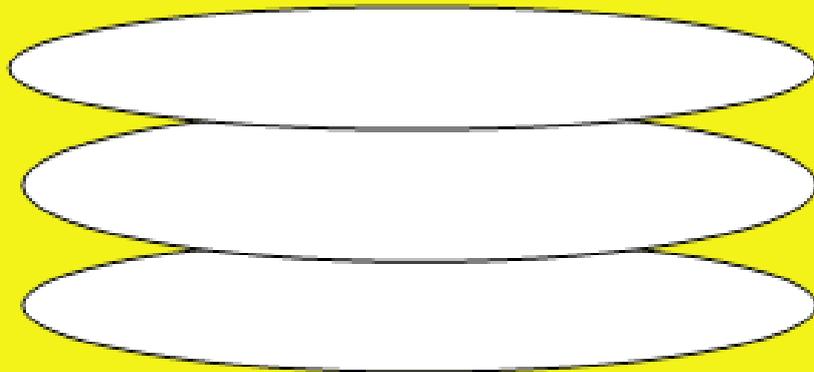


UNSHACKLING OUR FAITH

- Rethinking Church, Bible and Providence -

- Reformation 500: My View -



Piet Cronjé

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Who will read this book?

The most likely reader to finish reading this booklet will be one with an intellectual interest in spirituality, the word and will of God and the People of God.

And that reader may also be interested in how these understandings are used in life, inclusive of scientific endeavours. And does the will of God imply any form of predestination?

This book is especially directed at those Reformed Christians who are aware of their heritage of the past 100 years – a heritage which may be called the post-Kuyperian reformed era. Even with some good developments during this era, there are also many unsolved problems, some of which I address in this booklet. These problems link back to the less than perfect Protestant heritage which we accumulated over the 500 years since the Martin Luther protest. In that respect this booklet also makes a modest proposal for what future is available. How will the good starting point but the unfinished “agenda” of the Reformation be carried forward? I have at least three basic items of protest and proposals that I would want to fix to the collective door of the Reformed-Protestant heritage.

Finally this booklet is for those who want to remain Christians but who are looking into ways of how to rid themselves of some of the standard Christian heritages that have become embarrassments, if not shackles, almost too heavy to suffer.

Readers not having any particular sympathy with neither the Kuyperian nor even with the much wider Christian heritage may find some comfort in the efforts here to downsize a few unsustainable elements in these traditions and also in the outcome which the arguments in this booklet may have towards a more relevant engagement between Christians and others. I also propose that Christians embrace the feared mode of “secularization” in a very specific way.

[Reading advice: A shorter 15-page route to the concept and design of the booklet is the following: Intent & Background; Introduction; section 1.9; section 2.6; section 3.4; Looking Back; My Theses at Reformation 500.

Readers not interested in “technical” discussions may find section 2.5 and Chapter 3 the easier parts to read]

2017

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INTENT AND BACKGROUND

My story here revolves around three questions that when taken together are aimed at a specific effect. These three questions I believe stand in the context of a broader Christian community. Should I need to select some “recent” intellectual starting points for engaging with what I present here it would firstly be the work by AM Wolters, *Creation Regained* which already articulated much of my response to the first question addressed here. My response to the third question is mostly an affirmative but expanded response to the book by Adrio König, *God Waarom is die Wêreld so? (God, why is the world as it is? – my translation of title).*

So why then did I make the effort to produce this booklet? Firstly, although I have a deep admiration for these two authors I also have fundamental points of critique on their presentations since they are both overcommitted to the status of theology. Secondly, in the case of König, he has no appreciation for the created natural law and in addition he makes the institutional church far too important. Nonetheless, both provide crucial stepping stones towards a more flexible and comprehensive understanding of both the Biblical message and the task of humans in the world.

Both these publications provided a welcome relief inside communities often noted for their conservatism. But Wolters (reformed community of Northern America) and König ¹ (talking to the reformed community of South Africa) would normally not be found inside the same grouping. I think it is time that at least from a South African perspective their contributions are used complementarily in achieving the kind of aim that I am pursuing here.

I believe the reformed public and especially those interested in the intellectual foundations of their legacy have on many points not taken sufficient critical distance from their own tradition. The work of systematic theologians like JA Heyns (SA), L Berkhof (USA) and others require a serious reconsideration at the points I will indicate. My critique and the suggested changes which my approach here implies, may contribute to less embarrassment

¹ It must be added that König had already three years ahead of Wolters wrote a book on creation (*New and greater things*, 1988 – English version of *Hy kan weer en meer!* 1982a) that in many ways surpassed the work of Wolters but not in the implications for my views on human culture and the created cosmic laws. The text critical approach taken by König was also something that at that stage was still viewed with suspicion inside the more reformed conservative circles which makes it explainable why he did not receive sufficient recognition in local reformed circles. But this is exactly why I rate his work in a technical sense superior to that of Wolters. His political position in South Africa against apartheid also further complicated matters with some South African audiences at the time of publication.

The vision articulated by Wolters also found a well-rounded place in the chapter on cosmology in pp. 140-190. *Spykman GJ (1992) Refomational Theology: A new paradigm for doing dogmatics.*

and more confidence for reformed Christians when facing representatives of an increasingly sceptical Western world. That world I think is tired of some of the old solutions and the toxic packaging inside which we find even the better solutions. Hence I also find much of the stated positions in all “spiritual” conversation in Christian communities a serious embarrassment. Personally I no longer want to suffer unnecessarily for these embarrassing views which are forced almost by default upon me through my association with the broader Christian community and also by the very small enclave inside the Calvinian community which helped to shape my basic perceptions in important ways.

I studied the work of Wolters, Spykman and König only in the recent past. Before that I was mostly impressed with the kind of explanations provided by Danie Strauss as could be seen especially in an article published in 1972² and which is not frequently referred to in academic discussions. Many reasons could be given for its relatively low profile. Possibly the message by Strauss was presented in an oversimplified way, not taking into account the many complications both in the Biblical text and in the current conventions of theology. Maybe the attention at the time was taken up mostly by the flamboyant personalities from the Canadian ICS (Institute of Christian Studies) who addressed much the same problem in a much more communicative way even as I view it to be less accurate. But Strauss, following the assumptions of the more radically reformed tradition set out the basic concepts of what I do in Chapter 1. Much later I realised that what was stated there needed to be presented and contextualised in a far more comprehensive way than he did it originally – this is the case even if I take into account his later explanations on the very same topic. The reason is that there remains simply too much traditional if non-confrontational resistance inside Christian communities to appreciate the relatively simple message given by him.

I myself over many decades had to grow into the view offered there as I studied standardised reformed texts and asking myself why some of the most basic explanations as given by Strauss and Dooyeweerd have been ignored in the reformed theological and church communities. Eventually I realised that there are a number of apparently similar but in effect contrary messages active inside the intellectual circles of the reformed world and that those and a range of associated nuances have to be taken along on the journey towards articulating a view which I believed is Biblically justified in a non-fundamentalist way. That is

² Strauss DFM. 1972. *The Central Religious Community of Mankind in the Philosophy of the Cosmological Idea* This contribution needs to be read in conjunction with Olthuis JH, Hart H et al. who published *Out of Concern for the Church* (1970) and *Will all the King's Men....* (1972). I read some of their work and also listened to some of their discussions when they visited South Africa during the 1970s.

the larger context of chapter 1 specifically but also for this publication as a whole. The works of König and Wolters and the pleasure they provided are not sufficient in themselves to explain the intent of this publication. But equally so, the work of Strauss will remain for the most part unused if it is not deployed in a way that is complementary to the work of authors like Wolters and König who each made unique contributions to a wider Christian readership. I also realised that without a strong critical message on the Calvinist thrust towards predestination and providence, the more general Dooyeweerdian tradition within which Strauss stands, will contribute far below its potential. Here I specifically mean that Calvinians tend to assume the wrong kind of “hand of God” in events which happen in the so-called factual side of reality and which is the cultural-formative nature of human affairs. In that domain much more is within the control of human formative powers than is usually believed but humans are also exposed to coincidence far more than what is usually granted by people of Calvinian persuasions.

I am a Christian who no longer “belongs” to any church in a traditional way. Although I regularly visit reformed and evangelist congregations and sometimes even contribute, I view them as only some among the many service stations along the highway of life. I do not claim that I have found the full truth for a new and a spiritual lifestyle in the sense that we find such claims being insinuated in the extremist communities of either the super-humble or of the over-confident.

I am walking a road where I have to find my way between such extremes as above. There are many more extremities that I attempt avoiding on both sides of the way I follow. I listed most of these extremities further on, but here is a more expanded presentation of two of them:

- The theocratic approach of the dominion theology, often in a millennialist context, **versus** the promotion of the cultural irrelevance of the spiritual message as captured in the Bible (I will still argue the cultural limitations inside the Bible);
- The pedestalling of the organised church institution and its theology as either the darling of the Kingdom of God or as the full sum of the Body of Christ **versus** the complete side-lining of the church (even as I do think that a so-called de-churching of Christianity is necessary).

I trust that the way I walk the line here may provide a healthier platform for Christian witnessing than what is currently the case when Christians submit themselves to any combination of the traditional shackles, which are the extremities which I indicated in the following collection of concisely stated oppositions:

- The over-confident (see free TV channels) **versus** the super-humble (pietism).
- Biblical fundamentalism **versus** ridiculing of the Bible.
- Clericism **versus** anti-Clericism.
- Creationism (fundamentalism / intelligent design) **versus** physicalist emergentism (vitalism as a variant of deism).
- Gomarean and Arminian prescience by God **versus** naïve inter-personalist open theology.
- Strict salvific and other kinds of predestination **versus** a completely chaotic and coincidental world.
- Radical orthodoxy **versus** post-modernism.

Piet Cronjé

August 2017

INTRODUCTION

We Christians are fond of making three serious confessional claims as a means to convince each other of our unbreakable solidarity with the cause of God. These claims concern our views on the Church, the Bible and the hand of God in our lives - providence and predestination. I view these three claims as the answers to a set of open questions which I believe is the following:

- “What do we mean by the Kingdom of God and by the Body of Christ?”
- “What do we mean by the Word of God?”
- “To what extent do we believe that God is in control of our lives?”

I have often reworked my answers to these questions in confrontation with the standard answers provided by the spokespersons of the mainstream Protestant and Reformed communities. This booklet is my personal struggle towards finding an improved articulation of answers to these questions which are also some of the challenges facing all Christians. The aim of this publication is to address these questions as a set but at the same time also achieve a more intimate coherence between the elements of the set than what is usually attempted.

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Chapter1

KINGDOM, PEOPLE AND CHURCH OF GOD: AN EXPANDED VIEW

1.1 Overview

There are many strands and traditions in our understanding of the concepts kingdom, nation, people and church of God. These concepts will first be explored as traditional answers to the first open-ended question: *“What do we mean by the Kingdom of God and by the Body of Christ?”* We will look at the way in which we meet the concept of “kingdom” in the Biblical literature. Only then will I move through a discussion of a number of related strands and contributions.

1.2 Kingdom in the Bible: Body versus Church

Why the metaphors?

The expression “kingdom” in the Old Testament firstly carries a specific political meaning. This reality is most clearly visible in the promise to David (2 Samuel 7:12-16). This same notion is still active in the New Testament where the disciples of Jesus were longing for the restoration of Israel as a free Palestine kingdom in the Davidic line (Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6–7). The political expectation inside the Jesus-movement from Galilee remained strong until the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. But alongside this line of expectation we also have the separate notion of a so-called spiritual kingdom which was ever present in the Old Testament. So we see the reference to people who were uncircumcised in their hearts in Jeremiah 9:25-26. Jesus said that his kingdom is not of this world and then he refers to the power of the sword which is not to be used by his followers (John 18:36). In this way the connection between the notion of “God’s Kingdom” and an exclusive political understanding is loosened. This “loosening” reminder is promoted probably by as many Bible sections as there are those that connect the notion of a “kingdom of God” to a political/ governmental meaning.

Such a “loosening” trend enforces a metaphorical understanding of the expression. By this I mean that the actual rule of God could only be captured by our language in an incomplete manner by referring to the concepts that we as temporal beings can construct on the basis of our political experience of a kingdom, of a commonwealth association or of a parliamentary democracy. It may be appropriate to recall the most basic commonplace feature in the use of a metaphor. A metaphor is by definition limited in the sense that it always achieves a less than full overlap between the target concept and the meaning of the very word which we use metaphorically to describe that concept itself. So in the expression of the “nose of the aeroplane” there is no functional connection with an alternative breathing inlet as with

mammals. There is only a positional connection. But here follows the important consideration: Because of this lingual and cognitive limitation it appears advisable that more than one metaphor is regularly used in an attempt to achieve a more accurate communication about the targeted concept or idea. This is especially important when it is a really complex or evasive idea that needs to be communicated. Attempting to describe God will most certainly qualify as such a challenge. So we see in this attempt the well-known metaphors of Father and King which in the Bible are used most often of God: the governance and care for both a government (kingdom) and a family in our experience are then also both used as metaphors for explaining the “governance” that God exercises for his creation-wide Kingdom. We need both – one only would spoil, limit and misdirect our understanding! We need others as well: “Mustard seeds” and “the vine plant” are but two of the many alternatives.³

In my broader understanding the Bible writers were subject to such creationally given and similarly culturally practised norms for language and artfulness when communicating. The use of a general lingual regularity like a metaphor is not unique to the biblical literature – as is the use of the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. So the very core messages in the Bible as a lingual product are subject to the creational norms which were given ahead of the actual writing. The Bible did not materialise like lightning from another world. It was written slowly into this world, even as major conceptual themes like creation and covenant were initiated from elsewhere. The very fibre of the Biblical language was penetrated by both the created and also by the culturally designed normative structures for language and artfulness.⁴ Many other conditioning environments will be addressed later on.

³ Care should be taken that both metaphor and analogy are insufficient and if taken too seriously could be destructive of an understanding of God. Roy Clouser awares us that God adopts features of his good creation to make himself intelligible to us. So while metaphor and analogy are most efficient literary devices inside created reality it falls short when attempting to capture the origin of creation. See *Clouser R (forthcoming) Dark Matter: Why Naturalism Is Blind Faith*. The notion of a concept-transcending understanding has been promoted by Danie Strauss, also in the Dooyeweerdian legacy.

⁴ The play between precision and ambiguity or vagueness in the words we use is one of the miracles that makes language such an important tool in the human repertoire of skills. However sometimes language becomes deified in itself by unsustainable statements like “the limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (Wittgenstein). To the contrary, on reflection as we know very well that while language certainly contribute to our view of reality and our capacity in dealing with a variety of realities its very creative vitality is always co-dependent on the sensing (a non-language capacity) or discovering (a non-language capacity) of new non-language things or processes or conditions that were not known before. So most often other actions and realities precede our language capacity in our discovery of the much wider universe. The deification of the written word

But that is only half the story. We should also scrutinise if not audit our usage of metaphors. By favouring certain metaphors over others when describing the concept of kingdom of God one may betray an unjustifiable preference which is usually indicative of bias, often originating in a worldview and we are all prone to that.⁵

Some clericals and theologians tended to abuse this given “looser” connection between God’s kingdom and current political projects. They saw it as an opportunity to set up a complete instead of only a partial equation between the organised church and the kingdom of God. This is also a mistaken understanding to say the least. My reasoning is that as much as the connection between the kingdom of God and a political structure should be a loose one, so much the connection between kingdom and organised church/ temple events or administration should be a loose (incomplete/ inconclusive/ partial) one.⁶

This thrust for loosening the connection of kingdom to the church organisation and its ritual events is also present at a next level in the biblical expressions of “kingdom of priests”, “priestly kingdom” and a “royal priesthood” / “priestly royalty” (Bartholomew) (1 Peter 2:9; Exodus 19:6). Such expressions, in my view promote the vagueness which quite possibly is intended to create a deliberate ambiguity in terms of the perceptions of these times. Consider this: a king that has access to God in these days was also a priest. And then a priest that rules is also a king! The point that appears necessary to stress here is that during early-Israel times only the powerfully-positioned children of Levi could be priests and only the descendants of David (from Judah) could be king. But in the concept of a “priest-king” these traditionally hard lines that ruled since the Sinai-Samuel period are possibly scrambled deliberately so that in this case we are looking at something in-between, both priests and kings are included though neither one is privileged to a monopoly. From a New Testament

will be discussed with additional examples and contexts in the next chapter. The use of metaphor will also remain important.

Note: A softer explanation of the Derridean view “that there is nothing outside the text” says that it only refers to the “omnipresence of mediation” and that it does not sanctify either the first text or any of its interpretations. See p.220, Williams R 2003. *Historical Criticism and Sacred Text*

⁵ The following additional metaphors that are both adding value and also creating limitations are found in the Biblical text: God as Father and King; Mankind as King and Priest; Creation as a temple (with an Image of God, i.e. humankind). The last is revealingly discussed by Middleton JR 2005. *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*: pp. 81-88. For a perspective on post-modernity, consider Lubbe, JJ. 1990. *Ideologie en Teologie: Op pad na 'n ideologie-bewustheid* (Translation of title: *Ideology and Theology: En route to an awareness of ideology*)

⁶ The South African theologian JA Heyns even stated initially that none of the societal Kingdom partners of which the church is one, is holier than the other. He warns that none of the other forms of the Kingdom in society should be churchified (“verkerklik”). See p.24. Heyns, JA 1977. *Die Kerk (The Church)*; See similar pp. 24-25; 149; 200 (dubious); 216. But then later on he played a different version.

perspective the so-called Melchisedekian terms run outside of the professional one-ups between the bureaucracy of the temple and the bureaucracy of the palace. The pre-Egyptian Melchisedekian terms on the other hand fit well with the concept of the new covenant that also challenges the over-estimation and even the self-importance of any one of the above bureaucracies! But the history of this matter is even more interesting. The very confused king Saul was rejected when he tried to conduct a sacrifice. Then King David with his poetic passion moved closer to God revealing an intimacy which was largely unknown since Abraham and Moses. Still later it was Solomon who as king actually made a ceremonial (priestly) prayer of dedication for the temple (2 Chronicles 6-7). Eventually, beyond Pentecost, this ideal of a king-priest or priest-king was only properly fulfilled by Jesus (Hebrews 6:20) in the restoration of the order of Melchisedek – overcoming the limitations of the Sinai covenant. Jesus of Nazareth as well fits neither the role of typical priest or pastor nor that of a typical royal political ruler – a fact so obvious that there must be weighty other reasons for ignoring it.⁷

I have up to now attempted to “safeguard” the notion of kingdom against the monopolistic intent of both the church power-mongers and the scheming of the state politicians. I have also indicated the bridging nature of God’s rulership covering more than either church or state. It now appears appropriate to indicate in more detail what the nature and the stretch of that rulership is. A better understanding of that rulership will be helpful for finding the current responsibilities and opportunities of humankind in covenant with God. Understanding the rulership in the kingdom investigation requires that we go wider than looking only at the word “kingdom”. We need instead to focus on the notion of the rulership by God as creator which highlights some form of control which is far wider than what we find in the political ambitions of rulers or ruling groups. The notion of rulership and control appears to be more basic and is definitely much wider than the notion of kingdom which by definition is limited to the political field. Authority and office in this perspective is a pair of generic terms and is not the private property of the state officials. It is a generic concept that covers all forms of control:

⁷ Middleton 2005 op. cit. pp. 83-87 shows quite impressively the linkage between the narrative of the creative force in Genesis 1 and the narrative on the creative force released on the builders of the tabernacle (priestly domain, Exodus 31). The fascinating part revealed by Middleton is that the notion of a human being as image of God in Genesis 1 is specified in a dual manner. We see the well-known ruling style over planet, plants etc. (royal) which stands alongside the lesser-known status of being the image of a God inside a creation conceived by the (priestly?) author as a temple; hence a temple containing an image of the god; an image endowed with a royal habit – two powerful bureaucracies (in Foucaultian perspective) unified in one narrative, it seems!

church, state, business, entertainment, family etc. The only question is about the appropriateness of the kind of authority in a specific situation.⁸

How the “ruling” was narrowed down to the organised church

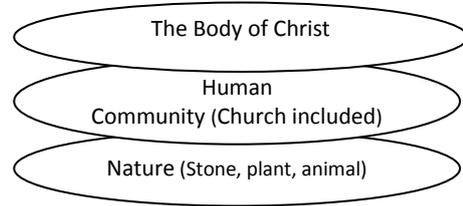
There is a certain body of assumptions to which thinkers in the reformed and protestant heritages, but also other christian thinkers, will sometimes pay their respects. I will state it as follows: Firstly, God created everything good, says Genesis 1:31. And this message echoes through Ecclesiastes 3:12 -14, Romans 14:14,20 and 1 Timothy 4:4a. Secondly we see Psalm 24 where it is said that the earth and its fullness belong to God. In my view these two simple statements mean that God’s kingdom (rulership) extends over the whole earth and everything inside of it.⁹ Finally humankind was made responsible for creation and also designed and tasked to humbly and stewardly care for¹⁰ the earth. This perspective we find in both Genesis 1 and 9. Subsequently Paul encourages the early Christians that everything they do must be to the glory of the Lord (Colossians 3:17;23; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Romans 14:19). So it seems to me that there is an assumption inside the biblical writing that there are better or worse ways in which to do all things that humans do.

⁸ The recognition of the variety of offices and authorities goes hand in hand with a differentiated society. Hence it is important to not forget the undifferentiated nature of the societies that dominated western communities up to the 17th century and which even to this day still continues in many ways. Some states continue the tradition and many a church politician appears to long back to that era. Most states outside of Western Europe and of the Anglo-American cultural complex have not experienced that highest level of a balanced and integrated differentiation of societal powers. But even that development of a free civil society saw mixed results only. The privilege of having experienced the positive results of such an understanding and practice, even when with partial success only, is not always appreciated sufficiently by our generation and our children who were the main beneficiaries of that development. It was a miraculous season of which western Europe but in particular the Dutch made good use. Yet its stability remains fragile and its future is never certain.

⁹ Heyns JA. 1977 in his introduction gives many more Biblical textual confirmations of this position than which I have offered here.

¹⁰ Seerveld C 1988. *On Being Human: Imaging God in the Modern World* (p.78) reminds us appropriately that “the position of leadership which goes with human nature fulfilled in Christ is most fundamentally a rule characterized by mercy, not mastery. Humans called to rule by the LORD have no claim in themselves, no absolute title, to be rulers.” This nuance most likely comes from Genesis 2:15 to both “till” and “keep” the earth. “Rulership” has to be reconceived in a non-heroic and non-destructive way since the earth (universe) is not our enemy but the foundation making our very bodies and living possible. Dupuy JP (2013) in *The Mark of the Sacred* indicates many specific examples of how human rulership estranged us from the earth. But the most arresting explanation comes from Middleton asking the question if we have been created in the image of a violent god? See pp. 235 - 269. Middleton. 2005. This question entirely redefines the issue of the extent to which Biblical literature is responsible for the fifth (?) massive environmental destruction and the subsequent species extermination on this planet.

But having covered this basic if not universal consensus,¹¹ we find that beyond this first set of assumptions the maintenance of common ground between Christians becomes somewhat trickier. I will state a second and narrower assumption than the previous set: To enable a working creation I think it is reasonable to suppose that God created a set of frameworks that consists of normative principles or laws that can help us towards decisions for making our lives work better. These frameworks which are far older¹² than the Law of Moses are also God's way to remain present both as a ruler and as a caring owner in all of his creation. In my view all the basic prototypes - but not the exact design of the individual specimens in creation - were given at some stage after the original network of norms. That is how I read Proverbs 8, Colossians 1:18,¹³ Revelation 5:13 and Psalm 148:5-6.



¹¹ Middleton JR 2014. *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology*. This publication covered much of the ground which I present here. While Middleton got much acclaim, his interpretation of some of the Bible texts which I also used in a similar way was challenged.

¹² The common assumption amongst Christians that God created only things and not also laws/frameworks that enable attributes is questioned very seriously in this publication. This problem is discussed most ably and explained in its Biblical context on pp.215-216; 243. Clouser R. 2005. *The myth of religious neutrality*. Also p.11. Heyns 1977.

Even as Genesis 1:1 and Isaiah 45:18 could not literally have referred to the establishment of a creational framework (deep laws, norms and structures) our current understanding can justify that as a reality. In addition then the rest of Genesis 1 and 2 which shows how creation, if we put naive language, aesthetics, mythical heritages and ancient worldviews aside, could be interpreted as being seeded (filled) with many primitive things and eventually also primitive human specimens. Clearly the ancient biblical authors could only think in terms of the specimen population of their time. Nowadays, informed by scientific studies on evolution and development I believe that these primitive seeds were created later by God and then left to develop further according to the soft pull of these deep law frameworks. This implies a specific understanding of what the Bible says about our God creating all and "everything" (e.g. Revelations 4:11). Did God indeed create Collie dogs and the Twin Towers? Of course not: But he most likely seeded the normed reality he created with some primitive entities and structuring possibilities which was his dowry to creation and especially to humankind to continue creating much more variety – again under the tug of Gods given created laws. In nature this self-procreation by creation also happens magnificently so outside of any intervention by humankind. Klapwijk 2012 *Nothing in Evolutionary Theory makes sense Except in the Light of Creation* p.73-74 rejects this seeding option posed by Gousmet. But it seems that Gousmet takes a Gomarean view. Klapwijk links it to the logi spermatikos of the Stoa – which in itself does not make it wrong.

¹³ The messages of Proverbs 8 and Colossians 1:15-20 are not regularly treated together with prominence in Christian evangelical circles. These two sections are crucial starting points for thinking about the Wisdom (Jewish) and the Christ mediatorship between God and his or her creation. Hence it is appreciated that these two passages are given extensive treatment adjacent to each other in four chapters of the publication by Ford DF & Stanton G (editors) (2003) *Reading Texts, Seeking Wisdom*: pp. 89-138. Elsewhere the notion that both salvation and wisdom are about restoring the spiritual and cultural connection with creational order is promoted by

Beyond these two sets of limited common grounds given above, we get to what may in geological terms may be called a Pangea of common ground between the mainstream Christians but which I do not share: In an “inexplicable” way the Christians have managed to limit this comprehensive view of kingdom – given above – to the church only. This I find questionable. Even as some limitations to this shared assumption have been indicated earlier on, we have to excavate the full scale of the practice. So for instance some christian thinkers will, even with as much flair as JA Heyns, commit to the points in the opening paragraphs above. But then all of a sudden we find them batting for a different team. In the case of Heyns and Berkof such a retreat action is embarrassing, at least to me. Their moves are reviewed below.

The end result of the narrow understanding of kingdom is that in the minds of most “lay” christians “Kingdom of God” is understood as what happens in and around the church building and what is done by the management of the church organization. Christians seem “unable” to register the strong indications in the Biblical scriptures that God had initially NOT wanted a temple and that He – contrary to the claims in 2 Chronicles 6-7 – certainly does NOT stay in a temple (2 Samuel 7:4-8; 1 Kings 8:27; Isaiah 66:1-2; Acts 7: 49-50 and Acts 17: 24-25). It is stated very clearly in Jeremiah 7: 1-15 that the Israelites should not put their trust in the temple and that only God’s name lives in the temple NOT He himself – and I believe that this is also the very conditional way how we could understand the expression “house of God” every time we read it in the Old Testament.¹⁴ Contrary to claims on God’s physical address, God dwells everywhere – I always thought this belonged to the very idea of being God. His preferred “temple” is then said to reside inside our human bodies (1 Corinthians 3:9-17; 6:19-20; 1 Peter 2:5) but in real terms we could even say that he is

Bartholomew CG 2002 *A time for war, and a time for peace: Old Testament Wisdom, Creation and O’Donovan’s Theological Ethics*: pp. 91-115. König A. 1982a. *Hy kan weer en meer! (New and greater things)* also made this connection. See pp. 80-85, 113-116. Opting for the Colossian exposition as I do here represents a specific understanding of the role of the Christ (as firstly tasked, then creating the rest of creation).

¹⁴ This is the case in many Bible references, e.g. in Deuteronomy 26:5. Going to the tabernacle, temple etc. is equated with being in the presence of God. But the reality of these references should be weighed up against many other reported counter-instances like where God visited Abraham in his tent, Moses in the desert, Gideon in the winepress, Paul on the way to Damascus etc. etc. In Jeremiah 7 the temple is repeatedly typified as the place for the “Name of God”, not his residence. My intention in this chapter is not to deny that God could be met in a temple or church. Neither is it my intention to deny the value of such places. It is only to deny the privileged status of temple and church. The game of church politicians on the other hand is not to deny the outside events but to still privilege the organised church events and presence as the preferred heart or essence of spiritual awareness proper.

simultaneously everywhere yet in a specific way remains outside of his creation – being the creator, himself being uncreated.

But the common understanding of Christians did not follow that route. The translation of the Biblical word “ekklesia” (Greek) as a “church congregation”¹⁵ is a way in which translators have intentionally or unintentionally succeeded to exchange the biblical vision of God’s creation-wide Kingdom, inclusive of the human spiritual community, for the narrow conception of a church kingdom.¹⁶ And this commonly shared but very mistaken view of Christianity survived into the 21st century, namely that the institutional church, either as a building or organisationally is taken to be both the house of God and the Body of Christ.

But claims that the entire creation “is his temple” are also very suspect. Why in the first place at all call it a temple? Why such an unfriendly place which is remote from thousands if not billions of other corners in the universe where God can rejoice in the actual victory achieved by the structures and the entities he/she created? Do we want to say that God does not want to enjoy the rest of his creation as he/she intend it? What about a colony of minute little crabs feeding on microlife forms at volcanic “smokers” kilometers deep inside freezing sea water; a human widow in some desolate shack caring for her children? Yes we know that the imagery of Genesis 1 and Revelations (both without an actual temple) talks about the presence of God in temple terms, but that is artistically coincidental if viewed over time and no principle at all should follow from this practise towards an ideology for romanticising or otherwise prioritising the church/ temple as the favourite habitat of God .

It seems as if the church politicians (from their old-Israel Levite forebears to adamant pretenders this very day) have attempted to set God under house arrest. And they have persuaded the faithful of their success in handling God. And the Body of Christ is hijacked as a result: Kingdom captured! And they have pretended that this is actually the way it should be. The mistaken nature of this message will form a major focal point as we investigate associated topics in the remainder of this chapter.

¹⁵ Tyndale’s death by strangulation for translating the koine word “ecclesia” with “congregation” instead of “church” was doubly sad because not only does it show the hideous disregard for freedom of speech and translator’s practice in the sixteenth century. It also shows the outcome of a skirmish for defending a vanity (by Tyndale) which in the bigger scheme of things was as mistaken as was the option that he opposed. It was not the first or the last time that politics played a role in translations. Additional references will follow on how this already happened in the initial recording of the biblical scripts.

¹⁶ pp. 11-35. Munroe M. 2006. *Principles of the Kingdom*. Munroe, refreshingly for a tele-preacher with influence – stresses the earthly rulership as a strong message in the Bible by differentiating between religion and kingdom. But then the Munroe context is clearly that of the so-called dominion theology.

In Roman times the early Christian communities were called “atheist” in the sense of ceremonially atheist: they have neither temple nor ritual offerings. But ambitious church leaders got their chance when Emperor Constantine wanted to include the church into the Roman way and so domesticate both Christianity and their God. Now they became civilised by containing their core religious expression and their god inside the confines of the organised church – a Roman “templum”. So while the fourth century is often hailed as a breakthrough for Christianity, it was in fact the scene of an accident from which all Christian thinking still suffer today – even mortally so.

Ruling only in the future?

Some tend to project the kingdom of God completely into the distant future, mostly after the second coming of the Christ. Of course one should agree that the kingdom in that sense will be better visible in the hereafter. But that still does not solve the question of our obedience in this dispensation: here and now. That is unfortunate, we may even say unhistorical. It certainly is unrealistic given that the human task is one of struggle not just for survival but also one of being dignified as a human being and for finding progress. Biblically we simply have to work on a better obedience already today.

Ruling only on the inside?

Lastly we may consider the reduction of the Kingdom of God to the inner spiritual life of Christians as “the” place for the Kingdom of God. This approach is sometimes called pietism. It is particularly popular amongst evangelical Christians, New Age Christians and Roman Catholics in the tradition of minimalism, ascetism and mysticism. They limit Kingdom to the hearts of the people and to the emotional experience of God’s presence. In short: Once a heart is humble, repenting and accepting of the grace of God then that condition is evidence of when and where the Kingdom is established, according to these promoters.

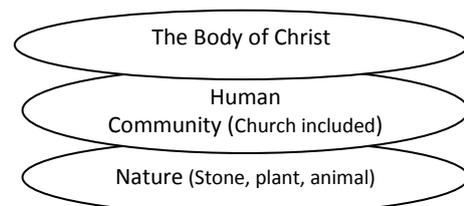
Obviously it is true that this core spiritual positioning provides the starting point for a fuller societal expression of the Kingdom of God. But to limit the Kingdom to that spiritual and inner starting point is clearly neither acceptable nor biblical. Such a limitation is also in denial of God’s ruling structures that are maintained even when people do not accept him spiritually or do not want to comply otherwise. A fuller picture of God’s rulership which stretches beyond the meditations and secret motivations of our hearts, follows later. The relevant Biblical passages against such a perception of Kingdom as an inner state only is of course the stewardship status of humankind that was confirmed in Genesis 1, 9 and elsewhere. We also find it in James 2: 14-26 where the futility of faith without works is addressed.

The limitation of Kingdom to both the future and the inner spiritual lives are using valid starting and endpoints to practice escapism from the current reality which is invalid as a Christian approach. Looking back we can also say that not all notions¹⁷ of kingdom have been noted in these few pages. However I will now move on to the next subsection where that part of the kingdom that is truly “inner” will be explored and positioned. Not least I will attempt to describe how that inner dimension in principle also truly escapes the confines of the organised church.

1.3 Finding the boundaries of the institutional church

Jesus of Nazareth used Kingdom as a catch-all phrase that covers both the inner connection between Christ and his people as well as the rulership of God beyond (outside) the inner connections. We cannot ignore the distinction between these two perspectives since the importance of each could be seen from both the Old Testament and the Pauline writings. It appears then necessary to maintain three layers of kingdom which are captured in the graphic to follow.

The associated terms “Body of Christ”, “Nation /People of God”, “Bride of Christ” and “ekklesia” will be treated more or less as a group of synonomous terms. This group of terms will be differentiated from those other



sections of the Kingdom of God which in this document are explained as a universe-wide structuring presence. “Body of Christ” and the rest of this grouping in my view refers to the internal human part of the subjects in God’s kingdom¹⁸ which stands opposed against the unfaithful part of humanity. It is not about a spiritual opposition between the church institution and other societal institutions¹⁹ like the state and businesses. It is also not justified to award the institutional church in a spiritual look on things a different ranking order as compared to the association of other societal kingdom partners. Heyns, viewed in pre-1994 South Africa

¹⁷ pp.559-560. Dake FJ. 2010. *God’s Plan for Man*. Dake distinguishes between the Kingdom of Heaven (future) and the Kingdom of God (since creation and universal). This is merely interesting. On pp. 593-594 he also found it necessary to argue that the Law of Moses and the Law of God are one and the same. This is very sad but thankfully and by contrast both the biblical text and the Roman Catholic tradition reminded us that there is a natural law created by God and which is far older than the Bible is. Pannenberg also is reported to recognise the necessity of a position on natural law in theology. See p.354. Woo BH. 2012. *Pannenberg’s Understanding of the Natural Law*

¹⁸ Strauss DFM. 1972. *The Central Religious Community of Mankind in the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea*

¹⁹ pp.64-69. Wolters AM 1985: *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*

as a “kingdom-theologian” notoriously ascribed to the church a different spiritual ranking. His argument was built upon questioning the very notion of an “invisible” church.²⁰

Sometimes it appears as if the church officials do see the full expanse of the kingdom. Then they refer to the “invisible church”, apparently meaning “Kingdom of God” or the “Body of Christ”. But the use of the word “church” in this expression is a problem from the very start as was pointed out earlier. On other occasions they will praise the excellence and achievements by Christians as they perform individually inside the non-church community e.g. in business and sport. However, the agenda of the church is soon exposed when it becomes clear that they have used such non-church environments only as a way to gain respect (reflected glory) by the non-church achievements of their congregational members. Meanwhile they still clearly view the church as the actual kingdom because they attribute the core features of the body of Christ (the ekklesia) to the institutional church. Hence – in the way they talk – the officiated church still claims for itself a higher status than for the rest of the societal kingdom partners.²¹

We have seen that it is, in terms of the complex matter at hand, unwise to award a monopoly of “kingdom” status to any one of the many candidate places or images (metaphors) as claimed by the bureaucracies and other prophets who represent such places and images. Instead the multiplicity of images and institutions should be treated as mutually complementary sides or places where the kingdom will break through during certain seasons

²⁰ Heyns JA 1977 takes an extremist position by denying at all the existence of any “invisible” church standing next to the organised church institution. In this document it is argued that Heyns does not consistently maintain his initial statements on equal partners in the Kingdom in the cases where he deals with the expressions Body of Christ and Ekklesia. When he addresses these expressions he gives the institutional church the sole and complete ownership of the “body of Christ” group of concepts. In this respect his position is similar to that of Newbiggin. So while Heyns and Newbiggin at face value do some things that appear to support a full-creation kingdom, they undermine it as they continue. And in the end they are not at all that distant from the South African charismatic preacher with a television footprint, At Boshof (Christian Revival Church) who on 2015.08.30 actually uttered the words from the pulpit: “there is no Christianity outside of the church”. Having sat through many of his sermons over more than two decades, this confirmed my worst suspicions. What is also often claimed (also by another popular tele-preacher Charles Nieman from El Paso, Texas) is that there is a communal truce between business (Kings) and the church (Priests). It comes to this they say: The church provides the (life and world) vision and the kings provide the (financial) provision (for the church). Of course there is an important natural donative relationship between for-profit and not-for-profit organisations, something which is underplayed in reformed communities. It just seems clear that in using such a bumpersticker as both Boshof and Nieman do that the church owners want to monopolise the prophetic function (vision) of all believers. That I believe is biblically thoroughly unjustified it not presumptuous.

²¹ The mainline Reformed position on the relationship between Kingdom and Church was never clear or consistent and in essence it remained tied to the imperious view of the organised church as in the legacy of the Roman Catholic Church.

of history. This view appears accurate to me and it provides the necessary historical perspective on the cultural confirmations of the Kingdom of God over time (both came and is coming – as is often stated by theologians since TC Dodd and GE Ladd). The reductionistic positions discussed above could be neutralised if Christians of all kinds promote the Kingdom of God in a variety of ways as will become clearer from the next sections.

But while it is necessary to rise above all these part-views, it remains a core imperative, for efficient communication with all Christians to identify the difference between the church organisation and the body of Christ. In the remainder of this chapter I will engage with the mostly futile attempts at this distinction as found in the work of several authors. Usually theologians or church-politicians are not truly intent of finding the difference. Their biased assumption on this matter simply disables them from seriously contemplating a distinction at all.²² I base my arguments on the premise that the institutional church as an organisation is *like any other* organisation. The famous Peter Drucker of organizational science, stated probably to the consternation of purists and romantics of many kinds, that

“...the differences between managing a chain of retail stores and managing a Roman Catholic Diocese are amazingly fewer than retail executives or bishops realize.”²³

The organised church institution displays the following features:

- It has a history of events, a founding period followed by a formative history inclusive of precursors in pagan shrines and temples and rituals. It shows cultural growth and differentiation, integration as well as a culture and a tradition – all fairly well recorded;
- It has a set of officiated roles, structures, locations and a definite organisation. It also has hierarchy.
- The participating individuals are highly recognizable as individuals in congregations even if uniform behaviour and even if uniform attire may be used.

²² Newbigin L. 1953. *The Household of God* is a typical example of how the attention is drawn away from this challenge by focusing on church-ecumenical matters. In his case as for much of the 20th century it is driven by the passion to unify organised churches on the assumption that together they are the Body of Christ. However on p.81 he discusses the problem if the church can sin or, like the Roman Catholic representatives argue, only its members can sin. In this case he argues apparently like Wink did later on that yes, organisations can sin and have sinned. In section 2.4 the cosmological perspective on such statements will be argued.

²³ Drucker PF 1998. *Management's New Paradigms*. The uniqueness of an organisation in terms of focus has only minor effects on basic management issues like managing money, maintaining assets and motivating people.

By contrast the Body of Christ (ekklesia) is not an organisation. It displays the following features:

- While created it is a spiritual and collective reserve which is in another dimension than entities, operations and functions. It is the elected people of God (Colossians 3:12-13). As people they are neither firstly church members nor firstly citizens of state. Nor are they just individuals. They are people with a collectively shared spirituality and that spirituality runs ahead of any church membership and ahead of their own personalised individuality and responsibilities.
- As a spiritual reserve it is a driving energy that causes the attitudes taken and the collective actions done in society and also in informal interpersonal relationships (Colossians 3:17). It provides a passionate drive that proceeds in the spirit of the kingdom. It also promotes an appreciative, caring and respectful relationship with nature and the universe as a whole.
- Only here in this collective can there be the truly meaningful and egalitarian understanding of the expressions “neither Jew nor Greek”, “no slave” etcetera (Colossians 3:11; Galatians 3:28). Although there were historical pointers towards this nation of God / body of Christ and although the membership of this body is growing all the time as more people get committed to it, in the strict sense of the word this body has neither culture nor tradition; neither hierarchy nor formal structures. Hence it cannot be the organised church in any form whatsoever. It simply is not inside the same dimension as where the church organisation is found. The organised church is only one amongst many institutions²⁴ which are benefiting from this collective. To really understand the Body of Christ / Nation of God in distinction from the organised church well and properly, the list in Colossians 3:11 and Galatians 3:38 should be viewed as open-ended and hence extendable. So the following could be added for a ring-fenced understanding: “Neither priest nor lay person.” That should close any back doors to papal ambitions in both the Protestant and Reformed communities, the Radical Orthodoxy movement obviously included.

²⁴ The view of Walter Wink on institutional evil as is reported in connection with Colossians 1: 15-20 is strikingly familiar to the Dooyeweerdian: “Wink...(to) explore the contemporary relevance... about the cosmic powers... to be not only angelic powers of the non-human world, but also the inner spiritual dimension of the structures of human power... affirms their creation by God (not intrinsically evil), assumes their fall into the condition of hostility to God... and affirms also their reconciliation in Christ. Wink builds an influential contemporary theology of Christian resistance to structural evil in human society which does not despair of the powers but works... for their redemption.” pp. 130-131, Bauckman R.2003. “Where is Wisdom to be found (2) – Col 1:15-20”.

The Body of Christ as above then is sometimes also called the “invisible church”. Is there any justification for that? There are in my view certain instances where the term “invisible church” could be used with integrity. That is for instance when we study an isolated settler community or communities where extreme persecution against Christians occurs. Another instance is when a disaster of war or the weather sweeps away both the local pastor and the church buildings – so the normal indicators of building, officials and organisation are absent. In these instances the societal need for a church service cannot be provided to the community in the standardised organisational sense of the word. Somebody will then read and lead in the ritual faith events, even give a sermon under a tree or in another building. The need in such a case is then addressed in prototype fashion. Similarly, and this is important for maintaining a comprehensive perspective, there can also be an “invisible government” where a settler community will appoint somebody as a “sheriff” in order to enforce a basic public judicial order to ensure elementary fairness in the public space but which is still a long way off from anything like a government. In both cases a societal need gets expressed and served in an archaean fashion, in prototype style, to provide in a practical way for the basic need of the human psyche and of a working society. The structures or the services that the people in a community crave for will in such cases be cared for at an elementary level only. These services provide what are required to enable a society to work at a minimum level. The difference between the so-called formal and informal economy illustrates a similar if notorious division line between visible and invisible. But the case of the “invisibility” of church / local congregation appears also not helpful in describing the “Body of Christ”. This “body” is beyond the administrative clutching of the organised church. It is beyond the justified use of the expression “invisible” as explained above.²⁵ The shameful history of the persecution on heretics is further evidence of how serious the attempt was by groups of people with a “mind-policing intent” to fully conflate the organisational church with the inner spiritual life of the people.

The way in which the attempted conflation of organised church and Body of Christ happened in history did not prevent many benefits from materialising. It is the case that many non-theological Christians, including myself and this manuscript, are the grateful beneficiaries of what many theologians, often paid by churches, have done to produce technically liberating, reasonable and scientifically informed explanations of the Bible, sections of it and also of our

²⁵ The charge that the concept of a Body of Christ or Nation (People) of God is a Neo-Platonic assumption will work apparently only when the following mistaken points of departure are taken: i. That the organized church is the only place where the People of God express their spiritual conviction; it is not; ii. That the structure for the organized church and the people participating in it are not different from each other. They are. This is the main argument of this chapter.

spiritual life. Such creative preachers and other writers who are employed by the church and who could be labelled “of the cloth” should be recognised for the many helpful contributions they made. But we who salute their contributions are not by such heartily applauding gestures in any way intent on promoting the church organisation as the exclusive and ever-present and all-providing “Mother of the Faithful” – which is the title which people of the cloth, Calvin included, would mistakenly ascribe to the institutional church.²⁶

1.4 Nature, grace and incarnation

It has to be considered how the terms “nature” and “grace” are used in church traditions. The two notions of nature and grace have often, as a pair been used as a, if not “the” leading paradigm in Christian thinking; Roman Catholic, Protestant and Reformed alike. The more Gnostic varieties have used the two partners in the pair in opposition to each other by which the understanding is that the good grace of God overcomes nature which by definition is antagonistic, sinful and bad. Others have simply said that grace perfects nature. It was in addition often implied that the institutional church is seen as the monopolistic owner and administrator of the “Grace in Christ” and hence acquires in their explanation, the status of leading importance in the Christian view of life, society and even in the universe. This view was and will be rejected throughout this document.

But since this conceptual frame of reference is such an important heritage, the meaning of these two poles need to be spelled out in the revised terms which is what is required by the alternative tradition followed in this document. Working with the polarity of nature and grace in a shorthand and undifferentiated way in whichever tradition is entirely insufficient for a believable understanding of our life and world. So below follows an attempt at unpacking these terms in a specific way.

Nature inside the reformed-Kuyperian perspective implies *both* the cosmic laws for existence and the factual states of affairs correlating with these created laws. This will be explained in more detail in section 2.4. Grace is also directed at both these sides of nature (created reality) but, very importantly, also in very different ways. The grace of the cosmic Christ (Hebrews 1; Colossians 1, John 1) ensured that the laws for an operational nature, i.e. a universe (both physical and cultural) get preserved. But then there is also the grace of the covenanting God, culminating in the prophesy and sacrifice of Jesus of Nazareth, followed by a Pentecost. This I believe is also the extended grace of incarnation: God assisting us (Body of Christ / People of God) through the Holy Spirit as Helper in restoring and developing a communal culture, yes communal lives that are compliant with those cosmic

²⁶ On pp. 433-435 *Spykman 1992* in vain attempts to paint Calvin in a better position.

laws (far predating Mosaic laws) which he has provided for our cultural ways.²⁷ So we end up with two kinds of nature: Law side and factual side. We also end up with two kinds of grace: preservational grace (providence of a life-giving framework) and incarnational grace (God-directed inspired living). Radical Reformational thinking has contained a third reality, namely that of sin on the factual side of nature (the universe) and that is also where the metanoia, the redirection, the spiritual renewal takes place: a repenting and a reinvigorated lifestyle with communal effects (fruits), and these “fruits of the Spirit” I propose can also justifiably be called “fruits of incarnation”.

So I will conclude at this stage that incarnation as above happens only on the factual side of reality i.e. in the decisions, events and traditions. Incarnation enables the universe towards its cosmic fullness, i.e. incarnation is not about providing a law framework but about inspiring obedient living in response to the maintained law framework. Such spiritual incarnation changes our hearts and minds, our society and our private lives and not just the church and dogma. But on the other hand the preservation of the cosmic universe is not incarnational; the maintenance of the universal laws as intended right from the beginning remained maintained long before the birth and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Treating the law-side of reality hypothetically as an incarnational concept would most likely be a purely Gnostic position, an outright rejection of the original goodness of the creation (Genesis 1:31).²⁸

The graphic below may be helpful to summarise this subsection. In linking up with the Biblical kingdom perspective we can say that on the law side the kingdom is already present, even if hidden in many respects. On the factual side the kingdom is coming firstly by means of survival, but in its fullness by incarnation. We see such coming in the development, in the breaking through of obedience, often obliterated again but then, once again pushing forward, a battle fought with opposing spiritualities.

²⁷ Newbigin rejects the claims of the Roman Catholic representatives on incarnation. He wants to limit incarnation to the physical body of Jesus of Nazareth (p. 80, *The Household of God*). I believe the Roman Catholic view is not without merits. They spoil it on other grounds, e.g. by viewing the historical facts of the church organisation as sinless.

²⁸ Mekkes PMJ 1951. *Incarnatie en Wijsbegeerte* (my translation of title: *Incarnation and Philosophy*) went as far as to also call the creation of human beings as Imago Dei “incarnation” (p.167). Mekkes would however not appreciate that since the creational pattern of Imago Dei refers to the law side for humankind and not to any specific individual, the creation of humankind could not truly be viewed as incarnation. Incarnation is the incarnation of God’s will for human life which is separate from his laws for human life and which is untouched by sin and hence not in need of any incarnation. The incarnation in Jesus and afterwards then all returning to obedience as compliance to cosmic laws, is to be rated as the incarnation of God’s will for human life which is separate of his laws for human life. This would also apply to pre-Christian eras.

Nature (Cosmic Universe)	Grace
<i>Law-side</i>	<i>Cosmic Christ</i> (maintenance: from and to)
<i>Factual-Side</i>	Covenanting before and after (intervening) sin (Creating a new People – Nation of God, Body of Christ) Prophets – revelations <i>Jesus of Nazareth</i> and <i>Pentecost</i> New Society ²⁹ (Inclusive of the Institutional Church) Desacralising (secularising) idolatory and associated beliefs Sacralising God, his creational law and his covenant

1.5 Berkhof and Heyns: Why a royal family in a democracy?

The habit to prioritise the organised church as the main scope of the Kingdom of God is a standard and non-artful strategic practice in reformed theology. Louis Berkhof in his *Systematic Theology* reflects the position in Dutch Calvinian communities in the first half of the twentieth century:

“Christian school societies...labor unions, and Christian political organizations, are manifestations of the Kingdom of God, in which groups of Christians seek to apply the principles of the Kingdom to every domain of life”.³⁰

He acknowledges, as did both Kuyper before and Heyns after that

“The Kingdom may be said to be a broader concept than the Church, because it aims at nothing less than the complete control of all the manifestations of life. It represents the dominion of God in every sphere of human endeavour.”³¹

While these statements were apparently in line with the view of this publication it is only partly and superficially so the case. Most dutifully typical to the reformed theological tradition Berkhof has in advance created some important provisions by means of what I will call a “collapse design” (I apply the term as in the automotive industry: cars are structured to, during a collision, crumble in such a way that the most important cargo, the passengers, remain relatively undamaged). This predesign will sabotage what he says subsequently: He does so by saying in advance that the church organisation is

- “... the most important visible embodiment of the forces of the Kingdom.” (p.630)

²⁹ The notion of “realised kingdom” is of relevance here.

³⁰ pp.630 - 631. Berkhof L. 1949. *Systematic Theology*.

³¹ p.631. op cit.

- “...God’s instrument in preparing the way for, and in introducing, the ideal order of things; and represent the initial realization of the ideal order ...” (p.630).

In this way he has already prioritized the church above the other fellow kingdom partners in society. In this case anything to the contrary which may follow in his exposition will be doubted. The reason is that over many centuries the expectations of the church membership population were in favour of the queen position for the church and its theologians. Thus a hegemony of understanding has been established. Berkhof continues this professionally (clerically) biased communication to re-confirm this established understanding. Any alternative statement which follows will most likely be read as a nice gesture to the aspiring partners in the kingdom - but not to be taken seriously at all.

Berkhof’s commitment to maintain the prioritised historical position of the church comes most clearly to the fore in his negative assessment of the view of the liberal-Protestant German theologian Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889):

“Ritschl substituted for the distinction between the invisible and the visible Church that between the Kingdom and the Church. He regarded the Kingdom as the community of God’s people acting from the motive of love, and the Church as that same community met for worship. The name “Church” is therefore restricted to an external organization in the one function of worship; and this function merely enables believers to become better acquainted with one another. This is certainly far from the teaching of the New Testament. It leads right on to the modern liberal conception of the Church as a mere social center, a human institution rather than a planting of God.”³²

Berkhof like 99% of theologians and clerics, irrespective their denomination, will typically claim the status of the “invisible church” for the “visible church” as could be seen in the last sentence of the quote given above. I believe Ritschl, though unlikely to provide a sufficiently comprehensive view of either kingdom or body of Christ at the time, was essentially correct in this case as was argued at the end of the previous section. What is intended herewith is the following: The distinction between organised church and the Body of Christ which was proposed in the earlier sections is on the one hand confirming the position by Ritschl as in this section. But our proposed distinction is also attempting to reach another more strategic picture than Ritschl: Firstly the Cosmic Christ is established to set up the laws for the kingdom (de jure). Then the Body of Christ (qahal-ekklesia) is established and only then

³² p.621. op. cit.

follows kingdom as obedience (de facto) and only then not as an afterthought but certainly in a much deflated position, in a separate subsection next to business, family and others, the organised church will stand. Typical scholastic influences will turn everything the other way: starting with the organised church (and its theologians and preachers) making all the others mentioned deflated subsections.

In South Africa JA Heyns (1939-1994) was professor in systematic theology at the University of Pretoria and also a prominent leader in the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). Given some of his intellectual positions one would expect him to be more sympathetic towards the Ritschl reference above than was Berkhof. For instance, in his publication *Die Kerk (The Church, 1977)* he gives us a more nuanced position than Berkhof but still with the same outcome. He started off like this:

“The search for the appropriate perspective on the church is a question for a concept that covers all of God’s actions, one which reveals the deepest meaning thereof and at the same time reveals the final purpose thereof. This concept in my view is *the kingdom of God.*”³³

In one of the last documents he authored before his untimely death this view is still promoted enthusiastically.³⁴ This exceptionally clear case which Heyns made in some instances for a co-equal partnership between the societal participants in the Kingdom of God is remarkable in South African reformed theology. However the effort that he puts into reversing this view is even more remarkable. On the one hand he would say that the other communal appearances or forms of the kingdom must not be churchified:

“Therefore there is a churchly form and a non-churchly form of the Godly Kingdom and the first is not more holy than the second.”³⁵

Yet on the other hand he romanticize and possibly even sacralise the church organisation – even as he sometimes talks the other way - by also saying that while Christ is the head of both the church and the world, “only the church and not the world is called the Body of Christ” (p.52; similar on “bride”, p.121). While kingdom is cosmic wide, the Biblical notions of “ecclesia”, “Body of Christ” and “Nation of God” are limited by Heyns exclusively and completely to the institutional church organisation. In this way he theoretically established an

³³ p.5. Heyns JA. 1977. *Die Kerk*. The sabotage strategy soon becomes visible, namely: sacrifice the churchly hold on “kingdom” only to reintroduce the same through privileging the organised church as “body of Christ”, Once this ploy is understood, the reading of pp. 51-56 is almost entertaining. (All quotations from Heyns were translated by myself – CPC).

³⁴ Heyns JA. 1994. *Die Koninkryk van God – Grondplan van die Bybel*

³⁵ p24 Heyns 1977.

extended royal family inside the Kingdom and that family clearly is the institutional church organisation and its associated network of professionals. As was noted, the outcome is then the same as with Berkhof.

It is no complete surprise that Heyns rejects the dimension of “invisible” church or what previously in this document I have called the central collective of spiritual energy i.e. the spiritual collection of Christians as the non-institutional Body of Christ. So contrary then to this general view, Heyns said:

“Exactly because it is not literal but a symbol, the Body of Christ is not a reality next to or outside the church, with which the church should be compared to or be connected to. The church is not a revelation of the Body of Christ as if the last is another and bigger substantial reality which is now repeated at a lower and less pure form in the church. If there was no church there would also be no Body of Christ.”³⁶

Heyns is hereby, strangely so, apparently saying that since “Body of Christ” is a metaphor it is therefore not pointing to anything else but the institutional church. This defies the very reason for using a metaphor, namely to illustrate the nature of something that is difficult to grasp otherwise. So the question is: Which reality is it that we,³⁷ Biblical writers included, are attempting to grasp? Heyns seems to have forgotten the original purpose of a metaphor as was explained earlier on in the commonplace understanding paraded by me. The point he misses is that the difficult concept to be explained in this case is not that of the institutional church. The difficult concept and which is in need of a variety of metaphors is the spiritual reserve which is in another dimension than is the very concrete, the very visible, the very historical and even very material entity like the organisational, i.e. the church institution³⁸ as just another organisation.

³⁶ p.51 Heyns JA 1977. *Die Kerk*.

³⁷ Pattison made an important case by showing how we could expand our existing knowledge on spiritual matters by using literary devices even of an entire genre like the novel. That genre could be used in explaining difficult concepts in religion and faith, both in theology and philosophy. Pattison G 2001. *A short course in the Philosophy of Religion*.

³⁸ Sometimes it is said that this concept of a spiritual reserve i.e. of a non-institutional bonding is too difficult to grasp for the ordinary church member and even some Christian academics say it is “spooky”. I really find this embarrassing if not politically mischievous – an attempt by Christian academics to play the johnny-come-lately role of an empiricist or positivist. Perhaps such an adopted questioning pose should best be directed at the many places where the Biblical texts speak of a nation of God that is not Israel in the Old Testament and in the New Testament at the places where no language or social status could be seen. Is that not “spooky” as well? How about people with a personal history, citizen numbers and not smelling like corpses, now claiming that they no longer live and that a godly human, Jesus, lives in or for them? And we should not forget that such Biblical revelations were addressed to pre-modern peoples who did not have our

We may need to consider the background to the South African situation first in order to demonstrate a serious weak point in the thinking of Heyns. In 1974 the DRC general synod accepted and published the report *Ras, Volk en Nasie*(My translation of title: *Race, People and Nation*). The finding of this report influenced the operations of the DRC congregations only mildly, in most cases not at all. The reason for this, some sceptics may say is because it was actually condoning apartheid. But in 1982 some 123 pastors and theologians signed the so-called *Ope Brief (Open Letter)* challenging the church to take its position as Body of Christ seriously, meaning that it should see no difference between people from different races or cultures in matters of the institutional church. This letter, addressed to the general synod in the same year was followed by an explanatory book *Perspektief op die Ope Brief* (my translation of title: *Perspective on the Open Letter*). Although Heyns supported the open letter he did not contribute to the book. Also important for the perspective of my narrative here, *Perspektief...* contained a very strong contribution by Adrio König in discussion with professor FJM Potgieter who was also chairperson to the Kuyperian-Dooyeweerdian Vereniging vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys (Association for Christian Higher Education) at around that time. In 1985 the *Kairos Document* was published. It enlisted international support in terms of liberation theologians and activists.

Then in 1986 the DRC publicly circulated a document *Kerk en Samelewing (Church and Society)* which claimed the unsustainability of apartheid, both in the SA society and in the (Afrikaans) churches inside that society. Heyns himself wrote much of this document. Common to these publications, also that part in *Perspektief* provided by A König, was how they used an assumed common and complete identification of the institutional church and the Body of Christ.

The document *Kerk en Samelewing* and especially the support it found at regional synod level provoked a negative response from some inside the white Afrikaans-speaking community.³⁹ Some of them then went ahead to launch a separate church, which still exists

understanding of connecting factors (laws / generics / abstract concepts) that transcend specific instances. As far as I am concerned this matter was sufficiently explained in 1.2.

³⁹ While Afrikaners are often taken to be solely responsible for the shame of apartheid, some argue that the English South Africans were quite comfortable, just like their fellow colonial compatriots of earlier across the British Empire in enjoying the benefits of Apartheid or similar for whites at the time. See p.xvi, Gilomee H. 2003. *The Afrikaners*. However, in the rest of the book Gilomee shows how very disgustingly suspect the early Afrikaners were in their attitude towards sharing the gospel with both slaves and the indigenous people. The situation in a survivalist community was complicated but eventually difficult to pardon at all.

today.⁴⁰ Eventually it was titled the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (Afrikaans Protestant Church). At the time a leader figure in this movement was Professor WJG Lubbe: Professor in Classical Languages (Latin) (UNISA). Heyns and Lubbe were invited by the government sponsored South African Broadcasting Company (SABC) for a live televised interview. Heyns and the separatist leaders have been engaged in sporadic communications over the previous six months. Heyns was also the chairperson to the Commission of the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) of SA. Heyns is reported to have always felt this was one of his prime failures: not keeping these separatists inside the fold of the DRC. Then towards the end of the interview Johan Heyns made a “final” but in my perception a very provocative closing remark to which Lubbe responded.⁴¹ The translation (by me) of the Afrikaans transcription is below:

Heyns (*concluding statement to the interview*): “We cannot afford it in this country; we cannot afford it theologically to lose somebody from the Body of Christ.”

Lubbe (*interrupts the TV interviewer who wanted to tie up the proceedings*): “Now that is something very serious to say – as if we are now lost from the body of the Lord Jesus; I think that you as a dogmatician – and being very knowledgeable on theology and on the Bible – are not supposed to say something like this. You know very well that we are all faithful and that we are still members of the Body of Christ even when there are churchly differences between us. We all belong to the same body of Christ, you only have to read your Belgian Confession again on this point.”

Heyns: “I have read it very well Dr Lubbe. You do understand and your background in theology is large enough and good enough to understand that it is about the Body of Christ in this concrete appearance of the DRC. This is clearly what I mean. I did not mean at any stage that you are out of the body as such; because for me it is about the unity of the Church of the Lord Jesus as it is given in the format of the DRC.”

The question one has to ask is this: What did Heyns mean with “the body as such” (*liggaam as sodanig*)? Does he in fact see it separately from both the congregational-institutional and

⁴⁰ The DRC, in line with worldwide trends also experience a serious drop in membership numbers since the 1970s. In the period 1990 to 2010 the numbers dropped by 170 000. The number of confessing members in 2013 was 803 877, baptised only members: 221 102. The SA total population is at around 44 million of which more than 70% are nominally Christian. The total number of reformed Christians in the 2001 census was 3 232 194. The drop in DRC members is in the main not due to the APC attracting them. The Afrikaanse Protestant Church has 220 Congregations and 35,000 (2012) members. For a more extensive discussion of church statistics see Schoeman, W.J., 2014, *Agter die syfers is gelowiges, gemeentes en die kerk, 'n praktiese teologiese refleksie oor lidmaatskap*.

⁴¹ Provided by Brink I. 2015. SABC TV recording (1986)

the ecumenical organisation? And if so, considering his 1977 denial of an entity separate-from-historical-church-institution why would he not maintain this view consistently? In my view this incident thoroughly illustrates how serious Heyns was about the exclusive and mutual full identity of the institutional church and the body of Christ.⁴²

Similar tendencies

It is appropriate at this stage to draw a wider picture and link the South African church-political struggle against the apartheid heritage to the civil rights movement in the USA. An important forerunner to the career of the civil rights activist Martin Luther King (1929-1968) was his fellow Baptist, Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918). This grandfather of the philosopher Richard Rorty published widely on the so-called social gospel and he became very popular about a century ago.

Common to both King and Rauschenbusch was their view – similar to that of Heyns and Berkhof – that the Kingdom of God is wider than the church institution which is only one of the manifestations of the Kingdom of God. But as usually they fail – what we can now tag as the shibboleth in these matters – to claim that the institutional church is also only one of the breakthroughs of the energy oozing from the Body of Christ! This social gospel tradition is somewhat discredited these days although it should not be forgotten that even as Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962) criticized Rauschenbusch, it is sometimes said that he equally benefited from him in establishing his concept of institutionalised evil.

In the case of Rauschenbusch and King it is clear that they dedicated themselves firstly to the achievement of equal civil rights for all citizens as the prime place to activate the Kingdom of God – according to the social gospel. It appears that Berkhof, Heyns and others in the Kuyperian tradition had a wider perspective than only the political and the economic liberation. But going wider required a disciplined concern about the problem of balance as such. The criterion of balance requires us to say that we should not only improve attitudes and practices in church and politics but also in business, science and entertainment. And so

⁴² It may be necessary to note that I, the author, do not prefer churchly racial segregation between white and non-white as in the South African context. As a matter of fact the church congregation which I attended most frequently for the past two decades has a great majority of ethnically black membership at the congregational level. And even as I reject the full equation of institutional church and Body of Christ in the arguments in this document, I still believe the use of the reference to the Body of Christ in terms of the fellowship of all Christians at the institutional and the congregational level is justified: Just as Paul reminded the husbands in Ephesians 5 that their wives are also their neighbours, so from that Biblical perspective it made sense that white Afrikaans-speaking South Africans at the time also needed a reminder that their fellow members, fellow citizens, even being members of a so-called “daughter” church, remained their neighbours, their brothers and sisters in Christ.

I could only guess it happened that this important but inappropriately applied (ahistorical?) concern for balance made those in the Kuyparian tradition over-cautious.

There is a price for everything and so the concern for balance became an almost mortal constraint on the neo-Calvinian hegemony which thereby acquired a conservatist tilt in both the governmental policies and in the church politics. Under the banner of “anti-revolutionary” (Kuyper) they left us as the heirs, with a legacy to live down in this current era where an anti-conservatist atmosphere of the era prior to 2017 was dominant. This happened in both the USA and South Africa. There were a few laudable exceptions. But even as the reformed heritage nominally brought a concern for a balanced approach, such an apparent concern was also hiding something: it was not at all balanced when it came to the institutional church.

In the Afrikaans-DRC community of South Africa the reactive debate from the APK and similar has now, 30 years later, still not subsided and new versions of the same debate keep recurring. Currently we witness the effort to introduce a new confessional document into the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa. This *Belhar Confession*, just like the contributions by JA Heyns, also stresses the complete and exclusive equation of the institutional “church” with “body of Christ”. It achieves this by alternating the words “church” and “nation of God”. It also makes the “church” the main bearer of the gospel while I believe the good message is flowing from the “body of Christ”, getting expressed in many ways across the whole community – in my opinion best not mediated by the institutional church. The entire drift of the Belhar document is evidence of how deeply engrained the practice is to claim all benefits, privileges and responsibilities of the Body of Christ for the “visible” church – exactly as Heyns and others did elsewhere. Hence irrespective of what other merits the Belhar document and its predecessors may have, the driving perception embedded in them, without exception, is overwhelmingly that the institutional church is the complete Body of Christ which should be exemplary to the rest of society. The notion of an institutional church acting as both mediator and retailer of grace still remains the silent assumption in every church and in every service their congregations provide. In terms of the argument of this manuscript the Belhar confession serves as a 21st century reaffirmation of the vitality of this specific usurper, impoverishing and to a certain extent a suicidal tradition upheld in Christian church-political circles.

The contributions by Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998), British missionary to India and key player in the international ecumenical movement amongst Christian churches found wide acclaim. His very promising contributions get marred by this very same problem of perspective we have seen with Heyns and Berkhof. On the one hand Newbigin would say:

“If Christians have nothing to say about the destiny of society as a whole, then they have nothing to say about the central problem of our civilisation and about three-fourths of the workaday life of the ordinary man.”⁴³

“The church is not to be identified with the Kingdom, but is properly the sign and foretaste of the Kingdom.”⁴⁴

But then later for Newbigin the organised church is presented as the only sign of the coming kingdom. This statement he would further support by saying in 1953 that:

“He (*God-CPC*) committed the entire work of salvation to that community (*organised church-CPC*).”⁴⁵

And in 1989:

“It is not the primary business of the Church to advocate a new social order; it is our primary business to be a new social order”⁴⁶

Moving from the UK to Northern America we have seen direct and enthusiastic support for the ideas of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven or, more to the point: a culture-wide Christian life of equal partners. Towards 1970 some radical Canadian academics published a book for the church public, *Out of Concern for the Church*. The authors were mostly associated with the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) in Canada, which operated in this Dutch tradition of Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. Two years later Wedge published another book as the second phase, a follow-up project: *Will all the King's Men...*(1972). Within this second publication it was claimed that there was a further explication of some of the assumptions and implications that were not fully stated in the first phase. Both these books are very readable and are representative of a particular phase in neo-calvinist thinking on the fringes of the Reformed Community of Northern America.

These brave men made many claims that are in effect supportive of the views as in this booklet. Most radical was probably that of Calvin Seerveld: Looking at how the church has failed the kingdom, Seerveld asked for the closure of the esteemed Calvin Theological

⁴³ p.26 Also: p.53 Wainwright G. 2003 *Lesslie Newbigin: Signs amid the rubble*

⁴⁴ p.106. Wainwright op.cit.

⁴⁵ p.27. Newbigin JEL. 1953. *The Household of God*

⁴⁶ p.40. Newbigin JEL. 1989. *Vision for the City*. Also pp. 64-65; 102. *The Household Of God*

Seminary!⁴⁷ Many other strong contributions were made. In the first two essays of *Will all the King's Men...* JH Olthuis and H Hart highlighted the difference between the concept "Church" in Biblical times and "church" from the second century onwards. In this context they do not challenge the use of the word "church" for exclusively meaning "Body/Bride of Christ", "Nation of God" or ekklesia. They simply argue that it was good and well to do that in the first century. They also continue to show that indeed in these near-Biblical times "Church" meant much more than the narrowed down definition that developed later on in patristic times, instigated by the intervention of emperor Constantine, to set the tone for the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁸ So these two authors ended up with the very broad Church (capital C) as body-bride-nation-people-ekklesia in Biblical times versus the differentiated and culturally delimited concept (church – institutional, lowercase c) of later times down to the 20th century.⁴⁹

But these and many other critical statements lost much of their effect since they were in the end balanced by some (unintended?) conciliatory statements that actually confirmed the status quo from which they were appearing attempting to escape from. So then while J van Dyk in his essay laments the fact that the "institutional church had in fact become the mediator between the Lord and the Masses",⁵⁰ and he also explains – delightfully accurate - that "It is precisely because the fullness of the Body of Christ has been reduced to its institutional aspect that theologico-rationalistic dogma acquires such frightful dimensions."(p.88). But following these, in this very same essay he loses his orientation and continues to equate any denominational split as a split in the "Body of Christ" (just like Heyns with Lubbe!):

⁴⁷ p.47. Seerveld CG. 1970. *A Modest Proposal for Reforming the Christian Reformed Church in North America*

⁴⁸ Both the Greek polis (Athens included) and the Roman Empire of Biblical times were totalitarian states. The Christian community for lack of a better understanding followed suite and the wonderful praise of freedom in for instance the letter to the Galatians was understood mostly as a move against traditions for tempic ritual and other forms of communal behaviour. To our (unhistorical) ethos it is hard to understand how quite large sections of the Bible reflect an implied approval the customs of the time, e.g. slavery. In that limited respect can we say that the Bible is dated and must be superseded. The mission to discard authoritarian practices was not the priority of the Christian community at that time even if there were notable low-key exceptions: See Ephesians 5:13 - 6:9 on the tactical implosion of the Greek-Roman household code. But such a critical yet tactical reformation of all kinds of culture is most certainly our priority living in an post-Foucaltian era beyond individualism and pluralism, having abundant examples of which contrary communal freedoms are indeed peacefully possible.

⁴⁹ See pp. 4-6;25-27. Olthuis JH. 1972. *Worship and Witness*; pp. 40-56. Hart H. 1972. *Cultus and Covenant*.

⁵⁰ p.78 Van Dyk J 1972. *From Reformation to Reformation*

“...the Body of Christ is divided into more than a hundred pieces”⁵¹

The same sentiment is amplified by De Graaff who claims “Denominations are the result and expression of sin.” (p109). And Zylstra: “the unity of Christ’s body must be evident in the institutional church.” (op. cit. p. 202; again on p.205). But finally it was JA Olthuis in the concluding chapter that most strongly revealed the common but unfortunate and utterly misdirected assumption that spoiled much of the mostly good work they did in this otherwise very easily readable and mostly coherent publication:

“The institutional church might be called the hub of an imaginary Kingdom wheel. However, without the outer rim, (the total vision of the Kingdom of God), the hub does not make a wheel. But with hub, spokes and outer rim, the wheel of God’s Kingdom can be of lasting significance in our society.”⁵²

One has to be in an alternative mind-set to appreciate the notion of “hub” in the opening sentence of this quote for what it is – and the magnitude of this Constantinian slip. In response we may take this imagery one step further by simply asking the following: Where is the Nation / People of God (ekklesia / Body of Christ) in this “wheel” image of Kingdom? Why is Body of Christ not the hub and the institutional church not but one of the spokes? In frontier situations or under persecution, Christians (and other faiths) can indeed go without a cultic organisation as was discussed. But it is the actual spiritual community, the primary bonding in Christ that will carry them. And that is the real hub to the wheel. A wheel can indeed keep running with a number of spokes missing ... but not with a hub and a rim missing, should we justifiably decide to push the metaphor. There are many similar misalignments. As argued before, the organised church should be an attachment when explaining both the Kingdom and the Body of Christ, not ever the other way round.

Al Wolters who was only for a short while with the ICS is most famous for his precious little booklet: *Creation Regained* which since 1984 has been translated into eight languages. The privileged position that Wolters awarded – along with the ICS “revolutionaries” and many other traditions – to either or both of church and theology was also confirmed strongly by the Millbank promotion of the so-called Radical Orthodoxy.⁵³ This is a reactionary movement

⁵¹ p.63. op.cit. Repeated on p. 82.

⁵² pp.239-240; repeated p.246. Olthuis JA 1972. *From protest to contribution*; p.4. Olthuis JH 1972. *Worship and Witness*. The two authors used the exact same imagery.

⁵³ The shocking insistence by O’Donovan against Skillen on a confessional statement from Christians in public office as well as the condonement of such figures by the institutional church hierarchy is clearly in the same mould. See pp.418-420. O’Donovan O. 2002 *Response to James W Skillen*

that since 2000 gained prominence in the Anglican Church and which is set to reclaim the historically ascribed salvific and royal status of both the institutional church (queen of society) and its theology (queen of the sciences). Amongst the reformed philosophers the Milbank contributions were discussed. Strauss did so twice.⁵⁴ But in conclusion it should also be noted that as much as Wolters favoured theology inappropriately as pointed out above, he eventually wrote the following in 2007:

“given the crucial role of philosophical foundational assumptions, in the theological disciplines as much as in any other, philosophy can no longer be rightly considered – if it ever was – the ancilla theologiae, the handmaid of theology. The erstwhile queen can learn much from its sisters in the other disciplines, not least from her former handmaid.”⁵⁵

Gordon Spykman⁵⁶ (1926-1993) at Calvin College in my opinion gave an excellent exposition of the relationship between a Christian theology and a Christian philosophy. It even attracted the scepticism of Johan Heyns⁵⁷ who in the Stoker tradition still adhered to the special (i.e. higher and self-sufficient⁵⁸) status awarded to both church and theology. Spykman made much additional progress (e.g. he viewed Pentecost as the rebirth and not as the birth of the body of Christ: from *qahal* to *ekklesia* ! – pp. 422-424). He also attempted the differentiation between Church/church (pp. 430-433). But eventually also he – as our other row of fallen heroes so far – could not stick to his distinction: Not in his full scale description of the church as an institution,⁵⁹ and he could also not do so when he dealt with the marks and attributes of the true church.⁶⁰ Traditionally none of these two sections in

⁵⁴ Strauss DFM 2015a. *Theology and Philosophy within Radical Orthodoxy (Milbank) and Reformational Philosophy (Dooyeweerd)*. Strauss DFM. 2016. *The inner Reformation of the sciences: An ambiguity in the Radically Orthodox thought of John Milbank?*

⁵⁵ Wolters AM 2007. *No Longer Queen: The Theological Disciplines and Their Sisters*

⁵⁶ pp. 98-105. Spykman GJ. 1992. *Reformational Theology: A new paradigm for doing dogmatics*

⁵⁷ p.4 Heyns 1994.

⁵⁸ A “self-sufficient” theology as part of the clerical and theological culture in the sense given here is understood as follows: Independent from philosophy (even as it is clear that philosophy does have an influence) and even when dependency on the biblical scripture is claimed, such dependency is taken to mean that the reading of Scripture is independent from the culture as well as from the life and worldview of the reader especially when the person is a theologian. It also means – with implied fundamentalism – that a blind eye is turned towards the biased cultural practices and worldviews which are reflected inside the Biblical text yet is contrary to the Biblical message.

⁵⁹ pp. 429-480. Spykman. 1992.

⁶⁰ On p. 434 Spykman 1992 says of the institutional church: “To it belongs the official proclamation of the gospel.” Once again both the phrasing and the context fail Spykman. The institutional church best promotes the gospel in a ritualist fashion. Secondly: If this proclamation is not regularly situated next to the other ways of proclaiming the gospel, the preferential position of the

dogmatics included such a distinction in a fashion integrated with the Church/church distinction. Hence he could not overcome the comfortably designed confusion in the tradition of systematic dogmatics for dealing with these two sections in systematic theology. And once Spykman gets to an exposition of the ecumenical unity of the organised church, it is clear that the Church/church distinction is really completely and finally forgotten. So even as in many respects he cleared up some unfinished conceptual matters in the wake of both the ICS rebels and of Wolters, it is clear that the road towards a more complete reformed understanding of church, Bible and providence as attempted in my own narrative here, is still a long way off from finding a respected standing in the theological and church communities.

1.6 Outside the church: “Christian” schools?

It may be informative to attempt a look at Christianity outside the church in the Reformed Canadian communities who were motivated in the Kuyperian approach. They have over more than six decades responded with a variety of initiatives similar to those from the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS). Such Canadian Calvinian communities associated with the Canadian Reformed Church (CRC) and others succeeded over time in establishing a remarkable communal association with many kingdom partners. Since 1943 the Dutch Reformed Community in Canada maintained a tradition of Christian Schooling. Currently the Ontario Association of Christian Schools (OACS) manages 70 such schools across that province instructing some 11 000 students. This number excludes Redeemer University, the Institute for Christian Studies and other related agencies. The Christian schools are staffed by many students from King’s College (Edmonton) and Redeemer University College (Ancaster) which both offered a B.Ed. degree since 1980. I have not yet studied the tradition of Christian education offered in these schools. But given the legacy of three generations that could be epitomised by Kuyper, Dooyeweerd and Wolters it would probably promote a more dedicated and differentiated understanding of kingdom than would most “schooly” combinations of piety plus respect for the church while doing run-of-the-mill nationally compliant teaching programmes. If they are ever audited for the level of differentiation which they promote between the Body of Christ and organised church in both the curriculum and other communications it is predicted that they would almost 100% fail the test, given the failure to do so at both the ICS and Calvin College.

institutional church is once again promoted and then it is only a small step towards seeing institutional church exclusively as Body of Christ.

But the partnership is currently under stress, especially in the support of congregations for schools. This is according to a limited study by Peter Schuurman published in 2013.⁶¹ The loyalties and needs of both parents and pupils are differentiating and it is no longer taken for granted that even CRC pastors would send their children to Christian schools. Sometimes it is for purely practical reasons like access or opportunities, e.g. what kind of competitive sport is offered or not at a particular school. So the reasons for decline may be multiple as Schuurman shows. Schuurman added that some congregations want to be seen as inclusive rather than exclusive since many of their members are sending their children to mainstream schools. So clearly then they do not want to risk divisive congregational debates on issues of schooling. However as could be seen in the previous footnote, christian congregations in Canada, like all over the developed world, have other problems to attend to, notably their declining membership.

Those who accused the neo-Calvinist movement of misguided cultural optimism will most likely be happy about this negative development which would certainly hamper the promotion of a culture-wide Christian heritage. The test will eventually be found in an assessment of the question to what extent the ideas which were promoted by Wolters and those from the ICS and Redeemer found sufficient adherents firstly. But secondly, have they

⁶¹ Schuurman P. *CRC Pastors take a step back from Christian Schools*. (Extensive research on Christian schools is available at www.cardus.ca/research/education/publications/). In private communications in December 2016 and January 2017 Schuurman indicated that conservative churches in Canada have maintained an 8% share of the population for at least 50 years. It is claimed that Canada has about 250 conservatively reformed congregations serving almost 100 000 people (270 000 in combination with the USA). The general decrease in participation in Christian congregational activities in some Canadian churches is alarming. For instance the United Church of Canada, which previously had millions of members, is now reported to close one of its congregations every week. They are down to 400,000 people in attendance on a Sunday. A new generation of United Church ministers promotes a more orthodox set of beliefs but it still has to be seen to what extent this countermove will curb the decrease in membership. In the national census on religion the category of “none” (i.e. no church association) has grown from 1% in 1950 to 24% in the 2011 Canadian census.

This last census counted the Canadian-Protestant grouping at 7.9 million – the entire Canadian population is more than 33 million. The census further shows that in comparison to 2003 those indicating **Protestant, not included elsewhere** increased from 628,945 to 2,000,000 (sic). This is also intriguing: The count in the category **Christian, not included elsewhere** also increased from 353,040 to 960,000 over this period. It is not sure what happened in the last case. It may be as simple as that the number of truly small home churches proliferated. It may also be that the census instrument changed, e.g. picking up religious attitudes not necessarily consolidated in formal congregational participation. Both cases will be very relevant to the rest of this chapter as is witnessed in the analyses made by Davie. But the actual position could be established only by a separate investigation. According to some the decline in church support is related to issues on evolutionism, women in leadership and even positions on being gay. Such issues may in a secondary sense also have touched the Christian schools. But this will also need a closer analysis to be confirmed.

also been able to translate these principles into a communal understanding that grew well beyond the idea of a church-bound, but still a church-inclusive Christian community? I will soon turn to the problem of secularism.

Have they indeed established a communal understanding of searching for a creational law in all fields of study, not just in the natural sciences but also elsewhere? Have they succeeded in matching such awareness with an appropriate understanding of the cultural dynamics? Or do they tend to slip back into oversimplified creationism and fundamentalism which is so very, very easy to do when one works with children and then not only in loco parentis but also under the eyes the influential and hawkish parent groups – forgetting that the spirit of the age already speaks to the children through all kinds of children programmes and reading materials. And finally have they overcome the limitations inherent in the views of theologians like Berkhof and Heyns who will mimic much of the voice of a radically reformed outcome yet in their last castles they clearly had no intention whatsoever to let go of the essentially ancient Roman Catholic imperial view on the position of the organised church in society and what we have been exposed to up to the late 20th century. This age may also already promote assumptions of a churchless society. Are these brave Calvinian scholars, educators, the parents of their pupils and their school boards both informed and up to it?

1.7 Sociology of religion and secularisation

The Kendal project

During 2000-2002 the Kendal research project was conducted in the UK. The purpose was to establish by means of a sociological survey what the weekly participation level of the population was in the so-called “spiritual activities”.⁶² A list of 55 such “holistic milieu” activities included some innocent practices like foot massage and spinal touch but also some other practices called “wild women group” and the well-known tarot card reading. The 28 000-odd members of the Kendal community were surveyed with the objective of profiling their participation in these activities. Some of the main results were published and discussed by P Heelas and L Woodhead in *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality* (2005).

A reviewing debate followed that addressed a number of issues which are contained in the publication *A Sociology of Spirituality* (2007) edited by K Flanagan and PC Jupp. In their chapter *The Spiritual Revolution: Another False Dawn for the Sacred*, D Voas and S Bruce challenged the methodology for the collection of data during the Kendal Project as well as

⁶² See pp. 60-61. Voas D and Bruce S. 2007. *The Spiritual Revolution: Another False Dawn for the Sacred*

the analysis offered afterwards. For purposes of this publication I will focus only on a few issues. For readers not yet acquainted with the subdiscipline of Sociology of Religion, a contextual statement from Voas and Bruce may be appropriate. They claim that since the inception of Sociology of Religion, the theorists in the field argued that “while the sacred may have to adapt and evolve, faith is always with us.”⁶³

Some interpretations of the Kendal Project made the projection that in future the number of participations in “holistic” events and practices may equal that of the churches in the past. Voas and Bruce to the contrary argued that there is little new in the set of practices known as the “holistic milieu” (New Age). Such practices were companions to Christianity right through the ages.⁶⁴ As such this so-called alternative form of spirituality is, in their view, more a symptom of full secularization rather than a durable counterforce to it. “What we see is secularisation at work, not the replacement of religion by spirituality.” (p.53).

The Heelas-Woodhead interpretation of the Kendal data worked strongly on the assumption of a so-called subjective turn in religion whereby “spirituality” is understood as “subjective-life forms of the sacred, which emphasise inner sources of significance and authority and the cultivation or sacralisation of unique subjective-lives”. This spirituality stands in contrast to the mainstream concepts of religion “which emphasise a transcendent source of significance and authority to which individuals must conform”.⁶⁵ It should be noted in terms of the rationale of this chapter that there is indeed nothing about organised church or ritual contained in such a phrasing.

Against these Kendal-assumptions, Voas and Bruce complain about this view of self:

“this view of self as sacred is not always distinguishable from a conventionally modern view of the self as precious and self-determining. The spiritual self is hollowed out; the label may be used to flatter anything from earnest introspection to beauty treatments ... It is right and proper that these activities should receive sociological attention; whether

⁶³ p.43; also p.58. Voas D and Bruce S. 2007.

⁶⁴ p.53. op. cit.

⁶⁵ p.44. op. cit. The opposition stressed here indeed is in accord with existentialist thinking as summarised in an overview of 20th century theological thinking by Durand JJF 1981 *Skepping, Mens, Voorsienigheid*, pp.148-149: "In the anthropocentric-oriented existential theologies on the other hand, the encounter between God and human beings, is seen only in terms of an ever recurring and new existential event. Because according to this conception, God is not found outside of this encounter and hence no enduring relationship between God and humankind exists which could be summarized in a doctrinal statement. The result is that the idea of the *imago Dei* did not receive much attention." (My translation – CPC)

they have much to do with the sacred and hence sociology of religion, except as a possible epiphenomenon of secularization, is another matter.”⁶⁶

They further note that

“...the descriptions of spirituality given by the Kendal respondents seem to have little to do with the supernatural or even the sacred: it appears to be a code word for good feelings, the emotional rather than the material.”⁶⁷

Of concern to me in the above is firstly the claim by Voas and Bruce that both the methodology and the interpretation in the Kendal project were misguided. Houtman et. al. (2012) somewhat later also lamented the lack of an effective methodology in the sociology of religion / spirituality in general. So for improving such instruments I believe that is crucial for research projects in sociology of religion and even for the further profiling of the notions promoted in this manuscript, should similar somewhere be put to the test as well. So in some sense it is back to basics for the sociology of religion. When rethinking such efforts the commonplace view which may be considered again is that the design of research instruments for profiling spirituality outside the church can only be as effective as the assumptions made ahead of the actual design of methodologies and instruments.⁶⁸ The following inputs may be considered as preparational strategies to follow ahead of designing the surveying instruments in a more appropriate way:

- Attempts to deflate the polar opposition of secular-sacred may need to be investigated. Dupuy claims:

“the Judaeo-Christian tradition cannot be identified with the sacred since it is responsible for the ongoing desacralisation (or disenchantment) of the world that epitomizes modernity.”⁶⁹

Such a claim if read in conjunction with much the same by König, puts a whole new perspective on the actual task that the Judaeo-Christian tradition has to complete but in fact has neglected. The assumption by the recent research projects by the Sociology of Religion into spirituality is most likely correct in terms of currently fossilized

⁶⁶ p.44. op.cit.

⁶⁷ p.51. op.cit.

⁶⁸ p.116. Strauss DFM 2006. *Reintegrating Social Theory*. “Does the method determine what we want to know scientifically, or is the method itself dependent upon the nature of what we want to know?”

⁶⁹ pp.xv-xvi. Dupuy JP 2013. *The Marks of the Sacred*.

syncretistic practices but is most certainly not aligned to the history of how such fossilization came about and as presented here and also not in terms of the ontology assumed by the PCI. Fresh contributions for consideration are implied.

- Attempts to freely articulate the notion of spirituality may need to be investigated more seriously given the critique that the Kendal project got from Bruce and Voas. This is closely connected to the previous point but now the focus is more specifically directed at the custodianship or locality awarded for spirituality or as some critics continues to call it, “the sacred”. I have tried to improve the articulation of such an understanding as a main thrust to this book: spirituality outside the organised church and its associated culture of piety.

Given the Kendal project it becomes essential to find instruments for measuring the spiritual profile not firstly of practices but rather the presence of worldviews and ideologies. It seems that because ideologies are assumed to be historically of a more recent origin and arguably operates outside of the historical churches, most sociologists and politicians tend to say: “It is just politics”. In that way they attempt to sidestep the claim that ideologies are indeed forms of spirituality which also operate with “sacred” points of reference. It appears that politicians and other communal leaders in our so-called post-secular age want to pigeon-hole spirituality and its “sacred” reference points inside a functional area, i.e. separated from the rest of society, mostly inside the churches.

Such a communication strategy appears to be a mirror image of the advertising initiative by the churches claiming that they are the sole custodians if not the owners of the business of spirituality and the sacred. Now, from the secular side, we also have another and opposing “PR” drive but in this case the spin doctoring goes the camouflaging way: labelling ideology as “just politics” i.e. implying it is “not spirituality”. Linked to an ideology we also have a life and worldview which is even more pervasive than either the organised church or the parties and practices of politics. Such “secular movements” of spirituality are much wider and of a much more fundamental nature⁷⁰ than are the limited set of holistic practices identified and tracked by the Kendal project. But nobody, it seems, wants to own up to this “hot” potato.

- The practice of foregrounding attention to the self, which sometimes is labelled as the so-called “sacralisation of self”, needs to be assessed as a possible indicator of a

⁷⁰ See Lubbe JJ. 1990. *Ideologie en Teologie: Op pad na 'n ideologie-bewustheid* (My translation of title: *Ideology and Theology: En route to an awareness of ideology*).

specific kind of spiritual expression. Is it just a world and life view or are there also ideologies springing from it? Voas and Bruce in the quotation above mentioned the “conventionally modern view of self as being precious and self-determining”. They thereby seem to imply that the self has now also been secularised. Two points should be mentioned here. Firstly there is a current view of almost full identification of self and of the feelings experienced – this view was given philosophical recognition already by David Hume. But currently the reverence for good feelings can also be a form of life and worldview sacralisation (hedonism – much older than Hume). Is the pedestalling of feelings similar to the case with drug abuse? Drug addiction, especially in the beginning phases, is sometimes not so much an addiction to the substance used as to the feeling facilitated by its use. While humanity is certainly co-defined by feelings a balanced view would also claim that it is not defined by feelings alone.

An important point to be considered is that Voas and Bruce seem not at all aware that such a foregrounding of self, which is of the individual self, gives the human individual / personality / self the status of a religious anchoring point (“sacred”). They seem oblivious of the fact that the human selfhood is a battle-ground for a variety of competing religions/spiritualities /ideologies.⁷¹ This is a known line of thinking in all of the modernist and the post-modernist traditions.⁷² Especially the individualist assumptions in classical liberalism are important not only for the destructive approach it fuelled towards medieval culture but also as the announcement of a different and very brave kind of spirituality. It is not for nothing sometimes called the “sacralisation of self”.⁷³ The self has in effect, also in “conventionally modern views”, obtained the ascribed status of “the sacred”. Neither the self nor the feelings of the human being are – in my view - transcendental in the sense of a “deity”. Yet by ascribing to the self such a pivotal position as it does find in the minds of people it thereby does achieve that

⁷¹ The move from “naked” freedom individualism towards a more responsible (connected) individuality can be seen in discussions on classic liberalism. The link between the liberalist legislative framework and the business community, especially during colonialism is obvious. This history also shows how communities which were initially impressed by the Mandeville glorification of the unlimited and even disorderly initiative of the individual (1714) soon had to face the risk on the possible abuse of such freedom by both the democratically elected president in the USA after 1776 and also of other individuals and businesses. The proposals by Bentham and others at around 1800 were all in aid of redesigning governmental instruments to ensure, amongst others, the happiness of the largest number. The political environment of the problem is well described by the essays in Cliteur PB (editor). 1993. *Filosofen van het klassieke liberalisme*.

⁷² p.56. Davie G. 2007. *Sociology of Religion*. In her exposition of Bruce’s view, Davie says that he viewed the rise of both individualism and rationality (since the Reformation) as the main drivers of secularism.

⁷³ Houtman D. & Aupers S. 2005. *The Spiritual Revolution and the New Age Gender Puzzle: The Sacralisation of the Self in Late Modernity (1980-2000)*.

kind of “finality” usually only ascribed to a deity or to an ultimate force on which all of reality depends. So contrary to Voas and Bruce as above seeing the self as being secularised, it is just the exact opposite: It is sacralised: Secularisation is not only about leaving an existing set of religious practices and creeds, it is also about something to replace it with, i.e. sacralising something different. In the next section this strand of thinking will be taken further by attending to Davie.

It is believed that only once these points have been explored, will it be possible to articulate empirical surveying instruments in the Sociology of Religion in a new and hopefully more appropriate way. Some of such advance work has been done by Davie to whom I move next.

Davie: Secularisation six decades after the Second World War

In her book, *Sociology of Religion* (2007), Grace Davie describes a main challenge for the subdiscipline of Sociology of Religion currently, which she sees somewhat more historically contextualised than Voas and Bruce, as follows:

“In the last decades of the twentieth century, the concept of secularization has been subject to ever closer scrutiny as the empirical data begin to suggest, at least for some scholars, that the whole idea of secularization as a necessary part of modernization might be mistaken. Berger’s later writings illustrate more clearly than anything else the dramatic changes in perspective that have come about in the sub-discipline in the later decades of the twentieth century. Quite simply, the default positions have altered.”⁷⁴

The empirical study of these new – other than anticipated – realities do not produce uniform results across Europe. So for instance, in the Nordic countries church membership is a national given. It is no surprise then that the church-religious differentiation for many individuals in communities there could be profiled as “belong without believing”.⁷⁵

Davie endorses⁷⁶ the three forms of secularization by Dobbelaere and the claim that they should be viewed in relation to each other. The three forms are:

1. Societal: Functional differentiation: “...sectors of society which historically were controlled by the church begin gradually to emerge as separate and autonomous spheres.”⁷⁷ (e.g health and education).

⁷⁴ p.46. Davie G 2007.

⁷⁵ p.141. op. cit.

⁷⁶ pp. 49-50. op. cit.

2. Religious organizational activity: A huge variety of religious organisations are available in some communities. What are the options for the individual?
3. Individual religiosity: The expression of religiousness both in belief and in activity tends to fluctuate on the count of participation; belief as membership and, on the opposite side: “believing without belonging” – as the reverse of the Nordic “belong without believing”.

Davie explains Dobbelaere further:

“No longer do people look to the church as the primary provider of healthcare, education or social services – this responsibility now belongs to the state which grows in stature as the churches diminish.”⁷⁸

Davie notes that this tendency is applicable to the major Western societies but will not apply to all sections of the developing world. In Europe the process happens differently in different communities and the process is also never completed. Davie agreed at an earlier point that one of the healthy aspects of secularization is that the:

“gradual separating out of different and more specialised institutions ... need not bring with it either the marginalisation of religion to the private sphere, or the decline in religious activity.”⁷⁹

Aligning herself with Dobbelaere, Davie⁸⁰ points out that these three dimensions of secularization will best be investigated separately at first inside the specific community or region and then, only afterwards, should the relationship between the three functional measurements be stated. She gives examples (pp.50-52) showing that where the first of the three dimensions (differentiation) is realised weakly (resisted strongly as in parts of Europe), the second dimension (a variety of religious activities) is also weak. But then where the first dimension (separation of powers and services, i.e. differentiation) was allowed to go very far like in the USA, the second dimension (variety of denominational options) also developed strongly. Studies of this kind she says are best done per community – to allow the uniqueness of every situation to be profiled.

⁷⁷ p.xii-xiv. Dupuy op. cit. gives an extensive and peculiar explanation of the notion of the secular state. In the USA he says it means that the state does not take sides in disputes on the concept of the good life. But in France the secular state does exactly that!

⁷⁸ p.49. Davie op.cit.

⁷⁹ p.3. op.cit.

⁸⁰ pp.50-51. op.cit.

But the contribution of Davie that I find most valuable is the focus that she trains on the life and world view and on the associated ideology and the questions that these are addressing in the secularised communities. In reviewing the study of religion in France (as by Hervieu-Léger), Davie concludes that it is true that

“modern societies are destructive of certain forms of religious life (regular attendance of Mass, for example or the unquestioning acceptance of Christian teaching), but it is equally evident that modern societies create their own need for religion. There is a permanent gap between the experiences of everyday life and the expectations that lie on or beyond the horizon. It is this utopian space that generates the need for the religious in Hervieu-Léger’s analysis, but in forms compatible to modernity. The process of secularization becomes, therefore not so much the disappearance of religion altogether, but an ongoing reorganization of the nature and forms of religion into configurations which are compatible with modern living.”⁸¹

An example of such a reorganisation is provided:

“supportive emotional communities...inside and outside of mainline churches and types of religion which provide firm indicators of identity (both ethnic and doctrinal) in the flux of modern life.”

This statement sounds similar to the Kendal issues listed in the previous section. Davie further observes that sections of youth has an awareness of life beyond death. She also sees (Kendal?) a spread of the idea that God is more immanent than transcendent (p.99). The New Age trend gave rise to the so-called “self-spiritualities” (p. 164). Meanwhile trust in modernity as a solution is waning. In the era of post-modernism people are calling into question the “secular certainties” (science, rationality, progress etc.) that ruled in the West for two centuries since the French Enlightenment (p.96):

“Science does not simply provide answers: on the contrary, the development of science poses new and ever more difficult questions, which in turn make heavy demands on resources other than scientific if answers are to be found. Hence an entirely different situation from that which was taken for granted in the early post-war decades. No longer is it assumed that a secular discourse will gradually overcome a recognizable and unified religious alternative. Instead both secular and religious thinking will evolve

⁸¹ p.60. op.cit.

as multiple groups of people look for new ways forward, and new creeds (both secular and religious) to live by in the early years of the twenty-first century”⁸².

As should be clear Davie is not differentiating religion very strongly from the church organisation but she is very sensitive that religion, even traditional religion is much wider than the churches or temples. That is still very positive in my view and probably a reflection of her realism. She is also acutely aware of the difficulties of choosing between a substantive definition of religion (referring to a deity) and a functional definition. In the last case she says:

“Any ideology, for instance, which addresses the ultimate problems of existence, could be thought of as a religion, whether or not it makes reference to the supernatural.”⁸³

She links recent religious awareness directly to the “decline in secular confidence so dominant in the 1960s.” (p.7. Similar on pp. 95;195-197;199) In view of the increasing instability of the secular modernist and progressivist promises “...both secular and religious thinking will evolve as multiple groups of people look for new ways forward, and new creeds (both secular and religious) to live by in the early years of the twenty-first century.” (p.95).

She later on repeats the religious status of ideology and fundamentalisms (pp.196-197) and indicates that both traditional church religions and other modernist pillars of identity like nationalism or culture or ethnicity function to provide havens of spiritual security as was highlighted by the issue on the Muslim people wearing the head scarf in France (p.173). Also included as fundamentalisms or ideologies she lists movements like environmentalism and feminism (p.199). This picture that she draws provides a much wider scope than does the Kendal list of 55 holistic practices.

As for the revival of traditional church religions she takes religion to mean the cluster of templic-social and the mores-cultural linkages and positions that is used as a haven of security against an infringing globalization which is “not uni-dimensional, as ...others maintain. It is a 'multi-dimensional and multi-centred historical development within which religion has a central place.” (p.209).

Davie is appreciated for posing ideology – what I would in most cases call a view of world and life – both as traditional in the church sense of the word and also in a variety of other secular movements as part of the religious package. Her work also flags the deterioration of certain securities which was previously offered by modernist philosophies as something with

⁸² p.95.op.cit.

⁸³ p.20.op.cit. See also pp.9-55. Clouser 2005.

religious implications. She seems sympathetic to the basic assumptions in the Kendal project but her scope is much wider, inclusive of ideology, culture and philosophy when looking at the expression of spirituality.

From a radically reformed position there is relative consensus that the first form of secularization of Döbelare above is actually good⁸⁴. The negative connotation ascribed by some to the first form of secularisation possibly flows from church politics because officials wanted to maintain the church monopoly (hegemony) of previous times. In the Dooyeweerdian theory a more optimistic view is maintained and this theory makes the notion of “differentiation” a given universal law (normative) structure of societal reality which is balanced by “integration”, which has an equally positive status. Not appreciating the need for differentiation is, in my view, probably a contributing factor to understanding the reasons why theologians like Louis Berkhof and Johan Heyns as discussed earlier on had problems maintaining a consistent position on the equal spiritual status awarded between church and other communal partners in the kingdom of God – especially when it comes to the “location” of the Body of Christ. The Dooyeweerdian position hence, in addition to the functional differentiation also stresses a bonding of religious quality in a dimension that runs across all differentiation and structural multiplicity.

1.8 Is a Christian secularization possible?

The 1970 question-title by JH Olthuis, *Must the church become secular?* is more of implied in the title of his essay than it is argued in the detail. I have decided to explicate the possible answer to that question somewhat further in my pursuit here. As pointed out earlier, both König and Dupuy claimed that the Judaeo-Christian message is responsible for secularisation since they robbed certain elements of nature (e.g. sun, moon and fertility) of its deified status. In addition it is sometimes mentioned that primitive Christians in Roman times were called atheists since, as I understood it, they neither sacrificed public offerings nor did they meet in public cultic temples and nor did they recognize Roman gods.

But getting positive readings on both the Roman notion of atheism and of secularism comes with a certain responsibility. And not fulfilling their proper roles as these kinds of atheists and these kinds of secularists, Christians left the door open for both militant atheism and humanism to hijack and distort their initiative on secularism. It was narrated earlier on in this chapter how the Christians by the “grace” of Emperor Constantine, fell back to templic

⁸⁴ König (1982a) welcomes another form of the secularization brought by the Judaeo-Christian line namely that of de-divinising (disenchanting) nature.

religion. And even as the Reformation initially brought fresh insights to both spiritual liberation and the study of biblical literature, it could still not escape the shackles of Constantine churchism, neither that of endemic biblicism (argued in the next chapter) and nor that of a continued practice of belief in ancient fatalism or determinism (argued in the last chapter). Under these conditions the secularists, especially since the Enlightenment could then mercilessly attack – and with good cause, I must admit and with even better effect – the vestiges of over-sacrilised notions in the minds and practices maintained by Christians on church, Bible and predestination / providence.

This above then is a main underlying thrust of this booklet. But there are two more supportive thrusts that carry my approach:

- All secularisation occurs in favour of a new sacralisation: In the Enlightenment, it was human reason, rationalism, sometimes less appropriately called “intellectualization”, to name but the most obvious. Luckily with post-modernism around, there is a growing awareness that the cloak of rationalism is nothing but another dressed-up ideology and, with Davie, another religion: pedestalling and pushing the rational capacity of human beings beyond its created intentions.
- The Judaeo-Christian secularising then, in its better moments, sacralises the following: firstly the Creator God of the Bible as the only God. Secondly, and this is obviously the view I take from the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea, the cosmic law side of creation, but this is viewed as the good gift from the Creator God ensuring a universe working in a minimalist sense, leaving much to the initiative of humankind even as we know with Alexander Pope that humankind is the “Great lord of all things, yet prey to all”. The antidote to being such a willing prey is found in paying equal and subsidiary homage to the plural nature of cosmic law, honouring reason as much as feeling, culture as much as libido, church as much as state and so forth. None of these lesser “gods” can claim to provide what we find in the creator God of the First Testament, his Wisdom and the freedom perspective which was rescued in the Last Testament. But by honouring them all equally, we ensure that the honour and glory of the Creator-Covenanting God remains not only intact but also effects a new and better understanding from ourselves.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ This secularization could be related to what Hegel called “sublation” which technically is the overcoming of societal and conceptual dualisms and which is something that most worldviews would aspire for. In the case of Dooyeweerd - compared to Hegel - the context for sublation was far more than that of establishing the ruling position of the state and in matters of state it is for various reasons neither as absolutist nor as dictatorial as we have seen many examples of in the 20th and 21st centuries. Secondly the Dooyeweerd “sublation” also proceeds on the basis of a non-

In this way Christian secularisation brings recognition of the proper place of every element that we find inside creation, and as we honour the elements equally inside a “whole” background, in principle it is difficult for any element to compete with the Creator-God. And that implies a downsizing of much of our treasured cultural heritages, as JH Olthuis said – almost too carefully to my mind – in his quoted article almost 50 years ago:

“This Church-church distinction is not a devaluation of the institutional church. Rather, released from the impossible burden of making its own witness the total Biblical witness in society, the institutional church can concentrate on its specific calling...The only point of the distinction is to emphasize that the institutional church- does not of itself exhaust the Kingdom of God.”⁸⁶

(I omitted a section that I think is dated – CPC)

reductionism (maintaining a parallel but integrated multiplicity) that in itself already deflates a number of experienced but artificial oppositional dualisms. Finally the radically reformed view has also been refined further to understand the normative position of humankind inside nature rather more as one of a mindful, caring and nurturing stewardship i.e. not the heroic conquest over a despised enemy.

⁸⁶ p. 115 op.cit.

1.9 CONCLUDING VIEW

I have analysed the strategic rationale used by some in the legacy of reformed contributors when they position the organised church in relation to firstly the Kingdom and secondly to the Body of Christ. Looking back one could say that a more specified question for the answers we found could have been the following: *Can we conceive of a spiritual reality that establishes a connection between people; outside of that which happens inside a temple, an organised church or a shrine, which are the historically dedicated spaces for ritualist celebratory events?* This phrasing is wider but also more suggestive than the initial question in the opening pages: *“What do we mean by the Kingdom of God and the Body of Christ?”* The arguments I came across alerted me to the specific representational tactics which is used inside reformed theological and church-political thinking. Hence after several versions of this publication, the question was rephrased as above. But it may be useful to keep both.

The reformed theologians, I have attempted to show, make huge upfront commitments to a creation-wide kingdom only to backtrack later by saying that only the organised church is the Body of Christ. In this sense they created a royalty which in effect degrades the other kingdom partners. Even the so-called IRS Canadian “rebels” of the 60s and 70s fell into the same trap but, to their credit, they did so while they were really working hard on an alternative.

Luckily everything is not dependent upon our own efforts. The cocksure secularisation predictors in the 60s and 70s were adamant that we will see a complete secularisation by the end of the twentieth century. But it did not materialise as they thought it would. The modernist securities promised by the prophets of secularisation began to wane and the human craving for unquestionable points of dependence,⁸⁷ what we may call the sacralised untouchables; started re-emerging in the minds of the secular populations, almost by itself, it seems. This entire turnabout as is recognised in some circles in the Sociology of Religion still seems very vague and attempting to validate such claims by studies in the sociology of religion is not easy. But while the Kendal project in the UK was not a technical success in this respect, it sparked some revealing discussions and also opened my eyes to what is possible. Davie, in my estimation, took a better road. And while I mention the work of the Frenchman Dupuy only in passing (that of Girard may be added) it seems from the work of Davie if there is a similar awakening underway even in mainland European intellectual circles. This development (500 years since Luther) is an opportunity for Christians to perform

⁸⁷ Clouser R. 2005. *The myth of religious neutrality*, analyses what he calls the “dependency arrangements” in scientific theories.

a full secularization as it should have been done initially – ignoring for the moment the ahistorical nature of such a view.

But the awakening of a “new” spirituality could also self-destruct if it is only about a refilling of old (i.e. used and non-renovated) wineskins. What I mean is that it is not only about the persistence of religion in its usual and idealised templic format, it is not just about improved moral individual behaviour, is also not just about pious individual spiritual experiences and it is most certainly not just about good deeds in super-humble mode. The question is if a groundswell with a pervasive and fundamental nature could be identified which could manifest itself in a communal sense of what we may call a world and life view and which in addition has a decidedly non-church character? Is it something that can emerge in our songs, our politics, our family life, our business life and eventually yes, almost as an afterthought, also in our churches? If it does not reach that level of a pervasive worldview, I am not sure if Christians should at all get that excited about the religious resilience that is currently recorded widely. Indeed, with the critics we can then indeed say: “another false dawn”.

The traditional practice of well-meaning Christians to conduct a spiritual warfare firstly by mobilising the faithful members of the organised church is probably the least promising option available. We need to think anew and I trust to have stirred some awareness of that. The graphic at the end of this section may be helpful. As in the rest of this booklet, here as well, we may find that as Christians we are shackled in our thinking by our cultural and spiritual addiction to those things very dear to us, the organised church being one of them. What was attempted in this chapter was not to destroy the church but to secularise it – announcing the nakedness of the emperor, certifying on the basis of a Drucker explanation that the organised church is just another human organisation. But such secularisation should not distract from the divinely given cosmic principles that all entities have. I am only saying that the church does not have one bit more of a creational foundation than any of the other kingdom partners – more to follow in 2.4.

But this last paragraph certainly calls for an explanation. Despite precautions taken along the way this chapter may still be understood as an attempt by an individual associated with a radically reforming position to instigate an anti-clerical vendetta against the church organisation as such. In my view any reduction of the cultural implications of the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea (PCI) to that point is premature, if not politically mischievous. The following strategic position should be considered in order to achieve a sense of proportionality: The radically reforming position that I take, as with the rest of the participants in the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea (PCI) is intent on deconstructing any mega

structure which was historically designed to limit our horizons or attempting to make the remaining societal institutions submissive and subsidised entities of it. In short it is a battle not only for our material freedom as in early liberalism but firstly for our spiritual freedom.

Such power-mongers will include the following as an unfinished list.⁸⁸

- The church (under specific official and oppressive regimes, past and current);
- The state (as directed by parties with specific oppressive ideologies);
- National and multi-national business organisations that attempt to turn the entire world and every practice connected into a single market but which is structured to benefit some citizens disproportionately more than others.

So the alternative view that is proposed in this chapter for all Christians, not only supporters of the PCI, asks them to reconsider the excessive claims of and about the organised church. It is necessary that they apply this secularising procedure well before they deal with the excessive (sacralising) claims made, assumed or even unintentionally promoted by other cultures, practices, attitudes, expectations and organised societal entities. The reason for singling out the church is that historically, past and present, the organised churches were often used as the flagship representation of Christians. What I do in this document is to perform, so to speak, an inner as well as a publicly demonstrated cleansing process – pushing secularisation in a specific way towards the point where Christians are requested to sacrifice things unduly dear to them. Only once the Christians distance or rid themselves of the embarrassments created by their own church traditions, dare they preach to the other sacralising power-mongers. Another example may be considered: One can only with sufficient integrity criticize socialist politics once one can demonstrate one's own critique of the shortcomings in alternative traditions, e.g. the different forms and practices of capitalism.

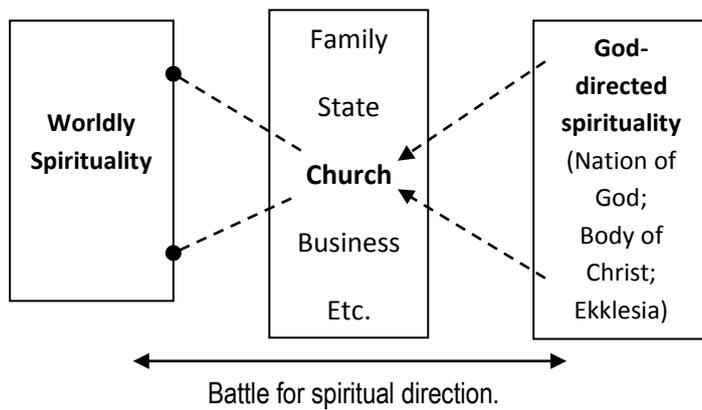
This change in perspective that I promote – completing the appropriate kind of secularisation – is best seen in the challenge of finding the most appropriate spiritual and conceptual connection between the Body of Christ and the organised church. It is also about opposing religious forces: Christianity against worldliness. I designed a little graphic below to demonstrate the two options for Christian communities in finding these connections. The lower profile awarded to the organised church in the radically reformed view should be clear in that graphic. The challenge articulated in this booklet is to move deliberately from the old

⁸⁸ It is reported that Paul Tillich wrote of the three faces of the somewhat mythic and demonic primordial monster mentioned in the Bible, the Leviathan. He considered these faces to be: Church, technology and forms of state totalitarianism (p. 118 Greene CJD. 2003. *Christology in Cultural Perspective*). Clearly there are many different approaches in which to explore and present the comprehensive and successive phases of institutionalized evil.

towards the new. It shows what I view as an ideal approach versus the traditional approach. The reality at a specific point in history and in a specific community will, as usual, be found somewhere in between, depending on the level of deliberate and tailored secularisation which the people in a community may have achieved inside a specific community:

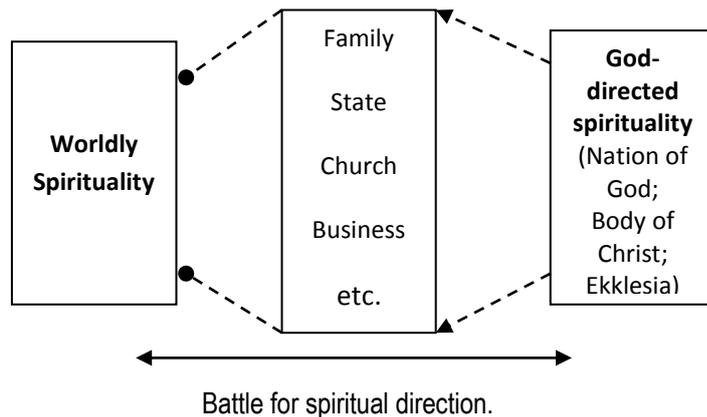
MAINSTREAM REFORMED (Christian) VIEW:

Primarily moving in the organised church, the others being secondary.



RADICALLY REFORMED (Christian) VIEW:

Primarily moving on the whole front and not privileging the organised church.



Chapter 2

WORD OF GOD AND THE GROUNDING OF CREATION

2.1 Overview

When we work through the Bible in search of the meaning of the expression “word of God” there are two things that are “easy” to see. The first is that contrary to popular belief “word of God” is very seldom a document. Usually it is a direct revelation from God, most often a spoken language which was presented as “being heard”.⁸⁹ Secondly in the instances when the expression “word of God” could be connected to documents it could never have been to the Bible in its finished state, given the histories in this regard.⁹⁰

But there are additional meanings to the “word of God” that is different from both word heard and word as a document. So inside the notion of “word of God” we have to include the idea of God creating and ruling the universe through his word, Genesis 1 being famous.⁹¹ And finally we have the notion of the Christ being “word of God” in John 1. We further see that the expression “word of God” in the Genesis 1 sense seems to form part of a group of three Biblical expressions which are closely related. The other two are the “will of God” and the

⁸⁹ In evangelical circles the use of meditative techniques, e.g. a combination of spiritual humility, dedication, visualization, sharing with spiritual partners and eventually journaling, are known. The intention with this practice is to articulate the felt revelations that in the words of one such a promoter, Mark Virkler, “are not in the Bible but are aligned or compatible with Biblical principles”. (For the record, as is the practice amongst USA Protestant Christians, Virkler also claims the inerrancy of the Bible.) The other well-known distinction of “logos word” versus “rhema word” will probably come down to much the same as with this current practice. Instances like these possibly point to an experienced uneasiness amongst Christians with many approaches which take the full Bible as a collection of rationalist statements and formulas suited for all eras and situations. I share that uneasiness but will articulate it in a different way in this chapter. The contributions by Karl Rahner (1941/69) *Hearers of the Word*, even in the context of the Roman Catholic approach will most likely also improve our understanding of the problem field indicated here. His contributions are often linked to that of the famous theologian, Wolfhart Pannenberg. See pp. 172-192, Greene CJD 2003. *Christology in Cultural Perspective*.

⁹⁰ The simple reality is that in all cases where reference is made to “word of God” in the Bible, the Bible itself has simply not been completed yet in terms of the “synodal sanctioning” in the 4th century AD. Any interpretation suggesting that the author of a Biblical text had a full perspective on all the other parts of the Bible being print-ready and that such an author was at that moment now finally adding his final sanction is seriously suspect. Given the known history of the Biblical texts the question is, as with all other reports: Can a report authorise itself?

⁹¹ König in 1982a warns rightly that reducing the act of creation to the speaking of a word (Hebrews 11:3) is not true to the text of Genesis 1 itself. Genesis 1 also uses “separation” (five times) and “crafting” (five times) as equally strong acts of creation. Wolters 1985 op. cit. (p.19) like many others explained the primary and secondary creational acts of God.

“law of God”. It is assumed that there is a large amount of overlap between the three concepts.⁹²

I have decided to focus in this booklet on two senses of the word of God. Firstly there is the revelation of God’s salvation plan for humankind which I will call Word 1. This is the word that brings us as a member into the body of Christ or as a branch growing on the True Vine. God’s ruling care and maintenance of his creation by means of laws I will call Word 2.⁹³ While the understanding of Word 1 (covenant) is not without problems, most Christians have a bigger problem with how to live a wise, fair, productive, efficient and useful life i.e. by using Word 2. Finding Word 2 requires us to start inside the Bible reports but then to move outside the Bible as well without being tied down by the those quaint contextual features of certain texts which display the specific cultural environment of a specific book in the Bible.⁹⁴ The distinction made in Chapter 1 between Kingdom of God (inclusive of organisational church) on the one side and the Nation of God / Body of Christ on the other side here finds a parallel in Word 2 and Word 1.

How will we know Word 2 which is word / will / law of God in a “cosmic” sense? Firstly we may ask who will participate in this search? The organised churches of many centuries have mistakenly taught us that only officials in their employ may explain and interpret the Bible as the only word, the law and the will of God. By contrast, Moses (Numbers 11:29) wished in frustration that all the Israelites should become prophets. And that usually means getting a fresh revelation for the moment. Jeremiah expected a new covenant according to which “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, ‘Know the LORD,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 31:31-34). The prophet Joel (2:28-29) stated the same wish which was expressed by Moses in frustration with his people. But now Joel states it as a serious future reality that the gift of prophecy will be general. I therefore believe that people in all

⁹² Wolters (p.19. Wolters AM 1985.) sees both a connection and a difference between the Word of God, the Will of God and the Law of God. Heyns (p. 9. *Die Kerk*) indicated six kinds of Word of God: Word of Creation, Providential Word, Word of Salvation, Incarnated Word, Inscripturated Word and the Proclaimed Word. Heyns added that these six forms display a unity and he wishes that none of the forms, e.g. Salvation Word (covenant) should be elevated above any of the others. Wolters advised against using the Word of God for anything but the Bible.

⁹³ I see the following kinds of Word of God: Covenant Word (Word 1a) and Redemptive Word (Word 1b); Creational Word (Word 2); Christ as the Logos Word (Creator and Maintainer); Bible as a signpost towards the different kinds of Word, itself not being the Word.

⁹⁴ Some of the history of when and how the oral transmission of the Bible contents were preserved, written down and adapted are mentioned in more detail in section 2.5.

professions can find the opportunity to be “minister of the Word” for their profession and beyond as was well-said by Henk Hart.⁹⁵ The notion of the “priesthood of all believers” will be practised and the children of God will claim their roles as prophets and kings, not only as mature members of a churchly congregation but also as members of all other sections in society.

This is not new to theological thought and also was dealt with on other terms throughout Chapter 1. The prophetic capacity of people with a biblically liberated worldview has an application to all of life. For how else would we understand the strange words of Isaiah 28:23-29? There Isaiah says that God gave humankind (farmers and bakers intended in this specific case) the knowledge on how to cultivate and process cumin and grain. Similar texts that also omit any detailed prescription by God are: Psalm 144:1 and Exodus 31:1-11. Also Luke 19:11-25 requires wisdom outside of given scripture.⁹⁶ “Put this money to work” (v.13). So? Finding Word 2 hence assumes an intuitive awareness of God’s created laws for a working universe, society included.

To repeat our paradigm for this booklet, finding Word 1 then is about the right spiritual relationship with God. Finding Word 2 is more about the enduring relationship which is tested in living with nature and in both the church and non-church environments of society. The answer to the question on who will participate in the search for Word 2 then, is relatively simple and it echoes between Moses and Joel; between Joel and Jeremiah: Everybody has

⁹⁵ p.42. Hart H. 1970. *The Gospel is radical: An essay on the propriety of modern attitudes*

⁹⁶ There are different nuances amongst the translations of Luke 19:13. Amongst a total of 26 translations the wording of the NIV is unique: “Put this money to work until I come back.” However the following is also equally as unspecified: “Occupy till I come.” (4 times) and “Trade ye herewith till I come” (3 times). But then there are others which seem to specify one of two options. These options seem to be: a) Invest in somebody else’s business (being the external financier): “Invest in trading until I come” (4 times) or b) self-financing own business: “Conduct (engage in) business until I come” (10 times) and “Trade until I come.”(3). But whichever option amongst the 26 translations is taken, it seems to remain open-ended. A study of money and business in the Eastern Mediterranean during the time of Emperor Augustus would probably confirm all the options above as real possibilities. But we are to find the rationale outside of the Bible.

There is a whole set of similar “open-ended” biblical texts that could make sense only if there is a wider presence of God’s will or created law than only that perspective what is reported upon in the Bible. So in this regard the notion of searching for the “hidden” kingdom is intriguing in itself (Matthew 13: 44-46). In terms of a wisdom-quest as in the Old Testament heritage there may be wider applications, in the sense of searching for the already-present kingdom. Going beyond the Matthew sense and context of a search, we can say the same in terms of a creational law (definitely a kingdom law!) which is present and which is near but which also is still hidden. Even so a search is both possible and mandatory because such laws are maintained in the pre-incarnational Christ (Colossians 1 and Hebrews 1). And against naïve readings, the question remains: Why would a kingdom be simple enough for children to grasp, yet requires a search that can puzzle the wise for centuries?

in principle, in a fundamental sense, both the responsibility and the capacity to participate. I would like to add that this capacity is for proclaiming both Word 1 and Word 2.

Finding Word 2 requires us to investigate the given regularities of events, practices and things in the universe (both natural and societal) and discover the laws and norms that make such regular factual realities possible in the first place. Hence Word 2 as given by God is about the structuring of the universe. It is about the laws of nature which were both spoken and crafted into enduring existence. The laws for motion and gravity are the classic ones that were not tweaked one bit at the dawn of aerodynamics and interplanetary space travel. There are also rules for the worlds of chemical states and reactions, for space and number. Logic also seems to have its own rules. And because of these very prominent regularities we tend to be intimidated by the claims of some natural scientists that these are the only lawful conditions we are allowed to talk about. But there are also unique regularities in the worlds of living systems: Micro-organisms, plants and animals. And although most natural scientists find it difficult to accept, there are also given regularities in the worlds of language, economics, politics and so on. What I believe Word 2 means is that all regularities in our factual realities, are outcomes of the norming principles and the law structure for reality, something “spoken” from God when he created the universe with all its promises and possibilities.⁹⁷ Such norms and laws are difficult to come by and being but human our formulations will never capture them completely – hence it is more important that we assume the existence of laws enabling such regularities rather than being able to formulate them in an exact and even in a mathematical way. The first reason is that viewed over time factual reality not only was diverse and dynamic but is still moving. The second reason is that our very work in this world is to keep at it and the history of scientific effort, combined with the right kind of humility, have revealed much of the work of God. Word 2 then is the backbone of the universe that has been maintained in the Christ; Word 2 shows the hand of God in the universe.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ This “speaking” by structuring the created order (Word 2) could be seen or heard best only in the wake of the spiritual renewal when people participate in the received Word 1– entering into the covenant from God. Thus Dooyeweerd said: “We cannot interpret the Divine order on the basis of a self-sufficient and autonomous reason. Apart from the Divine Word-revelation, this order maintains the unfathomable silence of the Sphinx.” (p.334. Dooyeweerd H. 1984. *A new critique of theoretical thought*. Vol. 2).

⁹⁸ It is rightly said that non-Christians will also succeed, at stages even better than Christians, to obtain access to parts of Word 2. While such is the case, we should not forget the history of science. Such history shows how often scientific communities have idealised one aspect or one system or one perspective as the all-containing enabler for all of reality. See Strauss 2009 and

Of course the writers of the Bible could never have thought of it this way. It was only in the seventeenth century that communities slowly became aware of the idea of a natural law that is truly universal, meaning that it applies both on earth and in the remote corners of the night skies as were observable with the primitive telescopes then in use. We can only see such a reality now because we have a more advanced and theoretically improved view on the character of the norms and the laws in nature like gravity and molecular mechanics.

Some neo-Calvinian academics since Kuyper have worked hard in meeting the growth of science with an improved spiritual understanding. But because of their cultural baggage, shared with all other Christians, their perceptions and formulations were often left unfinished and inconsistent. This is illustrated and discussed further in section 2.4. Some of the efforts by enthusiastic but misguided Christians turned into serious embarrassments like the courtcases in the USA since the beginning of the twentieth century on the teaching of evolutionism in schools. That battle is being fought over and again; pro-evolutionists still taking that version as the only christian version available. On the other hand Christian activists are still too afraid to move outside the parameters of culturally defined features in the Biblical text.⁹⁹ Slaves of a theology of fear. Very sad.

Meanwhile some smaller groups of intellectual christians have worked in alternative modes in order to achieve more sophisticated versions on the matter. Some accepted the ideology of physicalism and evolutionism, softening some of the edges – see Francis Collins and Jacob Klapwijk. Others with whom I align myself take a revisionist position on the

Clouser 2005 on the many ways in which such discoveries are perverted by the ideologies held – both by Christians and non-Christians (their dependency arrangements).

⁹⁹ As was already mentioned in general, here specifically it seems that the fundamentalist young earth creationists tend to focus too much on the creation of things and not on the creation of the law-like frameworks for the things. This is an underdeveloped theme in the Bible text, to say the least. Only when both of these are understood will the dynamics of evolution (change) be grasped as an attempt at explaining the interaction between entities and law structures. And only then a more reasonable approach may develop amongst christians.

An additional reference should be made on the gender issue in the Bible and how it also both assists and limits our understanding. The feminist theologians (along with liberation theologians) have alerted us to liberating our understanding from such necessary historical limitations. Hence as in the first pages of this book we explored ways to not only use but also transcend the metaphors of temple and government for kingdom. With feminist theology we also need to both use and transcend metaphors (and real instances) referring to maleness especially in doctrines of Trinity and Christology. See pp. 242-245. Greene 2003. The interplay of the universal and the specific is of core importance for all thinking, not excluding Christian thinking, also not excluding our assessment of the frame of references which were used in the Biblical text.

An interesting assessment of the female metaphor in the Divine presence is reported by Greene on Ruether for whom “God is best symbolized in female terms, that is, the mother quality of giving birth and reciprocity” p. 227. Greene 2003.

assumptions in the science enterprise but also on many legacies inside christian communities. Such a revisionist approach applies not only to Christianity in the mainstream, but also on the contributions of the fathers of the reformation and most importantly, on the fragile nature of the Biblical text and how sensitive it was to the conditions of the time. In short it is no longer a question if changes have occurred in the world of living things. It is a question of how the theories espoused by christian intellectuals account for the changes in the development of natural variety and in human history. And that I beleive is the way in which we will move closer to getting Word 2 into focus. The rest of this chapter will give a more elaborate view.

The road of searching for Word 2 is not easy and requires both time and working with others. An important obstacle for Christians in finding Word 2 is that inside both the evangelical tradition and in the other fundamentalist traditions there are no serious recognition of the cultural and the state-political and the church / temple-political issues that determined much of the content and the phrasing of the Bible texts at the time of writing. They do not see that even at the time of the reporting of Word 1 in the Biblical documents these revelations were never captured as pure and as perfect as we all would like it to be. It always carried the marks of culture, both very local in the communities of Palestine and also regional in the Mediterranean and the Middle East.¹⁰⁰ In the search for Word 2 it is about finding the “natural” i.e. the created law for a working universe. It sounds easy but it is complicated by our inherited traditions of thinking styles which include anything from tribal legacies to the vanities of a consumerist society. We have to use our intuition but that is also easier said than done since our intuition (as is also the case with Word 1) is never pure. It is always either primed or contaminated both by our present state, by our own and by other inherited traditions. The search for a truly open attitude, one which is also free from the spirit of worldliness, is what is required. But even under the liberation in Christ, even under the guidance by the Holy Spirit, we Christians still remain children of our time.

¹⁰⁰ This is mentioned as a balancing explanation against the charge by fundamentalists and relativationsts of all kind that it is too difficult to attempt finding Word 2. Firstly it should be considered that already in the fourth century Augustine counted more than eighty heresies. Secondly if we look at accounting for the localized cultural content in the biblical text; the compilation of the canon as well as the history of theology and of church confession it soon becomes clear that Word 1 is not nearly as stable as our church-dogmatic heritage makes us think. p.126 Hooker MD. 2003.”Where is Wisdom to be found (1) – Col 1:15-20”: “For Paul the ‘canon’ is not Scripture itself, but Christ, which means that Scripture must be read in the light of Christ. Where is wisdom to be found? Not in the written Torah – not even in the epistles of Paul! – but in the living Christ.” This challenge will be addressed again before the end of this chapter.

Culture and the evangelical tradition

The evangelical tradition has been a blessing by converting millions towards the minimum Christian consensus on and participation in the spiritual orientation and regeneration – facilitating the finding of Word 1. We who operate from a more radically reformed and semi-academic viewpoint should never under-appreciate the persistent effort and dedication required for such campaigning efforts. But even as we conditionally appreciate ¹⁰¹ these efforts and contributions we should also not hesitate to point out the following to our evangelising brothers and sisters: Reducing the biblical message to the following set of bumper-sticker statements is just not acceptable:

- God is only concerned about the repentance of humankind;
- The Bible is only about repentance and conversion (One often hears: “God is concerned about souls only”). As we have seen with the better side of Newbigin this is not biblical at all;
- All christian action (including the church) must only be about the conversion of people (“saving the lost at any cost”).¹⁰²

On their claims on what the Bible is about as here above I would pose one finding and one question:

- Word 1 (i.e. the covenantal entry into the Nation of God) is prioritised by the evangelicals as an end-point and not as a starting-point. As a result there is no sense for the evangelicals in giving any status to Word 2 (the cultural mandate and a search for the laws of the universe, society included).¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Evangelistic enthusiasts are adamant if not abrasive about the number of people saved during their crusade services. I think Ray Comfort made a good and timely case for downsizing the said claims made. It appears that only approximately 10% of those who “committed themselves to Christ” will eventually become practising Christians. See Ray Comfort 2010. *God Has a Wonderful Plan for Your Life: The Myth of the Modern Message*. So the figures they use in boasting and broad standing on the rest of us Christians appear, to say the least, quite inflated. But irrespective of the valid criticism by Comfort one has to attempt learning something from the evangelical brothers as brothers-in-Christ. It is not acceptable that church congregations are sick, dying and disbanding. The reformed tradition has to be open to advice in order to have an efficiently organised church as one of the many spokes in the kingdom wheel.

¹⁰² The need for finding common ground between the Pentecostal / Baptist / Evangelical and the semi-reformed approach taken here was also stated by Wolters (2005) in his: “neo-Calvinist agenda”.

¹⁰³ On pp.176 ff. Spykman 1992 discusses the Christian traditions that caused an “eclipse of creation”.

- Do they seriously mean “win the lost at any cost” to make a commitment to Christ? Does the expression “at any cost” include bribery, harassment and deception? I mean this last also in the sense of verbal abuse and salesman trickery from the platform or podium during over-confident if not the self-congratulatory preaching what we so often see - and not to exclude the one-on-one evangelical conversations.

Should the leaders from the evangelical tradition be in charge of creation as per Genesis 1 and 9 they would, I think, if they had the choice, most likely preferred to shut it down as soon as possible and only make sure the inhabitants, after a final warning, have their evacuation ticket to the new earth - they prefer to talk about heaven - then: abort and disengage. I can find no way to believe that this is the purpose for which God created either the world or humankind. We have a cultural mandate first and then in addition we have an evangelical mandate. The second must restore our understanding of the meaning of the first. Wolters repeated the risky phrase inherited from some previous traditions: Grace perfects nature.¹⁰⁴ Grace does not replace nature. The two are not in conflict but it seems that the evangelical tradition does not appreciate neither creation nor the cultural mandate. For them there is a conflict: Either the one or the other. It seems if they want to force a choice, and their choice: grace is to replace nature.¹⁰⁵ It seems to the contrary that we can do justice to both only when, apart from our intimacy with the Scriptures, we also diligently search Word 2 which is mostly found outside of the Bible.

¹⁰⁴ In chapter 1 the meaning of these words was spelled out with a definite and articulated focus for the purposes of a radically reformed context.

¹⁰⁵ pp.190-195 König A 1982a. *Hy kan weer en meer!* Here König stresses (as does the ecumenist missionary Newbigin) that creation has a value in itself. This could be viewed as recognition of the collection of biblical texts which is also used by reformed-minded authors towards the statement of both a cultural mandate and caring human stewardship. It is noted that König even tackles the unpopular question of in what sense creation is more basic than redemption ... and vice versa (pp. 185-190).

Also see additional explanations by JH Olthuis in *Must the church be secular?* (1970). Durand J.F. 1982. *Skepping, Mens, Voorsienigheid* (My translation of title: *Creation, Humankind, Providence*) in an overview of theology at the middle part of the 20th century reports the strong trend (in my view spawned by the popular but mistaken habit of all ages to assume a perfect and detailed prescience to God) that the covenant as salvation preceded creation (pp.85-99). I believe a better position would be to say that at the creation of humankind the God-initiated covenant as a fellowship arrangement was already in place. It was later on then reshaped in terms of salvation because of the calamity that materialised when humankind denied the creator God (the risk which God took by creating a free humankind). It is sometimes explained, e.g. by R Clouser, that while at Siniai the covenant was of a legal and vassal relationship, it was not like that from the beginning.

2.2 König: Rejecting the cosmic order because of Apartheid?

Adrio König was a well-respected systematic reformed theologian in South Africa - still very active as an author even though retired. Since the 1970s he was at the forefront of reforming both our political understanding of the South African society and our way of reading the Bible. He lately maintains respect from many corners.

König wants to see the Kingdom of God only in its Christological sense. This is of course not entirely against my argument in the main part of this document. Especially the notion of the “cosmic Christ” of Colossians 1 and the Wisdom idea of Proverbs 8 comes to mind. However the crucial question is what such Christ-centeredness that König sees then comprises of. Is it for instance reduced to the so-called personal relationship with God? And if so, is it bereft of any appreciation for the cosmic presence of the Christ? That is, will a Christ-centered approach result in a lesser appreciation for the earth and the associated cultural task of humanity? This standard question has been addressed earlier in this document as well. I think König will pass this test even as he damages his contribution by not using a cosmic law concept.

From a radically reformed position one will find a wide range of topics for agreement between König on many of the issues treasured in this document: He rejects the gnostic tradition for its denial of the goodness of creation.¹⁰⁶ He recognises a good form of secularisation – instigated by Genesis 1 – that undermined the divinisation of nature and what enabled a proper scientific investigation of the world. The universe is just that, good but not divine in itself.¹⁰⁷ He also sees humankind as having no higher or other calling than his work on earth.¹⁰⁸ He also appears sympathetic to the call for submission to Christ in all spheres of life and community.¹⁰⁹ Later on he stresses this view even further by saying that the enduring task of humankind is not missionary work¹¹⁰ – as the evangelical community would prefer it! Most welcome is his statement – like Wolters would three years later – that the separation between world (creation) and church as the supposedly basic spiritual battle

¹⁰⁶ pp.161-162; op.cit. But he appears inconsistent on p.206? A comprehensive understanding of how the goodness of creation in Genesis 1 sits with the Mesopotamian combat-myth of creation and parallels to that which we find especially in many of the Psalms (e.g. Psalms 74 and 89) could be gained from Middleton JR 2005. *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*. Chapter 6 “Created in the Image of a violent God?” is particularly revealing. Middleton probably provides one of the very best nuanced arguments why the original creation was indeed good.

¹⁰⁷ p.165; pp.201-205. König A. 1982a. *Hy kan weer en meer!* The English version *New and greater things*, 1988 was not available at the time of my study. All references are to the Afrikaans text.

¹⁰⁸ p.33; 166-167.op.cit.

¹⁰⁹ p.165-166. op.cit.

¹¹⁰ p.190. op.cit.

line is to be rejected for the simple reason that nature is good and we were created for this here creation.¹¹¹ I was always puzzled by the understanding which Wolters¹¹² gave of 2 Peter 3 on the new creation: In short, it is said that this passage refers to the revelation of creation itself and not as is popular to claim, the destruction by whatever means of the essence of creation. Now it seems that König (and also Bavinck) is not in conflict with this¹¹³ even as he has trouble explaining the continuity between creation and recreation – see further down.

But once these agreements and more have been noted one will also gain a number of new understandings. My chief gain was the understanding that the Old Testament authors used the existing explanations for the origin of the universe as found amongst neighbouring peoples in the Middle East. Unlike today, the assumption that the universe was godly created was commonplace at the time, a few practical atheists aside. Hence the Old Testament promotes firstly the teaching of a specific creator rather than a teaching about creation.¹¹⁴ Questions on the “what” and the “how” of the universe, König says, became important only in the scientific period after the Enlightenment of the 18th century.

But even so there was an important difference to be stressed: The Biblical authors wanted to communicate that God is the only creator and that he was not dependent upon anything else when he started his acts of creating the universe.¹¹⁵ Hence the moon and the sun in Genesis 1 are “deliberately” called “lights” in order to de-divinise them as a challenge to the competing religions and their competing gods.¹¹⁶ Elsewhere König, because of this, categorised Genesis as a polemic report against the myths on creation at the time in the Middle East. In association with this claim, neither man nor anything else came from God. Everything, the authors of the Old Testament say, is created but not God himself.¹¹⁷ It is most welcome that König repeatedly reminded his readers about the difference between creator and creation and that God himself is the only uncreated one. But here is the problem

¹¹¹ pp.138-139. op.cit.

¹¹² p.41. Wolters. 1985. Well-supported by the 2004 best-seller by Alcorn: *Heaven*.

¹¹³ pp.205-6. König. 1982a. Also see pp.972-976, Dake FJ. 2010. *God's Plan for Man*. Dake who is meticulous bible student in his own way, even as fundamentalist and millennialist, also agrees with what he calls the “renovation of the earth by fire”. With reference to Isaiah 1:25 and Malachi 3:2-3, CD. Isbell 2006. “Zoroastrianism and Biblical Religion.” (p154) argues that God is more intent on purifying with fire by burning away sin rather than with the destruction of his creation. More supportive references for this view could be found on pp. 558-559 Spykman GJ. 1992 *Reformational Theology: A new paradigm for doing dogmatics*

¹¹⁴ p.95. König. 1982a

¹¹⁵ p.161. 1982a

¹¹⁶ pp.33-36. 1982a

¹¹⁷ pp.4;10;51. 1982a

picked up by König. These Old Testament authors were not applying this part of the message as radically as they could have done when they lifted and remoulded the creation reports (myths) from the other mid-Eastern communities and presented it then as their own.¹¹⁸ Hence König pointed out a core problem in the Old Testament scripts: The world flood (a form of chaos, primal unstructured matter), the darkness and the reality of drought are still listed in the Bible narrative as enduring uncreated negatives, remainders from before creation – as in the inherited narratives of the time!!¹¹⁹ This I have to agree – however reluctantly – is the experiential reality of the Mid-Eastern cultural reference points at the time, shared by the biblical author(s). We and the next generations, in our confessions and explanations, have to elevate in our confessional literature a truly powerful God (as the true God) while not abandoning an acute and scholarly awareness of the culturally specific packaging in which the Biblical message arrived at our doorstep. Orthodox Christians, Neo-calvinists included here, were particularly slow in responding to this challenge. Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven students probably found it too risky to promote this knowledge especially in their position that was theologically already beleaguered. And so by being fainthearted they lost the respect of the academic world in any case.

König rejected the notion that the liberation of humankind from sin could be understood as a kind of restoration of the original state in paradise.¹²⁰ This statement I believe is in need of more precision. At issue is the notion of continuity amidst all the biotic and the cultural differentiation and the integration over time that often amounts to a form of progress in history. Such change and oftentimes progress, König explains, developed after the acts of creation by our God and it was also intended in that way.

We may benefit at this stage from considering that Wolters alerted us to the difficulties of expecting a complete restoration.¹²¹ He explicitly states that we do not get more in the recreation but also not less. However the cultural and other developments that have taken place since creation will be recognised. Hence: city instead of the garden and so on. Alcorn which was referred to earlier on displays an amazingly fertile imagination in picturing the development that will occur in the hereafter, affirming but also expanding much of the Wolters contributions. Both Wolters and König rejected a circular approach (repetitive) and also an assumption of original perfection understood as completeness.

¹¹⁸ p.155. 1982a

¹¹⁹ p.24. 1982a

¹²⁰ p.99. 1982a

¹²¹ pp. 63-64. Wolters 1985a.

There is a political issue here and – no surprise in South Africa – connected to Apartheid. König rejects especially the view of some reformed theologians in South Africa who sympathised with Apartheid. The so-called “creational ordinances” (“skeppingsordeninge”) were believed during that epoch, dictated a separateness of different races. This understanding at least was rejected by König.¹²² The fully argued position of König could also be read more extensively in his other 1982 contribution.¹²³ This discussion reveals the insufficient argumentation by FJM Potgieter who clearly and mistakenly equated the interventions by God and in this case, punishment by God, with an act of creation.

On the question of continuity between creation and recreation König takes up the challenging position that the Bible is not directed at the past but at the future.¹²⁴ Even at the first creation there was an openness of what still had to come, i.e. to develop.¹²⁵ König also addresses the position taken by some theologians that it was only sin that could kick-start history. He motivates his position that creation was, even before the presence of sin, designed as incomplete and intended to be developed by the culture and initiative of humankind.¹²⁶ This view is fully in line with the framework for a dynamic creation which I present in this publication. It is also a perspective not found by me in Newbigin. But let us see how König formulates the problem of continuity (my translation and underlining - CPC):

“The concept of history assumed in the Bible can by no means be presented as a huge circle – back to the original creation. There is some continuity between creation and recreation, but recreation is at least as radically new as the original creation. That is exactly why creational terms are used for it! Of course continuity is also of huge importance. God does not give up the works of his hands, the new earth is still *this* earth, the glorified human, *this* human – but it is an earth that is *renewed*, a human being that was resurrected to a *new, a different* kind of *life*, and which is *glorified.*”¹²⁷(p.214)

¹²² pp.210-211; 214. König. 1982a. This is popular in systematic theology. See previous reference to Durand.

¹²³ pp. 114-120. König A 1982b. *In gesprek met Prof FJM Potgieter*

¹²⁴ p.212. König. 1982a.

¹²⁵ p.213 op.cit.

¹²⁶ p.214. op.cit.

¹²⁷ p.214. op.cit.

(Original text: “Die geskiedenisbegrip wat in die Bybel veronderstel word kan ten ene male nie as ‘n groot sirkel – terug na die oorspronklike skepping - voorgestel word nie. Daar is wel kontinuïteit tussen skepping en herskepping, maar die herskepping is minstens net so radikaal nuut soos die oorspronklike skepping. Juis daarom word skeppingsterme daarvoor gebruik! Natuurlik is die kontinuïteit ook van groot belang. God gee nie die werke van sy hande prys

König claims that the freedom of God in the beginning i.e. being not dependent upon some dark primordial matter or forces could be repeated in the act of recreation. The difficulty is that in the second case God indeed does work with his first creation to which he remains loyal, also according to König. So unlike with the first creation there is for the second creation a very good remainder, a sizeable dowry, from the first creation. I think that König overestimated the value of literary parallels between the terminology of creation (“newness” and “creation”) and that of recreation. I mean this: It seems as if the literary parallels are considered by König to be the only parallels at play – thereby due to such assumptions of his argument he is not recognising anything of cosmological relevance.

In my view a foundational cosmological layer must be assumed as the common ground to guarantee continuity. That layer will certainly be the will or thoughts of God (in the Creator and Maintainer, Christ), but in practical terms, I would suggest that the created order for entities, people, processes etcetera is not cultural itself. Instead that layer enables in the first place what we call cultural dynamics. Yes, with König I reject the notion of a God who is micromanaging historical events in all and everything – see section 3.2. And I also reject the long and misguided tradition of using the notion of created ordinances towards justifying the ideology and practices of apartheid. But the identity of things in nature, the communal life and aspects thereof as broad categories, even the ability to be unique, are all possible only by virtue of a set of regularity enabling laws for reality set up by God at the very beginning and maintained ever since and also into the future. Earlier on it was argued that God did not only create things and people as a seeding event. He firstly created law frameworks, also laws for entities, which provided a loose and stretchable pull on the development of all things in the billions of years that were lying ahead.¹²⁸

nie, die nuwe aarde is nog steeds *hierdie* aarde, die verheerlikte mens *hierdie* mens – maar dit is ‘n aarde wat *nuutgemaak* is, ‘n mens wat opgewek is tot ‘n *nuwe, ander soort* lewe, en *verheerlik* is.)

About twenty five years later he stressed the continuity somewhat stronger in his comments on Revelations 21:2 in König A. 2009b. ‘*n Perspektief op Openbaring*. CUM: p. 379: “As God iets nuuts maak, maak hy nie iets anders nie. Hy maak die oue nuut.” [“When God makes something new, He does not make something different. He renews the old.” My translation. CPC]. Yet no mentioning yet of an extra-biblical created law.

¹²⁸ Durand JJF 1981. On pp.179-188 he provides an overview of theological thinking on continuity between the first and the future new earth. For our purposes here it is interesting that he (like both König and the creationists and fundamentalists) does not make any mention of the role of the created (cosmic) laws given for both the first world and the hereafter. It is probably a good reflection of current thinking at the time but not anticipating Pannenberg and not recognising the contributions by neither H Dooyeweerd nor that of DFM Strauss. In postmodernist thinking we could accept that created law occupied an even lower ranking – if mentioned at all.

Finally the apparent rejection by König of an underlying created law resulted most likely not only from the sad history of Apartheid. It may also be traced back to the individualist-romantic-nominalist-personalist traditions of the 19th century which was further amplified and contextualised by both existentialism and post-modernism. All his Biblical text-studies, his contextual studies and his enthusiasm could not free him sufficiently from these philosophical assumptions which were still very active in the theology of the twentieth century. Once these philosophical realities are out in the open, we can say many other things with less likelihood of being misunderstood. Yes in the circles of the South African reformed theology and philosophy there was a wide tolerance and also much attempted justification for apartheid. This carried on well into the 1970s and really messed up the perception of “being reformed” or “reforming”. Yet in a strange way both the Kuyperian heritage (some in the SA reformed community) and the Kierkegaard heritage (König) were the victims of reducing reality to the culturally formed heritage of worldviews, the cultural shape of institutions and the historical developmental features of societies, losing sight of the universal normativity created in Christ and by which events and entities should be measured.

The link between the contributions of A Kuyper and the Apartheid ideology is still to be established properly amidst a range of opportunistic linkages.¹²⁹ In view of the Kuyper and Dooyeweerd reports one may ask if the realistic distance that was created only later on between Nazism and the contributions of Nietzsche and Heidegger, should not also be used as a historiographical benchmark for evaluating the assumed links between Abraham Kuyper and apartheid. The contribution by G Strauss¹³⁰ is also useful in this regard.

König does talk about the structure of creation that is not dictated by some assumed given primal matter (i.e. being there before creation).¹³¹ God dictated that structure, he says. And then he says that if we accept that God is essentially love,¹³² then the creation must have a structure of love.¹³³ This statement was most certainly not properly reviewed. König seems not to realise that taken clinically the content of this statement militates against his earlier statement namely that the Biblical writers wanted to reveal that neither humans nor any

¹²⁹ See an argument for a sense for realism by Smit K 1989. *Abraham Kuyper en volksideologie onder die Afrikaners* (Translation of title: *Abraham Kuyper and nationalist ideology amongst Afrikaners*) A similar defence of Dooyeweerd was presented by Strauss DFM. 2015b. *Dooyeweerd's philosophy entails no support for Apartheid whatsoever*

¹³⁰ Strauss G. 1996. *Footprints in the dust. Can neocalvinist theory be credible in postcolonial Africa?*

¹³¹ p.160. König. 1982a.

¹³² p.171. op.cit.

¹³³ p.172. op.cit.

other creatures or features were born from God.¹³⁴ He correctly decided from this that a main message of the Bible is about the de-divinisation (disenchantment) of creation.¹³⁵ In the case of love, he is now (like most theologians and other romantics) making an exception. We have to ask if such an exception is ideologically motivated. We may best consider the question if our representations of God - even in the Bible - are also limited by our literary devices. Harry Kuitert alerted us already in the 1960s to this by the following simple question: If we say in line with the literature by the apostle John that God is love, how far do we want to go? Do we actually want to push it to the extent that in the end we actually mean that “Love is God?” My take on such an reversed outcome is that we then commit a re-divinisation of an aspect of creation, namely that of love.¹³⁶ There is of course more to it than is stated in this short paragraph and is also not an indication of any unlimited solidarity with Kuitert.

König like others says that it is not justified to ask the Old Testament writers if God created out of nothing.¹³⁷ This is the case because of the absence of any theoretical approach in a modern sense amongst these authors.¹³⁸ Yet he still says that one would have expected the Bible authors to have rejected these heathenish representations of some pre-existing dark force as completely as what the church leaders confirmed for 2000 years in their teaching of creation out of nothing.¹³⁹

König shows how the various representations given in Genesis 1 of the creational act stand next to each other. These acts of creation happened by means of the following: by separation, by speaking a word and by crafting as would a technician. None of these representations in Genesis 1 are superior to the other since the “how” and the “what” of creation were not at all important at the time to these writers. He concludes that no teaching on the detail of creation is required in the original context. But then he does something important. He says that even the notion of evolution may be a valid way of representing the way how God executed his project plan for creation.¹⁴⁰ Now this popular viewpoint is always difficult to discuss because of a number of heritages that come into play. Firstly it is my opinion that the hypochondriac reaction of many Christians to the use of the word “evolution”

¹³⁴ p.4. op.cit.

¹³⁵ pp.33-36; 201-205. op.cit.

¹³⁶ We find structurally the exact same formal argument in the feminist theology where Daly is reported as saying in her assessment of patriarchy and even towards a diagnosis of mysogynism in Christianity : “if God is male then male is God”. Quoted and discussed in Greene 2003: p. 221; again p. 244, where he says that her remark should be taken seriously.

¹³⁷ p.141. op.cit.

¹³⁸ p.163. op.cit.

¹³⁹ p.156. op.cit. Middleton (2005) provided more texture and context on this problem.

¹⁴⁰ p.159. op.cit.

is lamentable and that there are conditions where it is valid to combine “creation” and “evolution” as a pair. So the notion of “creation and becoming” can most certainly be justified - in Chapter 3 the realities of accident and coincidence are positioned against simplistic notions of predestination. Such an approach does not in any way imply support for a chemical-electrical emergence of the first form of life either from a pond here on ancient earth or from a blob of water on some remote moon or planet elsewhere many aeons ago. This point will be discussed again.

But König has more to say. He even says that it goes not only against the intention of the Biblical authors but also against the nature of God to present a full account of the creation act and about the exact way in which it was in the very beginning.¹⁴¹ And then he concludes:

*“An autonomous teaching of creation is just not possible within the framework of the Biblical message.”*¹⁴²

In concluding this subsection, I would in response give the following personal view as my version of a radically-reformed position on the statements by König:

- a. Searching for a reference on the detailed “how” of creation in the Biblical documents is indeed too ambitious given both the actual text and the traditions of the time.
- b. A teaching on creation at the beginning as being *independent* of religious assumptions is indeed impossible. But the reverse may need to be confirmed as well: If one could come up with improved (refocused) assumptions and could also recognise the limitations of such a set of assumptions then a Biblically aligned teaching on creation can indeed become all of possible, legitimate and even a requirement in later generations.
- c. The current world with its progress in science and technology cries out for a teaching on a dynamic explanation of creation – as implied in the references to Davie in Chapter 1. Despite some serious grandstanding by the supporters of evolutionism, the actual mechanics for the developments they claim to have happened are still missing in the explanations and so are the appropriate pieces of evidence.
- d. Christians in science careers can no longer afford to ignore the possibilities of an explanation on creation that takes all of the following into consideration:
 - The text-critical study of the Biblical accounts of creation and its assumptions.

¹⁴¹ p.216. op.cit.

¹⁴² p.216. op.cit. [Original text: “ ‘n Verselfstandigde skeppingsleer is eenvoudig nie moontlik binne die raamwerk van die Bybelse boodskap nie.” (Italics by König)].

- The worldview-assumptions (the “sacreds” or “dependency-arrangements”) in modern scientifically theorizing communities.
- The worldview inconsistencies in Christian heritages – not excluding the Bible.
- The established facts and theories in many branches of science and how they gained and maintained that status.

Christians interested in intellectual matters, whether supportive or non-supportive of evolutionism as promoted in its most progressive forms may best avoid being naïve or uninformed about any one of these fields mentioned above.

In view of the expressed need of people to know about the nature of creation as in (c) above, König has said that alternative explanations like the evolution hypothesis may be considered today. However we have not yet come across a place where he worked on providing a set of more acceptable religious assumptions as required for a 21st century rendering of creation. Hence even as König opened my eyes for the historical contextuality of many Bible texts on creation, it appears that the systematic rendering of our understanding of this very basic strand in Biblical revelation is not developed sufficiently in the König publications which I have consulted.

My attempt on addressing this challenge more comprehensively follows by a critical presentation of the contributions by H Dooyeweerd and D Strauss in section 2.4. First however I find it necessary to review how remarkable a famous televangelist presented the notion of a God-created “natural law”.¹⁴³

2.3 Munroe: Natural law preceding the Bible

It is sometimes protested that ordinary human beings have no understanding of universal laws. I think that such a claim is a postmodernist assumption promoted as a myth.¹⁴⁴ But the tele-preacher Myles Munroe after a lifetime of success in preaching was not deterred by such claims. So from the perspective of the radically reforming, the 2006 publication by M Munroe, *Kingdom Principles: Preparing for Kingdom Experience and Expansion* is somewhat of a surprise. It signifies a revival of optimism, possibly fuelled by the strong growth in church membership in some third and even second world countries and communities where he preached. In some respects it states the kingdom perspective as bold

¹⁴³ pp. 16-32. Goudzwaard B. 1979. *Capitalism and Progress*, provides an explanation of how the notion of natural law and providence was changed during the Renaissance and towards the early liberal phase as part of the Enlightenment.

¹⁴⁴ JP Dupuy refers to a survey showing the shocking lack of understanding in progressive USA populations about elementary matters in physical science. p.56. op.cit.

as we could ever wish to find from a more radically reformed position. That is of course not the full story. But this section will concentrate mostly on the possibility of understanding Word 2 (created law) as implied in one of the three opening questions at the start of this document as from this publication by Munroe.

Munroe makes a number of provocative if questionable statements about the Kingdom of God, of which the following is appreciated:

“Christianity as a religion is well-known, well-established, well-studied, well-researched, well-recorded and well-distributed: but little or nothing is known about the Kingdom. As a matter of fact, most of those trained in official institutions to understand the Christian faith and propagate its purported message graduate without ever taking a single course in Kingdom studies. Often, no such course is available. The result is that few so-called ordained ministers and priests have any formal instruction at all in any Kingdom concept. Their priority is in propagating the Christian religion rather than the message and concepts of the Kingdom of God. ...This perpetuation of the Christian religion and its rituals, customs, and rites has left a great vacuum in the world that must and can be filled only by understanding the Kingdom.”¹⁴⁵

His understanding of the cultural mandate is limited by his almost naïve political analogies and his preference for the concepts of “kingdom” and “colonization” that can most likely be traced back to the theology of dominion from Peter Wagner and some others. Even so his awareness of the cultural mandate remains virile and provides a view about the new earth that is somewhat compliant to that of Wolters and Alcorn. In addition he appears also compliant with the open theist thinking of König and others which will be considered in the final chapter:

“God has given us authority over the earth. That means we’re in charge. ... This gives us a lot of freedom to do what we please within our domain. But it also means that we can’t blame God for everything that goes wrong, yet that is exactly what we do... Why doesn’t God intervene? Because this is not His domain. He will not intervene in the affairs of this earthly domain without the permission of those who hold dominion

¹⁴⁵ p.20. Munroe M. 2006. *Kingdom Principles: Preparing for Kingdom Experience and Expansion*. See also similar on pp. 16;19;36;40-41;64. Note: As discovered in chapter 1: Some theologians grant creation-wide scope to the kingdom but that serves only as a decoy to safeguard their last castle where they happily carry on promoting the institutional church as “the hub in the kingdom wheel”: Only the organised church amongst the other kingdom partners, these theologians say, has the privileged to be viewed as the Body-Bride-Nation-People of God.

authority here. And who holds dominion authority? Every human being on earth who is a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven. God is not to blame for human evil and suffering. We brought these things on ourselves by our own selfishness and rebellious spirit.”¹⁴⁶

These statements certainly agree with much of what I promote in this booklet. But what I believe needs the most attention in this chapter is how Munroe relates the Bible to the notion of natural law:

- “The Word of God, written down and printed in the book we call the Bible, is the most powerful document we have. It is the constitution of the Kingdom of Heaven, the testament of the will of the Kingdom for his citizens.”¹⁴⁷
- “The Bible comprises God’s documented thoughts concerning His citizens – His expressed will, desire, and intent for the human race He created in His own image.”¹⁴⁸

A well-known statement by JH Olthuis from the ICS neo-Calvinian circles is that the Bible is a “re-publication of the creational law”.¹⁴⁹ I believe this to be an unfortunate and properly mistaken perception. The Bible reveals God as the only creator of heaven and earth and that he made laws that govern it. But the bigger part of the Bible is a record of the covenantal interventions by God to salvage a people by guiding them towards spiritual renewal and finding a restoration of the intended covenantal relationship (Word 1). Along the way there are pointers towards God’s creation-wide rulership. But the Bible is both culturally and volume-wise far too limited to be ascribed the status of the full creational law of God – think only about the molecular sciences, the kingdoms of micro-life and the current almost magical unfolding of knowledge on inherited genetic coding. It is also not even comprehensive enough to provide for the detail of a dominionist theocracy state as Munroe would. So, contrary to Olthuis the Bible does indeed add to the creational word as part of God’s intervention after sin. Munroe understood this somewhat better. We see that when it comes to natural law, Munroe argues in a way what would rarely even cross the mind of the run-of-the-mill evangelical Christian and which is barely suggested in the New Testament. He says:

¹⁴⁶ p.120. op.cit. König will largely condone this. See Chapter 3.

¹⁴⁷ p.133. op.cit.

¹⁴⁸ p.140. op.cit.

¹⁴⁹ p.10. Olthuis JH. 1976. *The Word of God and Biblical Authority*

- “We often think of laws as unpleasant and inconvenient demands that restrict our freedom and limit our options. In reality laws are designed to free us to pursue unlimited options by providing a safe environment where we can live in peace and prosperity.”¹⁵⁰
- “As long as we acknowledge the laws of God and submit ourselves willingly to living by and obeying them, we too will succeed and fulfil our purpose in God’s design. We will realize our full potential.”¹⁵¹
- “...laws are built into the very fabric of creation...Laws establish God’s Kingdom. And these laws were put in place long before the first human being arrived.”¹⁵²

As said earlier there were – to me – a number of pleasant surprises in this Munroe publication. And after the above he says even more impressive things – certainly not what his fundamentalist and evangelical colleagues and supporters whom I am aware of would think about:

- “It was humanity’s rebellion and separation from God that made written law necessary”¹⁵³ and then a grand finale: “Written law is a sign that the people have lost sight of the spirit of the law – the original intent. So where the spirit of the law is, there is no need for written law.”¹⁵⁴

The last statement above implies that as far as the spirit of the law is restored – e.g. by repentance accompanied by both humility and scholarly research or simply by displaying a truly open but sufficiently resolute attitude – the Christian (as in communion with others) can become freed not only from the Mosaic law but also from much of the historically situated New Testament prescriptives. This is much in the spirit of the New Covenant which was promised in the Old Testament. But promising as Munroe may sound, we as a Christian community are all avoiding the problems associated with this implication. This is our existential challenge. I have already mentioned this challenge and will edge a bit further on this very intimidating frontier in the rest of this chapter.

As for Munroe: I am not sure how popular with his followers this particular publication is and specifically these last quotations. And if it is, I am also not sure if they have actually

¹⁵⁰ p.142. Munroe. op.cit.

¹⁵¹ p.145. op.cit.

¹⁵² p.147. op.cit.

¹⁵³ p.151. op.cit.

¹⁵⁴ p.153. op.cit. Note: Even an influential theologian like Wolfhart Pannenberg promotes, against Karl Barth, a notion of natural law that is a required assumption for the practice of theology. I would like to add in terms of this document: It is also a required assumption for ordinary living at all levels and in all contexts of society. p. 356. Woo op. cit.

considered the implications of what they are reading. Maybe in his other publications he fed them with enough of a fundamentalist understanding to dull their senses. Whatever the case, we are left with the question of how a sensible and responsible relationship between the Bible (especially Word 1, defined earlier on as the covenantal word) and the natural law (Word 2 defined as the created law that enables a working creation) is to be stated. Many questions need to be asked. How did Munroe come to his notion of Natural Law and Kingdom? Was he exposed to Wolters or to the Social Gospel versions of Rauschenbusch and Martin Luther King? Or was he impressed by the dominion theology of a Wagner or a Rushdoony and other “less respectable” authors in the right-wing USA-politics? It is trusted that the more comprehensive reviews of the legacy left by Myles Munroe – who passed away in 2014 – will address this question and relate it to the on-going repositioning of both mankind and the communal body of Christians in the modern world. And are we possibly witnessing here a long overdue awakening in evangelist circles towards an appreciation of the concept of a cosmomic law?

2.4 Dooyeweerd: Conflict between creational law and development?

The heritage of Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) as interpreted by Danie Strauss (born 1945) was a major input into my early theoretical understanding of reality as well as the scientific reflection on that reality. All of these were assumed to be conducted at an interface between the main perspectives in the Bible, the factual presence of reality and the guidance of the Holy Spirit towards a non-idolatrous attitude and culture. As with anybody else also for me it was a journey not without challenges, disappointments and dead ends.

In this section I will focus specifically on two strategically critical issues inside the created or cosmic law as presented by Dooyeweerd. Firstly it needs to be stated for the sake of clarity that the idea of a cosmic law in the Dooyeweerdian sense is not an original force opposing God as it was implied in the concepts of natural law¹⁵⁵ that are reported in some Greek and Thomistic traditions. Further this law is not enforced mechanistically as in the original versions of fatalism.¹⁵⁶ This law is also much more than any combination of natural law (studied by the natural sciences), moral law and jural law. But all of these historically given notions of natural law are reckoned with in the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea (PCI). This summative statement may explain to some extent why the heritage of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven is most often called the Philosophy of the Cosmomic Idea (PCI).

¹⁵⁵ pp. 16-32. Goudzwaard. 1979. op. cit.

¹⁵⁶ Compare the selection from this body of literature as in Lawson JN 1991. *Mesopotamian Precursors to the Stoic Concept of Logos*.

The previous two sections on König (evangelical-Reformed) and Munroe (evangelical-Dominionist) had the function of showing the importance both of creation (König) and of the law for creation (Munroe) by outsiders not at all engaging with the philosophical concerns raised by a philosopher like Dooyeweerd. What we find in Dooyeweerd and that apparently is fairly unique is an attempt to consciously search for the detailed ways in which the created law functions and also an attempt to formulate the profile of this created law as a differentiated construct showing an integrated multiplicity. Inside the reformed circles Kuyper, Vollenhoven and Stoker all contributed but the Dooyeweerd contribution on this question is certainly the most comprehensive up to date, regularly updated by the efforts of Danie Strauss and others.

But both the scope and the abundant detail provided in the Dooyeweerd attempt are also what allowed us to see the places where the seams of his suit were not well-stitched. The issues that I want to address here relate to only two problematic instances of how Dooyeweerd maintains both a distinction and a correlation between the factual states of affairs and the law side of reality. This correlation is often prone to misunderstanding. The correlation is evidenced by a limited structuring i.e by a very soft pull on the development of the features of things, processes and traditions; it is a somewhat directing and a somewhat resistant force that acts firstly on the insight and understanding of humans as they create relationships and artifacts of many kinds. So for instance the presence of the law side can be felt to guide even criminalist governing regimes to recognize the stately task of public order and of public justice. Plato is reported to discuss that a band of robbers will still recognize the need for internal order (justice) amongst themselves – not stealing from each other, at least that is if they want to stay together as an effective band of robbers without factions. So it is important to realize that the notion of “subject” on the factual side as used here does not imply any sufficient compliance.¹⁵⁷ It simply means that events, entities and processes are under the “jurisdiction” of the elements of the law side. It is also important for understanding the Dooyeweerd legacy to realize that without the presence of an agent (entity) like a planet or a human being nothing could happen on the subject (factual) side of reality. The endless possibilities that the cosmic laws allow for will never be realized in the absence of actions by the entities. Later on it will become clearer that there are some remaining fatalist / determinist elements left inside many Christian heritages and which is one of the serious problems not yet sufficiently addressed inside the circles of the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea and also not in the much wider Calvinian theology. This part of our

¹⁵⁷ pp. 111-115. Strauss DFM. 2006. *Reintegrating Social Theory*

heritage is also very relevant for the last chapter of this book. My approach is to appreciate and defend the heritage of Dooyeweerd even while I discuss here two instances where I think his work leaves much to be improved.

Facing this problematic heritage it occurred to me as justified to ask the following two questions about the relationship between the factual side and the law side of reality: Does the correlation that Dooyeweerd claims to exist between these two very fundamental sides of created reality indeed allow for sufficient and real freedom of play for the entities which are active on the factual side? The second important question to be considered here is whether this correlation implies that the well-evidenced corruptibility on the factual side of reality is also found on the law side? These two questions are connected to parts of the discussions that Dooyeweerd conducted with Johan Lever (1959) and with CA van Peursen (1960). These discussions followed in the wake of the publication of his magnum opus, *A new critique of theoretical thought* (1955). The problem of the factual development of entities (the first question) and the preservation and reliability of the law side (the second) is as relevant and in my view as poorly resolved as they were almost sixty years ago.

In order to contextualise these two questions it may be helpful to start at a certain viewpoint that I believe represents the most summative structural perspective on the Dooyeweerd heritage. That perspective I believe is found in the so-called dimensions of reality where, according to Dooyeweerd, the cosmic law for the existence of everything would apply in different ways. While Dooyeweerd is mostly known for his theory on modal aspects, his theory of modal aspects as a coherent cluster is only but one of the dimensions of his ontology. He works mostly with four such dimensions. These four main dimensions¹⁵⁸ – to which I obviously provide my own interpretation – are the following:

- The time dimension: This is not limited to clock and calendar time but rather is expressing the first and most comprehensive enabling dimension of all of created reality.
- The modal aspects dimension: This cluster can be used to show the truly universal but differentiated structuring features of all of reality.
- The entity dimension: This shows the articulated presence of active agents and processes. The type laws applying here have a much more limited application than is the case with the laws in the modal aspects. (Humankind is the most comprehensive entity i.e. being active in all sides of reality. God on the other hand, since he/she is uncreated and hence predating all dimensions, is not at all viewed as an entity.)

¹⁵⁸ p.462 Strauss 2009.

- The religious dimension: This dimension addresses the question of the final grounding of all that exists, as it is sensed in a conscious way by humans only. In the Dooyeweerd texts this dimension is the most foundational dimension in communal affairs. This dimension which shows a built-in directional drive is much more than what is found in church-and-faith. It is an intense religious attachment running far ahead of both church and ritual confessions and also lies much deeper than any ritual that we may devise or conceive of. It produces a worldview platform even for the so-called atheists who all proclaim alternative “dependency arrangements” (Clouser). Amongst many supporters of the Dooyeweerd-Vollenhoven heritage this dimension is often incorrectly presented as equal to the modal faith function and the church-like activities.

I believe that any presentation of the Dooyeweerd thinking that does not respond to at least these four dimensions, together with the distinction between the law side and the subject side of created reality, cannot give any reliable and comprehensive overview of his contributions.

Tendencies have been noted in the history of science which give preferred attention to either the law side or the factual side. This resulted in a swing between essence and existence. There is another tendency namely to prefer one of the dimensions as a way to look at reality. Famous is the preference given for either entities or for modal functions as the focal point of a science. This resulted in the philosophical battle between essentialism and functionalism.¹⁵⁹ Strauss, with references¹⁶⁰ to the findings of various subject specialists, argued that the universal modal aspects or cosmic functions cannot theoretically produce the entities or otherwise make them necessary. The Dooyeweerd approach of multiplicity and non-reductionism (Clouser) simply signals that in the case of these conceptual oppositions mentioned above there is no need to reduce one of the poles to the other: Both the law side and the factual side are important. The one should not be viewed as the embodiment of the good and the other as bad or inferior; the one is not more basic than the other. This view of the PCI could at face value be faulted for a middle-of-the road position, but the serious students in this legacy usually are not like that, as a review of their contributions would show.

These dimensions do not represent separate realities. They are dimensions of the same universe and in their multiplicity they need to be honoured as simultaneous points of

¹⁵⁹ pp. 395. Strauss 2009. He refers amongst others to Ernst Cassirer. On p.79 Strauss also acknowledges the contribution of positivism in studying the ordered behaviour of entities on the factual side. On the acknowledgement of entities Strauss engages extensively and over many years with Stafleu whom he finds being overly careful for referring to the “thingness of things”. See pp. 456-460.

¹⁶⁰ pp. 79-80; 417; 421. op.cit.

departure in all thinking and other actions. As in the summative table below, each of these dimensions displays a separate angle on the law side as well as on the subject (factual) side:

TIME		Modal aspects	Entity and Process (Agent)	Central Religious
	Law Side (Non-historical Structure)	Aspectual laws (various and truly universal)	Type laws (There are many. They have a restricted application. They indicate the structuring of distinguishable classes of entities and processes)	Image of God (The Christ as human structure type ¹⁶¹ on the law side)
	Factual Side ¹⁶² (Facts: their quality and direction)	<i>The factual side of reality shows how everything is contextualised both in time and in the modal aspects. Secondly it shows things recognisable as a certain kind of event or entity: Animal, plant and minerals are internally structured by entity laws even as there is incredibly much variety on the factual side. These entities show a certain minimum compliance to the modal and to the type laws. However the level and shape of compliance may vary. Such variances have to do with, amongst others, the environmental factors and with the quality of compliance. In the case of human society they also have to do with the spiritual direction of the practices and processes that are used as well as with entity development (sustainable and unsustainable) both in the natural time span and in human cultural history.</i>		

The free play that one finds on the factual side of reality is crucial to account for as it supports the possibility of natural change and development over time. It is clearly also about cultural development, often referred to as “history”. The need for finding the causes of variety will be pursued further and in chapter three my understanding of how conditioned this freedom is will be provided in the final chapter.

The history of human society is discussed extensively by both Dooyeweerd and Strauss. They explain how societies developed in the course of history from an undifferentiated to a differentiated position. In earlier times a particular societal life form has dominated society and binding it into a whole. The extended family, the state and the church has each at different stages in the history of certain communities succeeded in capturing – often in draconian manner - an entire society towards promoting its own interests at the expense of the interests and general freedom of other entities like businesses. In a truly free society these three and many other forms of societal organisation are seen to stand differentiated,

¹⁶¹ Compassionate wisdom implies a necessary directing of all cosmic multiplicity in concentric fashion towards its assumed origin; infusing all multiplicity in its coherence with relative (dependent) meaningfulness. The lawside in the religious dimension is given a unique understanding by Hooker that the image of God, the Wisdom/ Christ who in Colossians 3:10; 1:16,20 is “the pattern according to which Adam was created and to which men and women ... are now being restored” so that there can be talk of “Christ *in you*” (Col 1:27). p. 125. “Where is Wisdom to be found (1) – Col 1:15-20” in Ford DF and Stanton G. 2003.

¹⁶² See the following proposed redefinitions in section 1.4 of (i) the famous pair: nature-grace as well as of (ii) the concept of incarnation. These redefinitions of this heritage follow the lines of law side and factual side.

that is co-equally “independent” from each other and next to each other. However such independence is never absolute and assumes the mutual and interdependently-integrated relationships between each other and it also requires a common spiritual respect for the freedoms and responsibilities ¹⁶³ that enable some openness in a society in the first place. But even as Dooyeweerd cherishes such a differentiated, integrated and co-equal differentiation in his study of human history and communities there are two themes in his work which in my view may be rated as underdeveloped.

Below follows a discussion of the first of the two already announced questions about the law side of reality which will consume the remainder of this section. The Dooyeweerdian view, in my estimation, seriously needs to grow its systematics on the reckoning of change, development and uniqueness. This approach has to grow from the dispersed set of asides and remote corners that it currently inhabits in this philosophy, towards a point where it makes freedom, chance creativity and development a more prominent and positive part of its general scope, narrative and instrumentation.¹⁶⁴

How closely could we expect to be guided by the type laws for entities?

The basic set of challenges

Type laws will be considered in this section firstly from an overview perspective on the science of biology but afterwards also from the perspective of organisational science. The formulation of the type laws for entities as provided by Dooyeweerd and as they are also presented by many teachers along the way, often appear to be overly specific and this poses a problem for appreciating change over time and that is what I will attempt to profile here. The challenge, in my interpretations, is how deep into the orderliness of an entity should the changes that are attributed to historical and environmental and environmental factors be understood to have an effect. There are even claims that the type law side itself can change. The understanding of change by Westerners over the last 200 years was dominated by the serious dedication to the idea of progress and in a subsidiary sense also to what is usually

¹⁶³ pp. 245-260. Strauss 2006.

¹⁶⁴ Both Stafleu and Klapwijk have each pushed for the development of this underdeveloped sector in the PCI. It is surely to be found that their work will be linkable to that of emergentism more than a century ago and also to the vitalism of the associated view by Teilhard de Chardin which is particularly popular amongst Christian theologians, also with JJF Durand in South Africa. But Stafleu says: “This emergence of *properties* should be carefully distinguished from the emergence of *characters* constituting evolution.” (±p. 26, 2017 op. cit.). This distinction is linked to the (law side) “order for” entities .and the “order of” (factual side).

called evolution / evolutionism.¹⁶⁵ And how does such evolution relate to certain constancies in reality, specifically when we take a view from some instances in the fields of biology, sociology and historiography?

It is a contentious issue and many Christians make serious if different claims. In the debates that developed in some communities many things are ascribed to the opposing side. Hence for an initial survey we first need to ask if there is any justification for claiming that Dooyeweerd and Strauss (who tends to follow Dooyeweerd where most other sympathisers do not) have no appreciation at all for the realities emphasised by the Darwinian and neo-Darwinian trends in the academic world. These realities or “change imperatives” are often labelled as an Umwelt of systemic effects and could safely be summarised as follows:

- Geophysical (climatic pressures and limited food sources).
- Competition between different species or different subspecies populations for the same food source or living space.
- The pressure exerted by all forms of predators and parasites.

In concert with these change imperatives are the random varieties that result mostly from genetic variety as per subpopulation. A particular subpopulation with their shared differentiating morphological or other features may then be favoured by the three change imperatives above that effectively act as selection / weeding factors by favouring the survival of those specimens or sub populations most fit for successfully living under the change imperatives - the theory says.

This set of conditions that, from a survival point of view, require adaptation is never denied and Dooyeweerd uses the concept of adaptation as an outcome positively - See *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (NCTT) for societal adaptation and in animals and plants.¹⁶⁶ Dooyeweerd distinguishes between what he called radical types (ultimate genera), genotypes (primary types and subtypes) and pheno types (variability types) as in the table that follows. This last category seems to include cultivars and breeds. He even seems to include

¹⁶⁵ A limitation in the English language and especially in the debates in Northern America is that it does not differentiate between *evolution* and *evolutionism* which creates an advantage to those promoting development and change as an unlimited possibility.

¹⁶⁶ Dooyeweerd H. 1984. *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* Vol 3. See p. 586 for market adaptation and p. 778 in animals and plants. Strauss DFM. 2009. *Philosophy: Discipline of Disciplines*: He recognizes adaptation positively (pp. 179; 233; 357) and a resultant difference between phenotype and genotype (p.349) in the biotic worlds. Adaptation, differentiation and integration also find recognition in societal environments (p.529.) Strauss further gives an overview of the literature on the mutual interaction between mutation and natural selection in the plant and animal world and also confirms the strong conservational (stabilizing) outcome of natural selection (pp. 469-487).

molecules in this last category, which in an era of sophisticated chemical and genetic engineering is possibly not that far-fetched even as molecules are also an extensive given in “pristine” nature and secondly all molecular combinations follow a fairly common set of strict rules. By allowing for sub-types inside the genotypes means that Dooyeweerd ends up with at least four taxonomic levels above that of the individual specimen selected for a particular investigation. This is crucial in the communication with specialist participants in the biological sciences. Going there he gives the following very important view about any particular phenotype:

“ its subjective identity cannot be guaranteed by any of its modal functions, not even by its radical function in its ultimate a-typical individuality.”¹⁶⁷

Any presentation of the Dooyeweerdian position would have to admit that this statement clearly allows for the effect of “coincidental” and “random” but extended environmental conditions which may contribute to at least some unique morphological changes in any species or subspecies. Clearly then such changes goes well beyond the genetically programmed life-cycle whereby living entities move through the regular biotic phases of birth, maturity and death.

Radical type ¹ (ultimate genera)	Genotype (Primary type)	Geno sub-types	Phenotype (variability types)
Physical-chemical			
Biotic (vegetative)			
Psychic (animal)			
Human Societal entity types ² .			
1. The concept of phyla is apparently the highest ordering types recognized by Dooyeweerd In terms of the “mainstream” taxonomy that is very high – about seven (main) levels above that of a given specimen selected for study. He also used “kingdom” as an alternative for radical type.			
2. Dooyeweerd argues that humankind is not a type since it is not modally specialized as are the physical, plant and animal types. However the human societal structures like state, church, family business etc are specialized. He calls these “Radical types of a secondary order” (NCTT 1984, vol. 3 pp. 89-90). More detail will follow in this subsection.			

The Dooyeweerd discussion ¹⁶⁸ of a publication by J Lever

J Lever was a biologist at the Free University of Amsterdam. Dooyeweerd welcomed the fact that Lever made a sharp distinction between creation (of time) and the process of becoming (“wordingsproces”) inside the order of time (p.114,118). According to Dooyeweerd only creation could be said to be completed (time, modalities and type structures) but this could never be said of the process of becoming (p.115). I find it interesting that Dooyeweerd in this context does not phrase this distinction in his own terms namely that creation by God was completed on the law side (structural side) but not on the factual side.

¹⁶⁷ p.97 Dooyeweerd. op.cit. Volume 3.

¹⁶⁸ Dooyeweerd H. 1959. *Schepping en evolutie*

Dooyeweerd fully recognises that plants and animals in the different taxonomic classes appeared in succession over time in the fossil record and hence we could conclude that these did not all appear at once (p.127). He recognised that the kinds of organisms as realised over time and as preserved in the fossil record over time shows an increasing differentiation and complexity. He also has no problem with accepting the timespans provided by the geologists and palaeontologists (pp.149-151).

Dooyeweerd warns against making concessions to the evolutionistic view (p.131) but the phrasing used could in my view have been articulated better. It seems correct to fault Lever for saying that the Bible only reveals *that* God created but the *how* would be revealed by the special sciences (pp.130-132). In my view it may be better to say that the special sciences could only reveal the succession of how the different taxonomical classes appear and how they were integrated into their environments. They could also tell us about the complexity levels of their body plans and what limitations and opportunities their functions enabled.

Dooyeweerd confirms that he views the “phyla” as the highest ordering types inside the radical types of the plant and animal kingdoms (p.141;142)¹⁶⁹. These ordering types themselves are givens and so they are not living entities and hence the origin of the features ascribed to the ordering types can also not be explained. Importantly Dooyeweerd also states that the structural types should not be identified with the Linnaean system (pp.142;146;147). However it is not clear enough in this communication if Dooyeweerd views the notion of phyla as the type laws. Sometimes the type laws seem to be located at a lower level. The problem is that while Dooyeweerd (and also Lever and Strauss) do not want to take the Ray-Linnaean taxonomic levels too seriously, one can in the face of the widely differentiated nature and levels of features displayed by specimens go forward without some form of classification, also when attempting to communicate inside the philosophy of biological science. And maybe it is for this reason that Klapwijk fifty years later challenged Dooyeweerd that he locates (in Linnaean-speak) the type law at the level of species.

With Lever then Dooyeweerd agrees that in some cases from the perspective of a skeleton (body plan) one could not say whether the found remains of a specimen were of a humanlike ape or fully human (p. 153). However he justifiably remains cautious on the hypothesis that human beings could have been the result of a set of transformed animal substructures. Dooyeweerd argues from his systematics and analysis which says that a human being is undivided in the sense that the enkaptically bounded substructures (chemical; vegetative;

¹⁶⁹ p.xv Strauss D 2011. “Foreword by the general editor” in Dooyeweerd H. 2011. Philosophy of Nature and Philosophical Anthropology (Collected Works).

animalist) are qualified by the super-structural act structure which in turn stands very close to the religiously directed spiritual heart of humankind. In this context he argues as follows:

“Its realization in the body of the first humans to appear on earth cannot possibly be explained from a structural transformation of animal hereditary factors (“erfmassa”), which, along with selection and isolation, might lead at most to the realization of a new animal species-type (although it turned out that this possibility cannot be verified scientifically).”¹⁷⁰

Here again we see Dooyeweerd playing for his home ground supporters and this suppresses any tolerance for even speculation with integrity. In addition I believe he is also using his justified critique of “psycho-creationism” in an inappropriate way in this case. Let me explain my view by first giving a set of summative statements:

- It is relatively easy as a Christian to support the view that all modal aspects and the building blocks for entity-structural purposes were created at once and complete at on the law side. But it appears that many understand this statement almost in deistic fashion except that they do not necessarily view that law side as essentially being mechanistically only.
- Dooyeweerd takes on an agnostic pose (“docta ignorantia”, p.156) on the question of Gods intervention on the subject side. While justified, by taking our own ignorance too seriously we shall neuter the radically-reformed view for creativity, hypothesis-formulation and experimentation. And who will be interested in such a dead fig tree? And is this not just what the young Lever realised and made him turn away in the end?
- Dooyeweerd (and Strauss) accepted the fact that all living things appeared successively in the fossil record and with increasing complexity. Dooyeweerd here as well says that we don’t know how it came about. That is indeed so but, for one thing we know that it is simply good household management to ensure that there is enough plant material (biomass) to sustain the grasses and so on before you create them – as any able farm manager would say.

This blinkered view of Dooyeweerd (docta ignorantia) is in need of a very serious re-specification, which I will attempt to recast as follows:

¹⁷⁰ p.153. Dooyeweerd 1959. (Draft translation by H van Dyke. I inserted the original Dutch “erfmassa”)

- I think we will be untrue to the Biblical narrative and indeed position ourselves more as deists than as Judaeo-Christians if we deny God's strategic interventions on the subject side. We know that God created not only laws (i.e. according to, I believe, the valid interpretation by the PCI) but he also created things on the factual side, i.e. subjected to these laws. The creation of "tame" animals as in the Genesis narrative is to be rejected as a sincerely wrong view – humankind did the domestication. Even as we take the creational narrative seriously we should not be blind to the cultural and perspectival limitations at the time of writing.
- It is clear that God's creation on the subject (factual) side was much slower to finish than his involvement on the law side. And creation (crafting) by God on the subject side happened inside the order of time just as much as his revelations to the Jews, the Christians, Pentecost and so forth was also inside time. We should not be intimidated by Dooyeweerd's reference to treating God like a Greek demiurge. I am talking subject side here, to state the obvious. Hence while God created the law side into time order, the seeding (not populating) on the factual side happened along in the flow of time. Dooyeweerd is simply seriously incomplete in this respect.
- The individualist interpretation of Psalm 139 is sometimes used to support psycho-creationism: I agree with Dooyeweerd on rejecting of psycho-creationism according to which every single soul is created separately by God as time goes by. Instead it should be modified as follows:
 - God seeded some early form of human beings once and from there on we bred and multiplied eventually just like any other herd of mammals. But as the law side for the act structure made itself felt this population diverged slowly but strongly from the species that donated our three enkaptic substructures.
 - There is no reason whatsoever to deny that as God seeded creation with other once-off entities, he could also have used a more apish homonid only once to create the first herd of humans – much like the Eve-from-Adam job. Hence indeed: Psycho-creation, yes but only that once: thereafter some morphological and functional evolution would have followed. This obviously is a limited recognition of divine crafting not too distant from all of psycho-creationism, intelligent design and even as they may protest - punctuated "evolution".

Dooyeweerd, with a number of references distinguish between systematic biology (facts) and phylogenetics which is about the interpretation. The above then is my "phylogenesis" – speculative in principle but possibly in a more Dooyeweerdian style than other previous attempts. And maybe I also achieved some recognition for Lever.

Change-supportive structures in the Dooyeweerd legacy

The Dooyeweerd legacy contains a number of other distinctions that on a much wider scale allow for and invite flexibility and plasticity. The following may be viewed as a core list of the main nomic supports, promoted by both Dooyeweerd and Strauss, and which are essential for achieving all adaptation, macro-development and creativity, making these not alien but indigenous concepts inside this philosophy:

- a. The presentation of the difference between and the occurrence of a non-mechanistic correlation between the law side and subject (factual) side. Per definition this difference implies much conditioned freedom of movement, development and growth on the factual side.
- b. The observation of regular dynamics and growth on the factual side also has normative correlatives on the law side. As such the law-side enables both the events and our understanding of what we see. The factual side, it is implied very clearly, does not have a monopoly on dynamics. In addition the very notion of dynamics is normed in every situation: It can support living but if not well-managed it could also destroy life forms. The fact is that the law-side as promoted by Dooyeweerd contains normative measures not only for static states (e.g. the kinematic aspect that norms, in the case of entities, either a fixed position or moving at the same tempo – e.g. planetary motion) but also for a physical aspect (that describes the energy-operation that in the case of entities may, besides many other possible changes, also result in a change of direction or of the tempo of movement, plasticity in form etc.). This elementary position should in principle disqualify any premature findings that the Dooyeweerd approach is neo-platonically biased towards rigidity (conservatism).¹⁷¹
- c. The well-established pairs of concepts of differentiation and integration and also that of regress and progress are firstly what are called biotic clusters of designators. These concepts as well are also not just concepts, they are profiling the designators of real life instances and they signify the norms on the law-side as well. Indeed they are used in the formulation of evolutionistic scenarios, but they are also leading notions in the Dooyeweerdian understanding of the universe.

¹⁷¹ The situation could be articulated historically more focused as follows: The physical aspect was introduced, separately from the kinematic aspect, into the battery of modal aspects only during the 1950s. Two questions here could make sense: (i) Are the critics of Dooyeweerd still overly fixed on his earlier position? and (ii) Has Dooyeweerd himself successfully and sufficiently adapted his own understanding and habit of presentation inside every corner of his own body of literature to this later addition?

- d. The enklaptic bonding type options (e.g. the non-living matter what is selected as nesting materials by a variety of animals) is a very powerful but normed real-world reality that shows how there are a number of combinational options available to living entities and this in itself is also supportive of adaptation. These concepts are quite prominent in the Dooyeweerdian theory even if I am not convinced that the resultant individuality is sufficiently recognized.
- e. Are plants and animals only treated as objects or do they also initiate activities? This apparently simple question is directed at a specific tendency in natural science. Strauss illustrated this further by his discussion of a tick-study done by Jakob von Uexküll and uses this quote from Portman:

“Whereas the science of ethology and physiology treat living organisms as ‘objects’, the ‘Umweltforschung’ (*Umwelt* research) of Jakob von Uexküll focuses on animals as *subjects*.”¹⁷²

The subjectivity (here meant as initiative as opposed to passivity) of the non-human world in scientific studies is in principle recognized by the subject-object relationship in the Dooyeweerd system. The activity-rich nature of biological entities is stressed.¹⁷³ This sounds better than it is but at this stage I will simply highlight the extent of subjectivity, understood as activity versus passivity:

- A planet by superior gravity plucks a wandering comet or other drifting matter from the interplanetary space.
 - Plants absorb various minerals for growth and the type of mineral may even influence some of its features.
 - Animals establish and maintain pecking orders in herd-behaviour, teach their young to become masters of their current territories, etcetera.
- f. Finally the opening-up or unlocking process (disclosure) in the Dooyeweerd philosophy of culture is also a dynamic development process that is normed. However this development figure is more about the quality of participation ¹⁷⁴ of either a process or

¹⁷² p. 351 Strauss 2009.

¹⁷³ p.357 Strauss 2009. “Although biologists tend to speak of *adaptation* – as if the environment fully determines what happens to biotical subjects – the guiding and qualifying *biotic activities* involved should be kept in mind, for otherwise one may lose sight of the fact that the organic function of living entities is not merely dependent upon environmental conditions – the legitimate side of the meaning of ‘adaptation’ – for this biotic function plays an active and guiding role in respect of the inorganic surroundings of living entities.”

¹⁷⁴ It is sometimes claimed that the disclosure process also “happens” on the law-side (Dooyeweerd op.cit Vol 2: p336; also Strauss 2009 pp. 461-462). I believe a moment’s reflection will reveal the untenability of this idea. The law side by definition contains no subject, it only norms the subjects

of an entity in a particular modal aspect. For Dooyeweerd it is not about changing the category or the type of the entity or of an event/ process.

Change versus constancy and uniqueness versus coherence

The balancing dance in a theory of development is to recognize the validity of the separate elements inside a system that often contrasts uniqueness with various levels of coherence and also contrasts constancy with the ability to undergo change. Uniqueness is theoretically often the onset of a subclass that is tailored by specific circumstances. Yet when is that uniqueness so rampant that the set of entities with a particular uniqueness loses its coherence with the class where it originally was associated with? Strauss provided an interesting perspective on such challenging questions from the perspective of the first four modal aspects of reality (number, space, movement and energy exchange) as provided by Dooyeweerd (but also to some extent by Kant and Pascal):

“If we expand this perspective on identity and explore statements in which the core meaning of the first four aspects of reality is stretched beyond the limits of these aspects, it will be possible to articulate the four most basic concept-transcending statements that philosophy can formulate about the universe.

- (i) Exploring the meaning of the numerical aspect in a concept-transcending way provides a foundation for the statement that *everything is unique*.
- (ii) Stretching the meaning of space beyond its boundaries leads to the statement that *everything coheres with everything else*.
- (iii) An idea use of the kinematic aspect underlies the statement that *everything remains identical to itself*.

and what they do or produce on the factual side. Secondly there is no need to disclose anything on the law-side since: a) it contains nothing to be opened up; b) The nature of the law-side is so comprehensive and flexible that it can norm (contain) anything that happens on the factual side of reality – laws by definition are like this (Also compare p.30. Stafleu 2017). And for the record: The subject side itself as well also cannot be opened up. It is only what it contains that could be opened-up (disclosed): Entities, processes and humanely constructed criteria; artifacts and relationships. Etcetera. The lawside and the subject side are both “cosmic spaces”, not entities. In addition it should be noted that the Dooyeweerd notion of a law side, even in the case of type laws should not be treated in a neo-platonic fashion. This means simply that I reject the notion that anything that happens in the factual side was “firstly in the mind of God” – so-to-speak: The lawside is not the clearinghouse for registered cosmic patents. If it was indeed presented like that it would be exactly the kind of micromanagement that is severely questioned in chapter 3. By contrast it simply belongs to the nature of a law that it covers even previously unknown events and entities or unique entities or known entities with unique features. Physical laws did not change with the advent of computer science and interplanetary space travel.

(iv) Finally, the physical intuition of change may be stretched beyond its boundaries, yielding the claim that *everything changes*.¹⁷⁵

Using such a multi-pronged platform for departure, Strauss argues how this set of statements is not self-contradicting. And this is the freedom provided for by a non-reductionist approach. This perspective is also the platform from which to approach the question on the question of constancy.

Constancy supportive nomic structures in the Dooyeweerd legacy

So up to now I have presented the “evolution-friendly” and the “evolution-neutral” side of the Dooyeweerd philosophy. However Dooyeweerd also said that the environmental conditions that produce much variability amongst life forms could not touch the basic structure of the entity:

“In each of these types the organic forms are never a mechanical result of adaptation to the milieu, but always co-determined by the structural geno-types of the living beings concerned.”¹⁷⁶

Dooyeweerd says in effect then that there is a morphological transaction between one entity or process and several others in the Umwelt where it is found. Such resultant morphological changes that are reported are in fact the signs of integration and often also show how successful the integration of a species happened over time¹⁷⁷ with one or more other factors or entities which are found in its immediate environment. But even as we can find much common ground here between Dooyeweerd and modern natural biological science, a challenging if somewhat but not entirely trivial question for the cutodians of the legacy to answer is this: Which one or more of the many levels in the mainstream taxonomy would he select as a position for the location of these structural type-laws? Is it at the level of the geno-type (atoms and, in the animal realm: “mammal, bird, fish, coelenterat, mollusc, insect”) or does he claim to find it in the geno-subtype¹⁷⁸ (insect: “oleopteron, neuropteron,

¹⁷⁵ p.455. Strauss 2009. op. cit.

¹⁷⁶ p. 778. Dooyeweerd op. cit. vol 3.

¹⁷⁷ Just for the sake of the record for readers not familiar with the text bodies it is repeated: Even as Dooyeweerd and Strauss question the use of timeframes in the evolutionist arguments, they were never supportive of the so-called “young earth” proponents. Hence the timescales of geology and paleontology are not viewed by them as any threat to their argued positions.

¹⁷⁸ These examples in brackets are the ones mentioned by Dooyeweerd in *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. It is clear from both this work and from his other work (*Philosophy Of Nature And Philosophical Anthropology* (Collective work)) that he had spent much time to work on the foundations of natural sciences, including that of biology.

dipteron”). Or both? In the previous reference it seems to be located rather at the level of the “geno-type”.¹⁷⁹ And are these taxonomic levels about “order for” or “order of”?

If we take a step back and look at other parts of the Dooyeweerdian theory of entities and processes, we see that it is by comparison relatively easy to state the participation, active or passive of all entities in the dimension of modal law spheres as mentioned in the table of dimensions at the beginning of this section – it simply

means that every entity has a presence in all modal spheres, either passively or actively: participation in the modalities of number, size, economics and others are obvious. But inside the dimension of the type laws everything is not that easy to explain. Only the first part of the theory on entities is easy to maintain. That is the theory of enkaptic structures which was mentioned earlier on. Enkaptic theory simply recognises that every living being has a physical-chemical substructure, e.g. the water or chemicals which themselves are not living even as they are essential to life. This part of the Dooyeweerdian theory simply attempts to capture a truly generic condition and will just like the modal aspectual laws, apparently apply to all living entities, irrespective of the species irrespective whether plant, animal or for that matter, humans. But the second part of the Dooyeweerdian entity theory refers to the consistent type lines which we find beyond the modal or enkaptic realities. Here it is often mentioned that the fossil record sees much evidence of the abrupt appearance of species without simpler forerunners and then they disappear unchanged after tens of millions of years. What are Dooyeweerd and especially Strauss saying with this? Firstly I believe they are not denying changes, they are simply saying that constancy in species is at least as real as is change.¹⁸⁰ That view is also evident from previous references

Taxonomic Levels	
<i>Mainstream</i>	<i>Dooyeweerd</i>
Domain	
Kingdom	Radical type
Phylum	Genotype
Class	
Order	
Family	
Genus	Geno sub-types
Species	
Subspecies	Phenotype
Specimen	Specimen

¹⁷⁹ While Klapwijk claims that Dooyeweerd locates the structural type law at the level of “species” Strauss finds to the contrary that he locates it at the level of the “phyla”. That makes a huge difference. In the “mainstream” taxonomy there are about four levels in-between. See p. xv. Strauss DFM. 2011. “Foreword by the Editor” In Dooyeweerd H 2011. *Philosophy Of Nature And Philosophical Anthropology*.

Note: In this collection frequent reference is made to “kingdom” but none at all to phyla, class, order and family. Some references are made to “genus” (genotype) and of course many to “species”. Strauss says there is a type law for mammals and that a type law only holds for a “limited class of entities”. He also states the obvious namely that “mammal” is not itself a living animal.

Note: Mammalia is one of several classes inside the phylum chordata. Class Mammalia contains thousands of species.

¹⁸⁰ Strauss will go further and say that inside the paleontologically recorded fossil records the stasis is the dominant rule by far. And for this he refers to publications by Gould. (SJ Gould 2002. *The*

to motion and energy. But it is not at all clear if they mean that this constancy is the result of a species-specific design pattern given since the dawn of creation. And this is the Achilles heel of the PCI theory of entities. The reason is that the uniqueness of a specimen is an assumed starting point for the occurrence of variation and, the evolutionist perspective will claim, the evolution of a new sub-species. Not ignoring many valuable arguments made by Dooyeweerd and Strauss, there is not yet enough common ground between them and the opposing views.

As was pointed out the uniqueness of a specimen (or to be more realistic, a class of specimens) is to a large extent the theoretical possibility for the onset for a sub-class. Uniqueness is also considered by Strauss.¹⁸¹ He approaches the question of the uniqueness with an extensively belaboured built-up. And we should hurry to add that there are good reasons for making such a prolonged build-up. There are many pitfalls in the playing of the polarities in universalism-atomism; rationalism-irrationalism/ nominalism etc. Strauss hones a believable survey of all the dangers involved.

He also surveys the systematic concerns: Firstly he contrasts the kind of universality inside two different dimensions. The *specificied universality of (the dimension of) type laws* stands differentiated from the truly universal nature of (the dimension of) modal laws (PDD p.417). And then he points out that universality and individuality are not poles on the same continuum. But as soon as the typicality of things is acknowledged, the unspecified universal meaning of the modal aspects acquire a *typical specification*, for in this case the *effect* of specific *type laws* result in unique ways in which an entity participates in the modal aspects themselves (PDD p.416). But the basis for the specificity of a type of entity is found in its being co-conditioned by the numerical modal aspect (PDD p.440). This further entails that modal specificity is a technical term that in the same discussion cannot be replaced by the term individualised (PDD p.451).

Then secondly he explains again that “The awareness of being distinct presupposes the discrete meaning of the numerical aspect, co-conditioning the nature of individuality (and our reflection on what is individual)”. (PDD p.612). Every concretely existing entity displays an individual side (this entity) (PDD pp. 67;440). This (individual) atom is an atom (universal)

Structure of Evolutionary Theory.) The well-known position of Gould on “punctuated evolution” runs as a counteraction to this embarrassment for classical Darwinism. In this publication Gould repeatedly returns to this fact. See the numerous instances in that publication where he discussed features and challenges in the concept for the facts of “stasis”.

¹⁸¹ p.453 Strauss 2009. On p. 455 the foundation of uniqueness in terms of the numerical aspect is repeated: See a more comprehensive context pp.449-457.

(PDD pp. 374; 400) which entails the use of numerical notions but, very importantly, such numerically related notions transcend the conceptually understood numerical function of such an entity. (PDD pp. 439). He says: “In our discussion of concept-transcending knowledge, references to the *individuality*, *uniqueness*, and *being distinct* of entities ...turned out to be instances of an idea use of modal arithmetical terms.” (PDD pp.430). So it is not simply about numbers or having a number: The simplest example of how the modal function is specified by an individual entity therefore is according to its concrete individual side, is that this (one) chair is not that (other) chair (PDD p.453). (Note: This refers to discrete quantity which is rated as the core of the numeral modal aspect).

Coming round this carefully constructed mountain of concerns Strauss says: Yet, as soon as it is “required to give a theoretical account of the individuality of an entity, two perspectives ought to be kept in mind:

- (i) the individual side of an entity transcends concept formation, and
- (ii) the universal side of an entity (its being this or that, i.e. its orderliness) points beyond itself to the universal order for its existence. In other words, there is no individuality without typicality – and the latter always reflects the type law to which entities are subjected.” (PDD p.462)

While all the aforesaid is good and well, we now have to ask: The table has been laid, the speeches have been made, the guests are there, the music plays but where is the food? How will all of these valid explanations assist us in dealing with the uniqueness of a selected specimen? We are not sure. Then there are instances where Strauss seems to evade the challenge of giving a fuller description and appreciation of the “individual side of an entity”. So for instance we found the following statements:

- “Consequently, the concept-transcending idea of *uniqueness* (individuality) ultimately rests upon *numerical terms* in service of an approximating and referring mode of thought – transcending the limits of normal concept formation.” (PDD p.195)
- “Concepts are blind to the unique, contingent and individual – yet it cannot be denied that we do have knowledge of what is unique, contingent and individual.” (PDD p.176).

There are a number of issues here that could be pursued regarding the usefulness of PCI for the disciplines. Strauss acknowledges our knowledge of the specimen uniqueness, yet he seems, even with the application of his concept of concept-transcending (idea) knowledge to not in fact get beyond the numerical. We have to continue asking: Is there then no

recognition of historical and cultural factors contributing to the uniqueness of a specimen? What about museums certifying rare artefacts¹⁸² as being genuine?: It is on this chair that Lincoln sat when he was assassinated? It seems that the museums know what they are doing. How about the work in the subdiscipline of forensics? Is he thereby denying all artists their hard work groping at what is perhaps misleadingly labelled as the “ineffable”? Is he denying natural scientists their hard work in describing the life patterns of very local populations of plants and animals? So for instance we know well that while to outsiders a herd of cows may all appear identical yet the person who tends them will often know them by name. A troop of baboons may all answer to the generic features of being baboon of a specific species yet only one of them will at a certain stage be the leader, at the top of the pecking order. And that position was gained and maintained by a series of skirmishes. Similar kinds of uniqueness could be multiplied as it occurs as a mix of historical incidents and given coincidences.

It seems that the PCI instrumentation in the hands of Strauss cannot account for these very important issues related to a great many subdisciplines. The following then will have to be answered sooner or later: Is Strauss with all of this saying with many in the scholastic and irrationalist traditions that the individual side of entities, the specificity of a specimen, its personalised uniqueness is unknowable and therefore we should say nothing about it?

Having nothing more to say about the specificity of the unique individuals, Strauss sticks to the numerical and it does not matter in this case whether he does so either conceptually or concept transcendingly so. What matters is that he does this in the face of a number of issues as listed above. People in general resent being known only by their citizen identity number, employee number or account number. So we have to ask: Has the notion of abstraction not been taken too far? The uniqueness of specimens that are indeed important seems not to feature at all in the frame of reference used by Strauss. Is this a Dooyeweerdian shortcoming? While Strauss acknowledges the contributions of experimental knowledge and surveys as promoted by positivistic science it does not seem to have sufficient effect in his general approach.

Fair enough, scientific study is more interested in general features, but etiology (study of causes) and ethology (study of animal behaviour) are most certainly forms of counterbalance to ensure that when the relevant features are identified for generic profiling it is also supported with a studied range of variation - the “ifs” and “buts”, the terms and conditions of

¹⁸² Compare the incident of “The statue that did not look right”. pp 2-8. Gladwell M. 2005. *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking*

so many entities, people and situations, the things that we may ignore in our search for universal features¹⁸³ but what we cannot ignore in the end since that is what makes life localised, personal, intimate and special.

Constancy and a Dooyeweerian theory of development

An important part of the Strauss contribution is on the subjectivity of animals. Strauss reviews the study of the tick (there is a large number of species) which is notoriously specialised in its hunting pattern. He seems to omit their mating and breeding patterns as well as their known adaptation to climate and insecticides? The last is well-studied by the manufacturers of parasiticide chemicals. He also refers to a study of fruit flies where no variations over many generations would develop even under manipulated laboratory conditions, mimicking extreme living conditions. These are convincing and intriguing in their own right. It is also important that an index of such studies is compiled by the critics of Neo-Darwinism or more positively, the prophets of stasis. But they provide no reason as yet why it should be viewed as sufficient reason for evading more persistent efforts towards the further explanation of uniqueness. When we come to mammals we have teaching patterns and a range of much other behaviours far beyond the tunnel view of the tick. These are pointed out not for proving that animals are equal to human beings when it comes to creativity. It is only about a responsible approach towards finding the variation in behaviour that may result in the development of a subspecies with a better chance of survival under specific conditions. It is also about creating more common ground with the mighty brigades and arsenals of Neo-Darwinism. Entering into a discourse with these is not only about setting up battle formations. It is also about the hard work for finding mutual recognition which is equally part of meaningful communication. I am afraid that much more work need to be done before the PCI philosophers can achieve a comprehensive theory of development that opens up communication with the majority of academics who are in the neo-Darwinian frame of mind.

Whether one considers the “standard” taxonomic levels or instead rather settles for the more simple Dooyeweerd layout, the challenge to the heirs of Dooyeweerd remains finding a more comprehensive theory for changeability and development in the lower regions covered by a taxonomy. As could be seen there is an awesome variety (which may or may not be evidence of evolutionis plasticity) displayed over time. One may first think of the variety of dog breeds which originates from the refined selection in wolf offspring. Many other examples will be found in agriculture. But such plasticity as is exploited by agriculture in

¹⁸³ As is well-explained on pp. 11-16 Strauss DFM. 2009. *Philosophy: The discipline of disciplines*.

breeds and cultivars is not at the same level as the variety that fascinates the promoters of the Neo-Darwinist theory of species development.¹⁸⁴ However because the bred and modified varieties are the only tested instances that are experimentally available I believe, it should be the starting point for a Dooyeweerdian (or any other) theory of change, constancy and development. This is also the area where most bio-scientists by far have their first-hand knowledge compared to the Neo-Darwinist big picture assumptions which could only rarely be tested in the day-to-day work of the great majority of regular bio-scientists.¹⁸⁵ Strauss has indicated a way in which this should be approached.¹⁸⁶ He followed some of the relevant records and discussions of the laboratory work which indicate what - under the best facilitating circumstances - the possibilities and prospects are for making mutations permanent and not futureless. It appears that a discussion on the laboratory work as a means to reveal the actual mechanisms that will enable evolutionism as fact and not as speculation, is of prime importance. One could also not help asking if the fossils that are used to prove the so-called transition phases between species, were indeed transitions or whether they were just futureless mutations and hybrids? – as we can see that often happens in the currently recorded cases of living specimens showing many examples of non-persistent variety outside of industrial maintenance.

In view of the plasticity that could be studied in the various branches of agriculture and genetic modification, the Dooyeweerdian tradition is now confronted with explaining its third challenge: Entity structure. What, if any, are the regulating principles that condition certain other persistent regularities in a species? This question is not about the modal laws, not about the enkaptic imperative and also not about the law frameworks (characters) as proposed by Stafleu. From the viewpoint of the Intelligent Design movement we have the

¹⁸⁴ pp. 144-145. Dooyeweerd 1959 op. cit. He provides evidence of discussions on the difference between breeds and species and how the breeds cannot develop into a new species. Note: The discussion of how to decide that a species or subspecies obtain that status beyond that of merely a breed, a cultivar or a hybrid is well-known but the occurrence of these forms of variety is too often incorrectly used as supportive evidence for the claims by neo-Darwinism.

¹⁸⁵ It is noted that in the minds of most scientists and other intellectuals the fact of variation between specimens (e.g by breeding) of whatever kind, is claimed as sufficient proof of evolution in the Darwinian sense. However this is inappropriate as is recorded elsewhere. Breeds and cultivars are not separate species since they are maintained as such for human purposes. So one needs to ask how many biological scientists (excluding the other scientists and intellectuals) who claim the validity of evolutionism have actually studied the structure and development of the theory: Pre-Darwinian, Darwin, post/neo Darwinism and eventually made a comparison between two prominent evolutionist theorists like Gould and Simpson who have different but well-informed opinions? I can already predict that many operate on professional hearsay, imagination and a good deal of ideology. The undeniable successive levels of complexity in paleontology do not in itself explain how the new species occurred. An autogenesis is simply assumed.

¹⁸⁶ pp. 110-132;483-487. Strauss DFM 2009. *Philosophy: The discipline of disciplines*.

claim that the complexities of design in many species are so intricate that they must have been designed individually by the creator God – the eye and the wing are two organs often mentioned in this regard. Speaking for myself I think that such complications flagged by Intelligent Design theorists could be helpful to rearticulate the variety found in wing and eye plans but I am not sure if the ID theory itself could be comprehensive enough. So I would give this option a very limited scope as does Strauss¹⁸⁷ who views Intelligent Design as a current revival of an earlier view, namely that of a form of vitalism. The other popular but complementary approach is the so-called physicalist emergent position. Promoters of this position deny the importance of a balance between the enkaptically structured presence of non-living elements and the given constellation of distinguishable unique features of living entities. That constellation which acts as a given superstructure maintains the levels of chemical components inside a living entity. But for the emergent view everything about an organism is reduced to or a derivative of the chemicals present, alternatively a result of the “germinating” effect of the presence of the laws (Klapwijk).

The standard and well-known explanations of these two fallacies are important but it should also not distract from the challenge for the PCI community to accommodate inside a theory of development the standard three classes of environmental selection imperatives which were listed above and which played a very important role and were indeed dominant not only in the development of subspecies but also possibly in the development of the multitudes of species themselves. To a limited extent I understand the frustration of Klapwijk¹⁸⁸ with the claimed over-specification of type law for a species (see previous notes on the justification of this claim) inside the Dooyeweerd-conceived type laws - even as Klapwijk does not argue from within the technical Dooyeweerd legacy of the Philosophy of the Cosmogenic Idea to the same extent as does Strauss.

But once again such gaps in the evolutionary explanations should not distract from the responsibility which the heirs of the Dooyeweerdian approach still have for explaining in more detail how the changes in living entities do occur. Participants in that legacy need produce an improved theory for the development and refinement of instruments which must explain and accommodate all change and demonstrated plasticity. But even so, against starry-eyed Neo-Darwinists it is demonstrable (and recognised as such by Gould) that the fossil records show far more constancy than change, i.e. that most species tracked by

¹⁸⁷ Strauss DFM. 2015c. *Intelligent Design – A Descendant of Vitalism?*

¹⁸⁸ Klapwijk J. 2011. *Creation Belief and the Paradigm of Emergent Evolution*. In this very readable but to my mind not entirely convincing article he explains his critical position on creationism, intelligent design, and theistic evolution.

palaeontology appeared in complete format (without prototypes – e.g. in the so-called Cambrian Explosion) and most often disappeared after millions of years in the same format.¹⁸⁹ But while Neo-Darwinists deny constancy, the Dooyeweerdians should not fall into the reactionary trap and then deny or question any statement about demonstrated change. As stated in the first subsection, a “Dooyeweerdian” theory of change should be convincingly visible in attempting to explain all of the following: the development phases of any specimen, the genetic learning by individual specimens and a species, the development of “culture” (actually a set of niche-integrated behaviours), the possibility of breeds and cultivars in agriculture and in the variety of adaptations that were made spontaneously by generations of specimens in response to environmental pressures – and referring to the cosmic enablers for such changes. Dooyeweerdian proponents still need to attempt answers to this relatively obvious challenge. As indicated earlier, the instruments are available and have been used some of the way.

The actual effect of the cosmic laws, whether type laws or modal laws, is something that requires the continuing attention of the heirs to Dooyeweerd. In general the prebiotic laws – inside the scale of modal laws – are far tighter and are made valid almost involuntarily. To some extent this may be extended to the kingdoms of the plants and animals however it is clear that the variation is far more. In human society the validation of laws is very entity dependent. But along the entire scale of modal laws, the actions of entities appears required at every level for making the laws valid – this goes from the formation of stars, planets and galaxies up to the most sophisticated human actions.¹⁹⁰ Is Klapwijk (and possibly the later Stafleu) saying that entities are evoked by the presence of modal laws to create entities out of nothing? At least Stafleu appears to deny this by saying that laws are not seen as agents of causation. As stated earlier, we who operate on Dooyeweerdian assumptions have no reason as yet not to allow for primitive entities interacting with both the type laws and with the modal laws in a situation when confronted with various environmental conditions, sometimes critical to survival. The type and modal laws will guide the development but in every situation there will be lots of free play although the presentation by Strauss of the limited action field used by a species of tick seems designed not only to be realistic but also to question any potential for adaptation. This will need to be reviewed critically, also inside a much wider contextualization.

¹⁸⁹ pp.20;30. Strauss. 2015c. op. cit.

¹⁹⁰ p.525. Strauss DFM. 2009. “principles are not per se valid (in force), for they need human intervention to *make them valid*, or *enforce them*”. The German scholar and father of modern federalism, Johannes Althusius (1563-1638) was apparently the first person to formulate these principles as the so-called “proper laws”. Similar was also recognized more recently by John Rawls (1921-2002) and Jurgen Habermas (born 1929). See pp. 531-533; 556-557 op.cit.

Both Dooyeweerd (with Lever) and Vollenhoven (only much later) according to Klapwijk became somewhat more open to accommodating a form of evolution.¹⁹¹ That change in approach now needs to be grown further in terms of the theoretical responsibilities of anybody supporting the PCI-project but also by staying in communication with its own basic instruments and approaches. In this context it should be noted that Strauss made an interesting statement related to physics, namely that the “type law for an atom holds for all atoms”.¹⁹² In other words, let me phrase it clearly, is he claiming that there is one type law for all 100 plus atoms that we find on the periodic table? Some atoms are well-known to be less stable than others. Is there also one type law for all molecules? He has also made similar allusions to a type law for all mammals. Does this imply or not that there are in addition some subsidiary type laws inside class mammal? All this seems to be pointing towards a serious need for the further development of a theory of variety, change and development, or at least for the purposes of better clarity, to ensure that much of the anti-revolutionary and arthritis-like Gomarean residue from earlier times is shed.

Type law in the world of organisations

When we view the notion of a type-law from the perspective of organizational science it appears that a similar problem recurs in the theory of societal entities than what we flagged in the world of biotic entities. Dooyeweerd made a comprehensive effort towards finding and presenting the structuring detail of social entities. Strauss carries his method forward and asks the following: “what are the kinds of procedural forms or procedural conditions we have in mind as being characteristic of the activities of a group?”¹⁹³ The standard Dooyeweerd classification considerations which Strauss has updated, are as follows:

¹⁹¹ pp.68-69. Klapwijk. op.cit.

¹⁹² p.417 Strauss DFM. 2009. *Philosophy: The discipline of Disciplines*. Klapwijk on the other hand aims to achieve the following: “We must reset the evolutionary theory and consequently free ourselves from philosophical materialism.” (p.19. 2011.). This is appreciated. But he also says: “Perhaps it is necessary to not only re-set our scientific views but also our religious convictions.” (p.25. Op.cit.). Note: The current narrative that I present here is exactly aiming at that. But what Klapwijk means still has to be explicated.

¹⁹³ p.248 Strauss 2006.

- Social Collectivities (“Verbande”): These display both the following features: (a) a solidary unitary character, and (b) a permanent authority structure.
- Communities A (“Communal relationships”): These display a solidary unitary character *but not* a permanent authority structure.
- Communities B (“Communal relationships”): These display a permanent authority structure *but not* a solidary unitary character.
- Coordinational Relationships (“Maatschap”): These display *neither* a solidary unitary character *nor* a permanent authority structure. They are free and associative casual relationships (networks). (See examples in the table herewith).

A Dooyeweerdian variety of societal types	
COLLECTIVITIES (“Verbande”)	Church School / University Associations (Art/Sport etc.) Nuclear Family Business / Company State Government Political party
COMMUNITIES A (“Communal relationships”)	Nation (Volk/People) Extended family Various Other communities
COMMUNITIES B	Marriage
COORDINATIONAL Relationships (“Maatschap”)	Inter<->Individual Fellowship Friendship Partnership Client and Salesperson etc. Individual<->Groupings Individual <-> Collectives Individual <-> Communities Inter<->groupings Collectivity <-> Collectivity Community <-> Community Collectivity <-> Community

These distinctions are intended to capture something of the generic texture and tendency inside a specific relationship. Strauss stressed that these questions are focused on the spatial and physical analogies of the social mode only and that other criteria are required to obtain a fuller and better justified picture of each societal entity as it operates in an integrated manner with many other entities. Are the four categories in this classification also type laws? If so it is noted that they contain a number of entities that elsewhere in the Dooyeweerd presentation are each allocated a separate type law (sub-types?) e.g. business, state, school and church. So it seems that there is also a taxonomic hierarchy at work here will.

In addition it should be noted that as much as any biotic entity has a non-living but enkaptically bonded “infrastructure” so the enduring societal entities also have an appropriate infrastructure (enkapsis). So although the modern state is jurally qualified it still needs, for proper functioning, buildings and vehicles which themselves are not jurally qualified.

The co-ordinational relationships shown in the table of Dooyeweerdian types of societal structures are clearly the most active field i.e. that is where the news of the day is generated. In any era such day-to-day interactions are foremost in the minds of the participating communities. The more foundational challenges on how a particular institution or organisation or collectives or communities should be established in the trains and processes

of history ¹⁹⁴ are not what concern them here. However it should also be noted that the way in which coordinational relationships are conducted may be either supportive or subversive of the collectives or communities. The annual reports of *Transparency International* do provide some illustrative cases of how transactions which are classified as coordinational relationships may promote or undermine the level of sustainability of a collective – e.g. a municipality or some department of a central government.

The coordinational relationships may have a long term historical effect either by an accumulated culture or by some truly historical changes, like a struggle against colonialism, a war, an election etcetera. Other coordinational relationships that may bring about massive changes are:

- A business gets a breakthrough contract that may change the future of that business. Biotechnology and IT will provide numerous examples.
- An organized church takes decisions on policies or principles that may open up new ecumenical relationships or may result in breakaway churches.

Coordinational relationships may be intimate in nature or simply an informal part of the wider set of networks. This may include anything from a society of above-board traders to criminal syndicates of corruption. The quality of such systems of relationships are as important to the health of an organisation as it is to maintain, grow and honour the more enduring historical structures and also the underlying cosmic structures given for collectivities and communities.

But it needs no argument to understand that in an era of postmodernism and similarly previous ones of individualism, those dedicated to narcissistic obsessions do not care about maintaining the structural aims of a social organisation. In such eras the coordinational relationship will be treated as paramount and at the expense of the need for modes of collectivities and communities. It is only in times of crisis that the importance of the basic health of collectivities and communities will be understood – e.g. when a government neglects the prevention of basic crimes. In this context the famous conservative and super-rich investor Warren Buffet is reported to have said about a stock market financial crash: “Only when the tide goes out will we see who have been swimming naked”¹⁹⁵ – referring to businesses with a high marketing profile but without underlying value. So the first point is

¹⁹⁴ Strauss provided an extensive series of illustrations of how the understanding of society runs on a number of assumptions. Amongst others he illustrates how both Rawls and Habermas are aware of the so-called “inner principles” (p. 532 Strauss 2009. Op. cit.) of the various non-state societal forms – which even in modern theories of state are very often still treated as if they are subsidiaries of the state and not free-standing agencies in their own right.

¹⁹⁵ p.60 Buffet M, Clark D. 2006. *The Tao of Warren Buffet*

that coordinational relationships are very important in the day-to-day life and culture of a community or a collective. These relationships are normal and very necessary and they also have their own criteria for success as could be seen in guidelines on how to network, how to motivate people and so on as we find in the extensive battery of DIY business guides at popular book stores. But the custodians of a business also have to balance the importance of such strategically planned actions against the “cosmic” health of the communities and collectivities. Secondly, engaging in such activities may show up the need for changes in a community or collectivity – e.g. racial and gender imbalances or operational inefficiencies or strategic misalignments of practices. Thirdly the co-ordinationals, communities and collectivities all stand in systemic relationships to each other. And these systemic ties may cause pressures which in turn may effect a cultural change – oftentimes called “entrepreneurial” – which is the important point in this subsection.

Finding an orderly pattern for successful business organisations are usually relatively easy to understand – in hindsight. Collins and Hansen provided the results of a massive 30 year performance review of whole classes of business in their publication *Great by Choice* (2011).

While type-laws for the state ¹⁹⁶, organized church (or similar) and the nuclear family – in its various forms – were relatively easy to explain, it is not so easy when it comes to the variety of businesses or other human societal activities. The rate at which businesses come and go is astonishing. So when Dooyeweerd talks of “the firm” the expression appears to convey a corporate understanding most likely not fully representative of the world of business. However important as big business is for the health of an economy, most working people are employed at smaller businesses and the number of ways in which people earn a living as entrepreneurs are quite wide. So similarly as in biology we have for the sake of consistency to ask if there will be a separate type-law for every kind of business? For instance will there be separate type-laws for a body beauty parlor and a hairdresser or a coffee shop and a fish and chips outlet to name but a few? Have Nokia migrated through three different type laws or sub-type laws in its series of product identities (saw-mil, cable manufacturer, cellphone manufacturer)? What happens when integration happens on the value chain as when successful mega-farming businesses not only produce the agricultural goods but also provide all the distribution, the transport and the selling of products to end-users; as it was a century ago? Here exactly the same question applies as was posed in the taxonomy of biology: Should a type-law not be contained higher up in any hierarchies of classification in

¹⁹⁶ pp.548-592 Strauss. 2009. *Philosophy: The Discipline of Disciplines* gives an extensive and updated overview of the type laws for the state as seen from a Dooyeweerdian systematic perspective.

order to ensure a sense of reality and also ensuring that at a theoretical level there is a serious intent on both explaining and illustrating the dynamics which both Dooyeweerd and Strauss claimed that they found on the law side of reality? And how much higher then? There are so many conditions to consider that together will constitute the current local shape and size of a business enterprise: local market, local culture etc. etc. Are all businesses under the same type-law or is there a differentiation in kind of (sub)type laws further down?¹⁹⁷ There are clearly, in terms of value-chains, in terms of business diversification and also in terms of businesses populations a certain hierarchy of institutions. Big business is not always the villain as promoted by socialists. Big business spawns many smaller ones.

If the type law is located too low inside a differentiated hierarchy, the Dooyeweerdian heritage may end up as a sanctioning rationale for current historical forms¹⁹⁸ and hence resist any appropriate further development. This could result in a circular-repetitive approach only which is exactly the worldview of slavery from which the Christian spirit liberated us from – without being sucked into the completely opposite position in the marketing world, that is into naïve notions on newness, freshness and progress which goes to the other idol, that of fertility.

The state may have many organs but it remains fairly unified (There will clearly not be different type laws for the levels of government: National, regional, municipal; nor for the different basic functions: legislative, administrative (e.g. jurisprudence), enforcement). The world of business is not formally and organizationally unified to the same extent as the state apparatus is. Nowadays in the era of globalism many multinationals are bigger than many states in terms of their annual budget but even so they arguably never act as the sole management agent for the economy in a country. This was the case even in South Africa where mining companies for about a century formed the backbone of the economy.

Strauss¹⁹⁹ said that for the entire business world there would be only one type law. This certainly looks promising for the future of understanding the nature of type laws for the

¹⁹⁷ Strauss explains the following in *Reintegrating Social Theory*, p 251: “Obviously this term (*idionomy*-PC) may also cause misunderstanding if it is taken to mean that *each individual* creature (subject) has its *own unique* law. What is intended is that every *type of law (nomos)* is meant to delimit and determine unique subjects. In other words, however *specified* the universality of the law may be, it can never, in its bearing upon unique individual creatures, itself become something *uniquely individual*.” On p. 272 Strauss 2009 specifically refers to Goethe and a quote from Gundlof for whom “Goethe’s laws themselves are individuals, delicately, elastic precisely though constantly mobile, mystical inner form forces”. This clearly is the kind of idionomy from which the PCI wants to escape from but even so it does not cancel the required challenge to both appreciate and explain the contributing factors to uniqueness.

¹⁹⁸ The antirevolutionary slogan of Abraham Kuyper in the Netherlands comes to mind.

¹⁹⁹ In a personal email communication (2017.04.18)

simple reason that the ability of a type law to accommodate great variety and historical hierarchy is now stressed anew – as also holding for Dooyeweerdian thinking. In the world of business the very nature of entrepreneurship is to diversify, relocate and re-invent production, sales, services etc. Business development contributes as much to diversity and dynamics in society and culture as do the arts. Such development is not only tied to different products or services, it also occurs inside businesses, e.g. developing the notion of limited liability which is an invention only of the last century or so and which is often highly contested as could be seen in the dispute over the rehabilitation of land disturbed by mining activities.

Looking back on the theory of entities and development

There is then room for development and especially for additional clarity in the presentation of the notion of type law. The research by both the evolutionary scientists in biology as well as the variety of forms of business as studied by organizational science should find an ever more comprehensive treatment in the processes of those using the Dooyeweerdian legacy as a support to their basic orientation. Insufficient attention and inappropriate approaches caused a breakdown in communication with the mainstream thinking on change, development and uniqueness. But let me repeat in conclusion: The over-optimistic and overblown evolutionism in biology deserves the criticism provided by Dooyeweerd and Strauss. The same goes for the emergentism that has recently also found support in reformed and other Christian circles.²⁰⁰ But that criticism will only become convincing and authentic once the criticism is supplemented by a proper theory of development of entities, and that has not yet come forth.

It is unlikely that this area of stunted growth and low-profiled presentation in the Dooyeweerdian theory will in itself be strong enough to overturn the wider theoretical notions of the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea. This is the case for many reasons but also since both Strauss and Dooyeweerd have repeatedly confirmed their adherence to the cosmic principles in support of adaptation. However I do foresee that the wider Gomarean-Calvinian²⁰¹ obsession with its naïve and totalitarian (mechanistic) notions of predestination will crumble more rapidly. That is the only way by which the reformed worldview will become compliant not only to the Biblical spirit but also to the unpredictability and randomness, yes the surprises that both we and God would experience in living with the relative

²⁰⁰ pp.28-29. Strauss 2010.

²⁰¹ This refers to Franz Gomar (1563-1641) and his hardline position in the run-up to the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619).

autogenesis²⁰² of the creation – which I believe is the way that God intended it to be. That view will be spelled out more closely in the last chapter.

Is the law side of reality protected against the fall into sin?

This second main question is also about the relationship between the law side and the factual side in general. It is not specifically about either the modal laws or the entity laws. Dooyeweerd explains the following about the law side:

“.. the law-side *belongs to the empirical world*. In this sense the law indeed implies an essential boundary between God and creature which from the side of the creature cannot be transgressed. By accentuating this essential boundary the *Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea* merely intends to preclude a speculative metaphysics which absolutizes law-conformative states of affairs by binding God to elevated eternal truths in themselves.”²⁰³ (My translation CPC).

In the dimensions distinguished by Dooyeweerd it is clear that the factual side contains both the positive (normed) realities like connecting to the current historical development and also the negative conditions like simple mistakes or outright sin/ evil. Dooyeweerd confirms that God is the creator both of the law side and of the factual side of reality. He then also says the following:

“Naturally, Divine Providence is not restricted to the law-side of the temporal world. However, in so far as it embraces also the factual side, this Providence is hidden from human knowledge, and therefore not accessible to a Christian philosophy.”²⁰⁴

On the one hand the phrasing used here is unique to Dooyeweerd but the fact that he states it as he does is also reassuring to the PCI supporters which were mostly from a Calvinian background where naïve ideas over-appreciative of predestination are usually dominant. Here he is possibly taking on an agnostic pose for purposes of evading the question of whether God’s engagement on the factual side is a complete predestination or whether it is limited to rare and occasional but strategic interventions. The remark that this “Providence is

²⁰² It is likely that Stafleu would agree with this view on the relative autogenesis of creation – even if from a different approach. See ± p.60 Stafleu 2012. But then sometimes he comes over as a determinist – see p. 73 op.cit. Dooyeweerd and Strauss usually respond to any suggestion of a relative autogenesis with reference to their critique on the concept of substance. While their critique is valid elsewhere it is not appropriate in this case given that the PCI allows ample space for the defined action fields (subjectivity) of all entities on the factual side of reality.

²⁰³ pp.113-114. Dooyeweerd H. 1960. *Van Peursen’s Critische vragen bij “A New Critique of Theoretical Thought”*.

²⁰⁴ p.174. Dooyeweerd 1984. Vol.1.

hidden from human knowledge” is obviously true to some extent but when it is overused it becomes true-blue Gomarean Calvinism, usually intended to downplay, if not raise opportunistic suspicion against any claims about human freedom and to intimidate the promoters of such claims.

In other places Dooyeweerd stressed the correlation between the factual side and the law side – which although easy to grasp in theory still remains to be explained with sufficient examples of how factual instances of regularities correlate with the law sides.²⁰⁵ But we have no reason to believe that Dooyeweerd intended this correlation in general to be understood in a mechanistic or mirrored sense – this remains the case even where in the previous section I questioned the apparent extent to which he was perceived to have pushed the effect of the type laws. Hence I believe that variety, randomness, coincidence and freedom are created “spaces” even inside a conditioned universe as understood by Dooyeweerd. In the cultural domain the variety and freedom are obviously much greater than in nature – where it is already breathtakingly varied. The Dooyeweerdian idea of law is non-neo-Platonic of intent, hence the law side itself is supportive of dynamics and plasticity – though most likely not quite as “germinating” as Klapwijk is promoting it.²⁰⁶ But the Dooyeweerd perception of law allows or enables variety, coincidence and randomness on the factual side – and that is most certainly not truly Calvinian (Gomarean?).

The wide variety of forms of law-compliance is in principle not problematic. This variety is somewhat complicated by instances of non-conformity and as usual, by the occurrence of grey areas. The important challenge in this section is to fathom the consistency with which Dooyeweerd explains the so-called radical impact of sin and the conflicts that are caused by it in our perception of the law side. Firstly he said the following, which I believe fits the dominant impression of what the Dooyeweerd system is about:

“...these conflicts shall never be ascribed to the cosmic order, as is done by dialectical irrationalism under the influence of an irrationalist turn of its dialectic ground-motive. The law of creation has remained the same in spite of sin.”²⁰⁷

Now an important and a logical question: Will the correlation between the factual side and the law side also apply to sin or corruption? Dooyeweerd posed the question as follows, which also appears to remain consistent with the statement in the most recent quotations:

²⁰⁵ For an extensive recent treatment of the difference between the law-side of reality (order for) and the regularity shown on the factual side (order of) see pp. 399; 435-439 of Strauss 2009.

²⁰⁶ pp. 19-20;24 Klapwijk 2011.

²⁰⁷ p.176. Dooyeweerd 1984. Vol 1.

“If the Divine order in the temporal cosmos were not kept intact and elevated above any kind of human “hubris”, the manifestation of sin in time would not even be possible. For the whole of temporal reality would then burst like a soap-bubble. Does this mean that the effect of sin leaves the law-side of the creation entirely unaffected, and can only manifest itself on the side of the *subject*?”²⁰⁸

Since the divine order (i.e. the law side) was kept intact as stated in the quotation above, Dooyeweerd and many others made the distinction between structure and direction as reported in the earlier parts of this section: Direction is firstly the spiritual orientation of the human heart (religious dimension) but this direction and other factors also influence the level of law-compliance for both modal laws and type laws in the practices, the artifacts and the cultural structures that we find.

The unitary but multi-faceted reality underlying the dimensions enables a strong interaction between the dimensions. Hence every entity, seen from the law side (type laws), is qualified by a modal aspect (modal laws). But it is the human being alone which is qualified by the religious dimension, i.e. the radical spiritual depth of being human, i.e. also possessing a non-organic spiritual “heart”. The features of this dimension are highly disputed among some supporters of the Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea. Some claim that the spiritual heart is supra-temporal in a specific way, others claim that it is merely more central and comprehensive than could be the case for any modal aspect. In most of the debates any reference to a different dimension is ignored completely which possibly contributed to even more misunderstandings in the ongoing discussions. Here I will not engage with that problem but only to say that there is possibly a need to review the cosmic grounds and the philosophical need for using different dimensions in the first place. By not highlighting the different dimensions as a disciplined way of dealing with the Dooyeweerd heritage will simply result in one or more of the dimensions getting preferred attention.²⁰⁹

Confirming the status of the dimensions as in the previous paragraphs is important for what follows. The above built-up towards answering the second question may, by and large, qualify as the widely accepted standard picture of the Dooyeweerd legacy. But having set

²⁰⁸ p.335. op.cit. Volume 2.

²⁰⁹ Strauss has persistently and also in opposition to many supporters of the PCI illustrated the need for a dimension of entities in distinction from the dimension of modal aspects. Some such instances are found in *Philosophy: Discipline of Disciplines* pp. 430-462. However I have not yet seen an extensive discussion for the necessity and rationale of at least the four most prominent Dooyeweerd dimensions.

the stage in that way comes as quite a surprise that Dooyeweerd answers the question he posed at the end of the last quotation in the negative. He continues:

“the consequence of sin must necessarily also manifest itself on *the law-side in the work of human formation and positivizing*. ...But in this very work of formation and positivation the process of opening of the temporal meaning on the law-side cannot be carried out harmoniously, when in apostasy it has lost its direction to the religious fullness of meaning. Disharmony on the law-side is then inevitable, because the opening-process invariably moves in the direction of the absolutizing of certain meaning moments.”²¹⁰

Dooyeweerd moves quite smoothly over the glaring contradiction here of, on the one hand, keeping the divine order “intact” yet on the other hand saying that it is affected by sin, which he says, causes us to find a “disharmony” in – of all places – the law side. One cannot help but ask, in his own words: Has the “soap bubble” now burst?

A quick survey of *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, Volume 2 Chapter 4 reveals the inconsistency that Dooyeweerd has on the matter of sin having an effect on the law side or not. This is summarised as follows:

Sin having no effect on the law side	Sin indeed having an effect on the law side
p.335	p.336
p.336	p.337
p.362	p.354
p.363	

So, it appears to me to be that there was a serious contradiction of terminology, expression and application – not necessarily of sympathies - in Chapter 4 of volume 2 of *A new Critique of Theoretical Thought*. Dooyeweerd justifies his view of the contamination of the law side in the light of his description of the cultural aspect as the free formative will (action) of acquired power by individuals or corporate and communal agencies which is the kernel of the historical aspect. Because there is a requirement for the exercise of the free formative human will in all of the post-logical aspects, Dooyeweerd then says:

²¹⁰ p.336. Dooyeweerd op.cit. vol. 2; See further pp. 115-116. Dooyeweerd. 1960. It was previously argued that the lawside itself cannot be disclosed (developed) only our (subjective) understanding of the law side and our actions in response could be developed.

“The human formative will is to be conceived of as a subjective moment on the law side of these law-spheres themselves”.²¹¹

Looking wider for a moment, there is a widespread perception in many circles, even among knowledgeable sympathisers with Dooyeweerd, that the law side can be expanded or changed. This implies that inside the law side perceived as a space, there are places where it becomes an entity, subjected to the latest specifications that we, the subjects, came up with. To mind comes the notion that humankind is not only a tool-using species, it can also make machines to make tools. Was this inconsistency in Dooyeweerd as flagged above, the result of an inappropriate application (metaphor) of the concept of a toolmaking machine?

And this may well be an important contributing factor to the problem. In retrospect then I believe that in the problem reviewed more than one thing went wrong at the same time. I think of the following stressful points which are in need of unpacking:

1. The Dooyeweerd statement that the law-side remained unchanged under sin is abandoned by him in the last two quotations.
2. The Dooyeweerd explanation that the uniquely human modal laws require intervention from humans on the subject side (p.239.vol.2) in order to be disclosed is now presented differently. Two problems are relevant here:
 - a. The law-side itself is here said to contain a subjective element: The question is if the description of the core of an aspect (one dimension) could contain reference to an element from another dimension i.e. “entities”, meaning the active human will.
 - b. As we have learnt from Dooyeweerd, a modal aspect is not entitarian and hence, I believe, cannot exercise will. Is he here, without any explanation, conflating two dimensions as well? So although the linkage between dimensions should not be denied in being focused on the same reality, treating the modal aspects as entities is correctly often described by Strauss as a case of “reification”.²¹² It seems like prudent householding that in view of the danger of reification all core descriptions of the law side should be revised to not containing any reference to the active human will originating there. The human will is clearly an internal agent (entity) activity which is found on the factual side of reality only.
3. Dooyeweerd in this case apparently abandoned the assumption that the correlation between the factual subject side and law side is non-mechanistic. Elsewhere he said that only by human intervention could the law-side be positivised i.e. on the factual

²¹¹ p.239 Dooyeweerd 1984. vol.2.

²¹² p.421 Strauss. 2009. *Philosophy: The Discipline of Disciplines*

side, it does not happen automatically – valid practices is established by human design when they specify and implement solutions to their needs either as a community or as individuals. Entities like human beings must make things happen on the factual side. Now he seems to say that since there is sin on the subject side during such formation, it must have been caused by distortions in the law side (see 1 above). Is the sin that accumulated throughout the millennia on the subject side now all of a sudden seen as (automatically?) eroding upwards? Can the law-side be guilty of sin?

In principle then it appears that Dooyeweerd at this point espouses some kind of fatalistic thinking (mechanistic correlation between the two sides) which belies not only the human freedom and responsibility which he appreciated positively at many other points; the implication of what he is saying is that since it happens on the subject side it must have been on the law-side first. This contradicts a very basic structure in his ontology.

So the rendering of the correlation between the law side and the factual side on this point above is to be rated as one of the less successful parts of the Dooyeweerdian heritage – even an embarrassment. The rectification that I promote is to restate the better position as in terms of the following commonplace view that two kinds of design (structure) are recognized in the perspective the PCI:

- a. On the hand we have the design promoted by humankind: legal contracts, artifacts, language, business systems and so on. Such designs form part of culture and will change over time. JJ Rousseau and more recently Girard and other sociologists of contractual constructivism have stretched that reality to the extreme. Usually the changes in such designs are much slower to occur than is the variety in the application of a specific design.²¹³ So for instance the Dutch–Roman law system may be considered as an example of human structural design at an even deeper level that continues over centuries but is applied to a variety of case-arguments that will count into the hundreds-of-thousands if not millions of court pronouncements, law suits and contracts. These historical developments in a specific industry could indeed be infected by sin. Whatever Dooyeweerd says about the effect of sin should in my view best be limited to this kind of secondary “law-side” on the factual side only (the order of things).
- b. On the other hand we have deep ontic designs which are creationally given from God. It is the pride of the PCI tradition to have exposed this as comprehensively as

²¹³ Some popularisers would claim that there are only 36 story plots in the fiction of stage, novel and film. These are applied many times over without audiences ever getting tired of the 36.

never before (the order for entities and processes). These ontic designs not only enable the variety and dynamics of application, it also enables the creation of a number of cultural constructs of changeable but relatively enduring designs as explained above in (a).

There is no doubt that sin effects point (a) above but it is certainly not the case with point (b). Sin and human limitation effect only our perceptions of the creational structures. We have to ask if it was not possible that Dooyeweerd, in a slip of attention, actually quite a Kantian slip, could have mistaken the one for the other? He may even have overlooked any possibility of misunderstanding because he did not explain the two senses in which he could have used the notion of “law-side”. However the long stretch of text in which this mistake occurs and then again does not occur very clearly contradicts such a suggestion. But I do not have any explanation why this relatively simple explanation which I provided above, was not the stated view of Dooyeweerd and why neither the problem in the text nor an appropriate and improved restatement has failed to emerge more explicitly by the students of his texts.²¹⁴

Van Peursen also raised the problem of sin on the law-side in his 1960-review of *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought* (NCTT). In his answer to Van Peursen, Dooyeweerd rejected any discussion on the question if the fall into sin had changed the way in which the laws operate. Such a discussion Dooyeweerd said would be metaphysical speculation. But it was Dooyeweerd himself who opened the gate for such speculation in the very inconsistent presentation and positioning that he provided in the NCTT as demonstrated above and which I would estimate as seriously wanting. This interaction with Van Peursen was an ideal opportunity for Dooyeweerd to correct himself publicly – e.g. there may have been a translation error or simply some slip of mind. Maybe there was a ghost writer which Dooyeweerd trusted too much? Dooyeweerd could also have told Van Peursen that he was talking about the negotiated cultural “law-side” as in (a) above. But he did not. Van Peursen on the other hand, as far as I can see in his response to Dooyeweerd, did not drill into the real enigma of the grumpy defence offered by Dooyeweerd. His gentlemanly courtesy in this debate towards Dooyeweerd has been no favour towards the current beneficiaries of the Dooyeweerd legacy. And as we have seen earlier on with Lever, Dooyeweerd used the expression “speculative” as a means to cut off discussions that could have created common ground and opened up new perspectives. He seemed to forget that much of the assumptions

²¹⁴ The continuities and discontinuities between Kant, neo-Kantianism and Dooyeweerd is a recognised and important aspect of Dooyeweerd studies. The notion of humans not prescribing law to nature (and society) is in my perception one of the better established notions given the later understanding of creation as provided by Dooyeweerd. Why he could not maintain it in all corners of his household as in the quotes paraded, is still to be explained.

made in the PCI heritage will from those intellectuals having less sympathy with the PCI also be categorised as just so much speculation. The core question is not if speculation is permitted or not but whether it is done with the necessary contextual integrity and if it leads to creative engagements. Are we willing to expose such to various forms of testing?

But in a search for a more encompassing perspective on this enigma it is noted that Strauss has in the meanwhile from another angle provided a diagnosis on the Dooyeweerd representation of the law side. Strauss made a detailed analysis of a number of core distinctions inside the presentation of the features of both the law-side and the factual-side in the Dooyeweerd legacy.²¹⁵ He ascribes the lack of consistency in the Dooyeweerdian text, contrary to the intent of Dooyeweerd himself, to the influence of nominalism (alternatively: irrationalism). Strauss, linking to other authors, attempts to clear up the matter and to align the technical understandings regarding law-side and factual subject-side with the better stated intentions of Dooyeweerd which are found elsewhere.

His finding is that Dooyeweerd has a blind spot where “law and lawfulness (law and law-conformity) are the same”.²¹⁶ In the analysis I gave above, it also seems that the same kind of blind spot caused him to not differentiate between human structuring (dubiously posed as “law-side”) and cosmic structures which are the actual “law-side”. In other words exactly as demonstrated above with the problem of a mechanistic parallelism in the question of a correlation of corruption, Dooyeweerd abandons (in some instances) the distinction between the law side and the factual side. Strauss found that the regularities on the factual-side of reality cannot fully stand in for the conditioning nature of the law-side of reality – this he found to be a common mistake apparently not only occurring in the text of Dooyeweerd but is also made by many of his beneficiaries.

Strauss does not address the issue of sin but it was not necessary to do so. His contribution is very obviously relevant here since it shows that Dooyeweerd was unsure in his footing when it came to maintaining the distinction between the law-side and the factual side.

Conclusion

From this survey and discussion it appears that in the Dooyeweerd legacy at least two points were left unfinished, contradictory and unstable. This created an undue and unintended feature of permeability as part of the correlation between law and subject side in both the questions posed in this discussion. That permeability caused Dooyeweerd at this point to cave in toward a usually unjustified mechanistic handling of the occurrence of correlation.

²¹⁵ pp.449-453.Strauss 2009

²¹⁶ p.453.2009.

Hence he promoted the idea, contrary to his other statements, that sin is also affecting the law side. In the face of the question on evolution he apparently, in some cases at least, over-specified the law-side (e.g. type laws at species level) in terms of the variety of entities and processes. This last point is unclear and for that reason alone justifies reconsideration.

I believe the question these days to any intellectual is not if one believes in evolutionism or not. It is possibly closer to the following: *What is the kind and scope of evolution (era-development) that becomes reflected in your theoretical model of reality? And how will the assumptions in your cosmology contribute towards enriching our understanding both of the changeable and of the constant nature of reality?*

So when I confirm with Dooyeweerd a correlation between law-side and factual side, between the logos-structured nature of reality and the incarnational interventions by God towards a better world then I am not repeating Plato and Hegel. Yes they were gigantic thinkers and Plato did contribute to an understanding of the law-side of the universe. Yes Hegel contributed to our understanding of history as cultural development. Yes we have to honour the merciless and tipping point laws of mathematics, geometry and mechanics where they apply, but we also have to appreciate the much wider stretch of the law-side of the universe – a universe that also knows of systemic stretch and give. We have to allow for the understanding of play and creativity of the relative autogenesis of entities and processes which were intended as such by the covenanting God of the Bible and which is borne out by the study of all of the physical universe, all of the many kingdoms of living things and all of the cultures of humankind.

So then in summary we have before us, in this case, the following alternatives to consider:

A Completely Coincidental Universe	A Coincidental but Principled Universe demanding Responsible Freedom and Creativity.	A Completely Mechanised Universe
Utter chaos No principles	Alignment and Stretch Support and Guidance Pull and Push Attraction and Conditioning Enabling and Structured	Duplication Micromanagement The will to Control and Subject
Individualist, postmodernist and self-centred	A covenantal and decision-rich stewardly understanding of a structured creation with relative autonomy.	Primitive fatalism and modernist authoritarianism

In the next chapter this pattern will be elaborated upon much further.

It seems then that the Dooyeweerd text was not freed sufficiently from the fatalism which is endemic in most Calvinistic thought. Possibly he deliberately stayed unclear on this for fear of losing his – I think overrated – home ground supporters: conservative Dutch Calvinists. Luckily, as will be seen in the next chapter there is another strand in the Christian heritage

which responsibly rejected beliefs of determinism / fatalism. This fatalism houses a sad association with the fundamentalist creationism which fortunately is not consistent with the rest of the Dooyeweerdian heritage. I also benefitted from separate research by Strauss, which shows that the heritage of nominalism limited the intellectual integrity of the Dooyeweerd legacy in this case. But while Strauss diagnosed the problem with Dooyeweerd, Strauss himself has up to now been unable as well to show in more detail how the more sustainable Dooyeweerd assumptions as well as the improved or renovated instruments in that legacy should apply to a more comprehensive theory on the change, development and uniqueness of entities: firstly in view of the variety of biotic specimens and species; secondly as to the development of a variety of businesses as recorded in the data bases of organisational studies.

2.5 Living with the Bible in a sceptical age

The Bible is the one document that I read and consult repeatedly. In terms of the very core assumptions of Christianity, I search it to find spiritual strength, guidance and also assurance.²¹⁷ Like most Christians I trust prayerfully that by replaying in my mind these historical events and experiences as well as the statements made, the Spirit of God will give me wisdom as I expose myself to the puzzling environments which I share with many others. Like every other Christian I trust to find understanding and yes, to find revelation in the rhema sense of the word as I so-to-speak walk in the tracks of God with his people. Using the imagery of Pete Collins, I often revisit the peak of the once-active volcano to see what has happened and what could happen again when we become open to the covenantal interventions from God in our personal and societal lives. Above all I trust that I will experience spiritual renewal in the Christ whose suffering in Jesus of Nazareth ended the era of blood sacrifice²¹⁸ - not just for Jewish community but practically for everybody. And this started the era of grace and liberation, liberation from the burden of sin but also a liberation from over-ritualised lifestyles. This liberation I believe also facilitates a renewed search for the balanced inner spiritual connection that we originally had with creational law frameworks. These are the common frameworks for all of creation which is also hardwired (Covey) into our own conscious individual being. But there my fellowship with most

²¹⁷ I share an awareness of the self-evidence of the reality of God in the general gait of the Biblical message, as is well-formulated by Clouser R (forthcoming) *Dark Matter*. None of my extensive sympathy with the historical critical evaluation of the biblical text – to which Clouser has not expressed himself - will undo this basic understanding that I experience. Clouser goes ahead and in the Dooyeweerd tradition then also shows how all naturalism indeed promotes their own divinity belief.

²¹⁸ This era is well-described by Armstrong K 2006. *The Great Transformation*.

Christians on the use of the Bible will end. From here onwards I walk some of the way with the reformed theologian, Adrio König which will narrow my association still further.

In South Africa Adrio König contributed much to an improved understanding of how to read the Bible.²¹⁹ He spent some pages on picturing the opposing approaches of liberalism and conservatism (fundamentalism) in the South African (Afrikaans) Bible reading public.²²⁰ He promotes a third alternative which he calls a “renewing” way of reading the Bible. Here he incorporates the best contributions of recent scholarship. In the South African context he applied the criteria designed by the so-called “liberal” text-critical practitioners (they branded themselves as the “new reformationists”) to their own assumptions and practices. This is quite timely and would most certainly be welcomed by the majority of the (Afrikaans) Bible-studying Christian population in SA.

But König is not fully on the conservative side. Hence he advised the popular (conservative) reader market in South Africa to read the Biblical text at various levels, i.e. at more levels than what they usually do. He emphasises a regular switch between the alternatives of reading texts closely and of reading the text at a distance. He explains this extensively.²²¹ But he doubts that the next decades will see any better i.e. “renewed” biblical reading practice. That, I am sad to confirm, is correct. König in addition found that those promoting such a responsible reading approach to the Bible can easily be categorised by the conservative majority as being “liberalist”. This statement also accords with my experience.

In this battle of stereotypes, having given both the conservative and the liberal traditions of Bible reading a dressing down, König makes a final call. His conclusion (my translation): “One can hope to open up the mind of a fundamentalist ... but the liberalist never changes his belief.”²²² So in his final call König came down for the conservatist side.²²³ This I believe is both unfortunate and untrue especially since König himself was at some stage categorized as a liberal theologian. So having learnt so much from him, I will in the end also have to tone down my loyalties to him even as I will continue learning from him.

In retrospect it is not completely surprising that the König position turned out the way it did. It is a logical outcome of the methodology which he follows. Even as he promotes a very

²¹⁹ See König A. 2009a. *Die evangelie is op die spel* (My translation of the title: *The gospel is at stake.*)

²²⁰ pp.301-310.op.cit.

²²¹ pp.212-231.op.cit.

²²² p. 302. op.cit.

²²³ This is in line with increasing challenges to the text-historical criticism, the lingering of post-modernism and the resurgence of more orthodox positions.

practical and balanced method of reading the Bible, his limitation, strange as it may sound to conservatist ears, is exactly that he remains too close to the Bible. He wants to argue everything directly from or from the vicinity of the Bible.²²⁴ While this will obviously generate sympathy with the fundamentalists, it will never work with the liberalists. The reason is that a common heritage of loyalty to understanding Biblical content is assumed by this approach. Such an assumption is clearly not justified in the case with all forms of theological liberalism. While many liberalists know the Bible quite well, the post-modernist young generation²²⁵ – even those from Christian homes – know very little. The challenge for communicating with a people that do not share the same heritage is a challenge. Paul, in Athens, as recorded in Acts 17:16 ff. talked in a completely different mode than when he was addressing people from the Jewish heritage. König, at least in his works which I consulted, does not seem prepared to follow this well-known Pauline tactic.

Additional tools for this Pauline tactic are being refined and developed in at least one smaller community of Christian academics and intellectuals. They are in the sphere of influence of Roy Clouser – also in the Dooyeweerd heritage. He is well-known for his book, *The myth of religious neutrality*.²²⁶ In this work and elsewhere he promotes an understanding of the common presence of a “divinity belief” which all people both share and practise. This belief need not refer to a personal God. It may simply refer to a force (e.g. causality) which is taken as the actual “godhead”, i.e. what is regarded as the original (uncreated) reality upon which all other forms of reality (creation) depend for their very existence. With this definition of religious belief (dependency arrangements) no atheist is safe any longer; their cover is blown, since they are now also shown to practice of necessity a form of “divinity belief”. This

²²⁴ König in general is not given to simplistic slogans like “The Bible is the Word of God”. However, having done so much to masterfully achieve the appropriate nuances on the concept of creation in the Bible (König 1982a); having produced a breakthrough book on rejecting fatalism (2002a) and in the same year he produced another quality book on the nuances in translations and other text problems (König A 2002b. *Ek glo die Bybel - ondanks al die vrae* – translation of title: *I believe the Bible – in spite of all the questions*) he still capitulated to a nuance free statement in the first of his 15 confessional statements on the Bible: “The Bible is the Word of God” (p.337 of the last publication mentioned). Even if the rest of his 15 statements pays homage to a nuance rich understanding of Biblical text, it would have been more truthful to rather have said: “The Bible is a very / the most reliable guide to the covenantal Word of God.” It should be clear that part of my intent with this booklet is to explain the background to this proposed alternative phrasing. Williams (2003) phrases my intent almost perfectly: “We may look for a post-critical theology, but it will not be one that ignores the critical moment.” (p.228)

²²⁵ Even if they know a number of proof texts and selected stories, they are not at all intimate with the cultural environment in which the Bible originated and they also seem not to appreciate how the contents and literary style refer to these.

²²⁶ Clouser R. 2005. *The myth of religious neutrality: A Essay on the Hidden Role of Religious Beliefs in Theory*.

belief also does not require an organised form of religion, but it still organises the way in which a person sees reality. The blind spot of most academics, inclusive of theologians, is caused by a belief that “decoupling” reasoning from its almost exclusive application in the study of “sacred texts” up to the Renaissance also decouples it from any ideology (religious commitments). This is clearly an illusion and realising this position may be one of the benefits from the legacies of neo-Marxism and postmodernism – and those in the Dooyeweerd legacy were too slow to capitalise sufficiently upon these. From my perspective it is a pity that König also missed this boat. His problem I suspect is that he does not appear open to the view that the “Word of God” is also a string of events and laws outside of the Bible documents, usually predating them by far.

So then here I take a different but also not a unique route.

I found the contribution by Schniedewind²²⁷ a pleasant surprise. He gives a survey on the use of the expression the “word of God” in the Old Testament.²²⁸ He confirms that indeed the expression was first of all about the oral tradition and secondly about the word received by the prophets – and that very few of them actually wrote down the words they communicated. As a matter of fact, there was great suspicion against the written word even up to the 8th and 7th century BCE. Jeremiah 8:8 talks about the “lying pen” of the scribes. Some of this suspicion also survived into Christianity where Paul talked of the “letter that kills” (2 Corinthians 3:3,6).²²⁹ But in the end according to Schniedewind, the text has won the battle, already in the Judaea under Roman rule, also in early patristic Christianity and then continued victoriously in Rabbinic Judaism. In the last two cases Schniedewind claims that the co-existence of the oral tradition and the textual tradition became more balanced. That statement probably applies to the Rabbinic tradition only. Looking at the Lutheran and Calvinist insistence upon “scripture alone” – sola scriptura – one would at first not expect to

²²⁷ Schniedewind WM. 2004. *How the Bible Became a Book: The Textualization of Ancient Israel*. There is no reason to suspect that König would have serious objections to the issues promoted in this publication.

²²⁸ pp.187-191. op.cit.

²²⁹ p.126 Hooker MD. 2003: “For Paul the ‘canon’ is not Scripture itself, but Christ, which means that Scripture must be read in the light of Christ. Where is wisdom to be found? Not in the written Torah – not even in the epistles of Paul! – but in the living Christ.

Is Paul’s view sustainable? The way which Christians down the ages have treated the words of Scripture as authoritative and regarded the Bible itself as the word of God – offering clear guidance and hard-and-fast rules – suggests that they have found it difficult to follow him. Tablets of stone are easier to take hold of than the Spirit of Christ.”

In the same publication R Williams (2003) gave excellent explanations of the “remainder” and “excess” in all text, also sacred text, that creates tensions that requires and even invite future responses.

see anything about such a balance. However one should not forget the roles of dogma, theology and politics in Protestantism which are endemic to this day. So if the practice of this often-repeated mantra – sola scriptura – would stand the test in practice is another matter: What for instance would happen if an audit is conducted to identify the personal and selective preferences of preachers as a percentage of the content of the entire Bible? Especially those who wave the Bible²³⁰ shouting: This is what the Word of God says!

The findings of an authority like Schniedewind are paralleled at a much lower level by the relatively unknown pastor John David Clark.²³¹ He promoted a simple but valid “recipe”. He provided a lengthy if neither agile nor elegant illustration of how impossible a literal equation of the expressions “Bible” and “word of God” is. He challenged those who equate these two expressions to demonstrate what the actual contextual meaning is. Can we believably tell each other what the case is every time the Biblical writers used the expression “word of God”? While it is easy for mainstream spokespersons to simply deny that Christians imagine the literalist (caricaturist) illustrations which Clark (who appears suspect in other matters) gives, the question remains the following: “How do Christians then see the meaning of “word of God” as used in the Bible texts?” I will bet that the answer to this will most certainly confirm the real caricaturist images paraded by Clark.

Christians by far, even if their practice most certainly belies their creed in many respects, in general persist with the exclusive equation of Bible and Word of God. So it is justified to ask this question: How did we Christians land at this point? It appears to me that especially since the Reformation of the 16th century, we wanted our relationship to God, to be fully regulated by a document (only the scriptures! – sola scriptura). I think that even today the greatest temptation of the literate era for Christians is to position the Bible documentation between ourselves and God and in the process making the Bible replace not only the relationship with God, but sometimes even replacing God himself. More about this view follows soon.

Schniedewind explains the extremist positions in the study of the Old Testament. Such extremists according to Schniedewind want to push the date for the compilation of the Old

²³⁰ pp.12-13. Dake FJ 2010. *God's plan for man*. Dake is probably the epitome of a fundamentalist Christian intellectual dedicated to the text of the Bible as current (at the surface, as published). He also has a dose of American inerrancy. So it is remarkable that this being the case he lists amongst others the following under the heading “What the Bible is not”: “The Bible is not a specimen of God’s skill as a writer or logician”; “The Bible is not a book of systematic discourses on any subject, but it does give divine information on practically every subject”. These phrases show the environment of a well-informed, hard-working and influential fundamentalist in evangelical and fundamentalist circles. Yet I am not sure if these statements are appreciated by all those faithfully using his publications.

²³¹ Clark JD. (Accessed 2015.01.01). *Is The Bible the Word of God?*

Testament completely into the Persian period (6th century BCE). He starts off by giving researched reasons why the development of general literacy in Israel and Judaea occurred only in the 8th and 7th centuries BCE. Up to that time the oral tradition was supreme in carrying the content of the Old Testament – he questions references to writing practices made in the Pentateuch. He gives reasons why the scribes of king Hezekiah of Judaea were actually the ones who performed most of the textualisation (writing down) of the original but orally transmitted contents of the Old (First) Testament. He further believes that it was during the reign of King Josiah that the authority of the text became supreme. Along the way Schniedewind also points out that there was a time in the Middle East when writing and text were actually viewed as divine and even an art of the gods. In non-literate communities this makes sense as a power mechanism both for the government and for the priestly classes. This pre-literate view of a “holy writ” as pure magic was then fossilised in the fourth to first centuries BCE – but even at that time in Judea this view of the Holy Writ was supported only by the Sadducees and the priestly class.

My viewpoint throughout this booklet is that both the oral and the textual are subordinate ways of how we relate to the ultimate will, love and interventions of God. But it appears that the misplaced loyalty and commitment to the Bible by Christian communities has a Jewish sectarian origin – not denying that this was probably in line with Egyptian and Sumerian precursors in the power games of temple politics. This basic attitude was further reinforced by a perversion of the very valid concern during the Renaissance period to find and accurately use the original documents in the classics.

Some interesting snatches from this history may be worth mentioning: For the Hasidic Jews, Johnson says, “the Torah and God were actually one, and divine energy, as it were, was stored up in the letters of the Book”.²³² I consider such a position as panic faith at best, but in reality it amounts to plain and pure superstition. There were more surprising things believed by some odd rabbis, such as that the Torah existed long before the creation: “Rabbi Akiva thought it was ‘the instrument of creation’ as though God read out of it like a magician reading from his book”.²³³ Johnson further tells how Maimonides rejected the following view that existed at his time: “Pious Jews saw heaven as a vast library, with the Archangel Metraton as the librarian”.²³⁴

²³² p.297. Johnson P. 1987. *A History of the Jews*

²³³ p.179 op. cit. Unbelievable. On the same page: Others even believed the Pentateuch preceded creation by 2000 years!!

²³⁴ p.190 op. cit.

Such views as these made God dependent upon the Bible and in effect deny that the Bible, as a tool, is – like all other reports – only referring to things other than itself and also outside of itself. At the most basic technical level it remains a memory support. But the further obvious point has to be made in this environment: The report can never ever replace the event itself. Without saying more at this stage it seems that the overblown respect of many Protestant and Reformed believers for the Bible comes close to this somewhat embarrassing naivety inherited from a pious if misguided and very small collection of rabbis with a particular habit of fetish for the written text. But it influenced millions of fundamentalist Christian Bible users towards a superstitious view on the Bible texts. And the practice of ritually elevating documentation to divine or semi-divine levels persists to even recent decades. It also appears in another garb and inside circles that are not necessarily very aware of the nature of their own religion. Bernard Stiegler (born 1952) is reported to attend to the practice of writing as a memory-technique in his quest for profiling cultural disorientation at the end of the twentieth century. J Rossouw²³⁵ reports that Stiegler raised the practice of writing to a “transcendent, animating status”. Stiegler then re-interprets the monotheistic religion and in particular Christianity “as an achievement of orthographic writing”. This certainly outdoes the claim by Akiva, the second century shepherd turned rabbi.

Rossouw in his critique reveals many of the unjustified assumptions in the Stiegler text. He questions the elevation of writings above “ritual” by Stiegler. Rossouw apparently ascribes a deeper-than-church status to “ritual” which is anthropologically justifiable. But what I miss in his presentation is any questioning of the elevation of writing above the actual events, inclusive of rituals. Important as our modern ability is to create, access, consult and manipulate text, it appears unfortunate to elevate this practice to the level as was done by Stiegler, Akiva and many others who will be remembered more as “people of the text” rather than “people of God”.

I see the ultimate reference point of the Biblical text as the search for logos as a “word” before and beyond the text, beyond the ritual, beyond the oral tradition.²³⁶ Schniedewind being an Old Testament scholar does not appear to be aware of this even as he occasionally moves into the New Testament. It has to be remembered that even the very practice inside the Gospel of John by calling the Christ, “word” is another instance of our deification of the

²³⁵ Rossouw J. 2014. *Bernard Stiegler se teologie van skrif en die disoriëntasie van Westerse moderniteit*.

²³⁶ See previous discussions of the Dooyeweerd heritage and references to Lawson on the ancient profile of “logos”.

technology of writing or of oral narration as it continued into the first century, becoming even more important after the fall of Jerusalem when the diaspora culture without temple was cemented. But looking for a second time at the this famous Johnine explanation, and in terms of the awareness partly captured in this document, we can see that on the one hand it pays homage to the elevation of the written or spoken word to divine status as the priestly and palatial officials would prefer it. But on the other hand, in line with the disenchanting and secularizing biblical style of dealing with current cultural heritages of the time, John is also disabling such a deification of the lingual “word” concept inside the very sequence of paying homage to it: Not our scribbling, not our reading and decoding, but by knowing the meaning of the Christ yes by making both an inner individual and a communal connection and commitment to whom God is – as in John 5:37-40.²³⁷

In summary then, considering the study of the textualisation of the Biblical content by Schniedewind, we have good reason to say that the undue reverential clinging to a primitive text reflects a preliterate attitude of undue respect for literacy, the art of scribing and of creating literary products. These attitudes dominated in a historical phase where palace or temple, often in conjunction, but by today’s standards of a differentiated society, unduly so dominated the entire society by posing as the sole recipients, custodians, users and interpreters of the divine arts of writing, reading and interpretation. These power-keys of memory and authority which attributed towards a cult of creating a holy writ were revived in the Protestant and Renaissance golden era and then fossilised as part of a general fundamentalist heritage not unconnected to attitudes in some of the Jewish and most Muslim societies, framing them as the “People of the Book”. What the extreme fundamentalist position usually does not appreciate is that the royal scribes and the priestly scribes were at the very beginning already infecting the original texts with their own agendas. Schniedewind shows this heritage convincingly in the case of the Old Testament. This simply means that not only does the Bible have to be studied exegetically; we also need to take into consideration the contextual agendas of the interest groups at the time and whose scribes did the writing. And that is well-argued by Schniedewind.

An even more chilling realisation of the colour and odour of the scribal hand is the way in which Genesis 1 was rendered. Middleton²³⁸ displays evidence how creation is presented as a great temple/ tabernacle for God and like any temple of the time it was furnished with

²³⁷ p.126 Hooker MD. 2003. “For Paul the ‘canon’ is not Scripture itself, but Christ, which means that Scripture must be read in the light of Christ. Where is wisdom to be found? Not in the written Torah – not even in the epistles of Paul! – but in the living Christ.”

²³⁸ pp 81-88 Middleton JR 2005 *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1*

an “idol”, a statue one could say, of the God, namely humankind. And this imago dei is like God in the sense that mankind is to create in a secondary sense but even so parallel to God. To conclude the parallel with the story of creation, when the tabernacle was built, the very same expression for the spirit that came over the two (creative) tabernacle builders (Exodus 31) is the exact same rare one that was used in Genesis 1:1 when the spirit hovered pregnantly over the empty nothingness. In this sense Genesis 1 is ascribed as of priestly origin since the dominant imagery shows that professional working (templic) environment. But the hands of the royal (palatial) scribes are there as well, given the rulership understanding of humanity. So we are confronted with both the benefits of metaphor and the limitations of competing professional perspectives in the very opening pages of the Pentateuch. Being aware of the imagery is important. And of course all multiple imagery enriches our understanding. But it works best only when used in one direction, only when understood as a part-contribution. If the templic imagery is used to describe creation, it does not mean that in a reverse direction the temple is for that reason sanctified (elevated) more than are other human activities and institutions. Lubbe, in discussing the uses of metaphor in theological models as presented by Van Huyssteen says the following (my translation):

“Such models should retain the same openness, provisional nature and referential status as the metaphors from which they were constructed in the first place. A tendency to award an exclusive permanence to a model is an indication of the presence of ideological motives”²³⁹

The technical limitations of “sola Scriptura” are now evident to me. And looking back in history, the reality for Christians is the following: The humanists – who then were almost all also Christians – already in the eighteenth century moved beyond the classics (documents) and towards empirical science (studying creation itself)²⁴⁰. But especially the very pious and fundamentalist Christians are to this day very slow and the large majority have still not moved beyond their “classics” towards a proper understanding of the way in which empirical reality was structured by the God of the Bible himself into a consistent character by providing a deep “logos” – and this was not done by the Bible itself, as would one Rabbi Akiva have it.

²³⁹ p.88. Lubbe JJ. 1990. *Ideologie en Teologie: Op pad na 'n ideologie-bewustheid* (My Translation of title: *Ideology and Theology: En route to an awareness of ideology*).

²⁴⁰ Hardy DW. 2003. “Reason, Wisdom and the Interpretation of Scripture” In: Ford and Stanton (2003) reminds us about our presumption on the “primacy of texts” against the background of the Baconian contribution during in which a “decoupling” of “reasoning from its primarily text-connected use” and also of a “pluralizing of reasoning” (as per investigation in the nature of many things in the various sciences) occurred in this period of early modernity (p.71).

In chapter 1 it was discussed how towards the end of the 1960s some members of the Institute for Christian Studies (Toronto, Canada) followed the vision of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven which they initiated since the 1930s. They promoted a concept of the Word of God and I followed them. John Frame seriously questioned these claims on the “Word of God” and we in that legacy should be grateful to him for demanding clarity on many matters that have been promoted without sufficient awareness of the full meaning of the items promoted (See Frame, *Dooyeweerd and the Word of God*). However Frame even as he showed sophistication in this matter seems to have missed the metaphorical side of any language usage by insisting relentlessly that the word “word” can only be lingual in meaning. He does not see that the word “word” itself could also be used metaphorically – pointing to something other than the lingual itself. So his response also highlighted many of the misunderstandings that could arise in communication with other members of the reformed public, its theologians and its clerical class.

In the 1960s the church politics and theological climate in the USA were against a mature usage of the contributions by the higher text criticism of the Bible. Few had the courage and foresight of a König even in a much more politicised South Africa to establish a position of integrity on this matter. The USA and Canadian colleagues in the PCI tradition were as afraid as we were in SA at the time. This faintheartedness has cost the movement dearly. Has the situation improved in the last 50 or 70 years? On the one hand the modernist challenges are still very strong as ever, even if weakened by the empirical studies in the sociology of religion on secularism as pointed out earlier. Williams (2003) showed how the text-critical position is being questioned not only from a fundamentalist position. The fundamentalists still claim inerrancy and much else for the Bible. They also seem to be smelling blood in the slowdown of harvest returns sown by the prophets of materialist secularism since the Enlightenment. Millions of pious Christians still treat the Bible or parts of it as a magical charm against all kinds of demonic attacks, perceived or otherwise while regiments of tele-preachers, complete with pom-pom girls, are fuelling their enthusiasm. And this will not improve soon. But there are signs of hope. A systematic biblical theologian like König, yes even when he, as the saying goes, moves three steps ahead and two back, still showed us valuable progress towards what he calls a renewed and responsible style of Bible reading. And there are many others. Nowadays we have the benefit of a much more mature and digested attitude towards textual criticism in Biblical literature, starting with a specialist like Schniedewind and a dogmatician like König making a lifelong contribution. We also have the work of Middleton who is firstly asking the relevant questions as an Old Testament scholar and secondly is handling the text both with respect and inside the appropriate context. His hermeneutics is altogether very helpful in any revision and better articulation of

the scriptural grounds that those in the Dooyeweerd-Vollenhoven legacy may consider referring to. And given globalism and the growth of the internet, more Christians like myself who are not academically positioned can electronically easily access both classic and current sources. And as we see swings between liberalism and conservatism in politics, we will most likely also see similar swings in practices of reading the Bible. I believe there will always be a thread of improved understanding that will not necessarily dominate the highways of mass-communication which also applies to networking between Christians.

In preparing this publication it was in the end refreshing, as a beneficiary in the Dooyeweerd legacy, to eat the humble pie dished up by König. He made a general challenge on understanding the Biblical presentation of creation that will apply to the Dooyeweerd tradition as well. He states justifiably that the Genesis 1 narrative gives no preference to “word spoken” as the chief or highest means of creation by God.²⁴¹ It is not sure yet if either Frame or Wolters for that matter would take the contributions by Schniedewind seriously. König for one, despite his contributions in early years, remained hesitant in addressing more aspects of the cultural baggage found in the Biblical texts as I will show in the next chapter.

So we may now ask: What is fundamentalism? Some sceptics and atheists would say that it is any person who takes the Bible seriously or at least treat it intimately. Such a description would include myself, so such a definition, given my own vanities, is not acceptable. I would rather follow Clouser (2005: 111) some of the way where he says that fundamentalism is the use of the Bible while making an encyclopaedic assumption. That is: The fundamentalist level is reached when one wants the Biblical scripts to provide an answer to every possible question that we can ever pose. So for example in matters of marriage, science and politics, we will obtain the final answer in the Bible, says the fundamentalist, according to Clouser. This is the kind of fundamentalism which I reject conditionally. Conditionally, because the Bible contains strands which undeniably are uniquely true, remained useful to this very day and which in addition also influenced western perceptions. I am also conditional on the Clouser position since it is not clear if he would for instance absorb the Williams and Schniedewind contributions or similar.

When the Biblical documents claim one creator God in the beginning and denying other divinities, it says by implication that the service of the Lord requires us to reject all absolutes other than him / her. So we have to take our commitment beyond desacralizing the cultic pillars for Baal in ancient Israel and similar towards new contexts, yet stay true to the Biblical

²⁴¹ pp.177-182.König A 1982a. Note: I have earlier on challenged and reformulated the Dooyeweerd assumption of a finished creation.

spirit. We have to take this task to those ideas or parts of whatever culture, scientific or other, where a section of reality has been presented as being the originator or creator or grand structuring agent or the final ground for the stability of all of cosmic reality. By making an assumption like that such ideas or movements are competing directly with God. And as the faithful we will need, with much empathy (Seerveld), to confront the followers of such false gods all over the place, also in science and in everyday life – not forgetting that we ourselves are also prone to idolatry, we also are adrift in the slipstream of other idolatries and people practising such idolatries wholeheartedly are also humans just like ourselves. Let us not fall into the trap of demonising our opponents in a bloodthirsty search for yet another scapegoat (Girard) than the man from Nazareth.

But having said that, yes, there is no way that the Bible can pose as an authority on many things. Of course this does not rule out any of the many valuable projects to see what the Biblical literature as well as closely associated sources indeed say on many things – after all it is part of our cultural heritage and we need not tone down our intimacy with it. We only need to be very careful with what kind of authority we ascribe there.

As we have seen earlier, the respected AM Wolters, even as he is aware of the nuances in the Bible, still advised that it makes more sense to stick to the theological practice of equating the Word of God = Bible = Word of God.²⁴² The reasons why I do not follow him in his separation of Word of God from will of God and law of God should by now be clear but it may be good to formalise:

- (a) The expression “Word of God” in numerous places in the Bible is not a document, as per the simplistic but convincing Clarke recipe mentioned but also in view of the Old Testament specialist like Schniedewind. Hence the technical singular meaning of “word of God” that is enforced by the guilds of theologians and professional church politicians (inclusive of the insertions and spins by the early priestly (Levite) or palatial scribes already at the time of Hezekiah and Josiah – as explained by Schniedewind) is out of line with some of many other Biblical texts which did survive tampering;
- (b) From a communications point of view I think that some inside the radically reformed community are – in abandoning earlier positions – overdoing their efforts to heal the breach with mainstream Evangelic, other Protestant and Calvinian theology. I mean this: There are traditions (e.g. the millennialist Dake) which equate the Bible with the Law of God. Hence for many prospective sympathisers to the Philosophy of the Cosmomic

²⁴² p.19. Wolters 1985.

Idea, nothing is gained by ignoring the ambiguities (alternatives) inside the Biblical texts themselves regarding the expression “word of God”.

An additional reason why we should also search divine footprints outside of the Bible is strengthened by a whole set of “open-ended” biblical texts that could make sense only if there is a wider presence of God’s will and guidance inside created reality than only that part of God’s revelation which is reported in the Bible – Williams and Hooker as mentioned earlier. These are texts which typically omit any reported detail prescription by God. The following – most of which were already listed earlier – are to be considered: Psalm 144:1; Proverbs 8; Exodus 20:17; 31:1-11; Isaiah 28:23-29; Luke 19:11-25; 1 Corinthians 10:31. See also the gifts of the Spirit in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12 and 1 Peter 4. The very fact that these lists differ, calls for intellectual explanations and a reconciliation on the basis of a Holy spirit-filled heart. This open-endedness assumes a common understanding (wisdom) that also operates outside the text of the Bible: It assumes a connection between the Creator God and the conditioned regularities of a good creation and it also assumes the guidance by the Holy Spirit given to a repenting and trusting heart. So such open-endedness may also refer to the natural (i.e. created) law given by God since creation and which has also been maintained by God’s grace. Hence the discussion in reformed circles on the difference between special and common (universal) grace is useful. But apparently the legacy of Dooyeweerd on an active creational law-consciousness still has to be superseded. Some current discussions on natural law may possibly point to a revival of interest in natural law.²⁴³ But only time will tell if this revived interest in natural law will go beyond the determinist limitations that came with Asian clothes to the Greeks²⁴⁴ during the last centuries B.C. In other instances it came with a moralist focus in the Thomistic tradition which is also a limitation.

The Christian communities, in spite of their verbal commitment to the leading by the Holy Spirit, could in most cases not get beyond their excessive dependence upon the Biblical documents and remained notoriously unsure in the worlds outside of the Bible, church, dogma and theology.

²⁴³ Woo BH 2012. *Pannenberg’s Understanding of the Natural Law*. On pp 16-32 Goudzwaard B. 1979. *Capitalism and Progress* discussed the changes which the concept of natural law underwent from medieval times until the Enlightenment.

²⁴⁴ Lawson 1991.

2.6 Concluding view

Looking back on the first two chapters of this document, it appears as an obvious conclusion that the main traditional view of the three biblical expressions “kingdom”, “body of Christ” and “word” should be expanded with more believability beyond a book, beyond a church building, beyond a church organization and most certainly beyond the christian churches in their ecumenical association with each other. While this has been said all along by many people it has painfully so not been maintained consistently. The arguments and narratives in this publication are attempts at salvaging more consistency.

In the second chapter I surveyed and discussed how a very diverse collection of christians like König (a relatively popular South African theologian), Munroe (the previously Bahamas-based internationally popular tele-preacher in evangelical and dominion circles) and Dooyeweerd (less-known Dutch Calvinian philosopher) handle the explanations of creation, creational law and the Bible. Finally I tried to tie it all together in a section on how to live with the Bible in an era of (potentially) wonderfully informed christian thinking: My question then is: Are we failing the opportunity of our historically uniquely privileged situation? I will think our situation is the following:

Firstly there is a growing scepticism and even offensive atheism about the core message from God as captured in the Bible. This remains the case even as currently there is a revival of spiritual awareness. Secondly it is a concern that the simplistic views of many christians regarding the Bible and the accompanying fundamentalism are not disproving the scepticism of those following the worldly faiths. And like in any war the escalation of claims and counterclaims starts feeding on the offensive-defensive energy of the self and the other.²⁴⁵ The battle in the end almost finds its own momentum, dictating its own needs, becoming a monster which none of the parties originally intended. This battle of the opposing forces – sceptical worldliness against enthusiastic fundamentalist christians – has to be transcended and a better way forward has to be found. While many have been at this point before, the results were often a grand capitulation to the forces of a materialistic worldliness. The set of arguments provided here is an attempt to move into a phase of spiritual engagement that still retains the core christian message, even as that which I propose is in effect a special case of secularising the Bible, secularising the Organised Church and secularising Providence. Such secularisation is intended to benefit from the post-critical awareness without “ignoring the critical moment” as was well-stated by Williams. In the final chapter I will attempt a synthesis of my understanding of Word 1 (the covenant – that assumes a free people) and Word 2 (a

²⁴⁵ pp. 70-72. Senge PM 2006. *The Fifth Discipline: The art and practice of the Learning Organisation*.

created law that is non-determinist) and how such a model can influence our interpretation of the problematic contents of the Bible on explaining God's hand in our lives.

The following table is an overview of the problem field that I have covered so far and provide a complementary perspective to the graphic at the end of Chapter 1:

<= The great divide¹ =>		
Kingdom of God vs Body of Christ; Organised Church vs Body of Christ	Creation From and towards God. A variety of created laws ² .	Kingdom of the world (Worldliness) Idols of all kinds: Sacralising / divinising created aspects, entities, processes...
Word 1 (Covenant)	Word 2 (Creation)	
=>The common ground: Word 2 (Created laws)³<=		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>The spiritual split between God's people and the forces of Evil is firstly a communal opposition. But this divide also runs through the hearts of the people of God and it also fractures what we as christians ourselves do: our practices, our culture, our churches etc. (See the revised description of the polarity of nature and grace and of incarnation).</i> 2. <i>Our finding of the created law is a struggle: Our understanding of it grows all the time.</i> 3. <i>Created reality and the laws by which it operates are shared ground between the forces of evil, God's people and those who do not even care. These laws – maintained by God in the Christ – hold all and everything together and make it possible that we can communicate and live with those who do not share our Christian faith.</i> 		

Against this background the following forms of the word of God can be distinguished:

- The Creational Word (Word 2 in this document).
- The Covenant Word (Word 1 in this document).
- The Redemptive Word (Word 1 in this document).
- The Christ as Logos (Word).

These words are distinct yet they have much in common. The commonality is not necessarily a sameness, but they all show a God-initiative and intent and as such they require our answers. As a set they also confirm that as much as we, as humankind, may be responsible for our own predicaments, we also have the assurance that everything is not entirely dependent upon us. We have these words as a liberating and vision-potent starting point, yes as a gift from God for all our communal-cultural work. These “words” are enabling “words” and they are also promises of God's maintenance of his originally good creation.

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Chapter 3

HOW FAR IS GOD IN CONTROL OF EVERYTHING?

3.1 Is the Biblical text going two ways?

Several church men of a more fundamentalist persuasion will diligently explain that the culture and the behaviors and the attitudes what God expects of us are “the same yesterday today and tomorrow”. And so is God as well, they will say. And such claims are indeed supported by such Bible texts as 1 Samuel 15: 29; Malachai 3: 6 and James 1: 17. However, when we look at the details of the stories in the Old Testament that report on how this God operates we see alternative features, both of God and of his requirements to his covenant partners, that is Nation (People) of God or Body of Christ. It appears that the behaviour of God as described in the Bible is seriously at odds with the popular bumper-sticker dogmatics promoted by most serious Christians. Working through the Bible we soon see that we are also dealing with a dynamic God who, although he or she does many things unilaterally, he or she also stays open to negotiate and even compromise with humankind. And this was the case long before Paul gave his wonderful descriptions of the freedom for the children of God, especially in the letter to the Galatians. So consider the following strands already clear inside the Old Testament:

- (i) God’s series of amazingly *open-ended conversations* with Moses and Abraham.
- (ii) The granting of divorce practices, the temple building projects and the establishment of a monarchical system – *all things that God initially rejected* in principle.
- (iii) Ezekiel, Amos and Jonah all report how God *changed his initial intentions* in dealing with them.
- (iv) As history developed, God gave an appropriate covenant for every new era which added to what he previously said (Adamite, Noahite, Abrahamic etc. covenants – some authors count up to thirteen²⁴⁶ covenants!). It is not, I think, that God could not make up his mind. It is precisely because he minds new situations and the level of readiness of a community.²⁴⁷ A cumulative-progressive “theology” on God’s promises and demands becomes possible in response to developments in the history of Israel as a community and God’s responses to it – continuing to our times and beyond.

²⁴⁶ p.10. Charlesworth M. *The Covenants in the Old Testament*.

²⁴⁷ Van der Walt states it directly: “God is not a *Deus immutabilis* at all. He goes along with human history”: p. 527. Van der Walt B.J.2011. *Flagging philosophical minefields at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) – reformed Scholasticism reconsidered*.

In view of the above I am very careful NOT to paint God in general as a one-trick pony. I think it suits us to box him / her in that way for purposes of formulating our statements of dogma, but that is also an attempt to make “him” conform permanently to our understandings and expectations which are built on our limited capacities and current experiences. I also do not want to present him as a micro-managing puppet master, one that plans and causes everything that happens in the world (fatalism). There are then, no surprise, also texts in Scriptures that contradict claims on micro-management. When we look at Genesis 1 and Genesis 9 and also at Deuteronomy 28-29 we see that humankind is presented as both responsible²⁴⁸ and free. But such freedom is clearly not the case when we look at God’s merciless manipulation of the embattled Pharaoh in Exodus 7-12 (an interpretation also confirmed by Romans 9: 11-18). There it seems as if that suffering man had no freedom whatsoever over some very important decisions in his life. Another Bible text that supports the perception on God’s handling of the Pharaoh, reads: “The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases..” (Proverbs 21:1). Hence the Belgic Confession (1561/1985), Article 13 could write: “The Doctrine of God’s Providence: We believe that this good God, after he created all things, did not abandon them to chance or fortune but leads and governs them according to his holy will, in such a way that nothing happens in this world without his orderly arrangement.... that nothing can happen to us by chance.” Since I chose for both an orderly arrangement in nature and society alongside a coincidental and free universe, I must question the implied caricature slur made in the implication of “abandon” and I most certainly question the micromanagement practices attributed to God in the rest of the Belgic Confession which in many places makes for a depressing reading experience.

So should we – as Bible-minding Christians – take such a single instance as that of Mr Farao and on that basis alone promote a universal assumption that all humans at all times are simply executing the decisions already taken by God? Could we on this unstable basis conclude that every little or every large event in the lives of individuals also originate from God? Should we like the Gomarean-Calvinist fathers of Dordt, like most other Christians and most certainly like many pagans of antiquity,²⁴⁹ advocate that God indeed works like an unstoppable blind force of fate in our lives? It seems clear to me that Calvin and especially

²⁴⁸ pp.54-55. Wolters AM 1985. Wolters says that we cannot blame the Satan for our mistakes. But true to his Calvinian background Wolters does not entertain the following question, posed boldly and honestly by intellectuals through the ages, recently also by König and other open theists: Is God indeed by intent or by approval responsible for the many bad things that happen in life to all kinds of people?

²⁴⁹ Lawson. JN. 1991. *Mesopotamian Precursors to the Stoic Concept of Logos*

his successors ²⁵⁰ were far too sure of their conclusions in terms of both the very inconclusive scriptural references and also, most embarrassingly so, in terms of plain common sense.

I decided after some time that incidents like the manipulation of the Pharaoh and other similar interventions by God in history do not in general represent the way in which God prefers to rule his kingdom. He prefers his original plan, namely that we live and work both freely and responsibly but still in obedience to his creational norms, the norms which sustain both ourselves and our environment. And yes, that our good creation develops towards full splendor according to the opportunities provided by time and chance. God still maintains the frameworks of his creation – after all these remain his own work, his word or will or laws. And he does that regardless of how much humankind persists in the sinful and idolatrous attitude which they maintain collectively and which resulted in a multitude of sinful (unlawful) practices. Despite the sinful attitude and the many sins he still lets it rain on both the obedient and the disobedient (Matthew 5:45). Both God's patience and aversion to immediate intervention are well-recognised (Romans 2:4; also: the history of Israel.).

The question whether God is in control of everything is usually answered by statements in support of the dogmas of providence, predestination and salvific election. These dogmas are apparently intended to honour God. A set of unintended outcomes from such a radicalised understanding includes that humans will not take up the clear and Biblical responsibility for their own lives as God intended it for them. Secondly in our minds there is no other option except making God responsible for all the bad events, persons and organisations in history.²⁵¹ How can this be corrected? Given the lack of Biblical consistency and comprehensiveness as can be seen from the examples above, the least we can do is to develop our views on human freedom and responsibility in such a way that it honours the following Biblical principles:

²⁵⁰ The Calvinist view on predestination, both in a cosmic scope and in our personal lives, is far more embarrassing than either most critics or most uncomfortable loyalists believe. In my opinion the deadlock between Arminianism and Gomarean Calvinism (as it played out at the Synod of Dordt) is weakened but not solved by the emergence of open theism and process theism. See the following discussions:

a) Drury JL. (accessed 2015.04.06) Review Essay: RE. Olson, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities*.

b) Hendryx J. (accessed 2015.01.14). *How to Answer the Arminian Charge that Calvinism is Fatalistic*.

²⁵¹ Debates in the so-called "national" Reformed Synod of Dordt in 1618 - 1619 in the Netherlands probably made the most forceful statement on predestination. Some smaller studies have in recent decades highlighted the cultural-political background that probably facilitated the hard line taken on that issue.

- Our joyful gratitude about the grace of God to people for inviting us as partners to his covenant,
- The Godly creatorship (kingdom as a working universe) and the difference between us and God,
- The equally Godly requirement for responsible stewardship towards his good creation.
- The ability of God to intervene on behalf of whatever future purposes he-she may have in mind.

I have attempted to argue the double and simultaneous requirement of, on the one hand, the law maintenance by God and on the other hand, the imperatives for all kinds of human freedom. I have also tried to stress that freedom is only possible on the basis of enabling laws. Hence the created laws are viewed as life-enabling. When one appreciates that aspect of creational laws, then the exercised freedom will to a large extent reflect lawfulness. Hence inside the following graphic the darker frame of laws is also conceived as creating a fertile aura-like presence (Klapwijk would say “germinating” but I am not that sure) inside the containing enclosure for freedom:

The Variety / Freedom / Selfdynamics / Coincidence / Spontaneity / Creativity / Control which are displayed by both Humankind and by all other Physical and Biotic Entities in the universe ²⁵² – amidst restrictive and necessary conditions.

The Supporting, Enabling and Live-giving Created Law given by God

The rationale to this simple graphic which could only with difficulty be reconciled with any fatalism, helped me to find a way towards a special definition of divine “omnipotence” ²⁵³ (kingdom) and human freedom.²⁵⁴ It shows in my mind how human freedom is intended as a

²⁵² Stafleu MD 2017 *Open Future* “Twentieth-century science has made clear that lawfulness and randomness coexist, as conditions for an open future.” (± p 11-12). Both the Stafleu title (*Open Future*) and this quotation taken together is probably the most directly challenging statement that could be found from the Dooyeweerdian circle against the persistent Gomarean legacy that still saturates much of the supposed piety in Calvinian circles from which much PCI support is drawn.

²⁵³ See pp.201-237. König A. 2002. *God, waarom lyk die wêreld so?* (My translation of the title: *God why is the world as it is?*). One sometimes also find similar well-formulated statements of this view in unlikely places: The otherwise fundamentalist Craig Hill, says as part of his guides for Family Foundations, *Ancient Paths Seminar 2* (± 1995), p3: “God is sovereign but he is not in control.” Amazing. I cannot help but wonder – as with similar sayings by Munroe – who amongst the many tens of thousands of course goers in this popular programme truly appreciated what they were reading?

²⁵⁴ pp. 156-159. König 2002. König has not yet shown any support for a creation-wide law structures which is much more subtle and much more enduring than any notion of the eschatology (end-times theory) that theologians like him love so much.

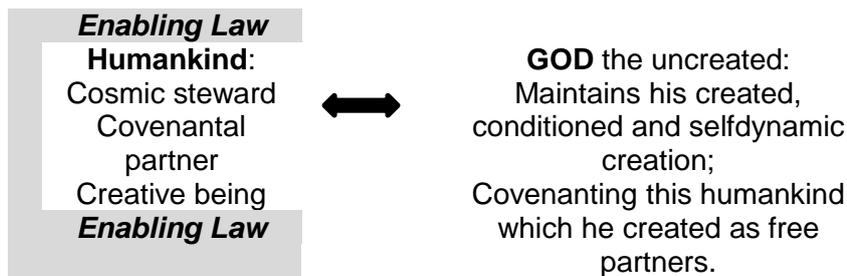
law conforming responsibility (covenant, obedience and stewardship). It also links back to the presentation of the Dooyeweerdian view of the comprehensive presence of the created law (section 2.4).

Adrio König stated some obvious arguments that are in line with that of open theism. He promoted a carefully nuanced understanding of the concept of omnipotence and this is promoted in tandem with the notion of how being all-encompassing and very powerful does not justify the notion of “almighty” in the Greek sense of the word “pankrator”. “Pankrator” he argues does not have any Hebrew equivalent. The popular but often incorrect translation of the Old Testament at the time, the Septuagint, used that word. König also showed that humans have free play inside the bigger plan of God and this is due to the kind of covenant which God himself erected with people in order to match his original intent for finding partners that are participating, free and responsible – see next graphic.

This rationale also helped me to tackle the other important question: Does God know EVERYTHING in advance? My answer is simple: No. The reason is also simple: Because by God not knowing is the only way that we, the people, can live as the kind of humans which God himself intended us to be. König²⁵⁵ says that he prefers the eschatological covenant theology since “it creates space for the actual role of humans to, next to God, realising the covenant.” (see next graphic). Wolters and Calvinists of all brands will condone such an “open theist” conclusion only under very unusual circumstances. Calvinists in general I believe are overreacting to the humanist hubris of militant atheism which we have often seen over the past 200 years – matching and surpassing the misplaced and arrogant confidence of christians over the centuries. Being so very overcautious many christians refrain from taking hold of the full scope, that is of an active and a participating partnership (covenant) with God. Especially conservative christians are hesitant to see the covenant as a basis for a respectful but bold friendship relationship between God and humankind. The implication is that they refrain from a full commitment to the image of God.²⁵⁶ For that purpose another graphic is presented:

²⁵⁵ p.120. König op. cit. On p.363. König A 1988. *Kingdom Theology and Covenant Theology* (my translation of title). See the expectancy of a *not-knowing-the-future* God in Genesis 2:19!

²⁵⁶ I will not deal here with the opposite pole where some Christians in over-confidence and in a disrespectful pretense of over-familiarity treat God as either a lucky charm or a messenger boy.



It is only when we follow the direction of König and others that we arrive at the Biblical point where we could confirm the “heretical” hunch of a God-designed lack of foreknowledge (blind-side) on the side of God which is the basis for all meaningful human relationships.²⁵⁷

The three terms Providence, Predestination and Salvific Election are seldom defined in relation to each other. Even if there are overlaps between them, I believe they can still be differentiated and hereby presents my description as follows: *Providence* is mostly about the maintenance of creation as God’s care on the law side; but it also allows for some limited interventions. The notion of *Predestination* does not necessarily make God into a micro-manager; but it is often making much of God’s continued intervention, e.g. to promote a leader or a nation like Israel – this is denied by deists of all kinds. *Salvific election* is not focused on the micro management of all of anybody’s affairs but is only targeted on the destination of an individual after death. But great care is to be displayed here as well. This election remains an opportunity to be taken up and it could be lost - as did Israel.

In this low-toned presentation above I attempted to not only separate but also to interrelate these three ideas that have been so harmful in the Christian and especially in the Reformed heritage.²⁵⁸ But Christians in general are not interested in finding or using the nuances attempted in the description above. Here is the problem: Usually these three concepts are

²⁵⁷ This is different from the ‘manco pose’ that God sometimes takes on as well-described by Calvin in his remark against the Anthropomorphites: “For who is so devoid of intellect as not to understand that God, in so speaking, lisps with us, as nurses are wont to do with little children? Such modes of expression, therefore, do not so much express what kind of a being God is, as accommodate the knowledge of him to our feebleness. In doing so, he must, of course, stoop far below his proper height.” Pp. 81-82 (I.13.i) Calvin, J. (1964; electronic:2002), *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

²⁵⁸ On pp.275 ff *Spykman 1992* presented variations on the theme but could in my view stil not escape from the negative sides of Calvinist views on providence as predestination in a very comprehensive sense. This was evident already when he said “We live in a predefined world” (p. 179). Although elsewhere he is somewhat sensitive to human responsibility, his view of “creational order” is not sophisticated enough to provide the required limitations to this statement which if not cushioned exceptionally well, would only further promote the perception of a reformed philosophy not able to deal with coincidence in factual reality, thus not just a “perception”.

lumped together in a gravy dish of folk belief consisting of anything from Article 13 of the Belgic Confession to some astrological and New Age notions of destiny. That concoction usually assumes the underlying fatalist notions of antiquity, whereby everything, both regular and uncontrollable in human lives is pushed to the extreme and the spin on all that pushing stays consistently biased toward an all-controlling God, obscuring his initial plan which was to establish a durable but fallible and hence a free covenantal relationship.

But let us drive at the heart of the matter: there is an elementary reality that has to be considered: foreknowledge on long-term-issues is possible only in simple mechanical operations, e.g. a clock or the mechanics of planetary motion like the earth, the moon and their cycles as Isaac Newton was to demonstrate convincingly sometime well after but still in the same century as the Synod of Dordt. Beyond that limitation on the possibility of foreknowledge, the events which we see as they happen are dependent upon the plans and the intent inside the minds of the most unpredictable creatures in the universe: Humans. Since we know then that humans are mechanical only to a limited extent, any foreknowledge about their intent and actions is also limited. This is not denying that God, who obviously has such an intimate understanding of humans and of individuals that his guesswork will be very accurate most of the time! But I think that arguments which attempt to justify the foreknowledge of God by saying he stands outside of time (the true part) are simply trying to justify the residue of mechanical fatalism (the partly true part) in the Biblical texts without taking Biblical texts with a contrary message into account.

3.2 A mighty God; a created, open and interactive universe

König studied the so-called predestination of all events and decisions in his controversial 2002 publication.²⁵⁹ In this work he positions himself against the heathenish conception of an original, primal, dark and blind fate that portions out both bad and good luck to people. König concludes that there is no difference – protests notwithstanding – between the views of staunch Calvinists with their teaching of providence / predestination / election on the one side and the heathenish belief in blind fate on the other. The critique that König offers, I believe, also opens up the way to create additional common ground between the philosophically radical reformed approach and the more evangelical approach – given the so-called sectarian Pelagian and Arminian sympathies in these last mentioned circles. Other important contributions by König in that publication are the following:

²⁵⁹ König A. 2002. *God, waarom lyk die wêreld so?* (My translation of title: *God, why is the world as it is?*)

- König shows how JA Heyns²⁶⁰ argued more like Arminius (died in 1609) and less like John Calvin (died in 1564). On the question of the “hand of God” that Calvin sees in the bad things that happen to people, König says: “With a God like this, one does not need a devil”.²⁶¹
- König shows how the church father Irenaeus already in the second century portrayed God’s engagement with the world as an on-going battle²⁶² with limited victories here and there. König argues that since God selected this road of battle and partial victory it is important that we revise the so-called “omnipotent” powers that are regularly ascribed to God. God respects the capacity for free play which He structured into humankind - resulting in either the actualised freedom or in the loss of freedom. For that reason God “cannot” force anybody. With great care König then formulates his conclusion that as God limited his power, from that followed his troubles in convincing Israel (and people in general) to take him at his promises. “The possibility of sin is the price God has to pay for gaining a true covenantal partner” (my translation – CPC) (p.120). This statement by König – implying a risk-taking God – has strong implications for providence / predestination / salvific election as in the reformed confessional documents and with other historical statements of faith – as was pointed out in a review by Van Wyk.²⁶³

In view of the contradictions which I experienced previously, I found myself a natural recipient of the König view against predetermination. I am also very grateful that this issue has been opened up inside the reformed discussion spaces in SA.

As a test one may consult a run-of-the-mill thesis on God’s control of creation which was submitted for the Doctor Theologiae at a reformed theological faculty of theology like the University of the Free State. It was submitted in 1994.²⁶⁴ This document served as an illustration of the strains and stresses on the believing and teaching of the Providence group of concepts in classic Calvinist theology. This study parades all the support for such concepts in the reformed confessional texts and also lists additional debates and practices of

²⁶⁰ pp.156-158.op.cit.

²⁶¹ p.79.op.cit.

²⁶² This battle is about the hearts of the people and not about the domestication of some uncreated primal force predating the ruling paradigm of a demiurge creation as in the Middle East. The previous references to both König and Middleton apply.

²⁶³ Van Wyk JH. 2002. *Die mens wik maar God beskik? In gesprek met Adrio König oor sy eskatologiese, verbondsmatige voorsienigheidsleer* (My translation: *Humans plan but God concludes: In discussion with Adrio König on his eschatological covenantal view of providence*)

²⁶⁴ Maré R. 1994. *God se beheer van Sy Skepping (The Control by God of His Creation – my translation of title)*

faith not addressed by König. It also parades the standard paternalistic warnings to believers to refrain from asking how God's providence (in a detailed sense) could stand alongside his requirements for human responsibility, the goodness of God, etc. Usually once the contradictions get too heavy to handle, the theologians and church officials – and even a philosopher like Dooyeweerd – take refuge by starting talk about the “mystery”.²⁶⁵ There is also an associated suspicion mongering against phrases like the “intervention of God”²⁶⁶ or that God “responds” to our prayers.²⁶⁷ The faithful in addition are pontificated to not attempt drilling into the enigma of God's counsel.²⁶⁸

Thankfully König ignored all such paternalistic warnings and frowning down from Biblical authors, theologians and the priestly caste and pushed through to the core of the issue. But even so I would have appreciated it if König in 2002 would have processed the references to providence in the Bible in the same manner that he has done with the Biblical presentations of the creation by God – as he did in his 1982 publication. To be fair, König has indeed as seen earlier on started some of this process by questioning the Septuagint-inspired but unjustified Greek translation of a very strong and mighty God as an “Almighty” God, a concept not known in the original Hebrew.

So in conclusion to this second discussion of contributions by König I view it necessary to conduct a thought experiment by growing some of the seeds provided by the König practice and whom I always find all of responsible, creative and challenging. So firstly I take the approach used by König on creation (1982a). Secondly I consider his valuable work on divine predetermination in 2002. Then I attempt to triangulate from these two contributions towards the anticipated outcome of a more expansive study of fatalism in the Biblical texts. While what I do could only be viewed as a (speculative) hypothesis I am intuitively confident that what I say below will be confirmed by a closer scrutiny of the Biblical texts of which some were already indicated in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. Should one then attempt to predict along the König lines of thinking the outcome of a more comprehensive

²⁶⁵ p.82.op.cit. And so also do BJ van der Walt in his otherwise well-articulated overview of philosophical issues inside the Dordt controversies: Van der Walt B.J.2011.

²⁶⁶ p.87.op.cit. This bad habit in some Calvinian circles is further promoted by Klapwijk who, while selling a lot of other mysteries, almost deistically reject any role of God in further creation or involvement in creation. Over the ages the labelling of specific instances as a God-intervention was highly overrated in the general public. These days the commodification of claimed interventions is often seen with young athletes who in fits of piety and jubilation after victories on the sports field attribute their victory to the grace of God, implying intervention. While this practice is indeed questionable, the complete Deistic position should be guarded against equally even as I have previously stressed the relative autogenesis of creation.

²⁶⁷ pp.87;91. Maré op.cit.

²⁶⁸ Compare p.200.op.cit.

study of providence-predestination-election, I believe the outcome of such a thought experiment would be more or less as follows:

The Biblical authors were as much the victims of the pagan representations on fate as they were the victims of the pagan narratives of creation by the mid-Eastern gods who were honoured at the time.²⁶⁹ Contrary to what was the case with presentations on creation, the biblical authors all along came out very strongly for both the individual and the communal responsibility. Such a statement of responsibility of course flies directly into the face of the pagan perceptions on the all-encompassing power of fate which the biblical authors presented elsewhere.

The position then seems as follows: The contradiction between harbouring pre-creation forces in the narrative of creation inside the biblical texts is fairly weak, and most current readers will not even notice it, also because we have been taught all along and with good reason that the “almighty” God indeed created-out-of-nothing. More specifically we can say that the body of texts containing a heathenish residue of creation views is not as voluminous and certainly not as assertive in spirit as those that promote a fatalist perspective.

So when it comes to fatalism it is in some respects a very different situation. Firstly: The number of texts on both sides – individual responsibility versus fatalism – is numerous. One could even say that it is not simply a hermeneutical problem of certain texts; it is a structural fracture in the message – on which the Dordt contenders fed. One would

²⁶⁹ The confrontation of the Mid-Eastern heritages that sit inside the Biblical versions of the concepts of *creation* and *fate* are only two of a range of similar issues that we need to be aware of. Some additional matters are the similarity in public law, rituals and temple design which are shared between the Old Testament (Israel) and other Mid-Eastern cultures. In the New Testament we have the similarity between the Jesus chronicles and similar Roman, Greek and Persian narrative heritages on godly persons born from virgin mothers etc. The first answer that works well in a number of such cases is that such standard cultural, narrative and aesthetic devices were indeed used by the writers of biblical texts. But then these standard formats were endowed with a new meaning or content and then that new meaning, in the longer run, eroded the original heathenish contribution which expires. In this regard one can think of the human sacrifice that was almost committed by Abraham and of the apparent support for slavery in the New Testament. However using the assumption of a corrosive presence of the biblical message in a cultural packaging constitutes a hypothesis for dealing with similarities between biblical text and pagan heritages. It will need to be tested case by case. König has made some helpful initial contributions in several of his publications that will strengthen this promising approach to problematical Biblical texts. Of course not understanding this incarnational and liberating move of God in such cases is the source of many a misguided interpretation – locking inappropriately onto the heathenish practice included in the text – treating it as an instruction rather than as a “dead man walking” (See for example the handling of the blood revenge and refuge cities in the Pentateuch).

logically have expected that such a large body of contradiction in the Bible would have spawned a corrective action far sooner than the 21st century. I think the reason why it did not happen like that was because most responsible hermeneutical practices will grant prescriptive or revelation authority to a view only when that perspective is firstly repeated several times in the Biblical scriptures and secondly it must also be connected to the main lines of the Biblical message. And the presence of the heathenish fate theme in the Biblical text arguably answers to both these requirements even as a number of text distortions could be pointed out.

So the church fathers of the mainstream groupings probably found the task just far too daunting, given their previous commitments to the status of the Biblical texts and their teachings on providence and predestination – also living in ages when authoritarianism was the order of the day. The amount of biblical texts that would have to be either reinterpreted or even denied was just too many. Hence theologians and the other faithful left the problem unresolved, resorting to claiming such problems a “mystery” – which apparently became the fifth amendment of theology. And the claiming of mystery as shibboleth had the desired hypnotizing effect on most of the faithful and probably was the reason why it did not result in a perceived contradiction in the “communal mind” of the Bible readers.

Back to what König did: Along with many precursors he mainly problematized the hand of God in bad things and boldly stated that our concept of an all-powerful God in the traditional sense of the word is mistaken. The Biblical authors and the church fathers over the centuries could not have dared to make such a statement inside the times in which they lived and also not inside the theological-philosophical paradigm from which they worked and most certainly not in the hermeneutics used.

We also know that the Biblical authors simply did not have the benefit of our cosmological information and reflections. They could not appreciate random events and the limits of random events. They did not have our open communal debate on the full implications of human freedom and responsibility, also not of tolerance, pluralism and common public cause and how it influenced history. And then later on, once synodal debates became the order of the day, the given amount of fatalism-promoting texts in the Bible would by the sheer weight of repetition have prohibited both the earlier and the later church fathers from launching a rescue attempt on human freedom and responsibility - from an inspired Biblical perspective. They could not risk making a choice between the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the silent if suppressed contradictions posed inside the very same Biblical texts which they or previous generations fought so hard to canonise. In terms of the previous chapter the solid bumper-

sticker association between the notions of Word of God and the Biblical texts was simply too strong for the fundamentalists of all ages to dream of risking.

Sadly though, conservative Christian theologians today, with all the benefits of modernist text-criticism, comparative religion, post-modernist scrambling and natural scientific reflection, are still not developing an improved understanding of human responsibility, stewardship and freedom from a revised Biblical perspective – open theists like König being one of the exceptions in this case. While the dissertation on predestination which we consulted, as did Calvin and others, showed an awareness of the difficulty in reconciling responsibility with predestination, they usually opted for the safety of a warning that this field is a no-go area: Mystery, or like on the ancient maps of the world, where unexplored territories were marked: “Here dragons reside”.

The works of König which I consulted show an absence of arguments regarding a natural cosmic but created and Christ-maintained law. As explained before I view that as a serious shortcoming. If God is to keep every little thing in his hand all the time – which is what the alternative implies – there is no possibility of freedom for the covenantal partners in the usual sense of the word. But if God maintains laws that could also encourage variety and tolerate contradiction, things appear differently. Then we can indeed and for the first time imagine our God playing with some ancient monster or, alternatively understand how God could in the excitement of no foreknowledge “stalk” around in the garden of Eden to see and hear what Adam would call each animal (Gen 2:19).

We are then looking at a set of laws or law-like structures under which events can develop both naturally and unpredictably, where humans can believably make choices and where nonlinear (chaos) mathematics can stand next to other mathematics. If the case is indeed such, then the free play and responsibility, yes also randomness and coincidence become possible, even necessary, under the governing laws – not as an insult to God but as our confirmation of the inexhaustible richness which he gave and also enabled. But as it stands König, with no clear view on created law, has no means to explain how freedom of choice and coincidence in the first place became possible.

3.3 Some additional implications

Enemies or partners?

The points of principle on the question about the control that God has or does neither have nor claim over our lives have now been argued to some point of conclusion. However a closer look at the way in which Calvinian theologians and philosophers have evaluated the three strong and competing non-Christian confessional positions namely that of fatalism,

deism and heroic (hubric; self-righteous) humanism, may be in place. The Reformed but also many other theologians in general appear bent in advance on a simultaneous and complete rejection of these three as if they do not each have a justifiable logic of their own and yes, as if views expressed in the Biblical documents do not share much common ground with these “heresies”. Such a practice flies in the face of the wisdom and associated practices that we have attained in the time since the Biblical documents were written. To state the obvious: The proper process in any fair discourse should be to first survey without undue suspicion and also by recognising the large stretches of common ground shared between the more conservative Christian positions – which I would view as my basic but not final background – and these three “heretic” directions. The first two, fatalism and deism, are sometimes also called the “false friends”²⁷⁰ of providence and predestination.

Taking my rationale of a created reality with laws allowing for much free play into account I will state which common grounds are found and what are rejected in each case:

- a) **Fatalism** (determinism). Proponents of fatalism saw correctly that many events are outside the control of both individuals and communities – our daily lives are witness to that. Not only our circumstances but even our very decision-making limitations are often caused by our limiting traditions and / or figures of authority that we either esteem or fear. But the helplessness of individuals and communities gets overstretched in some explanations. As a result fatalism often becomes the default religion of the poor and the marginalised – seeing themselves apparently as the victims. Fatalism finally denies human responsibility and freedom.

It should be rejected on that point only, I believe.

Many things just happen. Neither God nor Satan nor any dark force imaginable can be awarded full responsibility for all of these. And viewing determinism / fatalism like that, also disables its capacity to obtain a position of ascribed spiritual dominance. Then we can simply refer to events or conditions that cannot be controlled by an individual. And by doing it this way we secularise fatalism. Then the Frankl-message, repeated by many motivational speakers, including christian preachers, including non-astrological New Agers, are probably correct when they claim that it is in most cases not so important what kind of disaster hits somebody. What matters is the response which that victim gives to the disaster. Of course, saying this from a relatively catastrophe-free life does not add much integrity.

²⁷⁰ p.64 ff. Maré op.cit.

b) **Deism.** Proponents of this position correctly saw that God's created law is important for a working universe and that such laws are the same for both those who believe and those who do not believe in Him and his deeds. This is a most basic statement on the conditioned and lawfulness of creation. This part of deism is completely justified: The created and maintained laws explain certain circular and linear movements at various levels. It fascinated Isaac Newton and others how beautifully orderly and predictable the majority of events in the physical world are and this strengthened the concept of Deism. But on the other hand Deism overappreciated the "rest" into which God went after the basic establishment of creation with its laws. In the process Deism denies the continuing covenantal relationship, the continual incarnation of the will of God into the factual side and the maintaining interventions that are implied by a covenant as God intended it from the very beginning. It will most likely also be shown that the law-concept of Deism was restricted to the mostly mechanical-like laws pursued by many in the natural sciences and this made it a foundational argument in support of materialism. Deism should be rejected only on these two points and not totally.

In these paragraphs I am looking only at the law concept of deism. There are other fruits of deism that could be assessed as well for instance their view on natural religion which in principle has some attractive and often valid features. However it also contains notions of the omniscience and omnipotence of God which I would prefer to see presented with more nuance and in line with previous considerations given in this booklet – given the problem of reducing all of reality to its mechanistic features.

c) **Heroic (optimistic) humanism.** This position is contrary to the previous two in most respects. Proponents of heroic humanism correctly saw the extent to which humans can shape both society and the face of a planet. This is the most elementary statement on the stewardship status awarded to humankind at the first day of the "covenant" with God – sometimes called the "works-covenant". Deism indeed functioned as a means to establish heroic humanism, i.e. because law-awareness opened up the means to manipulate creation once the laws are understood. Later on humanism then turned around and rejected not only God but even the creatureliness of the laws. This two-step implosion is what constitutes the origin of materialist secularisation and which gave further momentum to the rise of scientific atheism: secularisation hijacked by rationalist materialism. But even as this is the case, one should not reject the valid grounds (many of them biblically compatible) on which these misconceptions developed. Heroic/hubric humanism should be rejected on the following points only insofar as they are:

- Making humankind its own measure by denying the existence of pre-created laws.
- Seeing the human task as the right to exploit the natural systems and entities destructively and not one of caring stewardship.
- Over-appreciating the potential of “progress” – which we all want – as the crowning achievement of humankind. This tendency seems to forget that terms and conditions apply as with everything else in a law-compliant and limited universe. The paraphrased message from motivational author and Latter Day Saint, Stephen Covey should be heeded: Our decisions are made in line with our values but the consequences of our decisions follow from very old principles.²⁷¹ Progressivist optimism also seems to forget, and this is also noted by Covey, the deceitfulness of the human heart.

Especially Christians in the pietist tradition could learn much from hubric humanism in terms of what God intended humans to be as “image of God” and as carrying the associated stewardly functions, especially the balancing of administrative ruling with compassionate caring. Although much deism resulted in catastrophic industrialist capitalism²⁷² there is also another side of deism influenced by an awareness of human dependency upon non-human organic and other systems.

Attempts at finding and arguing common ground with alternative views may encourage a more intelligent and truthful communication with our more worldly brothers and sisters. That was the intention with this subsection. But in order to go full circle and loosen our birthstring with our dated culture I want to reflect in a somewhat more focused way on an aspect of our Reformed heritage, as associated with the orders of the Synod of Dordt and one article in the Belgic confession.

The Synod of Dordt and Article 36 of the Belgic Confession

Calvinism in the Netherlands of the early seventeenth century was submerged in the politics of the day. And, most likely as a result of the close association with politics, this environment produced what probably was the most forceful statement of predestination understood as salvific election. This came through the “national” Synod of Dordt over the years 1618-1619. Even as it apparently denied full fatalism by stating that humans are not “blocks and stones”

²⁷¹ pp. 40-43, Covey S 2008. *The 8th Habit*

²⁷² See the earlier reference to the Middleton discussion on the question if we were we created in “the image of a violent god”.

(Article 16 – which like the rest of the document does contain good stretches) the overall impact of Dort is that an Almighty God is not only the Sovereign but also the micro-manager in the lives of people. That very same sentiment is nowadays sometimes restated in bumper-sticker format as follows: “God is not only in charge but also in control”; “Lord of all or not Lord at all”. Over the last few decades there have been smaller studies to profile the political and societal forces that made the statement of salvific election in the Dordt documents as strict as it turned out.²⁷³ Hopefully this will be accounted for when the 400th anniversary of Dordt is celebrated soon and then at least some Reformed communities will hopefully reposition themselves on this matter in order to gain a more believable position. Achieving such a new position will also need to take into account many of the issues raised in this booklet and elsewhere.

At around the year 1610 the political background in the Netherlands could shortly be stated as follows: In the last two decades of the sixteenth century the seven northern provinces of the Netherlands were at war with the Spanish-backed royal Habsburg forces. The Spanish were by definition Roman Catholic. The ruling Calvinist classes in the northern provinces demonised Roman Catholics for claiming that people are saved by practising good deeds (salvation by works). On the other side of the battle line, as was claimed in a wartime mobilisation by caricature, were the Calvinists who self-congratulating portrayed themselves as believing in salvation by grace by God alone and that human decision-making played no role whatsoever in their salvation. (Apparently only about 20% of the Dutch population at the time were Calvinist.)

But the Calvinist (Protestant) Dutch people were not unified in this matter. There were two professors of theology: The first was Jacobus Arminius (1560–1609). In 1610 his cause was taken up by the so-called Remonstrants. The Remonstrants are linked in historical studies to Pelagianism. Pelagius was a monk on the British Isles in the 4th century and who is often viewed as a precursor to Arminius.²⁷⁴ The second was Franz Gomarus (1563 -1641) who was anti-Remonstrant. Their differences were popularised: The Remonstrants believed in human participation in salvation; the anti-Remonstrants claimed the exclusive

²⁷³ Van der Walt BJ.2011 *Flagging philosophical minefields at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) – reformed Scholasticism reconsidered*. He indicates how the contest at Dort was not “between a correct interpretation of the Bible (the Calvinists) and a wrong interpretation (the Arminians). It was rather a deep-seated clash between different (unbiblical) philosophies” (p.516). He also claims that the actual decisions by the synod was neither Gomarean nor Arminian but a compromise (p.522).

²⁷⁴ Van der Walt op.cit explains a difference between the two: “Pelagius (a consistent empiricist) overvalued the human aspect, while Arminius (an inconsequent empiricist) still tried to give divine sovereignty and supernatural revelation its full due.” (p. 521).

predetermination of salvation by God. However it is not to be forgotten in terms of this booklet: both parties²⁷⁵ subscribed to the perfect prescience of God on the future. In today's terms such a difference on prescience is not much: The Remonstrants believed God elected those whom he-she knows would eventually make the choice for becoming dedicated Christians. As a matter of fact some Calvinian heavyweights are often referred to as neo-Arminians, JA Heyns in South Africa included, according to König. The anti-Remonstrants believed God makes the detail of the future happen, hence His perfect prescience. In the Netherlands of the day this dispute reached the streets in populist form. In 1610 the Remonstrants published a document with five articles of protest against certain teachings in Calvinian communities. This included that salvific election was not only conditional but also stated that people can fall from salvific grace again.

After almost three decades into the Dutch-Spanish War, for the period 1612 – 1621, the warring sides agreed to a ceasefire. It was during this so-called "Bestand" period that the differences between Arminius and Gomarus reached the streets in caricurist form and the run-up to the "national" synod started. The important points of political conflict were the following: Johan Van Oldenbarneveltdt, Advocate of State, attempted to ensure peace and order in the cities. The cities were mostly Arminian and like any free-enterprising citizen, they did not want to be intimidated by those of different opinions, mostly rural people: physical threats to the personal safety of the Arminians were real. Van Oldenbarneveltdt, at first succeeded with a policy whereby the cities could establish their own guard of soldiers to ensure order in the streets. But Prince Maurice of Orange (from the province of Holland) who was in charge of the national army of the seven provinces had a different agenda. He painted this move as unconstitutional and arranged for the arrest of Van Oldenbarneveltdt.

However – and this is the sad part of mobilisation by caricature and demonization – Maurice and others insinuated that Van Oldenbarneveltdt was collaborating with the Spanish (Roman Catholics) since as he was attempting to protect the public order in the cities – so it was construed by his accusers – it by definition meant he was ensuring the safety of the Arminians. And the Arminians (Remonstrants) were – by the mischievously construed association – supporting the Roman Catholic view. Once the Synod of Dordt ruled Arminius

²⁷⁵ Van der Walt op.cit articulates an interesting difference between the two ways of thinking: "If Vollenhoven is correct, the philosophical viewpoints of Arminius and Gomarus were (apart from their Christian orientation) similar to two phases of Aristotle's philosophy during the latter part of his life (cf. Vollenhoven, 2000:197, 198, 254), viz. inconsequent empiricism and semi-mysticism. This should not be a surprise, since many studies have emphasised the Aristotelian renaissance in Europe from about 1500-1650." (p. 522).

wrong,²⁷⁶ Johan Van Oldenbarneveldt was confirmed guilty and beheaded for treason. The Arminian / Remonstrant leaders were banned and most stayed in Antwerp until the 1630s when they were allowed to return. But in line with European practices associated with the notion of the status of a state church at the time they were still not allowed for more than another century to build their own churches in the Netherlands.

How could this have happened in the Golden Age of the Netherlands that provided so many breakthroughs for our modern way of thinking? One should consider that the Western European view on the role of national government in that era on matters of church faith is well-represented by Article 36 of the (Reformed) Belgic confession (1561) written mostly by the Protestant martyr, Guido de Bres. This article has been characterised by some critics for using “Constantinian” language. By that expression reference is made to the dominant church-political view since the 4th century in Europe when the famous Emperor Constantine of Roman history established collaboration between the Roman Empire and church leaders in the Christian communities. The general drift of Article 36 is to enforce and privilege the organised Christian church in a society. But most disturbingly for my purposes here was that amongst the Christian churches it also created favouritism for one particular Christian church / worldview.²⁷⁷

Abraham Kuyper (died 1920) who was famous in Reformed Dutch circles is reported to have said about Article 36 that he would rather be reckoned unreformed than having the blood of heretics on his head – he probably did this for political expediency but the fact that he did it at all, is notable nonetheless. That was but one of the efforts since the late 19th century in reformed circles to unsuccessfully review this confessional article. Such efforts seem to get bogged down in Biblical studies, translation issues and on establishing the original intention of the author.²⁷⁸ While such historiographical procedures will certainly have its place elsewhere, it is clear to me that Article 36 cannot really be renovated for current times by changing a few words or sentences. What good it contains should be considered – e.g. the

²⁷⁶ Reformed people outside Northern America are not always familiar with the shorthand for Calvinist Doctrine of Dordt summarised as TULIP: **T**otal Depravity; **U**nconditional Election; **L**imited Atonement; **I**rresistible Grace; **P**erseverance of the Saints (also known as “Once Saved Always Saved”). These five points are construed from the document produced by the Synod of Dordt which was a reaction against the five points raised by the Remonstrants in 1610 and in support of the teachings by Arminius. The Dordt Orders consisted of more than five articles.

²⁷⁷ This very Roman Catholic ethos is partially explained these days by understanding the Belgic confession as a whole as a plea to the Habsburgian Philip II, explaining how the Protestants are subscribing to the same partristic confessions as what did the Roman Catholic Church. See p.2 Van Wyk T. 2015. ‘*Die Dordtse Leerreëls: ’n Grammatika van geloofstaal gebore uit die nasie-staat-ideologie*’.

²⁷⁸ See a more extensive discussion by Clark RS 2012. *The Revision of Belgic Confession Article 36*

cautioning against authoritarian policies and actions by the state – but as a whole it should be replaced by something that truly reflects more recent, serious and appropriate reformed thinking with integrity on the status and role of the state per se and also on the proper public order regarding church matters.

By its inability, now for already more than a century to act on this fairly simple matter, the reformed tradition is really disqualifying itself inside the international Christian ecumenical communities by misplaced loyalties to this article. One cannot help but once again lament the curse of the slogan of “anti-revolutionary” which was used by the same Abraham Kuyper for his political initiative. And one cannot help but ponder the emptiness of the lesser-known but still common slogan used in reformed communities: “semper reformanda” (always reforming). How do the two sit together? Finally one also cannot help but recall this historical irony: Guido de Bres died a martyr for his Protestant faith. The Belgic Confession which he wrote well before his death was also intended to demonstrate to the Roman Catholic Philip II that the Protestants were not as un-catholic as the Habsburg Roman Catholics may have thought that they were. He then included Article 36 which was still very Constantinian and hence over-friendly to the imperious view of the organised church as a state church. And so by not taking the later if reluctant Reformed road against the mistaken role of the state in combatting worldview alternatives, as what to some extent was done much later by a Kuyper, the cities of the northern Netherlands were left with no documented confessional basis of legal defense against a loose cannon like a Maurice of Orange when in 1619 the blood of a good jurist like Johan van Oldenbarneveltdt drained into Dutch sand.

3.4 Concluding view

The review of opposing strands inside in the Biblical text was used to generate the strength of contradictions between human responsibility and the supposed predetermined nature of events as claimed by some. Secondly, linking to König, the responsibility of God for truly evil events as an implication of the extremist (Gomarean) position was mentioned. Thirdly a revised conception of cosmic law, as stated in chapter 2 was used to re-profile the hand of God as an ever-present reality in the universe. This enabled me to approach the so-called “false friends” of providence and predestination with a more open mind in chapter 3. Having earlier on also reviewed the degree to which the Biblical authors were victims to the mid-Eastern heritages from antiquity on both creation and fatalism, I was able to re-contextualise the Biblical heritage. Taking these strands together, acknowledging the cosmic presence of God through his tolerating laws as well as his original intent to have freely participating partners in his covenant, now becomes a real and unified possibility. Finally, one aspect of the Orders of the Synod of Dort was discussed in the political context of both the Eighty

Year's War and also of Article 36 of the Belgic Confession. The reluctance of reformed communities for executing a house-clean-up project regarding their confessional documents was briefly surveyed from the perspective of this booklet.

LOOKING BACK

I have tried to show how the three popular confessional statements on the organised church, the Bible and providence which Christians wield at each other are not the solid truths that the traditional bearers thereof usually claim them to be. I attempted to design an alternative set of views which in close proximity to each other require a specific alternative understanding of the universe as created but also both as being managed and not being managed by God – and there is no contradiction in this phrasing as should be clear from the approach, principles and arguments which I have used.

I probed for coherence in the answers given by some “elders” and traditions in the so-called reformed heritage which also influenced much of my own understanding. I then presented an answer on the question of God’s almightiness as a means to invigorate some of the meanings implicit in my first two answers i.e. on the unequal combinations of church / kingdom (creational laws / Body of Christ) and of Bible / word of God and on created cosmic law. I believe I have achieved the searched for re-invigoration by claiming in the tracks of König, others and on Biblical grounds that while God has full knowledge of all past and present thinking and doing by humans he does not have foreknowledge of the remote future in any detailed sense of the word – and in addition, he is also not intent on micromanagement.

In this way this document is a proposal firstly to the Calvinian community but then also to all other christian traditions to better articulate the detail of their confessions on the matters above towards a more sustainable position. While many Westerners with a European-American mindset are abandoning both Bible and church, the implications of what I see may possibly provide a better articulated use of the Bible and a recontextualisation of our participation in the organised church. Secondly I offered a restated concept of creational law that follows from the contributions by at least Dooyeweerd and Strauss but which I believe is still in need of a fuller liberation from the thick layers of residual fatalism which I found in the Biblical and Calvinist texts and also not sufficiently addressed in the text of these two contributors. The detail to be addressed is that humankind members are indeed responsible for the outcomes of their deeds and that in addition they are also subject to random events which for the biggest part by far were neither initiated by God nor by Satan and in addition are also not targetted at any person or community in particular. In this approach it is also then necessary to embrace in a careful way the very concept of secularisation which has been demonised by church people, yet was fathered long ago by our very own Judaeo-Christian view of reality. Hence a non-reductionist secularisation has to be nurtured and some of its features were discussed.

I trust that my answers here on the advent of celebrating half a millenium of Protestant heritage, may contribute from my traditional position towards creating some new spaces for a new vision. Hopefully such spaces will also provide us with the stepping stones for dealing more freely and convincingly with a world that amidst a current revival of religiosity is overall becoming increasingly more distant from the God reported upon in the Bible. Yet in my estimation this disillusioned rushing away from a dilapidated christianity occured in a spirit of complete misunderstanding of their claimed victory over the “church” sadly equated with a christian world view – an equation instigated by the church. We see them desparately clinging to a secularisation which after all is not of their invention. So they were misled twice – first by the church then by the prophets of secularisation. And the way in which they treat this secularisation carries with it the seeds of yet another religion, possibly bringing even worse catastrophes than what the past has seen from Christendom. The search for a liberating truth is not over yet.

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Biblical quotes: All references and quotations from the Christian Bible is made from the *New International Version*

**MY THESES
AT THE 500TH CELEBRATION OF THE 95 THESES BY
MARTIN LUTHER ²⁷⁹**

As an outcome of this study I have articulated, in statement form, what I consider to be a progressive commemoration of Martin Luther's protest of 31st October 1517.

Having reflected for some time, I have become more convinced that the following perspectives and theses need to be considered in reshaping the content of our Christian faith. The positions that are offered here are not intended to be a comprehensive confession of faith. They are meant only to take position on three issues of embarrassment that I experience with current Christian views. I am fully aware that I have done so within the limits of my own traditions, resources and opportunities. The three main theses are the following.

- 1. The organised church misrepresents the notions of the Kingdom of God and the Body of Christ**
- 2. The Bible reveals the Word of God only to a limited extent.**
- 3. God is not a micro manager of the past, the current or the future events in our lives.**

In what follows these main theses are elaborated to provide more context and also to articulate positive supportive statements.

Perspective 1: CHURCH *The historical protest by Martin Luther against the Roman Catholic Church practice at around 1517 of selling indulgences (discount to the dead on penalties for unconfessed sins) included his rejection of the claimed authority which the church has over the so-called purgatory in the afterlife - the sanitising fire for the souls of dead sinners. The merit of this protest was soon granted in principle.*

Now, 500 years later, we could look at what was not challenged directly by Luther but which in my view was at least implied in his challenge. This was the mistakenly ascribed status to the organised church as the so-called "mother of the faithful". This misperception inspired much of all churchly initiative from the early Constantinian Church Fathers to this day - Protestant and Reformed not excluded.

So the organised church is exclusively identical with neither the Kingdom nor the Body of Christ. The church in all its forms (congregational, synodal and ecumenical) is but one way of being Kingdom / Body of Christ. While some reformed theologians have made an effort to downplay the exclusive equation of church and kingdom, almost none have made an effective distinction between the organised church and the Body of Christ (Nation / People of God).

²⁷⁹ Various attempts have been made at designing a new set of 95 theses. See:
<http://archbishopcranmer.com/reformation-500-years-95-new-theses-21st-century/>
<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/newwineskins/95-new-theses-for-a-modern-reformation/>
English translations of the original Latin could be found in various places:
A more classic translation: www.luther.de/en/95thesen.html
A more modern translation: www.historylearningsite.co.uk/the-reformation/the-95-theses-a-modern-translation/

From this viewpoint the following thesis is made:

1. The organised church misrepresents the notions of the Kingdom of God and the Body of Christ.

The following supportive theses are listed for a better context:

1.1 The Kingdom of God is conceivable in at least two ways beyond the confines of the organised church:

- Since all creation is covered by the laws of God, the kingdom is as wide as the universe. In this sense the kingdom is present by authority.
- All places where communities (past, present and future) have changed both personal attitudes and cultural practices in order to be compliant to creational laws. In this sense the kingdom is present by obedience in daily life and cultural practices.

1.2 The Body of Christ is conceivable in at least two ways beyond the confines of the organised church:

- The spiritual collection of people who over millennia have entered into a covenant of the heart with the creator God is the Body of Christ.
- That spiritual hub of inspired people who drives the continual socio-cultural initiatives for more obedience towards the created laws is the Body of Christ.

Perspective 2: WORD OF GOD *While understandable in some cases, the variety of interesting positions Luther and other reformed theologians had on the Biblical Canon and even on created laws (related to but not the same as the Greek “natural law”) in the notion of “Sola Scriptura”, it eventually turned out to be a sad and mistaken fetish for original documents. This attitude was inherited from both Rabbinic and Renaissance heritages. So from this perspective I take an articulated position against both Luther and the Reformed heritage. For the sake of clarity it has to be said that intimacy with the Biblical text by all Christians is still viewed as important. Secondly, the services of scholarly-respectable historiography and hermeneutics are in principle not questioned. But what is seriously questioned is the shackling of the perspective of Christians to an ancient but spent mind-set as promoted by the leadership of some organised churches and by other groupings. Is life only a re-enactment of some overused themes from the past or is it also about taking on the challenges of the present? Hence the following thesis and supportive theses are posed:*

2. The Bible reveals the Word of God only to a limited extent

The following complementary forms of the Word of God are found:

2.1 The Creational Word

This Word occurred when God “spoke” a good and structured universe with a range of laws into existence. In this sense then the Word of God is

- His/her enduring laws for creation.
- His/her creative force (“Let there be...”).

2.2 The Covenant Word

This Word was

- Intended by God to maintain a spiritual partnership with humankind.
- A confirmation of the intended responsible, free, adult, spiritual and nurturing stewardship in the universe which was awarded to humankind for using and understanding the creational law frameworks as intended (Wisdom).

2.3 The Redemptive Word

This Word restores the original Covenantal Word. In addition:

- It tells of the struggle of God to re-establish (educate and mentor) people as his/her adult and responsible spiritual partners.
- It deflates any claims of sacred status ascribed to creaturely entities and cultural practices. Only God is holy and uncreated. All of his/her creation and all of its laws are to be respected equally for a productive and sustainable communal life.
- It resets in principle human spirituality towards a position where its vision becomes far less clouded by the idolatries of this world and hence over time enables humankind to appreciate the nature of the created laws.

2.4 The Christ as Logos (Word)

This Logos Word is viewed as follows:

- It/he/she enduringly provides the anchoring hub of creation (cosmic law and coherence).
- It/he/she was temporarily also incarnated as Jesus of Nazareth (culturally liberating, both personal and communal).
- It/he/she incarnates continually into the socio-cultural world by the Holy Spirit through the Nation of God by promoting law-compliance (See 4.1, 2.2, 3.2) (spreading the liberating obedience as “sanctification”).

2.5 The Bible is only a pointer to the Word, not itself the Word of God

The following statements about the Bible are important for a responsible view:

- The expression “Word of God” inside the Bible texts by far does not refer to a document.
- The Bible is a collection of reports on things that happened outside of itself.
- The Bible is an attachment to the original Covenantal Word.
- The Bible documents show the marks, limitations and conventions of the periods of its oral transmission and also in how such oral reports were eventually written and rewritten.
- The Bible authors sometimes engaged with the culture of their day in a healing fashion but Christians often mistakenly see the reflection of that culture in the Bible as a sanctification of such cultural elements (e.g. fatalist beliefs; the wearing of head covers by women).
- The Bible is a reliable but not the final presence of the Redemptive Word. Therefore new challenges in our spiritual orientation will make further reflection and scriptures necessary.
- The Bible contains more references to the Redemptive Word than to the other kinds of Word. Therefore it is necessary for us to improve our understanding of the other forms of the Word.

Perspective 3: PROVIDENCE *The pagan priests and poets of antiquity have in fear sung their respects to a mythical and unwavering machine of destiny that supposedly predetermined both the physical events of nature and the lives of all. This ancient melody has then survived into the pages of the Bible even as it was challenged by the freedoms and responsibilities as understood in the later Judaeo-Christian revelations of the Redemptive Word. When one audits the statements of esteemed theologians, our dear and dated reformed confessional documents and the pious talk of the faithful it soon becomes clear that we have all been notably slack if not aggressively resistant to any pursuit of a working balance between, on the one hand, God's maintenance of cosmic structures and, on the other, those historical varieties and coincidences which are there for all to see and which contradict a belief in the mythical machine of absolute destiny. Hence the following thesis and supportive theses are posed:*

3. God is not a micro manager of the past, the current or the future events in our lives.

The following supportive theses are listed for a better context:

3.1 The rejection of fatalism, of predeterminism and of the common folk belief that God manages everything does not contradict the belief statement that God's created laws cover all of our lives.

3.2 The spiritual liberation of humankind by God's Redemptive Word restores our self-image as responsible and free partners in culture and as caring and nurturing stewards in the universe. We are not simply being lived, we also make decisions of consequence.

3.3 While God knows the past and the present in a very detailed sense he/she does not know the remote future in detail.

3.4 While God prefers not to intervene in his/her creation beyond the maintenance of the creational laws, it is not denied that God may and did intervene strategically.