

By way of introduction we first explain the *issue* to be investigated here and, secondly, *how* the investigation will be conducted.

1.1 The issue: a divided but shared world

Humankind lives in a divided world (cf. the still important work by Goudzwaard & De Lange, 1995, Goudzwaard *et al.*, 2007 and Van der Walt, 1999 on the overdeveloped North and West and the underdeveloped South). If we omit the middle group the world is divided between very poor and very rich people,

countries and regions. Not only is there globally a stark contrast between the rich North and the poor South, but even in the same region, for instance Europe (cf. Boersma, s.a.) and even in the same country, e.g. South Africa.

A question that arises time and again is whether the poor are responsible for their poverty themselves or is it the result of the exploitation of the rich countries?

Hamelink & Visser (2002:136), two Dutch authors, are of the opinion that poverty in the southern part of the world did not only come about as a result of the acts of the North in the past, but is still maintained by the northern countries (e.g. by trade limitations). Goudzwaard & De Lange (1995) too, plead for an "economy of enough" in the case of the North. Exactly the opposite opinion – laying all the blame on the poor countries – is also heard (cf. 5.4.1 below). It is the author's opinion that such blame laying is not very productive in solving the actual problems of the dire poverty in Africa.

For we should remember that apart from a divided world, we also live in a "shared world" – rich and poor share the same world. God created only this world and commanded man to look after it and after his fellow human beings. As a consequence of globalisation this world is getting smaller all the time, so that the rich can no longer ignore the poor and the other way round. Co-operation is becoming a condition for survival – we refer only to global warming and the milieu crisis – and this applies also to oneself, one's own country or region.

From a biblical perspective, too, the divide between rich and poor is unacceptable – especially when the one's riches imply the other's poverty (cf. e.g. the prophetic books like Amos and Micah). It is a well-known fact that the majority of Christians today live in the poorer regions (Africa, Asia and Latin-America) and that their numbers are increasing rapidly (cf. e.g. Jenkins, 2002 and Jenkins, 2006). Nevertheless financial power and control remain in the hands of the decreasing number of northern Christians. In this connection Tshimika & Lind (2003:18) remark: "... there are strong and stubbornly entrenched patterns in the relationships between churches in the South and North that contradict our biblical beliefs".

The well-known Max-Neef (Nobel prize laureate and writer of the book *Human scale development* in 1987) puts a great part of the blame for both the extreme poverty and excessive wealth in the world on the current, global neo-liberal economy. In the place of capitalism he proposes the following five conditions for a new economic paradigm: (1) The economy should serve human beings and not *vice versa*. (2) The aim should be the real development of people rather than greater consumption. (3) Development is not the same as economic growth and material growth does not necessarily imply genuine development. (Economic growth only enhances well-being up to a certain point and then it stops and – like a boomerang – attacks real human well-being.) (4) Economic growth is impossible if the ecosystem cannot allow it any more. (5) Permanent material, economic growth is impossible.

The above two concepts (a divided and shared world) denote the two focal points of this investigation. First (by way of background and problem statement) it is shown how riches and poverty *divide* the world. Secondly (the possible solution) it is pointed out how rich and poor can *share* to create a better common (shared) world.

1.2 The set-up

The investigation as a whole will be developed as follows: (1) By way of introduction some statistics are given from which the huge and increasing divide between rich and poor across the world and in Africa in particular will become clear as well as some causes and possible solutions for this undesirable situation. (2) Next we reflect on what exactly poverty entails. (3) Subsequently we show briefly how gradually broader views on poverty relief have developed – both in Christian and in more secular thought. (4) Then we investigate why development *aid* has been replaced by development *co-operation*, what the latter entails as well as the problems attached to it. (5) The *partnership* model (with its pros and cons) is investigated as an option for more empowering co-operation. (6) Finally it is shown how a partnership relationship links up with the

contemporary emphasis on "civil society" and how it can be expanded in the light of a Christian societal philosophy.

2 Great poverty especially in Africa, its probable causes and solutions.

2.1 Poverty worldwide

As stated above, poverty is not restricted to Africa. To get a quick idea of its extent, read the introduction by Gasper (2004:2-12) to development ethics. These ten pages contain the most shocking data about, on the one hand, unbelievable wealth and on the other hand dire poverty and the resulting appalling suffering across the globe. First we take a brief look at the current economic situation in the world as a whole and then specifically at Africa as well as the probable causes and solutions to the poverty of this continent.

2.1.1 The global situation

Sachs (2005:18) divides the current population of the world into the following four categories:

- *The poorest of the poor* (who have to try and survive on less than one US dollar per day) are approximately 1 billion or one sixth of the world population.
- *The poor who can – just – succeed in surviving*, since they are able to provide for their basic needs. These constitute about 1.5 billion.
- *The middle income group* of about 2.5 billion.
- *The high income group* who (like the poorest of the poor) count about 1 billion (about one sixth of the total population).

Those who live in extreme poverty do not have enough to provide for their basic needs to survive. Therefore they are hungry, and sick most of the time, do not have clean drinking water or sanitation or proper housing at their disposal, nor can they afford education for their children. According to Sachs neither can they by themselves – without outside help – escape from the poverty trap in which

they are caught. It is estimated that 8 million people of this group die annually of hunger/undernourishment!

The situation becomes still more critical if the following is kept in mind: Firstly, after an initial decrease in poverty, since 1996 it has increased again to 1.2 billion (cf. Buijs, 2001:12 and Verbeek, 2005:26). Secondly the gap between rich and poor is widening steadily. Buijs (2001:12, 25) demonstrates that the 600 million poorest people all together earn only one eighth annually of the income of the 200 richest people in the world! In the third place Sachs (2005:82) points out that (since about 1980) the development aid to the poorest has not increased but decreased.

2.1.2 The situation in Africa

Especially Africa south of the Sahara is the very poorest part of the world (cf. Van der Walt, 2006a:18 *et seq.* for detail). Sachs (2005:21) classifies 50% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa in his category of "the extreme poor". (If current statistics are required it can easily be found on the UN's website.)

Although extreme poverty in South and East Asia has decreased since 1980, it has increased in Africa. According to Sachs (2005:189) Africa today is poorer than when it became independent (50-60 years ago) or when (in the sixties) the huge development organisations, like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund appeared on the scene. Verbeek (2005:26), too, has to state sadly that the economic development in Asia and Latin America has passed Africa.

A few shocking statistics on Africa:

- 10,000 – 15,000 people die *daily* of diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, AIDS (Sachs, 2005:208).
- Between 1 and 3 million children die in Africa annually (Sachs, 2005:7).
- In 2000 the average life expectancy of people in Africa was only 47 years, i.e. 31 years less than the 78 years for developed countries. In some cases it is a mere 20 years as a result of the AIDS pandemic (Sachs, 2005:194).

2.2 Probable causes for the underdevelopment of Africa

Sachs (2005) with right first criticises the still prevalent view that the blame lies only with the Africans and especially the African governments and that therefore Africa alone should take the blame. According to Sachs it is too restricted a view as proved already by the failure of the structural adaptation programmes – and still greater poverty in Africa.

What then are the real causes? Sachs's answer throws light on the following aspects:

2.2.1 Physical geography

Although Sachs is not a "geographic determinist" (p. 58) the geography of a country/region does play an important role. Natural resources, fertile land, enough rain, navigable rivers, enough ports, *et cetera* definitely make progress easier than it would be in for instance a landlocked mountain region.

2.2.2 The fiscal trap

This concerns the fact already mentioned that governments lack the funding to supply the necessary infrastructure which is needed for economic growth. The reason for this may be, apart from poor citizens and a great amount of debt, with the corruption of governments.

2.2.3 Geopolitical reasons

Here the emphasis falls on the significant role of international trade in development – and the detrimental effect of unnecessary trade interventions and sanctions as well as wars and the refugee problem.

2.2.4 Demographic factors

In poor countries the birth rate (as a consequence of a lack of health care and of child mortality) is much higher than in rich countries. This has negative results for economic development, since it is impossible to supply all the children with the necessary food, health care and education.

2.2.5 A lack of innovation

By this Sachs means (and he explains why this is the situation in poor countries) the lack of scientific knowledge and technological means. The other way round the development of science and technology was the great secret of the economic growth in the West (cf. p. 49).

2.3 The possible solutions

For every country a differential diagnosis can be made according to the UN Millennium Development Plan (cf. Sachs, 2005:82) to determine what the most significant obstacles and solutions are on the road to development.

2.3.1 What Africa needs

According to Sachs (2005:244) Africa needs the following kinds of "capital":

- *Human capital* like food, health and education (to attain the necessary skills);
- *Business capital* like machines, transport and industries;
- *Infrastructural capital* like roads, electricity, water, sanitation, air and sea ports and telecommunication facilities;
- *Natural capital* like enough and fertile agricultural land and healthy ecosystems;
- *Public capital* like effective government services, judicial systems, policing and
- *Knowledge capital* including especially scientific and technological knowledge.

In a convincing way Sachs (p.255) points out that that there is no one "magic bullet" for development. All these kinds of capital have to be present *simultaneously* for a good economy. He shows (p. 240) that, for instance, it cannot simply be said that illness is either the result or the cause of underdevelopment. The causality works in both directions: Bad health causes poverty and the other way round poverty contributes to bad health.

The second important condition is that the poorest of the poor in Africa can only be freed from the poverty trap with help from outside. They cannot free themselves from it since they simply do not have the necessary capital to place their feet (as individuals and governments) on the very first rung of the "development ladder". The people of Africa find themselves "in the worst poverty trap in the world" (Sachs, 2005:73, 208).

Extreme poverty does not permit people to save (and their governments to levy the necessary taxes) since they have to use their total meagre income to survive on a daily basis. The dimensions of such extreme poverty are *inter alia* the following: (1) chronic hunger and malnutrition, vulnerability to diseases, exclusion from (even primary) education, a lack of basic facilities like clean drinking water and sanitation; (2) a lack of the most essential infrastructure, like roads, transport, electricity, agricultural implements, means of communication, etc. (3) deterioration of the environment (as a result of soil erosion and deforestation).

So without development aid/co-operation the poverty problem of Africa cannot be solved. It is not the intention to make the Africans rich, only to help them provide in more than just the basic needs of life so that with the reserve capital they can gradually begin climbing the development ladder.

2.3.2 Is it feasible?

Sachs lists (p. 288 *et seq.*), apart from inspiring historical examples (like the Marshall Plan after World War II), the following reasons why such a massive effort is possible today:

- While sixty years ago half of the world population was extremely poor, today it only applies to one sixth.
- The world (especially the West) has in the meantime become very rich, and can therefore afford to help without loss to themselves.
- The scientific and technological capability to development is available.

- There are many countries today (like India, China, Mexico) that can help themselves since they already have a foot on the development ladder. It is mainly the African countries who are left behind.
- Such a development programme would therefore endeavour not to fight *all* poverty or pursue an *equalisation* between rich and poor, but merely to help the poorest of the poor to be able to eventually help themselves.
- Neither is it the idea to transfer *cash* to poor countries. The concern would be with *investments* in infrastructure and human capital (see above).
- If the rich countries – especially the USA – are prepared to actually give instead of the .07 merely .05% of their gross national income (GNP), (promised as long as 35 years ago), extreme poverty in Africa can recede from 40% to 20% by 2015. "... it is painfully clear that the funds are ample and even residing in the accounts of a few hundred of the U.S.'s superrich, not to mention the four million or so American households with net worth in excess of \$1 million, or the eight million or so households worldwide, or the one billion people in total who live in the high-income countries with a combined income of some \$30 trillion." So there is enough for the needs of everybody in the world. What is lacking is the political and moral will to do something about it.

2.3.3 Economically too one-sided?

Not without reason we have spent a lot of time on the important book by Sachs. On the one hand it helped in a positive way to obtain insight into the current situation of poverty in Africa, the probable causes and solutions – especially the necessity of development co-operation from foreign countries.

On the other hand we dealt with it because we can learn from it in a negative way. His book is a typical example of Western modernistic belief that a developed society can be created by means of science, technique and economy (cf. Jongeneel, 2006:15 and also Schuurman, 2005). There is not enough awareness that development economy and practical development work is performed by *people* and for or with *people*. Sachs (2005:57, 60, 317) is, for example, of the

opinion that socio-cultural factors are not really relevant. Such a reductionist, economic idea of development is linked with a very restricted view of what poverty is. This brings us to the second main section of the investigation:

3 On-going reflection on poverty

The way one attempts to *fight* poverty, depends on the way one *regards* poverty, what exactly it entails. If (like Sachs above and many African leaders) one reduces poverty to a material condition, brought about by a lack of things like money, food, water, electricity, housing, etc., then development as an answer to it would also be limited to material solutions. (Cf. Myers, 2001:14 and especially the much broader approach of the two economists Goudzwaard and De Lange, 1995. The same applies to the work by Goudzwaard *et al.*, 2007.)

3.1 What poverty really entails

Research and practical experience in recent decades have, however, shown that such a restricted view of poverty does not make it clear what poverty really entails and can therefore not really address the problem either. The concept "poverty" has gradually acquired a broader, more inclusive meaning, for instance from (1) a mere lack of means, to (2) a lack of knowledge, to (3) limitations on freedom, possible options, power, social influence and so forth (cf. Myers, 2001:12 and Speck, 2007).

So the well-known economist and Noble Prize winner, Sen (1999) emphasises that the quality of human life cannot be measured in terms of material things, but in terms of freedom or possible options. Economic development that does not promote these has failed.

Therefore Bruwer (1994) changes the popular saying "beggars can't be choosers" to "beggars can be choosers" and says: "Development without the element of choice is highly questionable. In Christian benevolence there is no place for beggarism, dependency and passive acceptance, but only for a life through choice and the acceptance of responsibility: an act of will. The basic

appeal of the Gospel is an appeal to the will: stand up and walk!" (Bruwer, 1994:21).

The most outstanding feature of poverty is a deeply rooted feeling of powerlessness to do something about one's own situation. Bruwer explains: "The effects of poverty penetrate right into the human mind and soul. The feeling of total hopelessness leaves the poor in a state of utter helplessness and lack of initiative and despondency. To be motivated to get out of poverty is already one step ahead" (Bruwer, 1994:18. Cf. also Perkins, 1993 in several places).

Since permanent powerlessness leads to a bad self-image, it not only affects external, material circumstances, but affects people in their being, their identity. (On the other hand it also affects the identity of the rich who are inclined to act as saviours or gods to the poor, cf. Myers, 2001:xviii).

According to Myers (2001:13) the cause of poverty is therefore mostly of a spiritual nature, while its nature is mostly relational. It affects all relations of the human being: to himself, his fellow human beings, nature and the transcendent (God). Real development can therefore according to Myers and Bruwer (1994:18) only start from within, in the human spirit, so that their relations can change. In line with this Van der Walt (1999, 2001 and 2003) pleads for substituting development as a restricted economic technical business by development from a Christian view of humankind as a multidimensional process in which the socio-cultural aspect enjoys full recognition.

As in being human, also in poverty too the following facets can be distinguished: (1) a faith facet, (2) ethical, (3) juridical, (4) aesthetic, (5) economic, (6) social, lingual, (7) historic, (8) logical, (9) emotional, (10) biotic, (11) physical and (12) spatial (cf. Kalsbeek, 1975:100). Therefore poverty is not merely an economic or even a socio-economic matter. It has many "faces", it concerns all facets of the human being and is a multidimensional phenomenon. (See further 3.3.4 below.)

3.2 Mere charity not sufficient

Since poverty is also the consequence of social powerlessness and injustice, mere first aid or charity cannot solve it – it can actually aggravate the problem.

3.2.1 Charity to be performed with caution

The problem with mere charity is that it can strengthen the feeling of hopelessness and dependence among the poor (cf. Perkins, 1993:21 *et seq.*) They tend to look for the solution to their poverty only outside themselves. According to Perkins (1993:24) the wrong way of giving can therefore be just as destructive as the poverty it attempts to relieve. This does not mean that there is no place for charity, but that it is merely the starting point and not the end of the solution.

In this regard Speck's book (2007) is worthwhile reading. He proposes Acts 3:1-10 as a model for development. Peter did not give the crippled beggar money – which simply would have continued his dependency – but much more than he expected. By healing the man, Peter liberated him from his total dependency as a beggar to enable him to take care of himself.

Help should therefore be given with caution, since it can strengthen the feeling of dependency and inferiority among the poor: "Receiving is a humbling matter. It implies neediness. It categorizes one as being worse off than the giver. Therefore we should be careful how we give. Giving should affirm and not dehumanize. We give because God gave to us. We should be humbled by our opportunities to give... Somehow we have to disconnect what and how we give from our need to feel good about ourselves" (Perkins, 1993:28). He does admit, however, that it is easier to give alms in an impersonal way than to become involved in the definite development of less privileged people.

Bruwer (1994:11) further warns that the poor can regard help as an invasion of their personal lives and a threat to their human dignity. The most prominent sign of true poverty is silence. To veto help, is a tacit or apathetic way of resistance or protest against (the wrong kind of) help. But the poor can go further and seek

alternative solutions to their problems by *themselves*. Or to sound a still clearer and louder “no”, they may resort to aggression and attack the symbols and power structures of the rich. In most of these cases they are calling for recognition and respect for their human dignity. The only way of closing this gap (of a veto by the poor) is true compassion and not help from a distance.

3.2.2 Charity as well as justice

Until recently a warm debate was waged between Evangelical and Ecumenical Christians on where the emphasis should fall in relief for the poor: charity or justice (cf. Verbeek, 2005:45 *et seq.*).

This debate was the result of a dualism between the spiritual and the worldly. It is time to take leave of this dualistic view for good, since it is unbiblical. According to the Scriptures God is, for instance, both the merciful Father who takes pity as well as the impartial Judge who judges injustice with righteousness.

“We can agree that the contrast between personal and public justice was a forced contrast. The Bible speaks about both of these, not separately but in close connection with each other”(Verbeek, 2005:63) [Tr. from the Dutch].

Elsewhere Verbeek formulates it as follows: The personal salvation of people should lead to a corresponding lifestyle and social involvement. These two facets of Christian life are inextricably intertwined (cf. Matt. 7:16-18, 21). To the individual Christian personal justification in Christ can be a motivating power to pursue social justice. The other way round the practical confrontation with injustice in society points the finger to ourselves – our lack of compassion and unconverted state.

The implication of such a holistic view for development aid stands to reason: relief organisations should pursue both charity (e.g. poverty alleviation) and justice (e.g. involvement in incidents of oppression).

3.3 Different categories of the poor

In the light of such an inclusive view of poverty the mere economic classification made by Sachs (between extremely poor and the group who struggle but still

survive – cf. 2.2.1 above) can be expanded. A classification into categories can help one getting a better grip on the complex phenomenon of poverty and fighting it more effectively. Hamelink and Visser (2002.31 *et seq.*) propose the following three categories:

3.3.1 The economically poor, who can then (the way Sachs does) be subdivided. *Charity* should be bestowed on them.

3.3.2 The powerless. As became apparent above, there is a close connection between economic or material poverty and powerlessness – the one leads to the other and the other way round. However, powerlessness is also the result of many other factors, like unequal social relations, political oppression, lack of safety, lack of education, certain religious and worldvewish convictions and so forth. In this case greater *justice* should be pursued.

3.3.3 The poor in spirit. This is a third kind of poverty. (Cf. the attitude of powerlessness and hopelessness described above.) Among rich people we find a different form of the same spiritual poverty, namely materialism.

3.3.4 Towards an even broader perspective

Even the above three categories are not enough to understand what poverty entails. As already indicated previously (see the concluding part of 3.1 above) a Reformational philosophical approach can provide a much broader view on the phenomenon. The following examples illustrate the effects of poverty on at least thirteen aspects of being human, starting with the most basic to the “spiritual” (faith):

- 1. The spatial aspect:** lack of space e.g. proper housing, agricultural land.
- 2. The physical facet:** lack of all kinds of infrastructure like sanitation, water, electricity, telecommunications, roads etc.
- 3. The biotic aspect:** malnutrition, vulnerable to all kinds of diseases, no energy to work and more.

4. **The emotional life:** a deep-seated feeling of powerlessness to do something about one's situation, a weak self-image (feeling of inferiority) which may lead to abnormal behaviour.
5. **The logical aspect:** poor people think differently from the rich, they are often captured in a limited pattern of reasoning which does not allow them to see alternative ways out of their deprivation.
6. **The historical-cultural** (or formative power) of human beings: little awareness of the human power to change internal and external circumstances.
7. **The lingual:** the typical beggar language used by the poor.
8. **The social facet:** inability to improve social environment, various kinds of social problems.
9. **The economic side:** not enough income to take care of even basic needs, like food, clothing, education, medical care etc.
10. **The aesthetical aspect:** the beautiful things in life, like music and the other arts, recreation, sports etc. are the luxuries of the rich.
11. **The juridical facet:** because of all the above factors crime, theft etc. often flourishes among poor communities.
12. **The moral side:** immorality, unfaithfulness in marriage, disintegration of families, drug (e.g. alcohol) abuse etc.
13. **The life of faith:** deep insecurity, hopelessness, a lack of love towards oneself, one's neighbour and God.

The intention with these examples is not to say that poor people are by nature bad people. (Rich people can be worse!) The examples merely want to indicate the dehumanising effects of poverty.

In order to fight poverty effectively it is essential that all these different forms of poverty be addressed together and simultaneously as far as possible. This brings us to the following important point:

4 Broader holistic views of fighting poverty

In agreement with a less reductionist and more inclusive view of poverty a broader perspective on development (in the case of secular reflection) and relief (in the case of Christian reflection) has in the meantime come into being. It is important to say something on each of them.

4.1 Sustainable development

Instead of the ideal of unlimited economic growth, sustainable development has become the key word today.

About "Sustainable development" the Wikipedia:3 says with right: "Sustainable development is a notoriously ambiguous concept, as a wide array of views have fallen under its umbrella... Thus the concept remains weakly defined and contains a large amount of debate as to its precise definition".

Further it is critical to realise that the concept has had its origin in the West and is in the first instance applicable to this region. Goudzwaard and De Lange (1995:117) remark with right that the combination of "sustainable" and "development" implies that something has gone wrong in the development of the *developed* countries.

Additional criticism is that "sustainable development" is an oxymoron, since it combines two contrasting concepts. How can on-going development (=growth and further depletion of resources) be sustainable if the resources are limited? Some environmentalists thus regard the term "sustainable" simply as a clever slogan of the capitalist business world to pacify them (the people who are concerned about the environment) (cf. Wikipedia:4).

Rist, who discusses in detail the idea of sustainable development agrees: The noun ("development") is the determining component and not the adjective ("sustainable"). He adds: "... sustainable development looks like a cover-up operation: it allays the fears aroused by the effects of economic growth, so that any radical change can be averted. Even if the bait is alluring, there should be no illusion about what is going on. The thing that is meant to be sustained is

'development', not the tolerance capacity of the ecosystem or of human societies" (Rist, 1999:194).

According to Rist the ambiguity of the concept – a reason for its popularity – could not lead too much. The poor South stands on the right to develop like the North, and the North is committed to further economic growth – in both cases to the detriment of the natural and social environment.

In the light of such critique the concept "sustainable development" was gradually broadened. Since about 1990 the "four pillars" of sustainable development (cf. Wikipedia:2) include, apart from (1) the economic and (2) the environment, also (3) the social and (4) political domain.

4.2 Holistic development

Just as the concept "development" within secular thought gradually broadened, their view of the need of their fellow human beings among Christian scholars also became more holistic (cf. e.g. 3.2.2 and 3.3 above). This applies to both the so-called Evangelical and the Ecumenical groups. (Van Til, 2007 also deals with Roman Catholic thought on this field.)

4.2.1 The swing among Evangelical Christians

Up to about 1970 this group still suffered from the unbiblical dualism between the material and the spiritual (cf. Myers, 2001:5 *et seq.*) Therefore a choice had to be made – in a false dilemma – between either preaching the gospel or social involvement. After Lausanne (1974) and Wheaton (1983) the emphasis was shifted to both evangelisation and development (cf. e.g. Samuel & Sugden, 1987:245-265 for the Wheaton Statement: "Transformation: the church in response to human need").

Of course the dualism was not completely cancelled by the both-and-viewpoint (this way it remains two separate causes which have to be integrated somehow). Nevertheless the door was opened for Christian involvement in changing social structures. The poor need no longer be helped only individually by way of preaching the gospel and providing charity. Structural poverty relief too (the

second category of the powerless under 3.3.2 above) became important. Most Christians within the Evangelical group (cf. apart from the works already mentioned, also earlier works such as Hengel, 1974, Sider, 1977, Schrottenboer, 1978, Dickinson, 1983 and more recent ones like Taylor, 2000, Tshimika & Lind, 2003, Van der Walt, 2006a and Van Til, 2007) today admit that the material, social and spiritual needs of the poor (cf. once more the three categories under 3.3) are intertwined and should be addressed simultaneously in a holistic approach. (Unfortunately it still does not always happen in practice.)

4.2.2 The situation in the Ecumenical group

From the work by Swart (2006) it is clear that in this group, too, at least three "generations" of reflection can be distinguished: (1) first aid first, (2) then community development and later (3) sustainable systems, while (4) today it is moving in the direction of a still broader global approach in an attempt to change international relations as well.

4.3 Sustainable or holistic development?

From the above it is apparent that both secular and Christian thought today agree that development – to be successful – may not concentrate on one facet only (e.g. the economic and material). Because development is concerned with people – multidimensional beings – it may be nothing but inclusive.

As became apparent above (under 4.1) the concept "sustainable" or "durable" (a translation of the Dutch term) development still suffers from a lack of clarity and is regarded with suspicion by the southern, poor countries. It may therefore be wiser to use the term "holistic" development.

4.4 The rich can become really rich

A recent book edited by Van der Wal & Goudzwaard (2006) discusses the consumer obsession of rich countries which by far exceed the carrying capacity of the earth. The only way out of this unsustainable situation is less consumption. Usually rich people will resist – to their own detriment – such a step. This book, however, indicates that less *welfare* can actually imply greater *wellbeing*: less

pressure to compete and achieve, challenging the rat-race, elevating stress, preventing burn-outs and superficial social contacts.

This concludes our first focus point of the investigation – the problem of a world *divided* between rich and poor. We can now focus on the second main point: the solution in which rich and poor can co-operate in order to reach a better, *shared* world.

5 Development aid/co-operation as a solution to the poverty of Africa

On how exactly a divided world can become a more shared world, the past fifty years have brought significant shifts in thought.

5.1 Development aid

The first effort in this connection was development aid. It often consisted of direct monetary aid or loans to governments in Third World countries. As a consequence of the fact that these governments wanted to dominate the development process (instead of merely acting as catalysts or facilitators), and that they were often corrupt, development aid, however, often brought great disappointments. (Zeylstra already pointed out some of these problems in his work published in 1975.)

5.2 Development co-operation

Not only the problems mentioned and the one-sided paternalistic connotation attached to "aid", but especially further practical experience made it clear that development cannot be achieved from the side of the wealthy donors (from "above") only. The people for whom it is meant should also have a role in it – local participation is of cardinal importance. "By any means, local participation is a critical success factor for transformational development" (Myers, 2001:147).

This writer further emphasises that this co-operation should include *everything*, like research, planning, implementation and evaluation. *Everybody* has to be involved: those who fund it, carry it out and those for whom it is meant. Besides,

they should all be acknowledged as true, equal *partners*. In other words integral and unlimited co-operation.

Thuc Verbeek (2005:232) defines development co-operation as follows: "Development co-operation is bringing about improvement in the material and spiritual situation of the poor and oppressed in society regarding (access to) basic needs and unfair structures on a local, national and international level, provided that there is partnership, durability, reciprocity and ownership" [Tr. from the Dutch].

In the light of the fact that poor people are characterised by powerlessness (cf. 3.1 and 3.3 above), such co-operation should specifically be aimed at their empowerment. Unless people themselves change, very little in their circumstances will change. *Empowering participation* according to Myers (2001:149) and many other experts is the core of true development work.

5.3 Fighting poverty?

However, Hamelink & Vissér (2002:13, 14) in stead of the concept "development co-operation" still prefer "fighting poverty" and give the following reasons for their choice: (1) Development is a vague concept – it could give the impression that poor people (in other aspects than the economic) are "underdeveloped". (2) It can be questioned whether there is real co-operation when development organisations in the south are financially dependent on rich northern donors. (3) In everyday practice the main issue is after all fighting poverty (which according to these writers includes structural poverty).

In contrast to their realistic viewpoint, I myself still prefer the optimistic ideal of co-operation, since it is a key element in true development. Fighting poverty – like fighting weeds – turns the poor into an object. By preferring the term "co-operation" the real problems connected to co-operation should not be ignored – a following significant point for our attention.

5.4 Developmental co-operation questioned

The history of development yields numerous examples in which Africa blames the West for its poverty (cf. e.g. the well-known book by Rodney, 1989) or, the other way round, the West holds Africa alone responsible for its economic underdevelopment. Such viewpoints impede development co-operation or even render it completely unfeasible. Because Africa is dependent on northern financial aid for its economic development, we will here look only at arguments against aid from a Western perspective as well as the answers given to them by the development economist Sachs (2005), already mentioned above.

5.4.1 Alleged reasons why development aid for Africa is unnecessary

- **It is no use giving development aid to Africa, for it produces almost no results**

To this Sachs (2005:269, 310) answers that Africa has received and still receives not too *much* development aid, but rather too *little*. In 2002 it was merely 30 billion US dollars – of which only 12 billion eventually reached Africa after all the hidden transitional costs (like US experts and materials) had been subtracted!

- **Africa is corrupt**

Sachs's answer is that the African governments are weak because they are economically weak (p. 312). Good government does lead to economic growth, but the opposite is equally true: Higher incomes can also lead to a better government. Neither is there any evidence that African countries are more corrupt when compared to many other poor countries.

- **Africa is undemocratic**

According to Sachs (p. 315) there is no direct link between authoritarian government and economic growth. (China is an example in this respect.)

- **Lack of economic freedom**

According to Sachs (p. 318) the idea that Africa will develop once it has fully accepted the capitalistic free market economy is yet another example of a magic

solution: "Economic freedom is definitely a plus for economic development, but alas, it is not a magic bullet" (p. 320). In spite of a shackled economy, China has developed enormously in recent times, while Switzerland – notwithstanding great freedom – has a low growth rate. Sachs therefore supports a mixed (not purely capitalist or socialist) economy, in which both the private sector and the state have to take up their responsibilities.

- **A lack of morality**

This argument is usually advanced in connection with the AIDS pandemic in Africa. In the West this disease is attributed solely to the licentiousness of the Africans. However scientific investigation has proved (cf. Sachs, 2005:322) that people in many other parts of the world – including the West – on the average have more sexual partners than in Africa. So other reasons will have to be looked for to explain the rapid spread of the AIDS virus in Africa.

- **It is senseless to save hungry/sick children's lives, for then there will be all the more hungry/sick adults**

To this too Sachs (p. 323) has a frank answer: It has been proved time and again in the world that the best way of curtailing population growth, is to fight poverty. Large families are usually found among poor people who do not enjoy the necessary health care. For various reasons (cf. Sachs, 2005:323) the number of children dwindle where there is economic progress.

- **Economic growth will spread automatically to Africa**

The argument here is one of "the rising tide lifts all boats." So if Africa's boat does not start to sail, it is their own fault. Once again Sachs argues very convincingly that the process of economic growth is not a simple one. The mere fact of Africa's geographic isolation (e.g. many countries that do not possess navigable rivers and ports) is not given account of in such an argument.

- **Africans are not competitive**

According to Sachs (p. 327 *et seq.*) the current capitalistic free market economy is seriously influenced by the social-Darwinist ideology of competition, struggle

and the eventual survival of the fittest. While socialism (e.g. in communism) wanted to eliminate all competition, it is absolutised by capitalism. In Sachs's opinion not only competition, but also trust and co-operation are essential conditions for economic growth.

So Sachs (cf. above) is convinced that development co-operation is a *sine qua non*. Bruwer (1994:71) stresses two requirements: apart from the inner will in poor people themselves, intervention from outside is essential, for poor people – ensnared in powerlessness and hopelessness – wait for a saviour.

Unfortunately the “saviour” of Africa no longer stands ready to help – our next point.

5.4.2 Development co-operation in a crisis

As is clear from *inter alia* the writings of Verbeek (2005 and 2009), Buijs (2001) and Van der Walt (2006b), development co-operation today is in a crisis. (Above it was already stated that development co-operation has decreased.) Verbeek (2009) emphatically states that development cooperation cannot continue in the ways it was done in the past.

Buijs distinguishes three facets of this crisis: (1) regarding the *motives* for development aid; (2) regarding the *methods*; (3) regarding the *results* (cf. Buijs, 2001:24-33). A few words on each of these.

- **Motives**

Under *motives* Buijs distinguishes apart from good motives (e.g. the motive of justice) also (mostly covert) wrong motives (for instance the mere political or economic self-interest of those countries who finance development work). It seems as if the latter, less good kind of motives currently are beginning to take on a more dominant role as a result of the prevailing global economic crisis and neo-capitalist ideology.

- **Methods**

Concerning the *methods* of development co-operation, Buijs points out the current insistence (of the donors) that development support should render the necessary results. However, it is very hard to determine which kinds of criteria should be used to decide whether a development project has succeeded or not (cf. p. 28). Among the problems with methods Buijs further points out wrong relations between the giver(s) and the recipient(s) of development aid. *Real reciprocal development co-operation* between the various parties has not been realised yet in his opinion.

- **Results**

Finally the *results* (of the motives and methods) are scrutinised. The problem here is that – after 50 years – the results in the poorer countries are not easily discerned and therefore not very encouraging. What does become clear is that development aid to the poor often results in dependence (addiction to aid) and therefore undermines their own initiative and sense of responsibility. Therefore such development is not sustainable either – it falls flat as soon as the aid is discontinued.

Later on in the chapter we will return to these three problem levels. (The methods and results when we deal with the partnership model under 6.1 et seq. and the motives or norms at the end under 7.2.4.) To get a more complete picture of the issue, we first look at what is lacking in the current set-up.

About the crisis in general Verbeek (2009) mentions the following three challenges: (1) the global economic crisis (starting in 2008) will affect the poor in Africa because aid will decrease; (2) a lack of moral leadership (both in the donor and aid-receiving countries); (3) the unwillingness (again on both sides) to learn from past experiences. He therefore recommends the following: (1) local development agencies/projects should unite and cooperate to increase their bargaining power for overseas aid; (2) encourage local, responsible leadership; (3) develop local knowledge and solutions for development problems.

We will only focus on the following critical aspect:

5.4.3 Weak links in the co-operation chain

The "development co-operation chain" (cf. Verbeek, 2005:93) denotes a complex process in which the following parties may be involved: (1) the wealthy financiers/donors/benefactors who supply the funds; (2) the mainly northern NGO's who manage the funds and channel it to (3) the southern NGO's who receive the support and have to use it (4) (on microlevel, mesolevel and macrolevel) to the advantage of a specific needy target group. In this whole drawn-out process many hitches may occur.

Various (above-mentioned) writers draw the attention to *inter alia* the following:

- The poor themselves do not sit at the negotiating tables where their problems are discussed, but are represented by something (a report) or someone (who may be uninformed). What the rich get to hear on what the needs of the poor are, has thus passed through several "filters" of reports, meetings and the perceptions of other people.
- Development organisations have the important task of helping the poor (the target group) by allowing them (the poor) to make their voice heard, by acting as a mediator for them. On both sides, however, there is the risk of "hijacking the voice of the poor." The northern NGO's seem to be fighting for the poor, but on closer inspection it often is their own views, interpretations and concerns that prove to be decisive.
- It even is a question how near the local NGO's stand to the world of the poor. For they belong to a group who no longer experience dire poverty. This class normally is not the best champions for social change for the sake of greater justice either.
- A following barrier concerns the givers of aid in the north. These rich people look through particular glasses coloured by their own culture and circumstances at the problems of the poor far in the south. Consequently there can be little talk of reciprocity in this process. The practice of development still faces old colonial

stereotypes: The "self" (West) is associated with being developed and thus superior and the "other" (southern poor) with being left behind, a lack of knowledge and even morale – the inferior ones. In general the rich donors show too little respect for the cultural values of the poor.

- Another barrier is the inherent imbalance in the relationship between the donors of money and goods in the north and the recipients thereof in the south. Money usually means power. Actually both the northern donors and the southern NGO's should be accountable to the target group – which they strive to serve. In practice, however (as a result of a hierarchic view of authority – authority from top down), all authority is vested in the donors and the accountability rests solely with the southern NGO's. The wealthy northern benefactors usually also enter into some or other contract with the south to reach certain aims (results). He who pays lays down the rules!
- Various power factors can warp the relationship, so that it no longer meets the requirements of a true partnership.
- The northern NGO's usually act as the "teacher" while the southerners must be the "pupils". "Accept our funds, accept our training" is the supposition. However, it is an unusual situation when one partner tries to develop the other. After all, a true partnership (cf. below) supposes equality, reciprocity, exchange of knowledge, listening to each other and learning the one from the other. Normally the ideal of the North for the South is that by means of capacity building they should become independent and also financially self-supporting. When this point is reached – which seldom happens – the partnership, ironically, is broken off from the side of the north.

In an interview with Tol (2006:24) Verbeek re-emphasises that the investigation into causes and possible solutions for poverty as well as the aim, direction, tempo and result of development co-operation projects in the South are still too much determined unilaterally by the northern "rulers". His final word to the readers is: "In the first instance: hear the voice of the South and listen to it. Do we really desire to be open to the other party or do we determine it ourselves beforehand?"

Do we also admit criticism from them on us?" (Tol, 2006:25) [Transl. from the Dutch].

5.4.4 Futile accusations back and forth

These more principal problems lead to many problems in practice and even accusations between recipients and donors of development aid like the following (cf. Hoksbergen, 2003:4-5):

- **On the side of the receivers** there are grievances, like (1) that the donors do give generously, but with a condescending attitude (for the real power rest with them). (2) The receivers may, for instance know that their greatest need is tertiary education, but that the donors will not help them with that, so that they will have to acquiesce in the donors' plans. (3) The receivers experience the donors as exacting, inflexible and meddling. (4) The continuous reporting makes the receivers suspect that they are not fully trusted. (5) Furthermore the donors do not understand the local cultural customs, neither do they make an effort to understand it better. I would like to add something more profound here: (6) the poor do not look for pity, but respect and recognition of their human dignity (cf. Bruwer, 1994:35). Besides (7) they long for transparency. If it is absent, it (the aid) becomes like bad food that is indigestible and therefore discarded (cf. Bruwer, p.41).
- **From the side of the (mostly) northern donors** the following criticism, amongst others, is levelled at their southern partners: (1) It is not clear that their southern partners exhibit the necessary commitment to the development work (on which the north decided). (2) They seem to be more interested in their salaries, vehicles and in appointing their relatives in profitable positions. (3) They do appoint controlling bodies to supervise development projects, but it is probably just to satisfy the donors. (4) The aim which the givers of aid have in mind, is that the recipients will in time become self-supporting, but they do not see much initiative to this end – the recipients rather act as if the givers of aid will be financing the work for ever.

How can this situation be improved? Maybe the idea of a partnership – already mentioned several times – will offer a solution.

6 The partnership model

In the light of the above-mentioned problems – and many more – lately great emphasis is laid on the idea of a partnership which can replace the relationship of benefactor-client, donor-recipient and teacher-pupil.

One of the G8's Millennium Goals is that of creating a global *partnership* for development. Ex-president's Mbeki's programme for the upliftment of Africa (New Partnership for Africa's Development – NEPAD) also stressed that development cannot be done in a one-sided way from the north – it should happen in a true *partnership*.

6.1 A definition

Verbeek defines a partnership as follows: "A *partnership* is ... seen as a form of co-operation based on mutual respect, *ownership* and everyone's own responsibility. Within this as much equivalence and recognition of mutual dependence as possible is pursued in the development event in spite of distinct asymmetry in access to power and means. In connection with the latter the nature of the agreement between both parties plays a crucial role ..." (Verbeek, 2005:95) [Tr. from the Dutch].

In a simplified form one could say the current procedure is that (1) the donors' funds (2) lead to pre-planned programmes/projects which (3) finally give rise to a certain relationship between north and south. It would constitute a huge improvement if this process could be reversed: (1) The relationship is the most important. (2) Then comes the need to be addressed, for which (3) the donors finally have to advance the money.

But is it not the case that the southern poor are dependent on the northern donors? Verbeek (2005:240) thinks they are not. The northern partner has at its disposal the *investment* capital and the southern partner the (human) *output* capital. Both forms of "capital" are needed and for good results are mutually

dependent. It is crucial to admit to one another this *mutual* dependence and act accordingly in practice.

Such a partnership relationship should however, meet several more requirements.

6.2 Key requirements for a true partnership

Expanding on the work of Hoksbergen (2003:12-18) the key requirements for a true development co-operation partnership are the following:

6.2.1 Local roots

Most local NGO's came into being because there were funds available from the north (or in any case "from outside"). The ideal that the southern partners should at length become independent and self-sufficient, has, however, seldom been realised – even after thirty years. Therefore it is much better that possible donors (domestic or foreign) join *already existing local initiatives*. In other words people with a vision, who also inspire others to work together for a certain goal on a voluntary basis (without remuneration). In such cases the local NGO's would rather work for a vision than for a salary at the end of the month. Most probably there will also be a better organisational structure and sense of responsibility, while the NGO's will enjoy more credibility within their communities.

Under this heading we could also emphasise once more that an essential facet of a partnership approach is a serious engagement with the culture, worldview and lifestyles not only of the West, but more so of the people of Africa (cf. again Van der Walt, 1999, 2001 and 2003).

6.2.2 Working towards a relationship of equality

As we have said repeatedly, the unilateral funding from the north (and from local donors) tend to further a relationship of inequality: a condescending donor against the inferior position of a recipient of "charity". Such a situation almost automatically fosters the already mentioned dependency and resignation ("dancing the tune of the donor"). However, a true partnership supposes equality in voice, respect, authority and so forth.

To reach this goal, Hoksbergen (p. 14) suggests practical steps like the following: less direct funding from the north and more own contributions from the south; joint decision-making; greater sensitivity to one another's opinions; trust and mutual respect; regular and clear communication, and so forth.

6.2.3 Concluding an agreement – not a contract

Many north-south development co-operations – probably most – exhibit the characteristics of a contract. Financing, projects, obligations and expected results are carefully noted. But this kind of agreement is questioned more and more, since they promote northern dominance and southern resignation. There is therefore a movement in the direction of more flexible partnership agreements.

The World Relief committee of the Christian Reformed Church (USA) recently went even further with their idea of a "covenant" between partners. It is almost akin to a marriage. During the time of "betrothal" the partners first get to know one another, discuss beforehand their own visions and values with one another and first work together on a smaller project before entering into a more binding agreement (the "marriage"). So there is much more at stake than a mere contract and it has the advantage that the work they do is planned, implemented and evaluated jointly.

6.2.4 Working together

Above we have already pointed out that people in the south (in Africa too) traditionally attach more value to *relationships* than to *money*. Working together is one of the best ways of building relationships. So the accent has to be shifted from the standard pattern, namely that the north provides the *money* and the south does the *work*. It is pointed out in different ways (cf. Hoksbergen, 2003:15) how the northern donors and the NGO's can become more involved in the actual work in the South.

6.2.5 Channelling the voice of the south

As already mentioned, there is a tendency among the northern NGO's to speak *on behalf of* the poor rather than just being a *channel* for the voice of the poor. To

reach the latter situation regular personal contact on grass-roots level is needed. (The faces of the poor have to be seen and their voices heard.) Working together in this way – making audible the authentic voice of the poor – can also lend much greater credibility to the advocacy made in the north by NGO's for the southern poor.

6.2.6 Joint funding

Since it is unrealistic to think that the gap between rich and poor will soon disappear, it is likewise unrealistic to think that the necessity for development co-operation will come to an end. The real problem is solving both the extreme control from the north and a lack of responsibility in the south. Some people even say that the north should stop all funding. Another extreme viewpoint is that they should simply finance everything.

A middle way may offer the best solution, namely that projects should be funded *jointly*. Hoksbergen (p. 16) thus is of the opinion that the southern partners should at least be responsible for the initial costs and for the salaries of their own personnel. (This does not mean that both parties have to invest the same amount in a project.)

6.2.7 Phasing out not desirable

Traditionally development co-operation was regarded as a temporary matter – when the *work* is finished, the *relationship* also comes to an end. The main argument in favour of this viewpoint was to prevent the already well-known dependency syndrome. (In the case of a true partnership it can, however, be limited or eliminated altogether.) There is also little sense in ending a relationship which was built up with so much time, energy and money. It does not fit in with the culture of the south, which sees the partnership *itself* as a part of the development process. What is more: "For development issues that are global as well as local, we need to develop civil society organizations that build a sense of community, or social capital, on a global scale. What better way to do this than to build *lasting* partnerships amongst like-minded organizations from South and North?" (Hoksbergen, 2003:17).

6.2.8 Evaluating the partnership itself

The custom currently is – as has been shown – to evaluate the growth in capacity of the southern NGO's and the target group (the poor) and then decide whether the aims with the different programmes/projects were reached. It seldom happens that the relationship *itself* is critically weighed. But if (cf. above) building a Christian organisation and community with influence in the broader civil society forms a significant part of the total aim, not only should the work on grass-roots level be measured and the NGO's strengthened, but the whole partnership *itself* should be evaluated regularly.

6.2.9 Not the only way

From the above it transpires that a true partnership supposes great resemblance in identity, underlying values and mission of both partners. Therefore not any work relationship can be regarded as a partnership.

What was said thus far does therefore not mean that a partnership relationship should be seen as a panacea for all problems in development co-operation. Neither is a partnership necessarily always the best development co-operation relationship.

Hoksbergen (2003:18) therefore also mentions other relationships, like "collaboration, co-operation, alliances, consortia, networks or joint ventures". The relationship between a great international donor, an NGO from the north, a local NGO and the local government with the aim of supplying clean drinking water to a region, could rather be called a "co-operative venture". Therefore circumstances also determine what kind of co-operation model would be the most suitable and most effective.

6.2.10 Broader possibilities of application

Up to now mention has only been made of international development co-operation between partners who are situated far from each other (the north and the south). It does not mean that what was said in this chapter cannot be applicable nationally and locally too. Churches, business ventures, charity

organisations and even individuals in the same country and neighbourhood should be involved in the development of their own poor people. This kind of work is described – in a moving and instructive way – in the quoted work by Perkins: *Beyond charity; the call to Christian community development* (1993). Although he does not use the word "partnership" it is clear from everything he says (cf. e.g. p. 64-71) that he considers something like a partnership as one of the secrets of successful community development. He stresses that such work should not be done "from a distance". The nearer to the poor, the more authentic, credible, successful and sustainable the work is.

6.3 The value of partnership

While from the foregoing it has already transpired what the value of a partnership can be, we now spell it out more explicitly.

6.3.1 Local impact. If donors no longer work *through* the recipients, but *with* them, projects can book greater efficiency. The strong sides of both parties are thus utilised – those of the south too, who know the local culture better and will accept the projects as their own. An authentic instead of a paternalistic partnership and the accompanying ownership in the south is, according to Hoksbergen, another significant motivation for the recipients to produce results.

6.3.2 Value for civil society. With a true partnership and local ownership the problem of a slight impact on civil society is also addressed. Citizens are empowered to take part in political-social-economic processes and exert an influence on them. (This cannot happen when their local roots are questioned, and therefore their voices are weak and their impact minimal.) When the donors do not *dominate* but merely *facilitate* the local processes, they not only strengthen the local NGO's, but also broader civil society.

6.3.3 Global development. The third argument favouring partnerships is that development today entails more than just the local community. Worldwide the same problems occur for which north and south together have to find solutions. Unilateral decisions and solutions may be easier in the short term, but they bear the seed for greater, more serious problems in future.

6.3.4 A kingdom community. We are not only concerned with solving problems and having an influence on the environment, but also with building a community of Christians between north and south. The more task-oriented and individualistic westerners usually start the work and only later start thinking of such a community. For the people of the south – including Africans – because of their strong community feeling, however, exactly the opposite way is important. It should also be borne in mind that when working in God's kingdom we are not concerned with *power* (military, economic, educational or whatever) but with *compassion* with other people. Such a kingdom community can only be built by being *among* the poor and not by standing *above* them.

6.4 No "magic bullet"

The partnership idea is not completely new. In the light of what Sachs (2005:255) says above, it should also be borne in mind that there is not one "magic bullet" to make development take place. Therefore the partnership model should be applied in development work not in isolation, but in conjunction with other significant insights.

Just as in the case of numerous other suggestions for successful development work, so in this case a great obstacle will be that the "environment" (in the broader sense of the word) is not always favourable to implementing the partnership model. For instance, in the absence of a favourable, healthy political climate with undue interference by governments or accompanying corruption, this approach, too, is doomed to failure.

7 Conclusion: Strengthening civil society and the contribution of a Reformational perspective

However, above (cf. 6.3.2) it has been pointed out already that the partnership model could actually contribute to strengthening civil society, also called the "middle field" of society, and in this way counteract domination by politics or the economy. Something more has to be said about this.

7.1 The crucial role of civil society

The concept "civil society" denotes a society with many more relationships than merely the political or economic. (Over against the slogan that "everything is politics/economics" it states that "politics/economics is not everything.") The concept does not denote the macrolevel or microlevel, but the mesolevel between the two.

While Buijs (2006:19-41) offers a comprehensive historical and principal exposition of what the concept "civil society" entails, Son (1999:184 et seq.) shows what an important role various voluntary groups and organisations from civil society have played in the economic development of South Korea in the past thirty years. They can empower the citizens and see to it that the government does its work, does it well without infringing its borders. "... civil society is reckoned as one of the most important forces in Korean society... Politicians and businessmen watch civic groups more closely than anything else, since these groups can easily mobilize voters and consumers to hurt them badly" (Son, 1999:185).

Hamelink & Visser (2002:17, 107) also say that the role of civil organisations in the development of a country cannot be stressed enough. The authorities should also grant them greater freedom. It is estimated that in 2000 there were already 35 000 such organisations working in developing countries. It is time the people of (South) Africa also become aware of the value of a well-organised civil society and no longer expect everything from politics (the state).

7.2 The contribution from a Reformational philosophy of society

There is great similarity between the current emphasis on the importance of a civil society and a Reformational philosophy of society. Both reject totalitarianism and stress the independence as well as interdependence of a variety of relationships or structures in society. Such a Reformational view of society could also make a significant contribution to the analysis and clarification of different development co-operations (including that of a partnership).

7.2.1 What it entails

It is remarkable that, while development is aimed at changing human society, most works in this field seldom contain sufficient reflection on the human being and a society at large. However, one's anthropology can be broadened and enhanced by the doctrine of modalities of Reformational philosophy which differentiate between aspects/functions of human beings (cf. the end of 3.1 above).

According to a Reformational societal philosophy (as developed amongst others by Dooyeweerd, 1957 and 1986; McCarthy, Oppewal, Peterson & Spykman, 1982 and Skillen & McCarthy, 1991 and explained in chapter 12 and 13 of this book) a variety of societal relationships, each with its own characteristics, norm, unique task, own offices and authority are recognised. They are much more than mere "contracts" between individuals/groups (as found in liberalism), neither are they mere "parts" of a greater whole (as in the case of collectivism or communalism). Each one is sovereign in its own sphere. At the same time they are not isolated from one another either.

According to this societal philosophy human relationships differ because their leading or qualifying functions differ. For example, a church is qualified by faith, a business is an economic matter, marriage should be led by ethical norms (fidelity) and a state is qualified by the juridical (common justice).

7.2.2 Different tasks

If this kind of social analysis is done on the various forms of development co-operation, it may yield clarifying perspectives. The co-operation between two states is probably of a political nature. The work of donors on the other hand is more economically qualified. How would one typify the relationship between northern and southern partners? Or the relationship between a local NGO and its target group (poor people)? It depends on what the aim of the development work is. For instance, is it primarily the provision of food (or agriculture), job creation, promoting trade, education and training, environmental conservation, human rights, good governance, conflict management, care for refugees?

An example of how one can differentiate between a variety of tasks according to a Reformational societal philosophy is given by Hamelink & Visser (2000:136 *et seq.*) who first differentiate clearly between the responsibilities of a state, societal organisations and multinational organisations (like the World Bank, IMF, UN and WHO) and according to this offer guidelines for co-operational development for each of the three.

7.2.3 Difference between office, authority, power and responsibility

Earlier on in this contribution it became clear that authority, power and responsibility are key problems in any form of development co-operation (including a partnership). Although we do not have the space to illustrate the Reformational view on these concepts (including office as service), it can be stated that such a viewpoint can also make a significant contribution in this respect (cf. Van der Walt, 2006c:137-146). Office, authority, power and responsibility are determined by the nature and task of a specific societal relationship, institution or organisation and is therefore always qualified and limited and thus cannot be exercised in the same way. In the light of the characterising or qualifying element of a societal relationship (cf. 7.2.1), a decision will have to be taken on the most suitable form of authority, power and responsibility for a specific co-operational agreement.

7.2.4 Different norms

Regarding the vagueness in connection with norms for development work (cf. Gasper, 2004 and Goudzwaard & De Lange, 1995:39) a Reformational philosophy of society can also offer more light. It departs from the basic idea that everything man does – including development work – is religiously determined, is service to God or an idol. This service should comply with the central commandment of love for God and the neighbour (Matt. 22:37-40 and numerous other references in the Bible). Love should, however, be made practical in its own kind of norms for each human relationship. So, for instance, love in marriage takes the form of mutual fidelity, in the church as love for one's brothers/sisters, in the state as public justice. How can the central commandment of love take

form in the field of development co-operation which pursues the alleviation of poverty?

Because this type of work is not religiously neutral (secular) one should first ask which norms have to apply in the relationship with God and then in the relationship with fellow human beings and nature.

- **Towards God** three norms, values or virtues could be mentioned: First *obedience* to his commandment that there may not be poor people among us (Deut. 15:4). This implies willingness to use the *gifts* received from Him for the *needs* of one's neighbour – voluntarily, without reserve or the expectation of compensation (cf. 2 Cor. 8:15). Secondly *gratitude* since everything we own is a gift from God. Thirdly *contentment* with what one has.

- **Towards the poor neighbour** the following four norms could be distinguished: First *respect* – which should be mutual. Second *charity*, especially towards the first category of the poor above (cf. 3.3), namely the economically poor. Thirdly *justice* towards the second category, the powerless. The fourth norm is *compassion* towards the third category of the spiritually poor (which include those who are materially rich, but still spiritually poor.)

- **Towards the rest of creation.** From the cultural mandate to humans (Gen. 2:15) it becomes clear that man's/woman's task is to *protect, preserve and care for* his/her environment. Therefore Goudzwaard & De Lange (1995 – cf. the subtitle of their book) talk about an economy of care.

Most of these norms apply primarily to the rich, but may not be restricted to them. If these norms are complied with the *divided* world (with which this investigation started) can become a better, *shared* world. But a completely *healed* world our human efforts at fighting poverty will not reach (cf. Deut. 15:11 and Mark 14:7). This fact (viz. that we will always have the poor among us) is, however, mentioned in the Word of God neither as an excuse for the rich to do nothing about it, nor as a fatalistic acceptance of the poor to resign themselves to their fate. On the contrary, it constitutes a call to active steps by the rich and the poor – for the benefit of our African continent.

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Is it appropriate for especially a Christian to write a book with the title *At home in God's world* – a world full of misery and eventually death? The author's response is in the affirmative. Because this is God's world especially Christians should be fully, that is involved with heart and mind. The book, therefore, neither accepts the viewpoint of some Christians that we are mere pilgrims, passing through foreign country en route to heaven, nor the contemporary secular belief that we are nomads on a way to nowhere.

- The book starts (in the first section) with the author's view of the Bible, the foundation of his Christian worldview and philosophy.
- In this Reformational philosophy (explained in an elementary way in the second section) he therefore accepts in faith the reality of a God who created a perfect world, a home for many creatures, and – in spite of everything bad and sad – still upholds and directs it through His ordinances.
- In the third section our earthly nature is emphasised: We belong to this world – God's world – and are also living in the expectation of the final renewal of the same earth. Here and now we are called to visibly reflect Christ – the paradigmatic Example of being human.
- The final section explores a transforming paradigm for Christians' involvement in the different domains of social life.

Over against both escapist Christianity and the secular philosophies of today, this integral, down to earth, Christian philosophy proclaims a clear message: This world, which belongs to God, is our real home in which – beyond personal piety and church walls – we have a God-given task to fulfil.

The author, Bennie van der Walt (born 1939), is a South African citizen. He was educated in South Africa and the Netherlands in the Reformational tradition in both Theology (Th.B.) and Philosophy (D.Phil.). He traveled extensively in Africa and beyond, lecturing worldwide. As a retired professor, he is presently a research fellow at the School of Philosophy, Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University. For a list of other publications still in print, see the last page of this book.