

Like the first
gleam of dawn

Reformational studies

B. J. van der Walt

Edited by Steve Bishop

LIKE THE FIRST GLEAM OF
DAWN

REFORMATIONAL STUDIES

A Bennie van der Walt Reader

EDITED BY
Steve Bishop

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In memory of Philip Bishop
1960-2010

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INTRODUCTION

STEVE BISHOP

The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining
ever brighter till the full light of day

Proverbs 4:18

"Can a Christian be a philosopher or a philosopher a Christian?" asks Bishop Desmond Tutu, he goes on to say, "Professor van der Walt has proven this is possible." Bennie van der Walt provides a model for how Christian scholarship can be done. This reader is intended as an introduction to Van der Walt and to his reformational vision. Reformational philosophy is like the first gleam of the dawn. Our hope is that it will shine even brighter until at the consummation of all things we will see the full light of day.

Barend Johannes van der Walt ThB DPhil, was born on 12 April 1939 in Potchefstroom, South Africa into a Christian family, the son of hard-working farming parents. At home they read the Bible, prayed and sang hymns during the daily family devotions. It was this foundation that enabled Van der Walt to become a Christian philosopher and theologian.

He began his studies in theology and philosophy at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PU for CHE), Transvaal South Africa in 1958. From 1968-1970 he studied in the Netherlands at the Free University of Amsterdam (VU). He holds a ThB in Theology and a doctor's degree in Philosophy. His 1968 masters thesis was entitled *Die wysgerige konsepie van Thomas van Aquino in sy "Summa Contra Gentiles" met spesiale verwysing na sy siening van Teologie* (PU for CHE, 1968). [The philosophical conception of Thomas Aquinas in his "Summa Contra Gentiles" with special reference to his view on theology.]

From 1970-1974 he was senior lecturer in philosophy at the University of Fort Hare, Alice, one of South Africa's first black universities. In July 1970 he also became the director of the Institute for the Advancement of Calvinism at PU for CHE. He completed his DPhil under J.A.L. Taljaard in 1974 with a

dissertation entitled *Die Natuurlike Teologie met besondere aandag aan die visie daarop by Thomas van Aquino, Johannes Calvyn en die "Synopsis Purioris Theologiae"* 2 vols (917 pages) (1974) [Natural Theology with Particular reference to the viewpoints of Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin and the "*Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*".]

From July 1974 to 1999 he was the director of the Institute for Reformational Studies (IRS) at the PU for CHE and since 1980 he had been professor in the Department of Philosophy at the same university. He retired in 2002. At present he is Research fellow in the School of Philosophy (Potchefstroom campus) of the North-West University (the successor to PU for CHE) and he devotes much of his time to writing. In 2005 he became professor *honoris causa* of the Theological Seminary Sárospatak in Hungary and was also awarded a honorary doctoral degree in Kosin University, Busan, South Korea. In 2010 he was awarded the prestigious Stals Prize for Philosophy (Stalsprys vir Filosofie) by the South African Academy for Science and Art.

This reader is split into five main sections: The sixteenth-century Reformation, Reformational worldview and philosophy, an African contextualization, Christian scholarship, and other applications of reformational philosophy. These are key areas that Van der Walt has addressed throughout his career. The articles have been chosen to reflect both the range and depth of Van der Walt's writings over the decades; his first article was published in 1960. He can write for both goats and giraffes. The majority of the writings collected here are aimed at a more popular

The Reformation

Van der Walt's Master's degree, under Taljaard, was on Thomas Aquinas, a rather unusual choice for a Reformed scholar! He then went on to study the place of natural theology in Aquinas and Calvin for his PhD dissertation. Once again his promoter was Taljaard – S. U. Zuidema (1906-1975) was too ill to continue in this role. Van der Walt describes the main aim of his dissertation:

"What I really wanted to achieve was to follow the philosophical lines from Aquinas (my MA thesis) to Calvin (father of the Reformational

tradition), and from him to the Reformed Scholasticism of the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (1625), a handbook in dogmatics that was re-issued by Herman Bavinck in the previous century. I discovered (with the help of Vollenhoven's problem-historical method) that neither was Calvin's so-called theology fully biblical, nor could the *Synopsis* be called the 'purest Reformed theology.'"

Parts of his dissertation were published in English in *Heartbeat* (1978; see chapter 2 in this volume) and his dissertation discussion of the *Synopsis* in *Our Reformation Tradition* (1984 ch 7) where he focuses upon the philosophical impurities in post-Dordtian theology.

Van der Walt is a 'critical friend' of Calvin. He appreciates his writings and work and yet is also critical of especially Platonic influences in his thinking. This can be seen clearly in Van der Walt's analysis of Calvin's anthropology in chapter 2. Here he utilizes Vollenhoven's categories to analyze Calvin. He also examines Calvin's view of woman and marriage (chapter 3) and finds his view liberating in comparison with his contemporary culture, but not liberating enough compared with Scripture.

Reformational philosophy

Van der Walt writes from an unashamedly reformational perspective. A perspective pioneered by Herman Dooyeweerd and D.H.Th. Vollenhoven in the Netherlands. This philosophical movement has been called the "philosophy of the law idea" (a loose translation of the Dutch *De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* (WdW)), "cosmonomic philosophy" and even the "Amsterdam school." He studied under J.A.L. Taljaard, (1915 - 1994), who in turn had studied under Vollenhoven at the VU. Under Taljaard Van der Walt became immersed in reformational philosophy. He was also introduced to Abraham Kuypers' writings and H. G. Stoker's development of his own version of a Christian philosophy. The latter he has great respect for, despite his pro-apartheid stance, and considers him to be "internationally underestimated."

When studying at the VU Van der Walt had the opportunity to attend Vollenhoven's private classes (*privatissima*). Van der Walt is more Vollenhovan than Dooyeweedian but draws from the insights of both scholars.

He has provided three accessible overviews of Vollenhoven's consistent problem historical method (see chapter 12). This is no mean feat in itself, but to make it accessible is a near miracle! But such is the talent of Van der Walt, the teacher, who in his writings can take complex ideas and provide clear summaries and syntheses.

Van der Walt, however, is no mere parrot-er of Vollenhoven or Dooyeweerd's ideas. (Cf. chapter 5). He has drunk from their wells but applies and develops their ideas rather than merely regurgitate what they have written. Neither is he afraid to be critical of them (see, for example, 1975.1).

Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven are the names that spring to mind when reformational philosophy is mentioned. Antheunis Janse, however, is largely a neglected figure in the reformational movement and Van der Walt has done much to remedy this. He makes a good case for considering Janse as one of the founding fathers of reformational philosophy. Little has been written of Janse in English. Van der Walt's chapter in his book *The eye is the lamp of the body* remedies this and offers a biographical overview as well as an overview of his worldview, in particular his anthropology (chapter 11). Janse's anthropology is also examined in more detail in Van der Walt's most recent book *At Home in God's World* (2010.1).

Reformational philosophy arose out of a neocalvinist perspective. The term neocalvinist was coined in 1897 by one of the first lecturers at the VU Anne Anema (1872-1966). Elsewhere I have outlined some of the distinctive characteristics of the Kuyperian neocalvinist standpoint:

1. Jesus is lord over all of creation
2. The idea that all of life is to be redeemed
3. The importance of God's Cultural Mandate
4. Creation, fall and redemption
5. Sphere sovereignty
6. A rejection of dualism
7. The distinction between structure and direction

8. Common grace
9. The antithesis
10. Worldviews
11. The role of God's laws or creational ordinances

From Van der Walt's writings it becomes clear that he stands within this neocalvinist tradition (see, chapters 4 and 8 in particular).

Africa

Van der Walt (cf. chapter 14) describes himself as an Afrikaner, a South African, an African, a citizen of the world but above all as a Christian (1994.9; 1997.1). Deep in his heart he belongs to the African continent (2002.3). His ancestors came to South Africa from Friesland in the Netherlands in 1727 and he is one of the eighth generation of Van der Walt's in South Africa. He has seen pre- and post-apartheid South Africa. It was during his time in the Netherlands and as a professor at a black university that he became aware of the egregious injustice of the apartheid system and he began to try to convince others of its ideological and unbiblical basis (for example, chapter 16 of his book *Horizon*, first published in 1978 and more explicit in 1994.5,6). He was a member of the group that produced the Koinonia Declaration (1977), which *Time* magazine described as "a rare Christian Afrikaner protest against South African racial policies." In November 1997 he attended the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Faith Communities Hearing in East London. There he openly confessed with honesty and humility his part in apartheid, even though he had spoken against it.

As director of the Institute for the Advancement of Calvinism (IAC) he was responsible for looking at the impact of Calvinism on South Africa. The IAC later became the Institute for Reformational Studies. As director of the IRS he organized a number of conferences dealing with issues that directly related to Africa. The conferences also aimed at gathering together different Christian groups in South Africa. One such conference dealt with *Christian Literature for Africa: a survey of problems and prospects in writing, printing, publishing, and distribution* (1989.1). This conference outlined several themes that urgently needed literature; these included: the family, the role of women in

Africa, African Christian marriage, corruption, political options and urbanization. It is significant that Van der Walt has subsequently dealt with all these issues in his writings. Such is his commitment to providing first-class materials written by Africans for Africa.

We might summarize Van der Walt's approach to Africa in terms of some of the key worldview questions:

Where are we? Africa is a large continent with a great variety, a place of cultural and religious diversity. It is simultaneously a rich and a poor place. Rich in history, culture, human potential, and natural resources. At the same time it is a continent of poverty, homelessness, low income, hunger, and disease.

What's wrong? We have not developed in the way God intended. Sin has distorted the direction in which God intended us to cultivate and steward his good creation. Development trends have failed. Even Christianity has been a mixed blessing to Africa. Unfortunately, many missionaries bought a dualistic, pietistic Christianity to Africa and too often confused the gospel with western civilization.

What's the remedy? The need for a genuine, biblical worldview - one that takes seriously God's command to cultivate and develop the whole of creation. Such a worldview is needed to prevent Christianity in Africa becoming numerically fat but malnourished in terms of its socio-political-economic impact.

He writes always with the African situation in mind, but his insights go much further. They are relevant for concerned Christians everywhere as these selections in this reader illustrate.

Christian scholarship

Most evangelicals adopt an integration model to describe how Christianity relates to scholarship. Van der Walt rejects this view. He argues that this approach arises from a "deep-seated ontological dualism and an anthropological dichotomy" (2007.1). The integration view accepts the neutrality of science and sees the Bible as an additional source of knowledge. His purpose in knocking down this model is to build Christian scholarship on a

more secure foundation. He proposes an integral model, where faith is integral to, rather than additional to, the scientific enterprise. This approach is then displayed in the way he writes and in the range of topics he has written on. His approach displays the unity within diversity of creation. A diverse range of topics, but a unity in the way he approaches issues from his reformational perspective.

He was involved with International Association for the Promotion of Christian Education (IAPCHE), as it is known now, from its inception in 1975. Up until 2000 he served for different terms on its Council. He has also served as the regional advisor for Africa. Under the auspices of the Institute for Reformational Studies (IRS) he organized and facilitated many conferences on Christian education. His concern is that education should be distinctively Christian. To this end he has written much on the urgent need for Christian higher education, particularly in Africa, and was a founding member of the Centre for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education (CPCHEA). This centre was founded in January 2000 and was "an African initiative in response to an African need." CPCHEA is now recognized as one of IAPCHE's regional councils.

He clearly explains what a distinctively Christian education is and what it is not - see chapter 19 in this collection.

It does not mean that the institution has a chapel or campus minister on the campus;

It does not mean that evangelization or missionary work is being done on campus;

It does not mean that certain subjects are or are not taught;

It does not only refer to the religious convictions of students and staff.

And neither is it merely working out a theological perspective on a 'secular' discipline.

For Van der Walt Christian education is much deeper. "Christian education has to start with the premise of salvation in Christ, inspired by his Spirit and be in the service and to the honor of God" (1980.3). No subject is

religiously neutral, scholarly insights are influenced by worldviews and philosophies. Christian education is an education informed by a Christian worldview. Christianity is no icing on the education cake; it requires a new recipe, a transformation of the sciences from within each discipline.

This is a radical message for education and one that needs educational institutions that are controlled neither by the church or the state. The authentic educational institution needs to be free from ecclesiastical or political dominance so that it can serve God and others.

A Christian social philosophy

Van der Walt is no mere ivory tower thinker. He takes care to apply his vision and insight to social, economic, cultural, and philosophical issues, ranging from agriculture to the role of women in the human community (chapter 3). His ideas have legs! The range and extent of his writings is testimony to the comprehensiveness of the reformational vision. Van der Walt's perspectives on social issues are based on sphere sovereignty and structural, confessional and religious pluralism. This is no religious totalitarianism, Van der Walt's approach is not to seek to "Christianize" society. Rather this is an approach that promotes the accommodation of a diverse range of religious convictions. This is not to say that one religion is the same as another. He is strongly committed to religious diversity without compromising the truth claims of Christianity (chapter 25).

His is no dualistic Christianity. His is a robust, integrated integral Christianity, a Christianity that takes seriously Kuyper's "every square inch" perspective. He sees that all of life is religion and so in his writings has dealt with all of life in its rich variety.

Areas he has dealt with from a reformational perspective include agriculture, backpacking, corruption, culture, development (chapter 20), economics (chapter 22), ethics, faith, family, friendship (chapter 26), globalization (chapter 21), history, leadership, marriage (chapter 24), morality, politics, publishing, postmodernism, religious equality and diversity (chapter 25), rights, science, secularism, society, sport (chapter 27), the state, stewardship, time and the role of women (chapter 3).

Conclusion

Van der Walt was born and raised in Potchefstroom and for most of his life he has worked there too. This may suggest a parochial vision; however, this is far from the case. His influence through his writings and lecturing stretches around the globe.

His strength is that he is able to synthesize different authors' views and provide an excellent summary and review. But he does more than that, he develops them in such a way that his own voice is not lost. Van der Walt has the heart of a teacher; he is able to make Christian scholarship accessible and is able to communicate clearly and with great clarity.

Like Kuyper before him, Van der Walt seeks to rouse the church from its pietistic slumber. He wants to see a bold, robust and involved Christianity; one that is able to transform and shape society, and one that avoids an escapist, dualistic, pietistic Christianity. This is certainly the Christianity that is modeled in his writings. At 71 his literary production shows no sign of halting, in the last two years he has produced two substantial books. Long may this continue. His message is one that the church needs to hear, but even more so to act upon. It is our hope and prayer that this reader will help in that process in some small way.

Steve Bishop lecturers at the City of Bristol College, Bristol, UK. He maintains and manages the reformational website www.allofliferedeemed.co.uk. He is author of *The Earth is the Lord's* (Bristol: Regius Press, 1999) and *Reformational Studies: An Annotated Bibliography of B J van der Walt* (Bristol, UK: allofliferedeemed, 2009). He blogs regularly at <http://stevebishop.blogspot.com>.

INTERVIEW WITH BENNIE VAN DER WALT

STEVE BISHOP

1. Life and family

1.1 Bennie, can you please tell us something about your family and yourself?

Steve, I was born (on 12th April 1939) in the town of Potchefstroom (in the present North-West Province of South Africa), but grew up on the farm Vyfhoek (divided into small holdings to help farmers to earn a living after the devastating Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902). My parents, J. J., called Mias, (1909-1989), and C.E. van der Walt, named Tiena (1916-1991), suffered from the flu epidemic of 1918 and the economic depression of the 1930s and could not enjoy higher education after standard six. My father, for instance, had to dig diamonds in the Lichtenburg district and later on became a mason. (Among other things he helped to build the main building of the Potchefstroom University – a place where I many years later would continue his physical labor on an academic level.) Prior to their marriage my mother (*née* Delpont) worked for a few cents a day in a clothing factory.

They were hard-working people and God blessed their labors. While my father worked as a bricklayer he and my mother also became farmers. At first only part-time (lucerne and wheat), but later on they added poultry farming, dairy farming (with Ayrshires imported from Scotland), and finally (before they passed away) sheep farming. Their financial progress also benefited their children. (I have one brother and three sisters of which the youngest died at the age of two.) All of them enjoyed the privilege of a university education. But our parents were wise not to spoil us: we had to take our share in all the farming responsibilities!

In 1964, during my studies, I married J. M. (Hannetjie) Loock (born on 5th December 1940). Because of her love and support, she should receive the credit

for whatever I may have achieved during the past 47 years. We were blessed with four children, first three boys and then a daughter. All of them are married and we are already "oupa" and "ouma" to nine grandchildren. The whole family love nature. We have done a lot of camping and hiking in many parts of our beautiful country, but especially in the Drakensberg Mountains of KwaZulu-Natal. As could be expected, I wrote a few books on our hiking experiences in Afrikaans and in English.

1.2 What was it like growing up and living in South Africa?

This is a difficult question to answer Steve, since I did not have the experience of growing up elsewhere. My ancestors arrived here from Friesland (the Netherlands) in 1727 and I am already part of the eighth generation of Van der Walt's in South Africa. We therefore regard ourselves as true (white) Africans.

During my own life I experienced pre-apartheid, apartheid as well as the post-apartheid era.

I enjoyed the privilege of growing up in a healthy, God-fearing family in a rural environment mostly unaware of all the political problems of South Africa. Even the black farm laborer, Silas Tekiso, his wife, Dora, and their children were treated as part of an extended family. My father also donated a part of his land for a primary school to be erected for all the black children of the Vyfhoek area.

It was only later, particularly during my studies in the Netherlands (1968-1970) and my work at the University of Fort Hare (1970-1974), that I became fully aware that something was terribly wrong with the apartheid system. During my time as director of the Institute for Reformational Studies (1974-1999) South Africa became the skunk of the international world. But many white people were still blinded by this ideology and I had the difficult task to convince many of my fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord that they had no biblical grounds for their viewpoint. (For examples see 4.3 below.)

After the demise of apartheid in 1994 the situation again changed drastically. We realized that the consequences of apartheid could not be

eradicated immediately, but would accompany us for many years. But most of us – both black and white – hoped for a better future. South Africa's present deterioration is perhaps not so much noticed outside the country, because the country is acknowledged internationally and the upper class of both blacks and whites still enjoy economic prosperity.

As you may perhaps already know from media reports, the following factors today concern every South African citizen: (1) Rampant lawlessness, like rape, robbery, murder, and other forms of brutal violence. Those who can afford it to take care of their own security, have to invest huge amounts to do so. The legal system cannot handle all the criminal cases; neither can the prisons accommodate the convicted. (2) Wide-spread corruption, especially among politicians and state officials on national, provincial, and local level. (Many of our leaders today – the so-called fat cats – are not really examples for a younger generation, because they are not motivated by service but by greed and a culture of entitlement.) (3) A weak state, unable to see to it that standards are maintained and to deliver the necessary public services. (4) The HIV/AIDS pandemic has infected a large part of the population – with detrimental implications. (5) A scarcity of jobs, while millions of “refugees” from other countries (for example Zimbabwe) are entering the country, leading to xenophobia among the South Africans who are losing their own jobs. (6) Reverse discrimination through inter alia one-sided affirmative action against whites and increasing racism from the side of both black and white. (7) An unacceptable and dangerous gap between the very wealthy and the masses of extremely poor people. (8) A huge brain drain of the highest qualified people to countries like Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. (9) Many people, who cannot or do not want to emigrate, start emigrating inside their own individual concerns, thus withdrawing from the problems of wider society. (10) An unwillingness to accept personal responsibility, blaming, for instance, the past apartheid or present racial tensions for own incapability, laziness, and corruption.

Did I mention these examples of the disintegration of a society – in spite of the most modern Constitution and Bill of Rights – to ask for the sympathy of

outsiders or to make South Africans even more despondent and eager to leave our “rainbow nation”? I will not blame people who, for their own safety and that of their children, finally decide on the last option. (I am one of the many families who have a son and three grandchildren in faraway Canada.) But I also firmly believe that it is not by mere chance that one belongs to a certain nation. However difficult it may be, God asks of us to get involved and try to change our own situation for the better.

To summarize: once South Africa was an example to the whole world of what was despicable; then (for example the Mandela-era) it became a shining model to the world of what was to be admired; today South Africans have to start working diligently to prove that their country not only deserves the respect of the outside world, but can be a place where all its own citizens can feel at home.

1.3 How did you become a Christian?

Since I grew up in a Christian family, it is not possible for me to indicate when I became a Christian. I did not experience a sudden conversion. But during secondary school and at my official confession of faith in the Reformed Church I already knew that I loved the Lord and wanted to be in his service. However, at that time I still held a somewhat narrow view of the Christian religion. If you really wanted to serve Him, full-time ministry in the church was the only option! One of the major benefits of studying Christian philosophy (starting with the BA degree in 1958) was that it opened my eyes to a much wider perspective: Life – one's whole life – is either service to the real God or to an idol taking his place.

1.4 What are Christianity and the church like in South Africa?

Steve, I can only answer this question briefly – which involves a great amount of generalization. On the positive side according to a recent census more than 80% of South Africans regard themselves as Christians. In the light of what I have said previously (without playing God, the only One who can see into peoples' hearts), one may, however, ask how many of these are real and how many only nominal Christians. Especially for someone like myself, who believe that Christianity does not exist for itself (to save your soul and ensure a place in heaven), but to

transform God's fallen creation in the power of his Spirit, it is difficult to accept that 80% of the South African population have so little impact on the unacceptable situation I have described above.

It is true that Christianity in South Africa is currently suffering from a crisis of legitimacy since in the past it condoned the apartheid ideology. It is also true that, since the acceptance of a secular state in 1994, secularization in every area of life increased dramatically. The Christian faith is now wrongly regarded (as elsewhere in the globalizing world) by many as something private (a personal faith in family and church) with little if any relevance to so-called public life. During the apartheid era (white) Christians operated with a dualistic Christian-national worldview. After apartheid this dualism was not corrected, but Christians passively accepted a modified version of the same old dualistic perspective, namely that of private-public.

Since dualism paralyses the power of the Christian faith, old mainline churches are at the moment in decline both in numbers and influence – they are now called the “old-line” churches. Especially the Charismatic churches are growing. Many people (cf. Anon, 2008) see this as a new sign of hope for the future. These churches may grow numerically, but I doubt whether they will have much more influence on the political-economic-social situation since they also operate from a dualistic worldview. On the one hand many of them have accommodated to a “gospel” of health and wealth. On the other hand they will try to alleviate poverty, but do not get involved in politics or other social issues to challenge the underlying structural causes of such poverty.

As a philosopher I sometimes tend to be too critical about church life. In the final instance history, however, is not about Christianity, but about Christ's all-encompassing Lordship. In spite of all our failures, He will not fail us. He will lead history towards the final arrival of his glorious kingdom.

2. The influences on your development

Could you please tell us something about the following:

2.1 What/who were your early influences?

The only grandfather I knew and loved (my mother's father) told me when I was still young (11 years) that I should become a minister. (Perhaps it was what he himself actually wanted to be.) At home we read the Bible, prayed, and sang the Genevan hymns during our evening family devotions. The thoroughness of our Reformed minister's classes in the Heidelberg Catechism further molded my Christian convictions. I also not forget the influence of committed teachers at school either who encouraged me to develop the talents I have received. (They were, however, not convinced that I should become a minister of religion!)

2.2 How did you discover reformational philosophy?

I have written my philosophical memoirs already in Afrikaans (Van der Walt, 2010a), but since only few people can read this African language, let me give a few flashes and fragments.

God can lead people in mysterious ways. Some time ago I was, for instance, told that a student in Europe discovered reformational Philosophy by way of one footnote in an article, making reference to a book by Herman Dooyeweerd!

However, I did not discover reformational philosophy accidentally in this way. When I started my BA studies (in 1958) with the idea to follow it up with a ThB (theology), at least one course in philosophy was compulsory. However, since I discovered that philosophy digs deeper than any other subject, I decided to take it as a three year major in combination with Latin.

All the lecturers in the Department taught their subject from an explicitly Christian perspective. During the three years for the BA degree we covered the whole history of Western philosophy, mainly under the guidance of Professor J. A. L. Taljaard (1915-1994). He received his doctoral degree from the Free University of Amsterdam (cf. Taljaard, 1955) under the supervision of Professor D. H. Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978), one of the fathers of reformational philosophy in the Netherlands. Taljaard translated both Vollenhoven's history of philosophy and his systematic philosophy (cf. Vollenhoven, 2005a; 2005b for

recent English translations) into Afrikaans for the use of his students. For a start we used Spier, 1959. (A comparable English introduction today would be Kok, 1998.) (Taljaard's own systematic philosophy was also very much in line with Vollenhoven's ideas, cf. Taljaard, 1976.) In those days BA students intending to study theology, also had to follow a compulsory course in the Dutch language. We were therefore expected also to read Dutch textbooks in our philosophy courses.

Systematic philosophy also received proper attention. We were, for instance, introduced to Abraham Kuyper's (1837-1920) Christian worldview as expounded in his well-known Stone Lectures (cf. Kuyper (nd), for the Dutch version we used and Kuyper, 1961 for the English text).

In those times three main approaches to a systematic Christian philosophy were distinguished. Firstly Herman Bavinck's (1854-1921) "Philosophy (of the idea) of revelation." We read S. P. Van der Walt's (1953) dissertation on Bavinck, and Bavinck 1908 – again a Dutch version of his Stone Lectures, *Wijsbegeerte der Openbaring*. (For the English text, see Bavinck, 1979.)

Secondly, Henk G. Stoker's (1899-1993) "Philosophy of the idea of creation" (*Wysbegeerte van die skeppingsidee*). Stoker did his doctorate (cf. Stoker, 1925) with Max Scheler (1874-1928) as supervisor, a German irrationalist philosopher. However, very early in his career he maintained contact with the development of a Christian philosophy at the Free University (cf. Stoker, 1933a). He also developed his own distinctive brand (cf. Stoker 1933b, reworked in Stoker, 1970b:202-330. For more details about this specific Christian philosophy cf. also Stoker, 1967; 1969; 1970a.)

Thirdly, as students we were also introduced to the "Philosophy of the idea of law" or "cosmonomic idea" as both Dirk H. Th. Vollenhoven's and Herman Dooyeweerd's (1894-1977) philosophies were called at that time. (Today we know that these two Christian philosophers did not hold the same viewpoints.) We did not study their original writings, but did so by reading Spier's introduction in Dutch, later on also translated into Afrikaans. (Cf. Spier, 1972. For an English

translation, cf. Spier, 1966. Later on Kalsbeek's book (1970) became more popular as a textbook. (For an English version, cf. Kalsbeek, 1975.)

2.3 Did you meet Vollenhoven when he lectured in South Africa? If so, do you have any abiding memories?

Steve, you should be informed that for some time a good relationship existed between the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PU for CHE) and the Free University of Amsterdam (VU) till the breakdown at the end of the seventies. (Cf. Schutte, 2005: 445 ff.) Guest lectureships were exchanged between both institutions. Already in my second year (1959) I had the privilege to attend Professor S. U. Zuidema's (1906-1975) guest lectures. (Little did I know that ten years later in 1969, he would for some time be my study leader at the VU.)

In 1963, when Vollenhoven gave his series of guest lectures at the PU for CHE (Department of Philosophy), I had already started my ThB studies in theology, but attended most of his lectures. (I still have a book with all my notes and the Vollenhoven Foundation is also in the process of publishing his Potchefstroom lectures from the tape recordings made at that time.)

Of course I was greatly impressed by – as Klapwijk (1987: 98) calls Vollenhoven – this intellectual giant with his wide knowledge and deep insight. However, what impressed me most – and it was the same when later on (in 1968-1970) in the Netherlands I attended his *privatissima* (private classes) after his official retirement at the VU – was his obvious Christian faith and his sincere humility. Vollenhoven was approachable, unsophisticated, uncomplicated, and (according to his Dutch students) also lived closely to his students and the ordinary people.

Klapwijk (1987: 101) also mentions the reason why this great scholar deep down in his heart remained a child: Vollenhoven was indeed a great philosopher, but never put his trust in any, not even his own, philosophy. He gave his heart to God and his word. He realized that philosophy (“Wijs-begeerte”) is merely a *desire* for wisdom – not less, but also not more. Philosophy (“love for wisdom”)

does not own the truth; it is merely a fallible, scholarly aspiration towards wisdom. If it, therefore, gives the impression of having arrived at a final truth, it is deceiving people. According to Vollenhoven, the word of God alone could answer our deepest questions and longings.

2.4 H. G. Stoker was an influential reformational thinker. What is your assessment of him?

I got to know Stoker better during my BA Honors degree in philosophy when I was the only student to follow his lectures on “the philosophy of the idea of creation.” (For more details, see again his collected works in Stoker, 1967; 1970b: 202-330. An English translation of his philosophy of the idea of creation undertaken by the School of Philosophy at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University is in progress.)

In spite of the fact that I later on decided to work more in the Vollenhoven line, I had the greatest respect for Stoker as a person and lecturer, as well as an original Christian philosopher. To my mind his contribution to reformational philosophy in South Africa and also internationally is underestimated. Three factors may have contributed to this. Firstly, because he did not publish much in English. Secondly, because of the unwise and negative way Malan (1968) dealt with Stoker’s contribution. He criticized Stoker’s philosophy from the viewpoint of Dooyeweerd’s ideas. (For Stoker’s reply to Malan’s dissertation, cf. Stoker, 1970a: 411-33.) Thirdly, because Stoker tried to condone apartheid as he viewed the Afrikaner nation (“volk”) as a separate societal relationship like marriage, family, church, and state. (Most lecturers at the PU for CHE, however, propagated apartheid in those days.)

3. Education

3.1 Could you tell us something in general about your academic training?

After my BA degree (1960) and Honors (1961), I decided to continue with an MA in philosophy (1962) and could finish the exam papers but not the thesis. From 1963 to 1966 I completed a theological (ThB) degree at the Theological Seminary

of the Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA).

Earlier in my life I had acquired the nickname of "Bennie Bookworm." (Later on in my life I tried to compensate for all the books I had devoured by writing a few myself!) Because of my protracted studies I now also earned the title of the "eternal student." I succeeded, however, financially as a part-time student assistant (in philosophy) and by getting paid by my father for determining the sex of thousands and thousands of day-old chickens and (after our marriage) from my wife's salary at the University Library.

In 1967 I finally completed the thesis for the Master's degree under the supervision of Professor Taljaard, dealing with the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) in his *Summa Contra Gentiles*.

3.2 Why your MA topic, why Aquinas in particular? Isn't he an unusual choice for a Calvinist?

Steve, I agree that it was a rather unusual topic, since even during my theological studies a lecturer would still warn his students against "die Roomse gevaar" (the Roman Catholic danger)! However, my theological studies already indicated to me that a synthetic tradition of nearly two thousand years (starting with the early Church Fathers and systematized by Aquinas in the Middle Ages) was still with us. It was the dualism of nature and grace, reason and faith, philosophy and theology. This bi-focal way of looking at God's creation led to many other distortions, for example, that theology would by nature be Christian, while philosophy is to be regarded as a neutral discipline; that theology is the queen of the sciences and that philosophy as well as other disciplines should get their biblical direction from a supposedly "pure" theology. This kind of dualism was furthermore not only of a theoretical nature, but influenced the churches and all other areas of everyday life. I already suspected that the Christian-national ideology was founded in this kind of dualism. But I did not have the courage to say so publicly before 1976 (cf. Van der Walt, 1978; and later on in more detail Van der Walt, 1993; 1994).

Needless to say that the young radical's MA-thesis caused furor among

Reformed theologians up to the highest academic body, the Senate of the University. Finally I received the degree – on condition that I should rewrite (water down) the final chapter – with distinction!

3.3 Your PhD was “*Natural theology with special reference to Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, and the ‘Synopsis Purioris Theologiae’* – a philosophical investigation” (1974) what made you choose this topic?

This topic reveals my continued interest in questions on the borderline between philosophy and theology. I started to do the research at the PU for CHE, I received bursaries from my *alma mater* as well as the VU and continued my research from July 1968 to June 1970 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. During that time (1969) I also received doctoral status (“doctoraal status”) as well as an appointment as assistant in Medieval Philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy of the VU. This caused me to decide rather to register for a PhD at the VU. Unfortunately other circumstances were not as favorable to realize this dream. My second supervisor, Professor S. U. Zuidema, became so ill that he had to retire and I had to work with a third. I then decided rather to accept the offer of a senior lectureship in Philosophy at the University of Fort Hare at Alice in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa (July 1970 – June 1974).

But you would be more interested in the topic of the dissertation than in the circumstances surrounding its completion, finally at the Department of Philosophy of the PU for CHE in 1974. (Professor J. A. L. Taljaard was my supervisor.) Of course I knew beforehand that the reformational tradition would reject a “natural” theology. What I was primarily interested in was how to understand God’s creational revelation (which was – and is still - underestimated in Reformed theology) and only in the second place whether a natural theology could be built upon God’s so-called general revelation. What I also wanted to achieve was to follow the philosophical lines from Aquinas (my MA thesis) to Calvin (father of the reformational tradition), and from him to the Reformed Scholasticism of the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (1625), a handbook in dogmatics that was re-issued by Herman Bavinck in 1881. I discovered (with the help of Vollenhoven’s

problem-historical method) that neither was Calvin's so-called theology fully biblical, nor could the *Synopsis* be called the "purest Reformed theology."

4. You spent the greatest part of your life as director at the institute for reformational studies (IRS) at the PU for CHE. May I ask a few questions in this regard?

4.1 How did the IRS start?

This institute was started in 1962 at the PU for CHE. (For more about its aims and history, cf. Van der Walt, 2008a: 278-303.) Till the beginning of the eighties it was called the Institute for the Advancement of Calvinism (IAC). I became its first full-time director in 1974 and recommended that the name should be changed to IRS (of course not realizing that in the USA it is the abbreviation for the Internal Revenue Services!) My motivation was that "Calvinism" did not cover the whole reformational tradition. Furthermore the apartheid-ideology was, according to its proponents, built on the Calvinist worldview.

My work at the IRS provided me with many opportunities to enlarge and enrich my views: research of the reformational worldview and its implications, editing publications (620 in total) by authors from different disciplines and all over the world; organizing local and international conferences (about twenty of them). Apart from other parts of the world, I travelled to fifteen different African countries (during South Africa's time of isolation from the world) to acquire first-hand information about situations in the rest of our continent.

The IRS conferences (to which we usually invited also Christians from outside South Africa) played a significant role in opening people's eyes for the real situation in our country. You should keep in mind, Steve, that these conferences were not merely academic in nature, but were characterized by deep Christian fellowship which made it possible to bridge the deep divide between black and white Christians.

4.2 Did being a South African organization have any effect on the IRS's international status?

Yes, indeed. Let me mention just three examples of the hassles the IRS experienced in organizing international meetings during South Africa's time of isolation. When I invited Christian leaders from other African countries (remember it was before e-mails) – to help opening the eyes of our own people – because of a postal boycott against South African mail, I had to send the letters to a friend in the Netherlands (Dr K. A. Brill), who re-mailed them (in new envelopes with Dutch stamps) back to the specific African country. The invited speaker was then issued with a PTA (prepaid ticket advice) – which often got lost – to fly to South Africa. Sometimes they could not even fly directly to Johannesburg International Airport, since his/her own country would then know that he/she visited the apartheid country. (So, we sometimes had to use the airport of a neighboring country.) When finally entering the country we pre-arranged with the customs officials for the person's passport not to be stamped, but for a lose-leaf immigration certificate to be issued instead. Otherwise the immigration official in the person's home country would upon their return know that they had visited South Africa and would not allow them back into their own country!

Since Christian literature from the West was not always relevant to African problems, the IRS started a project "Christian Literature for Africa" (CLA) in which Christian writers from Africa could write for Africans on the unique issues facing the continent. Also in this case we experienced difficulties to get the identified writers (men and women) from countries like Nigeria, Uganda, and Kenya to visit South Africa. The IRS, together with the International Association for Reformed Faith and Action (IARFA), therefore arranged for writers' workshops (including the South Africans) in neighboring countries. (For instance, in Harare, Zimbabwe – next to an ANC house!) A next problem was that in many cases publications from apartheid South Africa were banned in other African countries. When visiting for example Lesotho and Ghana, I therefore investigated the possibility of printing and publishing the books written in the CLA project outside South Africa. (Eventually this project took so long that the material available was published by the IRS itself when the African boycott was no longer in place!)

A third example is the position of the IRS in the international movement for

Christian higher education. After the First International Conference for CHE was held (in September 1975) at Potchefstroom, the IRS was appointed to administer an International Clearing House for CHE. But because of the political tensions between the PU for CHE and the VU after this meeting (lasting for about a decade), membership of the PU for CHE in the international body (later on to be called the International Association for the Promotion of Christian Higher Education, abbreviated as IAPCHE) was withdrawn and the Clearing House at the IRS closed. (For more details, cf. Van der Walt, 2001a; 2005; Schutte 2005; Hulst, 2009.)

4.3 Why was the IRS closed in December 1999? Can you also say something about its voice against apartheid?

I am not surprised that you ask this question. Why would a University close one of its institutes which (according to objective outside observers) put the PU for CHE on the international map? To my mind one of the primary reasons why the IRS was closed was because of a growing tension between the political viewpoint it stood for and that of the University authorities. (Even after the 1994 democratic elections it continued since not everyone at the University whole-heartedly accepted the post-apartheid dispensation.) However, for someone outside South Africa this explanation needs some explication. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to do so in a few sentences. (The problem I have to face here is that of a kind of self-justification as director of the IRS and of blaming others. May I be excused for perhaps too subjective an interpretation.)

It should be remembered that the majority of the staff of the PU for CHE (an Afrikaner university) were supporters of the apartheid regime of the National Party. Furthermore, most of them belonged to the Reformed Churches of South Africa (RCSA) which established, supported, and staffed the University and also condoned apartheid. The influence of the "Broederbond," described as the most powerful secret organization in the world, should also be mentioned in this regard (Wilkins and Strydom, 1979).

From about 1976 the IRS itself had to venture into the cross-fire between

different political perspectives: it had to choose between the political viewpoint maintained by the University officials and what was correct according to the Bible and a genuine reformational worldview. Neither the more conservative viewpoint (called “verkramp” in Afrikaans), nor the more progressive (called “verlig” or enlightened) among the Afrikaners provided a real solution. Mere window-dressing was not enough – the apartheid ideology *itself* had to be rejected. (For detailed information on the position of the IRS during the difficult political years of 1976-1996, cf. Van der Walt, 2010b: 471-512.)

Steve, permit me to illustrate the growing tension between mother (the PU for CHE) and her daughter (the IRS) with a few flashes from history.

- As early as 1976 the IRS published the proceedings of a conference of the Reformational Movement of South Africa (REMSA) with the title *Geregtigheid in die Suid-Afrikaanse Samelewing* (“Justice in South African Society”) in which apartheid was questioned.
- On 16th November 1977 a few young lecturers (including myself) and students of the PU for CHE (and a few like-minded people from outside) issued the *Koinonia Declaration*, a document which opposed apartheid and its biblical justification (cf. Villa-Vicencio and De Villiers, 1998, vol. 4: 82-83). The text of this declaration was secretly printed by the IRS. When the University printers reported this to the authorities (luckily *after* the declaration was printed), I was called on the red carpet of the then Registrar, Professor H. C. van Rooy. I, however, regarded such a declaration as appropriate for the task of the IRS. The authors were also reprimanded by the university President. (For a reprinted text in Afrikaans, cf. Van der Walt and Venter, 1998: 31-44.)
- During the eighties different local initiatives at reconciliation between blacks, coloreds and whites were undertaken. The university authorities disliked this to such a degree that we encountered problems to appoint a white minister, who had participated in such activities, on the IRS-staff.

- From 1983 to 1995 different national and international conferences organized by the IRS criticized the apartheid ideology as well as the PU for CHE – by name a Christian institution – which did not accommodate black students (cf. *Orientation*, no. 75-78, Jan.-Dec., 1995: 613-621 for references to the various conference resolutions.) By the way, I have to emphasize that my family and I never suffered but only benefited from apartheid. The worst that happened was that I was aware that my telephone was tapped and that prior to or after an IRS-conference a “spy” of state security would enter my office to ask a few “innocent” questions. Even this worried me – I was no anti-apartheid hero!
- During 1984-1986 the violence between the ANC and the security forces (police and army) of state president P. W. Botha became so widespread and intense that he declared a state of emergency. From July 29 to August 5, 1987 IAPCHE's International Congress met in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia – also the headquarters of the ANC. Some members of the staff of the PU for CHE who went to the congress had secret talks with a few ANC leaders. Because of the tense atmosphere during these days (the PU for CHE was no longer a member of IAPCHE, and we as white South Africans were again repudiated for the unchristian apartheid policy of our country), I had little sleep and one night at 02h00 came upon the idea that the ten white conference participants from South Africa should try to make an appointment with Dr Kenneth Kaunda, state president of Zambia at that time, who was an influential black leader in the Southern part of Africa. He could act as a mediator between the ANC and NP. (I was appointed by the group of ten as their spokesperson.) Kaunda promised to try his best. He sent us home with the message: “Go home. Don't become a terrorist, but open the eyes of your students.” That is exactly what I tried to do during the difficult years ahead.
- During one of those turbulent days I told my wife about the little stone monument that the descendants of Calvin, 350 years after the burning of Michel Servet (1553) erected on the hill of Champel in Geneva. On the one side of this stone the posterity of the great Reformer condemns and confesses his mistake to

be involved in such a horrible deed. Hanneltjie's reaction was that this was exactly what the PU for CHE also needed: a similar symbol of a confession of guilt and reconciliation about the apartheid crime. I made the proposal to the Rector that, next to the existing Calvin-memorial on campus, we need such a monument on which the University confesses its misguided condonement of apartheid. Unfortunately the idea was rejected. (For my critique of the arguments at the PU for CHE against such a confession, cf. Van der Walt, 1998:378-383.)

- At an IRS conference in 1992 I gave my own critique on apartheid (later on republished in Van der Walt, 1993: 29-52; 1994: 375-98). Thereafter (cf. Van der Walt, 1995) I tried to explain to my fellow-Afrikaners where and how our Calvinist heritage had become derailed and how we could regain a true Christian identity. I also pleaded in 1966 again for reconciliation in (cf. Van der Walt, 1996a). But since then the top University leaders abstained from participating in IRS conferences like the 1996 international conference on "Christianity and democracy in South Africa."
- From 1996 a difference of opinion on the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) further increased the tension. (For reports on the work of the TRC, cf. Krog, 1998; Tutu, 1999; and Meiring, 1999 as well as the official 7-volume report edited by Villa-Vicencio and De Villiers, 1998-2002.) The TRC asked the RCSA (of which many of the leaders at the PU for CHE and also myself were members) for a submission. The Synod (1997) of the RCSA, however, declined this invitation (cf. Villa-Vicencio and De Villiers, 1998, vol. 4:83). I phoned professor Piet Meiring (a member of the TRC), informing him that a number of RCSA members were disappointed by their Synod's decision. We were planning to do something about it, maybe submitting a confession of guilt of our own (cf. Meiring, 1999:102.)
- Meanwhile the IRS made its own offices available to a delegation of the TRC to inform local people about its aims and procedures. The IRS also publicly appealed to its members to accept the TRC and participate in its important work (cf. Van der Walt, 1996b).

- Subsequently (on 6th August 1997) four members of the RCSA (Professor J. H. (Amie) van Wyk, Professor J. J. (Ponti) Venter, the Revd A. J. (Alwyn) du Plessis and myself) in their personal capacities issued a public confession of guilt concerning apartheid. (For historical purposes I am also giving, apart from their nick-names, which are mentioned in Villa-Vicencio and De Villiers, 1998, vol. 4: 60 as well as Meiring, 1999: 281, the initials of the four people. Another correction to be made is that only Van Wyk and Du Plessis were ministers and theologians. Venter and myself were reformational philosophers!)
- The TRC organized different institutional hearings (cf. vol. 4 of Villa-Vicencio and De Villiers). One of them was held for all the faith communities in East London (17-19 November 1997). At this important meeting (cf. Villa-Vicencio and De Villiers, vol. 4, 1998: 59-92) it became clear how different faiths reacted to apartheid. Through acts of commission and legitimation as well as acts of omission as agents of repression. But also as opponents and even victims of oppression.

We were invited by Professor P. G. Meiring to attend and present our public (Potchefstroom) confession at this meeting. Unfortunately, it was only possible for two of the above-mentioned four (Professor J. J. Venter and myself) to go to East London and to read and explain our confession on the last day of the meeting. (For the Afrikaans version of the confession, cf. Van der Walt, 1997: 28-30, and for the English text Van der Walt and Venter, 1998: 29-31.)

I have to mention here my great appreciation of the way Archbishop Tutu acted as chairman of the TRC. To me he is the model of a Christian leader of integrity and consistency since he does not allow any politician to prescribe to him what to think. Not only in the past did he criticize apartheid, he does not spare the present ANC regime either.

It therefore caused me great joy when in 2003 my own *alma mater* under new leadership finally showed its appreciation to Tutu by way of an honorary doctorate. (It was my privilege to edit the motivation for granting the degree.) A special issue of the university's journal *Koers* (vol. 68, 2003) was also dedicated

to Tutu. (I contributed two articles on his Christian worldview on pp. 15 – 57. For an English version, cf. Van der Walt, 2008b: 230-277.) In the same year the Archbishop wrote the preface to my book *Understanding and Rebuilding Africa* (2003: vii-viii).

What a long answer, Steve, to your simple question! I do hope, however, that these fragments from history will provide enough background – at least according to my own viewpoint – to give one important reason why the IRS did not survive to see the twenty-first century. The PU for CHE made a decision that its staff should retire already at the age of 60 years instead of at the previous retirement time of 65. However, simultaneously at my own retirement (at 60), the IRS was also closed at the end of 1999.

It may be that I myself – because of my unwillingness to conform to the wishes of the leaders of my university – should take responsibility for the closure of the IRS. But if I did follow their political directions, I would not only have acted against my own conscience, but much more: I would have betrayed a genuine reformational worldview and philosophy based on God's Word.

A few – to my mind not really substantial reasons – were afterwards (2000) offered by the University authorities for the demise of the IRS (cf. Van der Walt, 2008a: 292). I therefore had to guess what the decisive reasons were (cf. Van der Walt, 2008a: 293-295). The influence of the powerful Afrikaner Broederbond, supporting the National Party's apartheid policies, may also have played a role in the closure of the IRS. (See the Broederbond Membership list printed as an Appendix in Wilkens & Strydom, 1979. More about this secret organization can be found in Pelser, 1979, Serfontein, 1979 and Smith, 2009.)

In spite of the promises that the PU for CHE would continue at least some of the work undertaken by the IRS (through a newly established Centre for Faith and Scholarship), nothing has been realized for the past ten years. This may add strength to my suggestions that there were also other reasons than only the political ones (for example increased secularization of a Christian institution) behind the IRS's death sentence.

I mentioned these things not primarily because it took me years to work through the trauma that one's life task had been destroyed, but because I realize that today, in an increasingly secular society in South Africa and Africa, there is an even greater need to have an institute like the IRS was for 37 years. I have therefore hoped and prayed that something similar will one day be born again – and that it will get wings to fly all over our vast continent!

The Lord has already given evidence that He is answering our prayers. In May 2005 the Kosin University, Busan, South Korea (who granted me an honorary doctorate) started its own Institute for Reformed Studies and appointed me as its honorary director. A friend, Dr Tokunboh Adeyemo, established a Centre for Biblical Transformation in Nairobi, Kenya. And more or less at the same time an interdisciplinary Kuyper Association (AKET) was founded in Belle Horizonte, Brazil!

4.4 What is the Institute for Contemporary Christianity in Africa (ICCA) and when/why did that come about?

Steve, I was always keenly interested in Christianity on my own continent. Also because I knew that it would be the end of the IRS endeavors, after my retirement (in 2000) I established my own independent publishing company, called ICCA, to continue at least something of the reformatory publications of the erstwhile IRS. (There is even today still a demand for older IRS publications!) Thus far my financial position unfortunately only allowed me to publish a few of my own works (see the website: allofiferedeemed.co.uk/vanderwalt.htm). Old age also convinced me that to try to work wider than publishing (for example conferences and seminars) will not be possible any more. But at the end of my life I realize even more than previously that we have received a rich heritage in a reformatory worldview and philosophy to be adapted for the African situation. At seventy I can still share it on paper with my fellow Africans!

5. You have an obvious interest in Africa, may I ask some questions regarding Africa?

5.1 You have mentioned your travels in Africa, your books comparing African and Western culture from a reformational perspective, and inviting African Christian leaders to IRS conferences. Were there more personal contacts with local black Africans?

Yes, but again only a few examples will have to suffice.

During my years at the University of Fort Hare in the Eastern Cape province I was already involved in missionary work and started a Christian periodical in Xhosa, called *Umthombo Wamandla* (Fountain of Power).

When the PU for CHE finally opened its doors also to graduate black students, I became one of their lecturers (for an introductory course in a Christian worldview). Prior to this, many black students received free copies of many IRS publications.

I also had close contact with black students, especially those who studied theology, when we started a Bible study group at our home on Tuesday evenings. We were enriched by the way each one of them read the word of God in their own languages and from their different cultural perspectives. During these Bible studies we also wrote sermons to be preached at different locations where the word of God was preached to local black Reformed congregations on Sundays. Some of these sermons were also published in an African language (Sesotho) in 1999 and 2004 in two volumes with the title: *Mamela Morena o a bua!* [Listen, the Lord is speaking!] to help ministers elsewhere. Those students were regarded as our "children" and we were called their "parents." Some of them became ministers and one even a professor in theology and vice-principal of the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Churches in South Africa.

My wife and I also decided to join (as the only two white members) a black Reformed Church (*Kereke ya Gereformeerde Boskop*), consisting mostly of farm laborers in the Potchefstroom district. She gave Sunday school classes for the children. Apart from being an elder and a preacher (every Sunday), I was more or

less a jack of all trades, taking care of minutes, finances, transport, acting as ambulance to the hospital, and even as funeral undertaker. On one occasion I had to testify in court to get an innocent child (Levi Diamond) out of jail. He was imprisoned for throwing petrol bombs, not wanting to do so, but intimidated to join the struggle of other young radicals. It was a very precious ten years in both our lives.

My wife, Hanneltjie, started her own development project, namely a clothing factory ("Another Hannah") in our house when our children left home. She eventually trained about fifteen jobless black women to be able to take care of their households themselves.

Because of the poverty among most black people, I was also interested in the whole issue of development in Africa. My first full book in Afrikaans on the problems and possible solutions in this regard appeared already before my retirement at the IRS (cf. Van der Walt, 1999). It was followed by more scholarly articles in journals or chapters in books in English. Some of them are used today by overseas development NGOs in Africa.

5.2 Can you tell us something about Christianity in Africa?

Let me first briefly say something about the history of Christianity in Africa. You may be aware of the fact that Christianity in North Africa, for instance in Ethiopia, is far older than European Christianity (cf. Hein and Kleidt, 1999). Usually a distinction is only made between three other later periods in the development of African Christianity: (1) the missionary Christianity of the nineteenth century and the establishment of the different mainline churches (of European origin); (2) the beginning from the early twentieth century of the many African Independent Churches; and (3) since the 1970s the growth of various charismatic churches.

In the charismatic groups three phases can also be distinguished. (1) The arrival of the Assemblies of God and the Apostolic Faith Mission in Africa. (2) The influx after World War II of neo-Pentecostalism from the US. (3) The subsequent growth of indigenous African Pentecostalism.

Like in the rest of the Southern hemisphere (the so-called developing world, of Asia and Latin America) Christianity in all these different forms is making extraordinary advances. You may be aware of the books of Jenkins (2006; 2007) and more recently Johnson & Ross (2010) in this regard. This dramatic advance is, by the way, also taking place in Eastern Europe and Russia. Simultaneously Christianity in Europe is declining. Missionaries from Africa are today, for example, re-evangelizing a world that previously sent out its missionaries to Africa!

Many Europeans are not aware of this “Christian fever” in sub-Saharan Africa, because it is not regarded as news by the media – nobody has been killed! Until about a century ago Christians were a small minority on our continent. Now they number about 350 million, one in every six of the global Christian community! African Christianity is rapidly becoming the new centre of gravity within world Christianity.

Amazing parallels exist between this young, contemporary Christianity in Africa and early Christianity (from the second to about the fifth centuries). A leading African theologian, Bediako (1992: xii), who passed away two years ago, even writes that, if he looks closely at the concerns of modern African theologies, it may be possible one day to wake up and find himself in the second century AD! Christians in Africa today again face the choice between four basic options: world-flight, world-conformity, world-compromise or world-transformation. The first three options, however, boil down to some kind of dualism (for details cf. Van der Walt, 2001b: 17-22).

5.3 How do you see the future of this “new Christendom”?

In the first place we should be positive, rejoice, and praise the Lord for what is happening. I also don't doubt the sincerity of my African brothers and sisters in Christ – many have died as martyrs. One should also keep in mind that African Christianity should not be carbon copies of western Christianity – they should be allowed and encouraged to serve the Lord in the garb of their own cultures.

At the same time one should not become triumphant or ignore possible weaknesses. Some scholars simply try to explain the phenomenal growth of Christianity in Africa as resulting from the situation of poverty on the continent. A gospel of health and wealth (for example, Grifford, 1998) will naturally attract people living in economic deprivation.

Others argue that Christianity in Africa today is like a very wide river, with a depth of only a few millimeters. Increasing secularism will eventually lead to a totally dry river bed.

Personally I am more worried about the often-unnoticed dualistic tendencies (of world-flight, world-conformity, or compromise) already mentioned. As you will already be aware, I don't regard Christianity as a waiting room for immortal souls to be taken to heaven. We cannot live near to God, if we deny his creation. We serve Him not *alongside* or *apart* from creation, but *in* this everyday world. The closer we move in genuine love to all His creatures, the closer we move to Himself. And the nearer to Him, the more will we be concerned about his world. A world which He loved so much that his own Son died for it to be redeemed.

If we take this as a norm, the young Christians of Africa still have to learn more. To be converted and plant a church is only the beginning. After the apostle Paul completed these two steps (cf. the Acts), a third followed: teaching the young Christians and churches the implications of living *in every aspect* of their lives as kingdom citizens (cf. Paul's and the other apostles' different letters). That is why my Nigerian friend, Tukunboh Adeyemo, emphasizes the need for a Christian worldview (including a Christian view of being human and of society) for Africa. What we need at the moment is more visible signs (shelters of hope) of God's liberating kingdom in Africa. But let me immediately remove a possible misunderstanding: a comprehensive (pre-scientific) worldview and (scholarly) Christian philosophy will not guarantee our salvation. It will also be wrong to look down upon fellow-Christians who do not have such reformational insights.

Many of the above concerns were also voiced about my own church (the RCSA) in a book that was published, in Afrikaans, shortly before my retirement

(1999) by the IRS. Its title was *Naby God* and the full title translated in English reads: *Nearer to God: Christian and Church on the Threshold of Genuine Spirituality* (264 pp). However, apart from minor changes to the church order and liturgy as well as other formal aspects, not much that is essentially new has occurred during the past decade since the book – hailed by some as a prophetic voice and by others as unnecessary criticism – appeared. Perhaps a Reformed church is the most difficult of all churches to reform!

By the way, I sometimes wonder whether my Christian philosophy does not lead me astray to become a philosophical Christian. I then experience a tension between my “philosophical” faith and the simplicity of being a normal Christian. I envy “ordinary” Christians their childlike faith and sometimes doubt whether even a Christian philosopher can maintain his/her faith and be saved. When I read Christ’s command not to worry about what one shall eat, drink or wear (Matthew 6:28 ff), I wish he had also added – as a reminder to myself – that one should not be troubled about philosophizing!

I say this since “intellectual” Christians may tend to become too critical without any inspiration to other church members. But at the same time “thinking Christians” have a responsibility not to simply swallow anything going by the name of “Christianity” or “church.” Therefore, I find rest in the fact that God also created – and bear with – people like myself. In our own unique but limited way we are also called “to seek first his kingdom and righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). And whether his kingdom will arrive, will not be dependent upon answers to all my philosophical questions.

5.4 Is there anything non-Africans can do?

Steve, my honest viewpoint is that especially western people will have more influence in Africa if they do not prescribe with an attitude of superiority to Africans how they should “develop.” Then outside help of all kinds will be appreciated and much can be achieved. Apart from financial assistance (Africa will not be able to get out of its poverty trap without outside help from the rich

northern part of the world), we need all kinds of expertise. For instance, Christian teachers and lecturers are badly needed at the thousands of church-related and private Christian schools, colleges, and universities on the continent.

I am in no way shifting the blame for its own poverty away from the Africans themselves, but I do hope that most African countries have by now realized that "first to seek the political kingdom and everything else will be yours" (Nkhrumah) will not solve their problems. Christians themselves have to mobilize their own resources, build a strong civil society and not expect everything from their governments.

6. You have been a Christian scholar for over forty years. Two final questions:

6.1 What lessons have you learned?

With this kind of question, Steve, you are enticing me to write another book! Let me suffice with only a few things that come to my mind at the moment.

In my "philosophical memoirs" (in Afrikaans) published in the journal *Koers*, (Van der Walt, 2010a) I explain my life history as a footpath, sometimes not straight and also including turn-offs along the way. Initially I wanted to become a minister (preferably a missionary) to be able to serve the Lord. However, through my acquaintance with a reformational worldview and philosophy, I discovered that He wanted to use me elsewhere in his creation-wide kingdom. In this way I finally became a Christian philosopher. The first lesson I have thus learned is that one should always pray that God will use you and the gifts He has given to you as He has decided, and then fully trust Him to guide you through all of life's zigzags.

Concerning a Christian philosophy I have realized that even the greatest reformational thinkers stood on the shoulders of their predecessors and were furthermore influenced by the philosophical trends of their times. Because their deepest intention was to be obedient to God's revelation, they moved a few steps ahead of their teachers. But at the same time some of their ideas remained

unreformed. Therefore Calvin's adage, *semper reformanda*, will be valid until our Lord comes again. Every new generation has to take up this task anew. An important implication is that – in spite of the fundamental critique offered by a reformational approach – we should always share our insights with others in genuine humility.

As far as lecturing is concerned, I have realized – perhaps too late in my life – how important it is in teaching a Christian philosophy to be a mentor or model for one's students. Of course they have to study the contents of a reformational worldview and philosophy. But they also need its confirmation in the example of an older person who himself/herself lives accordingly. (Apart from that they of course also need the support of a like-minded community of younger people.) I say this especially in the light of the increasing commercialization of life, including universities, resulting in less and less personal contact between students and their lecturers.

In spite of the secularization of my own *alma mater* (and this can also be a message to Christian scholars at other secular universities), Christians should be innocent as doves, but also shrewd like snakes (Matthew 10:16). Taking an example from the red-chested cuckoo, we can still lay our Christian "eggs" to be hatched in a secular nest (curriculum). The students will be able to see the difference between one's own viewpoint and the prescribed syllabus. As Christians we have received a great gift in our reformational tradition. We have the obligation to share it. And the more we share, the richer we will become!

6.2 What advice would you give to budding Christian students and scholars?

If I now start sermonizing, Steve, please bear with me – I am a philosophical missionary after all! Again only a few remarks.

In our contemporary materialistic, market, and consumption-driven societies

the temptation to get wealthy – even at great costs – can be very strong. Since a Christian philosophy cannot be weighed, measured, and counted in cash value, its real value may be severely underestimated. But don't be misled: the wisdom it offers is worth far more than gold. For the time invested in studying it, you will reap a rich harvest on both the theoretical and practical level.

The contemporary postmodern world and philosophy is confusing, while a reformational perspective provides direction. (Of course this does not imply that reformational thinkers should be afraid to ask questions!) One should therefore first shape an own Christian viewpoint before one spends all the time unraveling present philosophical tendencies.

Don't try to be "accepted" by simply following the most recent philosophical currents. Remember that a reformational worldview can be traced back to the sixteenth century. In 2010 it is 75 years since the revival of a genuine reformational philosophy in the Netherlands. While it should never be regarded as a closed system, it is a tried and tested tradition, not simply something fashionable – that will be replaced tomorrow by a new philosophical freak. We need Christian students and lecturers to carry the torch of this liberating philosophy into the new context of contemporary culture, a world that was still unknown to Vollenhoven, Dooyeweerd, Stoker, and their many followers worldwide.

I have also realized that our so-called contemporary tolerance of all viewpoints can in fact be very intolerant – especially of a clear Christian perspective. Don't be scared, don't withdraw. You have a basic right to serve the Lord also with your mind. And the rest of the world has a right to hear his Good News. He will finally bless us, not necessarily for what we have achieved, but for our faithfulness as Christian scholars. Revelation 14 verse 13b promises something amazing. Not that our works will *precede* us, but that they will *follow* us. God will use them as building blocks for his renewed creation!

To talk about oneself can be very difficult. The danger to think too much of one's own life is always present, while God's Word in many places (for example

Proverbs 27:2) advise humility. May I nevertheless thank you, Steve, for this interview. The kind of questions you asked forced me to review important aspects of my past life. It also helped me to ascertain whether I want to share something with a new generation of reformationally-minded Christians. Finally, it reminded me that I have to look ahead, because God leads one's life journey "like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day" (Proverbs 4:18) when He will awake us on His renewed earth.

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PART I

THE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY REFORMATION

RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION

CONTEMPORARIES BUT NOT ALLIES

I do hope that you are going to have the deepest sympathy for my contribution, because it really represents an attempt at the impossible. To force a whale into a sardine tin is no mean feat. And here one is expected to force not less than five whales (Renaissance, Humanism, Stoicism, Platonism, and Calvin as a representative of the Reformation) into the same tin. This titanic effort assumes even more heroic proportions when one considers that I have exactly fifteen minutes at my disposal in which to commit this academic crime.

I am convinced that Calvin as a reformer (the theme of our congress) can only be fully understood and really appreciated if the background against which he grew up, developed, thought and wrote is also carefully studied.

This sixteenth-century décor against which his life and work has to be considered is an extremely complex and many-sided one. There is an unbelievably wide range of factors which we have to keep in mind in the field of the church and religion, in the field of society and politics, and in the field of philosophy and theology.

There is a great deal of variation within each of the trends that we are going to deal with. Apart from that there is a strong degree of reciprocation among the various trends: Renaissance, Humanism, and Stoicism can only be dissected in theory neatly afterwards.

In what follows I am merely going to attempt to isolate the deepest religious driving force behind the Renaissance and the Reformation.

The sixteenth century: a spiritual watershed

The turmoil in a number of areas was already noticeable in the late Middle

Ages. The sixteenth century became an uneasy period of *Sturm und Drang* with many far-reaching events: repeated epidemics of the plague, agrarian and economic crises, and large-scale urbanization with the resultant social upheaval.

A new mercantile middle class was established, and the farmers rebelled against injustices... .

This was also, however, a period of unprecedented broadening of horizons. The compass and gunpowder, ancient manuscripts, and books of great age were discovered and studied. Through the voyages of discovery the world map was extended, the use of paper and of mobile printing, the development of schools and of universities, new ideas (such as those of Copernicus) all heralded the birth of a new world.

And the spiritual leaders were aware of this dawning. Over against the "dark Middle Ages" they began to see their own epoch as a golden epoch, a new epoch of light and enlightenment.

In the dawning of the new era in western cultural history various intellectual trends came into being, each with the pretension of having *the* light, each secure in the belief that he and he only could offer new certainty and security to European man.

Whoever attunes his seismograph sensitively would see clearly that the ways diverged here. The sixteenth century represents the beginning of the end of the important route that Christendom played in the West for more than a millennium (c. 500 – c. 1500). At this time the secularization of the West started. A new paganism was born. At first it was a little unsteady, and sleepy-eyed, but it would soon conquer the West by storm.

In spite of the mutual dissatisfaction with the Scholastic past the ways slowly but clearly diverged. The Renaissance broke with the mentality of synthesis or compromise because it could not tolerate the Christian and biblical element contained in Medieval thought. For the Reformation the synthesis between Christendom and ancient pagan thought became unacceptable for exactly the opposite reason: the word of God did not come to full justice in it.

As to the question to which source one should turn for light in the new epoch there is no unanimity. The Renaissance looked for new light in a totally different direction than the Reformation.

The Renaissance

We can already discern the difference in Early or so-called Christian Humanism and the pre-Reformation thinkers. Both sought to kindle their own flame at the cinders of the patristic age. The motives, however, differed. The precursors of the Reformation returned to Patristic thought, because they were fascinated by the *Scriptural* aspects of it, while early humanist thought was more interested in the question as to how the early Christian thinkers could simultaneously also be *Romans!*

This early form of Humanism was mainly a pedagogical movement, which sought a moral injection (to affect the rebirth of church and religion) in the past.

Later Humanism still sought to re-dream the beautiful ideals of the past. These thinkers, however, delved even further back into the past. The period to which they returned to kindle their light was not so much that of the *Patres* as the Greek and Roman thinkers of Antiquity.

Here we have a still clearer leftish trend. The question now is not so much (as with the Early Humanists) how it is possible to be simultaneously Christian and Roman, but why it is not possible (as in Antiquity) to be purely Roman (that is pagan) in thought? The emancipation from church and religious bonds strengthened. Autonomous, assured, dignified, and noble man emerged ever more clearly in spite of the Christian mentality of many individual humanists like, for instance, Erasmus.

Humanism was characterized by a scientific, literary, and educational ideal based on a study of Antiquity. (It was confined more to intellectuals in comparison with the Reformation which was a more popular movement.) Humanism was the result of the process of fermentation instigated by the Renaissance in the field of the sciences. It did not, however, consist merely of the grouping of a number of disciplines. A new vision of life was presupposed in it. In his view of life the Humanist dreamed not only of a number of

disciplines but also of the end result of schooling therein: a new world in which the new, autonomous man would be dominant.

All too soon the Humanists began to realize, however, that while a glorious past could be recreated in dreams, dreaming within the confines of one's study alone was not adequate to build a new culture. Repristination, after all, did not seem to hold the true answer. The clock of history could not be reset at will. Too much stress on the authority of the writers of Antiquity, for example, checked originality. Noble man could not be inhibited thus!

Renaissance man (in this brief survey I do not distinguish sharply between Humanism and the Renaissance) thus took a further step. Man could be reborn of his own power. He did not need the midwife of Christianity any more than that of pagan Antiquity. Man could pull himself up by his own bootstraps and be the source of his own light.

One of the antique trends which beautifully complemented the new spirit of Renaissance man was Stoicism, represented in Antiquity by figures such as Cicero and Seneca. This was a school of thought in which man and his imperturbable moral duties stood in the centre. Renaissance intellectuals liked the doctrine of "back to nature" (in the place of the Scriptural one of grace). The Stoa, however, did not find the laws for moral life (*logoi spermatikoi* of the *Logos*) only in nature. These laws or measuring rods they considered to be implanted in the reasoning faculty of man. Man was thus basically his own lawgiver and autonomous. Rationalism, seminally already present in the Early Stoicism, was eagerly embraced by Renaissance man and would soon assume a leading role in the western world.

As a result of the initial trend to return to the past, a number of schools of thought dating from Antiquity (such as neo-Platonism, Aristotelianism, Pythagoreanism, Epicurism, and Scepticism) had revivals in the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. We cannot go into all these. We have to direct our attention now to a totally different group of men which found their light for a new culture and society elsewhere.

The Reformation

The Reformers also had an aversion to scholastic Medieval synthetic thinking.

They broke with it, however, for the exact opposite reason than the Renaissance did, namely to enable the word of God to be freed again. Their thought can be regarded as being clearly anti-synthetic, spiritually directed to the right.

The Reformers learnt a great deal from Antiquity. Like the precursors of the Reformation they also returned in many respects to the Church Fathers. The motive, however lay in the fact that the *Patres* could be regarded as representing a purer period in the history of Christendom. Thus Augustine was for Calvin in the first place a guide back to the word of God.

The Reformation clearly sought its source of light elsewhere. It did not look at pagan Antiquity, it did not look at the enlightened, noble, educated man come of age and reborn through his own devising, following the light of his own intellect. Whether one sought authority from the Pope or from enlightened man was in the eyes of the Reformers equally wrong.

Light for them emanated not from the earth but from Above. The Reformation sought not merely historical change on the horizontal level, but religious change on the vertical level of the relationship of man to God and his law, not conversion to the past or reaction against the past or conversion from one's own power, but conversion to God and to his word. Absolute authority belonged to God alone. The word is the only source of light.

Calvin puts to the test the spirit of the times

It would be wrong — as many are so prone to do — to regard Calvin, out of a sense of piety, as a sort of sixteenth-century Melchizedek, a man without beginning or background. He grew up within a certain period and was in many respects a child of his time. From his youth onwards he came into daily contact with all the spiritual trends of his environment. One could even say that his own thinking developed out of a continuing dialogue that he conducted with the various trends of thought current in his lifetime.

It would be wrong to try to explain Calvin's thought merely from extra-biblical influences. It would be equally wrong, however, to claim that he underwent no influence other than the Bible.

A few remarks regarding Calvin and Humanism, Stoicism, and Platonism

should serve to illustrate this.

Humanism

According to experts Calvin was particularly influenced by that type of Humanism in which philology, as a result of the literary renaissance, played an important role. This group, in their return to the sources, developed a specific historical philological method which prescribed an attitude of reverence towards the texts of Antiquity. The historical awareness and the effort to be objective towards the sources and to let them speak for themselves was a novelty.

Calvin had a lot to thank Humanism for in this respect. He assumed a similar attitude to the Scriptures. It was an enormous forward step that in his exegesis of the Scriptures he broke with the centuries-old allegorical exegesis, because this had been an important method for reading all sorts of foreign ideas into the Bible and thus effecting a synthesis between Scripture and pagan concepts.

Stoicism

The fact that Calvin's very first writing was a commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*, would seem to indicate just how intimately he was aware of this school of thought. Some would suggest that Calvin's thought was in fact none other than "baptized Stoicism." The other extreme is represented by those who would plead that there is no evidence whatsoever of Stoic influence on Calvin.

One could, of course, use the concept "influence" in different ways. Personally, I think influence of the Stoa can be detected on Calvin's idea of a *lex naturalis* and, concurrently, his idea of a *semen religionis* and *conscientia* (conscience).

Platonism

Research in this field once again has to do with two extreme viewpoints. Where some sin *per defectum* (by omission) by maintaining that Calvin had put aside completely the Platonising tendency (of Augustine, for example), others sin as it were *per excessum* (by commission) by totally over-estimating

the influence of Platonism on Calvin.

My own tentative research in this field have convinced me that Calvin's thought underwent influence from Plato (and the neo-Platonists?) not only in the formal sense of word usage but also as regards content. His view of man (especially the way he sees the relationship between body and soul) is perhaps the clearest evidence of this. (See, for example, chapter 5 in this volume.)

I would not, however, go so far as to call Calvin a Platonist. That would presuppose a relationship of master and scholar which in this case definitely did not exist. What Calvin found useful in Plato he used — without becoming a disciple, intent on confirming his master's ideas and careful that not one facet of it be changed.

It is a pity that limited time does not permit me to add a few quotations from Calvin's works to illustrate what has thus far being stated only in very general terms about the possible influences of Humanism, Stoicism, and Platonism.

Recapitulation

The Renaissance, with all the philosophical schools it revived in the sixteenth century, was at heart a religious movement to the left, away from the word of God and the God of the word. Calvin's religious bias was to the right. He was imbued by a different spirit.

Renaissance in essence was a rediscovery of Antiquity, a revival of original *paganism*. The essence of Reformation was the rediscovery of the word of God, of genuine *Christianity*.

For that reason one has to be very careful not to come to the conclusion that Calvin was influenced by a specific philosophical school merely on the basis of similar word usage and parallel intellectual patterns. A more detailed analysis is necessary in which the relevant systems (for example, his entire anthropology) can be fully and carefully compared.

One often gets the impression that Calvin did not take the philosophical material of his times too seriously. He normally dealt with it in a remarkably

nonchalant manner. He used philosophical ideas as an illustration of the truth rather than as a guide to the truth. His thought was not carried by these ideas, but these ideas did contribute to the clarification and explication of what he was trying to say. Many times he mentions a certain viewpoint merely to bring out the contrast with his own ideas more clearly.

Calvin's use of Humanism, Stoicism, and Platonism can be said to be eclectic rather than systematic. As far as I know, one finds no attempt in his work of a sustained systematic argumentation to deal with a specific philosophy fully and to argue in its favor.

All of this, however, does not take away the fact that Calvin did, as regards some of his ideas (such as his concept of natural law and his anthropology) immersed himself deeply in the philosophies of his time. Whoever reads what Calvin wrote in an unbiased fashion in the light of preceding history would have to acknowledge this.

Calvin's independence, however, is the most striking feature, guaranteed by the fact that the source of his thought was the word of God. Perhaps one should not evaluate Calvin negatively by the extent to which he submitted to extra-biblical influences, but rather positively by inquiring to the extent to which he made a contribution to a better understanding of the word of God.

Although it has not happened within the prescribed time limit, the crime has been committed and the whale is safely ensconced in the tin. You see, Calvinism does not prevent one from sinning. The only thing is that it takes the enjoyment from the act of sin!

Postscript: For an elaboration in more detail (with bibliographical references) of the material discussed see Chapter 8 ("The intellectual decor of the Reformation with special reference to Calvin") of Van der Walt, B.J. *Anatomy of Reformation* Potchefstroom, Potchefstroom University for CHE, 1981, reprinted in 2009 (page 164-214).

BIBLICAL AND UNBIBLICAL TRAITS IN CALVIN'S VIEW OF THE HUMAN BEING

The Catholic who thinks criticism of the *Summa* calls the gospel into question would be as wrong as the Calvinist who equates criticism of the *Institutes* with doubt about faith.

Q. Breen "St. Thomas and Calvin as theologians: a comparison." In *The Heritage of John Calvin*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973): 24.

It is indeed the case that even today some Calvinists equate Calvin's doctrines with the word of God. Quite recently I happened to hear that Calvin was not to be "tampered with."

H. A. Oberman defines this type of interpretation of Calvin as "not unlike the German phenomenon in the field of theology when a reference to Scripture is replaced by a quotation from Martin Luther, the classical school interprets Calvin with the pretence of presenting the word of God itself. Valid theology is the reiteration of the positions described — and hence prescribed! — by Calvin."

These types of Calvinists apparently regard Calvin as a super-historical figure who could interpret Scripture infallibly. With all the appreciation we should have for the pioneer work of the Reformer of Geneva in making the word of God more explicit, we must never forget that he was a man of his time. Like any other thinker he was exposed to various spiritual trends — including the secular ones — of his times. An unhistorical approach would be an injustice to Calvin. He can only be rightly understood — and valued — when his thinking is studied against the background of the climate of thought of the sixteenth century.

In this contribution only a preliminary reconnaissance in respect of one facet of Calvin's thinking, namely his anthropology, is being attempted. The question arises as to what extent he could make the revelation of Scripture manifest in his views about man and in what degree he was influenced by earlier and contemporary trends that would not be able to withstand the test of Scripture.

1. Man as a religious being

The deep religious character of the Reformation in a positively Christian sense is also revealed in Calvin's view of man. Religion is not regarded by him as a subjective, introvert piety but is taken in the sense that man in the core of his being is aligned to God and that this religious alignment controls and determines his whole being. In this religious relationship man does not occupy the foremost position but God, who has placed man in a covenant-relationship to Himself, does.

2. Self-knowledge dependent on knowledge of God

In the opening words of the *Institutionis Christianae Religionis* (in future abbreviated to *ICR*) it is immediately evident how much importance Calvin attaches to the religious relationship between God and man especially in the knowledge of the self. "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes and brings forth the other, is not easy to discern. In the first place, no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God, in whom he 'lives and moves.' For, quite clearly, the mighty gifts with which we are endowed are hardly from ourselves; indeed, our very being is nothing but subsistence in the God."

The beginning of the second paragraph presents the other side of the picture: "Again, it is certain that man never achieves a clear knowledge of himself unless he has first looked upon God's face, and then descends from contemplating Him to scrutinize himself."

Before going into the problems that are latent in these statements allow me first to make a more positive remark. In my opinion a clear proof is found in these quotations that Calvin's thinking is not purely cosmological. Because he does not narrow down ontology to cosmology, he can begin immediately with God. He does not need at a later stage to deduce the existence of God through creation. He does not make the knowledge of God dependent on the knowledge of creation but states emphatically that self-knowledge is not possible without knowledge of God. The visible does not determine the invisible but vice versa.

The problem in these statements of Calvin is, however, seated in the fact that he also maintains that self-knowledge can lead to knowledge of God. This standpoint of Calvin has already led to violent controversy. That self-knowledge would lead to knowledge of God is doubtful: "Calvijn zag schijnbaar voorbij, dat de kennis van onze ellendige toestand ons alleen tot God doet vlieden, wanneer de kennis van God reeds aanwezig is; men kan toch niet beweren, dat de kennis van onszelf als zodanig reeds leid tot de kennis van God."

Others have seen in this the clear influence of St Augustine on Calvin, considering that St Augustine also saw the gist of wisdom in both self-knowledge and knowledge of God. On this point Calvin would then show the clear influence of Neo-Platonism. According to Battenhouse there can be no doubt about this: "The Neoplatonists regard intuition, the interior apprehension of the divine within the self and of the self in the light of the divine, as knowledge. They would advise man to begin with a study of himself, since in coming to know himself he must come to know God. If man will but survey his own talents, says Calvin in the opening paragraph of the *Institutes*, he will see that they are 'as it were so many streams conducting us to the fountainhead,' God. The metaphor clearly suggests the Neoplatonic concept of emanation."

In the author's opinion care must be taken that we are not led to over-hasty conclusions by the mere sound of words. Polman is probably nearer the truth. He shows that Luther, just as in the case of Calvin, accentuates the close relationship between self knowledge and the knowledge of God and

that in this particular respect a stand is made against the neo-Platonic Augustinian conception: "Naar de klank der woorden beoordeeld schijnt hier een treffende overeenkomst te zijn tussen Augustinus' uitspraak en de beide door ons gegeven citaten van Luther en Calvijn. In werkelijkheid is het onderscheid radicaal. De Reformatoren gaat het om kennis in Bijbelse zin. Augustinus gaat het om kennis in Griekse zin... ."

In the writer's opinion what has already been formulated in connection with the religious character of Calvin's anthropology offers a solution here. In this respect it is profitable to refer to Schroten who says the following about Calvin: "Zijn leer aangaande de mens is geen psychologie, geen sociologie, geen filosofie... Het gaat hem er niet in de eerste plaats om, de verhouding van lichaam en ziel te doorgronden, noch om de mens te zien in zijn verhouding tot zijn medemens, of in zijn verhouding tot al wat maar object van zijn kennen kan zijn: hij richt zich op de verhouding van de mens tot zijn God, en van God tot de mens. Zijn anthropologie is een integreerend deel van zijn 'onderwijzing in de christelijke godsdienst'.

"Calvijn ziet de mens steeds en voor alles *in zijn relatie tot God*. Hij zoekt niet de zelfkennis op de weg der filosofen (vgl. I, 15, 6), die de mens op zichzelf zien, als een zelfstandig, autonoom wezen, met een eigen waardigheid en voortreffelijkheid, afgedacht van God. De mens is voor hem in geen opzicht te denken, zonder dat hem meteen God in gedachten komt."

If we therefore interpret Calvin correctly, his statement does not mean that we must first get to know ourselves before we can know God. The introductory words of the *ICR* state emphatically that knowledge of self and knowledge of God take place as it were simultaneously and that the one cannot take place without the other. Viewed in the light of the religious relationship between God and man, as defined in Holy Scripture, this is correct, for only he who knows and acknowledges God and His word, will know himself; and only he who (in the light of the word) knows himself as a child of God, will acknowledge his Father.

The second citation quoted above reveals something more about Calvin's philosophy. In this citation his dualistic ontology is faintly apparent

when he says that man *descends* from his view of God to himself. From God as the transcendent man descends to the lower niveau of being, namely man as part of the non-transcendent world.

3. Man as soul and body

If uncertainty should still exist as to whether Calvin actually accepted a dualistic ontology, this does become apparent in his anthropological views. Calvin's doctrine of a heavenly soul (because it originates from a transcendent God) and an earthly (i.e. non-transcendent) body reveals that he links up with an age-old tradition.

As far back as his first writing after his conversion to Protestantism he treats the structure of man as consisting of body and soul. The *Psychopannychia* (1534) combats the idea of the soul in a sleep of death, in the case of deceased who have been believers. A comparison of this work with what Calvin later formulated in *ICR*, I, 15 shows that he remained faithful to his earliest views. Consequently the *ICR* is mainly followed in our exposition and the *Psychopannychia* is only referred to when it provides more detail.

According to Calvin it remains undoubtedly a fact that man consists of two parts: a heavenly soul and an earthly body. He is also assured that the body is the incarceration (*ergastulum*) of the soul. The body is the lower part of man, the less important, so that Calvin does not devote further attention to it but gives all his attention to the soul as the noblest part of man. The soul is the real man, the body happens to be incidental and, according to Calvin, practically a fortuitous evil. Calvin already implies this when he calls the body a prison or jail. It is even clearer when he states in *ICR* I, 15, 6 that man has undoubtedly been created for the purpose of contemplating the heavenly life, but especially in chapters 9 and 10 of Book III where he treats of the contemplation of the future life and the utilization of this earthly life. Here the consequences of his dichotomistic view of man become apparent in contempt for the earthly corporal life. He says for example: "For this we must believe: that the mind is never seriously aroused to desire and ponder the life

to come unless it be previously imbued with contempt for the present life.”

“Indeed, there is no middle ground between these two: either the world must become worthless to us or hold us bound by intemperate love of it. Accordingly, if we have any concern for eternity, we must strive diligently to strike off these evil fetters.”

Such statements may, of course, be interpreted that Calvin merely follows biblical revelation. In the Bible we also encounter the tension between sinful present life and re-born future life. In the next paragraph (3) Calvin correctly states that contempt of life is not synonymous with hating life and showing ingratitude to God.

In the following paragraph (4) it is, however, evident that Calvin says more than Scripture permits. It becomes clear from this paragraph that un-biblical influences are responsible for an overstatement. His anthropological views are responsible for his contempt of life in this world. He states that present life compared with the future life must be completely despised. For if heaven is our fatherland, what is the earth other than a resort of exile? If passing from this world is synonymous with entrance to life, what is the world then other than a grave? And what is living in the world other than lying in death? If release from the body entails being brought into complete freedom, what is the body then other than a prison?

In my opinion these ideas of Calvin are definitely not in accordance with Holy Scripture. His views in this connection are, however, understandable when seen against the background of his dualistic ontology of a transcendent (heavenly) and a non-transcendent (earthly) sphere. Holy Scripture reveals that man as a creature of God is an inherent part of this (earthly) creation and – in spite of his fall – is domiciled here. For this reason the Bible speaks of a new *earth* which shall be man’s fatherland.

Calvin’s dichotomic anthropology in which the soul is kept imprisoned by the body, necessitates an unscriptural longing for death, for through death the soul is freed from the body. According to him there should be a longing for and no fear of death, for then we get rid of the “unstable, crumbling, corruptible, dilapidated, transitory tabernacle of our body” and the soul is

recalled to its actual heavenly fatherland. He even suggests that no one has made good progress in the school of Christ if he does not await the day of his death with joy. As the result of his dichotomic anthropology Calvin no longer espies anything terrifying in death. Death is actually a friend, as it releases us from the body and it does not affect the immortal soul — which is the actual human being.

It is true that Calvin uses well-known biblical concepts and expressions (for example, “tabernacle”). At the same time, however, it is also clear that his use of biblical revelation is colored by a specific anthropological conception.

Stellingwerff's finding regarding Calvin's view of man is correct: “Deze dualistische mensopvatting van Calvijn doet geen recht aan de eenheid van de mens, strijdt met wat God's Woord over de mens zegt, leidt tot valse problemen en tot verachting van de schepping. De leer dat de mens uit twee delen bestaat, een onsterfelijke ziel die in een lichamelijke kerker woont, is van griekse en niet Bijbelse afkomst. Die onsterfelijkheid van de ziel poogt Calvijn te bewijzen uit de heilige Schrift door te verwijzen naar plaatsen waar Paulus spreekt over de onsterfelijkheid die de gehele mens in de opstanding zal ontvangen. Wat in de herschepping aan de gehele mens geschonken wordt, kent Calvijn aan de ziel toe vanaf de schepping, zodat de opstanding des vleses voor Calvijn een bijkomende zaak wordt.”

Battenhouse also points to the unscriptural origin of Calvin's view of man when he says: “But one point, I think, is clear: that both the Neoplatonists and Calvin base their thinking about man on the premise of a dualism between soul and body. The soul is associated to the body yet ideally detached; the world is but a vestibule to heaven... The other-worldliness of Calvin, it seems quite clear, is more Greek than Hebrew. A fundamental dichotomy is set up between the inner man, who is concerned for eternal life, and man's external conduct, which concerns civil justice.”

Calvin's dualistic anthropology also becomes apparent from the fact that he describes the soul as an incorporeal being which has been placed in the body in which it lives as if in a house which it manages. A variation on the image of the house (body) and its occupant (soul) is that of the body as a

tabernacle.

Calvin defines the soul as follows: "I understand by the term 'soul' an immortal yet created essence, which is his nobler part."

He adds that soul is equivalent to spirit (*spiritus*). However, if the words "soul" and "spirit" are used concomitantly, they have different meanings. Apart from the question as to the correctness of this point of view it is very important that he uses *anima* and *spiritus* (mostly) as synonyms. As will become apparent later, his anthropology is characterized as *spiritualistic* on these grounds.¹

Calvin also stresses (as was also apparent from former citations) that the soul or spirit is the "master" which directs the body.

In the light of Holy Scripture these anthropological views of Calvin cannot be accepted. Man, according to Holy Scripture, is not a combination of two different parts – soul and body – but an indivisible unity of extraordinary complexity. To go into all Calvin's proofs from Scripture, is impossible at the moment as it would be within the compass of a new treatise. For this reason reference is only made to the most important contemporary literature on biblical concepts like "soul," "body," "spirit," "flesh," and "heart," which in the opinion of the writer reveals an interpretation more in accordance with Holy Scripture than that of Calvin.

Antheunis Janse [see chapter 11], who has undertaken such pioneer work to develop anthropology more in accordance with the teachings of Holy Scripture, finds it a pity that Calvin did not dispute the Greek conception of the soul more profoundly and replace this with a conception based on the teachings of Holy Scripture. I keep in mind the possibility that I may err, but the reading of the *ICR* often gives the impression that Calvin (as the result of an inadequate historical notion, mainly as regards the history of philosophy) in his rejection of certain standpoints derived from Greek or synthetic thought often delivers criticism more of the *implications* thereof, than of the *basic points of departure* and presuppositions. This may be one of the reasons why

¹ In a reworked version of this chapter in Van der Walt 2010.1, p. 255 he changed this characterization of Calvin's anthropology to *semi-mysticism*

he (sometimes too easily?) makes use of the fruits of pagan thought.

4. Immortality of the soul

Attention must particularly be directed to the fact that the soul is an immortal being (*essentia immortalis*). Calvin lays great stress on the fact that man has an essence (*essentia*), namely, the soul, as well as the fact that this is an immortal essence. It is, however, difficult to reach definite conclusions on the ground of these statements of Calvin, such as that he (like Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas) would think in a hylemorphic manner or would accept a subsistence theory. Although he calls the soul itself the essence of man, he says later again that the divine seed is engraved in the soul. (Interesting research may await the person who would endeavor to trace the influences of Stoicism on Calvin's thought in this respect.)

Calvin produces various proofs that the soul is an *immortal* essence. Such is the conscience, which can distinguish between good and bad, an indisputable proof of an immortal spirit. Furthermore the fact that the soul can have knowledge of God proves that it is immortal. All the excellent gifts of the soul, the mobility with which it can examine heaven and earth as well as the fact that intelligence can comprehend the invisible, like God and the angels, are also used as proofs. According to Calvin something must lie hidden in the body which is differentiated from it, for even in sleep, which seemingly renders man unconscious and deprives him of life, man can have thoughts of present and future matters.

After these reasonable proofs Calvin further tries to confirm his belief in an immortal soul with proofs from Holy Scripture. Holy Scripture, according to him, also teaches that at death we depart from the tabernacle of the flesh, the corruptible body. The soul has originated from another world and is not quite at home in this world. It ascends above this world: "The very knowledge of God sufficiently proves that souls, which transcend the world, are immortal."

It therefore looks as if the soul is something transcendent which carries only temporarily in the cosmos (the human body). In any case it is clear that

the background of Calvin's dichotomistic thought that the soul originates "from another world" and transcends this world to a certain extent, is seated in his dualistic ontology: the soul is either a part of the transcendent world (to which God also belongs) or something from the transcendent sphere in the non-transcendent world.

Calvin expressly also says that "something divine is engraved" in the soul.

The difficulty here — as throughout this whole essay — is *how serious* such statements of Calvin should be taken. Does he simply utilize the common language of his day to say something about man, or should such statements be regarded as a deliberate effort towards a theological (or philosophical) explication of his anthropology. To put it differently: was Calvin fully aware of the fact that he uses expressions with a long tradition and often-dangerous philosophical background?

Calvin will, however, be misunderstood if he should be accused of not distinguishing between God and man. He actually criticizes those (like the Manichees and Servetus) who think that the soul is a shoot from the divine being as if a part of the infinite godhead should have flowed into man: "All these things one must attribute to God's nature, if we understand the soul to be from God's essence, or to be a secret inflowing of divinity. Who would not shudder at this monstrous thing? Indeed, Paul truly quotes Aratus that we are God's offspring, but in quality, not in essence, inasmuch as he, indeed, adorned us with divine gifts." He subsequently refutes, in a reasonable way, the idea that man would be an effusion from the being of God. The being of God certainly cannot be torn apart so that each creature possesses a part!

As will be evident later, Calvin wishes to call man the image of God although not implying by this an equality of being between God and man. Man can be a mirrored reflection of God, owing to the fact that he is "divine" on a small scale.

In spite of Calvin's above-mentioned criticism of the idea of a relativity of being between God and man, his thought is not entirely free from speculations about the essence of being. His creationistic viewpoint

concerning the origin of the soul clearly shows that the soul is something divine in man.

According to Schroten Calvin simply means the continued existence after death when he speaks of the immortality of the soul, for Holy Scripture proclaims eternal death (i.e. the God-forsakenness) of the unbelievers and it would not be possible if the souls ceased to exist after the death of the body. The soul that sins will die, because life can only exist in communion with God. "Immortality," according to Calvin, thus primarily means the eternal life of the redeemed with God.

If Schroten's interpretation of Calvin is correct, then Calvin's thinking is decidedly more in accordance with Holy Scripture than it would seem at first glance, for Holy Scripture uses the conception "immortality" (except for God) in the case of the believer only of his state after resurrection. The question of course still remains as to whether, according to Holy Scripture, man as such (set in dichotomistic terminology: body *and* soul) does not die and rises from death and that only then can mention be made of the immortality of *man* (as against the second death of the unbelievers).

Wendel maintains that the immortality of the soul, according to Calvin, is a gift of God which He can withdraw from man, so that it can cease to exist just like the body. In Calvin's viewpoint the soul does thus not possess a natural immortality. In this connection Wendel quotes from Calvin's *Treatise on Freewill* against Pighius which he translates as follows: "For likewise we do not agree that the soul is immortal of itself. What is more, that is the teaching of St. Paul, who ascribes immortality to God alone. We do not therefore believe, however, that the soul is mortal by its nature, for we do not estimate the nature of the same by the primary faculty of the essence, but by the perpetual state, that God has put into his creatures."

According to this statement of Calvin it thus seems that in using the expression "immortality" he wishes to express the biblical idea that man as a result of God's mercy is an imperishable being, so that even the second death which the unbelievers die, does not entail the destruction of man. The question still remains, however, why Calvin speaks only of the immortality of

the soul. In spite of all attempts to defend Calvin here, it is clear that certain effects of unscriptural thoughts can be discerned in him.

This becomes even more evident in Calvin's thoughts concerning man as the image of God, to which subsequent attention will be paid.

5. Man as the image of God

Calvin arrives at the idea of the image of God by introducing it as one of the proofs that the soul is an immortal being. To him it is a foregone conclusion that the actual seat of the image lies in the soul. Arising from the fact that he employs the word seat (*sedes*), it appears that he sees the state of being an image of God as there being something *in* man. That this "something" is considered to be divine or heavenly is also evident from his criticism of Osiander who applies the idea of the image of God without distinction to body and soul. Calvin's criticism is that heaven and earth get mixed up in this fashion. (It is surely not necessary to draw attention once more to the dualistic background of these thoughts in the mind of Calvin. He wishes to make a distinction between heaven and earth, or the transcendent and the non-transcendent. The soul is clearly regarded by him as something transcendent. Compare the following paragraph as well where he maintains that man rises above other creatures or is separated from them as a result of being endowed with a transcendent soul.)

Calvin wishes to apply the idea of the image of God also to the body but not without reservations and differences: "And although the primary seat of the divine image (*divinae imaginis*) was in the mind and heart, or in the soul and its powers, yet there was no part of man, not even the body itself, in which some sparks (*scintillae*) did not glow. It is sure that even in several parts of the world some traces (*lineamenta*) of God's glory shine. From this we may gather that when his image is placed in man a tacit antithesis is introduced which raises man above all other creatures and, as it were, separates him from the common mass."

The thoughts expressed here by Calvin are found in the writings of many early Christian and Medieval thinkers and are typical of a hierarchical

structure of being. The human soul comes from heaven and therefore from God himself (the transcendent) and is thus the image (*imago*) of God. In the body, which is the lower (non-transcendent) part, only sparks (*scintillae*) of his divinity glow. In the different parts of the world some traits (*lineamenta*) of God glitter, too.

The fact that Calvin says that man is called the image of God because "he is equal to God" or that God "made himself perceptible in the form of an image by means of engraved marks of likeness" shows how literally Calvin regarded the idea of an image of God.

That this entire train of thought is intimately linked up with his philosophical view of law (*logoi spermatikoi*) as a divine seed implanted in creation is also apparent from the fact that he does not regard man alone as divine. He does not only regard nature as divine but "in pious sense" says that nature itself *is* God!

Calvin's doctrine of the *imago Dei* becomes even clearer when he asserts that it is not necessary to go outside one's self to find God as man finds God within himself hundreds of times. The fact that some philosophers have designated man as a microcosm (the world on a small scale) meets with Calvin's approval in a context like this.

Calvin's ideas about man as microcosm in his *Institutes* is not very clear. It is possible that he used the concept more or less "innocently," to explain to his readers in an illustrative way something about the difficult problem how man could be the image of God. The other possibility is that Calvin was more "serious;" that his utilization of the idea of man as microcosm describes exactly his own viewpoint about the ontological (instead of, to my mind, religious) relationship between God and man. What is offered below is therefore merely a preliminary hypothesis.

It seems as if God is viewed as the macrocosmic world and man as the microcosmic world. In accordance with the classical macro-microcosmic theory the macro- and micro-cosmos were respectively the universal and the individual. The universal and the individual, according to this type of partial universalism, look exactly the same and differ only in size. Possibly owing to

ignorance of the classical theory of macro-microcosm, or because he wished to adapt the original theory to fit into his thinking, Calvin accepts partial universalism with a macro-micro-cosmic theme, whereby God is seen as the macro- and man as the micro-cosmos. The idea that the macrocosmos (the world on a great scale) and the microcosmos (world on a small scale) are identical, irrespective of size, is retained. Hence he could say that man on a small scale is divine or displays the image of God.

Although there is a difference between Calvin's view of man and what could generally be termed "the view of man in Medieval times" the similarities are evident. Den Hertog is correct when he says the following about Calvin's anthropology: "Ofschoon Calvijn zich krachtig verzet heeft tegen Humanisme en Scholastiek en reformatories teruggegrepen heeft op het Schriftgetuigenis, bovenal op Paulus, is het hem toch niet gelukt met die beide sterke geestesrichtingen, geheel af te rekenen en ze restloos te doen verdwijnen. Reeds als reactie mag Calvijns leer niet los van haar historische omgeving beschouwd worden."

Wolmarans affirms the following regarding Calvin's views of man as the image of God: "As in the case of Tertullian Calvin is prone to be inclined to attack philosophers sharply, but he is just as ready to accept much more from pagan philosophers than could be brought to tally with Holy Scripture. His anthropology is actually Hellenistic and reveals a great number of anti-Israelitic elements ... it must be concluded, in particular from his love of Plato, that humanism exerted great pressure on Calvin... ."

Irrespective of the question as to whether Plato should be branded as the culprit, Wolmarans is correct in his assessment. Calvin's idea that the soul alone constitutes the image of God tallies with his dichotomistic view of man in which the soul is regarded as the divine, godly or better part of man. As already stated, this form of dichotomy does not find any substantiation in Holy Scripture. Furthermore, Holy Scripture does not teach that *something in man* – his soul – is the image of God, but that *man* is created in the image and likeness of God. The image and likeness of God is not *in* man but *man is* His image and likeness. (Hence it would also be wrong to speak of man as the image *bearer* of God, considering that it creates the impression that man,

irrespective of his state of being man, yet has some additional attribute which renders him the image of God). Although it is to be appreciated that Calvin expresses no desire to call the soul “a shoot from divine being,” it still remains an open question whether he has succeeded in his ideas concerning the image of God in maintaining the radical difference between God and man. In the writer’s opinion the danger of a relativism of being is no longer imaginary when the image is seen as something divine in the human soul. (It is not a suitable occasion now to go into detail on how Calvin makes use of various sections of Holy Scripture to substantiate his dichotomic view of man.)

The problems Calvin experiences by assimilating, in his view of man, data from Holy Scripture *and* pagan philosophy — which he takes over via early Christian and Medieval synthetic thought — are clearly evident from his representation of the parlous state of man as the image of God after his fall into sin.

6. Nature and supernature in man

In Book I, chapter 15, paragraph 4 of his *ICR* Calvin says that merely by saying that the soul is the reflection of God’s glory, one has not yet given any complete indication of the image of God. Calvin agrees with Paul who sees the image of God as knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, from which Calvin deduces that in the beginning the image of God existed in the light of the intellect, uprightness of the heart and the soundness of all its parts.

Everything relating to the spiritual, eternal life is included in this idea of the image of God. The image of God is the undefiled, unscathed excellence of human nature.

A problem arises at this stage: on the one hand, in the writer’s opinion, the *imago Dei* is correctly taken (according to Holy Scripture) as knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. But on the other hand Calvin links it with human nature. (“Nature” understood here as the essence or soul of each human being.)

For the latter he appeals to Plato who, according to Calvin, finds the

image of God in the soul. The image of God is then connected with reason and with the seed of religion (*religionis semen*) which is engraved in reason. He accepts Plato's five senses and apparently the theory of knowledge which is concomitant. Later he brings in Aristotle and accepts that there are two parts in the human soul: intelligence (*intellectus*) and will (*voluntas*).

Calvin's argument gives the impression of uncertainty. He says that he gladly leaves it to philosophers to deal with the faculties of the soul more soundly. He agrees with Plato's classification of the faculties of the soul or at least regards it as probable, and says that anyone who wishes to classify them in any other way, may do so, as far as he is concerned. On the one hand he condemns Aristotle for splitting hairs and on the other hand he admits that Aristotle spoke the truth. Eventually the reformer of Geneva falls for the division of the soul into two faculties – mind (or reason) and will – and he is able to embroider further on them both.

This uncertainty in Calvin is caused by his effort to combine different philosophical ideas about man into one conception. The question can be asked if Calvin was not aware of the fact that pagan philosophical ideas are irreconcilable with the biblical revelation about man.

In our assessment of Calvin's ideas it should, however, be kept in mind that he stands in a long Christian tradition. During the previous thousand years and more Christian thinkers assimilated data from Holy Scripture *and* pagan philosophy. Foreign philosophical ideas in the thought of Calvin may also be part of this heritage. Acknowledging this fact should, on the one hand, encourage mildness in our judgement of Calvin. On the other hand it makes our research more difficult: it is possible that the Plato, for instance, which Calvin had in mind, was not the original Plato but a Christianized version of Platonic philosophy.

Apart from this the question asked earlier, how serious Calvin's statements should be taken, again arises here. Especially when he says, for instance, anyone who wants to classify the faculties of the soul in another way may — as far as he is concerned — do so.

In recapitulation it can, however, be said that Calvin's vision of the soul

as the image of God consists of two components of which one originates from Holy Scripture and the other from pagan philosophy.

From Book II, chapters 1 and 2 of the *ICR*, which treat of the fall of man, it appears that Calvin sets out the two parts as the natural, as opposed to, the supernatural. In Chapter 1 he had already contrasted the natural and supernatural. In Chapter 2, however, he explicitly says: "And, indeed, that common opinion which they have taken from Augustine pleases me: that the natural gifts were corrupted in man through sin, but that his supernatural gifts were stripped from him." Augustine's distinction between natural and supernatural is thus adopted by Calvin. An important question is whether Calvin accepted the doctrine of the two realms which during the Middle Ages usually had specific anthropological links. According to Klapwijk, Calvin usually makes use of the distinction between natural and supernatural only in the sense of natural life (birth from earthly parents) and spiritual rebirth. Klapwijk says in this connection: "Calvijn was een kind van zijn tijd, ook van de denkwereld van zijn tijd. Het is derhalve begrijpelijk, dat hij veelszins nog gedacht en geschreven heeft in denkschemas en voorstellingen van zijn eeuw, zonder dat men deze nu direkt moet zien en beoordelen als typisch voor Calvijn. Met Kuyper ben ik van mening, dat het typische van Calvijn niet zozeer schuilt in wat hij gemeen heeft met zijn tijdgenote, maar in wat hem juist van zijn tijdgenoten onderscheidt en waarin hij iets nieuws naar voren heeft gebracht." What Klapwijk propounds here, is indeed true but in the writer's opinion Calvin, by distinguishing *naturalia-supernaturalia*, did not have in mind the difference between an unconverted and a converted person. Calvin is in this respect decidedly influenced by the Scholastic doctrine of two realms and speculations closely related to the image of God.

Calvin hence divides the *dona* of the image of God into *naturalia* and *supernaturalia*. The *naturalia* consists of the qualities which make man man (*facultates animae*), and the *supernaturalia* consist of those qualities that constitute a Christian (knowledge, righteousness, holiness).

The supernatural image was lost with the fall of man, but the natural image was only corrupted. For if it was lost, man would cease to be man — man without mind and will does not exist.

This distinction explains why Calvin sometimes says that nothing good was left in man after the fall of man and why on other occasions he apparently contradicts himself when he mentions so many good gifts in (sinful) man.

It is apparent how Calvin's anthropology could impede him in seeing the fall of man in all respects as radical. The natural image in the soul (the mind and will) is in a certain sense unaffected by sin. In this way, however, Calvin succeeds in preserving man from pride as well as passivity, for if anything is left of the image of God man still remains responsible. This also makes it possible for him to be able to justify a certain *semen religionis* in man after his fall from grace.

In *JCR* Book II, chapters 2 and 3 (in which Calvin deals with the fact that man is subjected to pitiful bondage and that from man's depraved nature nothing but the damnable comes forth) time and again the fact that something good remained in man comes to the fore. In paragraph 13 of chapter 2 he differentiates between earthly and heavenly affairs. In earthly affairs man is still capable of attaining something but not in heavenly affairs (the pure knowledge of God and the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom). Man's reason in spiritual matters is blinder than a bat.

To the first group (earthly matters) belong government, home life and the various arts and sciences. Man is capable of living in a state and in a family because "the seeds of law are implanted in all human beings," "in all people a certain seed of civic order is strewn" and no man is deprived of "the light of reason."

Hence Calvin can also express appreciation for the works of pagan writers and the excellence of various sciences. He is compelled to acknowledge the excellence of their works and the little drops of truth (*veritatis guttulae*). We are confronted here with the problem of the "elements of truth" in pagan thought. Possibly the problem should not be seen as *whether* man after his fall into sin could exercise arts and sciences but *how* he did so, what direction he took (for example to the glory of God or with the aim of self-glorification). Because Calvin sees the fall as a loss of

supernatural gifts, it is a problem as to how man still has all kinds of abilities at his disposal, and Calvin could only explain these as residues of the (natural) image.

7. Synthesis of Calvin's anthropological view

Keeping the above-mentioned in mind, the anthropology of Calvin could preliminarily be characterized as follows according to the consistent problem-historical method. It is a dichotomic view of man rooted in a dualistic ontology. In dualistic ontologies two types of anthropologies can be differentiated. According to some, man has an entirely non-transcendent nature. Such views are indicated as dualism without an anthropological dichotomy. Others — and of these Calvin's anthropology is a clear example — believe that man is not purely of a non-transcendent nature, but in his "composition" also contains something transcendent (usually the soul or a part of it). Man thus consists of two different parts. Hence the term dichotomy for this type of anthropology over against the first mentioned type which does not see two different "parts" in man, because man is in that case wholly of a non-transcendent character. Calvin acknowledges the existence of a spiritual sphere above the material. Besides the lower body he also accepts a higher soul. Taking into account that the soul is regarded by him as spirit (*spiritus*), it seems if his anthropology can be classified as *spiritualistic*: the spirit, as soul, originating from the transcendent God which is also Spirit, returns after the death of the material body to its transcendent Origin. (See earlier footnote for a later characterization, viz. *semi-mysticism* – Ed.)

8. Balance

What has been said thus far about Calvin's view of man may seem — especially to some Calvinists — rather hyper-critical.

Calvin has, however, been quoted from his own works and as far as possible not been judged by any contemporary philosophical anthropology. (In any case it would be unfair to condemn anyone in such a way 450 years after his lifetime!) An attempt based on Holy Scripture — which Calvin also

regarded as the final authority — has been made to show that a large part of his anthropology cannot stand the test. (We should of course consider to what extent our own understanding of Holy Scripture is also influenced by philosophical presuppositions of our own times!)

The sense of writing an article like this can also be queried. Would it not be much better to concentrate on the positive aspects by bringing out what is unique in Calvin's view of man? There were surely facets in his view of man in which he broke with tradition. (For instance: after Augustine he is the first again to realize the importance of the biblical concept of the heart — compare his idea of the offering of the heart to God. We also mentioned at the beginning the deep religious character of his anthropology: man cannot be understood apart from his Creator.)

To my mind Calvin's own particular contribution in this respect cannot be shown unless one assesses the extent to which he was tied down to earlier and contemporary anthropological ideas. In this article an attempt has been made to show how Calvin still adhered to traditional views — often unbiblical ones. (Of course this cannot be taken amiss: posterity will possibly say the same of us!) However, with these facts at our disposal the way is paved for a more positive appreciation of the Reformer of Geneva's view of man.

Postscript

For an updated version, see Van der Walt, B. J. 2010. "John Calvin's struggle to attain a truly biblical view of the human being." In B. J. Van der Walt *At Home in God's World*. Potchefstroom: ICCA: 224-258.

WOMAN AND MARRIAGE

IN THE MIDDLE AGES, IN CALVIN AND IN OUR OWN TIME

Since the Fall, man has been desperately afraid of recognizing that a woman is his equal, his helpmate, his companion. Therefore, he has consistently tried to reduce her to something less than himself, a being he both loves and detests. Woman was either raised to the level of a hollowed saint and praised as the all-good, tender, passionless Madonna of heaven, or she was lowered to the vulgar sinner and berated as the all-evil, seductive, lascivious witch of Satan. Either she was an object of adoration or a vessel of lust; a virgin or a harlot. In neither case was she what God wanted her to be: woman.

J. H. Olthuis, *I Pledge you my Troth* (1975)

In his well-known book *De Vrouw* (eighteenth print, 1975) F. J. J. Buitendijk says that it is a general idea that a woman can read a man like a book, but that the opposite is not true: a man cannot understand a woman. She remains a puzzle to him.

I hope, therefore, that the topic, as formulated in the above title should have adequate attraction, and that I won't have only men in the audience!

My intention is also to make my explication as simple as possible, so that it will be easy to follow. For this reason I have chosen to present the survey in the form of a broad overview rather than as a penetrating analysis of one or the other single aspect. Through that I hope to succeed in the request of the organizers of this congress, namely that we should not only provide delectation for the expert on Calvin but also for the ordinary man and woman — something that can have some personal meaning for them.

In order, however, to justify myself should there be unnecessary criticism from the side of the experts, I will provide a short justification, which you need not read or listen to!

1. Introduction

A great deal for *one* lecture

My subject is very wide-ranging. There are, however, special reasons for this. In the first place it is difficult to talk about woman without involving marriage and the family too. In the second place it is difficult to reveal the traditional and the new as represented in Calvin's view on woman if one does not at the same time briefly compare him with the Middle Ages. In the third place one would not to be confined to Calvin only — one would also like, if only in broad outline, to indicate the meaning of his vision on woman in terms of the situation we find ourselves in today. He had progressed beyond the Middle Ages — a few steps. But we, in our turn, have to decide whether we are going to take a further few steps forward. We have to study the Scriptural passages on which he based his view carefully once again.

More than just the *Institutes* and yet not all

The request of the Organizational Committee has been very explicit that all topics covered during this conference should let the light fall on Calvin's main work, the *Institutes* (1559). In this case it unfortunately appeared to be impossible: Calvin's *magnum opus* does not offer adequate material for the way in which I would like to tackle the subject. We are thus forced also to look at his sermons and his commentaries.

This does not mean that one involves all of Calvin's oeuvre. There are still other sources like his letters (especially the many directed at women in various circumstances). There are also other interesting themes such as, for example, his relationship to specific women (also his own wife!), their responses to this, his view with regard to the persecution of witches, as well as the way in which his view of woman was given shape in Strasbourg, but especially in Geneva. Was the theory superior to the practice, or did the practice at times appear to be more favorable than his views?

The set-up

Although a great deal of research can still be done in this field, and is being done (woman in the period of the Reformation is becoming a popular field of study), we are yet not confronted with a complete *terra incognita*.

Apart from brief pieces about women in books on the sixteenth-century Reformation in general, I have found useful particularly two articles, namely those of J. H. Bratt (1976) and W. P. de Boer (1976), and one larger work, namely the book by A. Biéler (1963) as secondary sources. Bratt and De Boer deal especially with the status and the role of women. Biéler's approach is much more encompassing, and he touches on practically all themes to do with woman, marriage and family. I regard Biéler's work as being reliable because he continually lets Calvin do the talking, and his own (Biéler's) commentary and interpretation are limited.

Following this introduction, just a brief word about woman in the Middle Ages. In the third section of this lecture I shall give a survey of Calvin's vision of woman and the various issues surrounding woman along the lines of Biéler's book. In the fourth part a much more penetrating look is directed at how Calvin used particular Scriptural passages to justify what was, according to him, woman's subservient position. At the same time an effort will be made to attach a personal interpretation to the relevant biblical passages in order to be able to determine what precisely should be the position of woman according to the Scriptures.

Before we come to the main course, then, first a little background to enable us better to understand and thus better to evaluate the contribution of Calvin.

2. Women and marriage in the Middle Ages

When we keep in mind that the Middle Ages lasted about a thousand years (c. 500 - c. 1500), you will understand that a heading like the above is more or less ridiculous. Add to this the class distinctions of the Middle Ages (nobility, middle-class, farm labourers and clergy), which means that one cannot merely speak about "women" in the Middle Ages, and it becomes almost totally impossible to say anything meaningful about "women in the Middle Ages."

Thus what follows now you are to regard as a few fleeting thoughts by an amateur in the field who would like to learn more from the discussion.

A chorus of contempt

When we read what former writers — even Christians — thought of woman,

we are not surprised by what we find in the Middle Ages. We give you a few fragments from the long song of disdain for woman.

Aristotle (a Greek philosopher, 384-322 BC) sees the feminine sex as a defect of nature. In his *Historia animalium* (69) he says among other things that a woman cries sooner, is more apt to be jealous, complain and scold. Besides, she loses hope more easily, she is more impudent, less reliable, harder to rouse to action and... she needs less food!

Tertullian (a Christian advocate from North Africa, second century AD) calls woman a gate to hell. Augustine (a well-known church father of the fourth century AD) says: Together with man woman bears the image of God, but without man she does not have the image of God. Boethius (another philosopher from Christian antiquity, 470 — 525 AD) calls woman a temple erected on a sewer.

Medieval voices

Familiar themes are taken further: woman is cursed as a consequence of the sin of Eve, dishonest because she was made from the crooked rib of Adam, bestial because she associated with the serpent and lustful and crafty as a result of her biology.

Albertus Magnus (theologian of the thirteenth century) says: abstinence in marriage is good, but not perfect, for widowhood is better and the best still is the virgin state.

Thomas Aquinas (most famous thirteenth-century theologian of the Roman Catholic Church) confirms the viewpoint of the heathen Aristotle, namely that woman is woman because of her lack of male characteristics! Woman is the coincidental result of a defect in reproduction. Actually woman is a miscarried man!

Even a cursory glance through Thomas's *Summa Contra Gentiles* (cf. for example Book III, chapter 122-124 and Book IV, chapter 78) reveals that he did not have a high regard for sex and marriage either (although he regards marriage as a sacrament). For him sex is mere physical pleasure we have in common with dumb animals. Sexual intercourse can only take place for the purpose of procreation. (Therefore there will be no more sexual love in the life

hereafter.) He also sees the purpose of marriage as the begetting (and education!) of children.

He makes the following not very flattering remark about the feminine sex: "Woman needs man, not merely for begetting children as in the case of other living beings, but also with a view to government, since man has a more perfect reasoning ability and more strength" (*Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book III, chapter 123, par. 3).

During the Middle Ages woman's subordinate position was firmly established. She was the property of either her father or her husband. Her place was not determined by her personality or her capability but by her sex. Often a marriage for her was agreed upon while she was still a child and it had nothing to do with her personal happiness, but with financial gain for the family! (This, of course, also applied to young boys!)

Jacques de Vitry wrote in the thirteenth century: "Between Adam and God in paradise there was but one woman. And she did not rest until she succeeded in having her husband driven from the garden of happiness and Christ condemned to the torture of the cross."

It is not my aim to go into all the different types of anti-feministic literature. There were anecdotes in rhyme (French: *fabliaux*) in which the deceit and malice of women received special emphasis, novels, jokes, allegories, and long lists of women from antiquity and the Bible (from Eve down to the present generation) who dragged their men into misery. Perhaps you know the story of the mythical monster, Chicheface, who was only allowed to eat women who were obedient to their husbands. In 200 years he never found anything to eat!

This chorus of misogyny and misogamy is not particularly edifying. But to show that contempt for women is not something unique to the Middle Ages, as a last encore listen to this opinion from the seventeenth century: "Woman is a stinking rose, a pleasant wound, a sweet poison, a bitter pleasure, an enchanting disease, a pleasant punishment, a flattering death"

It is clear that this Adam — in spite of difficulties — would not like to be without his Eve!

Temporary change

Since the twelfth century voices began to go up — especially from the urban middle class — against the subordinate position of women. For instance, we find the following in an old manuscript in the Oxford University Library:

Women are preferable to men with reference to the matter from which they were made: Adam from the soil, and Eve from Adam; the place where they were made: Adam outside paradise, and Eve inside; in conception: a woman bore Christ which a man cannot do; in honour: Christ first appeared to women after his resurrection So St. Bernadice says: 'It is a gift of grace to be a woman — more women than men are saved'.

And did not Peter Lombard say early in the Middle Ages that God made woman not from Adam's head because she was not meant to be his ruler, but not from his feet either, because she was not destined to be his slave, but from his side so that she could be his friend and companion.

All books, poems and other literary works from the time were written by men, however. We do get feminine works like the love letters from Heloise to Abelard (published *inter alia* in 1974 by Betty Radice in the Penguin series under the title *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise*. From the tragic story of these two people one forms an idea of the terrible burden laid on the people by the ideal of celibacy and virginity). Furthermore there are the writings of a few feminine mystics and learned women. (Cf. for instance the Dutch poetry of Hadewijch and Sister Bertken in *Dat was Gezelschap* by J. van den Bosch, pp. 64-79.)

Only by the end of the fourteenth century there emerges a feminine writer who takes a stand against the degradation of her sex. She became famous especially for her attack on the well-known medieval poem *Le Roman de la Rose*. In the first part of the poem (completed before 1240 by Guillaume de Lorris) the ideal of courtly love is still propagated. In the second part (by Jean Chopinel de Meun about 1280) however, a brutal attack is made on the feminine sex. Against this attack in particular Christine de Pisan defended her sex with her pen.

The basic point of departure

Keeping in mind that the Middle Ages was the era of the doctrine of the two realms, one gets a better understanding of how it was possible that woman in this era was sometimes honored and sometimes despised, now regarded as a saint and then again as a witch (or even a whore).

According to the two-realm doctrine the whole of life is divided into two levels, the one above the other. On the lower level we have the profane or secular field of nature. Raised above it is the sacral or holy field of grace. Through this bifocal lens the Middle Ages viewed everything in life — even woman, sexuality and marriage.

Of course it is wrong to localize good (holy) and evil (profane) in specific fields in this way, for evil (sin) and good (salvation) cannot be divided so neatly in this life. There are no fields in the universe (not even in the church) which are excluded from sin. Neither are there other fields (for example sexuality, ordinary “profane” work, etc.) which cannot be redeemed.

According to the (later) medieval doctrine of the two realms, if one really wants to serve God, one has to flee from the lower field of nature to the more elevated field of grace. This is exactly what Christ does not want. He specifically prayed that God should not take us out of the world (where our calling is), but only that He should keep us safe from sin *in* the world (John 17:15). Asceticism is no solution!

For the medieval vision of woman the nature-grace doctrine had the following consequences: marriage and sex was all right, but virginity was better. (This was also applicable to men, hence the celibacy for priests.) As a nun in a convent she would serve God far better, but at the expense of her femininity — which had been given to her by God himself. Her consolation would be to think of the Holy Virgin Mary.

If a woman chose marriage, it also came at the expense of her femininity. It is true that the church had made a sacrament out of marriage (like a condiment of grace on this natural institution to render forgivable the sexual intercourse which is supposed to be sin!), but actually she was the subordinate, property of the man, to satisfy his lusts and for the procreation of offspring.

Thus one could either look up to woman or look down on her, but one could not regard her as the man's equal.

The Virgin

At the height of the Middle Ages (twelfth and thirteenth centuries) there actually were two cults alongside each other with reference to women: in the spiritual field there was the cult of the virgin and in the profane field there was the cult of the lady. The first was the cult of divine love for the clergy and the last the cult of the terrestrial love for the aristocracy and citizenry (laymen).

It is unnecessary to say more about the cult of the Virgin Mary (already widely diffused in the eleventh century). It was much more common in all layers of the population than the cult of the lady. Certainly it prompted many women to go and live as virgins in convents. There they would at least be free from the rule of men and the bother of marriage and children, and because they were somewhat elevated, they were more honored, too.

In life in the convents — the only scope the church allowed women for many ages — women were given the opportunity to prove themselves. They did make excellent use of it and showed that they were capable of taking the lead and teaching no less than men.

It is to be doubted whether this was a solution to the "problem of woman." Escapism is no use. There is also definite proof that the convents often degenerated into brothels!

The knight and his lady

The romantic lady cult forms the counter-pole (in the natural field) of the virgin cult. According to some writers the *troubadours* from France, the *minstrels* from Germany and others of like mind from Italy played an important role in the propagation of the idea of courtly love. However, it was limited mainly to the aristocracy and citizenry. In this cult woman was also honored, but in a completely different, worldly manner. This came to the fore in the new kind of love which the knight was bound to give to his lady.

When one keeps in mind that marriages among the aristocracy and citizenry were more often based on politics and money than on love, one can

more easily comprehend this reaction. In feudal society there was no such thing as freedom in the choice of whom one wanted to love. (Feudal estates marry, but man and woman love.) Most of the time marriage was an arrangement by the parents who coupled children with a view to land ownership.

This does not mean that we are glossing over the love which is described in for instance the *De Artis Honesti Amandi* (1174-1186) by Andreas Capellanus. On the surface it may seem as if there is beauty in chivalrous love, but it is a thin veneer. Basically it is a plea for adulterous love. One of the premises of this love cult was that love between married people is impossible. The first rule (according to Capellanus) was: marriage is no excuse for not loving! That which bound married people had nothing to do with true love. Thus true love *might not* only be sought outside marriage, it *had* to be sought there. So the lady idolized by the knight was always the wife of someone else.

Neither should one be deluded into thinking that the knight harbored a kind of platonic love for his lady. The ideal was embracing her and in the embrace carrying out all love's directions. The seventeenth rule by Capellanus says: "A new love puts the older one to flight," and his thirty-first: "Nothing prevents one woman from being loved by two men, or one man by two women"!

Just as definitely as the wife stood in a subordinate position to her husband, the lady stood in a superior position to her adoring knight in this cult. The question is whether this contributed in any way to the elevation of woman (even though only of the aristocracy and rich citizens). Since the courtly ideals openly propagated adultery, this is a rhetorical question.

Christian and pagan love ideals

This tension can also be seen clearly in the previously mentioned work by Andreas Capellanus on *The Art of Courtly Love*. In the first two parts of the work he gives a systematic explanation of the whole system of courtly love, which he finally sums up in a few basic rules. What is very peculiar, however, is that in part three he rejects the whole system, because he realizes that it clashes with the biblical injunctions about love between husband and wife!

In his dissertation on Capellanus doctrine of love, F. Schlösser (1959) grapples with this problem! How can Capellanus possibly condone the heresy of adulterous love and then on the other hand speak in biblical terms? As a Roman Catholic Schlösser could easily have given the answer: the two-realm doctrine of nature and grace (or supra-nature)! As a result of this dual order Capellanus is incapable of seeing both worlds from *one* biblical perspective and consequently preaches a double truth (cf. Schlösser, 1959: 385-386). On the level of grace the biblical injunctions are valid for love between the two sexes, but on the natural level, man can indulge his sinful lusts!

However, the biblical injunctions mean nothing to woman: she is either a saint (which the Bible does not want) or a harlot (which the Bible rejects likewise).

Capellanus is a clear example of how the medieval doctrine of the two realms could not succeed in radically Christianizing life. Grace floated like oil on the water of natural life. And once the natural sphere slowly began to become of age and be emancipated, it brought about secularization (rejection of the norms laid down by God). The idea of courtly love is a clear example: a completely pagan love religion.

R.H. Bainton, for instance, says the following: "Romantic love was the art of adultery. During the Renaissance the romantic notion began to fuse with marriage. One stage was the contention that if young people fall in love they should marry. The next step was to require that in order to marry they must first have fallen in love. The final step was to hold that if they ceased to be in love they should dissolve the marriage." *The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* (1953), p. 258.

If the sixteenth-century Reformation sincerely wanted to contribute to restoring honor to women, it would have to have begun in the first instance by breaking away from the profane-sacral dualism of the Middle Ages!

Actual practice speaks a word too

In order not to close on too somber a note, I conclude with a quotation from Eileen Power's *Medieval Women* (p. 34):

Such then were the contradictory ideas about women formulated during the Middle Ages and handed on as a legacy to future generations. On the one hand stood subjection, on the other worship; both played their part in placing women in the position they occupied in the Middle Ages, and in dictating or modifying the conditions of their existence in subsequent ages. Yet we should be wrong to consider either of these notions as the primary force in determining what the average medieval man thought about women. A social position is never solely created by theatrical notions; it owes more to the inescapable pressure of facts, to give and take of daily life. And the social position which these facts created in medieval society was neither one of superiority nor of inferiority but one of rough and ready equality. For in daily life man could not do without woman Indeed something like camaraderie is to be found at times even in writings of churchmen about women

Restored in honor in the course of the Reformation?

What would the Reformation and in particular Calvin make of woman and of marriage? Would it continue denying her femininity by either idealizing her or making her contemptible? Would it elevate marriage (by making it a sacrament) and at the same time decry it (by regarding it as a mere procreative device for those who were not willing to opt for the celibate), without realizing what the most fundamental aim and purpose of marriage should be?

We already know that the Reformation restored marriage to its rightful place. The appreciation for woman *within* marriage rose unprecedentedly. But what of woman *outside* marriage?

In effecting a reaction one can also overdo things. Marriage too can be absolutized. We then find exactly the opposite of what pertained in the Middle Ages. Then the unmarried virgin was the highest ideal. When, in the time of the Reformation, the married woman is seen as the ideal, is there not the danger that the unmarried woman will be seen as the sinful one? Has the Reformation not perhaps succeeded in releasing woman from the convent only to lock her up in the house ...?

3. Woman and marriage in Calvin

In this section I make liberal use of the material which A. Biéler collected and collated from a wide variety of Calvin's works. In between I shall make my own observations.

A time of transition

H. J. Hillerbrand (1973:196-8) indicates that in the course of the intellectual ferment of the sixteenth century in the fields of theology, literature and art a new concept regarding woman came to the fore. He adds to this that it is very difficult today to determine whether, and if so, what results this had with regard to the role of woman in the home and in society. It is difficult for us today to decide whether women received more or fewer hidings from their husbands!

Woman was, so to speak, brought back to earth. In the Middle Ages she was an ethereal and spiritual being, with a mystical and extra-worldly beauty, who evoked no ordinary human emotions and who simply elevated all thoughts in the direction of heaven. The Virgin Mary had been, as we have seen, the model for the spiritual qualities of true womanhood. Now, however, she became a being made of flesh and blood again. The sexual part of humanity was again seen as a gift of God not subject to sin more than any other sphere of existence.

This "return to earth" did not, however, take place with the reformers in a secular manner as also happened in the sixteenth century. As a result of the stress on the fact that God called man to service in all spheres, woman could also be proud of the fact that she was wife, housewife, and mother. In this way she could enact her God-given responsibilities.

According to Biéler, Calvin was conscious of the new trends towards the emancipation of women, but he remained basically conservative.

Reformation was essential

The necessity for Reformation emerges clearly from the first chapter of Biéler's book on the morals of the sixteenth century. He relates things such as the influence of the many wars (and the resultant loose morals among the

soldiery), the widespread immorality among the clergy (in spite of the ideals of the celibate and of virginity — or perhaps precisely because of the celibate!), the enormous scope of prostitution among the ordinary people (public bathing houses became brothels), the origin and the spread of venereal diseases, titillating songs, dances and dress, extravagant eating habits, inns with bad reputations and many more.

Method of renewal

There had been efforts at reformation in Geneva both before and after Calvin. And these efforts had not been limited to this one city. (This is a further proof that Calvin was no tyrannical moralist!)

Calvin was convinced that sins in this field not only had to be judged passively, but also had to be opposed actively. These sins, after all, were directed at both God and man. For that reason not only the individual but also the church and the state had a duty in dealing with this.

Biéler constantly draws attention to the fact, however, that these changes did not take place in the first place because of the external measures of force of the church and the state. Calvin did not want any legalistic moralism. The renewal came about primarily because of the faithful preaching of the word of God. Morality gradually, spontaneously, changed because of this.

One can try to impose a certain moral level on the people by means of law enforcement, but one cannot bring new life to a community by this means. Moral life has to be a spontaneous outflow of faith, the result of the work of the Holy Spirit.

The purpose of marriage

According to Calvin marriage is an institution of God Himself, to be contracted also in his Name. For that reason it cannot be regarded as a kind of contract simply entered into according to the wishes of two people (parties), and which could by the same token be broken again.

The purpose of marriage is the unity of the married couple in love, fidelity and faith. In this Calvin differed from the Roman doctrine according to which marriage was primarily intended for the procreation of the human race.

Calvin also spoke against the general custom then that parents should arrange marriages for their children. In Article 8 of his *Marriage Ordinance* (1545) he said that no father or guardian had the right to force a child into any marriage. The children themselves had the right to choose for themselves, and should they not choose to accept the choice of the parents, they were not to be punished for this.

Calvin also added that, after the fall, marriage had become an essential cure for sin (in the field of sex).

Calvin thus has a much more elevated vision of marriage than the Catholic Church and even than Luther, who regarded women mainly as a means provided by God for the sexual relief of men and for the production of children.

Sex restored to its rightful place

The Reformer of Geneva was of the opinion that two concepts of the erstwhile church prevented marriage from coming into its own: the contempt of the sexual and the elevation of the celibate.

From his writings it is very clear that Calvin did not deny the physical side of life. He did not regard sex as such as sinful. If one should think that one's marriage should be polluted by sexual intercourse with one's wife, one should be guilty of false religious piety. It does not help to regard sexual intercourse contemptuously under the guise of religious fervor, and then to be unable to refrain from indulgence oneself!

By the way, because Calvin was not afraid of sexuality anymore (although he did feel a little uncomfortable because of the possible enjoyment attached to it!) communal singing in church was also introduced. (The Roman Church did not allow this because of a fear of possible sexual excesses!)

The rejection of the celibate and of virginity

If sexuality then is not to be regarded as a sin, one should also not seek sanctity *outside* marriage (by way of the celibate and of virginity), but it should be realized *within* the institution of marriage itself. The celibate is not to be regarded as being higher than marriage, but the opposite is to be seen as the

truth: marriage is the rule and the unmarried state is the exception.

Calvin also stated clearly which two exceptions could be regarded as being permissible. These include a situation when God should call someone to service in a way in which it would be better if the person should be unmarried, so better to serve God; and a situation when it is physically impossible for one to marry (here he distinguishes three types of disability: by nature, rendered thus by others, or rendered thus by oneself).

He also stresses, however, that a more chaste life in itself should not be the purpose of the unmarried. Even when it is permissible, the unmarried state should not be seen as being superior to the married state. It only has value if the person called to the state is thus rendered more able to fulfil his calling. It is a foolish deduction that in itself the unmarried state is a virtue which will please God. Rome is totally wrong in elevating the celibate and virginity above marriage, because marriage in itself is a calling from heaven. Did not God at the creation of Adam already say that it is not good that man (Adam) should be alone? If man places a prohibition on things which are free to be used in accordance with the will of God, then it becomes a diabolical tyranny.

The Roman Catholic Church wished to be even stricter than God Himself, and for that reason their ideals perished in the hard practicality of everyday life.

No sacrament

In the Roman Catholic Church we encounter the curious situation that, although the celibate is regarded more highly than marriage, it is not a sacrament, whereas marriage is a sacrament. (We have already observed earlier that this might well be the "sauce of grace" intended to render marriage more acceptable.)

Calvin also rejected this heresy. We can only accept as sacraments those specifically instituted by Christ Himself, namely, baptism and holy communion. And the fact that we may not regard marriage as a sacrament does not in the least mean that we regard it slightly. For Calvin it was merely a different kind of institution of God Himself.

In Calvin's view we often find the concept of a half and a half making a

whole, that is, the view that it is only in marriage that man becomes whole, "complete." He also stresses the fact that marriage is the basic cell in the social structure of humanity.

A breakthrough

One thing is very clear. Although Calvin did not completely break with the dualism of the doctrine of the two realms of nature and grace in some fields (such as in his anthropology), he clearly broke with it in his view of marriage. Life was no longer divided into, physical (sexual)-spiritual, marriage-celibate, laypeople-special people (clerus).

Calvin rejected both the sacral and the secular view of marriage of respectively the Roman Church and the vulgar popular views of the day. According to both these views one had to seek happiness *outside* marriage. According to the former this had to happen through abstinence (the celibate) and according to the latter in the other extreme, namely loose flirtations. Calvin unmasked both as cul-de-sacs: one's true happiness and fulfillment lay within marriage, not outside it.

In the sphere of ordinary married life one also has a calling to serve God. More: the calling has to be the rule within this field. Where the Roman dualism tended to see only one's spirit as the temple of God, Calvin repeatedly stresses the biblical truth that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

It is also a step in the right direction that Calvin should once again pinpoint the essence of marriage as residing in love in the sense of mutual fidelity, as opposed to views which saw the core of marriage as residing in the biological (procreation), in the economic, the political or even the ecclesiastical fields. Marriage is based in sex and directed at mutual fidelity, and the two may not be divided. Although sexual communion does not create love, it does strengthen and affirm the fidelity.

Fundamental equality but still subservience

The man of Geneva had no doubt at all that men and women were fundamentally, spiritually, equal before God. In marriage — and, according to Calvin, also in the rest of society — the wife, however, is not the equal of the man but subservient to him. In this Calvin is the child of the

church of his day!

Is it not a little paradoxical to support both the concepts of equality and inequality of man and woman?

We, as children of the twentieth [first] century, would of course like to know exactly how Calvin could manage this, and what his grounds could be for such a view. As a biblical thinker he finds support for his view in the Scriptures.

One could divide his reasons in an argument from the perspective of creation and an argument from the fall. Genesis and Paul both teach that the woman was created after the man, out of the man and for the man. Furthermore, it is also clear that sin came into the world as a result of the first woman. (Not that this absolves the man of all guilt, Calvin adds very scrupulously.)

You have to think about Calvin's reasons carefully. In the fourth section of this paper we will deal with them in detail. One could not refrain, however, from listening to two of Calvin's contemporaries who held the opposing view also based on an interpretation of the word of God!

In her *Discours Docte et Subtil* Marguerite de Valois maintains that the fact that the woman was created after the man (according to the Bible) is in no way a proof of her inferiority but rather of her superiority. According to Genesis, after all, God created his creatures in an ascending line, in an ever greater degree of perfection. The one coming last, the woman, is therefore the best, the nearest to God, the utterly perfect. She also provides concrete examples: the body of the woman is more attractive, more delicately finished. And as regards the soul of the woman, God prefers the tranquil, calm, devoted spirit to the rough, rebellious, and bloodthirsty soul of the man.

Without necessarily agreeing with Marguerite, we can see from this already that one has to be careful not to want to deduce too much from the specific moment of creation (*after* Adam) of Eve. Calvin's other arguments for the subservience of the woman might be equally wobbly. Are the results of the fall (including the tyranny of the man over the woman) a fact or a norm? Should the disharmony between man and woman following the fall, or the

curse of God on sin be a law for us? I do not believe so. For that reason I also do not believe that out of the fact that Eve sinned and was punished by God (among others in the sense of difficulties in pregnancy and desire for her husband) the principle may be deduced that she also has to be subservient to the man.

But we anticipate. Let us see how a male philosopher-medic from Calvin's time stood up for woman. Cornelius Agrippa rightly warned that we should not deduce too much from Eve's seduction and curse. Did not God's warning and prohibition for Adam already exist before Eve came into the world? And as regards Eve's punishment: did not Someone come to expiate her sins?

The meanings of the names of the first married couple offered Agrippa material to elevate the women above the men. Adam means *earth* and Eve means *life*. Old father Adam was taken from the lifeless earth, while mother Eve is the creature of God Himself, seeing that she was made from material already purified. Her body is therefore purer, more refined. She has no beard (sic!). When she bathes, the water becomes cleaner rather than dirtier — as is the case when her husband comes to have a bath. During pregnancy she can digest everything (ouch!) and she is even able to give birth without the assistance of the male sex (*vide* the Virgin Mary!).

From the viewpoints of Marguerite and Cornelius we can see clearly that Calvin did not live in a time in which the subservience of the woman to the man was accepted anymore without any opposition. There were already clear signs of protest and emancipation.

Qualified subservience

To Calvin's credit, however, it needs to be said that he did not support unqualified subservience of the woman. Sin did have the result that man became a tyrant and woman a slave, but it need not be like this. The man is the head from before the fall, and even more afterwards, but this does not mean that he is allowed to oppress the woman.

Man and woman have equal rights in the sexual fields, because the man is not the master of his own body, just as the woman is not the master of her

body.

But the shape that the authority of the man should assume also indicates clearly that the subservience of the woman is qualified. The authority of the man is situated in service and in sacrifice. It is then rather an authority of comradeship than of oppression. Calvin offers the man the example of the unselfish service of love and the denial of self of Christ in his relationship with his bride, the church. In this way the man's wife should be more precious to him than his own life. Calvin was, without any doubt, no champion of the suppression or the contempt of women.

In her turn the woman has to bend to the man as the church to Christ: spontaneously and willingly. Neither may the weaknesses of woman be an excuse for the man not to keep to the unbreakable commandments of God, nor may the weaknesses of the man be an excuse for the woman not to keep to the injunction of obedience to the man.

The third person in marriage

Calvin then also does not tire of stressing that it is only in Christ that marriage finds its true character again. In continuing communion with Him marriage is daily renewed, restored, and can there be unity and mutual willingness to serve. Outside this understanding man tends to tyranny and woman to autonomy.

Our Reformer places special stress on the idea of communal prayer which seals the unity in Christ and which is the only thing making possible mutual forgiveness between man and wife.

Marriage to an unbeliever?

In this regard Calvin distinguishes between a marriage that already exists and one which still has to be solemnized.

In the case of an existing marriage between a believer (or rather someone who became a Christian within marriage) and an unbeliever there is no reason to break the relationship, because, as he maintains, the piety of the one has more value in sanctifying marriage than has the unbelief of the other to desecrate it.

In the case of intended marriages, the Scriptures, however, have clear injunctions that one should not even try to pull in the same yoke with an unbeliever.

As regards marriage with members of other Christian faiths (such as Roman Catholics, for example) Calvin enjoins caution in judgement, seeing that people of other (Christian) convictions than Protestantism may not be regarded as heathens.

Abstinence, military service, respect

As compulsory military service today in South Africa makes great demands on the young married couples, this was also the case in Calvin's time as a result of the many wars. He states that it is not without reason that the Bible (Deuteronomy 24:5) enjoins that men may not do military service during their first year of marriage. They first have to be granted the opportunity to establish mutual troth properly.

We have already seen that Calvin did not regard abstinence in the field of sex as a virtue in itself. For that reason he also establishes clear guidelines for abstinence in marriage.

In the first place (and this is already clear in what he says about military service) it should only be for a limited period — even though man and wife should voluntarily decide about it.

Secondly it has to be voluntary with full agreement from both parties, and one of the two may not take such a decision alone.

In the third place the only reason for this has to be that it might enable one to render God better service.

Calvin was only too conscious of the fact that a man could, within marriage, commit adultery with his wife. Even within marriage everything is not simply permissible. There can be shamelessness within marriage which is just as wrong as fornication. For that reason the spouses have to behave themselves with dignity and act respectfully towards each other.

Widows and the unmarried

Young widows who do not marry again can run even greater risks than those

who remain unmarried. Calvin therefore advises them to marry again.

It is striking (as far as I have been able to ascertain) that Calvin says nothing about unmarried men or women who could and might have married, but who were unable to find a mate. I wonder whether Protestantism did not, as a result of reaction against the Roman ideal of the celibate, go too far and overemphasized marriage. One often gets the impression today too that if someone has not been married by a certain age s/he should be pitied, as if an unmarried person has missed the bus. Such an attitude — even though one does not realize it — places the same overdone emphasis on marriage and the sexual as we are often so quick to reject in the society surrounding us. Marriage and sexuality are not the whole person, or the central facet of life.

Divorce and remarriage

As happens today, people in Calvin's day often divorced with frivolous, unimportant reasons. The argument was advanced then as well that it was better to dissolve the marriage rather than to continue an abnormal marriage.

Calvin says that when we act like that, we are seeking a cure outside the will of God. The solution for a marriage that has landed in a crisis is not simply to try another marriage!

We have already seen that marriage for Calvin (on the basis of the Scriptures) was not a mere contract between two parties which could be entered into and broken at whim. The only true solution then rested in restoration from Above. Patience, trust, and reconciliation were needed.

Apart from the will of God, there are also concerns of public order to be kept in mind. According to this Calvin — and in this he differs from the Roman Church — does allow divorce on two grounds.

The first case is adultery, through which it is established that married unity has been broken. It is better to have the right divorce than to live on in bigamy. Here one should thus rather leave one's wife than to live on with more than one wife. Calvin approves divorce on the basis of adultery only, however, in the case of the adultery being committed by only one of the parties. His *Marriage Ordinance* (1545) states clearly that, if the man should fall into adultery as a result of the behavior of his wife, or vice versa, both are guilty, and they may not request a divorce on the grounds of adultery.

The second ground for divorce may be found in the case where the unbelieving marriage partner rejects the believer. The opposite is not permissible (as has already been mentioned above), namely that a believer may reject his unbelieving partner and divorce him/her.

Apart from these two there can be no other sin or circumstance to justify divorce. Perhaps there had been people who had tried to justify divorce on the grounds of a stroke, of paralysis, leprosy or one or the other incurable condition, because Calvin rejects this and says that the Holy Spirit gives one the strength under such conditions to continue in the married state.

Calvin is not only ahead of his time in that he does allow legal divorce, but also in the rights that he accords to women. In his Ordinance (*Ordonnances sur les Mariages*) of 1545 he also grants a woman the right to request a divorce on the basis of adultery in her husband — in contradistinction to the double standards which had obtained up to then.

The remarriage of divorcees Calvin only allowed in the case of people divorced for legal reasons. (Should this not be the case, remarriage was excluded, as the previous marriage was then deemed to still exist.)

Idleness and gossip

When Calvin comes to this kind of topic, one can clearly see that he is still a child of his time. There is nothing better for a woman to do than housework, because this keeps her from indulging in idle pursuits which might give rise to curiosity and gossip.

In one of his commentaries, among others, he says that "... gossiping is a disease among women and it becomes worse with the years. Women think that they do not enjoy a conversation if they do not tattle and gossip. In this way it happens often that old women may set fire to various houses by their gossip as certainly as if they had set fire to them with a fire-brand."

In the church the greatest danger on the part of the woman is fanatic piety. This is a striving towards piety for the sake of piety purely. This prevents one from letting oneself be truly led by the word of God. Many women fall into this spurious piety and never come to the truth.

Is Calvin perhaps prejudiced here, or is he speaking from hard experience?

Clothes and fashions

As is the case in our own day, clothes had been something of an issue. This had also been true of both sexes. (In our case it has been the issue of hats for women and at present the issue of a suit for men in worship services.) The temptation is great to go into details about the fashions of the period.

One wonders really whether anything has changed since the sixteenth century if one hears that Calvin accorded his fatherland, France, the doubtful honor of having taken the lead always in seductive fashions. "Of all the nations in the world there is not one so changeable, daring, exaggerated and inconstant as the French."

He had no appreciation for the fashions of the day which made the men wear frills and lace like women and women strutted around in hats with plumes and buckles like soldiers, so that it was even difficult to distinguish between the two sexes. (Who does not here think about the struggle in our own country of a decade or so ago about the issue as to whether it was permissible for women to wear slack suits to church, seeing that it would look too much as if they wore men's clothing!)

Of the women he says: they are dressed to kill, daring and loose and each day they wear a new disguise! Their dresses are so wide that one cannot approach closer than one meter to them, and they turn like windmills in the huge contraptions.

Who is not reminded irresistibly of the windmills for hats that women wore to church up to a few years ago? Speaking of hats: it is understandable that Calvin should have insisted on "hats" for women in church. The way in which he did this, however, is reminiscent of the way in which many contemporary arguments about clothes sound: if women are allowed to come to church without a covering for their heads, it won't be long before they come to church with their breasts uncovered, and reveal themselves in church as if there were a pub sign outside!

Does this mean, then, that father John had been insensitive to the beauty

and the charm of the female sex, and the elegance imparted to women through wearing beautiful clothes? In no sense. But he also noted realistically that beauty could be deceptive and even dangerous. It could be dangerous not only for those succumbing to beauty but also for the beautiful. Although beauty is a gift of God, one finds barely one woman in ten among the beautiful who does not effect her own downfall by demanding the glory of the beauty for herself! Physical beauty can also be a great affliction.

Calvin was directed not so much against fashion as against the fickleness and capriciousness of fashion, which caused women to act unpredictably and become spendthrift. He wanted to maintain a balance between asceticism and waste. You might be getting curious to know which criteria Calvin applied to judge whether a specific type of clothing could be regarded as acceptable or not. He clearly struggled with the balance between the two points of departure: clothes are not the be-all and the end-all, but clearly are of concern. On the one hand one's piety is not determined by what one wears. On the other hand one's appearance (gestures and clothes) cannot be distinguished completely from one's service to God — one's outward appearance is testimony of one's inner disposition. Excesses in clothing then mostly indicate, according to him, something of a spiritual problem. "If it is so that one should render testimony through what one wears of one's fear of the Lord, then it should also be expressed through a modest choice of clothing ... the clothing of a modest woman should be different from that of a whore."

He does acknowledge, however, as we know only too well, that it is not always easy to determine exactly where the line has to be drawn. He does not want to prescribe a fixed way of dressing for all times and all places. If the clothes worn in a specific place at a specific time are decent, then he has no objection if they are worn by the believer. Should the clothes, however, clash with the demands of the word of God, then it is the duty of the Christian to maintain distance.

But what then are his final criteria? In the first place practicality and comfort, in the second place modesty and honor and in the third place simplicity. Clothes, in the first place, are intended to protect us from heat or cold.

Modesty means that one has to be clothed respectably and not in a daring fashion. And as against extravagance and vanity he sets the ideal of soberness and simplicity.

Parents and children

Although the family really falls outside the scope of this paper, one should say something about it briefly. This is, according to Calvin, an important facet of the life of a woman.

He stresses for his countrymen that they should again see their children as a gift of God. Then they will care for their children better, and they will be less concerned about them. On the thorny issue as to how illegitimate children can be a gift from God (as this might imply that He plays along with sinners). Calvin responded that they too are a gift from God in which He proves that his grace far outstrips sin.

Calvin states — and this is typical of his time — that God is more honored through the birth of sons. He adds to this (probably in the light of the horrifying custom of the murder of girls at birth) that daughters should not be rejected.

Calvin impresses on the hearts of the women that the road of faith ran through motherhood and daily, humble duties. Their hard housework had more value for God than many of the so-called achievements of people admired by others.

Parental authority

In contrast to marriage (where the man, according to him, has all the authority) the wife shares in the practice of authority in the family. Calvin says very beautiful things in this regard, of which only a few flashes might be repeated here.

He states that the fifth commandment contains a promise (a long life in peace) which is valid not only for the family but also for all other relationships of authority in society. Obedience to one's human superiors also means a step in God's educational process to bring man to subjection to his will. The purpose of all authority then, is to bring man closer to this ideal of subjection

to the will of God.

God, however, is the source of authority. Parents can only have authority over their children because they have been granted the mandate by God. If they should forget this, they become tyrants and they darken the vision that their children might have upon Christ. Children, in their turn, are obliged, because their parents have been appointed by God, to render respect and love to their parents, irrespective of whether the parents might be worthy of it. Just as parents are not freed of their task of caring for their children just because the children might be difficult, so children are not absolved of obedience just because the parents might have weaknesses.

Should children then truly obey their parents "in all things" (Ephesians 6:1)? Are there no limits to parental authority? No, there are. The condition is: without sinning against God. Calvin states it very beautifully that it is obedience that we owe to our parents and to others in authority, and that this is only one part of the honor, love, and obedience that we should render to God. If someone in office should thus demand of us action that is against the will of God, then we are bound not to be obedient on this particular point, because they have at the same time ceased, at this point, to be obedient to the function imposed upon them by God. This "right of revolt" is also applicable to princes, landowners, and other authorities when they should want to cause their subjects to contravene the law of God. No authority, in his view, is absolute and unconditional, but has been ordained by and is subject to the Highest Authority.

Education — raising children

Calvin complains — and wouldn't he still be doing it today! — that many parents of his day give more attention to their oxen, cows, and horses than they give to their children. Raising children is also primarily a matter which should not be determined by the interests of the parents but by the will of God. Parents have to be strict yet patient and refrain from being cruel and unkind.

Although communal religious devotions do not take away the necessity of personal religious devotions, they should be at the centre of family life.

Calvin himself says — and this is remarkable for his day — that the

husband should help the wife with her domestic responsibilities and motherly duties. Mutual help and support are essential.

Members of the family have to help each other and be involved with each other. Bonds of blood, however, may never play a more important role than the bond of faith. Love and obedience to God precede all other bonds. Biéler maintains that although Calvin loved his own family and his own fatherland, he was never a religious nationalist (Christian-National in South African terms!). Obedience in faith was a primary concern for him.

The woman within the perspective of society

To my mind Calvin here makes the same mistake that we still tend to make today: because the married woman within marriage is subservient to the man, woman has to be subservient to man in general too. He says this explicitly. This is even true of young unmarried men and of young women and of widows! In accordance with the principle that each societal structure is sovereign in its own sphere, it is, to my mind, possible that a woman could, for example, be the principal of a school (also with male teachers on the staff — even her own husband!) without the principalship effecting the authority of her husband within the confines of her marriage.

We do have to concede to Calvin's credit that he does relativize this idea of his. Paul's view was not absolute for all times and all places, but pertained to the specific circumstance of Corinth. In the same way, Calvin says, the social subjection of the woman to the man is simply a question of an external, public, temporal, and transitory order. It is thus very relative as against the fundamental spiritual equality of the two sexes.

This has brought us back again, however, to the central issue as to whether Calvin could justify his ideas about the subservience of woman on the basis of the Scriptures. It brings us to the third and final section of this paper in which our own vision with regard to the place of the woman is more clearly elucidated.

Recapitulatory evaluation

Calvin is not always very clear about the precise position of the woman. There is often a duality in his thought: equal with the man and yet not equal.

This is perhaps clear when we keep in mind that Calvin was confronted with two very extreme viewpoints. On the one hand the traditional disdain or depreciation of the Middle Ages in regard to women, on the other hand there were the radical trends of his day such as, for example, the Anabaptists, who demanded complete equality. Calvin did not wish to be associated with either.

Calvin was a child of his time yet was also a pioneer responsible for something new. In this paper we have stressed this especially by comparing his view with the Medieval view. One could also compare him on this point with his contemporaries (co-Reformers, Anabaptists, sixteenth-century Humanists, and Roman Catholics). In contrast to the preceding Middle Ages one could, however, in recapitulation at least mention the following new, original perspectives in Calvin (and in some of his contemporaries).

- i. He broke through the nature-grace schema of the Middle Ages, so that man could serve God not only ascetically outside but also within marriage. Marriage, and through that womankind, came to be restored in a large measure.
- ii. The celibate was rejected and sexuality was acknowledged.
- iii. The idea of marriage as a sacrament fell away.
- iv. Love and fidelity are the primary considerations, and not procreation, economic, or political issues. The choice of a marriage partner was therefore not the province of the parents but rested with two people voluntarily marrying out of love.
- v. Spiritual equality of man and woman is the essential norm and social inequality is a changeable historical fact.
- vi. The woman should have the same rights (in divorce, for example) as the man.

Although John Calvin, in many respects, had been bound to his time – as we all are – he did open the door for a re-appraisal of the woman and of marriage.

4. Woman and marriage in our time — a critical look at Calvin's exegesis

As has been stated in the introduction, this section will consist of two sub-

sections. In the first place we are going to see which Scriptural passages Calvin uses to prove his viewpoint about the subservience of woman. In the second place we will attempt to find a new exegesis of the relevant Scriptural passages in order to attain to a contemporary, distinctive vision of the status of woman.

Calvin's Scriptural appeal

One need only read Calvin's sermons on, for example, 1 Corinthians 11:4-10 or 1 Timothy 2:12-14 to see that the subservience of woman within and without marriage was to him a matter of course. In his sermon he even appeals to similar customs among the heathens! We are more interested, however, in how he can justify his viewpoint on the basis of the Scriptures. It is good, then, to start right at the beginning, with Genesis.

Explication of Genesis 1 to 3 in the light of Paul

In Genesis 1:27 we read that God created man in his image, as his representative — He created them man and woman. We cannot deduce any inequality from this, because it is stated without distinction that man and woman are images of God. Calvin, however, makes a distinction: the woman is only the image of God "in the second degree." By this he means that although she is the image of God in the spiritual sense, she is not in the present earthly disposition. Therefore she is the equal of the man in the spiritual sense but not in the natural order. I am convinced that Calvin here introduces a distinction into Genesis which does not really exist. The old schema of nature-grace, which he did succeed in breaking, but which he has not been able to shake off completely, is probably here making him guilty of a delusion.

Calvin is also not very clear on this point. In certain "natural" fields (such as for example in the field of family life) he accords the woman a more equal status than he is willing to accord her in the "spiritual" field of the church — precisely the opposite of what we would have expected.

From Genesis 2:18 Calvin deduces that man is a social being needing a mate. One can deduce from this verse not so much subservience as mutual involvement. It appears, however, that Calvin did not understand the meaning of the word *help/helper (ezer)* correctly. He saw it as a type of adjunct or assistant,

an auxiliary (*adjumentum inferius*). The Hebrew word *help*, however, in the Bible never has the meaning of subservience or of inferiority. In fact, in many of the Psalms God is called the *help* of man (and the same Hebrew word is used). And yet this does not mean that man becomes the superior of God!

Calvin here introduces the idea, however, that the man is the leader, the authority over the woman. If he wanted to deduce this consistently from the fact that God calls the woman the helper, then he should really have seen the man as the one requiring help!

If God describes the woman as the *help* for the man, it does not at all mean that she is inferior. The word rather indicates someone (as also when the word is used of God) who offers support and strength!

It also emerges from the fact that God said that He would make someone for the man who would be suited to him, that is an equal partner with the man. (The new Afrikaans translation then also renders it that she is the equal (of the man).)

Calvin propounds three reasons why the man is the head and the superior of the woman: a historical argument (order), an archaeological argument (origin), and a teleological argument (aim and purpose).

He founds his historical reason on 1 Timothy 2:13 ("For Adam was formed first, then Eve"). Calvin does express a little doubt here, when he says that Paul's argument does not seem all that sound to him, as John the Baptist preceded Christ, and yet he was not superior to Christ. Yet he does not let go of his conclusion that Eve, as a result of the fact that she was created after Adam should then of necessity have a lower rank than Adam.

From 1 Corinthians 11:8 ("For man did not come from woman, but woman from man") he deduces his archaeological argument. As a branch is not more important than the trunk or the root of the tree, so the woman is not more important than the man. He draws the conclusion again that the woman is a sort of adjunct to the man. One could well ask whether Adam should not then be subservient to the dust from which he was formed! The son of a queen, after all, does not remain ever subservient to his mother just because he was born of her. Above all: only one woman was formed of a man.

Subsequently all men have been born of women!

1 Corinthians 11:9 (“neither was man created for woman, but woman for man”) provides Calvin with his third (teleological) reason for the subservience of the woman. Here too one cannot deduce female subservience from Genesis. Calvin had to introduce Paul into Genesis. And after looking at Genesis through Pauline spectacles, he returns to Paul’s explications, which offer a beautiful explanation of the story of Genesis! It is a circular line of reasoning, because Genesis does not confirm Paul’s vision of woman.

This is still quite apart from the fact that subservience does not have to mean inferiority (cf. for example Mark 10:43-44!).

If Calvin had confined himself to man and woman in marriage it would have been understandable, as the Scriptures are very clear about the authority of husband over wife in marriage, but in his sermon as well as in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 11:4-10 he says that it is valid for all women (married and unmarried) that the man is the superior and the figure of authority because it was so ordained by God.

How Calvin could manage this seems inconceivable, because it is not at all certain that these Scriptural passages deal with man and woman in general. The Genesis story as such deals exclusively with Adam and Eve. Perhaps Calvin read Genesis in the light of 1 Timothy 2:8-15, which gives the impression of dealing with men and woman (in general) in the congregation. I get the impression, however, as if Paul here specifically has in mind the man-woman relationship within marriage. When the Greek *aner* and *gune* are used together in one sentence (as the subject and the object), it is usually safe to assume that they should be translated as *husband* and *wife* unless the context indicates *man* and *woman*. And the context here indicates husband and wife within marriage. There is reference to a specific marital relationship and also to motherhood (verse 15). Paul also deals here with authority, and authority always presupposes a specific relationship, such as marriage. It is impossible that Paul should here be advocating the authority of one person over others *in any possible relationship*. Paul here specifically calls women within marriage to the acknowledgement of the man’s authority

within marriage.

Thus, instead of using Paul for his argumentation, Calvin abused him!

Up to this point Calvin has, on the basis of the fact that the woman was created *after* the man, came *out* of and lives *for* the man, "proved" her subservience, that is, on the basis of the order of creation. The story of the fall in itself strengthens him in this viewpoint.

The punishment meted out to woman in Genesis 3:16 ("...Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you....") and 1 Timothy 2:14 ("And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner") moulds Calvin's thought towards the formation of the following conclusion: because the woman fell into sin (first), the man will rule over her.

It has to be clearly stated in advance that there is no question here of the rule of the male sex over the female sex, but of the authority of one man over his wife within marriage.

Calvin was, of course, immediately confronted with the problem that he had already stated before that the woman had been subservient to the man before the fall. He evades this problem by saying that Eve was obedient voluntarily before the fall and not so voluntarily after the fall. Adam's authority also changed into a tyranny.

The problem lies with what precisely Paul means. I can hardly believe that Paul should prescribe the curse of the fall as a norm for women. If we believe that Christ can redeem us from our sins, then we cannot at the same time wish for the continuation of the punishment which has been suspended. How can pain and suffering in childbearing and subservience to the man simultaneously be used as an effect of sin and as a norm for her position as against the man? If this were the case, then the medical profession should be prohibited from relieving the pain of childbirth, and also weed-killers should not be permitted. (Genesis 3:18)!

Olthuis (1975: 10-11) says that:

It is important to emphasize that the curses of the Lord are just that —

curses, not commands to obey The domination of man and subordination of woman is a distortion of the original intention of the Creator ... Thus, the words of curse are not norms to guide our male-female relations. For instance, the curse does not mean that man ought to rule over woman or that man and woman ought to live in pain. The disorder of the fall is not to become an order we try to maintain.

Or should we see the punishment of God as grace at the same time, in the sense that authority (of the man over the woman) has become more essential in the corrupted marriage following the fall, and that this is what God means when He says: "... he shall rule over you"?

These texts also, however, give Calvin the opportunity to explicate the vices of womankind: she talks too much, she is idle, curious, she loves daring clothes, etc. etc.

Calvin does not always, however, speak so slightly of women. He also stresses her equality with the man — at times, and in certain senses.

Equality — also within the church?

Seeing that it is not of importance for us, I do not provide Calvin's Scriptural proofs of the equality of man and woman. They are equal, it seems, on the following points: in their humanity, as image of God (although the woman only in the spiritual sense), they are equal in authority and honor in the family, and in the right both have (on the basis of adultery) to demand divorce.

In reality the woman is only the equal of the man in the private field (family life). One would think that, because she is also the equal of the man in the "spiritual" sphere, she should also be allowed to be on an equal footing with the man within the church. This is not the case, however. The church, just like the state, belongs to the public domain.

Calvin therefore has problems with women in history — and in his own day — occupying positions of authority in the church and in the field of politics. After John Knox had raged about government by women in his *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regimen of Women* (1558) Calvin made a stand about this in the preface to the second edition of his Isaiah commentary which he dedicated to Queen Elizabeth. This amounts to the

fact that exceptions are permissible even though it is against the order of nature.

Such exceptions are usually one of three: divine judgements, emergency situations or the action of women in private life. (The latter, of course, is not really an exception but rather a way in which Calvin justified the actions of some women as leaders.)

We already know that for Calvin the prohibition on speech and teaching, the covered head and the prohibition of any guidance by the woman in church could not be suspended, and then it is not difficult to forecast what he would do with the many Scriptural passages in which women are described as having taken the lead.

The prophetess-general, Deborah, had to act because Barak was too weak-kneed. Her action could thus be justified because it was an emergency situation and God's judgment over the man. In Acts 2:17 ("... and your daughters shall prophesy ...") which quotes from Joel 2:28, Calvin generalizes the idea of prophesying to such an extent that he could not possibly have any more objections to the text! Priscilla (Acts 18:26) taught Apollo *privately*. Also the prophesying daughters of Philip (Acts 21:9) did not prophesy in public. The message of Christ's resurrection was first preached to women (just as Eve was the first to receive the promise of the Messiah — Genesis 3:15), and they also became the first disseminators or preachers of this. In this instance Calvin cannot try to maintain that this was not done in public. His justification is therefore that it was God punishing his (male) disciples through their weak faith by giving the task to women temporarily to shame them!

De Boer (1976: 269) does not act unfairly toward Calvin when he says of this kind of explication:

The basic pattern for Calvin's outlook on the role of woman had been set by Paul's allusions to the created structure ... the biblical material is read through these glasses and made to fit this structure as well as possible. But ... sometimes it took some ramming and cramming to make them fit, and sometimes it took an almost high-handed explaining away of the text to keep the structure. Calvin was a prince of exegetes, and read the

Bible message so well on so many subjects. But the beautifully consistent structure he built on the subject of woman has its ragged seams and its threadbare weak points. It is less than a perfect explanation of the biblical materials and invites other attempts at putting the Bible all together on the subject.

Surprising openness

Calvin did not, however, maintain his viewpoint about the woman in the church consistently. In his explication (in his commentaries and sermons) of the well-known Scriptural passages which enjoin woman to be quiet and to subservience in the church he often made concessions because he realized that Paul was concerned with customs bound by time and place. These were not divine, universal commandments. Calvin reveals that he is keenly aware of the fact that Paul had to apply such measures in Corinth and Ephesus because of specific circumstances. He also realized clearly that decency, decorum and respectability were relative concepts depending on specific cultural conditions. What Calvin has to say in his *Institutes* IV, chapter 10, paragraphs 29-30 ties in with what we read in his sermons and in his letters.

Bratt (1976: 11) also fixes the attention on this when he says:

It appears that Calvin is wavering between the position that the prohibitions in Corinth are normative for the church of all time and the position that this is a localism and an ad hoc situation ... Calvin's estimation of passages in 1 Corinthians, so frequently marshaled in favor of the traditional view, are not necessarily indicative of a timeless principle. He does set the door slightly ajar at the point but then he slams it shut when he thinks back on the 'created order.'

De Boer (1976: 263) summarizes this as follows:

If love leads the way and order and decorum are maintained, then apparently women may teach in the church in the appropriate cultural settings. Calvin again shows his awareness that not a biblical command or biblical prohibitions were applicable across the board at all times and in all situations.

It is also very clear that sources outside the Bible determined Calvin's

exegesis of specific Scriptural sections about woman and marriage. C. J. Blaisdell (1976: 20) justifiably says that

Calvin's exegesis was by no means created in a vacuum Social and biological assumptions of the sixteenth century informed his attitudes, his exegesis and his sermons In this respect Calvin was probably no different from his contemporaries Luther, Zwingli and Bucer, or, for that matter, Loyola or Cajetan.

At the same time, with regard to specific points, Calvin was also ahead of his time. Biéler is therefore correct in maintaining (1963: 80) that Calvin did not in principle exclude the new principles brought about by a new era with regard to women.

We — and woman and marriage today

The “new era” which started in the sixteenth century and which would bring about changes for women has now been going for at least four centuries. One could say that this would have been enough time for woman to have been released from her secondary position, and in fact a great deal has happened. In most countries women have been granted the vote, and practically all professions are accessible to women today. Women are no longer confined to pinning on diapers and to being caterers in kitchens. The only exceptions is still the church — or some churches.

This struck me again recently. Our eldest son made his personal confession of faith (in the Reformed Church of South Africa) at the age of seventeen and also obtained the vote. He could now participate in the election of (N. B. male) elders and deacons. Seeing the shortage of deacons he will most probably have the privilege within three or four years of serving as a deacon.

Next to him in the same seat there was his mother, who gave birth to him and who reared him. She disposes of far more wisdom than her son can dream of having at present. She, however, does not have the vote in the church and can also not have the privilege of serving on the church council.

Is Paul the obstacle?

From our discussion of the texts drawn from Genesis it has become clear that we cannot justify the inferiority of the woman on that basis. Calvin could only do that through the spectacles of his own interpretation, and because he interpreted Genesis through the eyes of Paul.

For that reason, in the last section of this paper, we will look once more at some of his judgements.

I would like to venture two statements. The first is that Paul probably did not intend all the prescriptions in the relevant sections of his epistles to be applicable to all places at all times. The second is that I am convinced that Paul at times says something quite different in the relevant Scriptural sections than we are used to reading into them. The challenge here is therefore to study the sections in question carefully once again. The stress will fall especially on the second statement.

"Time-bound" positivizations

Just a very brief explanation of the first statement. I know that it is a very slippery field in which I am venturing to move. The argument against this is usually that, if one has once ventured onto this path, the authority of the Scriptures is impugned. How then can one determine which Scriptural judgments are time-bound and which have universal meaning? Where does one draw the line?

There is some truth in this. There are those who regard the word of God merely as a time-bound document of thousands of years ago, which can have nothing more to say to us today. There are also academics who, by means of the distinction between time-bound packaging and supra-historical content, rob to a large extent the Scriptures of their authority.

It does not, however, help to shove a very real problem from the table without reflecting on it seriously.

Is the great art of using the Bible correctly not precisely situated in this ability to distinguish between the permanent will of God for mankind and the temporal arrangements, single prescriptions, unrepeatable commandments for specific people who lived in history at specific times and under unique circumstances? An example to illustrate this: I am not called today to sacrifice

my son as Abraham was. But from Genesis 22 it is still possible for me to deduce that God wishes me to love Him above all else, yes, even above my own child, and that I should always obey Him — even though I might not know where the road is leading.

Everything contained in the word of God is (historically) true, but that does not mean that it is binding for us. (Cf. for example all the instances of Biblical figures sinning). In this regard I would not like to recommend the distinction “historic-normative”, seeing that this might create the impression that the Bible is (partly) not normative, and also because in the history of philosophy it is too heavily loaded (for example, fact-value, nature-grace, temporal-extratemporal, “Historie-Geschichte,” form-norm, etc.). It might be a good thing, however to distinguish between the *timeless* (eternal) will of God, the *time-directed* (contemporary) word and the *time-bound* or *time-determined* reaction of man on the will and word of God. God’s word, while linked to a certain time, is not bound to it!

The Scriptures abound in time-bound positivizations by many people about the unchangeable will of God in many spheres of existence. Some people have responded to the word of God in obedience, and others have responded in disobedience. We have to try to reach the “timeless” will of God via these manifestations of obedience (*and* disobedience). And we have to try to positivize or concretely apply these for our own time. If we want to take over positivizations of the past for our own time, we are lazy, disobedient to God, and we may even be doing our neighbor an injustice.

Some theologians maintain that one only has the right to regard biblical judgments as time-bound or time-determined if the Bible itself indicates them as such. Such cases are not all that abundant, however. If Paul, for example, in Ephesians 6:5 and Colossians 3:22 orders slaves to be obedient to their masters, it does not really imply that slavery should by that token be permanently sanctioned! Calvin can be an example to us in this. Although he did at times acknowledge this somewhat hesitantly, he still clearly realized that it was problematic to apply Paul’s injunctions about woman and marriage just like that in one’s time. The first step to be followed in attaining a contemporary application is to study the relevant Scriptural passage carefully again (my

second statement above). Let us carefully wipe the spectacles we have been using up to now — this also includes getting rid of the dust of the sixteenth century — and see whether we might not perhaps gain a new vision on woman and marriage.

5. The texts to be studied

The most important Pauline texts are the following: 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 and 14:26-35, Ephesians 5:21-32, Colossians 3:18, 1 Timothy 2:8-15. Add to this 1 Peter 3:7.

I am not going to discuss all the passages in detail and in succession, as that will consume too much time, but will rather deal systematically with the same themes which occur in the passages. First I would like to indicate that there can be no question of inferiority in the woman even though the man might be the figure of authority in marriage, but that the woman should be seen as an equal partner with the man. Following that we will have to check what Paul meant by saying that women had to refrain from speaking in the church, and that they had to wear a head-covering. Are these injunctions binding for all times and all places?

The décor

In view of the fact that one usually understands something that somebody says better if the background is not unfamiliar, it might be a good idea if one understands the background against which Paul and Peter wrote.

Although it is not stated explicitly in the Scriptures, we do know today that Paul, in his epistles had to struggle with Gnostic influences. They introduced all kinds of heresies into his young congregations. As regards the relationship between man and wife, they preached absolute equality, which gave rise to women rebelling against their husbands. They even rejected marriage (cf. 1 Timothy 4:3).

This was not Paul's only problem, however. He also had to fight on a second front, that of Judaism. Where the Gnostics taught equality or even the superiority of the woman, the Judaists underlined her inferiority.

Paul chose, as far as I am able to ascertain, a third way, namely, neither

concurrence nor subservience but partnership. The equality of the sexes did not for him mean similarity, and the distinction also did not mean division or even inferiority. Galatians 3:28 ("There is neither ... male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus") was also written by Paul!

It is interesting to note anew that Calvin also had to fight on two fronts. The Anabaptists, for example also set the woman in the forefront, while the Roman Church did not allow her to come into her own. Although Calvin was married to a former Anabaptist, Idelette de Bure, he still contested this group fiercely. We have also already seen that he did not reconcile himself with the Medieval vision of woman and marriage. He does acknowledge the unity of which Galatians 3:28 makes mention (see for example his commentary as well as his sermon on the same Scriptural passage), yet he limits the unity and the equality to a small field, namely the spiritual. I do wonder whether this is not perhaps a little artificial. Does our spiritual unity in Christ not also determine our everyday life, the here and the now?

The cultural mandate

In Genesis 1:26-28 we are told that God made Himself a representative to rule in his place, namely man *and woman*. His command to them then is: "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it and have dominion over ..." (verse 28).

It is clear that the so-called call to culture *in its entirety* (thus also the dominion over the earth) is directed at the woman as well. God does not limit her call to the "be fruitful and multiply" part.

After, out of, and for

We have already seen that the simple fact that the woman was created *after* the man is no reason to think that she might be inferior. The same is true with regard to her having been created *out of* the man. With regard to her being created *for* the man, it is good not only to read 1 Corinthians 11:9 ("neither was man created for woman, but woman for man"), but also a few verses further on: "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman." (11:11). The man is therefore also *for* the woman! This is a mutual and not a one-sided involvement. It does not say that

the woman has been made for the man to be a servant to him, but to be a helpmate.

A helpmate

About the word *help* which has been so hopelessly misunderstood in history we have already said enough to indicate that it did not mean something inferior but rather something indispensable, a strength and a support. We might add here that God nowhere in his word limits the help to, for example, sexual communion and having children.

The head

In 1 Corinthians 11:3ff. Paul provides the following hierarchy: God is the Head of Christ, Christ of the man and the man of the wife. In Ephesians 5:21 ff. this is repeated slightly differently: as Christ is the Head of his (bride) church, so the man is head of the wife.

In the same way as the word *help* has been misunderstood, the word *head* has been misunderstood. Contained in the word *head* is the concept of origin or of beginning. And as we have already seen, the fact that the woman was made out of the man does not at all indicate inferiority. *Head* does not mean a figure who dominates. It also does not indicate the right of disposition. In 1 Corinthians 7:4 it is stated explicitly: "The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife." We thus find the idea here again that Paul sees man and wife as people with equal rights, directed at and involved with each other.

To have a man as head over one does not render one inferior. And for a man to be head over a woman does not render him superior.

Did not Christ Himself say: "...The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." (Luke 22:25-27).

If we further keep in mind that Paul sees the authority of the man over the wife as a reflection of the authority of Christ over us, then we find in this a challenge for the married men! Christ's service was not to his own advantage, but to the advantage of his servants.

Our standard conception of authority is often very far removed from the biblical doctrine in this regard!

The focus in authority lies with the responsible *office* emanating from God rather than with the *person*. The man then has to see to it that his marriage complies with the norms laid down by God.

Obedience is not subservience

I have already said this once, but would like to underline it. Seeing that Paul so often used Christ as example (cf. for example Ephesians 5:24-25) we might as well also do it. In 1 Corinthians 15:28 it is said that the Son will subject Himself to the Father. If one should postulate that Christ because of obedience to the Father would then be inferior to Him, then one would be a heretic. But He was even obedient to his earthly father and mother (cf. Luke 2:51)!

Usually we tend to think that Paul only teaches that the wife has to be obedient to the man. To our great surprise, however, he says in Ephesians 5:21 — even before he commands that the wife should be obedient (verse 22) — that man and wife should be mutually submissive! For the umpteenth time, then, we find in Paul the underlying idea of mutual equality and therefore mutual responsibility and indebtedness. It is not a matter of the one partner having only duties and the other having only privileges!

In Ephesians 5:32 Paul says that a wife should show respect for her husband. In 1 Peter 3:7 the men, however, are given the same injunction with regard to their wives.

One cannot, after all, from the fact that only the men are enjoined in Ephesians 5:25-30 to love their wives, deduce that wives should then not also love their husbands! Paul, however, stresses that certain aspects of the relationships among men and wives were not right in his day. Men used their wives as possessions and as sex objects instead of loving them warmly. And women were urged by heretical preachers not to be obedient to their

husbands. For that reason they had to be newly enjoined to be obedient.

I get the honest impression that Paul lays more stress on the mutual submissiveness to the will of God than on the obedience of the wife to the husband. By saying this I do not deny the biblical injunction that the man is the head of the marriage. Where, however, does one find greater submissiveness than in the self-sacrificial love of Christ for his church? And this is precisely the kind of love to which the man is enjoined (Ephesians 5:25).

The weaker sex?

In 1 Peter 3:7 mention is made of the woman as the weaker sex. If "weaker" had here been meant to mean inferior, then Paul could hardly have enjoined men in the same verse to honor their wives! I also do not feel that "weaker" in this regard should of necessity only be understood in the purely physico-biological sense. The probability is great that Paul had by that also meant the socially weaker position of the woman in the male-dominated society of the time.

Saved through motherhood?

After Paul had again stressed that Eve had not been created first, and that she had allowed herself to be seduced, he says in 1 Timothy 2:15: "But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety." The passage has been something of a headache for exegetes.

One could of course declare that Paul is here pointing out to the woman her place as mother in the house. But how is it then that she can be saved through this? We do not believe, after all, in deserving anything. How then can the woman gain salvation by having children?

In Ephesus the conditions because of the Gnostic influences had apparently been ever greater. Women eagerly reached for the Gnostic doctrine of equality of the sexes in order to dominate the men. Even during religious services the women embarrassed the men by interrupting them. Paul therefore enjoins them to be silent.

I think that one should understand this statement as follows (cf. M. D. Roberts, 1983). In the first place Paul is most probably here first of all directing

a blow at the Gnostics who despised marriage. By giving birth woman cancels the creational priority of the man. Adam might well have been the first to be created, but after him all men were born of women. By becoming a mother, a woman also avenges herself on Satan for his seduction. She propagates the "seed," namely Christ who will destroy the snake. This in itself has no salvation value, and the woman cannot in this way render herself redeemed. She can only be redeemed as a woman when in love, faith, and a sober life of modesty she perseveres. In this way she reveals the maturity of faith of someone who wishes to learn. Then she is redeemed from the command of silence which Paul enjoins upon her in the preceding verses. (From this we can already see that Paul's injunction to silence was not a permanent one. We will return to this issue.)

Equal partners

The only conclusion that we can draw from the foregoing is that, although man and wife are different, yet they are equal. They are each other's fellow-beings. Although the man is the carrier of authority in marriage, it does not render the wife inferior, forcing her to act as his concurrent, his rival.

The Scriptures regard the bond of marriage as being inextricably linked to the covenant of God. If one does not live directly in accordance with the covenantal prescriptions of God, the marriage is directly affected. And no one who lives in disharmony in marriage can live in harmony with God (cf. the closing section of 1 Peter 3:7).

Does the woman have a place in the church in Paul's vision?

We would here like to have a brief look at Paul's commands that women have to wear a head-covering in church (1 Corinthians 11:5, 6, 10) and that they may not speak during services (1 Cor. 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12).

Where in the foregoing it has been a matter of Paul not being understood properly, we have to do here with my second postulation, i.e. that these had been time-bound injunctions, applicable only to the women of Corinth and Ephesus — or then also to women of today acting as the women of these cities had acted to deserve these injunctions!

Veils, hair, and hats

At present we do not have so many problems in my own church with the issue of hats. The whole turmoil around this issue has died down and most women come to church without covering their heads.

I do not believe that this is wrong. In Paul's day, however, for a woman to appear unveiled in public was not only unfeminine but a disgrace. Probably the heathen women also removed their veils in the course of religious rituals. Paul wished the women to distinguish themselves from their heathen sisters in this way. A woman had to indicate by this that she accepted her role as woman. If she did not do this, she might as well cut her hair (a custom then among prostitutes) and look like a man. (It was the general custom for men then not to wear their hair long (verse 14)). Today a covering for the woman's head does not have this meaning any more and it has therefore become a meaningless habit to wear a hat.

It is not too clear what Paul means in verse 7 when he says of the woman that she "is the glory of the man." The original Hebrew word for glory (*kabod*) indicates weight, value, honor. In describing one person as the glory of someone else is to describe the person in terms of the one that he reveals.

Thus the man reveals, if he seeks the honor or glory of God, the glory of God himself. The woman is the glory of the man because through him she can be fully woman — just as he can only be fully man through the woman.

Another difficult passage is encountered in verse 10: "For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head." The question is as to whether the translation here is correct. Does it deal here with the man's power or authority (*exousia*) or does it point to the woman's own power or authority? To go into this in too much detail, however, will mean making too wide a detour.

A woman has to be seen but not heard

The usual exegesis of 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2 is that it is a universal norm that prohibits participation of the woman in religious services (apart from singing and sitting together).

The problem is then immediately that this should be equally true of the head covering. Another, more serious problem is that Paul does allow women

to pray and to prophesy (1 Corinthians 11:3-16).

I think that we will already have made some progress if we keep in mind that in this whole section (1 Corinthians 14:26-40) the issue at stake is not really the place of the woman in the church, but the orderly progression of the service. It also does not deal primarily with the question of submission to the man but with God's demand that there should be order (cf. verses 33 and 40).

We already know that the Gnostically-inspired women in Corinth and Ephesus disturbed the good order through their behavior and their interruptions. In the light of this Paul's prohibition: "And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in church" (verse 35) is readily to be understood and not at all harsh. Paul is thus here concerned as much with the restoration of the order in marriage (where presumptuous women threatened the authority of the men) as in the church.

We have already seen in the case of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 that it was the failure of the women of Ephesus to persevere in love and in faith that forced Paul to enjoin them to silence. This is true, however, only for as long as they did not convert themselves. The translation of verse 12 ("But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence") might then in the light of the Greek verb (*epitrepo*) also be amended as "But I suffer no women *for the moment* to teach"

I am not going to go into the problem of women in church offices here. It is clear from the Scriptures, however, that the woman had a more important role in church and society than we might ordinarily think.

A woman could be a judge (Judges 4:4), manager of an estate (Proverbs 31:14-24), a prophetess even in the Old Testament (2 Kings 22). From the New Testament emerges the important role that women played in the church. Phoebe (Romans 16:2) was a deaconess. In the same chapter Paul mentions a whole number of other women who helped him in the dissemination of the Gospel: Tryphena and Tryphosa, Olympas and Priscilla, the wife of Aquila. The latter married couple helps us — 2 000 years ago — to relinquish many of our stereotyped views of the division of roles in the church. Together they offered

hospitality to Paul, the traveling missionary (Act 18:1-3), together they took in Apollo to teach him further (Act 18:26), and together they were willing to put their lives on the line for the Gospel (Romans 16:3-5), and together they organized a home congregation (1 Corinthians 16:9). As man and wife both of them made a special contribution to the dissemination of the Gospel.

6. And now to continue

If you should get the impression that my sole aim had been to bring Calvin's view of women into discredit, then you would be wrong. We have learnt a great deal from him: he stimulated us to reflect further in the light of the Scriptures.

If you should maintain that the problem of woman in the Bible and church is far more complex, then you would be right. My purpose has simply been to make clear that (in contrast to views of the past and of the present) woman ought not to be regarded as being inferior on the basis of the Scriptures.

Sexuality is not merely a matter of the physico-biological. It is also not simply a matter of fortuitousness as Simone de Beauvoir would like to make us believe in her famous *Le Deuxième Sexe I et II* (first edition 1949). According to her a woman is not born but made. She is a product of her upbringing and education, and these are prescribed by men.

Man and woman are both complete and yet different. A woman is different in the way in which she walks, talks, sings, feels, thinks, and believes — just as a man is different from a woman in the way in which he looks at the world around him, in the way in which he buys and sells — and loves.

Because a woman is different from a man she also has a unique calling which she can only fulfill in her own unique way. Her emancipation does not lie in an effort to be like a man, but precisely in her being a complete woman.

I also do not believe that we are entitled to limit the scope of the woman in the whole expanse of the kingdom of God on the basis of Scriptural strictures. She need not be locked up among the four walls of her house — with her husband as custodian! — as wife, mother, nurse, cook and housekeeper. The woman does not at all need to confine herself to the traditional female roles.

Did not Christ Himself point in this direction when He visited Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-41)? Martha, the typical caterer for the church — which we know so well — knows precisely what her sister's role should be. She even speaks to the Lord about the fact that He can allow Mary to sit at his feet and to listen to Him (traditionally the domain of the men) instead of letting her go to the kitchen and to do her work there. Christ, who had no objection to dealing with women at this level, in fact, not even a bad Samaritan one! (cf. John 4)), reproaches the reproacher. Mary has done right. Martha is worried about many things, but only one thing is necessary ... Christ mentions that one quality is lacking in Martha without pinpointing it, but from the context it is clear that it is not one dish or the other which He would still like to have, but rather spiritual communion with Him.

Mary and Martha both truly loved Him. Each proved their love in their own unique fashion. It was only when Martha tried to impose her way on her sister that Jesus spoke in friendly rebuke.

Let us then cease to prescribe to each other unnecessarily (men to women and women to women) how the Lord should be served. Let us grant the woman freedom in Christ – in the church too – to serve the Lord in accordance with her gifts and talents granted to her individually by the grace of God.

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PART II

**REFORMATIONAL WORLDVIEW
AND
PHILOSOPHY**

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE REFORMED? AN ANSWER FROM A WORLDVIEW PERSPECTIVE

The aim of this chapter is to determine – from a worldview perspective – the hallmark of being Reformed. As an introduction a few current, unsatisfactory efforts at revealing the genius of the Reformed faith are mentioned.

The main section of the chapter provides, firstly, a typology of five basic, recurring worldviews during the past 2000 years of Christianity. Among them only the reformational worldview is not plagued by an inherent dualism. Secondly, the differences among these worldviews are illustrated by way of their concrete, practical implications for real-life issues. In the third place, the dualistic Christian worldviews are critically evaluated in the light of the biblical revelation of *inter alia* its message about the kingdom of God.

In conclusion the distinctive character of being Reformed is described, both negatively (as the rejection of dualistic worldviews), and positively (as the rediscovery of an integral, holistic worldview, inspired by the biblical idea of the kingdom of God). Such a worldview should always be practised in humility and never lead to triumphalism, because we often do not apply it consistently and especially because our fallible human efforts may not be identified with the coming of God's kingdom.

An International *Reformed* Theological Congress with the theme "The kingdom of God" provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on the question: what exactly is the hallmark of being Reformed? In which way(s) is the Reformed faith unique among a variety of Christian positions?

In this chapter an answer to this vital question will be attempted from the perspective of a worldview. But – as an introduction – a few current ideas about the genius or essence of being Reformed to illustrate the need for this reflection.

1. Introduction: current ideas about the distinctive character of the Reformed faith

Many books have been written about the misunderstandings, myths, caricatures, as well as the distinctive characteristics of the Reformed faith. For example, to be Reformed has among other things been labeled as: to be orthodox, to attend catechism classes, to go to church faithfully on Sunday mornings *and evenings* (!) and to honor the Sabbath. Other definitions accepted the five points of Calvinism, namely total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints (often referred to by the acronym TULIP), which was derived from the Canons of Dordt (1618-1619).

Another well-known viewpoint is that Reformed people believe in *sola gratia* (through grace alone), *sola fide* (through faith alone), *sola Scriptura* (only Scripture), and *solus Christus* (Christ our only Savior).

In spite of the value of each of the above-mentioned characteristics, I do not think any of these characteristics fully reveal the real genius of the Reformed tradition. What then is its hallmark?

I agree with Hesselink (1983: 67) when he states that Reformed theology is kingdom theology. "Therefore to be Reformed is to seek to bring the whole gospel to the whole world, not a truncated version which applies only to the individual's spiritual welfare." Its starting point is the absolute sovereignty of God over all areas of life. Christ's rule has cosmic dimensions. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16; 17:14), His kingdom shall have no end (Luke 1:33).

Therefore the Reformed outlook is one of great scope and grandeur, compared with other forms of Christianity:

In contrast to Lutheranism's quest for a gracious God, pietism's concern for the welfare of the individual soul, and Wesleyanism's goal of personal holiness, the ultimate concern in the Reformed tradition transcends the individual and his salvation. It also goes beyond the church The concern is for the realization of the will of God also in the wider realms of the state and culture, in nature and in the cosmos (Hesselink, 1983:108-9).

To be able to achieve this lofty goal, an encompassing worldview is necessary. Therefore for Hesselink (1983: 71) the hallmark of the Reformed tradition is its development of a biblically reformed worldview. In summary:

A life and world view, a vision of the sovereignty of God and the lordship of Jesus Christ manifest in every sphere of life, a theology of the kingdom of God which transcends time and space – this is the grand design of Reformed theology at its best ... one leitmotif underlies them all: the glory of God ... 'From Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen' (Rom. 11:36) (Hesselink, 1983: 111-12).

The aim of this article is to determine the uniqueness of a Reformed worldview (I would prefer the word "reformational" to indicate that it is not static in nature) by comparing it with other Christian worldviews. The variety in worldviews becomes evident when we take a look at the different responses that Christians provide to the relationship between grace and nature.

2. A typology of the five basic positions

Like many other fundamental problems in the history of thought, the number of possible responses to the problem of the relationship between grace (redemption) and nature (creation), or the Christian and culture, are limited. Only five basic models or paradigms to describe the relationship have been employed over the past 2 000 years.

2.1 Different attempts at a typology

Bavinck (cf. Veenhof, 1994) was one of the first who distinguished carefully between the five positions. In the beginning of the forties Bonhoeffer (1966: 196) summarized three of the five models in the following words:

In the scholastic scheme of things the realm of the natural is made subordinate to the realm of grace; in the pseudo-Lutheran scheme the autonomy of the orders of this world is proclaimed in opposition to the law of Christ, and in the scheme of the Enthusiasts the congregation of the Elect takes up the struggle with a hostile world for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth.

Following his pioneering work, we have the famous classic, *Christ and Culture* by Niebuhr (first published in 1951 with many reprints). In 1970 Olthuis gave his own version of the five types. And more recently, Wolters (1990) applied the same basic models to explain the different attitudes of Christians to Greco-Roman culture.

2.2 The *principium divisionis*

When studying the five viewpoints, we should be aware of the fact that only one of them really rejects dualism. Even the two moderate types among the remaining four accept dualism and merely try to avoid the extremism of the first two viewpoints.

One can apply different principles to arrange the five paradigms. On the one side thinkers emphasizing the corrupting power of sin, consider the natural realm to be predominantly evil, while on the other side, theorists impressed by the goodness of creation, conceive the realm of nature to be more or less good in itself. Therefore the most common method to order them, according to the degree of appreciation each model accords to nature in contrast to grace, ranges from the most negative to the most positive.

Because dualisms (or their rejection in the fifth model) play such a foundational role in one's outlook upon life as a whole, they are more than merely methods or models for describing the relationship between nature and grace. We can therefore also use these paradigms in describing different worldviews.

2.3 A comparison of divisions

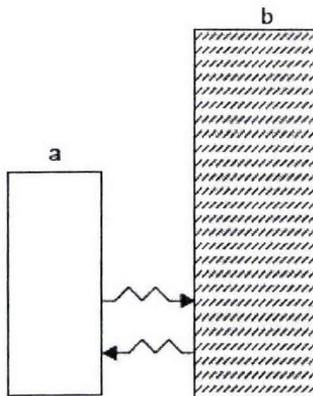
The following comparison provides a summary of the worldview models distinguished by three of the above-mentioned authors, indicating their basic agreement:

Niebuhr	Olthuis	Wolters
Christ <i>against</i> culture	Right bank extreme (Tertullian, Anabaptism, older Evangelicalism, Dialectical Theology,	Grace <i>opposes</i> nature

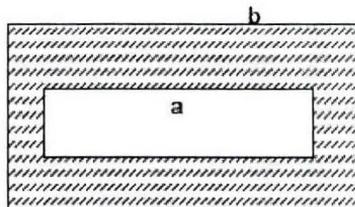
	e.g. Karl Barth)	
Christ <i>of</i> culture	Left bank extreme (from Origen, Justin to modern theologians like Ritschl, Paul Tillich, Paul van Buren and the Social Gospel Movement)	Grace <i>equals</i> nature
Christ <i>above</i> culture	Moderate, middle of the stream type – to the left (Thomism, Neo-Thomism, Catholicism)	Grace <i>perfects</i> nature
Christ <i>and</i> culture in paradox	Moderate, middle of the stream type – more to the right (old and new Lutheranism)	Grace <i>flanks</i> (stands alongside) nature
Christ <i>transforms</i> culture	The reformational-biblical model (Augustine, Calvin, Kuyper, Bavinck, Olthuis, Wolters – Niebuhr's position is not clear)	Grace <i>restores</i> nature

2.4 The typology in diagrammatic form

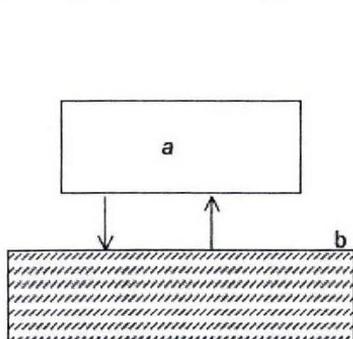
This typology can be visualized in the following diagram (van der Walt, 1994: 102 ; 1999: 133).



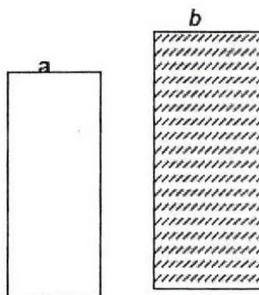
(1) Grace (a) opposes nature (b)



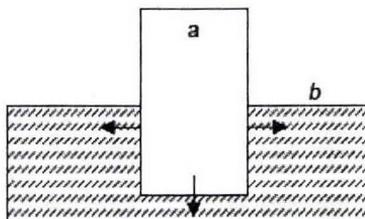
(2) Grace (a) equals nature (b)



(3) Grace (a) perfects nature (b)



(4) Grace (a) flanks nature (b)



(5) Grace (a) restores nature (b)

3. Practical consequences

The difference between the five basic paradigms or worldviews becomes even clearer when their practical results in everyday life are considered.

3.1 General examples

Numerous general examples of dualism can be mentioned, such as the following. (1) Sunday is regarded as the Lord's day, but the rest of the week does not belong to Him. (2) Tithe money is considered to be dedicated to God, but with the rest we can do as we please. (3) Certain activities in life (like holy communion) are regarded as holy, while others (ordinary eating and drinking) are not. (4) Evangelism is more saintly than social work. (5) Theology is more honorable than philosophy. (6) Some callings are holier than others. This last example will be elaborated in the following paragraphs.

Many Christians today still evaluate different professions using a hierarchical scale, according to which some are closer and more acceptable to God than others. Missionaries, ministers of religion, missionary doctors and nurses are at the top of the scale, while the "ordinary" professions, like business people, politicians, lawyers, artists, etc. are at the bottom. Only the first group is in full-time Christian service. Many in the lower ranks therefore feel uncomfortable and either leave their professions or try to give at least one year of their life to God by, for instance, joining a missionary campaign.

There is, however, no such thing as part-time and full-time Christians. As a Christian one is either God's servant full-time or one is not a Christian. A so-called part-time Christian, serving two masters, is a contradiction in itself. We are only permitted to serve one Master (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:13). In spite of the fact that not everyone of us is called to be a missionary, all of us – without exception – are called to His full-time service, to offer ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1).

This is the reason why the Bible never asks us to leave our different professions. When tax collectors – a hated profession even today – became converted and asked John the Baptist what they should do, he did not demand that they *leave* their work, but that they *change* the way in which they behaved *in* their profession: "collect no more money than you are required to

do" (Luke 3:12, 13). The same advice was given to the not very highly estimated work of being a soldier: "don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely, be content with your pay" (Luke 3:14). From Paul we hear the same message: "Each one should retain the place in life that the Lord has assigned to him/her and to which God has called him/her" (1 Corinthians 7:17, 21, 24). This he even applied to slaves – if they could not gain their freedom (1 Corinthians 7:21-23). Therefore he sent Onesimus back to his master Philemon. Paul respected the social customs of his day, but at the same time he challenged Philemon to abandon slavery by calling Onesimus *his brother in Christ!*

One of the most fundamental biblical perspectives – which was re-emphasized throughout the reformational tradition – is that ordinary "jobs" are divine callings. Instead of divided allegiance we can serve God with single-mindedness *in* any work!

Many similar *general* consequences of dualistic Christian worldviews could be mentioned. We want to focus now on what *specific* difference the above five worldviews will have in practice. From the many possibilities (cf. van der Walt, 1999: 133-8) two examples are discussed.

3.2 The Christian and politics

The implications of the five worldviews will in this case be the following.

1. The Christian should be *against* any political involvement, because political life as such is dirty and evil and a contradiction to the Christian faith.

2. *Very little if any difference* exists between ordinary (secular) politics and political involvement in the case of a Christian. Good politics is also Christian politics! Christians should sanction secular politics.

3. The Christian is by nature, in a *superior* relationship to secular politics, which has to be perfected by "baptizing" or "Christianizing" it from above. This may be done by, for instance, the opening of a political meeting by a priest with Scripture reading and prayer or in fabricating a theological perspective on politics. All such activities, however, remain *external* or *extrinsic* to political life, unable to change it *internally*.

4. The Christian should take a position *alongside* political life. Being a Christian and a practising politician are two totally different callings, in no way related to each other. A Christian may, therefore, *also* be a politician, but his Christian faith could and should have no influence on his political activities, because then he will confuse entities which should clearly be separated and kept apart.

5. This viewpoint differs from all the preceding ones in that it teaches that a Christian should be *directly involved in* politics, *renewing* and *transforming* it in order to respond in obedience to God's norms for justice. This Christian witness should be *political* in nature in order to reform political life from *within*. It should, therefore, not bear an ecclesiastical character as when, for instance, a minister of religion delivers a "sermon" in parliament!

3.3 The easy ways are not the right road!

From this one example it is already clear that the fifth, reformational model is the most difficult of all to apply in real life. The temptation to simplify matters – as in the other four models – will therefore be strong. It will be much easier and simpler to *reject* politics (position 1), or to *accept* it uncritically (position 2), or else to distinguish neatly between "neutral" politics and religion which either *transcends* it (position 3) or *flanks* it (position 4). Over against all of these, the fifth model forces us into a continuous struggle to discern exactly between that which is creationally valid and that which is sinfully distorted or even perverse. The reformational paradigm confronts us with a never-ending task which not only requires spiritual discernment, but also competence in a specific area like, in this case, politics.

Limited space does not allow elaboration on the concrete strategies to be followed in order to change and renew society. In other publications (e.g. van der Walt, 1994: 295-335) I have, however, described the reformational strategy in comparison to others. One of the features of this strategy is that it will not limit the Christian presence to the "private sphere" of the individual and the church. In our secular society a reformational strategy will fight for the right of Christian organizations and institutions in the "public sphere" which should transcend our narrow denominational divisions to enable Christians from

different churches to collaborate in the fulfillment of their calling in God's kingdom.

3.4 The Christian and a rock concert

This is a less serious example, but because young people usually understand – and enjoy – it, I do want to mention it here. The response of the five viewpoints to the question of whether a young Christian should attend a rock concert, will be more or less the following.

1. Stay away – it is from the devil!
2. If it is a good performance, no problem – go for it, enjoy yourself!
3. You may attend – but remember to pray prior to or after attending the concert to confess your sin!
4. Please go – but I want to see you in church on Sunday!
5. Be careful! First ask yourself whether it will be possible to serve God – not *before* or *after* the event, but *in* your attendance.

3.5 The easy ways cannot offer a solution

It is evident, also from this example, that the reformational viewpoint does not provide easy, clear-cut, simple answers. People therefore often regard it as being too vague on specifics, too imprecise and even fuzzy. The reason is that also in this case of the rock concert it is difficult in our sinful world to define exactly what is creationally valid and what is sinfully distorted. How should we understand Christ's parable of the weeds among the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30)?

But the difficult, complicated reformational way is the only correct way. The reason is that, when we follow any one of the three other orthodox roads (1, 3 or 4 above), we have only two options: we either legalize what is sinful or we fight against wrong enemies.

On the one hand, we can simply accept the *status quo* because it has a right of existence of its own. On the other hand, we could engage in the futile business of fighting against imaginary "enemies." For example, we fight against our bodily needs, but in our hearts the devil reigns. We fight against

so-called dirty politics, but we do not recognize sinful practices of the church. We distance ourselves from married life, not realizing that the temptations of immorality follow us into the solitude of the monastery. We fight against philosophy, while our theology is infiltrated by all kinds of unbiblical ideas.

In both cases (acceptance of what exists or fighting it) dualistic Christians are condemned to powerlessness. To *fight* against the world and even to *destroy* it (position 1), to *churchify* it (position 3) or to *accept* it (position 4) does not really *change* it in any *fundamental* way!

4. Two-realm dualisms in a biblical perspective

When dualism is an inherent part of our Christian worldview it is very, very difficult indeed to get rid of it. Bonhoeffer (1966: 203) realized this when he wrote:

It is hard to abandon a picture which one has grown accustomed to using for the ordering of one's ideas and concepts. And yet we must leave behind us the picture of the two spheres, and the question now is whether we can replace it with another picture which is equally simple and obvious.

There is – as we have already discovered – no *simple* “picture” to replace simplistic dualism. But there is an equally *obvious* “picture” – a radical Christian worldview inspired by the word of God.

In the following section I will critique two-realm theories, concentrating on how the Bible can help us to rid ourselves of worldviewish dualisms.

4.1 Be on the lookout for unbiblical terminology which may reveal a dualistic approach

As a starting point one should become more critical of polar concepts, which are not derived from the Scriptures, but which are read into them. Whenever you encounter certain contrasts like the following, be careful – they may be the result of one or the other form of dualist thinking: nature–grace; nature–supernature; natural–spiritual; creation–redemption; kingdom(s) of the world–kingdom of God; secular–religious; autonomous man–sovereign God; autonomy–theonomy; the god of the philosophers–the God of the Bible; God

the Creator–God the Redeemer; earth–heaven; visible world–invisible world; flesh–spirit; body–soul; outer life–inner life; lay person–clergy; world–church; state–church; emperor–pope; politician–priest; marriage–celibacy; natural (general) revelation–supernatural (special) revelation; reason–faith; understanding–believing; natural theology–supernatural theology; academy–church; university–seminary; class room–chapel; natural law–divine law; horizontal–vertical; temporal–eternal; natural virtues–Christian virtues; research–prayer; human–Christian; love for the world–love for God; physics–metaphysics; natural history–redemptive history; general grace–special grace; historical–trans-historical; worldly–spiritual; citizen–Christian; science–religion; this world–the next world; secular–holy; profane–sacred; worldly–heavenly; immanence–transcendence; material–spiritual; etc.

4.2 A new interpretation to replace traditional dualistic exegesis

Even God's word is sometimes powerless to liberate us, because we simply read it – again and again – through the spectacles of our dualistic worldviews.

We will therefore have to allow God's word to correct our dualistically distorted worldviews. Instead of reading them *into* the Bible (eisegesis), we should permit the Scripture *to speak to us* again (exegesis).

I will mention examples of how Christians in the past have tried to prove their dualistic approaches from the Scriptures and then indicate how one can understand Scripture in a totally different way when one removes the glasses of a dualistic worldview.

- *Is the Old Testament dualistic?*

Before we discuss specific texts from the New Testament, first one remark in general about the Old Testament. To prove their dualistic worldview, proponents of a dualistic worldview like to refer to the Old Testament's distinction between the "profane," the holy and the most holy in the construction of the tabernacle and the temple of Israel.

However, the fact is that the holy and most holy parts of the tabernacle did not remind Israel of a separate holy sphere above creation, but about the garden of Eden – the beginning of creation! The Old Testament concept of holiness (cf. Leviticus 19) is not about a supernatural existence, but about

obedience to God on this earth, like respect for one's parents, compassion with the poor, honesty in juridical and business affairs, etc. While in the Old Testament religious intermediaries (priests and prophets) still played an important role, in the New Testament every believer is a priest, prophet, and king, living in the immediate presence of God! (This does not imply that God's holiness did not result in great distance between Israel and Himself. In His presence Moses had to take off his shoes! At Sinai Moses had to mediate between the Holy God and Israel.)

- *Is the New Testament dualistic?*

Let us now turn to some New Testament texts misinterpreted by dualistic thinkers. They quote, for instance, Christ Himself, saying that His followers should not – like pagans – be concerned about earthly things like food, drink, and clothes, but should be concerned above everything else with the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 6:25-34). They should not store up riches for themselves here on earth, but in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). Christ also explicitly says that His kingdom does not belong to this world (John 18:36). And in line with this Paul reminds the Colossians (3:1-2) to put their hearts on the things that are in heaven and not to fix them on things here on earth.

Other parts of Scripture, however, warn us to be careful not to deduce from the above texts a dualism of earthly as against heavenly things. In Genesis 2:15 God already gave Adam and Eve the mandate to cultivate *the earth*. And in Matthew 5:13-14 Christ entrusted his followers with the task to be the salt and light of *the world*. He also prays that the Father should not take us out of the world but keep us safe from evil (John 17:15).

As Van Wyk (1993: 38) correctly explains Christ's kingdom is certainly not *from* (out of) this world, but it is very clearly intended *for* this world and directed *towards* this world. We have to find the "treasures in heaven" *here on earth*, in our daily, often difficult labor (cf. Matthew 13:44). This treasure is the same as God's kingdom, where we obey God's commandments – *here and now*. Paul's expression "the things that are in heaven" should also not be contrasted with "the things of the earth," but with *sinful things* (cf. Colossians 3:5, 8, 9). The "things of heaven" are gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to people

on earth (Colossians 3:12-17). The expression "kingdom of heaven" (used by Matthew because his Gospel was written for Jewish people who avoided using the name of God) does not indicate that His kingdom has nothing to do with this earth. It simply indicates that its *origin* is with God in heaven.

It is of the utmost importance to be aware of the fact that the word *world* is used in the New Testament in at least two different meanings, the first positive or neutral and the second negative.

Examples of the first are: "God so loved the world that He gave his only son ..." (John 3:16a; cf. 1 John 4:9). Christ is the Savior of the world (John 4:42; 12:47; 1 John 4:14). The world has to be reconciled to God through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19). Thus "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord" (Revelation 11:15). "Everything created by God is good and nothing is to be rejected" (1 Timothy 4:4). God not only created the world, but he loves it and cares for it, despite its sin and rebellion. In this sense we too are to be concerned about it, care for it, and become involved in its betterment.

In the majority of New Testament references to the *world* its meaning, however, is negative, particularly in the writings of John and Paul. In this case *world* indicates a sphere at enmity with God and humanity. The whole world is in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19). The devil is the ruler of the world (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). The world hated Jesus and will hate his followers (John 7:7; 15:18-10; 17:14; 1 John 3:13). According to James (4:4) one has to keep oneself unstained from the (sinful) world.

The first (positive) meaning concerns the *structure* of this world. The second (negative) meaning indicates the wrong religious *direction* of the fallen world. We do not have to retreat from or avoid the world in the first sense, but from the world in its second meaning, namely the worldly (sinful) things of this world (1 John 2:15). Christ's high priestly prayer is very clear on this point. He prays that his heavenly Father should not take his disciples "out of the world." True, they are not "of the (sinful) world," but Jesus sends them "into the world" (John 17:15-17). Christians are to remain unstained by the sinful world, but at the same time they have to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world

(Matthew 5:13-14).

- *Only one legitimate kingdom*

It is true that the Bible speaks of two kingdoms – the kingdom of God and that of Satan. The point is that only one of them has a legitimate existence. The kingdom of the devil is to be defeated and destroyed. However, all the dualistic worldviews firstly interpret these two *kingdoms* as two *realms* (or ontological distinctions in creation) and secondly, in spite of the fact that they are usually not regarded as of equal value, both of them are at least accorded a relative right of existence. Consequently, humanity is placed under two opposing norms – the unity of God's law is broken!

- *The real biblical antithesis*

God's word assists us in replacing the false antithesis in dualism (that between nature and grace) with the real antithesis. The nature-grace antithesis is wrong because grace is an attitude of God which intends to *renew* (rather than stands opposite, above or alongside) nature. The grace of God is not even the opposite of *sin* – the work of humanity – but it is the opposite of *God's wrath* against sin. The real biblical antithesis is between humanity's obedience to God's will (a result of God's grace) and humanity's disobedience (earning God's wrath).

- *The limitation of all-encompassing biblical concepts*

Most Christians will agree with the following core confession of their faith: "God the Father redeemed His creation, which had fallen into sin, through the death of His Son and is renewing it through His Spirit to become the kingdom of God." They do not, however, agree on the all-encompassing meaning of the core concepts (creation, fall, redemption, and kingdom) in this confession, but limit them in one way or another.

According to Scripture *creation* includes everything that God made; the *fall* corrupted the entire creation; *redemption* is intended for the whole of creation and the concept *kingdom* points to the fact that God is King of everything He has created.

In the history of Christianity the fall into sin has often not been viewed as

a radical or total disruptive, life-destroying power, penetrating and corrupting everything. Its effects have been minimized because it was regarded as the mere loss of something good (grace). Or else it has been localized as an area of creation which would be less good or even bad as such. In the same way redemption was viewed as something extra, added to creation or – even worse – as a special power in humanity to be actualized, instead of total and integral renewal. In a similar way the kingdom of God was seen as a separate part of creation – or even as something separate from creation.

When we do not understand these core biblical concepts in their holistic meaning, the result will therefore inevitably be one or other kind of dualism.

Another example is the dualistic perspective of God's original cultural mandate (Gen. 1:26-28) and Christ's missionary command (Matthew 28:19). While the cultural mandate is our primary, all-encompassing religious calling, it is often viewed as a secondary, more or less "secular" task over against the primary importance of missions and evangelism. Christ's so-called mission command is, however, in many respects a reminder of God's very first command to subdue and take care of the earth that belongs to Him!

4.3 Confusion between kingdom and church and the identification of God's kingdom with the church

In Christian dualisms the church is regarded as belonging to the supernatural realm of grace. In principle it can therefore have no real connection to or influence on the world. The further limitation of the encompassing kingdom of God – as wide as creation itself – to the area of grace (understood as cultic life in the church) which also characterizes two-realm theories, excludes in principle the very possibility that God's kingdom can embrace the whole world. Having first tied the Bible and religion to the church, one cannot possibly present a genuine biblical witness in the many other non-ecclesiastical areas of life. Then, at every turn, one is faced with false dilemmas and pseudo-choices.

The church is but one "room" in the kingdom and should not be identified with the whole "building" of God's reign. The Bible clearly teaches that the kingdom has cosmic dimensions (cf. Psalm 24:1, Psalm 103:19 and many

more texts). The church reveals the kingdom, but it is not its only expression. The church as an institution can never exhaust the richness and variety of God's reign. Membership of the church only, does not fulfill our responsibilities as citizens of the kingdom. Belonging to a church is important, but still it is only one way in which a Christian should be present in the world.

A clear distinction between the institutional church and God's kingdom does not imply a devaluation of the church. It rather relieves the church of an impossible burden, namely to make its own witness the *total* biblical witness in society. At the same time it enables the church to concentrate on its specific calling: the nurturing of faith through the preaching of the word during communal worship.

Every section of life has to reveal the kingdom of God in a *different way*. Christians must be present in the world in *various ways*, so the form of their witness will differ as the structural make-up of the different sectors of life differs. The witness will also not have the character of something ecclesiastical from *outside* – it will be a witness *within* and *relevant to* the specific sphere of life. In this way Christians will be able to speak *concretely* about day-to-day affairs of the world!

Today we can understand even better this basic distinction between church and kingdom present in the Bible, because we live in a much more diversified society with different societal relationships and organizations responsible for a variety of tasks. At its inception the church took upon itself many of the wider, non-ecclesiastical kingdom responsibilities. It was not simply a gathering for prayer and preaching of the faithful. In Acts 2:42 it is, for instance, narrated that the first Christians shared the same roof, pooled their finances, were a separate social community, etc.

4.4 The distinction between religion and faith

Another way of explaining the difference between kingdom and church is the distinction between religion and faith, generally used by exponents of reformational philosophy.

Religion is not an *addition* to life, but its *essence*; it is not a *complement* to existence, but its *character*; it is not *higher* than "ordinary" life, but its *central*

thrust. Religion or spirituality is as broad as life itself. It is a way of life that people engage in with their full existence at all times. It is not – as many believe – a carefully limited enterprise for the nurturing of the soul at special times and in special settings. No, service – or disservice – of God is what life is about. Life is religion!

Faith, however, is only one of the modes or ways of being religious in which the intrinsic spirituality of all of life is expressed. Faith, although the most important, is one kind of function belonging to the created order next to many other human functions, like sensitivity (the psychical), justice (the juridical), clarity (the logical), beauty (the aesthetic), morality (the ethical), etc. In each one of these different ways of human behavior, one's deepest religious commitment is expressed in a unique or *sui generis* way. In the particular way of faith the central *dynamis* of religion is expressed in a focused and very explicit way in, for instance, personal devotions, prayers and worship in the church. Faith, therefore, is both distinct from religion and expressive of religion.

When one regards religion as the nature of life in its totality, that totality of life is a spiritual response to God, while one facet of this all-encompassing response is the response of faith. Two of the most important benefits resulting from this distinction are the following.

In the first place, it prevents the downgrading of any other human mode of functioning as second-rate or "natural" or even the locus of evil and sin. Our eating, sleeping, sexuality, emotions, and politics are as spiritual as our thoughts, morals, and beliefs. The Bible therefore teaches that "whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

In the second place, such a view avoids reducing religion to one sphere of life alongside that of art, science, politics, business, etc. with the always present danger of acting as if God is locked up in the church and is only a concern on Sundays. Faith is only one of the many modes of religion!

4.5 A confusion of structure and direction

Since the fall there have been two directions present in the one creation: both

obedience to the will of God and disobedience, service of the true God or an idol in His place. Obedience to God brings forth the good while the result of disobedience is what is bad or sinful. Good and bad occur in every facet of creation and should not be limited to a specific thing or a clearly delimited area. Because we live in between the time of Christ's first and His final coming, everywhere – even deep in our own hearts – we experience a mixed situation and should be careful to make a clean-cut separation between light and darkness. The tension between the two is the cause of a *religious* antithesis and not the result of *ontological* opposition. The basic mistake of all the dualistic worldviews we have discussed is that they misinterpret the religious antithesis as something spatial or ontological. In Spykman's (1992: 67) words:

Dualism gives the spiritual antithesis ontological status by defining some parts, aspects, sectors, activities or realms of life (the ministries of the church) as good and others (politics) as less good or even evil. Dualism grants sin a built-in ontological status At bottom, therefore, dualism may be defined as a confusion between structure and direction ... the antithesis is read back ontologically into the very structure of creation.

The consequence of this, according to Spykman, is that dualism fails to see that life as a whole is sacred – in the sense of being dedicated to God – and that it should be lived to the honor of God in our daily down-to-earth activities. Dualism considers some parts of our lives as inherently, innately evil or at least have a lesser status than other parts. It draws a line through the world and tries to walk with uneven pace on both sides. Consequently, some life activities and structures are regarded as redeemable and others at best only remotely redeemable. Spykman therefore regards dualism as a deceptive attempt to partly accept life and partly reject it. It leads to a dual normativity, the legitimization of sin, disruption of the unity of creation, and the limitation of the cosmic impact of the biblical message of redemption.

The variety of two-realm theories is the result of different viewpoints about the following: (1) the place in creation where sin is localized; (2) how serious or not the effects of sin are regarded; and consequently, (3) how great or little the need for redemption will be.

5. Conclusion: the ideal and reality of being Reformed

In his contribution on the essence of being Reformed, Zuidema (1951: 157, 158, 160, 165) emphasizes again and again that for a Reformed person religion is not something additional and added to life, an “after dinner” or simply a consolation prize for the disappointed. No, life in its totality is religion – or it is not worth living. Therefore Reformed believers will never be able to sit idle, without work to be done. They will rather have more than they can do and always be in need of more workers and more money for the great variety of work in God’s kingdom.

In humility and honesty we will, however, have to admit that, in many instances, this description of the reformational worldview remains an ideal to be accomplished. Contemporary Reformed Christianity has lost a great deal of its saltiness. One of the major reasons is the unnoticed infiltration of dualism into a worldview that ought to be integral and holistic. What we badly need in South Africa, in Africa, and in the entire world, is a genuine reformational worldview to inspire Christians again to be fully present in a suffering and groaning world. We urgently need a salty Christianity which is again capable of healing a wounded world and preventing its increasing decay.

We should, of course, always be keenly aware of the fact that our efforts and even our small achievements in the socio-economic-political world can never be *identified* with the kingdom of God. At the same time they are not entirely *unrelated* to His kingdom. As signs they point beyond themselves to a kingdom which is still coming. We are not allowed ever to fall into triumphalism. Our task is not to *seize* power, but to *transform* the powers of this world. Therefore, however provisional, partial and sinful our socio-cultural involvement as Reformed Christians may be, we have a place in the powerful kingdom of God to which the future belongs.

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LIFE- AND WORLDVIEW

A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

1. The value of knowledge about life- and worldviews

Every person adheres to one or other life- and worldview, and because a life- and worldview is typically human, our scientific (philosophical) knowledge about it could be valuable to us all.

1.1 Social value

This type of knowledge will *help us to understand our fellow humans much better*. It will help us to realize why certain people differ, why they view the same reality differently. That is because we see what we think. (The point of departure determines the view.) We see what we are prepared to see, or have been trained to see.

A familiar story is told about four people who stood on the brink of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado at sunset. The *geologist* busied her mind with the light as it reflected itself on the various strata of rock. The *poet* thought of life as pictured by the dying day. The *painter* watched the various hues of red and yellow and purple. The *estate promoter* thought of building a restaurant with large picture windows, and the good prices for food in such a setting.

This shows us how a specific vocation (which is usually chosen in accordance with one's personality) determines our view of life.

But people of the same profession may have different life- and worldviews: different poets look with poetical eyes at one and the same tree with different consequences. The *conservative* poet wants to prune the tree; the *revolutionary* one intends burning it; the *optimist* immediately tries to make a Christmas tree of it, and the *pessimist* thinks of hanging himself!

We all tend to see things in the light of our own interests, our training, and our perspective or view of life. This is called selective perception. None of us is really objective in the way we look at life and its problems. The way we see others and our interpretation of the facts of life depends upon our own emotional background, our sense of values, our life- and worldview.

A European psychiatrist, Hermann Rorschach, found in this fact a tool that can be used to test what we tend to see, and possibly why we see things the way we do. He took some large cards and put inkblots on them. These strange figures do not actually represent any particular object, but they can be interpreted by one person as one thing, and by other persons as another thing. Psychologists use this Rorschach test as an instrument to discover what a person sees. One may see in the ink figures a bird with wings, another may see a face with large ears, and a third may see the map of an island. Experts have found out that what one sees in these inkblots is an index of emotional adjustment to life. Naturally, no test is infallible, but it is a great help of determining the structure of the personality.

1.2 Cultural-historical value

Knowledge of life- and worldview in general, and the different conflicting life- and worldviews in modern society, may *help us to understand our contemporary world more profoundly*. Today's struggle is not only an atomic (physical) war, but it is also an ideological one: it is a clash of life- and worldviews, and of different spiritual directions.

Our knowledge will help us to discern the spirit of our times. The spirit of a person or movement is the characteristic dynamic of what inspires his or her acts, the motor in the grip of which they move on and which characterizes whatever they do. When you speak of the spirit of a movement you speak of its life, of its way of going about things, of its heart, of that which truly makes it what it is. When we speak of a spirit we speak of guidance, direction, and motivation. The spirit moves and leads us into a certain direction, along a certain path. We must hold on to the fundamental idea of spirit as direction in its religious sense.

Our philosophical knowledge of life- and worldviews clarifies our discernment of the great world systems. It helps us to realize that at the back of the different

ideologies lie human hearts struggling with each other because there is a difference in religious direction. It makes clear to us the great passion and seriousness in the gigantic struggle for truth.

You may say: "Tell me who you are and I will tell you what your life- and worldview looks like." But you may just as well say: "Tell me your life- and worldview and I will tell you who you are." A world- and life-view may build up a person but it may also totally destroy them. (Compare for instance the modern brainwashing of Communist ideology.)

1.3 Personal value

Our knowledge of life- and worldviews also *has a pertinent personal value* for each of us. It may help us to deepen the knowledge of our own life- and worldview, or to choose another life- and worldview than the one we have been brought up with.

Each of us needs a life- and worldview because no one can live without direction or perspective in their life. We grow when we are inspired by a high purpose, when contemplating vast horizons.

Our intellectual and spiritual wilderness of today cries out for direction. The great sickness of our age is aimlessness, boredom, and lack of meaning and purpose in living. There are many who lack an adequate purpose for living. They take a joy-rider's attitude towards the pilgrimage of life for they are indifferent both as to the direction and destination. They drift along with the tide of time. How do we achieve consistency and unity? This can only be accomplished by establishing a dominant purpose in life. When our whole life is directed towards one, all-embracing goal, the scattered forces of the person will be unified to accomplish that purpose.

Scientific knowledge about life- and worldviews will give us certainty. It will help us to distinguish and also see the coherence, the unity of life; to be alert and watchful; to explore genuine new ways so that we may be better equipped for our life's task.

1.4 Practical value

A life- and worldview has a living immediacy to reality, in it thought is focused on the full, concrete reality and its relations. The pre-theoretical thought of a life- and worldview should come to theoretical clarity in the philosophy of life- and

worldviews. This clarity may again be a stimulant in the practical approach of the life- and worldviews because it should guide and direct the life- and worldview.

It is thus clear that a philosophy of life- and worldviews cannot be dismissed to the realm of theory which has no intrinsic connections with the practical situations with which the life- and worldview has to cope.

I should like to make the incidental remark that our philosophy (the theoretical explication of our world- and life-view) is not isolated from our walk of life but is a part of it. Our walk is closely bound to a world- and life-view and to philosophy. The serious walker looks about him and orientates himself as he goes along. He knows both his destination and the various stages of his journey as he reaches them.

It might be helpful to consider that theoretical activity is not so much a case of being *different* from those activities commonly called practical, as it is *another* kind of practical activity. *Theory is not opposed to practice, but the impractical is opposed to the practical.* Trying to draw water, or to milk a cow, while using a bucket with holes in it is not a theoretical activity but an impractical one; trying to find out how children react psychically under certain situations is not an impractical activity, but a theoretical one. It is important to distinguish between practical activities of a theoretical nature, and such activities of a non-theoretical nature.

As with every science, philosophy is also of a theoretical, but not impractical, nature.

To deepen the pre-theoretical knowledge of the life- and worldview(s) (one's own and other's) by grounding it objectively, tracing its historical development, arranging it systematically, comparing it with other life- and worldviews and classifying the various life- and worldviews according to certain principles, is, in my opinion, one of the most important tasks of philosophy.

2. Life- and worldview in its relation to similar phenomena

It is possible to distinguish various comprehensive grips of human consciousness:

— Way and conduct of life

- Style of life
- Life- and worldview
- Ideology
- Philosophy

2.1 Way of life or manner of living (“*lebensweise*”) and conduct in life (“*lebenswandel*”)

There is an intimate relation between a life- and worldview and a way of life. The knowledge given in a life- and worldview directs and guides us to action, to a certain way of life. It is essential that one should *live* according to one’s specific life- and worldview otherwise the life- and worldview is unfruitful and dead. Life- and worldview and way of life are only the two sides of the same coin.

The attitude of life (a view of life or life- and worldview) is not opposed to the way of life. The person who walks through life should *look where* he walks. Walking is not just to *walk* but also to *look where* you are going, to have a *view* of life and the world. A view of life and a way of life are an unbreakable unity which is clearly illustrated by the fact that a wrong view of life results in an incorrect way of life.

Every sane human being, whether they are aware of it or not, has a way of life. (Just as everyone has a view of life.) It is a subconscious habit or activity (knowing and doing both) which is not a studied view but is a pattern which gets beaten out during the course of time and the press of daily life and notably shows itself in crisis. This habitus is not just an individual phenomenon but it has historically developed and is corporately held, which is constantly being tested and modified by experiences.

2.2 Style of life

In the way of life you may get a differentiation of styles of life. Style is not a specific aesthetic phenomenon. Except in style of art, architecture, music, etc., certain people have a different style of thought (analytical style), a specific style in their culture, language, social intercourse, economic transactions, juridical, ethical, and ecclesiastical life. The difference in style depends on factors such as character, talent, circumstances, and historical

development.

Way of life is thus more comprehensive and fundamental when compared with lifestyle. Style of life, however, is not superficial like fashion — which may change from year to year, or even from day to day.

2.3 Life- and worldview

When one's subconscious way of life (and style of life) reaches sustained consciousness, when the pattern becomes understood as a pattern, gets expressed, articulated with intelligible implications, then you have a life- and worldview. A life- and worldview is a reflective, persistent, comprehensive view of everything together, but it is not scientifically precise. It breathes the concrete push of life and is literally suggestive rather than theoretically defining.

We prefer not to speak of "view of life" only (cf. Rudolf Eucken's *Grundlinien Einer neue Lebensanschauung*), neither of "view of world" (cf. Karl Jasper's *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*) or of "view of man and world" (modern tendencies) but of "life- and worldview." Even "life- and worldview" is not comprehensive enough because a life- and worldview always includes a certain idea of God (or gods) but we prefer to remain with this present terminology.

2.4 Ideology

The difference between a life- and worldview and an ideology is not always very clear. Dictionaries define ideology as: the whole set of principles or ideas in a system; a manner of thinking characteristic of a class or individual; a system of ideas especially for an economic or political system; the ideas at the basis of some economic or political theory or system.

The, *first difference* between a life- and worldview and an ideology is that ideology is used more or less in the political and economic sphere, whereas life- and worldview includes the basic ideas on these two areas, but also the principles for the rest of life. It is more comprehensive.

The *second difference* between life- and worldview and ideology is that "ideology" is very often used *in malam partem* (in a bad sense), as a purely

speculative system which people blindly obey or when a certain life- and worldview is enforced by scientists or a certain (political) group in a community it becomes an ideology (for example, the Communistic ideology).

2.5 Philosophy

Thus far we have: style of life, way of life, life- and worldview. Now we come to philosophy.

Hyperconscious philosophy systematizes into analytical order what a subconsciously developed life- and worldview brings together in an easier, less defined coherence.

According to Calvin Seerveld the relation of these levels of consciousness, namely, way of life, life- and worldview (view of life), and philosophy is one of interdependence with mutual influence, sympathetic stimulation, correction, and reinforcement. Philosophers are not the elite contemplating the *hoi polloi*, and should not consider themselves as advanced beyond the simple workaday wisdom of busy people. Philosophy should not overlook life- and worldviews as vague and useless, and likewise, those with a life- and worldview should not accuse philosophy of making too definite assertions and of being presumptuously clear about indefinable and very complex matters.

On the other hand, it is necessary for philosophy, as a science, to be critically distinguished from the pre-scientific way of life and a life- and worldview (although in real life these levels of consciousness flow imperceptibly from one to the other in an interlocking manner). If this is not done, philosophy suffers because it is reduced to popularized practical hints on how to live and lacks any professional scientific precision.

In the history of western thought can be established the fact that on the one hand philosophy and life- and worldviews are distinguished most sharply, and on the other that they are identified with one another.

The genuine life- and worldview has undoubtedly a close affinity with philosophy because it is essentially directed towards the totality of our cosmos. However, it is not of a theoretical character as such. Its view of totality is not the *theoretical*, but rather the pre-theoretical. It is not

restricted to a special category of "philosophic thinkers," but applies to everybody, the simplest included. Philosophy cannot take the place of a life- and worldview, nor the reverse, for the task of each of the two is different.

Herman Dooyeweerd, particularly, emphasized that philosophy will never be in a position to replace the life- and worldview because naïve experience cannot be replaced by theoretical (scientific) knowledge. There is residue of living left in every life- and worldview that must necessarily escape the theoretical concepts of philosophy. An authentic life- and worldview is never a *system*. Not that it should be lost in a vague feeling, but because in it thought must remain focused on the full, concrete reality. This is exactly what theoretical scientific, systematic thought as such cannot do. As soon as a *life- and worldview* is made into a system, it is no longer speaking to us out of the fullness of reality. The immediate contact with concrete relations in the fullness of reality is essential to the life- and worldview, but not to philosophy.

Summary

It is impossible that philosophy and life- and worldview, from the same root, should not influence each other making mutual appeal to each other, because they have a close *relation*.

Philosophic thought should find in the life- and worldview a continuous actual stimulant to self-reflection.

Conversely, life- and worldview should come to theoretical clarity in philosophic thought. Philosophy is the scientific counterpart of the life- and worldview because it has to bring the latter to theoretical clarity by rendering a theoretical account to its pre-theoretic picture of the world.

The two *differ* and they should remain sharply distinguished, each according to its own task and essential character.

As little as philosophy may fall with impunity into the concrete tone of the life- and worldview, as little may the life- and worldview accept with impunity the distance from the full reality which is suitable to theoretical thought.

3. General characteristic of all life- and worldviews

A life- and worldview is the pre-scientific comprehensive view and the fundamental convictions of a group (or community) concerning reality. We will analyze the different components of this definition.

3.1 A life- and worldview is “pre-scientific”

By pre-scientific we mean that a life-view is not something which you find only with scientists. It is something typically human. Science is based on an already existing life-view.

Although a life- and worldview is not scientific by nature, there is a science which studies the different life-views: philosophy.

Philosophy studies the whole reality whereas the special sciences concentrate only on aspects of reality. For example, physics studies inorganic beings, botany — the vegetable kingdom, zoology — the animal kingdom, anthropology — the human being, etc. Philosophy is the scientific counterpart of the pre-scientific life- and worldview. Both life- and worldview and philosophy gives us a comprehensive view of reality; the first a pre-scientific, and the latter a scientific.

3.2 A life- and worldview is “the comprehensive view concerning reality”

A life-view is therefore comprehensive. The term “life- and worldview” gives the impression that it only concerns life and the world. Humanity, however, never lives without God or their own fabricated gods. In a life-view an idea about God or gods will always be included.

A life-view concerns reality as a whole. With reality we designate that which is — which exists. According to Scripture, God who exists from eternity, created heaven and earth (cf. Genesis 1:1), and posited laws for creation. Thus we find three entities: God, His law, and His creation (which includes heaven and earth).

It is remarkable that we find reflection on these three entities (God, law, and cosmos) in every life-view. Apart from that, the relation between the three (between God and the law, the law and the cosmos and between God and

the cosmos) plays an important role in every life- and worldview.

We need the light of God's word to enable us to see everything which reality includes in the right way. With this light alone it is possible to place everything in the right place, and in the correct relation. Therefore, we find that when a life-view has broken away from the word of God, it mostly sees reality in the wrong way or distorts it. People take one of the aspects of the multi-colored creation and absolutize or idolize it.

For example, Liberalism absolutizes the freedom of the individual; National-Socialism absolutizes the nation; and Communism, the worker class. In all these life-views humanity stands in the center, therefore, we call them Humanistic life-views. They differ among themselves according to which aspect of humanity they consider as the most important.

The third part of the definition of a life- and worldview is:

3.3 A life- and worldview is “the fundamental convictions”

A life-view revolves around principles, the basic, the fundamental, most important things. It asks questions, such as the following: what is God? What does it mean to be human? What is freedom? What is good and what is bad? The answers which are given to these questions determine the whole life of humanity. It even comes to expression in the result of human labor.

The life-view, however, does not come to the fore so obviously in all cases. For example, it may be clearer in a Christian novel where the Christian character comes out explicitly than in a painting or a bridge built by a Christian, where the Christian character is not shown quite so explicitly. In a Christian philosophy or theology it will be clearer than in Christian physics or mathematics.

The last part of the definition to be explained is:

3.4 A life- and worldview is “of a group (or community)”

3.4.1 *A life- and worldview is thus typically human.* It is never found in the three other realms of things (inorganic beings, plants and animals).

3.4.2 *Specific-human*

It is not only certain groups who have a life- and worldview. Even although certain people assert that they are neutral, neutrality is impossible.

It is quite possible that the life- and worldview of some people does not come to the force so clearly. Some people are not conscious about their life-view. Every life- and worldview, however, has its philosophers who reflect on that specific life- and worldview. In their philosophy they only voice the thoughts applicable to a particular community, and reproduce it systematically. Vice versa, the philosophy influences the ideas of the community. (Cf. for instance, the existentialist philosophers in relation to the modern existentialistic life- and worldview.)

Everybody has a life- and worldview: it is an absolutely indispensable compass directing our lives. A worldview is something glorious. It gives rest and peace, it helps us to see the apparently confused and bizarre chain of events in a definite arranged whole.

3.4.3 A life- and worldview is by nature *social*. Everybody does not have a separate life- and worldview — although it is true that the personality of a person is connected with the life- and worldview to which they adhere. It has a social character as is clearly illustrated by the following.

The *origin* of a life- and worldview: this arises from public opinion, the formative work of different societal structures, such as the family, the school, the church, the university, and different organizations.

The *progress* of a life- and worldview: it is not limited to a specific generation, but is transferred from one generation to another.

The *extent* (geography) of a life- and worldview: often a whole nation or a certain group within a nation honors a specific life- and worldview (for instance, Russian Communism and American pragmatism).

3.4.4 A life- and worldview is, by its very nature, *religious*. The human being is a religious being. This means that he or she is standing in some relation to God (either positive or negative). This relation between humanity and God is also revealed in one's life- and worldview.

4. Different methods of classifying life- and worldviews

The methods we will mention were not developed specifically for classifying life- and worldviews. As the names with which we will indicate them reveal, for instance, they were methods dividing the history of philosophy or the development of western culture. This is a totally new field of investigation. In our search for a more or less appropriate method for classifying life- and worldview we may learn, therefore, from these various possible ways of classification.

4.1 The chronological method

The life- and worldviews are divided according to specific periods in the history of western thought, for instance:

- The age of Architecture (the Greeks)
- The age of Belief (the Middle Ages)
- The age of Adventure (the Renaissance)
- The age of Reason (the 17th Century)
- The age of Enlightenment (the 18th Century)
- The age of Ideology (the 19th Century)
- The age of Complexity/Anxiety/Analysis (the 20th Century)

There is some truth in this way of classification, but this method oversimplifies the actual facts. It is not true that in a certain period (for instance, during the Renaissance or the nineteenth century) there was only one common life- and worldview. It is also possible that a certain life- and worldview may be active from the seventeenth century to the present time!

4.2 The geographical method

Life- and worldviews are divided according to the land of origin or the lands where they play(ed) an important role. For instance, the American, Anglo-Saxon, German, Eastern, etc., life- and worldviews.

It is not, however, necessary that one country or part of the world adheres to only one specific life- and worldview and conversely, a certain life and worldview may play a dominating role in different countries. (Cf. the

Communitistic and Calvinistic life- and worldviews). The aspect of truth in this method is that a life- and worldview is not something individualistic, but is something of a group. This does not, however, imply that the life- and worldviews coincide with certain geographical areas.

4.3 The ethnographic method

This method is nearly the same as the geographical method as there is a close correlation between the nation and the country it inhabits. The same critique applies here: a life- and worldview should not necessarily be limited to a certain nation, and it is also possible that one encounters different life- and worldviews within one nation. It is an oversimplification to speak of the Italian, English, etc., life- and worldviews.

4.4 The epistemological method (Van Peursen)

According to the type or way of thought which is dominant western culture is divided into:

- mythological thought (Greeks)
- ontological thought (Middle Ages and Modern thought)
- functional thought (Contemporary thought)

The above-mentioned critique of oversimplification also applies in this case.

4.5 The progressive method (Comte)

According to his universal law of progress Auguste Comte divided human intellectual development up to his time into three stages. He used it as a device for subtly undermining all points of view previous to his own. The three stages were in chronological order:

- the theological or fictitious (sub-divisions include: the fetishistic, polytheistic and monotheistic)
- the metaphysical or abstract
- the scientific or positive.

This division is now outdated and the critique of oversimplification is also applicable in this case.

4.6 The philosophical-historical method(s)

Life- and worldviews are divided according to periods (philosophical) or currents. For instance:

- Rationalistic life- and worldviews
- + Older rationalistic types
- = Scientialistic
- = Practicalistic
- = Idealistic
- + Younger rationalistic types
- = Positivistic
- = Neo-positivistic
- = Neo-idealistic
- Irrationalistic life- and worldviews
- + Vitalistic
- + Pragmatistic, and
- + Existentialistic types.

In general it should be kept in mind that a life- and worldview is not a purely chronological (historical) or geographical or ethnographical or epistemological or philosophical phenomenon, and should not be classified according to such methods.

4.7 The philosophical-systematic methods

There are different possibilities:

4.7.1 According to the *distinction God-cosmos* the life- and worldviews are divided into theocentric (God-centered) and cosmocentric (cosmos-centered).

4.7.2 According to *different conceptions of humanity in history* (Weber):

- = The first human: sociological groupman of prehistoric times.
- = The second human: mythological-irrational man of ancient cultures.
- = The third human: rational and religious human.
- = The fourth human: the de-christianized or contemporary secular human.

4.7.3 According to the *aspect of reality which is absolutized* in the specific

life- and worldview.

For instance, *materialistic*, *vitalistic*, *logicistic*, *socialistic*, *economic*, *ethicistic*, etc., life- and worldviews. These and other are all totalitarian views about reality which arise not from a mere rational observation and analysis of positive facts, but rather from the failure to see the relative aspects of our life as all relative, and from the consequent effort to explain all the remaining relative aspects in terms of one that is religiously lifted out and absolutized, and thus made the deeper source of unity of the others. For all these theories we use “ism” words (materialism, etc.). These words always indicate exaggerating, distortion. We feel the distortion and speak of the theory as being one-sided. When the one-sidedness has been sufficiently felt a change may come to another theory, but in time it also proves to be one-sided. There never comes a resting point — a satisfactory end to the search.

Lacking the knowledge of the true God, many apostate thinkers of history had to fill up the lacuna by enlarging (absolutizing) one of the relative aspects of the temporal order. This phenomenon explains the diversity of life- and worldviews. Humanity has to take one particular *aspect* of created reality for the *whole* of it, thereby reducing all the other aspects to so many modes of the one they have just absolutized. In this way one’s view of the whole structure of reality is obscured because one can then no longer grasp any one of the aspects in its peculiar inner nature.

How is it possible to be in such a position and still show signs of being sufficiently in touch with reality, to uncover even important moments of truth? The answer lies in the inner structure of the different aspects themselves. No aspect is something which is cut off from the other aspects. In each *aspect* we have what we call its *sphere-sovereignty*. But over above that there is the principle of *sphere-universality*. For the one aspect cannot even exist except in indissoluble coherence with all the other aspects that together make up the integral whole of reality.

It is this creation-principle of sphere-universality that has supplied

whatever grounds humans have been able to adduce for their attempts to find the whole meaning of reality in what is actually but one aspect. But of course the mirroring of all the sides is not the same thing as all the sides.

It is here, therefore, that all the "isms" (materialism, organicism, psychologism, logicism, technicism, economism, historicism, aestheticism, moralism, etc.) arise.

You have an "ism" when you have too much of something, and exaggeration of what is not proper to a matter, or when what is tangential, peripheral, is given central importance. In socialism one gives too much importance to society and in Calvinism, technically speaking, too much value is put on Calvin's teachings.

Each "ism" seems to have something to say for itself and from each of them we can learn something. But in fact each of them is a religious distortion of the fullness of meaning of reality.

Out of the specific mother-idea (central idea) for instance, matter in the materialistic life- and worldview, life in the vitalistic, etc. the whole life- and worldview is built up.

4.8 The religious methods

4.8.1 The religious motives (of Dooyeweerd)

According to Dooyeweerd a certain religious motive grounds and shapes the core complex of leading ideas which guide and set up the kind of systematic coherence which one's philosophical conceptual analysis of things bears. The underlying religious motive is the inner spring of a certain philosophy's problematics. The what/how/why of a philosophy's first questions, the fundamental *cast* of its basic ideas, is critically determined by a usually hidden motive, which is always permeating and demandingly religious. This is the jugular vein. The make-up, thrust, the spiritual temper of a given philosophy depends upon what religious motive drives it.

Let us allow Dooyeweerd to speak for himself:

Now, a spiritual communion is bound together only by a common spirit, which as a *dynamis*, as a motive force, dominates the centre of our existence.

We will call these motive forces the 'fundamental motives'. And here we have discovered at last the true starting points of philosophy, and at the same time of the whole of human culture and social activity.

These fundamental motives are the true motive forces that have dominated the evolution of western scientific and philosophical thought.

Each of them has established a community among those who have started from it. And the religious motive as hidden motive force of his spiritual community dominates the thinker all the more if he is unconscious of it.

The thinker, indeed, can fashion this motive according to his individual view, but the motive itself is super-individual.

There have been four great religious motives that have dominated the evolution of western culture and western scientific and philosophical thought. Three of them are of a 'dialectical' character, that is to say, they are in fact composed of two religious motives, which, as implacable opposites, drive human action and thought continually in opposite directions, from one pole to the other. This inner conflict within the religious starting points implicates human thought and action in a *religious* dialectique, which is completely different from *theoretical* dialectique as inherent in the antithetical relation of theoretic thought.

For *theoretical* antithesis is by nature *relative* and requires a theoretical synthesis developed by the thinking 'Self'. Religious antithesis, on the contrary, is by nature *absolute* and does not allow a theoretical synthesis.

At best it allows the awarding of first rank (*das Primat*) to one of the antithetical motives (cf., Kant's *Primat der Praktischen Vernunft*).

Now it must be remarked that this religious antithesis originates in a deifying of some aspects or parts of temporal, created reality. This latter is by nature *relative*.

If one part of it is proclaimed to be *absolute*, its correlative is roused by religious consciousness to claim its own and opposite absoluteness.

(*Transcendental Problems of Philosophic Thought*, pp. 59-61).

Dooyeweerd distinguishes four fundamental religious motives in the history of western civilization:

In the first place, there is the great motive of *Matter and Form*, which was the ground motive of Greek thought. It originates in an endless conflict in the religious consciousness of the Greeks between the natural religion of antiquity and the younger cultural religion of the Olympic gods. The motive of 'Matter' corresponds to the faith of the ancient natural religion, according to which divinity was the great vital current without stable or personal form, out of which emerge all beings of individual form, which are subject to the great law of birth and death by a blind necessity, *Anangke*. The motive of 'Form' corresponds to the later religion of the Olympic gods who are only deified cultural forces who have left the 'mother earth' with its vital current to receive an immortal personal and invisible form (*eidos*). But the Olympic gods have no power over against *Anangke*, which dominates the stream of life and death. *Anangke* is their great antagonist. (*Op. cit.*, pp. 61-2)

The second fundamental motive was introduced into western thought by the Christian religion. It is the motive of *the Creation, the radical Fall due to sin, and Redemption in Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit*. (*Op. cit.*, p. 67)

The third fundamental motive is that of *Nature and Grace*,

introduced by Roman-Catholicism, which originates in a real attempt to reconcile the opposed religious motives of Greek and Christian thought. 'Nature' is conceived here in the Greek sense of *physis* (composed of form' and 'matter'), but accommodated to the Roman doctrine of Creation. 'Nature' in this sense should be the autonomous basis of super-natural 'grace.' Thus 'grace' in its turn could not contradict 'nature' in its accommodated Greek sense. (*Op. cit.*, p. 70)

The fourth fundamental motive is that of '*Nature and Liberty*', introduced by modern Humanism, which originates in an insoluble conflict between the religious cult of human personality in its freedom and autonomy, and the desire (stimulated by the religious motive of human liberty and autonomy itself) to dominate reality by modern natural science, which in its classical form seeks to construe it as a rational mechanical and uninterrupted chain of causes and effects. This humanist motive has tried to absorb into itself the three earlier fundamental motives, secularizing the Christian and the Catholic motives. (*Op. cit.*, p. 73)

4.8.2 *The religious-cultural method (De Klerk)*

This viewpoint divides the life- and worldviews as follows:

- The pre-Christian period (up to 400 AD)
- The Christian period (400 - 1600 AD)
- The post-Christian period (1700 - 1900 AD)
- The anti-Christian period (20th Century)

4.8.3 *The attitude toward the Bible (Vollenhoven)*

Some people did not know the word of God (Ancient Greek); others tried to reconcile the truths of the word of God with pagan Greek thought (Middle Ages); others broke with this synthesis thought either because they wanted to give the word of God its appropriate place in their life- and worldview (or philosophy) or they wanted to break totally with God and his word.

This way of looking at philosophy and at the different life- and worldviews gives us the following divisions or classification:

- Pre-synthetic thought (Ancient thought) from c. 700 BC to c. 40 AD
- Synthetic thought (Patristic and Medieval thought) from c. 40 to 1600 AD
- Anti-synthetic thought (Modern and Contemporary thought) from around 1600 to the present time with two possibilities:
 - + Anti-synthetic right wing: gives the word of God its appropriate place.
 - + Anti-synthetic left wing: breaks with God and His word.

4.9 Conclusion

Personally I would prefer a crossbreed of methods 4.7.3 (according to the *aspect in reality which is absolutized*) and 4.8.3 (according to the *attitude toward the Bible*). Method 4.7.3 gives us a *systematic method* and 4.8.3 a *religious-historical-cultural* classification. There are amongst the pre-synthetic, synthetic and anti-synthetic (right and left) different possibilities depending upon the specific aspect of reality which is viewed most important, or absolutized. The following diagram explains this schematically:

		1 Arithmetical	2 Spatial	3 Physical	4 Biotic	5 Psychical	6 Analytical	7 Historical	8 Linguistic	9 Social	10 Economic	11 Aesthetic	12 Juridical	13 Ethical	14 Pistical
A Pre-synthetic				B						S					
B Synthetic										S					T
Anti-synthetic	C Right														
	D Left			C	E					S	C				

Examples of classification according to this scheme:

- The *Thomistic life- and worldview* (T) is to be qualified as B14 (Synthetic, absolutizing of the pistical aspect, the church).

- The *Communitistic Life- and worldview* (C) is to be typified as D3 or D10 (anti-synthetic left absolutizing or idolizing matter and the economical aspect

of reality).

— The traditional *Bantu Life- and worldview* (B) before the acceptance of Christianity may perhaps be classified as A3 if we accept the views of Tempels (1959) in his book, *Bantu Philosophy*, wherein he advocates the idea that power (the nuclear moment of the physical modality is power) is the central or mother-idea in Bantu thought.

— The *Evolutionistic life- and worldview* (E) D4 (anti-synthetic left, exaggerating or idolizing the biotic aspect).

— The *Socialistic life- and worldview* (S) may be A9, B9, or D9 depending on the attitude of the specific life- and worldview towards the Bible.

None of the methods of classifications — not even the last — is absolutely satisfactory and complete enough to give a classification of all life- and worldviews.

The situation is much more complicated than this simple diagram. It only serves as a preliminary method to be of some help. To be complete, it should be necessary to include much more detail in this more or less skeleton map. For instance, the different possible nuances in the same life- and worldview such as people accepting one and the same life- and worldview and yet they may differ in their attitude towards it. The one may have a negativistic viewpoint, the other a conservative, another a progressive, and the attitude of the last may be that of a compromise. If a person with the last attitude is a Communist, you will not get a pure Communistic life- and worldview with him, but Communism blended with, for instance, the shade of Liberalism.

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WORLDVIEW: MODAL ASPECTS

According to a reformational philosophy everything in reality exhibits at least fourteen facets: (1) a numerical, (2) spatial, (3) physical, (4) biotic, (5) sensitive or emotional, (6) logical, (7) historical, (8) lingual, (9) social, (10) economic, (11) aesthetic, (12) juridical, (13) ethical, and (14) faith aspect. This distinction is known as the doctrine of modalities. (Modalities = aspects, facets or sides of reality).

According to this perspective on reality material things exhibit only the first three modalities, plants the first four and animals the first five facets. Human beings exhibit all fourteen aspects. This also applies to things created by humans, including worldviews.

When the doctrine of modalities is used in the structural analysis of a worldview the result is as follows.

14. The *faith* aspect: a worldview consists of deep religious convictions directed at the true God or other gods (idols) – it is a window on the transcendent.

13. The *ethical* facet: a worldview is accepted and trusted as the best (descriptively correct) image of reality.

12. The *juridical* facet: a worldview is prescriptive – it points out what is wrong and what is right.

11. The *aesthetical* facet: a worldview uses various symbols for inspiration.

10. The *economic* facet: a worldview offers only a basic framework, the most essential points of departure – not like a painting, but more like a sketch.

9. The *social* facet: a worldview normally is not something individual, but originates among people and is adhered to by a certain group.

8. The *lingual* facet: it is put into words by means of a particular vocabulary and a typical style of language.

7. The *historical*: it originates in a particular time and is relevant to specific historical circumstances.

6. The *logical*: it attempts to understand the variety and coherence of everything in reality as well as the human being's place and task within reality.

5. The *sensitive or psychic*: a worldview not only concerns understanding, but is also embraced emotionally, creating feelings of certainty, security and identity.

4. The *biotic* side: although it grows in a different way from a plant or animal, a worldview is also something that lives and develops and changes.

3. The *physical-energetical* aspect: a worldview is a driving force, it supplies spiritual energy.

2. The *spatial* facet: it originates and exists in a particular place among a group of people.

1. The *numerical* denotes the uniqueness of every worldview.

REFORMATIONAL SPIRITUALITY

True reformational spirituality encompasses the whole of life. It differs from all other types which we encounter within Christianity.

- It is in the first place not pietistic spirituality, which mostly sees religion as a matter of private concern.
- It is not mystical piety, which we find, for example in the Eastern Orthodox church. In this case too the Christian faith would have little influence in the world.
- It does not suffer from the sacramentalist religiosity of the Western Roman Catholic church. Our concern is not with liturgical service (holy times, people, and buildings), but with life service to God. Religion is not in the first place formal actions of a public cult but total devotion to God.
- Reformational spirituality also differs from the enthusiastic (strongly emotional) piety of the Anabaptist and charismatic movements. The whole of humanity is involved in religion, not only the psycho-emotional side. The personal subjective experience of religion can therefore not be the only or the most important. The accent may not merely be on our experience alone, but also on what God has done and still does. This leads to soberness and prevents a fanatical gushing.
- Reformational spirituality, however, is not just like all other human religious movements immune to derailment. We have to take care about that, as a result of the strong accentuation of service to God throughout the whole of life, our personal devotional life is not neglected. It does not help to conquer the whole world and in the process to suffer from spiritual anemia oneself!

- That, because of the strong emphasis on purity of doctrine, our piety should not gain a one-side cerebral-intellectualist character which excludes all spontaneity. Emotion and experience is also part of our life of faith. Without meditation, prayer, and a personal relationship with God our religion loses power.
- Reformational spirituality is a religion of obedience to God's commandments, a spirituality which demands total dedication in word and deed. These accents, however, may not be placed wrongly, otherwise the result might be legalism and moralism.
- The accent which certain kinds of spirituality puts on the sinfulness of humanity may not be over-emphasized at the expense of the gratitude and joy which we have to experience in our faith. Christian faith is full of hope and optimism!
- The important accent on God's sovereignty and the fact that we have to live through his grace alone should not lead to passivism (quietism), that is, we should not evade our responsibilities.
- The involvement of reformational spirituality in the fields of politics, society, economics, etc. should never lead to conservatist or revolutionist attitudes that is, links with ideas which are not in accordance with the fact that the Christian does not choose to the right or to the left, but should walk the "third way."

Should we be able to realize such a reformational way of thought and living, then we can offer something substantial which contemporary man is seeking with the whole of his being.

SHAPING A RADICAL BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

Businesses formulate vision and mission statements. Churches are searching for new visions. Academics are trying to create new perspectives in different subjects. During elections politicians propagate their own brand Everywhere people are looking for a new direction. No wonder that the concept of *worldview* has gained in importance and popularity. Basically a worldview describes our understanding of reality and our place and task in creation.

What will a genuine biblically-inspired worldview look like? To answer this question is the aim of this chapter.

1. Six components

Any worldview (not only a biblical one) includes at least the following six basic components: (1) a conception or view about God or something divine or absolute; (2) about law, order or value; (3) about what it means to be human; (4) about the ideal society; (5) about our relationship towards nature, and (6) about time and history. Let us have a look at how these worldviewish components changed at creation, fall into sin, and redemption.

2. Creation, fall and redemption

The word of God reveals that the history of humanity developed through three main phases, namely creation, fall into sin, and redemption in Christ. History will culminate in the final consummation, when Christ returns to live with us on a new earth.

We may call creation the time of *formation*, the fall the moment of *deformation*, and redemption the period of *reformation*. At the moment we are living in the age "between the times," the time of "already" and "not yet." The

reason is that Christ's redemption of the world started during His first coming to this world, but will be completed at His final, second coming when He will completely reform and renew everything.

Humanity's religious direction, place and task were different in each of these three main divisions of history. We will concentrate on the worldviewish aspect (describing our place in creation), especially the six components of the biblical worldview at creation, fall and redemption.

2.1. Creation

- At the dawn of creation the direction of the lives of Adam and Eve was toward the true *God*.

- They were created in the image of God, indicating that they obeyed His *commandments*.

- The essence of their *humanity* was that they were God's caretakers, His stewards. Their place was that of trustees - not proprietors - who had to see to it that the whole of creation in its immense richness and diversity should develop, evolve, unfold and reveal its potential. (To use an image: the exposed but undeveloped film has to be developed and printed to reveal all its beautiful colors.)

- Adam and Eve not only served God and acted according to the will of the God they served, they also created a *community* life (marriage, family etc.) which reflected their own concept of being human and in the final instance also revealed which God they served. (Our idea of humanity and of society is determined by the kind of God or god we serve.)

- They were permitted to use *nature* because it was not something divine, but part of God's creation entrusted to them. They did not misuse nor exploit it, but used it carefully and respectfully.

- Finally, they knew how to both use and enjoy the *time* God granted them.

The *direction* of their lives was correct. They knew their *place* in God's creation. They could, therefore, also fulfill their *calling*, the cultural mandate entrusted to them by God. They could perform their task in a balanced way, without one-sided distortions, enjoying life in its fullness.

When we understand the unspoiled circumstances at the time of creation, we also know what our real task should be!

2.2. Fall

When Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptation of the Evil One, everything changed.

- While their hearts previously had been directed in love towards *God*, it was now directed away from Him towards themselves. They rejected being the image of God (*imago Dei*) and wanted to be like god (*sicut Deus*)! According to them, God was redundant.

- They consequently did not want to obey God's *commandments*. They preferred to blow up their own image, to be a law unto themselves (autonomous) - not realizing that it was a contradiction in terms. They thought that they could take care of themselves as well as the rest of creation. By doing so, they lost their *place* in creation, namely that of *stewards*. Instead of *taking care* of God's creation, they were *hiding* behind trees (Genesis 3:8). God reminded them that they had deserted their proper place when He asked them: "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9). They thought they had become *masters*, but in reality they were now *slaves* of the devil. When they had lost their *direction* and their *place*, they could also no longer fulfill the original cultural *task* given to them.

- They also lost the real meaning of *being human*.

- They began creating a *community* (see the rest of the Genesis story) not directed by love, but by hatred. In essence the community they created was a reflection of their own corrupted nature. It was also a reflection of the new substitute god (Satan) they were serving.

- While directly after the fall it was not clear how reckless and harsh humanity would treat *nature*, it is evident today. The simple fact that God banned them from the Garden of Eden was an indication that they were not regarded fit, capable, responsible caretakers of nature any longer.

- Finally fallen man/woman had forgotten how to correctly use and enjoy the *time* God had given them. Because they misused it, their life span was shortened (Genesis 6:3). Their time on earth was terminated by death. We

may try as hard as he can, but he will never be able to re-establish paradise lost - neither in the past (like Africans) nor in the future (as the West).

2.3. Between redemption and consummation

As said before, we now live between the times. Christ redeemed the world, but the final result will only be fully visible when He returns to earth. We live in a totally different historical epoch than that of creation or the fall. The good seeds and the weeds grow together (Matthew 13:37-43).

We are not anymore in the favorable position of Adam and Eve. In fulfilling their cultural task, they started with a clean slate. On our own "slate" the word "evil" is written in large letters. Our task is not like theirs, simply to govern, develop or form. Because of the terrible deformation caused by sin, we have to *reform* - to reform our entire lives according to the six worldviewish components.

What exactly does the concept "reformation" entail? This will be discussed in the following section.

3. Reformation

Reformation basically means dealing with evil. But the question is *how*? The answer depends on how serious we take both humanity's fall and Christ's redemption.

3.1 Different Christian worldviews

According to how serious humanity views both fall and redemption, we may divide Christian worldviews into three main groups (see also chapter 4 in this volume):

- *The optimistic* ones emphasize the many good things left in creation after the fall. They do not see a too great tension between the new creation we are heading for and the old sinful world (cf. different liberal Christian worldviews).

- *The pessimistic* worldviews emphasize the tension between the present (old) world and the salvation promised for the new. This viewpoint could be divided into three subgroups. (1) Redemption is something *against* creation; recreation

implies another, alternative creation (cf. the Anabaptists in the sixteenth century and their contemporary descendants). (2) The second group sees less tension: redemption is placed *next to* creation (e.g. the Lutheran position). (3) A third group views salvation as something simply to be *added to* the existing creation (e.g. Thomism and neo-Thomism).

Neither the optimistic nor the pessimistic worldviews want to change the world. For the optimists, it is *not necessary* while the pessimists (in their various subgroups) *cannot* do it, because they have more or less separated redemption from creation. They all have a “weak” concept of redemption.

- In a *realistic Christian worldview*, on the one hand, the evil of the present world is neither underestimated (as in the case of the optimists) nor overestimated (as the pessimists do). On the other hand, realistic Christians neither overemphasize the good (like the optimists) nor do they underestimate it (like the pessimists tend to do). They face the evil in this world and at the same time believe in the power of redemption. According to them, redemption does not simply condone the existing order (the optimists), nor is it something against, next to or above the evil of this world (the pessimists). According to this third group the old, sinful, evil creation has to be renewed or reformed from *within*.

This is a “strong” and clear viewpoint about redemption: it is radical. Like salt it wants to penetrate the old in order to stop the decay. Like light it intends to eliminate the darkness. Redemption is not merely something *added to* the old; it *renews* the old without *destroying* it.

Unlike the African worldview, the real biblical worldview does not want to return to an idealized past. Neither does it try, like the western worldview, to create a future Utopia. In spite of the fact that it emphasizes our human responsibility in the present to reform the world, it believes that only God will finally bring about a new heaven and a new earth. We cannot force it. We have to *await* it.

3.2. The essence of reformation: a return to the correct norms

Each of the six components of a biblical-reformational worldview is important for reformation. If, however, we have to select the most important, it will be the normative component. *Reformation in essence can be described as a return to*

the correct norms applicable to the different aspects of our lives.

The western worldview believes in the individual autonomy of humanity and the African worldview in communal autonomy. Autonomy in both cases implies a subjectivistic view. Instead of obeying God's laws, humans elevated themselves to the status of law.

In the place of both kinds of *autonomy*, Christians will have to reply with *heteronomy*: our norms do not originate from ourselves, but from a Higher Authority.

3.3. The character of norms

We have to (1) obey God's *will* which is (2) expressed in different *laws*, for example the Ten Commandments but also revealed in the history of God's dealing with Israel and in Christ's life. Because these laws were given to a specific nation (Israel) in specific historical circumstances, we have to (3) "translate" them to be relevant to ourselves, living today under quite different circumstances. These "translations" we call *norms*.

Briefly defined, norms are our human and fallible responses or answers to the real God or an idol whose will we regard as the highest authority.

Although our norms are time-bound and fallible - they have to be reformed continuously - they play a very important role, providing: (1) *direction* to our lives, (2) indicating *limits* to what may be done, as well as (3) what *ought to be done*. In other words, they teach us how to distinguish between what is bad as a result of the fall, as well as how we should reform life to attain the goodness possible through Christ's redemption. *Without correct norms, no real reformation will be possible!*

3.4. How to know that we are following the correct norms

The norms of our biblical worldview are fallible responses, themselves influenced by our own culture and sinful nature. How then can we know that they are the correct norms to guide us in our task of reformation?

Our first answer is that we will have to test and retest them continuously against God's laws or mandates as revealed in the Bible and in the person of Jesus Christ. Are they the correct responses to God's authoritative will?

The second answer to this important question is that God also reveals His will in our everyday lives. This is called His creational revelation. Apart from the norms of our Christian worldview, we have to watch creation carefully for “green lights” and the “red lights.”

The green lights are signs that the norms prescribed by our worldview are the correct ones. This happens when humans experiences joy, physical and spiritual health, peace - in brief: the fullness of life.

The red lights serve as warning signals. They flash in the case of disorientation, a lack of vision, pain (physical, psychological and spiritual), suffering (of different kinds), death of humans and animals, and damage done to the rest of creation. These signs are an indication that the norms provided by our worldview are wrong - in spite of the fact that they may be called “Christian.” They are not the correct responses to God’s will.

The old South African apartheid ideology may serve as a concrete illustration. Many (white) Christians believed it to be based on the Bible. It was part of their Christian-National worldview. However, the red warning signals from the real day to day life in apartheid South Africa could finally not be evaded nor ignored any longer. It became clear that apartheid meant disorientation, no hope for the future, different kinds of pain and suffering and even death. Christians advocating apartheid were consequently forced by the South African reality to return to the Bible; to reconsider their socio-political norms derived from the word of God. They finally realized that apartheid was a great injustice - committed in the name of their “Christian” worldview. They discovered that they were actually misled and blinded by an unbiblical ideology, prohibiting them to read the Bible correctly!

I therefore believe that we should not only “read” creation in the light of Scripture, but that it is also necessary to interpret the Scriptures in the light of God’s creational revelation.

At the same time we should keep in mind that the “voices from creation” are only *aids* to keep us on the correct normative tract. They cannot provide us with the *final yardstick* of what is good or bad, right or wrong. Our hearts are so sinful that, despite urgent warning signals from creation, we may still ignore them and try to explain them as “teething problems” or “necessary sacrifices” if

we want to reach the final goal.

3.5. Structural and directional norms

Important in our normative approach is the distinction between *structure* and *direction*. It is closely connected to creation, fall, and redemption. "Structure" is connected to creation. Creation as it was meant to be, had to answer to God's creation order. "Direction" indicates obedience to God's central commandment of love towards Him and our fellow-creatures. This direction was changed at the fall. Love towards God and our neighbor changed direction, away from God and from our fellow creatures towards ourselves. Through Christ's redemptive suffering, however, it became possible for our lives to be redirected.

Both structure and direction, therefore, are subjected to God's will. The first is subjected to His creation ordinances and the second to His fundamental, directional commandment of love. In the normative evaluation of any cultural product *both* have to be considered.

The following two illustrations will explain: a book, for instance, has to comply with the following *structural* criteria: understandable language, no spelling mistakes, clear typography, attractive technical workmanship, etc. If this is the case, we may still not call it a "good" book in the full sense of the word. This is determined by the *direction* of the contents of the book. If it is God-denying and morally offensive, it cannot be called "good," because then – as Da Costa once said – it is a step in the direction of hell and not heaven.

The same applies to development: it should be both structurally and directionally good to be really beneficial. In reality we may encounter development projects which may be acceptable, but when its direction is considered its wrong religious direction is revealed - it is not motivated by real love. The reverse situation is also possible. The direction may be correct, for example it could be inspired by real love towards God and our fellow creatures (as in the case of sincere Christian development projects), but the people involved do not have the slightest idea of the structural requirements for effective development!

"Love" indicates the will of God in its fullness. In His commandments God "analyses" or "dissects" love into various kinds. We should keep in mind that

"love" as *such* is an abstraction. It always acquires different shapes in different areas of life. In marriage it takes on the form of mutual troth; in the family of paternal and maternal love as well as the love of children towards their parents; in the church as brotherly/sisterly love; in the state as public justice and in business as stewardship.

4. Conclusion

A radical biblical worldview can provide the necessary new vision and direction people are looking for today so desperately. It indicates our real place in God's creation. It also calls us to an all-encompassing task of service in this world. Therefore a genuine biblically-inspired worldview will never be an attractive but abstract theory. Its truth will be proved in the ways we daily act and live.

THE MEANING OF BIBLICAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL DATA FOR A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF BEING HUMAN

Over many years a considerable amount of valuable research has been carried out on biblical words such as “soul,” “body,” “spirit,” “flesh,” and “heart.” Despite this many – perhaps most? – Christians still believe that the human person consists of (at least) two components, namely soul/spirit/heart and body/flesh. However, such a view of being human leads to unsolvable theoretical problems regarding the origin, present existence, and future life (after death) of the human being. Furthermore, a dichotomy in one’s anthropology holds many serious practical implications for the everyday life of Christians. Against this background the need for a renewed investigation of some key biblical anthropological data is evident.

The set-up of this exploration is as follows. (1) First the problem to be investigated is explained. (2) Then the current Christian (usually dichotomist) views of being human as well as their problems and practical implications are briefly explained. (3) The third (main) section investigates the real meaning of the above anthropological words in the Bible. (4) The results are summarized in the next section. (5) The final section examines a key question: should a monistic anthropology be preferred to a dualistic one?

1. Introduction: the current state of affairs

We have to mention beforehand that bibliographical references are omitted in the first two sections of this chapter. The reason is the following: Although what is offered in these sections affords important background knowledge, at the same time it can be taken as well known to the experts – at least to people pursuing an academic career.

It is not difficult to ascertain that most Christians are still stuck in age-old, and moreover unbiblical ideas about being human. This can easily be illustrated by referring to what is preached at funerals as well as by numerous popular publications on life after death.

1.1 Funeral sermons

Since I am no longer young, I have attended numerous funerals. On such occasions the bereaved are “consoled” with for instance utterances like the following (The doubts are expressed in brackets.)

- The devastation of death is reasoned away. Actually, it is normal to die. (Then why are people sad and even cry when faced with someone's death? Besides, the Bible teaches that death is not a blessing, but God's punishment for sin and that it is our enemy. Cf. Romans 6:23a and 1 Corinthians 15:26.)
- It is alleged that the deceased merely “passed on from the temporary to the eternal.” (However, Scripture clearly teaches that only God is eternal. Humanity is a *time-bound* creature – now and hereafter.)
- Today we are merely burying the “mortal remains,” the less important “part” of a human being. His/her “immortal soul” is untouched by death. (This is contradicted by the fact that nowhere in God's word mention is made of something like an “immortal soul” and even less of “mortal remains.” In Genesis 47:29, 30 Jacob does not request that they should bury his mortal “remains.” He speaks about *me* (myself). Just as his ancestors – real people – were buried there (Genesis 49:31).)
- Be happy that the deceased has now been released from this earthly vale of tears. (The question may be asked if life on earth *as such* is bad and sinful.) He/she now leads a completely different kind of existence. In this life we are actually merely “apprentice angels” who have to prepare ourselves for our proper heavenly destination in the hereafter. (But the Bible knows no such discontinuity, only a clear continuity. It promises a new *earth* as our final home.)

1.2 Popular publications

Utterances on the human being like the above are not limited to funeral services. Publications on life after death (the "intermediate state") are always good sellers. But in many of these people are consoled with unbiblical, speculative ideas. The result is that often justice is not done to the central biblical message of our resurrection at the second coming of Christ.

1.3 No doubt about the resurrection

This chapter will not continue with the issues about death and beyond. Nonetheless, we have to be clear about the following.

Christians have to *think* about death. In this way we also serve God with our minds (Matthew 22:47). The churches should also allow for different interpretations of the Scriptures on this difficult issue. Our intellects, however, are fallible and limited. Quite correctly Glas (1996: 124) remarks that, just as the creation of the human being is God's secret, also his/her death is and will remain an impenetrable mystery.

In spite of the fact that we cannot know what happens at death and afterwards, God's word is very clear about our final resurrection from the grave. Read, for example, the following: Daniel 12:12,13; Matthew 22:31; Luke 23:37, 38 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

In the light of God's revelation in the Bible one also does not have to be concerned about the so-called intermediate state between death and resurrection. Christ told Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25,26). According to Romans 8:38 not even death will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And in the same book (Romans 14:8b) it is confessed that in life and death we belong to the Lord. Finally 1 Thessalonians 4:14 promises that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep (died) in him.

1.4 One's view on being human determines one's whole life

It is tragic that the results of years of research on biblical concepts like "soul" and "body," "spirit" and "flesh," "heart," and so forth evidently have not

reached the theological training of ministers, pastors and priests – and seldom the “ordinary” believers.

An unscriptural view of being human does not only surface at funeral services. It also determines one’s everyday life here and now. Therefore it is essential that one take a new look at what the Bible itself means by certain anthropological concepts.

1.5 The Bible is no scientific manual, yet nevertheless indispensable for understanding human beings

The word of God in Scripture has authority for our whole life, but it is possible to ask *too little* of it or *too much* from the Bible.

One expects *too little* from it when claiming that (*inter alia* as a result of its age and character) it is not relevant to a view of being human. However, as divine revelation it offers certain data on humanity which could not be obtained in other ways (like scientific ways). For instance, that human being (in contrast to the rest of creation) was *created* by God *in his image*, fell into *sin*, but can also be *redeemed* in Christ. It also reveals what happens to human beings after *death*. All this information can only be accepted in faith or rejected, since it is not accessible to scientific research. (Those who does try it, are merely speculating.)

On the other hand one expects *too much* from the Scriptures when one attempts to turn it into a scientific manual with a fully rounded anthropology. The Bible is not a *textbook* for any science (in that case it would have to be updated every few years!). It is a book of *faith* about man’s relationship to God (or idols in his place). Therefore one cannot expect the Bible to use words like “soul,” “body,” “heart” etc. in an unambiguous, technical and scientific sense.

1.6 A hypothesis

What was said about human beings by Berkouwer (1962: 195-7) and De Graaff (1979: 98) is here taken as a hypothesis and is tested below with reference to various detailed studies. They both say two significant things.

The first important point is that, when the Scriptures use concepts like “heart,” “soul,” “flesh,” “body,” “image,” and so on, it is always describing the

whole human being from a *specific* angle. The second is that the Bible never gives a neutral, independent analysis of a human being, so that we could know his/her components, how his/her structure is composed. As a book of faith the Bible never pictures humans on their own, that is *in isolation from God* – not even when they disobey God – but as religious beings. In summary the Scriptures always teach (1) the integral unity of the different facets of being human (2) in relationship to God, in other words the religious direction of his/her life.

By way of background we now first take a look at how biblical concepts were misunderstood in the Christian tradition.

2. Dichotomistic Christian views of being human in the past and present

We have to make it clear beforehand that what follows implies generalization. Even among Christian theologians there are hundreds of kinds of views on being human. (Usually unfortunately the consequence of a synthesis with contemporary, but non-biblical philosophies.) And I will speak about a dichotomistic view of being human (humans consist of two separate basic components), although there are also trichotomistic views (humans for instance consist of body, soul, and mind). Dichotomists usually appeal to texts like Genesis 35:18; Matthew 10:28 and Luke 23:46, while trichotomists use 1 Thessalonians 5:23 as proof from the Scriptures. (For examples from the early church fathers see Gousmett, 1993.)

2.1 The core of the matter

Thus, although there are many variations and the relationship between body and soul can be understood in different ways (for instance in the doctrines of priority, parallelism or interaction theory), we will confine ourselves to saying that a dichotomistic anthropology accepts that man is made up of two substances, namely an immortal, reasonable soul (the higher and more important part) and a mortal, material body (the lower, less important part).

This becomes evident from the following riddle you may have come across. A house stands on two pillars. It has a door and on both sides of it

windows of which the shutters are closed at night. What is the house? (Answer: the body) Who lives in the house? (Answer: the soul.)

However, the following problems show that this view is not tenable.

2.2 Questions about humanity's origin

Humanity's view on his/ her origin influences his/her view on his/her existence and continued existence (after resurrection) and the other way round. Let us first have a look at a dichotomistic view on humanity's origin.

Usually there is no problem about the origin of the body – it comes from the parents. But where does humanity's soul (something invisible and immortal) come from? Some (the generationists or traducianists) claimed that it comes from the parents. Others, (called creatianists) were of the opinion that God creates each person's soul in the body. (Their point of departure is the difference between Spirit and matter. God is a spiritual substance and creation is material substance. The exception is humanity, who receive their spirit/soul from God and are therefore a combination of spirit and matter.)

Both viewpoints read an unbiblical view of being human into the Scriptures, which leads to all kinds of (false) problem statements for which "solutions" have to be found. The reader should therefore note that even Bible translations are not always dependable, since the translator cannot eliminate his own view of being human.

Creatianists, for instance, struggle with the following (unsolvable) questions. According to them a human being is only truly a human being when God has created his/her soul. But when does this happen? An answer to this question has to determine for instance whether the abortion of the human fetus up to a certain age can be considered as permissible (in other words not as murder). A next problem: Does God then work together with adulterers and rapists by "willingly" supplying a soul for their sinful deeds? Furthermore we could ask whether such a view of being human does not clash with God's revelation in Genesis 2:2 that He had finished his creational work – including humanity. A further problem creatianists are faced with is how to explain the sinfulness of human beings. Does God create sinful souls or should sin be confined to the body?

2.3 Continued existence after death

While a dichotomistic view of being human has problems with how humans come into being, it can easily come up with answers on what happens with a person at death. This is most probably a reason for the popularity of dichotomistic views of being human among Christians through the ages. This enabled them to show that when man dies he does not altogether fade into nothingness.

At death humanity is simply "disassembled" according to the dichotomists. The tie between body and soul is simply undone with the result that the body (the lesser component) dies. The immortal soul, however, somehow lives on. At the resurrection it is not the *human being* that rises again (as in the Nicean Creed), but only the *body* (compare the Apostolic Creed) which is reunited with the soul. The resurrection of the body therefore is of no essential importance, but actually an additional matter.

2.4 Implications for our existence here and now

The implications of a dichotomistic view for man's existence here and now are even more important than for the view of man's origin and continued existence (after death). It has disastrous consequences for the *whole* of life. A few examples will suffice to demonstrate the practical consequences for everyday life.

- The so-called higher, spiritual things are more important than the so-called lower, bodily ones. Therefore only "spiritual" occupations (like ministers or missionaries – called "soul shepherds") are in direct service of God, while other occupations are regarded as more or less "secular."
- Man's whole existence is divided into two: food for the body versus fare for the soul; material versus spiritual wellbeing; physical and spiritual diseases and so forth.
- The word of God is important for the saving of our "precious" souls and does not have meaning for life in its fullness. (One's view of being human therefore also determines how one reads the Bible.)

- Such an anthropology also determines one's social philosophy. Applying the gospel is firstly concerned with saving "souls" while social involvement is of secondary importance to Christians. The kingdom of God, therefore, is something "spiritual" which does not encompass the whole of life.
- This viewpoint has a tendency to regard man on earth as a stranger and to stress life hereafter. Also when concerned with the existence after resurrection, emphasis is placed on heaven instead of on the new earth (compare §1.1 above).
- In the field of science a difference is made between arts and natural sciences; in education between spiritual and physical education; in singing and music between spiritual and "ordinary" (secular) songs/music, etc.

Thus not only man himself is composed in a dichotomous way, but as a result his whole life is dualistic. S/he leads a schizophrenic existence. An integrated life in the service of God is impossible.

De Graaff (1979: 107) says about most of the anthropological models among Christians: "Almost all models... end up depreciating man's physical, organic and sensitive ways of functioning. As a result, these dimensions of human functioning are usually regarded as man's lower nature, which is then considered to be irrational, seductive, unbridled, base, dangerous, the occasion for sin, etc., and which must therefore be controlled and directed by man's higher, rational, moral nature. Thus, these conceptions... often result in an inability to cope with and integrate in a positive manner our physical, sexual functions and feelings and our emotional reactions in general. These persistent trends within orthodox Christianity give rise to strong neurotic tendencies and hinder the free acceptance of our creaturely functioning as created *very good* by God and, although subjected to sin, essentially redeemed and renewed in Jesus Christ."

2.5 Conclusion

A good test for the truth of a view of being human is whether one can live with it to its full consequences. In the light of the above the dichotomistic view of being human fails this test. (Just as in the case of a materialistic evolutionistic view of being human it offers no viable implications.)

Subsequently we subject this view of being human to a still more probing test: does it tally with what God's revelation in the Scriptures says about humanity?

3. The true meaning of biblical concepts about human beings

In this main part of the investigation older as well as more recent investigations into biblical "anthropological concepts" will be looked into. Certain basic concepts will be researched one by one: soul, body, flesh, matter, spirit, and heart. (Please keep in mind that when I use the term "biblical concepts" (instead of "words" or "data"), I do not have in mind *theoretical* concepts.)

3.1 Fallible yet progress

From the start it has to be said that the studies referred to naturally cannot be exempted beforehand from the risk of eisegesis-exegesis (the well-known hermeneutical spiral). Just like the dichotomistic anthropologies of the past they can be fallible, because they read their own ideas into the Scriptures and subsequently – with biblical sanction – extract them again from the Bible (cf. section 5). Nevertheless I am of the opinion that research in this field can bring Christians nearer to the biblical message on humans.

3.2 Works giving overviews

If one wants to come abreast quickly with the present state of research, one can for biblical concepts in the Old Testament consult the well-known (already fifteen volume) *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* edited by Botterweck and Ringgren (1977-2007). For the meaning of the anthropological concepts in the New Testament there is the (ten volume) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (cf. Kittel and Bromiley, 1964-1976). The following concepts are discussed in it (cf. Pitken, 1976): "body" (vol. 6: 166-167; 7: 1024-1094), "dust" (9: 472-479), "flesh" (7:98-151), "heart" (3: 605-613, 7:548-559), "image" of God (2: 381-397; 5:191-198), "immortal" (3: 22-25; 9:93-106); "spirit" (6: 332-451 and 9:6) and "soul" (9: 608-660).

Older works like the one by Pedersen (1940) and Ten Boom (1948) also offer considerable information. The work by Ridderbos (1975: 115-121) discusses the concepts body, spirit, heart, and soul in Paul's writings in clear non-dichotomistic terms.

Even Paul's distinction between inner and outer person (for example in Romans 7:22: 2 Corinthians 4:16 and Ephesians 3:16) may not, according to Ridderbos, be understood as dichotomistic as if the outer person was less important and the inner the essential part of a person. Humanity does not *have* two parts but exists both inwardly and outwardly (Cf. Ridderbos, 1975:115). Further Vonk (1963:109) points out that Paul's distinction between "man inside" and "man outside," since he uses adverbs, not adjectives, could rather be translated by humanity "inwards" and humanity "outwards." Humanity directed inwards or outwards then denotes a specific way of looking at a *person as a whole*.

According to Vollenhoven (cf. 1992: 184-194) the concept "soul" should not be identified with the psychic (a *facet* of the human being) and "body" should not be identified with the organic (another *aspect* of being human). When the Bible uses the word "soul" in connection with the human being, it indicates the heart or center, which has a directional function. The human heart determines the direction of one's life in obedience or disobedience of God's fundamental commandment of love. The heart as the "inside" determines the "outward" behavior of the entire human being.

Since translations are not always reliable, in this investigation we will concentrate on a detailed investigation into the different biblical concepts in the original languages of the Old Testament and New Testament. Emphasis is laid on what the various writers have to say while my own comments are kept to a minimum.

3.3 The concept "soul" (*nephesh* in the OT and *psyche* in the NT) according to the Scriptures

A careful study in the original languages of the Old and New Testament already renders surprising results on this first concept.

3.3.1 Surprises

A deceased person for instance is called a soul (Leviticus 19:28; 21:1; 21:11; 22:4 and Numbers 5:2; 6:6,11). (Cf. Vonk, 1963: 64.). Food we take satisfies the soul (Psalm 78:18). A person enjoins his soul to eat and drink wine (Luke 12:19). Or the blood is called the "soul" of humanity (in Deuteronomy 12:23). In all these cases the soul is equated to the body – in complete contrast to the dichotomistic view of being human. A bodily way of existence is regarded as the normal one in the Scriptures (cf. Fowler, 1991: 4 and 2004: 3-4).

3.3.2 Various studies

According to Fowler the "two component theory of the human person" is an unbiblical idea that was read into the Scriptures by the Christian tradition under the influence of pagan Greek philosophy. The Bible talks about the "soul" as the whole person and not part of him/her. According to the Bible the human being is a "single, indivisible entity" (Fowler, 2004: 5). Formerly we ourselves also spoke about so many "souls" in the church and by that simply meant so many *people*. The Bible does the same (cf. for example Romans 13:1)

Becker (1942) did a detailed investigation on the concept *nephesh* in the Old Testament. Apart from the fact that according to him "soul" can simply mean a person, human being or some-one, it is also used in the meaning of life or a living being. Therefore it is even used in connection with animals – something that would not be permissible according to a dichotomistic view. Becker (1942:116) summarizes the result of his research as follows: "*Nephesh* is everything that is present in a living being in general, and in the human being in particular, in motion of life – manifested in the breath, and residing in the blood – and the motion of the soul – manifested in desire, and that moreover ... makes and characterizes the possessor as a living being, or a person as the case may be" [Translated from the Dutch] (cf. further also Kuitert, 1963/64: 37ff. and Pop, 1958: 361-378).

With the following statement Von Meyenfeldt (1964: 55) explicitly rejects the idea that the soul could be something separate within a human being:

.. *nefesh* deals with the concrete, earthly personality for whom breathing and the circulation of blood are most important, and who lives intensely emotionally. It indicates the man of this world... man is in every inch 'soul', and soul is in every inch man.

Ridderbos (1975: 120) says basically the same:

Psyche in Paul is neither, after the Greek-Hellenistic fashion, the immortal in man as distinct from the *soma*, nor does it denote the spiritual as distinct from the material. *Psyche* stands in general for the natural life of man (cf. Rom. 11:3; 16:4; 1 Thess. 2:8 – to give his 'soul', that is, his life to someone...).

In a more recent work Green (2004: 186) shows that the word *nephesh* occurs about 800 times in the Old Testament with the meaning of life (vitality). The concept "soul" is thus also applied to animals. "When used anthropologically, its typical use is with reference to the entire human being, and not to some portion of the person." Thus a person does not *have* a soul but *is* soul, a living being.

In conclusion Vollenhoven (cf. 1992: 185-6) says that "soul" in the Bible has two basic meanings. Firstly, it indicates creatures (animals and human beings) that breathe through their noses, in other words *living creatures*. Secondly (as already indicated under §3.2 above), the word "soul" indicates the religious center or the *heart of man/woman*. Instead of a dichotomy (of a higher and lower component) Vollenhoven, therefore, prefers to look at the human being from the perspective of an inner-outer distinction.

3.3.3 An immortal soul?

Why then do Christians cling to a dichotomistic soul? There are three possible reasons: In the first instance to be able to show that a human being is more than a physical, bodily being. Secondly, because it then is easy to show that human existence does not end at its physical death – the soul is immortal. Vonk (1963:55,56) points out a third reason, namely that earlier theologians (like Kuyper) needed the idea of a separate soul to explain certain doctrines (like the doctrine on being born again).

Apart from the fact that the soul is not a (sub)division of man, it does not have immortality (*athanasia*) either. The research done by Snyman (1961) in this respect is still valid, so that we give the word to him:

The specific issue (in the NT) is not the immortality of the soul, but the resurrection of the body. Not *athanasia* but *anastasis* is the specific New Testament word ... The word *athanasia* occurs only twice in the whole New Testament, viz. 1 Cor. 15:53 and 1 Tim. 6:16, while *anastasis* with its verb and the related word 'raising up' forms quite a considerable list. It is notable too that that the word *athanasia* is not connected with the soul in any of these passages, but once with God Himself, of whom it is said that only He has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16). There is no evidence of the immortality of the human soul in the Platonic sense, namely that the soul has immortality in itself. In the other instance *athanasia* is connected with the body in close context with *anastasis*, namely when the body is clothed with *athanasia* (1 Cor. 15:53, 54). The difference between Greek philosophical thought and that of the New Testament cannot be put more incisively. (Snyman, 1961: 422-423.)

An essential moment in the Good News therefore is not immortality but resurrection. Resurrection, however, demands greater faith than the immortality of the soul. In ancient times the Jewish Sadducees could not believe it (Mark 12:18-25 and Acts 23:8), neither could (according to Acts 17:32) the Stoics and the Epicureans (Greek philosophers). Even contemporary, so-called Christian theologians deny the resurrection (cf. the review by van der Walt, 2006: 643-649 of a recent work propagating such a viewpoint.) Even though it is theologically and philosophically incomprehensible, the resurrection should be adhered to in faith.

Green (2004:193) confirms Snyman's version with reference to Scripture passages like 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. They "affirm that... immortality is the *consequence* of (not the *preparation* for) resurrection. That is, nothing in the created human being is intrinsically immortal" [My italics].

Vonk (1963: 49-160 as well as Vonk, 1969) also goes into the belief in immortality in detail and amongst other things points out the following:

- That this belief is of pagan (Oriental, Greek and Gnostic) origin, because people could not accept that death is God's punishment for sin (Romans 6:23a). It also attempted to mitigate the horror and seriousness of death (our enemy according to 1 Corinthians 15:26). According to the belief in an immortal soul death does not wipe out the most essential part of man.
- Such a viewpoint, however, clashes directly with the Scriptures according to which God explicitly warned Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:17 and 3:3) that disobedience would be punished by death. It rather accepts the lie told by Satan (Genesis 3:4-5) claiming that God had lied!
- Proponents of this view rely on something of the *human being* (his "immortal soul") instead of on God's firm promise that He will raise us from death.
- A further very serious implication is that the death of Christ (and his resurrection) was not really significant: something of man can escape death without the atoning death of Christ. This clashes for example with 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4, 14.
- According to Vonk the whole person dies – the dead is truly dead! Not in the sense that at death it is the final end of a person, but in the sense that the human being does not have a continued existence in a kind of "interim state." At death God's words (Genesis 3:19b) are fulfilled in the sense that humanity returns to dust.
- A person dies and knows or thinks nothing. For the dead there is no passage of time in a waiting period (intermediate state). For the one who dies, the moment of his death and resurrection are simultaneous. One closes one's eyes as a dying person and – as far as one's awareness goes – one opens them immediately and simultaneously as a resurrected person.¹

¹ This view of Vonk's is discussed further in van der Walt (2010 ch. 11).

3.4 The meaning of the concept “body” (*sooma* in the NT) according to the Scriptures

It is striking that the Old Testament does not have a separate word for “body.” The New Testament word does not denote a separate (lower) part of humanity either.

3.4.1 *Two meanings*

The body, that is the whole human being, belongs to God and is raised again. “*sooma* is to Paul the most adequate expression for the concrete living person ...” (Kuitert, 1963/64: 44. Also cf. Pop, 1985: 267).

According to Kuitert (1963/64) the word *sooma* in the New Testament has mainly two meanings. In some cases it means more or less the same as “flesh” (*sarx*) which can denote sinful man (not the body as sinful *part* of man). In other instances the word means almost the exact opposite from that which Paul denotes with “flesh.” (Also cf. Van Peursen, 1958, 1970 and Thuijs and De Valk, 1951).

This tallies with what Ridderbos (1975: 116) also finds regarding Paul's use of “body.” The concept in the writings of Paul has the comprehensive meaning of a human being in his/her totality. It does not denote a “subdivision” of woman/man. Ridderbos also points out that it is often used in the same meaning as “flesh.” He writes the following:

... ‘body’ and ‘flesh’ ... are not thought of as the external ‘constituent part’ of man, as the material casing of the real, inner man, but rather denote man himself according to a certain mode of existence... Paul frequently speaks of the body as the concrete mode of existence, co-extensive with man himself.

Subsequently he stresses (p. 117) that the *whole* human being *is* body, not *has* a body. Also Vonk (1963: 109, 110 and several places in Vonk, 1969) shows that “body” denotes the whole human being in his/her concrete appearance.

3.4.2 The “worldliness” of man

In this regard what Fowler (2004: 19-25) writes about the “worldliness” of the human being is significant. Our worldliness is part of the good way in which God created us. To attempt to escape our created nature would therefore mean that we despise our being human. The essence of Adam and Eve’s sin was exactly to break away from their worldly existence in an attempt to be like God (Genesis 3:5).

However, Adam was made out of the earth (cf. Genesis 2:19). Therefore a human being should live *on* this earth and not *outside* it. We do not draw nearer to God the less we are involved in this world!

The sinful world may therefore not be identified with God’s (earthly) creation. There is a worldliness (sinfulness) that we should *shun*, but also a worldliness (creatureliness) that we should *confirm*.

In this connection Fowler also points out the meaning of Christ’s resurrection from death. This great event was God’s recognition and confirmation of our being human:

In that event God affirmed the glory of being human in all the fullness of the bodily human existence... When Jesus Christ rose it was not an ethereal spirit that rose but a human being. He did not leave his body in the grave. It was specifically the human body that rose never to perish. God the Son came to earth to share our bodily existence, not just for a period of thirty-odd years, but forever... Jesus Christ did not come to deliver us from our humanity. He came to rescue our humanity from sin so to that we are free to be fully human. (Fowler, 2004: 24-5).

3.5 The meaning of the word “flesh” (*basar* in the OT and *sarx* in the NT)

As with other biblical concepts both *basar* and *sarx* can have a number of meanings.

3.5.1 “Flesh” in the Old Testament

Helberg (1953: 64-69) differentiates no less than seven meanings. However, the most significant is that the concept does not (as among dichotomists)

denote a *lower* part of humanity, but the *whole person* being seen from a *particular* angle. The flesh of humanity characterizes him/her as frail, transient and mortal. *Basar* therefore depicts the whole human being from the point of view of his weakness compared with God's omnipotence and immortality.

3.5.2 "*Flesh*" in the New Testament

According to Lindijer (1952:7,8) mainly two meanings of the word *sarx* can be distinguished in the writings of Paul. (1) As flesh, body, the whole human being and (2) as sinful man. So in the work of Paul the word not only indicates man's frailty and transience, but also his incapacity to live the way God wants him to. It is significant what Schep (1964: 31) writes about the first-mentioned meaning:

There is... nothing wrong with flesh as such... either before or after the fall... when it is involved in sin, it is man himself who sins... he is the real culprit, not his flesh as such.

3.5.3 *Flesh as opposed to spirit*

In the second meaning "flesh"/"fleshly" is often contrasted with "spirit"/"spiritual" (cf. Galatians 5:17). Even then it is not used in a dichotomistic sense. Janse (1938: 104-5) explains it as follows: "Fleshly" in the Scriptures means relying on oneself, following one's own evil heart, living in rebellion against God. "Works of the flesh" are not only (bodily) sins like adultery, but include idolatry, sorcery, enmity, quarrelling, etc. (cf. Galatians 5:20).

On the other hand "spiritual" in the Bible means being led by the Holy Spirit on the way of obedience to God. Therefore doing the "works of the Spirit" does not mean being busy solely with so-called "spiritual" matters. It actually means that you practice your occupation conscientiously, open your purse to God's work, show charity to the needy, look after your own health, etc.

3.6 The meaning of "**matter**" (*aphar* in the OT)

In the light of the distinction made between spirit and matter by the age-old dualistic philosophy, it is understandable that this biblical concept is also

usually misunderstood, namely as the lower component of the human being (more or less the same as the body). Kuitert (1963/64: 39) however, once more calls it a characteristic of the *whole* human being. He draws attention to the fact that in Genesis 2:7 it does not say that God made the *body* out of the dust of the earth, but He created the *human being* from it.

That humanity – *adam* (man) and *adamah* (earth) belong together – was made from the ingredients of the earth, further means in the Old Testament that (just as in the case of *basar*) the human being is insignificant and frail. *Aphar* is therefore also associated with death and mourning. (A well-known sign of mourning was to throw dust on one's head.)

3.7 The meaning of “spirit” (*ruach* in the OT and *pneuma* in the NT)

Scheepers (1960) devotes a voluminous thesis to this concept. Once more this biblical concept too comprises a variety of meanings, like the seat of emotions, life, power, breath. In summary Scheepers (1960: 91) says about *ruach*: “...it is that invisible and non-bodily part of the human being which is ... the principle of its life and motion.” When he, however, says that the spirit comes from God and returns to Him at the time of death, it sounds like a kind of non-biblical semi-mysticism.

3.7.1 The whole human being according to the Old Testament

While Scheepers seems to suggest that the human spirit is a separate component of the human being, however, Pop (1958: 14) says “The spirit of a human being is the human being himself/herself as a living, thinking, acting, reacting, planning, decision-making ... being.” [Translated from the Dutch] And Kuitert (1963/64: 45) adds to this: “Someone has *ruach*, but he is at the same time to such an extent typified by his *ruach* that in many cases we may read his *ruach* as: he himself.” [Translated from the Dutch]

3.7.2 Meaning in the New Testament

Respecting the New Testament concept *pneuma*, Waaning (1939), like Scheepers, differentiates between the Spirit of God and the spirit of creatures. In creation itself a difference can be made between evil spirits and the spirit of the human being. As far as the human being is concerned, *pneuma* does not have an unequivocal meaning but a wealth of shades of meaning. All of them,

however, point to the unity of the human being (cf. Waaning, 1939:166 and Crump, 1954).

This is also confirmed by Ridderbos when writing: “.. there is no trace of the spirit as a supersensual divine principle inherent in man. Accordingly when Paul says... the grace of God be with ‘your spirit’ (Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23; Phlm. 25), this means the same thing as ‘with you’ (Rom. 16:20; Eph. 6:24 *et al.*)” (Ridderbos, 1975: 121). Ridderbos thus also rejects the trichotomistic interpretation (humanity consisting of three components, namely body, soul, and spirit).

3.7.3 God gives the spirit of life

But what then does one do with texts like for instance Psalm 31:6, Ecclesiastes 3:21 and 12:7; Luke 23:46 and Acts 7:59? In these the word of God says clearly that the person's spirit returns to God at one's death. Or at your death you surrender your spirit to God.

According to Vonk (1963:121-125) such utterances on *ruach/pneuma* links up with what is said as early as in Genesis 2:7, namely that God gives to people the breath (of life) and can also take it back from them. People have their lives thanks to the Spirit of God – the source of all life. (Remember that the Bible is always describing human beings in their relationship to God.) So “spirit” simply means life and not something *separate* which is *added* to the body (or material part). Genesis 2:7 does not say that God created the *body* from dust and then *added* the spirit/soul, but that He made a *human being* and that the human received his breath of life from God. Christ (Luke 23:46) and Stephen (Acts 7:59) at their death surrendered their spirits, that is their lives, to God who had given it.

3.8 Heart (*lev/levav* in the OT and *kardia* in the NT).

As far as Paul is concerned, Ridderbos (1975:119) says that to him the heart is the very essence of human existence. “The heart of man is the real center of his being.” Von Meyenfeldt agrees but offers in three different writings much more on this important biblical concept.

3.8.1 *The heart as the representative*

The thesis of Von Meyenfeldt (1950) on the concept "heart" in the Old Testament first differentiates between the concept "heart" not in humans but in God, animals (and in a spatial sense) and then he distinguishes two meanings in the human being: the non-religious and the religious use.

In a non-religious sense the word is also used in different meanings, as for instance in biotic, emotional, noetic and ethical connotations. The characteristic meaning of the heart is, however, the representative. Thus it does not indicate a bodily or spiritual "part" of man, but it represents the whole human being.

The representative can be distinguished but not separated from what it represents. The totality of being human is concentrated in it. Therefore the heart is not the "double" of a person (cf. Von Meyenfeldt, 1950: 152). Elsewhere he says: "... the heart is not a reduction of the human person to a core from which the mask – the body – can quite easily be unpinned" (Von Meyenfeldt, 1951: 63). Later on he repeats that the heart of a person can be distinguished from the person as a whole but they cannot be separated. "Man is like a world with deepenings. He who is able to penetrate into the deepest depth (the heart) comes to know himself thoroughly" (Von Meyenfeldt, 1964: 51).

At the end of his thesis he summarizes the above as follows:

... the fundamental meaning is not to be sought in the heart in the biotic sense as the restless, beating organ... *leb* (*lebab*) in the Old Testament is the nucleus of something, in the sense of the most important constituent in which it is completely represented (Von Meyenfeldt, 1950:221).

This meaning we can still understand very well today. When one has given one's heart to someone (for example in an engagement to be married) one has given oneself in total to that person. This also applies in one's relationship to God or a substitute god.

3.8.2 A comparison of heart and soul

Above it has been pointed out that the soul denotes the real concrete person. Von Meyenfeldt (1964: 55) compares heart and soul as follows: “.. ‘heart’ is man *properly* speaking, and ‘soul’ is man *concretely* speaking.” Or as follows: “.. ‘heart’ is man in a nutshell, the whole man, not only the seat of his activity, but its summary. The ‘soul’ is the whole man in his full concrete development, his total appearance.”

3.8.3 The religious meaning of “heart”

Out of the approximately 854 times the word “heart” is used in the Old Testament, it is used 318 times in a second (religious) sense. Statement 1 in Von Meyenfeldt’s thesis (1950) says that “heart” in the Old Testament reaches its deepest sense as the focus of religion (cf. also Von Meyenfeldt, 1964: 51).

He explains it as follows: The heart is the real person and “religion stirs man in his essential existence ... One could say: If you want to understand a human being, you should know him in his religion, but one could also say: if you want to understand a human being, you should know his heart” (Von Meyenfeldt, 1951: 59). [Translated from the Dutch]

Later on he puts it even more explicitly: “Religion is not a certain capacity. It is the relationship between God and man in which man is engaged from his innermost parts to his fingertips. It takes hold of man in the deepest and at the same time broadest sense possible... Religion is not one of man’s many capacities. No, religion is a matter of the authentic, unadulterated man; in other words: religion is a matter of the *heart*” (Von Meyenfeldt, 1964: 52, 53).

This religious meaning of the heart is also confirmed by Vollenhoven (cf. 1992: 186) and Becker (1950: 12) who calls the heart the central organ of the true service of the Lord. Pop (1958: 215-221) comes to the same conclusion. He points out that it is of cardinal importance who rules one’s heart, for he who possesses one’s heart, possesses the whole being. Therefore one should guard over one’s heart diligently. “Above all else guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” (Proverbs 4: 23, also cf. Matthew 15: 18-20).

3.9 The Bible read with new eyes

Readers who up to now have accepted a dichotomistic view of being human as biblical as a matter of course – for which many Bible translations can be blamed – will at this stage have many questions on the above. The most serious question will probably be how one should understand the passages from the Scriptures which were formerly read through dichotomistic lenses. Does not the Bible teach in these passages that being human is a two-fold being?

The limited length of this chapter does not permit me to go into such passages here – it would justify a separate chapter and even a book in itself. To help the interested reader we can provisionally mention two examples of how the most important texts (which are usually cited as evidence for a dichotomistic view of being human) can be read with new eyes. These are the above-mentioned work by the theologian Vonk (1963 and 1969) and the work of a Christian philosopher, Popma (1961:190-235).

The latter has amongst other things, severe biblical criticism on Answer 57 of the Catechism of Heidelberg (Lord's Day 22) which answers as follows the question what comfort is afforded by the resurrection of the body (please note: not of the *human person*): "Not only my soul will be taken immediately after this life to Christ its head, but even my very flesh, raised by the power of Christ, will be reunited with my soul and made like Christ's glorious body." Seen in the time in which the Catechism originated (Reformed Orthodoxy or Scholasticism) such a dichotomistic wording is understandable. Yet today, in the light of more recent insights into God's word, it is no longer acceptable. The way we read the Bible has to be tested and reformed all the time.

4. The result

Since the Scriptures are not a scientific manual, we can expect each one of the biblical concepts to have diverse meanings. Highly simplified, the main contours of the biblical view of being human could be summarized in the following.

4.1 The essential meanings of the different concepts

"Soul" denotes man as a living being. "Body" denotes the human being in his/her concrete earthly form. "Flesh" indicates that it is frail, transient, mortal. (Sometimes it also denotes man/woman as a sinful being.) "Matter" has more or less the same meaning as "flesh." "Spirit" denotes the life that one receives from the Holy Spirit and (at the time of death) surrenders into God's hand again. "Heart" is the essence or religious focus of the human being, the important centre in which his whole humanity is concentrated and represented and which also determines the direction of the whole human life.

4.2 Not structure but direction

As a second conclusion the hypothesis from the beginning (cf. §1.5 above) is confirmed, namely that the Bible does not deal with the composition of the human being, neither does it offer a structural analysis of being human. The various biblical concepts provide light on the *whole* human being from *various angles* or perspectives. In every case it is done in the light of the religious *relationship* (of dependence) with God or some other ultimate certainty.

Differently formulated, one could say that the emphasis in the Bible falls on the *direction* of a person's life and not on the human *structure* (exactly how humanity is "composed"). The human structure should be studied by, among other things, the different sciences. Since human structure and direction may be differentiated, but not separated, studying the human being should always be done *in* the light of the Scriptures. I emphasize "*in* the light" to make it clear that one cannot just collect texts about the human being from the Scriptures and then obtain a complete view.

In my opinion one of the real problems from the past and the present is that Christians departed from the supposition that the Bible would reveal to us how humanity is structurally "made up." However, to know the human being structurally, one has to study God's creational revelation.

4.3 A structural analysis of the human being by a Christian philosophy

The structural facet of being human was worked out in the reformational philosophy (of which D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, H. Dooyeweerd and H. G. Stoker were the fathers) by means of a doctrine of modalities. According to the latter

a human being displays the following aspects or facets: an arithmetic, spatial, physical, biotic, psychic, logical, historical, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, juridical, ethical, and faith aspect. Woman/man is viewed as a multidimensional being and not merely two-dimensional as taught by the dichotomistic views of being human. Neither is the human being – as claimed by numerous contemporary anthropologists – merely a chemical-biological being. All such views are reductions of the multifaceted human existence.

We have to bear in mind furthermore that the various modalities or functions are merely *facets* of being human. Therefore they may not be classed together as a lower *group* (for example the arithmetic to psychic) versus a higher *group* (for example the logical to faith) so that humanity once again consists of two *components*.

Apart from that a reformational anthropology differentiates structure (the dimensional) from the religious (the directional) without separating them. Being religiously directed (towards God or idols) is determinative for the various dimensions of man's life (cf. Vollenhoven, 1992: 189 and De Graaff, 1979: 108-9). There is no such thing as a neutral scholarship or economic or juridical actions. All the activities of a human being – even when he/she is not conscious of the fact – are religiously colored. Humans as *religious* beings differentiates them from the rest of creation (matter, plants, and animals).

4.4 Questions remaining

We have not nearly answered all questions about the human being. These basic points of departure of a reformational view of being human will have to be worked out further in the various fields of study. For the ordinary "person in the street" one question could be what happens to the human being after death if according to the Scriptures (cf. §3.3.3 above) there is no such thing as an immortal soul. Are the opinions of for instance Vonk (1963; 1969) acceptable? It is a serious question indeed, but the answer to it will have to wait for further discussion.²

This brings our investigation to a final issue.

² See van der Walt (2010).

5. Is a monistic anthropology an improvement on the dichotomistic?

Earlier on (cf. §3.1 above) the risk was indicated that one could read one's own presuppositions into the Scriptures. Even translations of Scripture are not immune against one's anthropological pre-understandings! This became evident in the case of the traditional dichotomistic views of being human. (In this respect various passages in the New Afrikaans Bible translation of 1983 is an improvement on the Old Translation of 1933.) The awkward question now is to what extent it may also be the case with the numerous writers who in §3 above gave their views on soul, body, etc. Is it not perhaps the result of a contemporary tendency to emphasize the unity of man and to read the Scriptures according to a monistic paradigm?

5.1 A contemporary tendency towards monistic views of being human

Although most ordinary Christians and theologians still hold dichotomistic views of being human (some call them "dualistic"), many natural scientists today have a propensity for what are labeled "monistic" views. Since the compendium edited by Jeeves (2004) is a good example of this tendency, it is briefly discussed here in order to answer the question whether a monistic view entails an improvement on dualism or not.

Several writers in this volume demonstrate how the physical-chemical composition of the human being is of decisive significance for all of being human. It has for instance been ascertained neurologically that capacities which were formerly attributed to the human soul/spirit, are merely the results of neurophysiological processes in the brain. These facts point to man as an integral unity. Therefore most of the writers in this work query the traditional dichotomistic and trichotomistic views of being human. According to contemporary neurological and related research there no longer is room for something like a separate "soul" or "spirit" (cf. Jeeves, 2004: 32-33).

5.2 Complicated issues

Such a physicalistic view of being human brings Christians face to face with complicated issues like the following: traditionally it was accepted (in dichotomistic views) that his/her soul/spirit differentiates the human being from the rest of creation. But what differentiates the human being from an animal

when one favors such a monistic-physicalistic view? Are there still ethical norms that are valid for humans, or should they simply follow their physical urges? When does a human being actually become a human being? Does he/she stop being a person in a case where his brain functions are impaired as a result of for example an accident or Alzheimer's disease? Can there be any talk of life after (physical) death?

5.3 The proposed "solution"

In an attempt to solve such problems various writers in the volume by Jeeves (2004) propose *non-reductionistic* physicalism. In contrast to the normal physicalism which reduces all of reality to the physical they want to make room for something they call "mind," "spirit" or "souliness." They then describe the human being as an "embodied soul" or "embodied spirituality" (cf. for example Jeeves, 2004: 74, 230, 245). The influence of the physical-chemical part of humanity on his "spirit" and vice versa they explain as (mutual) interaction (cf. for example pp. 240, 245).

After having worked through this insightful book the question still remains whether such a monistic anthropology does not finally again amount to a dichotomistic one. Are the writers of the book not inconsistent to plead for monism and then speak about an "embodied soul" which is yet again a duality?

5.4 Ontology determines anthropology

The writers in Jeeves (2004) are, however, not inconsistent when one realizes that their view of being human is the consequence of underlying ontological points of departure. The problem-historical method of Vollenhoven (cf. Vollenhoven, 1950; 2005a; 2005b; and Bril, 2005; see also ch 12 in this volume) explains that we have to distinguish between two views of reality, namely dualism and monism.

Dualists claim that the diversity in reality can be retraced to a basic duality: a transcendent one (most often the godly/divine) and a non-transcendent. (This ontology can be represented by a line dividing the higher, transcendent and the lower, non-transcendent.) The implications of this ontology for anthropology depends on where the line is drawn between the

transcendent and the non-transcendent. For some philosophers man also possesses something transcendent, usually his soul or spirit. (Cf. for example creatianism above under §2.2, which teaches that God creates the soul as something semi-divine in human beings.) Other philosophers again, teach that the human being as a whole belongs to the non-transcendent world.

Over against the dualists, the monists depart from the original unity of reality. However, then they should offer an explanation for the great diversity. (The word "unity" in itself presupposes a plurality!) According to them the plurality is the result of a splitting off from the primeval unity. (Represented diagrammatically: a point from which one arrow points 45 degrees upwards and a second arrow 45 degrees downwards. Cf. De Graaff, 1979: 100.) In the case of the human being the higher usually is the soul/spirit and the lower the physical or bodily part.

A following question that awaits an answer is what the relationship is between the higher and lower part in the human being in the case of both the dualistic and monistic ontologies. In the latter case Vollenhoven among others distinguishes, for example, the doctrine of priority, which teaches that the soul influences the body; parallelism, which is of the opinion that the two function independently; an interaction theory which accepts mutual interaction between soul and body. Some of the writers in the book by Jeeves adhere to the latter type of anthropology.

De Graaff (1979: 104) therefore is quite right when saying that both dualistic and monistic ontologies in the end lead to a dichotomy in humanity. Therefore the answer to our question (whether a monistic view of being human is better than a dichotomistic one) is in the negative.

5.5 Humanity seen from a biblical view of reality or philosophical ontology

It is clear that to elaborate a valid view of being human in the light of the Scriptures we cannot succeed with a mere semasiological (semantic) study of certain biblical concepts. We need a reformational worldview and philosophy.

Instead of a one-factor ontology (of monism) and a two-factor ontology (of dualism) Vollenhoven poses his own three-factor ontology in the light of the

Scriptures. In line with Genesis 1 verse 1 he differentiates between (1) God and (2) creation. (3) God's creational ordinances are again not to be identified with God or his creation. They apply to matter, plant, animal, and humans. There is a radical difference between God, creation and his laws for creation. At the same time they are closely connected. In creation itself there is great variety (cf. for example the doctrine of modalities – §4.3 above).

Such a broad view of reality also leads to a totally different view of the human being from the two-dimensional perspective of both monism and dualism. Apart from this, the human being - the only one of all God's creatures – is created in his image (Genesis 1:27) and (after the fall) has to be renewed into the image of Christ. God's image depends on the direction of humanity's life, in other words to what extent s/he obeys God's central commandment of love in all domains of life (cf. Vollenhoven, 1992: 187, 202).³

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³ This view of being human is discussed further in van der Walt (2010).

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CHRISTIAN RELIGION AND SOCIETY

THE HERITAGE OF ABRAHAM KUYPER FOR (SOUTH)

AFRICA

It should be kept in mind that this chapter was not primarily written for the august audience, gathered at the university established by Kuyper to commemorate his famous Stone lectures. My paper is not at all intended to present a scholarly analysis and evaluation of a minute detail of Kuyper's heritage to be appreciated – and criticized – by Kuyper specialists. It is an elementary overview, presenting broad outlines. The reason is that it was originally written (in line with the sub-theme of this conference: *The heritage of Abraham Kuyper on different continents*) for ordinary (South) African Christians, battling to find direction. My modest contribution can therefore only be relevant as an example, a serious effort, to make the spiritual heritage of a great Dutchman understandable and relevant to an African audience – to inspire them with a new vision.¹ This is also the reason why we start with a brief introduction about the personality of this giant in the Reformational tradition.

1. Introduction: The man Abraham Kuyper²

Kuyper was not a perfect human being. His human relationships were not always of the very best. Also his spiritual heritage can easily be criticized: his love for generalizations, his speculative tendency, his preference for theoretical constructions and grand systems, sometimes misrepresenting

¹ To encourage my fellow Africans – the majority of whom will not be able to read Dutch – I have also confined my references mainly to the few available English sources (translations of his works) as well as English publications about Kuyper.

² For biographical details about Kuyper, the following are available in English: M. R. Langley, *The Practice of Political Spirituality: Episodes from the Public Career of Abraham Kuyper, 1879-1918* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia, 1984); L. Praamsma, *Let Christ be King: Reflections on the Life and Times of Abraham Kuyper* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia, 1985); and F. vanden Berg, *Abraham Kuyper: A Biography* (Jordan Station, Ontario: Paideia, 1978).

history, his often weak exegesis of the Bible, and finally, the clearly discernable influence of biblically foreign ideas, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, on his own conceptions. As a fallible human being – like all of us - his ideas could even have had a detrimental influence.³ At the moment, however, I want to emphasize five aspects which fascinate me about Kuyper.

- *He was a true reborn Christian.* Proof of this can be found in the great amount of devotional literature which he wrote.⁴ He lived in an intimate relationship to his Savior. But he also differed from most contemporary “reborn” Christians: his Savior was also his Lord! Therefore not only in his *heart* but also in his *mind* – in his *whole life* – he had to obey Him.
- *He was a visionary, a man of broad outlines, and wide perspectives.* He knew the current secular ideas of his time and, over against them, formulated a personal, clearly distinguishable Christian worldview which enabled him to inspire his people.
- He was not only the architect of theories or interested in the history of ideas, but a *practical man, an activist in the good sense of the word.* Most of his publications were the result of his confrontation with the real, practical problems of his day – they were, so to speak, conceived from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.
- *He was a man of the people.* He did not elevate himself above the ordinary person in the street. On the contrary: he was their leader or general, who tried to understand, inspire, empower, motivate, and mobilize them – to provide them with a vision worthy to live – or even to die – for.
- What could the message of this great man be for contemporary (South) Africa? In order to enable us to indicate Kuyper's relevance for today we first need to take a brief look at the present (South) African situation on the

³ The original text of my paper also included a section on the possible negative influence of Kuyper's ideas on South Africa, namely its apartheid ideology. Because of limited space and the fact that other South African speakers discussed this part of his heritage in detail, it was omitted from this article.

⁴ An example is his *Near Unto God: Daily Meditations Adapted for Contemporary Christians*, translated and edited by J. Schaap (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1997).

issue of Christian religion and society.

2. Christian religion and society in (South) Africa

- Much has changed during the last century since Kuyper delivered his Stone lectures in 1898. On the one hand Europe and the US, about which Kuyper held such high expectations - in spite of a strong evangelical influence - has become more or less secularized. On the other hand Africa, to a large extent has, as a result of the missionary endeavors of the past century, become a Christianized continent. What is the state of Christianity at the moment on the African continent? Three dominant types of Christianity can be distinguished. Briefly they can be typified as follows: ecclesiasticism, escapism, and secularism.

- *Ecclesiasticism*

- According to this viewpoint, Christianity is confined to converted individuals and the established churches. It lacks a broader kingdom vision. Society (politics, economics etc.) can only be Christian when the church has "stamped" or "baptized" it - life is "churchified."

- *Escapism*

- This type of Christianity has, because of the current situation on the continent, a very strong appeal. Within the safe walls of one's religion, one can escape from the harsh realities of the "outside" world. It manifests itself in different sub-types (often imported from overseas), like an apocalyptic Christianity or a gospel of prosperity. Also from this side we cannot expect either criticism of or Christian involvement in society at large.

- *Secularism*

- In spite of the phenomenal growth of Christianity on the continent, African Christians today are schizophrenic. In their personal or church life they think and behave as Christians, but in politics, economics etc., they are lost. More and more African Christians don't even see any relevance in the gospel for the real and burning issues on our continent – they have capitulated to a secularist religion, living as if God does not exist or does not matter. One of the basic reasons for this is the lack of a clear, biblically inspired worldview and philosophy of society.

- What we urgently need is a type of Christianity with both a *clear focus* (a

personal relationship with the Lord through his Spirit) as well as a *wide scope* (the relevance of the gospel for the whole of life). A socially “blind” Christianity will not survive for very long on our continent with its many and very serious social problems!

Dr. Tokunboh Adeyemo (General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa) has the following to say in this regard: “For decades in Africa, evangelism and missionary activities have been directed at getting people saved (i.e. spiritually) but losing their minds. Consequently, we have a continent south of the Sahara that boasts of an over 50% Christian population on the average, but with little or no impact on the society.”⁵

Therefore, one of the recommendations at the end of the same volume reads as follows: “We are convinced that an integrated Christian worldview based upon the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, is an indispensable foundation to live out an authentic Christian life in our contemporary society, hence the imperative of calling all Christians to develop a Christian worldview within the African context. The battle, therefore, is for the Christian mind, to think Christianly and to grasp the full implications of the Lordship of Christ over all areas of life. This implies the necessity to develop a Christian anthropology and a Christian social philosophy.”⁶

An important part of Kuyper’s heritage to our continent is that he can provide in exactly this urgent need for a Christian social philosophy.

3. Kuyper’s Christian philosophy of society in brief

In the limited space at my disposal, I can only highlight the most relevant aspects of his philosophy of society. We will first provide an overview of his societal philosophy as such and conclude with its application to the problem of poverty, one of the major issues on the African continent.

3.1 The broad perspective

In reply to the problems of African Christianity (where the state and the church

⁵ T. Adeyemo (ed.) *A Christian Mind in a Changing Africa* (Nairobi: Association of Evangelicals in Africa, 1993): 4.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 227.

are the most prominent institutions) Kuyper provides the following perspective: (1) the state should not dominate the church (as is the case in many African countries with secular constitutions); (2) the church should not dominate the state (as was the case in the old apartheid South Africa or is the case in the present Zambia); (3) each state should not have only one religion (the old *cuius regio eius religio* of Lutheran countries or the present divisions in the same African country between more or less exclusively Muslim or Christian states like Nigeria); (4) the state is not an a-religious or neutral (secular) institution (the viewpoint today in many countries all over the world); (5) but both the church and the state should be free institutions.

In summary: one should neither *identify* religion and society (including the state), nor *separate* them, but clearly *distinguish* between the two. We should furthermore remember that the Christian religion does not automatically have a beneficial influence on society - it can actively condone an unjust *status quo* or passively accept it.

To be able to understand and appreciate such a perspective on Christianity and society, we have to elaborate on Kuyper's ideas. In the following seven "flashes" I mention a few foundation stones or building blocks of his societal philosophy.⁷

3.2 A different kind of secularization

Especially in reaction to the secularism brought about by the French Revolution, Kuyper distinguished between two types of secularization, the one positive and the other negative. Liberating the rest of society (marriage, family, school, business, politics) from the supervision and dominance of the church, he regarded as positive secularization – a development which would also benefit present-day African Christianity. The second kind of

⁷ For this section the following original sources were consulted: A. Kuyper, *Calvinism: Six Stone Lectures*, introduced by H. Beets (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1931); as well as the relevant parts of his translated works from J. D. Bratt (ed.) *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998); and J. W. Skillen and R. M. McCarthy, *Political Order and the Plural Structure of Society* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars, 1991). Additional, valuable information is provided by P. S. Hesham, *Creating a Christian Worldview: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998).

secularization, which teaches that society (the so-called “public square”) has nothing to do with religion, should, however, be rejected. This conclusion of a wrong kind of secularization was drawn because Christianity previously narrowly confined religion to the church. Kuyper clearly held a different view about (the Christian) religion!

3.3 A totally new view about religion

- Because it is impossible to understand Kuyper’s philosophy of society without a grasp of his view of religion, its essence will be briefly summarized⁸ in the following points:

- *God is neither part of creation nor separated from creation.* According to Kuyper, God is (ontologically speaking) totally different from his creation, but (religiously understood) intimately related to it. This is the exact obverse of what is believed in, for instance, traditional African religion.

- *Religion does not exist for the sake of humanity, but for the sake of glorifying God.* Religion also produces a blessing for the human being, but its final purpose or its essence is not anthropocentric. If this is the case, it will only thrive in times of hardship amongst the poor and oppressed (as in contemporary Africa) or die in days of prosperity and comfort with the advancement of science and technology (as is the case in the present Western world). The real essence of Christian religion is the adoration of God. It is first to seek his kingdom (Matt. 6:33).

- *Religion should not operate mediately but directly.* Kuyper never gets tired of emphasizing that real Christian religion excludes every human mediatorship of so-called holier ministers, priests, ancestors etc. No person can appear before God on behalf of another. Every human being must appear personally, live *coram Deo*, in the presence of God. This can only happen if Christians are liberated from all kinds of human intermediaries – another urgent need in contemporary Africa!

- *Religion is not partial, but has to embrace the whole of our being and life.* Kuyper distinguishes between the (1) organ, (2) sphere, and (3) circle of religion. He indicates (1) that, as the *organ* of religion, we should obey and

⁸ See Kuyper’s second Stone lecture.

serve God as *total* human beings – intellectually, emotionally, and ethically; (2) the *sphere* of religion is not confined to the secret chamber of an individual heart, and (3) the *circle* of religion cannot be limited to the church, but is all-encompassing including agriculture, commerce, politics, the arts, sciences etc. Life – the whole of life – is religion! One cannot shut oneself up in the church and abandon the rest of the world to its fate.

- *Religion is not normal but abnormal.* Because the whole of our (religious) life is fallen in sin, it needs redemption from God and our own continuous conversion in the light of God's revelation.

- To summarize Kuyper's perspective on religion: it is not about what we *do* (e.g. cultic performances) or feel or think, but about what we *are*, that we are captivated in the grip of the true God or an idol, determining the *direction* of our whole life. Humans do not control God, but our deepest commitment towards God or idols drive or determine our entire lives. Prayer, preaching, singing, and confession in church is *part* of our Christian religion, but can never be identified with the *whole* of Christian religion which includes everything we think and do.

- Therefore Kuyper's Christian worldview includes not only a relationship to God, but also *to* one's fellowman and woman as well as a relationship to the rest of creation. The prominent types of Christianity on the African continent today (cf. above), should clearly be corrected according to his viewpoint: ecclesiastism, escapism, and secularism does not really offer any worthwhile perspective for Christian involvement in society.

3.4 A novel conception about vocation

During the Middle Ages – and among many African Christians today – divine calling was reserved for special people (ministers, priests, and prophets) with a holy office in the church. Luther and Calvin, however, did not hesitate to regard ordinary jobs as divine vocations. As the word *vocation* indicates, God calls human beings in *every area* of life to serve Him and their fellow humans. Kuyper especially followed Calvin, who added an institutional dimension to the idea of calling: God calls us to be *office bearers in a specific societal relationship*. With their authority and power they have to answer to their calling by serving God and the members of the

particular relationship.

3.5 God's ordinances apply to the whole of society

According to Kuyper the ordinances for social life are, in the first place, *real*. He rejects the liberal idea that social norms or values are merely the result of a human contract or agreement which can be accepted or not. Neither can he accept the idea that they are confined to the ecclesiastical area or that church laws should apply in other areas of life.

Second, these societal ordinances are *divine*, originating from God Himself. In their variety of vocations, officers do not *invent* the norms according to which their calling should be conducted. They merely *respond* to God's ordinances.

In the third place, Kuyper explains with many examples how God in creation reveals his ordinances for the different spheres of life. The Scriptures, as spectacles, assist our weakened (sinful) eyes to "see" them correctly again. This does not imply that we can, for example, use the Bible as a textbook for politics at all times and in every place. It also does not mean that we as Christians have a perfect grasp of the different norms for societal life. Our understanding of these norms should continuously be purified and reformed.

In spite of all this, Kuyper firmly believed that justice, for instance, is not made by the statesman, but that it exists before any notion of justice crossed his mind: he can only approximate it in his formulation of laws. God is the absolute Sovereign: he has given the ordinances according to which our social life should be conducted!

Kuyper did not work out a complete social philosophy. But he laid the foundations to enable his followers to look for specific norms applicable to the different societal relationships. One way of doing it is to assume that God's central commandment of love (Matt. 22:37-40) should acquire different forms in different spheres of society like truth in marriage, (loving) care in family life, brotherly/sisterly love in the church, stewardship in business, and justice in the government of the state.

3.6 A third alternative (pluralism) for both communalism (socialism) and individualism (liberalism)

With all these preceding building blocks Kuyper erected a distinct Christian philosophy of society, which he himself indicated as the doctrine of sphere sovereignty. We may call it (structural) pluralism.

Its basic idea is that of the *equality* between the different societal relationships. The state, church, family, business, academy etc. does not exist one *below the* other, but *next to each* other. Not one of them is *subordinated* to another, either holier (e.g. the church) or more powerful (e.g. the state) spheres of society.

In each of these societal structures human beings exert and fulfill their specific divine calling in the presence of God, the Absolute Sovereign. (Sphere sovereignty is, according to Kuyper, a second kind of sovereignty, delegated by God.)

Kuyper used the metaphor of the cogs of a machine to explain his pluralism: each cog turns around its own axle in its own sphere. If it leaves its place, interfering in the place of another cog, the whole machine (society) will be bogged down. On the other hand the different cogs in the machine are not isolated from each other: in order for the "machine" of society to run properly, they have to interact with each other.

I add two other metaphors of my own to explain the uniqueness of Kuyper's contribution in comparison with two dominant secular views of society, namely, socialism and individualism. Socialism can be compared to the segments of an orange: the "peel" of the orange indicates the state as the encompassing social structure, while the different segments symbolize the family, church, school etc. as its subordinate parts or subdivisions. Individualism can be visualized with different atoms coming together and by mutual agreement establishing a societal relationship like the state, church or whatever.

It will be difficult to overemphasize this part of Kuyper's heritage today. In the past first the church was absolutized. Then the state was idolized. (Compare Kwame Nkrumah's dictum: "First seek the political

kingdom”) Today, amidst economic globalization, neo-capitalist economics dictates to every other area of life – Mammon is our latest god!

3.7 A solution for the problems posed by a multi-religious society

The final liberating perspective, through which Kuyper could bring more light to my continent today, is what I would like to call his confessional pluralism.

He believed that one’s religious commitment should be allowed to express itself in the different societal relationships outside one’s private life and the church. The Muslim as well as the Christian should, for example, have the right to establish distinctively Muslim or Christian schools. Only in this way could freedom of religion be guaranteed.

A century ago Kuyper warned that so-called secular organizations and institutions are not neutral or a-religious – they made a deliberate choice against the true God! According to his insights Kuyper therefore took the lead in establishing across the spectrum of society a great variety of Christian organizations and institutions. He, however, never regarded them as the safe, closed hiding places (bunkers or ghettos) of a group of introverted and complacent Christians. On the contrary, he viewed separate Christian organizations more as “strongholds” or “military bases” from which the spiritual battle for the soul of his nation should be fought. Far from separating themselves from societal life, they should be serviceable, giving guidance and direction to society. Not in the sense of missionary church organizations, but emphasizing how their *specific tasks* in different areas of life should be conducted according to the *specific norms* applicable.⁹

We cannot deal with the history of Christian organizations in The Netherlands after Kuyper’s lifetime.¹⁰ At the moment his ideas about distinct Christian institutions/organizations are more popular outside his home country, for instance in the US, than inside. Why should we not give Kuyper’s idea of dealing with religious pluralism in contemporary societies in

⁹ For an excellent exposition on the idea of Christian organisations, see J. Klapwijk, ‘Christelijke organisaties in verlegenheid.’ In: R. van Woudenberg and S. Griffioen (eds.) *Transformationele Filosofie* (Kampen: Kok, 1995): 91-123.

¹⁰ See H. E. S. Woldring, *De Christen-democratie* (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1996) for a detailed history of Christian political activity in the Netherlands following Kuyper.

Africa at least a chance?

4. Conclusion: the application of Kuyper's philosophy of society to the problem of poverty – eight points to ponder

In conclusion I want to indicate how Kuyper applied his ideas on society to a real and concrete problem of his time, namely that of poverty. Also in this respect there can be no doubt about its relevance to (South) Africa. Poverty is *the* problem of our continent and it will become an even more serious issue in future. In South Africa on one side of a street we see the palaces of millionaires – behind high walls and with security guards. On the other side of the same road are the squatter shacks of dirt-poor people. On the one side people die of over-consumption and on the other side of malnutrition and starvation. And the dividing line is no longer simply between black and white Actually poverty is a world problem today: the rich northern countries over against the poor southern parts of the globe.

Kuyper clearly indicated more than a hundred years ago (in 1891)¹¹ that the question of poverty cannot simply be viewed as a material, economic, or even a social problem. Basically it is a religious issue (dealing with our religious *focus*). It is also an issue to be dealt with from a distinctive Christian philosophy of society (our religious *scope*).

Lack of space means I can only provide the following flashes from his book, leaving it to my readers to apply it to their own situations.

- *We can learn a great deal from Christ's own example.* Jesus flattered no one, neither rich nor poor. Among us humans, we find either flattery of the rich and scorn for the poor or sympathy for the poor and abuse of the rich. Christ convicted *both* of their sins. But when He corrected the poor, He did it so much more gently. And when He called the rich to account, He used much harsher words.
- *Cynical pessimism will be of no avail.* In this regard Kuyper gives a new exposition of an often misinterpreted text such as John 12:8 ("You will always have the poor with you"). These words, according to him, give no *rule*

¹¹ A Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty: A Translation of the Opening Address at the First Christian Social Congress in The Netherlands, November 9, 1891*, edited and introduced by J. W. Skillen (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 1991).

but merely state a *fact*. There is no implication that it *should* be that way, that we should accept it like a *norm*! Jesus' statement also includes a reproach: in life as you are patterning it – like Judas – you will always have the poor!

- *Charity is not yet Christian love.* Simply giving away money should not be the way in which to tackle the roots of the problem. Charity may also be offensive to the poor themselves. We have to give ourselves – not something of ourselves – like our time, expertise etc. to be able to solve this huge problem.
- *Poverty is a structural evil, needing the fundamental restructuring of all the different societal relationships in order to be solved.* Long before all kinds of liberation theologies, Kuyper realized how greed and a hunger for power can become incarnated in the structures of society. No superficial remedies (emergency aid etc.) will therefore be able to solve the problem of poverty. What we need is a penetrating “architectonic critique” of society.

Both socialism and capitalism will not be capable of offering a deep enough diagnosis and therapy. Liberalism in its neo-capitalist garb – the present savior following the demise of socialism – builds its ideas on the first part of the slogan of the French Revolution, (liberty), but the laws of the animal world prevail in the jungle of Mammon: the strong devours the weak. Socialism, emphasizing the other two motives of the French Revolution (*equality* and *fraternity*) also builds society on sand. Its result is terrible inequality and, instead of the promised fraternity, a modern performance of the fable of the wolf and the lamb!

- *In spite of the fact that the state is not the same as society at large, it still has an important task in preventing or alleviating poverty.* It can promulgate just laws about property, labor, pensions etc. Kuyper, however, rejects both the capitalist and socialist views about property – their ideas about *absolute* private or *absolute* communal property are not founded on Scripture.
- *Even just laws by the state will not completely solve the problem because the rich and powerful will always be able to twist or evade them to their*

own advantage. He clearly realized that *juridical* justice (e.g. a bill of human rights) cannot be identified with *biblical* justice!

- *The poor cannot wait until the day we have completed the restoration of society.* They will not live long enough to see that day. In the meantime they have to eat and drink! This is the reason why Kuyper made an appeal to the deepest Christian motives and values of his audience. The rich should not be driven by fear for the loss of their possessions. They should be motivated by the higher ideal of love and compassion for their suffering brothers and sisters. Even the poorest is not merely a “creature” in wretched circumstances, but of the same human nature. If (s)he has to rely on state relief, it is a blot on the honor of our Savior!

At the end of the previous century, amidst a “violently disturbed society,” Kuyper concluded his opening speech at the First Christian Social Conference with a prayer. At the end of the twentieth century we in South Africa, “a violently disturbed society” because of the large gap between rich and poor, may use the same prayer only substituting *The Netherlands* with *(South) Africa*:

... may it never be possible to say of the Christians of (South) Africa that through our fault, through the luke-warmness of our Christian faith, whether in higher or lower classes, the rescue of our society was hindered and the blessing of the God of our fathers forfeited.¹²

Postscript

For more English literature on Kuyper and Kuyperian Calvinism see the bibliography of the following paper delivered at the IAPCHE Conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA in June 2010: “Worldwide Christian scholarship and higher education; responses from a worldview perspective” (p. 42-54), published (in Afrikaans) in *Tydskrif vir Christelike Wetenskap*, 46 (1&2): 43-60, 111-134, 2010.

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 79

ANTHEUNIS JANSE OF BIGGEKERKE (1890-1960)

MORNING STAR OF A REFORMATIONAL WORLDVIEW

This chapter is the result of research on the life and work of the Dutch thinker, Antheunis Janse (1890-1960) of Biggekerke conducted at intervals in South Africa and in the Netherlands during the past 35 years. The stimulus for the research was the fact that Janse has never been acknowledged for his contribution to a Christian worldview and philosophy – especially anthropology – which originated in the nineteen thirties in the Netherlands. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that he should be regarded (with professors D. H. Th. Vollenhoven and H. Dooyeweerd) as a founding father of Christian reformational philosophy, also known as the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea or simply as the Amsterdam philosophy.

The biographical details are intertwined with the following systematic aspects. (1) Why reformation was required during Janse's lifetime, (2) Janse's contribution to the development of reformational philosophy, (3) a more detailed discussion of his anthropological viewpoints, (4) the secret of his reformational endeavors. (5) In conclusion, some suggestions are given about much needed research to be done to be able to profit fully from the rich heritage of this "morning star of a twentieth-century reformation." (6) An addendum of his most important publications is also provided.

1. Prologue

Reformation will never be finished - it is a continuing task. The sixteenth-century motto, *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est* (a reformed church must always keep reforming), is as valid today as it was 500 years ago and this is true not only of the church, but of all society. If Christians do not take their reformational task to heart every day, stagnation will certainly set in. We should not believe

that our reforming task was completed in the distant past and that in the present we can relax.

Even though we believe that every age in history calls for an ongoing reformation we can learn from reformations of the past and from reformers in history. Of course, we look at things differently today and maybe beyond. But as a thinker of the Renaissance once confessed, that is largely due to the fact that we – as dwarfs – can stand on the shoulders of the giants of the past.

It is thus important to focus on an almost forgotten figure of our reformational tradition, Antheunis Janse van Biggekerke. (In §19 it will be explained why and how this biographical overview came into being.)

2. A descendant of the Huguenots

More than three hundred years ago, in 1685 when the Edict of Nantes was revoked, many Frenchmen, who remained faithful to their Reformed faith decided to flee to an unknown future in foreign countries.

A certain Remste (or Raimste), a farmer from northern France, also fled (via England) and settled on a farm in Ritthem (near Vlissingen) in the Netherlands. At the beginning of the nineteenth century his descendants still lived there. It is highly likely that the descendants of Jan Hendrikz (eleven children) received the name "Janse" during the time of Napoleon. His grandchild, Antheunis Janse (1833-1916), later lived in Oostkapelle on the island of Walcheren in the southwest of the Netherlands. Eight children were born from his marriage with Catharina Maljaars, one of whom was called Jan, who eventually married Catharina Wondergem.

On 1 July 1890 this Oostkapelle couple stood with joy at the cradle of their first-born, a son, who was called after grandpa Antheunis. Shortly after that he received a brother who was called Jan.

Antheunis lost his father at an early age. He died in 1899 at the age of 33 years, and left a wife and two small boys in a small workers cottage on the Noordweg in Oostkapelle, near Middelburg. Antheunis and Jan thus had to work on their grandfather's farm during summer and could only go to school during

winter.

In *De betekenis der drie hoofdvakken (Bijbelse, Vaderlandse en Kerkgeschiedems) voor de principiële vorming* (originally printed in 1938 reprinted in 1979, in *Gereformeerde Schoolblad*), Janse wrote a fascinating narrative about the memories of his youth. Among other things he relates how much the Reformed Boys' Society – under the leadership of a simple gardener – meant to him. From this man he learned the Calvinist principle of serving God in all areas of life - not just on Sundays and not only in church. He compares this guidance with the ethical, mystical, pietistic kind of religion of which his own *Hervormde* pastor was an example. According to this conviction, creation is left to the sinful "world" and religion is seen merely as a means of salvation for heaven. From childhood this kind of piety did not satisfy Janse.

Even at that stage a special gift, which emerged more and more in his adult life, namely the discernment of the spirits was manifested. He chose for the real reformational principle, that of the sovereignty of God in all areas of life. This emphasizes that life should not be divided into profane and religious sections, implying that belief and religion is the domain of God and the rest of life is the domain of humanity.

This, after all, is what the Scripture teaches. The reign of the God of the covenant encompasses everything. God is concerned with hungry oxen and sacrifices, birds' nests and priests, with the clean linen of the Israelites and their worship, with workers' pay and also with their tithes, with the education of children, and their circumcision. The Lord, the God of the covenant, is the sovereign ruler of our existence in totality and of all areas of life.

3. Teacher training

When he was seventeen years old Antheunis received the opportunity, thanks to his childless uncle, Adriaan de Visser, to attend the Normal School in order to take up teacher training. Up to then Antheunis had only completed elementary school. (His brother Jan meanwhile continued in the footsteps of his forefathers and became a farmer.) At first it was difficult for the young student because he had much to catch up. However on 3 May 1910 he received his diploma (*de*

acte van bekwaamheid als onderwijzer) to teach at elementary school level.

In October of that same year the energetic young man began his teaching career in Schoondijke (1910-1917). Shortly after this Europe was plunged into World War I (1914-1918), and the young teacher also had to fulfill his military duty (1914-1915). We have an interesting letter written on 28 July 1915 from Zuiddorpe to his brother. His military service turned out to be useful as he learned German which, later in his life, gave him access to important literature from that country. Since German money was of little value and German books cost next to nothing, the bookworm Janse duly made use of the opportunity. At that time he could not have known that he would experience a second - and much worse - world war.

4. Work in Biggekerke

In 1917 circumstances, however, changed for the better – wedding bells rang for him and Debora Louwerse (born in 1885). In that same year he also got a position at the two-teacher Christian School in Biggekerke. In 1918 he became the principal. He began to work, study, and write, inexhaustibly, for nearly a quarter of a century (1917-1942).

He was very dedicated, a born teacher. The many textbooks, handwritten by him and illustrated with his own drawings, showing a special drawing talent, testify to this. He especially had a keen interest in history. (He also, by the way, knew the history of South Africa.) It is interesting that – contrary to the norm – he did not begin with the history of the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, but that he started his history education with the biblical story about creation, fall, and redemption. He did not accept a dualism between church history and world history!

He believed in concrete, illustrated education, so he not only told the history of faraway lands, and unknown nations, but also the history of Biggekerke itself, a small village with a rich history. In Biggekerke a church existed from around 800 AD and the sixteenth-century Reformation had a strong influence on the island of Walcheren. No wonder that Janse was loved by his pupils for his interest in their local history. Many letters in the Janse archives still testify to

that.

However, the teacher of Biggekerke was not only good in the classroom. He also intensively reflected on the theories of education. For example, he developed his own reading and arithmetic methods (see the list of his publications in the addendum).

In those days a teacher could not, of course, be only a teacher. He had to serve in the wider society. As well as being a teacher and the secretary of the school board, he also gave Sunday school classes, was president of the Reformed Boys' Society, secretary of the *Antirevolutionaire* association and much more. It was not always easy to work together on the school board with the old farmers of Walcheren. If master Janse had not helped, the book accounts of the treasurer would never have tallied. And the cheap cigars of the board members stank so badly that the young teacher preferred to share out his own cigars at the beginning of the meeting.

According to the testimony of his own children, he was a very diligent worker. At the end of a school day (15: 30) Antheunis would first take a long walk along the footpaths of Biggekerke and would then begin to work. It was normal for him to sit in his study until two in the morning, and at times to work until dawn.

5. Appearance and character

He was not an impressive personality. He was merely 1.60 meters (5' 3") tall and had a soft voice. Stellingwerf (1992: 39-40) describes him as a man with a clear mind and deep knowledge of the Bible who because of his many writings, acquired great influence among Reformed people. According to his children, he was extremely modest, very gentle, and a friendly person. Although the analytical content in his writings could be very sharp in nature, he never used sharp words against his fellowmen, nor spoke evil of them, nor ran them into the ground. (Sinful behavior, however, could make him angry.) His gentle nature did not mean that he was not a brave man. For example, he did not hesitate to go against the opinion of the general public.

In response to my question to his three sons, whether such a busy father ever had time for his children, the answer was positive. On Sunday evenings, for

example, he regularly related Bible history to the family. On Saturday afternoons they also went for walks together, and along the way he supplied his children with interesting facts about the flowers, plants, and birds. As typical Zeelands, there was, however, a distinct distance between father and son, so that he did not talk as confidentially with them as a Dutch father would nowadays talk with his children.

6. A time which calls for reformation

From Janse's letters and diaries we know how he longed for reformation, for which he also prayed. "For several years I have been praying ardently to God for reformation" (letter March 13, 1929), "Oh, Lord, remember your covenant. Dry my tears. The mourners of Zion will rejoice when Your reformation comes" (diary May 9, 1931). And when his ideas about reformation were opposed, he wrote, "No attempt of any reformational activity has escaped the cross of Christ" (letter April 6, 1936).

A cursory glance at the time in which Janse grew up and in which he worked will make us realize why there was such an urgent need for renewal, real reformation. At theological and ecclesiastical levels there were two reasons in particular for reformation: Pietistic theology and Reformed Scholasticism – two currents still present in many contemporary churches the world over.

6.1 Against Pietism

We have already pointed to the fact that he had encountered Pietism in his youth and did not feel at home in it. Whoever wants to know more about this aspect should not leave unread his delightful work *Lourens Ingelse: Een Episode uit het Godsdienstige Leven op Walcheren Omstreeks 1780* (1926). In this book he brilliantly describes the religious life of the introspective believers of his time. Through mystical inner illumination people such as Ingelse from Zeeland wanted to come to religious certainty. They sought peace and certainty in their own religious experience whereas they already could have this outside of themselves in Christ (Romans 5:1). Whoever depends on the result of his own "soul-searching" and whoever moans and groans in order to have peace with God, will never find real peace. These soul-searching people of his time focused inwardly

to see if there were signs of the working of the Holy Spirit in them. Questions generally asked were: How is my faith? Am I sincere? Am I really aware of my sins? After having made up the balance of their spiritual life, and attaining a positive outcome, they were happy. If not, they fell into deep doubt and uncertainty. Pietistic people are constantly busy with themselves. They are trying to believe in their own faith. Instead of throwing out the anchor of their faith (to God), they try to anchor inside their ship (in themselves) with the sad result that they never find any certainty of faith.

In contrast to the self-*searching* of pietistic theology Janse puts the biblical notion of self-*testing*. In self-testing one does not stand in front of oneself, but before God. In the light of God's word one discovers one's unbelief and sinfulness, but at the same time one latches onto God's infallible promises. Such a person does not believe in her/himself, but in a God who demands faith, but also - amazingly - provides faith. In such a manner one can forget oneself because one is safe with God.

With his booklet (*Lourens Ingelse*) Janse undoubtedly helped many who doubted and struggled, who were constantly delving in their own soul-life, to look away from themselves and to focus only on God's word, promises, and grace.

6.2 Against Scholasticism

Janse also wanted to bring his people back from the barren, dry, and narrow consciousness of Scholastic dogmatism to the concrete, practical, and living Scriptures. The Reformed (*Gereformeerde*) Scholasticism from before and during his time allowed the wonderful, warm reality of the good news to be swallowed up in cold concepts. Although Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck could not entirely free themselves from Scholasticism, their thoughts heralded a golden age in the Reformed world. The Kuyperian age, however, was coming to an end. Followers of Kuyper (such as V. Hepp and A. Kuyper Jr), did not only try to canonize the work of Kuyper, but also fell back into the Scholasticism of the seventeenth century.

Scholasticism is characterized by a dualism between the sacred (holy) and profane (secular) or nature-grace dualism (cf. Janse, 2001: 286). The life of a Christian is accordingly divided into an area in which one can serve God (religion

church, theology, etc.) in contrast to a sphere which is more or less neutral (science, politics, philosophy, etc.). In the light of the Bible, which emphasizes the unity of life and obedience to God in all areas of life, Janse emphatically rejected this harmful and unbiblical dualism.

Reformed theologians were held in the grip of their dogmatic system to such an extent that they did not acknowledge the limits of theology as a science any longer. Because the difference between human, fallible theological scholarship and the infallible word of God was no longer clear, intellectual Scholastic theology in fact received absolute power over the believers in the church. Ordinary church people looked up to the academic knowledge of the theologians who ruled the church and church meetings with their perspectives. The "queen of the sciences" (as theology was called) blocked access to the living word of God and to the living God himself. Even more, the idea developed that dogmatic theology could help a person to be saved – instead of childlike belief in the death of Christ on the hill of Golgotha. In his *Dogmatiek als Wetenschap* (Dogmatics as a science) of 1939 Janse attributed a much more limited role to theology.

What were the consequences of Scholasticism? As far as theologians were concerned, these could be seen in arrogance, complacency, and conceit. As far as the congregations were concerned, the final result was spiritual death.

In these winter times the preaching of ministers such as S. G. de Graaf and K. Sietsma, and the writings of men such as S. Greijdanus, K. Schilder, D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, H. Dooyeweerd, and the teacher from Biggekerke were the first signs of a new spring.

In his grace, the Lord gave a revival in the Netherlands, known as the reformational movement (reformatiorische beweging) of the thirties. If we keep in mind that reformational philosophy, which originated during this time, is known around the world today and inspires many people, we realize what great things God did then. These people were not looking primarily for a new theology or philosophy in contrast to dry Reformed Scholasticism. In the first place they wanted to return to the living word of God and to the true, living

God himself. They realized that reformation, new life, was possible only when God's prophetic word is viewed as incomparably more important than abstract theology.

Janse was, fortunately, no theologian but by the grace of God he was an authority on Scripture. He could explain the Bible better than the majority of theologians – including the Reformed ones – because Scholasticism did not cloud his view of God's word. Only a few people could let the old treasures of the word, freed from all Scholastic dust, sparkle in the way he could. In a surprising and an encouraging way he made God's word alive again in his time.

7. The key to real reformation

The secret of Janse's reformational work is like a two-sided coin. We could also say that God blessed him particularly with two gifts of the Spirit, namely a prophetic gift and that of a discernment of the spirits.

Janse had at his disposal an astonishing knowledge of the Bible and he displayed an unbelievably clear insight into the intellectual movements of his day. He could expertly expose the deepest motivation behind the different movements in pedagogy, politics, theology, and philosophy. And he could, sometimes in an amazingly simple manner, offer a biblical-reformational answer to counter the views of his time. And are these two things (to let the Bible speak clearly again and to take the pulse of our times in the light of the word) not the deepest secret of every true Christian reformer? The only difference is that every reformer must do this in and for his/her own times.

8. Development as a thinker in the circle of a reformational philosophy

Following these remarks about Janse's reformational work in general, a closer look at his more specific contribution towards the development of a reformational philosophy is necessary.

8.1 Philosophically interested – even in his childhood

The philosophical interest of Antheunis was already obvious when he was

thirteen years old. At that age he read a booklet by P. Biesterveld (then Professor of Philosophy at Kampen, but later called to the Free University of Amsterdam as Professor of Practical Theology), titled *Het Echt Menselijke, hoe het is Gezocht en Waar het is te Vinden* ("The truly human how it was sought and where it can be found," 1902). He devoured it. His son, Revd J. C. Janse, still has the original copy in his possession. Antheunis used a bread-knife in order to cut open the pages. Those things that were important to him he underlined in blue and in black and read it about six times.

Revd J. C. Janse also has other books of his father in his possession, with personal underlining and comments. Among those, for example, are Karl Barth's *Romerbrief* (1924, 3rd printing), and the first volume (*Prolegomena*) of Barth's *Christliche* (later *Kirchliche*) *Dogmatik* (1927), which was first sold and later bought back by Revd Janse. Janse, it is said, read them, being rather in agreement with Barth's anthropology, although he was very critical of Barth's perspectives in general.

It is interesting to point out in passing that Janse realized, long before anyone else in the Netherlands had written about Barth, what a great and influential thinker Barth would become, and started to struggle with his ideas. For example, he wrote 19 pages on *Karl Barth en de waarheid* ("Karl Barth and the truth") dated 2 February 1929. It was followed by an article "De nominalistische inslag in de Kirchliche Dogmatik" (Janse, 1935: 92-105). The book, *A. Janse on Karl Barth* (1987, 121 pages), contains other articles on Barth and shows how Janse struggled with this theological giant. Another interesting document (in the archives of his son J. C. Janse) is an incomplete and unpublished manuscript from his youth in which Janse presents the history of philosophy in the form of a novel.

8.2 Contact with Vollenhoven

Through God's providence Janse early in his life met Dirk H. Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978), who is regarded, with Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977), as a founder of reformational philosophy from about the middle of the twenties of the previous century. Janse and Vollenhoven influenced each other (cf. Janse 2001: 286. See also *postscript* at the end of *bibliography*).

On 27 September 1918 Vollenhoven defended his doctoral thesis *De Wijsbegeerte der Wiskunde van Theistisch Standpunt* at the Free University. This thesis is not only an extensive work (444 pages) but also difficult philosophical fare. (The story goes that even Vollenhoven's promoter, Prof. W. Geesink, acknowledged that he did not understand everything in the thesis.) Shortly after his promotion Vollenhoven became minister in Oostkapelle on Walcheren. On 13 February 1919 he received a request from the young teacher Janse from Biggekerke (only a few kilometers from Oostkapelle) for a copy of his dissertation. Soon afterwards Vollenhoven received a letter (about 20 pages) in which his thesis was perused and in which there were also several questions. Obviously the writer had clearly understood the essence of the indigestible material.

The written contact quickly became personal contact. In 1918 Vollenhoven and Janse together published an article on "De activiteit der ziel in het rekenonderwijs" (Vollenhoven and Janse, 1918: 97-109).

From the outset it was evident that two kindred spirits had found each other. (A bulky file containing the correspondence between the professor and the teacher is to be found in the Vollenhoven Archives in the Library of the Free University.) Janse enthusiastically cooperated with Vollenhoven in the founding of De Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte (1935) and during the initial stages he contributed to the society's philosophical journal, *Philosophia Reformata* (for details see Stellingwerf, 1992: 120-124). All over the country he offered popular courses in reformational philosophy, which were attended by up to 80 people per course. In 1937 and 1938, for example, he published a series of articles on "Calvinistische wijsbegeerte" in the journal *De School met de Bijbel*. (In 1982 these articles were republished as a volume with the title *Inleiding in de Calvinistische Filosofie* [Introduction into Calvinistic Philosophy] by Buijten en Schipperheijn in Amsterdam). Publishing about this new reformational philosophy in popular form was not fruitless.

8.3 Janse's influence

Stellingwerf (1992: 60) indicates how Janse had struggled to formulate a more biblical anthropology before Vollenhoven paid attention to the issue. Prof.

André Troost (Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam) told me (during a discussion about A. Janse on 13 August 1986) that he had been a student of Janse before he was even introduced to Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd and Dooyeweerd's *Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee* (later translated as *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*). The first book of Janse's that had made a deep impression on him was *Van de Rechtvaardigen* ("About the righteous") (first published in 1931).

Prof. K. J. Popma (1903-1986) also learned much from Janse and until Janse's death there was close contact between them as well as an extensive correspondence. Popma particularly had great appreciation for Janse's biblical view of being human and said about him: "He was the only one who explained the unique unity of human nature *perfectly clearly*" (Popma, 1963: 168).

Janse and Vollenhoven remained life-long friends. They worked together and corresponded regularly (cf. Kok, 1992: 40,-41; and especially Stellingwerf, 1992: 261 [authors' index] for their extensive correspondence up to the end of the thirties). Later on the contact became sporadic due to all kinds of circumstances. During the years of World War II (1939-1945) they could not correspond about everything as openly as before. When Rev. B. Telder was suspended, Janse also became a member of the *Vrijgemaakte Gereformeerde Kerken*. As a result of illness, Janse could only write with great difficulty, and later he could not write at all. Vollenhoven also wrote less. Vollenhoven visited his friend Janse, once more around 1950 in Breda (where Janse lived for the last twenty years of his life). However (according to Janse), the conversation did not really flow well and it did not reach the depth of earlier years. Even so, Janse was contented with this visit.

Twenty years later (1972), more than ten years after the death of his friend, Janse, when Vollenhoven himself was seriously ill, he however, thought much about his own anthropological views. He then again read Janse's books on being human, and according to trustworthy sources Vollenhoven acknowledged that Janse's anthropological views were correct. Earlier he had certainly been influenced by Janse but now he fully supported him (cf. Brill 1982: 113).

Instead of the traditional leadership of two (Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd)

at the birth of a Calvinist philosophy, we should therefore rather see a joint leadership of three – with Janse included – standing at the dawn of a new reformational philosophy.

8.4 An unrecognized father of reformational thought

These facts are not only important in order to understand the spiritual development of Janse, they may also explain why Janse did not receive the recognition he should have received as one of the fathers of Calvinist philosophy (see §19.1 below).

Janse became increasingly isolated; this was the result of several circumstances: the war, political unrest, the strife that accompanied the church struggle and which eventually led to the secession of the *Vrijgemaakte Gereformeerde Kerk*, his illness, and his move to Breda. As a result of his illness, he could no longer continue to participate. The second and third generations of reformational thinkers, therefore, for the most part have forgotten him.

9. An impressive list of publications

One is simply astounded by the enormous number of publications that flowed from Janse's pen in less than 25 years. In addition to at least ten large books, there are many smaller brochures, about 500 articles in journals, a large number of unpublished lectures, and speeches, hundreds of letters and his personal diaries. Particularly when one keeps in mind that these publications represent not only quantity but also quality work, it becomes clear how untiringly this teacher from Biggekerke must have worked. He did not study at a university, during which he might have read up ahead of time. As a self-educated man he had to spend much time reading and reflecting before he could start writing. In spite of that, he had from 1932 warned against ideologies like Fascism and National Socialism – far ahead of his time.

The limited space available makes it possible to mention only Janse's most important books. Some bibliographical particulars are given with each title, keeping in mind those interested readers who would like to further delve into his work. Many of the books are collections of articles originally published in different journals.

The different areas and evidence of the many different topics about which Janse published are indicated in the addendum to this article (cf. also Janse, 2001: 286-287, *sub voce* "Geschriften").

It is regrettable that (as far as I am aware) as yet no publication by Janse has been translated or published in English. A few of his works were, however translated into Spanish, and have been distributed in Spain and in Central and South America, for example, *Que es Politica Christiana Frente a la del Mundo?* (1977) and *Los Justos en la Biblia* vol. I (1984), vol. II, (1986) and vol. III (1987).

Further research will have to determine which of the writings included in the addendum can be regarded as the most original, important, or most influential, and which would still be relevant today. Of course, the answer to this question will depend on the area one has in mind. For example, *Lourens Ingelse* (published in 1926) is a treasure when the concern is for religious piety. If it is anthropology one is looking for, then Janse's *Van Idolen en Schepselen* (Janse, 1938) is certainly a standard work, although *De Mensch Afs "Levende Ziel"* (1937) definitely would be an easier introduction. For his view on theology, one should read his article "Dogmatiek als wetenschap en hare wijsgeuge motieven" (Janse, 1939). In the political realm *De Verhouding van Christelijke Politiek tot de Wereldse* (1937) is certainly the most important. Furthermore, it is striking how highly many people appreciate Janse's *Van de Rechtvaardigen* (Janse, 1931). Janse Jr (2001: 285) regards it as his grandfather's most important work.

The result of all these biblical, prophetic, reformational publications was that Janse did not remain an unknown teacher at an elementary school on the island of Walcheren. He became the pioneer of a refreshing reformational movement in the thirties and forties in the Netherlands.

10. His anthropology

Since his view on being human (see in the addendum the books listed under "Biblical studies specific on the portrayal of being human") is one of the aspects of his thinking which not only was the most original (for his time) and

influenced Vollenhoven, but which also provoked the most vehement reaction a brief exposition follows.

10.1 The essence of his anthropology

The traditional Reformed scholastic viewpoint starts from a dichotomist perspective, namely that a human being consists of spirit (the immortal soul) and matter (the mortal body). At death the human being will be disassembled. The tie between soul and body will be undone, so that the body will perish in the grave and the soul will continue to exist in an intermediate state. In their criticism of Janse, Prof. V. Hepp (1937) and Prof. J. Ridderbos (1939) represent this school of thought.

Janse refutes them with the argument that being human implies much more than a simple dualistic matter-spirit combination. A human being is a unity but not a unity as a compound formed of two substances. A person does not only *have* a soul, but *is* soul. The word "soul" in the Bible usually simply means "living being." Nowhere in the Bible an immortal soul is mentioned. God alone is immortal, and only after the resurrection does He clothe the believer (not his/her soul) with immortality. It is therefore, not the immortality (of the soul) that accompanies us through death but almighty God.

Janse does not believe that one is "taken apart" into two substances at death (as in dichotomist teaching) but that one is *broken*, so that one is simultaneously in the grave and with God. That does not mean that at death one becomes *two* (persons). No logical thinking can explain how this is possible, but according to Janse this is what the Bible teaches and therefore we must accept it in faith. In this respect science reaches a limit that cannot be crossed without falling into speculation. Janse does not doubt our existence after death (as Hepp suggests). Rather he puts the accent on the *unity* of the person in this life, his/her *brokenness* in death and his/her *resurrection* at the return of Christ.

10.2 Janse's influence

Four people, in particular, have benefited from Janse's anthropological insights Prof. D.H.Th. Vollenhoven, Prof. K. J. Popma, Revd B. Telder, and Revd C. Vonk. Popma (1961: 196) says, for example "A dead person

continues to exist although we absolutely do not know how, he exists as a dead person. Nowhere is the Christian faith as mysterious as here. God is not a God of the dead, but of the living" (cf. *inter alia* Matthew 22: 32).

B. Telder (1961; 1963) and C. Vonk (1963; 1969) want to go further, because they cannot accept that a dead person will exist *consciously*. They do not teach that a person *disappears* between death and resurrection, but according to them Janse did not really solve the problem of what happens to him/her at death. If he had considered the logical consequences of his point of view that a person is a unity, he would also have taught that she/he dies *totally* at death before God resurrects her/him at the return of Christ. Janse did not follow this line of thought, so a contradiction seemingly exists, that is that man/woman, after death and before resurrection, is in the grave *and at the same time* with God.

According to Antheunis Janse's son, Revd J. C. Janse, Janse could still read Telder's books, and had said that although Telder's arguments would appear to be waterproof, he could not agree with him. Janse, therefore, rejected both the (Scholastic) doctrine of immortality and Telder's idea of the unconscious intermediate state between death and resurrection (cf. Janse, 2001: 286).

If I understand it correctly, Janse wanted to accept neither a dualistic nor a monistic interpretation of the Scriptures because the first interpretation leads to the view that a person is a duo-unity (dichotomy), and the latter has the result that a person's being is indivisible. According to him a person is, indeed, an indivisible "unity," but as a result of sin, she/he is broken in death – therefore death is such a terrible punishment of sin.

10.3 Janse's view on death and the unity of a person

In conclusion to this part some brief excerpts from Janse's book, *Om "De Levende Ziel"* (1939), chapter 15 (pp. 62-66) with the title "Wasn't Lazarus himself in the grave?" will be presented.

It would be a too simple a conception if we were to say that the real person is the 'soul' and the buried person is no longer that person. It would be altogether too simple a conception to say (according to the

dichotomist opinion): God has created two parts, soul and body, and at death the 'tie' between the two is simply broken. Death is the breaking of 'a tie' even if it is a strong tie, between two things, two 'substances.'

In the Bible 'death' is much worse. Then the jug at the well breaks into pieces. Then *man* turns to dust again, that which God let live as man decomposes, and *man* descends into the grave, he is buried with his fathers.

We must hold onto this.

And we must not say that the one who is being laid in the grave, is not that person himself ... [p. 63]

In the Bible the conception of man is open to being divided. The person Paul does not know if he is 'in the body' or 'outside of the body' when he is taken up into the third heaven. He considers both possible. And the same Paul differentiates between an inner man and an outer man without speaking about two persons because of that.

Why shouldn't man as a whole be able to break into pieces, that all belong to the whole? If I pick up a valuable vase, I could call it a unity I could even say that in principle it is an unbreakable unity.

In the same manner, man also is an unbreakable unity in the Bible.

But still the vase is breakable. So also, under the judgement of God, man is 'breakable.' When a piece of the vase breaks off I can save the vase and the piece I can leave somewhere else. Is the unity broken then? Yes, and no. The unbreakable unity of the work of art remains. The viewer thinks and desires the missing piece to be there as well. It cannot be missed. Whoever sees the small piece broken off would gladly join it to the whole. Whoever sees the larger piece, would gladly join the little piece to the larger one – that which was broken was a unity and it remains a unity, even though it is broken.

So it is with our body.

It is also a unity of, for example, body and limbs.

An unbreakable unity.

But still breakable ... [p. 64]

Couldn't one say of someone that he is both in the grave and with the Lord? Precisely those who confess the unity of man according to Scripture, can understand the brokenness through death as brokenness.

Dichotomy, which explains 'soul' as 'the person himself,' and the dead body as *not-the-person*, has only seen the breaking of a tie.

Those who confess that 'he' is in the grave and that 'he' is also with the Lord, has seen a 'he' break and prays 'Come quickly, Lord Jesus', sighing and expecting the redemption of our body, Romans 8:23.

According to Scripture we must maintain I must go into the grave and I shall be with the Lord. Then the one person does not become *two*. Just as the broken vase does not become ten and Paul outside of his body did not become two.

This is not preposterous

It is preposterous to want a person to share the concept of indivisibility (which is only God's according to our confession). And it is absurd to say that it is not man himself that is buried, because then it is also not he himself who will come out of the grave. [p. 66] (Translations Aria Sawyer)

* * *

One could divide A. Janse's life into three periods. The first thirty years (1890-1920) one could call his youth and years of preparation for his life's work. The next twenty years (1920-1940) one could call the period of great activity during which basically all his writings originated. The last twenty years (1940-1960) were difficult times for Antheunis. The overview of this phase in his life starts with the opposition which he experienced in spite of the appreciation for his work.

11. Honor and appreciation, opposition, and insult

As many original thinkers before him, Janse experienced both attention and

resistance, appreciation but also criticism This man with his loving heart, who wanted nothing else than to live his faith intensely in all areas of life, was honored and insulted, knighted and kicked, loved and hated.

11.1 Appreciation

One example that his work has not gone by unnoticed, is the fact that A. Janse, "hoofd van een bijzondere lagere school in Biggekerke" (principal of a special elementary school) was honored on 24 August 1931 by Queen Wilhelmina with the conferral of the Companion of the Order of Orange-Nassau. This acknowledgement is similar to the Decoration for Meritorious Service (DMS) that South Africa previously granted to people who in all kinds of areas made special and important contributions.

Another example that Janse was appreciated in certain circles is evident from the fact that his name was on the nomination list for a professorship in pedagogy. However, he chose to remain a teacher in Biggekerke.

Ministers like B. Holwerda, H. J. Jager, C. Veenhof, G. Visee, and C. Vonk also regarded Janse as a much needed reformer and appreciated his work.

11.2 Opposition

As in everyone's life there were however not only roses but also thistles. Someone who tests the spirits with the sword of the Spirit cannot expect to escape opposition, especially if he is not afraid to reveal the truth in no uncertain terms.

As could be expected (cf. Janse, 2001: 285), he experienced fierce opposition from adherents of both Reformed Pietism (like Revd G. H. Kersten) and Reformed Scholasticism (supposedly followers of Kuyper and Bavinck).

He had to endure opposition and scorn, insults, and even slander. For example, someone remarked that in his anthropology truths that even pagans accept are repudiated by Janse. There were examples of disapproving criticism, viciously fierce mockery, and slander in the press. The response to his publication on the biblical view of being human, especially from two theologians, V. Hepp and H. H. Kuyper can be found in his publication *Om "De*

Levende Zie" (1939).

In particular Mrs H. H. Kuyper-Van Oord was guilty of a nasty review in the style of: how can anyone who has no degrees or titles know anything about Greek or biblical anthropology? Apparently Biggekerke was regarded like Nazareth: how can any good come from such a despicable village on an island?

11.3 His reaction

Janse was not a fighter by nature, but through his publications – and his pen could be sharp – he was forced to battle. He had to accept this – not because he enjoyed it, but because it was imposed on him as a result of the cause he supported. Janse also tried to remain positive – reformation is not in the first place to be against something, but to be for obedience to God. That is why, for example, he did not write a book on how bad the "gezangen" (non-biblically based songs) were, but rather on *De Heerlijkheid der Psalmen* ("The glory of the Psalms") (1933).

He held on and did not sit down in sackcloth and ashes. It undoubtedly must have been a great encouragement to him that when the heat of the strife subsided, it clearly emerged that he had for the most part understood Scripture correctly.

The strife in the different churches was extremely sordid and must have caused Janse much pain. He never wrote in the trend of "we, the true church" in contrast to "you, the false church." His struggle for reformation in the thirties was also not only for church renewal, but for reformation on the broader front of life in its totality.

For instance, he wrote a catechism book (around 1935) that was not accepted by synod and was published only in 1950 – but not by synod. In his letter of release (after almost 25 years as a teacher in Biggekerke) the school board crossed out the normally used word "honorable" so that Janse – by his own "Gereformeerde broeders" – received a dishonorable discharge when he left for Breda. The Reformed church council also did not want to give Janse his certificate of membership when he left for Breda, because he had in the meantime transferred to the dissenting *Vrijgemaakte Kerk*.

When his son, the later Revd J. C. Janse, was not accepted as a theological candidate because he could not agree with the prevailing theological views, Janse wrote to him (on 2nd August 1944):

Lay it before the face of the Lord and ask Him to give you licence to preach and to strengthen you through his Holy Spirit. And be happy, because your reward in heaven will be greater than the salary of professors. And the Bank there is very safe. The Lord Jesus who promised this, has also read the church documents. Pray for the brothers of the classis that the Lord will not hold their weakness and ignorance against them and call for revenge on the leaders of the synod (Luke 18: 7, 8) who mislead the church.

In the midst of pain and abuse it is reported that Janse often said, "Some things I shall take higher up – to the heavenly Judge". Maybe it also applies to him, as it did to Luther in an especially trying time of his reformational work, that his friends heard him pray from behind his closed door "Lord, because it is Your cause, You must now give it Your protection".

12. Sorrow in the family

Earlier in his life Janse experienced another kind of pain, the sorrow of losing his wife. At the birth of their second son (C. J. in 1926), Debora (1885-1926) died at the age of forty-one. It was a hard blow to Antheunis, and he had great difficulty dealing with it. As a result of it he landed up in a sanatorium. He writes about it in a letter (13th May 1929)

Sometimes the Lord does not answer our prayers. For example, when I begged Him to be allowed to keep my wife when she was dying. Who knows ... He could spare her. But no. And it tore my heart apart ...

But again God provides. In 1929 he married Francina Pieternella Fregeres (1895-1974). From this marriage another two sons were born as well as three daughters. Large families were normal in those times. We, with our families of two or maximum four are somewhat surprised how this man, with his responsibilities as father and his duties in education, could accomplish so much work in other areas and especially as a writer.

13. Incurably ill and departure from Biggekerke

The Lord not only saddened Antheunis by taking away a loved one. Just like Job, he himself was chastised – so much so that it is actually frightening to us. At the outbreak of World War II (1939) the first symptoms of Parkinson's disease (*paralysis agitans*) were already noticeable.

In 1942 the German Wehrmacht claimed the large Janse home in Biggekerke for military purposes. Walcheren was flooded with soldiers. There was no other living space available. The Janse family had to leave for Breda, where Revd Telder gave them his garage to live in until they later found their own place. These nerve-wrecking experiences – and all that still would happen before the liberation in 1945 – forced the ailing man to consider early retirement (1945). It certainly was not easy to put food on the table for a large family on such a small pension.

At first he could still write articles for the local church paper but the lingering illness caused his strength to deteriorate and made him constantly more of an invalid, until the hand which had written so much finally refused to hold the pen.

It must have been extremely difficult for Janse to take leave of his beloved school and the familiar surroundings of Biggekerke after almost 25 years. Here he had spent the happiest and the most productive years of his life. He almost lost his valuable library. When the Germans notified Janse that he had to leave his house within 24 hours, so that they could use it as a military office, they did seal his study so that it could not be robbed or damaged. When Janse later realized that they might never get their house back, his books were taken out of the house and stored in the attics of several farms on the island. Shortly afterwards, however, the farms were flooded as a result of the bombings of the dyke by the English (October 1944) and the books had to be saved by his son Chris, who used some kind of amphibian transportation to save them from the water (April 1945). The whole library was brought to Breda first by horse and wagon and then by truck.

14. In prison

The war brought even more misery. From a letter which Janse wrote from Breda to P. Grootheest, and also through his children we know more about this.

14.1 Arrested as a traitor

Breda was liberated by the Polish army. (That is why the Motengracht Street, where the Janses lived at the time, was renamed as Poelseweg.) Shortly after the liberation, on 31 October 1944 Antheunis Janse was picked up by a "Gereformeerd" man and two boys from the resistance movement. In all haste, he could just grab his Bible and some other documents that he would need in order to defend himself. During the march through the city – branded as a traitor – he was booed at by the roaring crowd. At night in the prison he was snapped at by the personnel.

The worst is that a "Gereformeerde broeder" (Reformed brother) took away his glasses and his Bible with the words "You've done enough Bible reading."

That night he and three others slept in the cold and dark cell without having had anything to eat. They did not get anything to eat until five o'clock the next day – a piece of dry bread, beans, and two cups of tea.

On the fourth of November he and 250 members of the National Socialist Movement (NSM) were transported to the attic of the Military Academy. Apparently some of them were arrested on the false accusation that they had sympathized with the Germans during the war.

14.2 The background

As far as I could determine (the case still has to be thoroughly examined) the accusations against Janse were unfounded.

As already indicated (also see the addendum), even before the war, he wrote against the National Socialism of Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy. (It was precisely these publications which he quickly grabbed at his arrest to defend himself against the accusations.) He was, therefore, not pro German nor was he for the Dutch National Socialist Movement (NSM). The Germans captured the Netherlands in 1940 and as a result of their ideology of "race, blood, and soil" from October all the teachers had to fill in forms about their ancestry in

order to check if they were not Jews or to see if they had any Jewish blood in their family. During the occupation teachers were forced to put the NSM party papers in their classrooms, so that students could look at them and read them. Many teachers of the resistance did not want to do this and threw the party papers into the wastepaper basket. Janse did not see this as a solution. He pointed out the papers to his students, but not before he told them what the National Socialist ideology entailed and how dangerous these papers actually were.

In this he obeyed the enemy, but at the same time he counteracted the effect of their ideology. (Revd J. D. Janse was at that time an eight-year-old boy, and had his father for a teacher.) In the eyes of those who supported resistance, however, this pedagogically correct behavior was something terrible. He was regarded as a coward. The teachers who dared to throw away the papers, of course, were seen as heroes.

14.3 His reply

During that time many people asked Janse what their attitude in the war should be. Janse compiled a stenciled paper of 22 pages at the end of 1942 or at the beginning 1943, with the title "Onze houding in deze tijd" (Our attitude in the present circumstances). It consists of 55 questions which Janse answers. To show how relevant this paper still is just a few examples of the questions "Couldn't it happen that the government becomes so anti-Christian that we don't need to obey it (according to Romans 13) anymore?" (question 11), "or that we need no longer pray for it? " (question 12). "When is armed resistance allowed?" (question 15). "Shouldn't we obey God more than man?" (question 25). "Why are you now so set against the spirit of the world, which curses and despises Hitler and Germany?" (question 32). "Is our queen Wilhelmina still sovereign in the Netherlands, now that the Germans have occupied it?" (question 36). "Don't we have a right to resist the Germans?" (question 38). "Is a positive Christian life still possible under the National Socialist reign?" (question 48). "Would you recommend voluntary military service?" (question 52) and so forth.

Janse wrestled with the difference between a lawful government and an

occupying force (the Germans). In such a complex situation one cannot simply say, "You must obey." (Janse also resisted, for example, in the case of the NSM papers by warning his students against them.) On the other hand, Janse did not say, "You may never resist." People, however, could not understand that, while before the war Janse had written against National Socialism, when this ideology actually had the Netherlands in its grip, he was silent – or even created the impression that he condoned it. Janse's answer was that he continued to back what he had written before the war. Now, however, there was an even greater danger than National Socialism that threatened his nation. Just like Israel – as a result of their disobedience – was attacked on the authority of God by pagan foreign nations, Janse saw the invasion by the "Moffen" (Germans) as a punishment or judgment of God. It was the covenantal revenge of God for the apostasy and sins of Christianity, and therefore one had to humble oneself.

But what was the reaction of the Dutch people? Pride instead of a confession of sins. Dutch people reasoned God cannot punish our nation – we're His chosen people! In contrast to the National Socialist ideology Janse saw a nationalist *volksideologie* (idolizing the nation) in his own nation, that practised idolatry concerning *het Vaderland* (the homeland). He regarded the one ideology as no better than the other – according to Janse's views both imply idolatry and renounce the true God.

According to his grandson, W. Janse (cf. Janse 2001: 287), Janse called for obedience to the German occupiers instead of to the Dutch rulers who fled The Netherlands. He also expected the Germans to counteract communism. He called on his own people to humble themselves because of God's punishment. He rejected resistance and interpreted it as not acknowledging God's wrath upon Christianity. In this way Janse, however, became estranged from many of his friends.

According to Stellingwerf (1992: 155-156), Vollenhoven had since the summer of 1940 disagreed with this viewpoint of Janse. It also affected their long friendship. At the end of 1943 Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd even wanted to prevent Janse from being re-elected on the board of the Society for Calvinist Philosophy. K. J. Popma, however, defended Janse.

At a time – immediately after the terrible occupation, the winter of hunger and all the atrocities of Hitler all over Europe – when political feelings were explosive, there really was no understanding for Janse's point of view. Even today, Janse's behavior during the World War II is still a sensitive issue (cf., for instance, Kramer-Vreugdenhil, 2001 who gives an unhistorical and incorrect picture of Janse's position during World War II).

14.4 The rest of the story

In the previously mentioned letter to Grootheest, Janse relates how he confessed the name of Christ with other prisoners. As the eldest, he was later appointed as the leader of a group of ten and therefore responsible also for all the "crimes" in this group. The times when a certain Mr Bakker (who could retain his Bible) read from his Bible to Janse were his best moments in prison.

On 14 November many Dutch citizens were sent to Vucht. (A feared prison camp. Before the liberation the Germans were in command there.) With three others Janse had to live in a cell with only two straw sacks and no table or chair. He was permitted to get a couple of blankets but no news or visits from his family. Finally on 18 November, after receiving special permission, he could exchange a few words with his wife. In order to fill the long hours, with nothing to read, he taught Bible history to his fellow prisoners (who were Catholic) in his Zeelands dialect, "mijn eerste Moedertaal, waarin ik het nog beter kan zeggen dan in het Algemeen Beschaafd Nederlands" ("my dearest mother language, in which I can better express myself than in High Cultural Dutch").

Meanwhile his health deteriorated. Fortunately, on 18 November he was transferred with ten others to the *Regentenkamer* in the prison. There were chairs and a table, light, water, a straw sack on the floor, and a toilet. His wife and two of his children were allowed to visit him once a week and they took him sandwiches and apples. All the attempts to retrieve his Bible and his glasses were in vain. His wife was permitted to bring him another Bible and also the glasses of someone who had been evacuated, with which he could once again see.

Not until 23 January, after almost three months in prison, was he

released, although he remained under house arrest. He did receive permission to go to church once on a Sunday. On 22 May (the date on his previously mentioned letter) this was still the case.

The lawsuit did not take place until much later – in August 1945. He did not appear before an official court of law, but in Breda before a "tribunal" – something like a people's court at the time of the French Revolution. In this lawsuit the nationalist spirit prevailed. He was acquitted of collaboration with the German enemy, but a year later a subpoena was served on him again. Finally, in July 1947, he was found guilty of not participating in the resistance against the German occupation of his country. He only received a light punishment (he was not allowed to vote for the next ten years), and after that he was acquitted. He was permitted to keep his insignia of knighthood.

15. Twenty years of chastisement

The last twenty years (1940-1960) in Janse's life was a period of broken vitality as a result of Parkinson's disease, which made it ever more difficult for him to write, to move and later even to speak. The fact that this energetic man of earlier times could hardly work anymore after his fiftieth year must have been a great trial to him. How mysterious are God's ways with us. How much more could we have learned from Janse if he had remained healthy.

However, according to Revd B. Telder, his pastor in Breda, the contribution of Janse as an elder during these last years of his life was something special, no pastor was as experienced and trained in the mysteries of faith as this farmer's son from Zeeland.

16. The end of his life

At the beginning of 1960 it became clear that Janse's strength was declining. On 6 March he celebrated the Lord's Supper for the last time together with the congregation. After a short sickbed he passed away on 18 March. His last words to Revd Telder were almost unintelligible: "May the Lord strengthen you in your work."

The modest reformer of Biggekerke was buried in the Protestant graveyard of Zuilen in Breda. During the memorial service Revd Telder asked those present to sing the last stanza of Psalm 90: "Strengthen our hands and bless our efforts, crown our work now and always." The text on the tombstone is typical for this modest servant of God, who did not put his trust in his own work, but only trusted in God's deeds "Uw werk, o Heere, behoud dat in het leven." Translated "O Lord, revive your work in the midst of the years" (Habakkuk 3: 2).

In his *In Memoriam* in the church paper, *Opbouw*, Revd Telder very appropriately quoted from Daniel 12:1-3. In the first verses of this chapter the curtains of eternity are pulled back to reveal the resurrection of the dead in which Janse, who had thought about life and death so profoundly, believed with all his heart:

At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

Antheunis Janse also belonged to the group of those wise men, because he had such a clear insight into the will of God. Therefore he could lead many of his contemporaries – and today us as well – through the maze of confusing movements onto the right path.

17. The secret of his reformational contribution

If the previous sections gave the impression that Janse was almost perfect, without flaw or sin or faulty formulations (see James 3:2) it was a wrong impression. As with all of us, in his life too only a small beginning of obedience was disclosed. There is, however, nothing noble about delving into someone's

faults and weaknesses.

17.1 An important lesson

Maybe the most important asset of Janse's biography is that one does not need to be a great or learned person in order to be a reformer. Janse never studied at a university and yet he had been more influential than many university professors of his day. Reformation is urgently needed in our country and on our continent in all areas and it is not only the calling of the "great leaders." Everyone – in the "Biggekerke" where God has placed us – has a task in it.

What then was his secret? It can perhaps be summarized in one word: wisdom. He was a wise man. How did he obtain that rare and precious gift, that is so needed in our day?

17.2 Three ways to acquire wisdom

There are three ways to obtain wisdom: from experience, from God's word, and (sometimes) from scholarship. Janse made use of all three sources.

In the first place, he was a man who had practical knowledge of life. With an alert spirit, a sharp capability to distinguish, and an open heart full of love he stood in the midst of the world where God had placed him. He paid attention and had an intense interest in what happened around him. His experience in life made him a prudent man. One could also say that Janse had great respect for God's marvelous creation and, at the same time, the realization of the terrible results of the fall into sin.

He was not in the first place, a scholarly man. This does not mean that Janse despised scholarliness. His large library, with the many scholarly works which he had worked through, would immediately contradict this. He only corrected the order, scholarly knowledge does not have the last word. Therefore he constantly tried to apply scholarly knowledge in the service of practical life. The two ways of knowing reality (the pre-scientific and the scientific) should influence each other in such a way as to stimulate and correct each other.

17.3 The most important source of his wisdom

Janse never severed his practical life experience or his studies from the most important source of wisdom, that is, God's word. He continuously directs our attention to the concrete and non-scientific language of the Bible. This insight did not make him appreciate the revelation of Scripture less, but rather it made him appreciate it more. For him the Bible is relevant, aimed at concrete circumstances and not a book with timeless, abstract explanations about redemptive truths – which Reformed Scholasticism made it into. He did not regard the Bible as having a complete set of rules for living, or a book that should be used in a biblicist manner as a handbook to solve every kind of issue.

Janse, however, did not simply acquire his extensive Bible knowledge passively. He read and reread his Bible, underlined, made comments, compared Scripture with Scripture, and contemplated. His main resources were the biblical concordance by Trommius and the notes of the *Statenvertaling*. He had also taught himself enough Hebrew and Greek to check important concepts with the help of dictionaries.

Above all therefore the humble teacher from Biggekerke loved and knew the Bible. He heard the word of his heavenly Father in it and applied it concretely in his whole life. Time and again we are surprised by the refreshing, unique, and authentic way in which he opens up the treasures of God's revelation for his own and our time. He does this in such a manner that revelation touches our hearts as the direct and living word of God.

From his wrestling with the word of God, Janse gathered foundational perspectives for his Christian worldview. Well-known reformational ideas, such as the sovereignty of God in our entire life and the central meaning of the covenant, and God's kingdom, were once again highlighted.

17.4 Testing the spirits of his times

The fact that he lived so close to creation and to God's light on creation, gave Janse particularly sharp eyes to test the spirits of his times. His study was not just an interesting hobby – he wanted to hear the Lord speak in the midst of the time in which he lived. In his sharp analyses of people such as Barth, Gandhi,

Mussolini, Lenin, Kant, Hegel, and Dostoyevsky, and his gauging of all kinds of movements such as Pietism, Scholasticism, Marxism, National Socialism, and Anabaptism, Scripture was his final criterion. In his attempt to understand his times, he was always searching for the core, the essence, the deepest motivations, the spirit which possesses people and movements and which can incite millions.

Janse indeed had a sensitive antenna for the disastrous results of attempts to synthesize or compromise on the side of Christians with all kinds of non-Scriptural tendencies. He continually warned against these and kept an eye on the principle of antithesis in his struggle against the spirit of the times.

Because he lived in the assurance that Christ is King, he did not consider it necessary to create the impression that he was important, distinguished or significant. Modestly he kept working tirelessly – also when criticism, mockery and insinuations came his way.

17.5 A message for today

Hopefully it has become clear how a common teacher on an isolated, distant island could become such an influential figure. He took up the torch of the reformational tradition in the nineteen twenties and thirties and carried it further. Today it is our task to take over this torch of hope from him – and others of kindred spirit who have accompanied and followed him – and to spread its light in our own times. This is the best way in which we can bring our respect to this modest morning star of a twentieth-century reformational worldview.

18. For future research

As possible Janse research projects for the future, the following could be considered (not necessarily in order of priority):

- A complete index (bibliography) of his publications – this is more or less completed.
- Expansion of the Janse archives; for example, copies of important correspondence with his contemporaries are still lacking.
- Editing and publishing of publishable unpublished manuscripts and

correspondence.

- The compilation of a "reader" of the best Janse has produced – if possible in English – so that it can be read by a broader public.
- A scientific biography – preferably also in English.
- Systematic critical studies of different aspects of his thought.

19. Epilogue

As promised at the beginning, this postscript will explain why and how this biographical sketch came into being.

19.1 A forgotten thinker

There are many forgotten reformers in history. This is also true of the reformational worldview and philosophical movement which was started in the nineteen thirties.

The name of Janse is not even mentioned in the two *Festschriften* dedicated to Vollenhoven (cf. Zuidema, 1951; and De Boer, 1973). In 1961 at the twenty-fifth commemoration on the "Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte" (cf. Van Dijk and Stellingwerf, 1961), extensive attention was given to H. Dooyeweerd, D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, S. U. Zuidema, J. P. A. Mekkes, K. J. Popma, and H. van Riessen. In this book the name of A. Janse, however, is only mentioned twice in passing (pp. 89 and 90) when Vollenhoven is discussed. Janse died in 1960 – the year in which the editors were still working on the *Festschrift* and his death undoubtedly must have focused the attention of those compiling the edition on his contribution to a reformational philosophy. In Klapwijk's description of the 100 years history of philosophy at the Free University of Amsterdam (Klapwijk, 1980), the name of Janse is not even mentioned in a footnote.

In 1986, at the fiftieth commemoration of the "Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte" it was no different, even though the theme of the symposium (11-15 August) was "On being human: anthropology in Christian perspective." It was exactly in the area of anthropology that Janse was a pioneer, long before any of the above-mentioned important figures of the

reformational philosophy. Janse thought and wrote a series of articles about being human according to the Scriptures, and he left us no less than three books about this topic (see addendum). He focused attention on the unity of the person in a time when the Reformed world was still holding on to old Scholastic dualism à la Voetius *cum suis*. Without his tireless work, many of us would even today still be in the spell of such unbiblical ideas about the human being.

Some recognition at least was given to Janse when Stellingwerf (1992: 252) wrote that Vollenhoven "in cooperation with A. Janse and H. Dooyeweerd" became the *de facto* leader of the reformational movement in philosophy.

Maybe I feel so strongly attracted to this largely forgotten thinker because with him we are at the start of the movement for a Christian worldview and philosophy in the twentieth [and twenty-first] century. With him, more than with the other, later representatives, we feel the deeply religious pulse of the movement beating. Maybe he was ignored because he did not offer us a scholarly philosophical system, but something more in the nature of a biblical worldview, which gradually grew within him and was stimulated by his personal relationship with God and his word.

19.2 The origin of this biography

This popular sketch of Janse's life and work developed during the past 35 years through the following four phases.

19.2.1 First encounter with Janse's work in the Netherlands

I first got to know the writings of A. Janse when I studied Philosophy at the Centrale Interfaculteit (the Faculty of Philosophy) of the Free University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands) 40 years ago (from July 1968 to June 1970). I was already fascinated in a special way by what he wrote. What was the secret of this simple teacher from Biggekerke who had never had any formal academic training?

Regretfully the library of the Free University then had no more than a dozen of the works of A. Janse. Fortunately, I discovered a "Lijst van werken, referaten, brochures, tijdschriften, enz van A. Janse" (a list of works, lectures,

brochures, magazine articles, etc. of A. Janse), which gave me an impression of his many writings since 1917. At the time I managed to acquire (and read) most of his works from second-hand bookstores, and I also made photocopies of his articles in journals. My idea was to immerse myself in Janse's works in their entirety and maybe to write something about this remarkable man and his thinking.

19.2.2 The first draft in Afrikaans

In the meantime a lot of water has gone under the bridge after my return to South Africa. The Janse collection on my bookshelves has grown with the republishing of a couple of his books, including the reprinting of many of his shorter writings in *Gereformeerd Schoolblad*. Thanks to the help of my friend, Dr K. A. Bril, previously head of the Medical Library of the Free University, I obtained much (complementary) material on Janse during 1980-81. Among these were several "In memoriam" articles which appeared in different journals after his death plus some photocopies of articles by Janse himself.

Especially valuable was a bibliography of 25 pages compiled by C. J. Janse, a son of A. Janse. This bibliography contains different manuscripts (e.g. lectures) typed articles, a number of published articles and an extensive number of monographs (books and brochures). For the children of Janse, C. J. Janse compiled a folder with many interesting bits of information about their father. Using some summaries from that (plus some additions) he also made a collection for Janse's grandchildren in 1980, of which I obtained a photocopy, thanks again to Dr Bril. In the "Beknopte lijst van publicaties 1916-1961" [Concise list of publications] more of Janse's later publications were mentioned, and also an entire series of articles in Breda's church paper, from 1945-1948, which was not included in the former bibliography compiled by C. J. Janse.

After almost twenty years I finally had two weeks off (in July 1986) in order to at least write something about Janse. I realized only too well that the limited number of pages devoted to him was entirely insufficient to do justice to the reformatinal work of this man. Janse is someone worthy of a complete biography. More than 30 years ago Prof. C. Veenhof wrote that it would only

be detrimental to the Reformed world to forget Janse. During that same time, Revd B. Telder wrote that no historian would do justice to the history of Reformed life in the second quarter of the twentieth century in the Netherlands if he would bypass the person and influence of A. Janse.

19.2.3 The final Afrikaans text

Many years had again passed. This has, however, produced a better end result, especially since I could test my temporary manuscript in August 1986 in the Netherlands, and, in response to the discussions I was able to have with the three sons of Janse, correct and expand it.

On 4 August 1986 I had a long interview with C. J. Janse and his brother, Revd J. D. Janse. At that time the Janse Archive had been organized in chronological order into 16 binders of considerable size and except for Janse's books, also contained brochures and other publications, many unpublished articles, his diaries (from 1929 to 1932), correspondence (with Janse and also copies of letters from Janse to others), photographs, newspaper clippings, etc. (The A. Janse Archive was afterwards rearranged by Dr Wim Janse, a grandson, and handed over to the "Historisch Documentatiecentrum voor het Nederlands Protestantisme vanaf 1800 tot heden" at the Free University of Amsterdam, where it is accessible today [compiled by D. Smits, archive number 157]).

On 6 August 1986 I was able to have a very insightful discussion with Revd Jan J. Janse, emeritus minister. As already mentioned, he owns several books from Janse's library containing his comments, as well as Janse's own writings.

I would like to express my thanks to these family members (and also to others in the Netherlands) who were so co-operative and not only read the first copy of my manuscript (1986), but also checked the final text (1988) and gave worthwhile comments which improved it before publication (van der Walt, 1989).

19.2.4 The present English text

My original booklet in Afrikaans on Janse (van der Walt, 1989) was translated into Dutch and published in the Netherlands in 2000 without any changes in

content (Van der Walt, 2000). However, when Mrs Aria Sawyer of Hungary translated it into English in 2004 I took the opportunity to rework the manuscript in the light of *inter alia* the following publications which appeared after 1989 on Vollenhoven and which also shed some new light on Janse: Bril and Tol (1992), Kok (1992) and Stellingwerf (1992). Finally W. Janse (2001; 2006), A. Janse's grandson, provided me with valuable information. His article of 2001 contains a brief biography and provides details about Janse's letters, diaries, lectures, stenciled material, manuscripts, etc. and the different Dutch archives where these can be found. This article (cf. Janse, 2001: 287-288) also includes a long list of literature on A. Janse.

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on D.H.Th. Vollenhoven, was documented in detail in the following dissertation:

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Van "Dordt" tot '34. Kampen: Kok 1934 2nd printing 1984.

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Biblical studies specifically on the portrayal of being human according to the Scriptures

A series of articles on what happens to man at death and afterwards *Op den*

Uitkijk: Tijdschrift voor het Christelijk Gezin 9 (1932) and 10 (1934)

De Mensch als "levende Ziel." Amsterdam: Holland 1st printing 1934, 2nd printing 1937.

Van Idolen en Schepsele. Kampen: Kok (1938)

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Politics

De Verhouding van de Christelijke Politiek tot de Wereldse. Aalten: De Graafschap, 1933

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Nationaal-Socialistische Fascisten Politiek Gezien in de Ontwikkeling van Mussolini en in de Propaganda van zijn Geestverwanten in Nederland. Aalten: De Graafschap, 1932, reprinted 1933

Articles such as "De rede van Mussolini van 14 November 1933 over den corporatieve staat," "De nieuwe vorm van nominalistische wereldbeschouwing in het Nationaal-Socialisme," and "Gandhi," published in *Antirevolutionaire Staatkunde*

Philosophy

Inleiding in de Calvinistische Filosofie, 2nd print Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1982

Dogmatics/ Theology

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF D. H. Th. VOLLENHOVEN

(1892-1978)

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS HISTORIOGRAPHY OF PHILOSOPHY

1. Introduction: revived interest in Vollenhoven's philosophy

Herman Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) and Dirk H. Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978) are both regarded as the Dutch founders of a Christian-reformational philosophy during the first half of the previous century. Dooyeweerd, however, is internationally the better known of the two. An important reason may be the fact that his *opus magnum* (published in the thirties in Dutch) was translated (in the fifties) into English as *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*. Vollenhoven's works went out of print, were not (until very recently) translated into today's *lingua franca*, and thus they were not accessible to Christian philosophers who could not read the original Dutch.

Proponents of a Christian approach in philosophy should be grateful that this unfortunate situation is slowly changing. Since 1992 – the year of the commemoration of Vollenhoven's birth a hundred years ago – key texts of his *oeuvre* are being republished, and they are also being translated into English.

This chapter aims to make a modest contribution in restoring an acknowledgement of Vollenhoven's contribution to reformational philosophy. It will, firstly, do so by providing information on existing and more recent literature on Vollenhoven's philosophy in general. Secondly, literature on his problem-historical method of philosophical historiography will be reviewed. Thirdly, it will give a brief, elementary introduction into Vollenhoven's method of studying the history of philosophy.

2. Material on Vollenhoven and his philosophy in general

Vollenhoven has been known as the historian and his brother-in-law, Dooyeweerd, as the systematic philosopher in the reformational tradition. The greater part of Vollenhoven's time and energy has indeed been devoted to his study of the history of philosophy. Less well-known is the fact that he has also given – in his own distinctive way – attention to systematic philosophy. Bril, Hart and Klapwijk (in their dedication to the 1973 volume in honor of Vollenhoven) even stated “the very manner of his approach to history betrays him to be a systematician at heart. For his involvement in the history of philosophy has been primarily for the sake of further positive elaboration of systematic insights...” His historiography cannot be separated from his systematic philosophy and vice versa, so it is appropriate for this article to start by reviewing some sources on his philosophy in general.

2.1 Bibliographies of Vollenhoven's publications

During his long career Vollenhoven published much. A first requirement to research his contribution has been to ascertain what he wrote, and when and where it was published. Groen (1961), Bril (1973), Petersen and Derksen (1976) and Bril, Derksen and Kok (1979) did important groundwork in providing researchers with lists of Vollenhoven's publications.

2.2 Bibliographical contributions

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

2.3 Publications in honor of Vollenhoven

On two occasions Vollenhoven was honored with *Festschriften*. The first (Zuidema, 1951) was published at the occasion of his twenty-fifth year as professor at the Free University. The second volume (Bril, Hart and Klapwijk, 1973) appeared in commemoration of his eightieth birthday. Both these volumes contain valuable material for Vollenhoven research.

2.4 Republications and translations of Vollenhoven's systematic philosophy

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

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

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

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

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

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

The following four original sources are indispensable for a study of this method. (1) Vollenhoven (1956) first *applied* his method in an introductory course for students in which he gave a survey of the history of western

thought. (2) In one article he (Vollenhoven, 1961) *explained* his method. (3) A year later (Vollenhoven, 1962) his *Schematische Kaarten* (schematic maps) appeared. In a bird's-eye view they provided a *survey* of the philosophical conceptions and their interrelatedness of western philosophers from antiquity to the twentieth century. (4) Finally, from 1959 to 1964 Vollenhoven became a contributor to the fifth edition of the *Oosthoeks Encyclopedie*, responsible for religion and philosophy. In this capacity he wrote articles on many of the major western philosophers and philosophical problems. It provided the opportunity to add more "flesh" (detail) to his very brief discussion of different philosophers in his study guide for students (of 1956) as well as his "skeleton" survey of conceptions (of 1962).

These four publications complement each other and should be studied together to get a full picture of Vollenhoven's method. In summary it consists of two basic lines. On the one hand it gives the types of philosophy (the ontological differences and similarities), on the other hand the successive time-currents (climates of opinion), which molded, modified, and revitalized the ontological conceptions. Also a thinker's dependency on his predecessors, the interrelation with his contemporaries and his influence on subsequent generations became visible in Vollenhoven's survey – especially in his schematic charts (1962).

3.2 New additions to and editions of the basic texts

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

From 1992 the process of the republication of Vollenhoven's writings on the problem-historical method gained momentum. Bril (in Tol and Bril, 1992: 303-346) republished two texts. This was followed by Bril and Boonstra (2000) who edited a new edition of Vollenhoven's *Schematische Kaarten* (1962) with many valuable notes to enhance its accessibility. Then Bril (2005b) followed with a republication of Vollenhoven's *Kort Overzicht van de Geschiedenis der*

Wijsbegeerte (1956) and *De consequent probleemhistorische methode* (1961) as well as selections from his *Schematische Kaarten* (1962). This book was also published in an English translation (cf. Bril, 2005c). The most recent is the republication in one volume (473 pages) by Bril (2005d) of all the articles on philosophers and philosophical problems which Vollenhoven contributed (during 1959-1964) to the *Oosthoek's Encyclopedie*.

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

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

Vollenhoven's method fascinated many Christian philosophers around the world. Because of the complexity of two thousand years of western philosophy, his method may be difficult to follow. (For educational purposes some of his students have tried to simplify it). At the same time this method, developed from a distinct Christian perspective, provides much deeper insight into the patterns of the western mind than most other methods. The following are a few examples of the worldwide interest in this method.

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

In *Canada* the contributions of Hart (1965a; 1965b), Seerveld (1973; 1975) and Wolters (1970; 1979) should be mentioned.

In the *United States of America* Runner (1958/1959), Van Dijk (1969/1970) and Kok (1998) explained and/or applied the problem-historical method.

In *Australia* see Van der Laan (1967 and 1973).

In *South Africa* Taljaard (1955) applied Vollenhoven's method in his dissertation on Franz Brentano. He also translated Vollenhoven's survey of the history of philosophy (1956) into Afrikaans (cf. Vollenhoven, 1982). In a book on his own systematic philosophy (Taljaard, 1976) the influence of Vollenhoven's method is evident. The present writer contributed articles on the method in van der Walt, 1969/1970, 1973, 1978 and 1986. The method is also applied by South African philosophers who have not published on the method as such. For example, Ponti (J. J.) Venter of the School of Philosophy at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University employs a simplified version in his courses on the history of ideas.

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

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

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

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

The history of western philosophy often makes one think of a dense forest with a rich variety of fauna and flora. To follow a footpath at whim or at

random will not be advisable. One needs a good guide in order not to get hopelessly lost.

4.1 Introduction: why study the history of philosophy?

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

Many people regard history as something that is merely belonging to the past. History has been described as being what Macbeth has called life: "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" The study of history is thus seen by some as digging over the debris of the past. Why doesn't one leave the old philosophers in peace? The answer is very simple: it is because they will not leave us in peace. Philosophical problems are unsolvable but at the same time unavoidable!

Everybody starts from a heritage

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

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

One can learn from one's predecessors

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

which I can trust and build?

These are the most profound and troubling questions humans wrestle with. But at the same time the answers to these problems determine one's whole life. The history of philosophy tells how the greatest minds in history have grappled with these fundamental issues and how they found answers to them. Their answers can not be regarded as final solutions – even though many of them thought so at the time. Their struggles, however, were not in vain. To listen to the accounts of their struggles, provides some sort of schooling in one's own quest for answers.

One can attain a broader perspective

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

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

Philosophy has practical consequences

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

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

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

Value in non-Christian philosophies for Christians

Another question is whether a Christian philosopher can also learn something from a secular philosopher.

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

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

Let us return to my metaphor of the indigenous forest at the beginning of §4. In the course of history one giant of the forest after the other has either been toppled, or cut off for the sawmill and the factory. But they are still of value. One has the task to study the various kinds of wood. Each is different. From their color, texture, and (when they are cut up) fragrance this becomes clear. In this way one also has to look at the greats in the field of the human intellect in the light of their heritage (writings) to determine of what "wood" they were carved. For this, however, one needs a good method not least because the history of western philosophy is old (2,500 years) and complicated.

4.2 Requirements for a method to study the history of philosophy

A method presupposes among others an *aim* (for example a survey of and insight in a specific field), careful *planning* to enable one to reach the goal,

execution of the plan by a *person* (or apparatus controlled by a person) with due consideration of the *material* that has to be processed, and the *means* that he has at his disposal. A method (both scientific and pre-scientific) rests on assumptions or presuppositions and it can therefore not be neutral.

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

It should truly be built out "in Your light" (Psalm 36:10), which means that one cannot just use an existing (secular) method and graft onto it the Christian approach. The light of the word has to be incorporated in it in such a way that the method should enable one to penetrate to the core of the history of philosophy.

It should be a truly philosophical method, by which is meant that it has to fit the material which has to be worked with, which is the history of philosophy. A non-philosophical method may not simply be imposed on the field of study. The method has to tie in with the field of study. Seeing that the field of study of philosophy is a very wide one (the whole spectrum of reality) and not a particular facet (as is the case in the subject disciplines), the method would also have to be comprehensive.

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

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

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

Vollenhoven in his method uses the Bible as a determining touchstone. How does he, by means of insights gleaned from the Bible, determine the kind of

"wood" used to carve a certain philosopher? From the Bible Vollenhoven distinguishes three realities in his ontology: God, his laws, and the cosmos (which is subjected to God's laws). He therefore tests each philosophy on three levels. He looks carefully at the *color* of the philosophy, he sees the wood and smells the special *fragrance*, he planes the wood and touches its unique *texture*.

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

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

The Greek and Roman philosophers of antiquity (500 BC – 100 AD) answer that they did not know the Bible or the God of the Bible at all.

The Patristic and the Medieval philosophers (200 to 1400 AD) say that they could not only listen to the word of God, because they also had to keep account of the important philosophical heritage of Antiquity. They therefore tried, in their synthetic philosophy, to serve two masters at the same time.

The philosophers during the period of history from the Renaissance and the Reformation (1500 and after) do not like the spirit of compromise of the Middle Ages. This is, however, as far as they agree. Renaissance man (and all his many followers in western history) does not like synthesis, because the Christian elements encompassed in it offends. The Reformers (and their small number of spiritual children) want to get rid of the pagan element in synthetic philosophy in order to be able to listen to the unadulterated word of God once more.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vollenhoven does not merely ask the *formal* question (namely, what a particular philosopher's attitude towards the word had been), but he also asks

questions about *content* (with reference to *what* the Bible reveals to us). It is not because Vollenhoven wishes to judge people unjustly (such as the Greeks who could not know the Bible), but because he is convinced that only the light of the Bible can supply answers to ultimate questions.

Therefore the second question that each philosopher has to answer according to this method is: where did you seek and find direction? How did you determine what is right or wrong, true or false, ugly or beautiful?

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

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

Subjectivists

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

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

Unnecessary to say that subjectivism (often accompanied by

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

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

Objectivists

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

This has the unfortunate effect of seducing the objectivist to seek firm ground, basic certainties and guidelines for life in these objects. The objects have now become the laws for the subjects. An object, for example, the seductive fragrance of one's girl friend's perfume, may well influence one's actions, but may never become the norm for your behavior.

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

Realists

The great Greek philosopher Plato (427-347 BC) gave a third reply to Vollenhoven's question about law. Because he realized that neither subjectivism nor objectivism offered sure direction, he visualized the law *outside* the cosmos. The law is according to him a *thing* (Latin *res*, from which

"realism"), which exists independently outside the cosmos, and indicates to us how we should live in terms of what is true, good, and beautiful. (In this way Plato became the first Greek thinker who acknowledged two separate modes of being.) According to him we can know these laws by way of our reasoning power.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Throughout the ages human beings have also wondered about themselves. Where do we come from? Do we consist of body and soul? What is the sense of our existence, and what is our destiny? How do we have to live with others? How do we attain true knowledge?

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

The origin of reality

As regards the question about *origin* there are those who have called on myth (the result of fantasies of faith) to explain the origin of reality. These thinkers are characterized as *mythologizing*. Others have rejected this explanation. Vollenhoven calls them *non-mythologizing*. Within this group there are also differences: the *purely cosmological* philosophers completely evade the question about origins and they philosophize only about the cosmos

as it exists, while the *cosmogono-cosmological* philosophers do not disregard the question of origin.

Original unity or diversity

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

Universal and individual

To the question as to what the *relationship between the universal and the individual* is, history offers fascinating theories. Vollenhoven distinguishes between *universalism* (which regards the universal of primary importance and puts the individual in the second place), *individualism* (which does the exact opposite) and *partial universalism*, which follows a middle road. Among the partial universalists Vollenhoven distinguishes two subtypes, namely, those who hold to a *macro-microcosmos theory*, and those who accept the doctrine of *form and matter*.

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

Summary

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

era or period, which is determined in the light of a philosopher's attitude to the word of God and the God of the word;

trend of time-current, which is determined according to a philosopher's view of law; and

type, which emerges from the philosopher's vision on the *cosmos*.

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

Vollenhoven's own systematic philosophy, with its basic distinction between God, law, and cosmos, clearly influenced the way he understood the history of philosophy.

The first and major question (as to whether Vollenhoven's method was really constructed in the light of the Scriptures) can therefore be answered affirmatively. The second question set at the beginning, namely, as to whether this method does justice to the field or investigation can be dealt with briefly.

4.4 Does Vollenhoven's method do justice to the history of philosophy?

The requirement set above, was that an alien method should not be imposed on a field of investigation. Stated in positive terms there should be compatibility between the nature of the method and the prospective field of study. This is an important requirement.

A caricature of the method

People have accused Vollenhoven of "raping" the history of philosophy by his method. He has also been accused of being guilty of a pigeonhole-type of

schematism. He would then have gone around like a Sherlock Holmes and arrest every philosopher he encountered, label him or her, and place him or her into a previously prepared cell. The mesh imprisoning the philosopher would be woven of type and trend, and the philosopher would be guilty as charged until he had proved the opposite!

A reply

Such criticism could only emanate from people who were not fully aware of what Vollenhoven was trying to do. In the first place he did not fully formulate his method before he turned to the history of philosophy. His method grew gradually on the basis of what he discovered in the history itself. (It was only in 1948 that he formally named his method.)

In the second place Vollenhoven was always willing to adapt his method, to correct it, and to make it more encompassing. These continual adaptations were often the cause of great despair among his students, but also clear proof that he did not attempt to force the history of philosophy into a steel corset. By means of his terminology he wished to distinguish small details in the patterns of thought of the various philosophers.

In the third place it is also not true that Vollenhoven tried to pigeonhole philosophers in one of only a few pigeonholes. However, this is true of many of the current textbooks of philosophical history which have no more than three or four labels at their disposal. Vollenhoven's method allows several thousand possibilities. If his method has to be called a prison-house for philosophers, then it is rather a liberal prison-house.

The two sides of the method

In philosophy one deals with the *basic problems* that each philosopher wrestles with anew, but never fully chews. One could say that the ever-recurring problems point at the *constant* element. As every other history, the *history of philosophy* is *dynamic*, ever-changing. As a result of the quest for direction (especially in terms of norms or laws), which never comes to rest, the history of philosophy remains in motion.

Vollenhoven thus wishes to do justice to the field of investigation by

giving attention to both the problematic and the historical. (This explains the name of the method.) Emphasis purely on history is not sufficient. On the other hand history will disintegrate into small fragments when only the philosophical issues are lifted out.

The emphasis on the close link between these two facets of the history of philosophy ensures that the philosophical historiographer sees the problems as they originate, or as they developed in the course of history. This prevents, for example, that one should anachronistically superimpose one's own problems on a previous era and, for example, refer to Socrates as an existentialist.

Vollenhoven was not the first to develop a problem-historical approach. In his well-known *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie*, Windelband also indicated the need for a "problemgeschichtliche" method according to which emphasis should be on the "Hauptprobleme" (main problems) and "Hauptrichtungen" (main currents or directions). Windelband, however, did not consistently stick to his problem-historical method.

Therefore Vollenhoven's method is sometimes called the *consistent* problem-historical method. One or the other form of problem-historical approach (history of ideas) is quite popular today. Vollenhoven's special merit, however, lies in the fact that, decades ago, he *consistently* treated philosophical *problems* in their *historical context*.

In conclusion an affirmative reply can be given to the question as to whether Vollenhoven's method does justice to the field of investigation. This does not mean that it should be regarded as the final and perfect method. Each method has its inherent limitations and weaknesses.

Before, in conclusion, a few arguments against and in favor of the problem-historical method are discussed, a synopsis of the method in the form of a diagram may be helpful.

4.5 A diagrammatic resume

In a simplified way the problem-historical method boils down to the following:

The letters (A to H) in the different blocks represent different philosophers:

- Philosophers A, B and C's philosophical conceptions do not only differ as regards to *trends* or *time-currents* which they subscribe to (subjectivism, objectivism and realism), but also as regards the *type* of philosophy that they adhere to: they hold to different viewpoints regarding the origin of reality. Their deeper relationship emerges, however, in the fact that they are all Greek philosophers from the same *period* preceding synthetic philosophy.
- Philosopher D, although from a completely different *period* (synthetic philosophy) most probably underwent influence from philosopher C – even though he was a pre-synthetic thinker – because they hold to identical *types* of philosophy. Systematically speaking they have "family" ties.
- Philosophers D and E, while they do differ as to the *type* of philosophy that they adhere to (the "texture" in the terms used earlier) are probably related in terms of *era* because they have been placed in the same *trend* (the "fragrance" of their philosophy is the same).
- Philosopher E was a dynamic thinker. He did not keep to the same point of view all his life. First he changed from a monistic (E1) to a dualistic concept (E2). Then he maintained his dualism, but a changed viewpoint on the law shifted him into a new trend (E3).
- Philosophers F and G agree strongly as to the "texture" of their philosophies, but the "color" (religious direction) differ in both cases. F has broken with the word of God, and G wants to use the light of God's word in his philosophy. Although philosopher G's attitude is right, he does not yet think radically in biblical terms. Also the texture of his philosophy still has to be reformed in the light of the Scriptures.
- Philosopher H is a truly reformational thinker. (For that reason he stands totally outside the diagram.) The color, the fragrance and the texture of his philosophy are clearly determined by the word of God.

4.6 Arguments against and in favor of the problem-historical method

As is the case with any method this method has its limitations as well as its strong points. The objections that have already been aired in the course of the chapter, such as for example the objection that Vollenhoven imposes his own preconceived ideas on the material will not be repeated.

Objections against

As far as possible a response will be given to the following objections – which of course does not mean that some of the objections are not valid, pointing out real weaknesses in the method.

- *The method does not represent the biographical details concerning a philosopher.* It is true that biographical information is not given in Vollenhoven's *Schematische Kaarten*, but there is nothing to prevent one from giving this elsewhere – as Vollenhoven himself has done in his survey for students and in his articles for the *Oosthoek's Encyclopedie*.
- *The method does not allow the philosopher himself to become visible* – he disappears behind his abstract philosophical conception. This method is not in the first place concerned with philosophers as people but with their patterns of thought. If a philosopher's personality were to be of special interest for a true understanding of his ideas, attention can be given to this aspect.
- *The true influence of important philosophers cannot be indicated by means of this method* – the dwarf stand on the same line as the giants from the history of human thought. This is once again true if one were to identify the method with the schematic charts of Vollenhoven. Those who know more about this method, are aware that Vollenhoven's method succeeds in showing the immense influence of great philosophers through the ages. And the so-called dwarfs are not included in his charts without reason – they are included because they have also contributed in an important way to the history of western philosophy.
- *The method is very selective.* This is true, but each method is selective. The question is whether *one* method could be found to cover and exploit the entire field.

- *The development of movements, the reasons for the changeover from one trend to another, is not given.* Vollenhoven did (in, for example, the short survey for his students) pay attention to this "struggle of the intellects."
- *Are there not more similarities (and also more differences) between philosophers than merely the conceptual (type) and historical (trend)?* That might well be possible. These are however, the two most important ones.
- *The method is fleshless and bloodless* – it merely offers the skeleton of a philosophy. This is true, but if it were to offer more, certain strong points (such as, for example, the broad survey that it offers) will have to be sacrificed.
- *The method is difficult to comprehend.* Usually the reference in this respect is to Vollenhoven's compact style and terminology. He does not, however, introduce new terminology purely for the sake of the terminology, but in order to be able to distinguish more clearly. Scientific accuracy prevents Vollenhoven from – as many textbooks in the history of philosophy – using vague terms, such as "the Greek vision of the world," "the Medieval ground motif," "modern Anthropology," or "the concept of Aristotle." (Aristotle did not have only one concept but a long and complex philosophical development – which can only be described by means of accurate terminology.) Each method has its own terminology. Scientific "jargon" is the "shorthand" by which scientists communicate.
- *The method is time-consuming and therefore not very useful.* This is true. Vollenhoven worked with it and on it his entire academic career. One does not gain anything which is worthwhile, especially in the field of philosophy, in one day. Digging – in history too – demands sweat and devotion. Most people, however, do not have to know the *whole* of history *in detail* or to write books about it. The method remains useful in the analysis of only one thinker or one trend.

Arguments in favor of the method

The following points highlight the value of this method:

- It is the *only truly reformational, biblically-founded method* of philosophical historiography so far.
- It was also pointed out already that this method – as far as can be judged – *does not willfully force the history of philosophy into a pre-conceived, restrictive scheme.*
- It offers a *useful overview* of the whole of western philosophy.
- Apart from the *unity* of the history of philosophy it also allows one to see the *great diversity*. (Not only the “wood,” but every individual “tree” receives the right amount of attention.)
- At the same time it offers insight into the *pattern* (color, fragrance, and texture) of each philosopher's thoughts.
- It has *an eye for the development of specific thinkers* and disposes of the apparatus to be able to describe their development. That for which in the past Vollenhoven was ridiculed, namely, that in various thinkers he often indicated a course of development and thus change of concept, would seem today to have been one of his great strengths.
- It is possible, by means of this method, to *indicate clearly the differences and relations between various philosophers.*
- At the same time the method lends itself to *indicate where and how philosophers have influenced each other.*
- The method has not been developed only recently. It has been tried out by Vollenhoven's students and *has already yielded some surprising results.*
- The possibility of the *application of the method in other fields* than the purely philosophically is not excluded. Theology (especially the history of dogma) is an obvious example, but philosophical presuppositions influence every field of study.

An important factor which in the past rendered this method unpopular, especially among young students of philosophy, is perhaps to be found in the

fact that it was presented in a pedagogically unsound manner. Therefore it is of the greatest importance that his method should be offered in a simple and comprehensible manner. This article has been a modest effort in this direction.

5. Conclusion

The perceptive eye, sensitive nose, and appreciative hand of the expert can help one to discern the great variety of "woods" from the history of philosophy. Each has its own color, fragrance, and texture. Some are rough-grained, some are fine-grained; some are dry while others have their own oil. In some one can discern the rings of growth very clearly, in others not.

Vollenhoven was such an expert, who could see from precisely what kind of "wood" a philosopher have been carved. His method brings us to the core of many "trees" in the history of philosophy. He left us a precious heritage which can be used fruitfully and should be explored more fully in future.

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PART III

AN AFRICAN CONTEXTUALIZATION

THE CHALLENGE OF THE AFRICAN WAY OF THINKING TO THE WESTERN MODE OF THOUGHT HOW TO AFRICANIZE WESTERN SCIENCE

Africans find the western way of thinking and practicing science difficult to understand. Western people, likewise, find it difficult to gauge how African students think. The question "Who has to change?" has to be asked. Do the Africans, so that they can master the western way of thinking? Or do westerners perhaps have to change?

Proponents of western culture (of which western science is one of the most important facets) usually respond skeptically to the second option: the effort to Africanize science cannot succeed because this will affect the essence of science and will simply lead to the lowering of standards. Science is a thoroughly western product and is therefore averse to Africanization. If Africa wishes to progress, it will simply have to acquire the western mode of thought. On the other hand, the response of those who have become the prey of a new Afrocentric ideology is also predictable: this attitude is simply the result of a Eurocentric vision.

If westerners should argue that science cannot be Africanized, because black people cannot be good scholars, they would be wrong—our continent has already delivered many excellent scholars. The issue of Africanization, however, is much more complicated.

Voices of criticism

The problem raised is not unique to South Africa or the African continent. A Brazilian theologian, Rubem Alves (1980: 41), started his response to a paper by a British

scientist on the nature of science at the 1979 conference of the World Council of Churches on *Faith, Science and the Future* with the following parable:

Once upon a time a lamb, with love for objective knowledge, decided to find out the truth about wolves. He had heard so many nasty stories about them. Were they true? He decided to get a first-hand report on the matter. So he wrote a letter to a philosopher-wolf with a simple and direct question: What are wolves? The philosopher-wolf wrote a letter back explaining what wolves were: shapes, sizes, colors, social habits, thoughts, etc. He thought, however, that it was irrelevant to speak about the wolves' eating habits since these habits, according to his own philosophy, did not belong to the *essence* of wolves. Well, the lamb was so delighted with the letter that he decided to pay a visit to his new friend, the wolf. And only then he learned that wolves are very fond of barbecued lamb.

With this parable Alves wanted to make it clear that western science likes to speak about itself in such a way that its eating habits (detrimental effects) are hidden. The "lamb" of the so-called Third World were blinded by that for a long time, but are beginning to realize more and more what its dangers are, more so than those who are paid to practice that science and to defend it as a "civilizing power." The difference between the British scientist and the Brazilian theologian lay in the different ways in which they saw the role of science in culture. The first saw it as progress and civilization, while the latter saw its immense assimilative and ultimately destructive power.

One of the most important western values, which has also emerged clearly in science, is that of the autonomous power and the control of humanity over their environment. Science enables us to do with the environment what we please. How one does it is thought not to be subject to higher norms. Our concern is with power for the sake of power and especially for the sake of economic-material progress. Norms like stewardship, responsibility, accountability, and respect for the environment are neglected. While the objective of western humanity is autonomous control, the key or method of achieving this is his scientific control of

reality. This method is often idolized, and scientific knowledge is regarded as being higher and more important than other forms of knowledge.

The scientific endeavor has undoubtedly led to enormous prosperity in the West. Today the West measures its wealth especially by way of scientific knowledge, technological power, and commercial wealth. The other (mostly submerged) side of the picture, however, is that this has led to the creation of "intellectual barbarians," very poor people indeed. The mere fact that we measure wealth in terms of material possessions in the West testifies to our immense poverty, because human life does not consist of an abundance of possessions and pleasures.

The West, obsessed with its faith in progress, sees development simply as scientific, technological, and economic development. Unfortunately, but entirely understandably, it is only in these fields that the West has developed (over-developed?). In other aspects the West is poverty-stricken. As far as human relationships and our awareness and experience of true human communion are concerned, we are poor. We are poor in aesthetic experience. We hurry through life without enjoying the vast wealth offered in abundance by creation, because joy has to be manufactured and bought.

The present western scientific practice therefore clashes with the culture of the "Third World," Africa included. The tragedy of the matter is that many Africans do not notice this danger. The western way of doing science is uncritically accepted as normal. The only question still discussed is how this type of education in the sciences can take place in a more effective way and be made more "acceptable" to other cultures — or simply be enforced. But we have to accept that nothing in this world is inherently good. Even the best products of our culture have a mixed character. On the one hand science and technology releases or liberates us from many things (such as monotonous routine labor), but on the other hand it enslaves us. It is therefore of crucial importance to reflect on, at least, the nature, purpose, practice, and results of science.

Important guiding questions

How could one—in a fair way—compare the thought patterns of Africa and the West? Whoever asks questions of this nature immediately opens a hornet's nest of problems and is susceptible to all kinds of criticism. These problems, however, are so important that we do have to address them first.

Does the whole of Africa think in the same way? With more than two thousand ethnic groups and languages/dialects spread across the continent, such uniformity is, of course, impossible. But if one wishes to say something about African and western patterns of thought, one can only generalize; otherwise one would achieve no more than monographs about the ways of thinking of individual tribes or groups.

A subsequent general question is whether it is possible for one to describe and understand the way a person from another culture thinks. Would one not, if one were a westerner, distort African culture by trying to render it in western categories? Of course the answer to this has to be in the affirmative. This does not mean, however, that one is so enveloped in one's own culture that one is not capable of understanding anything whatsoever of another person's culture and way of thinking. It is important to remember, however, that should such an understanding emanate from a paternalist attitude of superiority, it will definitely distort and thus be unjust to the other culture.

A third general question is: why stress the differences rather than the similarities between Africans and westerners? Surely we heard enough about differences during the of apartheid era in South Africa? My response to this is that we should indeed stress similarities because our shared humanity is most important. In the old South Africa this was not a generally acknowledged fact. The differences we stressed in the old South Africa were, however, superficial ones, such as differences in skin color, habits, and customs. We should now look at some of the more deeply seated differences, and then not stress difference for the sake of difference (a sort of neo-apartheid), but know the differences in order

to understand each other better. My purpose is therefore not to emphasize the differences in order to keep the cultures separate or drive them apart, but to bring them closer to each other, to understand each other better, to accept and respect each other.

To do this, with an eye to clarity, one has to exaggerate these differences somewhat. But doing so exposes one to even more queries. Do Africans still think as their traditional ancestors of 100 years ago did? Have they not changed a great deal as a result of the enormous influence of western culture? These are legitimate questions. There has indeed been a great deal of acculturation between the two cultures.

There is also a "but," however. In spite of westernization, traditional religion, and worldview—the deeper cultural layers of Africa, which co-determine the mode of thought of black people—have not been eradicated. In fact, when one scrapes off the veneer of the West (clothing, habits, customs) one discovers a totally different layer of "paint" underneath. It is also not unique to Africa that the traditional may continue to exist virtually intact for generations beneath the modern layer. Furthermore, in the new South Africa, liberated from white oppression, conscious efforts are made today to seek out the traditional roots and to revive them.

A more difficult question is, to which cause(s) should the differences in the mode of thought between Africa and the West be attributed? Is one's mode of thought determined only by one's own (cultural) attitude or is it the result of a variety of geographic, economic, social, and political factors? My own viewpoint is that one cannot begin to separate the two sides of the issue because they are too intimately interwoven. Even to say that they influence each other reciprocally is still too simplistic. In reality the problem does not only have two sides, but many facets. Humans are biotic, emotional, language creating, social, economic, aesthetic, ethical, and religious beings, so all these factors influence the way in which we think. Furthermore, everyone lives in a specific environment from which they cannot be isolated. We are human *within* our environment. And this

environment is also is multifaceted.

An example could explain the problem. Scientific thought is not the invention of the West. The highly developed cultures of the Chinese, Sumerians, Babylonians, and Egyptians flourished thousands of years prior to modern western science. (Examples from ancient Egypt are its agricultural methods, pyramids, embalming techniques, and writing.) Modern science, however, blossomed in the West. Why? Why did it only happen at a specific moment in time? One could try to explain this riddle in different ways. Some point to the written word in contrast to conveying information orally. Others use intensive intercultural contact with totally different cultures as an explanation, or the need for worldwide trade, which led to the discovery of foreign countries and cultures. These and many other factors, however, do not yet fully explain why modern science developed in Europe at a particular point in time. I would want to maintain that the most fundamental solution to this mystery, from a Christian perspective, is that different cultures respond differently to God's creational revelation by focusing on different aspects of his multi-faceted creation.

This brings us to a subsequent problem—perhaps the most important in this investigation. It is the question: *what in Africa* is to be compared with *what in the West*?

One possibility is to compare the *traditional* mode of thought of the West with the *traditional* mode of thought of Africa. There will definitely be differences. But problems arise as well: (a) westerners do not think in traditional ways any longer, but have been changed significantly by the modern scientific mode of thought, (b) if we studied the original, pre-scientific western mode of thought (sources are available for this purpose), it would probably emerge that it does not differ all that much from the present traditional mode of thought still found in many places in Africa.

One could also compare the *modern* Africa with the *modern* West. Then we will have the opposite problem, however. In many instances Africa still thinks in traditional ways. The "modern" is often a matter of a western window-dressing on

an African substratum. (There are also, of course, Africans who have become almost totally westernized.)

The only alternative—and I do not believe that it is unfair because it takes the factual reality into account—is to compare *traditional* Africa with the *modern* West and to keep in mind that this has to be done with especially the following reservation firmly in mind: the picture that we draw will not be 100% in line with reality. Wide reading and experience in a dozen African countries, however, have convinced me that this need not be a meaningless exercise. It can help us, in spite of all the reservations, to understand each other better.

Pre-scientific and scientific

When I compare traditional African culture with modern western culture, it almost amounts to comparing something that is pre-scientific with something that is scientific. I can say this because, as already stated, western culture today is a strongly “scientized” (and technicized) culture.

I am aware that the word “pre-scientific” can be misunderstood. For example, that pre-scientific would only be an elementary preamble to scientific knowledge, which would be real, genuine knowledge. This is not my opinion. I also do not understand pre-scientific as pre-logical or un-logical. Pre-scientific knowledge is logical! One could replace *pre-scientific* with the words *concrete* or *naïve* knowledge, but they are not very satisfactory replacements. With the necessary reservations, I therefore prefer to use the word “pre-scientific.”

For the sake of clarity, and to avoid any misunderstandings, a little more should be said about the distinction between pre-scientific and scientific.

By pre-scientific knowledge I mean the ordinary, everyday way of knowing—the common sense mode. This is typical of all people. Even among westerners, who have been strongly influenced by the scientific way of thought, we still find this way of understanding reality.

“Pre-scientific” also does not mean that this form is in any way inferior. There is often an attitude, especially among scholars but also among ordinary people,

that scientific knowledge is better than the knowledge of the person in the street. This, however, is not the case. In every scientific abstraction something of concrete reality is lost. Someone once remarked correctly: "On the dissecting table of science, real life dies." An example to illustrate this is the fact poor people often have a better understanding of poverty than all the different scholars studying the phenomenon of poverty.

The one way of knowing is not *better*, but simply *different* (see later). Both are ways of trying to understand, explain, control, and predict reality. Both, for example, seek to find regularity in the midst of apparent irregularity, order in the midst of apparent chaos, and unity in the midst of diversity. They, however, do this in different ways.

This can be explained with a simple example. A child is ill and the mother (who has already raised a few children) is certain that it is chicken pox. However, she takes the child to the doctor. With his medical knowledge he diagnoses chicken pox and prescribes the necessary treatment. It would be foolish to try to determine who would *best* know what is wrong, because the mother does not know *less* or the doctor more about the child, but they both have a *different* type of knowledge of the child's illness. (The mere fact that the mother realized that the child was not well is already an indication that she is capable of knowledge.)

It is important, therefore, that we *distinguish* the two ways of knowing and the two types of knowledge—but never assume each has its own airtight compartment. The scientifically trained doctor's knowledge *builds* on the pre-scientific way of thinking. Without this more concrete way of knowing it cannot exist. And pre-scientific knowledge can in turn also be *enriched* (sometimes also *impoverished*!) by scientific knowledge. One could therefore think in terms of two overlapping circles—because it is not always clear where the pre-scientific ends and the scientific begins. (Especially in a strongly scientized culture, such as the western one, the distinction can be difficult to make at times.)

Points of departure and aims

In proceeding I will assume that there is a strong traditional component in African culture and that this component provides a good picture of what most people's pre-scientific knowledge was like (including early western people). My aim is to compare this pre-scientific way of thinking with the modern scientific mode of thought. The focus is therefore not only on comparing Africa and the West, but also with a comparison between pre-scientific and scientific. Traditional Africa is our example of what the pre-scientific mode of thought was like before it came under the influence of western science.

My ultimate goal is to determine whether the scientific cognitive attitude tends to let one lapse into one-sidedness and concomitantly impoverishes life instead of enriching it. And if that is the case, whether its disadvantages can perhaps be limited by once again considering the pre-scientific mode of thought? It might sensitize us to the fact that "science" cannot simply be associated with one kind of science (so-called standard science). The mathematics and physics, for example, which one finds in most textbooks, has been built on specific western cultural presuppositions and is perhaps not the only possible kind of mathematics or physics.

From this new perspective it may, for example, be possible to write a textbook for a specific subject in such a way that greater transparency is offered for the religious, worldviewish, and cultural contexts of the African, in a way that he is really involved and in which he really has insight into his own particular types of problems.

Comparing the pre-scientific pattern of thought of Africa and the scientific mode of thought of the West

The African mode of thought cannot be understood apart from its strong communalistic attitude (van der Walt, 1997: 29-50). It could be described as *communal* thought (see item 8 on the comparative table). In the same way, the western way of thinking can only be understood from the perspective of the

strong individualistic tendency of the West. The thinking subject in the West is primarily the *individual*.

The table on the next two pages contrasts the two worlds of thought by way of summary.

As noted, there are *differences* between the pre-scientific, everyday mode of thought of Africa and the scientific mode of thought of the West, but there are also *similarities*. This clearly emerges from this tabular comparison. At times the differences are very clear. In other cases it was of degree, so that I had to speak of *more* or *less*. Even in the cases where it was more difficult to capture these in words, or they were simple differences, scientific knowledge was indicated with concepts such as *analytical, intellectual, reflective, and distinguishing*, one has to keep in mind that to a lesser extent the same traits are also true of pre-scientific knowledge. Rational thought is not the prerogative of the scientist, and we do not find logic only in western thought. We also find it in non-western countries such as Africa—even though it might imply a different kind of logic.

Based on further research, reflection, and experience the list could therefore be either shortened or extended. What might have appeared to be differences at first glance could subsequently lapse. This table and its explanation do not pretend to be more than a preliminary exploration. Interesting research has already been done in this field, for instance by Appiah (1992; 1996), Hallen (1996), Malherbe (1995), Masolo (1995), Ochieng'-Odhiambo (1995), Horton (1993; 1996), and Sogolo (1993), but much still needs to be done. My aim is not to engage in a critical discussion with the different viewpoints of these authors, but to gain more clarity for myself and make their results accessible to a wider audience than only the specialists in this field.

Traditional Africa	Modern West
1. spiritual powers important	material entities important
2. focus on knowledge of the material world	focus on knowledge of the spiritual world
3. power-oriented	truth-oriented
4. spiritualistic-organistic	materialistic-mechanistic
5. quest for supernatural causes	quest for physical causes
6. divination	verification
7. magical	technological
8. emphasis on human interaction	emphasis on non-human things
9. holistic, integral, totality knowledge	reductionist, fragmented knowledge
10. close to concrete reality	abstract, removed from reality
11. warm, personal, individual knowledge	cold, businesslike, universal knowledge
12. pragmatic	neutral
13. symbolic	theoretical
14. affective	objective
15. emotional	intellectual
16. closely involved with object of knowledge	observed object of knowledge at a distance
17. less analytical, more synthetic	more analytical, less synthetic
18. more intuitive	more reflective
19. more experience-oriented	more experimental and technical
20. more cyclic	more linear-systematic, methodical

21. expressive	instrumental
22. elementary distinctions	complex distinctions
23. ideas bound to events/situation	ideas bound to ideas
24. flexible and flowing	fixed and rigid
25. and-and logic	either-or logic
26. completion of differences	duality of opposites
27. consensus important	competition important
28. past-oriented (traditional)	future-oriented (progressive)
29. more protective and closed	more critical and open
30. does not easily accept coincidence, probability, and other factors which render knowledge uncertain	accepts coincidence and probability of knowledge more easily

The issue at stake here is what Africanization could imply in the case of scientific practice, and what it should not imply. Stated differently: would it be possible, on the one hand, that (pre-scientific) African thought could offer correctives to western (scientific) thought and might it, on the other hand, possibly be that western science could become more “friendly” or sensitive towards African thought?

Although I am not a philosopher of science by profession, I am aware of the fact that western science, especially the positivist mode of scientific practice, has had to endure a great deal of criticism in recent decades. This criticism has emanated from western ranks by such prominent figures as Feyerabend, Popper, Kuhn, and many others. Efforts have even been made to make adjustments to the western scientific way of thought from Eastern perspectives. Space does not permit one to elaborate on this matter, as the focus here is on a comparison with African thought. Also, my comparative table cannot be dealt with in detail. Only certain facets will be

highlighted.

The spiritual versus the material

Under this heading we summarize the first seven points of the comparison between the patterns of thought of Africa and the West.

Though true to a lesser extent today, western science has largely ignored the spiritual dimension. It has concentrated on the visible, measurable, weighable, and countable physical reality. Possible “supernatural” causes were not allowed to be brought into consideration in science. Everything was explained according to natural causes and results. This focus on the material world, it was believed, also enabled science to be objective, unprejudiced, and neutral.

To put it somewhat differently, we could say that the West severed the umbilical cord between faith and science. Everything associated with faith was regarded as personal, subjective, and metaphysical. Science, however, which has the task of studying physical reality, is regarded as objective and universally valid. In this way an artificial divide was created in the West between faith and scholarship. The consequences of this division are very clear today!

I need not belabor the fact that African thought has realized for centuries that nothing—including knowledge—can be neutral. Their holistic religious orientation does not make it possible to distinguish between the secular and the sacred, the profane and the holy, or the natural and the supernatural—least of all to separate them. For that reason, in their efforts to understand reality, supernatural causes play such an important role.

In this regard the contemporary secular scientific practice, which does not allow for faith in something or someone above the material, can learn something from Africa. Today some prominent natural scientists are of the opinion that within the near future we will understand and explain everything. Once condensed in compact formulae the world around us and we ourselves—from the big bang to the distant future—will be as transparent as glass. God is no longer needed to explain something. There is no deeper mystery on earth or in heaven.

Although westerners (especially Christians) may not approve of the veneration of supernatural powers and ancestors in traditional African religion, it still remains a fact that Africa does not ignore the "spiritual" side of reality as the West does. Their way of thinking is therefore, in principle, richer than that of the materialist-mechanistic way of the West.

It is also one of the strong points of the Amsterdam [reformational] school of philosophy to which I belong that it emphasizes that science cannot be neutral. If one does not serve the true God in one's scientific endeavor, one is simply serving a substitute, an idol. Science is inherently ideologically loaded. Some kind of faith is the deepest motivating force in every science, and present-day postmodernism has confirmed this.

Faith is not only the deepest driving force behind any scientific practice. It is also acceptable, from one's convictions based on faith, to seek answers to the many issues with which science is confronted on a daily basis. History, for example, is not simply a secular matter that can become transparent through the study of intra-worldly causes and effects. Historical research should also remain cognizant of the divine mystery in historical events.

On the debit side for Africa, however, one should mention point 13 in the comparison. Africa's ontology is concerned with the spiritual world and the forces that play a role in it. Put in western terminology, Africans regard supernatural causes as the explanation for almost everything. I emphasize that this is a western way of expressing the situation, because for Africans these causes are not supernatural but natural. It would be even better to avoid using the word "natural" and simply speak of causes, because Africans do not know or accept the western distinction between the "natural" and the "supernatural."

Symbols play an important role in the way Africa knows reality. Concrete objects, which according to the African have magical qualities, are in the first place not seen for what they *are*, but for what they *represent* or what can be associated with them. Items and events of symbolic value refer to other things outside themselves. Dreams, for example, may represent facts. Symbols may even be dangerous. An

example of older symbols may be found in the ancestors. A recent example is the removal of the Verwoerd statue in Bloemfontein, which was done by the ANC government because for them it represented *everything* that involved apartheid.

Western science makes use of pictures, images, or metaphors, but they try to pin them down or reduce them so that they lose the flowing quality of the symbol. We would rather call them signs. Through definition and precision their multifaceted meaning is reduced. In the magical-symbolic way of thinking, however, the images used are undefined. Because figures or numbers are precise signs, black students often find it difficult to cope with statistics in science. They do not think in such exact terms and do not understand why this is important. (It is probably also a reason why it is so difficult for the African to plan meticulously.)

A further negative result of this concentration on the spiritual world and the quest for supernatural causes can be found in point 30 of the comparison: Africa does not easily accept coincidence, probability, and other factors that lead to uncertain knowledge. Of course western science can also be dogmatic about its own explanations. Yet it is more open to the possibility of multiple explanations of a phenomenon.

The human-social versus the nonhuman

The African's way of thinking is strongly influenced by the community and social relationships (a communalist worldview). In contrast, as indicated in the comparative table (point 8), western science is especially directed at non-human things, that is, it is materialistically inclined. The emphasis is not, in the first place, on the investigation of human issues. Also the person (scientist) herself, who is doing the investigation, is not important: she practically does it in a mechanistically, neutral fashion. Western scientific practice also has a strong individualistic trait: individual competition and achievement are highly regarded.

But does scientific practice not have a human and social side? If we think about this carefully, we realize that no one can practice science on his own or in isolation. Science is practiced in a group context and scientific paradigms claim particular communities of thought. Most scientists are continually exchanging ideas with co-

scientists. They read articles and books by others, receive criticism on their own work, and respond to others. Social power and authority relationships also play a role in scientific practice. Knowledge is power, and those who know more have greater authority and power. They can use or withhold their knowledge to manipulate people. Not only is science itself socially determined but it in turn determines social circumstances.

Is the pre-scientific knowledge of Africa, which puts such strong emphasis on human interaction (communalism), not an important contribution to take into account? Mutual co-operation and consensus building are surely as important to science as individual competition. Are we adequately aware of the social implications of our scientific practice? Answers to these kinds of questions might help to release us from a one-sided view of science.

The concrete versus the abstract

From the comparative table we can deduce that western science is especially characterized by four actions: abstracting (10), theorizing (13), analyzing (17), and systematizing (20).

Abstraction takes place in four stages. (a) It leaves the concrete, observable reality behind and abstracts especially the laws that are valid for reality. (b) It relinquishes the special, unique data and abstracts only the general or the universal. (c) From the coherence of all the aspects of reality, it further also abstracts only one aspect. (In economics, for example, the economic aspect and in physics the physical, etc.) (d) The scientist also relinquishes his own and other advantages and interests—science should be “disinterested.”

By means of this fourfold abstraction one arrives at theoretical knowledge, which is especially characterized by an urge for distinction, analysis, or a breaking up of the abstracted “portion” of reality into components. Finally, everything is summarized again in a system of knowledge, a process in which logic plays an important role. For that reason science is considered as logically coherent knowledge. This knowledge can often be expressed in mathematical relations (one could call this a further abstraction). Subsequently, science can be used as an instrument for the

control or manipulation of reality.

Given all the steps above, scientific knowledge is actually "alienated" from concrete reality—the fullness of reality has been lost. As a result, science can never obtain a complete grasp of reality and we should not equate knowledge of reality with reality itself—although this is often done.

In contrast to this abstract scientific way of knowing, there is the more concrete mode of knowing of Africa (point 10). The African is more closely involved with the object of knowledge and observation is not done at a distance as is done in the West (point 16).

When the young people of Africa still received their education on the farm or from the local carpenter, potter, or artist, their training was not theoretical. Under the guidance of a master craftsman, their attention was directed at (a) concrete objects or situations, (b) they noted general patterns—for example in the case of the carpentry apprentice, the texture of certain woods. The generalizations they made based on their observations were not dependent on conceptual abstractions, however, but always referred to concrete things. They were not *abstract but concrete* generalizations. (Theoretical knowledge gains meaning within the relation in which it stands towards other concepts in a conceptual system, while concrete concepts refer to aspects or characteristics that we experience as real things, events, or relationships. An example of a concrete concept is the concept "table." A mathematical system, however, is something abstract, because a mathematical problem can be solved with pen and paper or a computer without reference to any concrete thing.) (c) In the third place this type of instruction helped pupils get to know the individual qualities of things.

I therefore question the view that concrete knowledge is a more primitive form of knowledge that can be left behind as humanity's theoretical knowledge progresses. Concrete knowledge can be pursued with as much discipline. It is also not less reliable and accurate than western scientific knowledge. Such knowledge is obtained by concentrating on the richly shaded details of concrete things. According to repetitive patterns general deductions are made and tested. In this way a source of

knowledge is built up that can identify and understand universal patterns. It can be described in concrete, basic, everyday language.

On the other hand it should be emphasized that no training at a tertiary institution (college, technical institute, or university) can occur without some measure of abstraction—even in the fields that could be described as less abstract. Even though the emphasis in colleges and technical schools might be less theoretical, knowledge of (abstract) scientific principles remains a condition.

All students, however, cannot develop the same high level of proficiency in abstract thought. Many students simply are not gifted in this way. Sound “Africanization” should probably keep this in mind, not by accepting the deficiency, but by assisting students to master the minimum abstract scientific skills required in a specific discipline or a certain educational institution such as a college, technical school, or university.

Individual-personal versus universal-impersonal knowledge

Western science seeks the universal, typical facets of things and the general laws that govern them (point 11). It tends to regard the unique, individual sides of things as being of less value because they constitute an obstacle on the road to operational efficiency. The attention of pre-scientific knowledge of Africa, in contrast, is directed more at concrete, individual things. Because individuality cannot be learnt via the categories of an abstract conceptual system, Africa’s focus is also on a face-to-face interaction with concrete reality (see the previous point).

In western thought itself there have been trends and schools (as for example in the reaction of Romanticism to the Enlightenment or in the case of the late Rationalism of Dilthey) that have stressed the fact that the specific or individual (against the universal), the concrete (against the abstract), and what is unique (against what is identical) should not be neglected in scholarly endeavors. A one-sidedness in western science was noted without solving the problem of how the individual aspects of things could be given a place in scientific investigation.

We should acknowledge that everything in reality has both a universal side

(pecan trees) and an individual side (the specific pecan tree in my garden). Should we get to know the universal facet of something through science, we should therefore realize that it represents only one side of it—we only have something concrete once we also know its individual facet. Individual differences can be important, as for example in the case of medical science.

More emotionally-synthetic versus more intellectually-analytical

Western science is seen as something intellectual, in which the emotional definitely does not belong. Against this we have the pre-scientific knowledge of Africa, which is more involved, warmer, more personal, emotional, affective, and expressive. This is the contrast that emerges from points 15 to 17 in the chart. Du Preez (1978: 76) has the following to say in this connection:

In contrast to modern man, whose approach to life is objectively analytical and whose spirit is accordingly also divided into value, thought and feeling systems, blacks have a different approach. They do not face the world objectively and at a distance, but live in it. No object exists outside reality. They touch and are attuned to things and the earth. They experience everything intensely and are part of everything.

It seems as if the mode of thought of Africans is closer to that of the holistic-concrete way of Hebraic thinking. Black people are more congenial to the Old Testament than to New Testament literature. This fact becomes evident if we compare the contours of Hebrew thought, as described for example by Wilson (1997: 135-165), with the traditional African way of thinking summarized in the chart above.

Are these two ways of knowing completely irreconcilable? Can we really detach scientific practice from all our senses? May involvement, interest, experience, emotion, perception not play a role at all? I have the feeling that western science has a stronger emotional side than we may think.

At the same time the western pattern of thought is also more analytically directed when compared with the emphasis on synthesis in the African way of

thinking. As indicated in point 9 above, while western science offers fragmented knowledge (not only within the same science but as a result of the ongoing specialization also between the sciences), African thought aims at holistic, integral knowledge of the totality. To my mind the holistic picture which African thought offers is as important as the detailed knowledge of western science.

A third point, which relates to the previous paragraph, is indicated in point 25 of the comparison. The logical is usually seen as the most important or at least as one of the most important characteristics of western science. The more emotional accent of African thought, however, does not imply—as is sometimes suggested—that African thought is not logical. Even in the West there is not only one system of logic. (Aristotelian, medieval, and modern symbolic logic are all different.) Africa, however, uses a different type of logic.

Africa mostly operates with an *and-and* logic, as compared with the western logic of *either-or*. In this case, too, African logic shows similarity to the ancient Hebrew “block logic” of the Old Testament (Wilson 1997: 150-3). In the former case differences are seen as complementary, while in the latter case differences are seen rather as contrasting, opposing (26). African logic is more flexible and flowing, while that of the West is more fixed and rigid (24). My question would be whether these two types of logical thinking are not reflecting two sides of the same reality. Does Africa not put more emphasis on the unity of things, while the West wishes to emphasize their diversity? Should this be the case, the African way of thinking offers a valuable correction to the western way of scientific thought.

Traditionally closed versus progressively open

With this final contrast (points 28 and 29 of the table) this preliminary investigation is concluded. Although the western ideal of progress is often absolutized, the pendulum would, in this instance, swing in favor of the western mentality, which is more receptive to new possibilities than tradition-bound African thought with a unique conception about time and history (cf. van der Walt 1997: 51-71).

This elementary comparison has, in fact, indicated that the comparison between Africa and the West has at times favored Africa and at times the West.

The balance

Before we return to the question of Afrocentrism versus Eurocentrism I first want to launch a hypothesis. Different cultures emphasize different sides of our *fourfold relationship* to God or the supernatural, to nature, to others, and to ourselves (cf. van der Walt 1997: 12-20 for a detailed explanation). My hypothesis is that because of this state of affairs: (1) different *gifts* are also developed in the different cultures; (2) these gifts enable the different cultures to *know reality* in different ways; and (3) knowledge of reality can also be *expressed in different ways*.

A common way of knowing reality and expressing our knowledge is by way of language and numbers (a mathematical way). This is typical of western educational systems: listen, read, memorize, and write. Today, however, even western educationists realize more and more that "intelligence" cannot be limited to only these two ways of knowing. Scholars (such as Gardner, 1983) have drawn our attention to what are called "multiple intelligences." Not only people who are capable of working with words and figures should be regarded as intelligent. These are only two forms of intelligence. We should also acknowledge other ways of attaining knowledge and other learning styles. It is, for example, also possible to get to know reality and express one's knowledge about reality in the following ways: by way of visual images, with body activity, in an aesthetic way, in a technical way, and through personal contact with others. To really comprehend the richness of God's creation, we need all these gifts and their accompanying ways of knowing.

Recently Olthuis, as editor of *Knowing Other-wise: Philosophy at the Threshold of Spirituality* (1997) also emphasized that "we know more than we can think." He quite rightly points out:

Instead of judging that emotions are subversive of knowledge, or are irrational urges that need to be controlled by reason, we believe emotions, as emotions, are vital and honorable ways of knowing. Feelings are themselves indispensable thermometers, signals registering how we apprehend, situate, and motivate ourselves in engaging the world. There is also tactile-kinesthetic knowing, as there is knowing a friend, and, to employ a biblical idiom, knowing one's wife. In other words, reasoning is only one of the many ways in which we engage (i.e., know) the world ... Knowing is the multidimensional, embodied, gendered way human beings engage the world in order to situate themselves meaningfully (spiritually) and come close responsibly (ethically) to the different and other. We also know by touch, by feel, by taste, by sight, by sounds, by smell, by symbols, by sex, by trust—by means of every modality of human experience. Knowing by thinking is no better, no worse, than any of the other modalities. Each modality, according to its own style, is an important and indispensable way in which we actively engage the world. In any human act of engagement, all the ways of knowing are reciprocally interwoven, simultaneously present, even when, as the case may be, one of the ways of knowing stands out and marks that particular activity in a heightened way. (p. 6)

On the one hand we should never try to fit someone into only one of these learning style “boxes” as if it would be the only way in which that person could acquire knowledge. On the other hand we should not suppress a unique learning style and simply regard someone as stupid because he/she cannot express him/herself very well in a language. A teacher/ lecturer should be aware of the specific kind of intelligence of a student and create different kinds of learning opportunities to enable the student to use his/her own gifts. This also calls for a variety of evaluation methods in education.

My hypothesis is that what was said of individuals thus far might also apply to cultures. Specific gifts, intelligences, and learning are more strongly developed in some cultures than in other cultures. My guess is that the visual, active (bodily), and interpersonal (communal) way of knowing and learning is more strongly developed in Africa than in the contemporary western world. In the West the

mathematical and technical ways of knowing and expressing knowledge are perhaps better developed. Much more research, however, has to be conducted to confirm my hypothesis. If it proves to be true, we will not only have to acknowledge individual talents. In the same way, the unique gifts and knowing and learning styles of different cultural groups should also be acknowledged in education. Africanization understood in this way should not be viewed as a threat—as the lowering of standards, for example—but as a challenge and an opportunity for the enrichment of our educational process.

The two ways of thinking of Africa and the West also supports my viewpoint that every culture contains something good and valuable, but simultaneously it has something not so good, a defect. To be able to get rid of the negative and to gain the positive elements, we will have to accept cultural pluralism as something positive and valuable.

I would like to advocate a *mutually affirming and corrective cultural pluralism*, which implies that the cultures of Africa and the West mutually affirm as well as correct each other. This entails that one will first have to accept that one's own culture has, apart from good qualities, limitations from which it can only be freed by listening carefully to other cultures. Only then, in the second place, will one be in a position to help other cultures to accept their own limitations and weaknesses.

Such a mutually affirming and corrective approach to cultural diversity will, of course, only be possible through intense dialogue between the two cultures. It will be impossible when the cultures exist next to each other as during the time of apartheid. Neither will it be possible when one culture intends to force others to accept its perspective, as is the case in both the Afrocentric and Eurocentric approaches.

We can no longer cling to a Eurocentric orientation. The pre-scientific mode of thought of Africa should make us sensitive to the defects in western scientific thought. We should seriously ask ourselves whether scientific thought should not be "broadened" to soften the cultural shock that Africans experience. At the same

time it should also be emphasized that the latest trend in my country of South Africa to approach everything from an Afrocentric perspective will not provide a solution for the encounter between Africa and the West. In spite of its limitations and defects, western science and technology provide opportunities without which a developing country like ours cannot survive.¹

When we are critical towards both Afrocentric and Eurocentric ideas, we will be moving, closer to the ideal of a balanced, correct approach. Exactly what such an answer will look like is difficult to say at this stage. It may imply that the basic aims of scholarly work, the ways we think, and the *nature* of our scientific activity will have to change.

Postscript

Since this paper was delivered, I had opportunity to write on the detrimental influence of the development models from the West applied in Africa without taking into consideration the vast differences between traditional African and modern western worldviews and cultures. The clash between the two culturally determined views about development is, to my mind, one of the major reasons for the dismal failure of so many well intended development efforts during the past fifty years in Africa and many other so-called underdeveloped countries. See my book, *Understanding and Rebuilding Africa: From Desperation to Expectation for Tomorrow*, Potchefstroom, Institute for Contemporary Christianity (2003), especially chapters 4 and 17 on "Culture, worldview and religion: a comparison between the West, Africa and the Bible" and "Development of the African Continent"). See also: *When African and Western Cultures Meet* (2006), chapter 6 of *The Eye is the Lamp of the Body* (2009) and chapter 15 of *At Home in God's World* (2010).

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NEW HOPE FOR A BLEEDING AFRICA

Earlier this year (1992) the Institute for Reformational Studies offered an important Pan-African conference at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education. It was attended by 150 people from South Africa and 15 other African countries — from as far away as Nigeria and Ghana. (Participants also came from four other continents.) Prof. Bennie van der Walt gives his impressions.

In spite of the fact that many believed that Africa is a "lost continent," I gained new hope. New and wonderful things are happening. Here are ten pertinent points.

A second liberation

Africa has now gone through the following phases: the pre-colonial, the colonial, the post-colonial (liberation and independence), a period of (mainly) one-party government, and at present some countries are already in or moving towards the phase of democratization (or so-called second liberation).

Most African countries today realize that, although they might have been released from one form of oppression (colonialism) they were never really liberated politically (because of oppression by their own people) and in any case not economically.

"Liberation" should take place on different levels. It is also not merely a negative concept (free *from*), but should in the first place hold a positive connotation (for example, free *towards* development).

I hope that we have now reached this new, positive stage.

Democracy only a means towards a better future

The realization has also come (probably not among all the people) that democracy is merely a means to an end (such as a more just society), and not an end in itself. It is not a magic concept which will resolve all Africa's problems in the wink of an eye – injustice can still be committed, even in the name of democracy.

New private initiative

This goes hand in hand with a growing realization that the so-called state culture did not offer a real solution. Too much has been expected of governments, namely to create and order the whole of society and to have direct control over all facets of life and to provide in every need. The whole of life (as well as in South Africa) was politicized, because the principle of sovereignty in its own sphere of societal relationships was not respected.

A fundamental depoliticization of society is therefore needed. This is happening in Africa – not necessarily as a result of a correct societal philosophy, but simply because governments have dumped their countries in chaos – and in more than simply economic chaos.

Africa learnt the hard way that one of its leaders, Kwame Nkrumah, was totally wrong when he declared: "First seek the political kingdom and all the other things will come of themselves."

Private initiative in various fields (as against earlier state absolutism) is therefore becoming not only a possibility, but an absolute necessity for survival.

Re-awakening of a more radical and encompassing Christianity

Christianity and the churches are one of the facets showing signs of awakening at present. The earlier tendency towards pietism is being exchanged for a greater reformational involvement in the fields of politics, society and economics.

Christians, for example, are raising their voice against injustice in politics, and Christian actions are being organized across denominational borders. As a result of the respect which most people in Africa still have for Christianity, a

politician's mouth can be shut, but a prominent Christian leader's cannot.

Rightly one of the conference participants from Africa said that "Christians do make a difference in Africa. And I am proud to be one of them."

Two examples (which emerged during the conference) can be cited in illustration of this. In Kenya there will soon be no less than six Christian colleges which came into being through the private initiative of the church. ("Our universities in Africa are killed by our own leaders – for political reasons.") In Zaire, after the medical faculty of the University of Kinshasa closed down, forty different churches came together to start their own (Christian) medical university.

Do we really realize what this means? This means that the field is also open to, without state intervention, establish really *free Christian* (higher) educational institutions.

Indeed (once again in the words of a conference participant): "The time has arrived for Christians in Africa to act."

End of the wars between East and West

The East and the West have ceased their ideological war – and especially their efforts to fight it out on the African continent – so our continent might now taste the necessary peace to give attention to more constructive matters than war (should it also be able to avoid its own ethnic clashes).

Perhaps the East-West struggle did teach Africa not to expect its salvation from outside its own borders. And Africa also learned the lesson that ideologies are destructive and cannot give peace, provide jobs or feed hungry people.

This brings me to the following point.

Self-reliance as the solution

The people of Africa have no more illusions about help from the East, the West or the North in order to help Africa out of the mire. During the conference it was repeated like a refrain that (1) the so-called new World Order should not invoke false hope in Africa, and that (2) we have to help ourselves, for if we should not do

that, we will surely go under – finally.

This brings us to the next sign of hope for the bleeding continent.

Openness towards self-criticism

At international conferences in the past we often had to hear – *ad nauseam* – how Africans piled all the guilt for the terrible conditions in Africa squarely on the shoulders of either colonialism (of at least 25 years ago) or neo-colonialism (especially the multi-nationals). Of course they were not totally wrong. I have, however, over the past two years noticed a healthy change, a greater openness towards self-criticism, instead of always accusing others.

Somebody, for example, said at the conference: "There are outside factors, e.g. international. But most of our problems are our own creations – the results of bad leadership." And three other speakers did not hesitate to expose the exact conditions of university life in Africa publicly – even though criticized by other participants from Africa as not being loyal and fitting.

Their response to such criticism of co-Africans was that we can only make progress if we are willing to face up squarely to realities.

A new spirit of reconciliation

In conjunction with the previous comments, it is clear that Africa is tired of all the struggles and warring. A new spirit of reconciliation – even towards white South Africans – has settled on people. "One does not kill a human being when one differs from him. One reconciles with him," one conference-goer said pertinently. At the same time, however, it has become clear that reconciliation is never cheap. The three r's cannot be seen in isolation from each other: they are *reconciliation*, *repentance* and *restitution*.

High expectations of South Africa

Another tendency which struck me was the extent to which all eyes (even from as far away as the numerically strong Nigeria) are fixed on South Africa. At times the

expectations regarding the “new” South Africa are unrealistic. This does not eliminate the fact, however, that very high expectations are held of South Africa in general and the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education in particular.

South Africa changing

Fortunately, things have begun to change not only for Africa but also for South Africa in the final decade of this highly fraught century.

It would seem to me that people have finally begun to realize that South Africa as well as white South Africans are an *inherent* part of Africa, and not a coincidental Western *bastion* at the Southern tip of the continent.

It is a pity that the process of becoming aware of this should still be a nightmare experience for many white South Africans.

For me personally (and I have had the privilege of traveling widely in Africa) the awareness has been a blessing and not a curse, because now I need not hesitate any longer about whether I am an African or a European. I know that I am a (white) African. I also know that I will never really be at home in Europe or in America. Almost along the lines of a friend from Zimbabwe whose poster said “I am a Zimbabwean – and proud of it”, I want to say “I am an African — and proud of it.”

MORALITY IN AFRICA: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

THE REASONS FOR THE CONTEMPORARY CRISIS

We are experiencing the results of moral decline in South Africa and on the continent at large daily. Academics are also worried by this “moral vacuum.” It seems as if something important has disappeared and nothing good has replaced it. This chapter will, by way of introduction, mention some of the moral virtues of traditional Africa. They reveal a stark contrast with contemporary “morality.” The main emphasis will be on the possible reasons for the present moral decline, because knowledge about the causes may assist us in our search for solutions. By quoting extensively from African authors on the topic the chapter provides an in-depth look at the following reasons for the moral crisis: (1) some general characteristics of traditional morality, (2) inherent weaknesses in traditional morality, and (3) different external influences. The chapter concludes with a few ideas of how the challenge of the moral crisis can be met from a Christian perspective.

Judging from the following two statements there seems to be a vast difference between traditional and contemporary morality in Africa:

Ethical education was the ultimate aim of education in the traditional society (Kigongo, 1991: 23).

Contemporary African society is lamenting a moral world fallen apart ... Today the African society ... seems to be in a state of near chaos in the realm of morality (Kinoti, 1992: 75, 86).

This statement is echoed by many other writers. Shutte (2001: 1), for instance, speaks about a “moral vacuum, something has gone and nothing has replaced it.” Two moral summits have already been held in South Africa (October 1998 and April 2002) to address the moral decay. At the last meeting a Moral Regeneration Movement (MRM) was established.

One way to describe the present situation of moral degeneration is to contrast it with the values or virtues appreciated in traditional African society. However, limited space does not allow us to discuss the religious, social, educational, and other structures which form the basis of these values (cf. Motlhabi, 1986: 92-93).

1. The virtues and values of traditional African society

In traditional Africa a shared morality was the cement of society. It is clear from the agreement in the following lists of traditional values mentioned by different authors: charity, honesty, hospitality, generosity, loyalty, truthfulness, solidarity, respect for nature, elders, and God (Kinoti, 1992: 84). Elsewhere she distinguishes between *personal values*, which helped individuals to be integrated people, like honesty, reliability, generosity, courage, temperance, humanity, and justice and *social values* that helped society to remain integrated, like peace, harmony, respect for authority, respect for, and fear of, supernatural realities (Kinoti, 1992: 80). Mojola (1988: 30) adds: harmony, peace, friendliness, and decency. Apart from those already mentioned, Gyekye (1998: 324) mentions the following traditional African moral ideals or virtues: kindness, compassion, benevolence, concern for others – in short, any action or behavior that is conducive to the promotion of the welfare of others. Elsewhere (p. 332) he gives the following list which imposes on the individual a duty to the community and its members: interdependence, co-operation, and reciprocity. (See also Gyekye, 1996.)

Motlhabi (1986: 91, 95) draws attention to the fact that equivalents of the Ten Commandments, like prohibitions to steal, murder, commit adultery, tell lies or deceive, are encountered in the traditional African concept of a virtuous life.

Gelfand (1987: 65 ff, 82 ff) not only provides a description of the cardinal values or virtues of the Shona people, but also of the bad qualities. The most important *virtues* are: respect, love, compassion, kindness, generosity, truth, rectitude, humility, self-discipline, forgiveness, mercy, pity, sufficiency, repentance, trust, giving, strength, patience, courage, hard work,

unselfishness, and the willingness to share whatever one has, no matter how little it may be. The *vices*, rejected by traditional society, were: abuse, lying, deceit, stealing, adultery, drinking, violent quarrelling, pride, jealousy, covetousness, hatred, ingratitude, anger, negligence, weakness, assault, provocation, and selfishness.

Geldfand also mentions different types of sanctions designed to ensure proper behavior. One of them is public ridicule to cause shame, guilt, and fear and to prevent antisocial behavior. Kudadjie (1983: 171-173; cf. also Motlhabi, 1986: 96) discusses the question how morality was enforced in detail, and distinguishes between two main types of sanctions: religious and social.

Religious sanctions included the practice of cursing through magic and the fear of punishment by the ancestors and the gods – the “policemen” of traditional Africa. *Social sanctions* included the following: (1) praising and honoring the good and brave; (2) parental gifts to good, reliable children; (3) confidence between parent and children.

Apart from these *positive* social motivations, the following were *negative* social sanctions: (1) family or clan renunciation; (2) disinheriting; (3) swearing of oaths and curses; (4) ostracism; (5) public disgrace or scandalizing; (6) execution, in the case of notorious criminals, adulterers, seducers, etc.

2. The present moral crisis: uncertainty and confusion

The present situation contrasts sharply with the previous (cf. Mugambi and Nasimiyu-Wasike, 1992). Elderly people lament daily that they are meeting behavior that shocks them: sexual immorality, dishonesty, corruption, crime, violence, and many other things which hasten the old to their graves. Middle-aged people lament about children they fail to control. The youth complain of a lack of example from the older members of society.

Eitel (1986: 1) describes the present African as someone between two worlds: unable to part with the old and not yet of the new world. In a limbo between these two worlds a dichotomy permeates his moral behavior. Kinoti (1992: 73) draws attention to the same phenomenon by way of the following folk tale. A hyena was following the general direction of the smell of meat. But

when his path forked into two he was not so sure which one would lead him to the meat. In his uncertainty he put his legs astride the two paths and tried to walk along both. He ended up splitting in the middle! Many other people have written in similar ways about the "divided soul" of Africans.

This uncertainty is evident when Oruka (1990: 105-106) lists the types of values which form the roots of contemporary Kenyan culture: (1) the pure traditional; (2) the pure Christian (or Muslim); (3) the traditional-cum-Christian; (4) the secular West; (5) the secular traditional; and (6) the unspecified culture in transition.

The first is a cultural root which results in a cultural attitude which does not go beyond the values of a given ethnicity. The second is a commitment to Christian values ... in defiance of any other values... . The third is a category which caters for those who believe partly in African traditions and partly in Christianity. The secular West is an unreligious attitude The secular traditional is an unreligious and unmagical belief in traditional culture. The unspecified culture in transition is the culture of the urbanised youth in Kenya today – it is what others have begun to refer to as the *sheng culture*.

3. The reasons for the contemporary crisis

When we know what caused the moral crisis, we may be in a position to look for solutions. This main section will, firstly, characterize traditional morality. Secondly, it will become clear that traditional morality reveals some inherent weaknesses. Thirdly, important external influences will be discussed.

3.1 The characteristics of traditional African morality

Traditional African morality can be described in the following terms: (1) communalistic; (2) humanistic or anthropocentric; (3) pragmatistic and utilitarian; (4) tribalistic; (5) shame-oriented; and (6) this-worldly. These six characteristics imply the following.

3.1.1 Communalistic

According to Kollman (1988: 59) "African morality and ethics ... cannot be conceived outside of the community." Gyekye (1998: 318) regards

communalism not only as its outstanding but also as its defining characteristic. Traditional African society was therefore characterized not by one's own rights but by duties towards others:

If I carry out a duty to help someone in distress, I would not be doing so because I think a person has a right against me, a right I should help to fulfil. I would be carrying out that duty because I consider that person worthy of some moral consideration by me ... (Gyekye, 1998: 333).

Wiredu (1998: 305) is also of the opinion that African traditional morality is "quintessentially social." When writing about the ideal person according to the Akan [an ethnic group in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire] he says the following:

The communalistic orientation ... means that an individual's image will depend rather crucially upon the extent to which his/her actions benefit others rather than him/herself, not of course, by coincidence, but by design ... an individual who remained content with self- regarding success would be viewed as so circumscribed in outlook as not to merit the title of a real person (Wiredu, 1998: 312).

Motlhabi (1986:95) agrees: "... the central moral norms were the maintenance of harmonious relationships within the community"

A communalistic ethics or morality does not only imply that all human behavior should be to the benefit of society. Society itself is also the *norm* for moral behavior. According to Mojola (1988: 31) the fundamental criterion of morality is the community: "An act is right if and only if it also conforms to the rules and regulations established by the community" The moral norms are, therefore, not derived from the will of the Supreme Being: "the thought is not that something is good because God approves it, but rather that God approves of it because it is good in the first place (for society)" (Mojola, 1988: 31).

Kigongo (1991: 24) stresses the fact that in a society – like the present African one – where there are rapid and profound social changes and fundamental conflicts in people's social experience, one's ability to make choices in respect of moral behavior is of paramount importance. Traditional morality did not prepare Africans for such choices because it emphasized

conformity to the *status quo* and punished non-conformity.

Having impinged considerably on the freedom of the individual ... the traditional society left very little room and opportunity for one to make a deliberate rational choice in the realm of ethical conduct (Kigongo, 1991: 24).

3.1.2 Humanistic or anthropocentric

According to Wiredu (1998: 308) African concepts of morals are generally of a humanistic orientation:

...at all stages ... morality is grounded in conceptual and empirical considerations about human well-being ... this is why the term 'humanistic' is so very apt as a characterisation of Akan moral thinking. At least in part, this is why it is correct to describe that ethic as non-supernaturalistic in spite of the sincere belief in a Supreme Being.

Elsewhere Wiredu (1983: 11, 12) concludes:

We now see that the 'gods' or even the Supreme God are irrelevant to the conceptual foundations of morality in Akan thought ... The gods are treated with respect if they deliver the goods, and with contempt if they fail ... Attitudes to the gods depend on their success, and vary from healthy respect to sneering contempt.

The anthropocentric (human-centered) orientation is clear from the following quotation:

...a human person is essentially the centre of the thick set of concentric circles of obligations and responsibilities matched by rights and privileges revolving round levels of relationships irradiating from the consanguinity of household kith and kin, through the 'blood' ties of lineage and clan, to the wider circumference of human familyhood ... (Wiredu, 1998: 311).

Mojola (1988: 30) agrees that because of its preoccupation with human welfare and well-being, traditional morality was "essentially humanistic" and "man-centered." Bujo (1990: 49) also describes traditional African ethics as "fundamentally anthropocentric and humanistic," in other words a horizontal

relationship between humans. When Motlhabi (1986: 94-95) discusses traditional African moral values, norms and codes he arrives at the same conclusion: "The concept of ubuntu placed emphasis on the person as the highest and intrinsic value."

It is clear that traditional morality is not about obeying the will of a god or pleasing him, but about obeying the will of the community and seeking the well-being of human beings.

3.1.3 *Pragmatic and utilitarian*

Gbadegesin (1998: 302) asks the important question "Why be morally good?" "It will pay you" appears to be the ultimate appeal for moral goodness in traditional Nigerian worldviews. He concludes:

Far from having a religious foundation, then, we have here a system of morality which, while it makes use of religion as a motivating factor, is clearly pragmatic and 'this-wordly' to the core ... the Yoruba are very pragmatic in their approach to morality, and though religion may serve them as motivating force, it is not the ultimate appeal in moral matters (Gbadegesin, 1998: 305).

Mojola (1988: 32) and Bujo (1990: 50) use the word "utilitarian" to describe traditional ethics. Wiredu (1998: 307) uses the same word and indicates that this utilitarian attitude even applies to the Akan's relationship to his gods:

...what is good in general is what promotes human interests ... the Akans are known to be sharply contemptuous of 'gods' who fail to deliver; continued respect is conditional on a high percentage of scoring by the Akan reckoning.

3.1.4 *Tribalistic*

In spite of the fact that Africans do not prefer their traditional culture to be described as "tribal," Turaki (1997) does not hesitate to use this term. He (Turaki, 1997: 66 ff; cf. also Motlhabi, 1986: 94) provides the following description of what he calls Africa's tribal morality and ethics.

Its source or basis. In Africa the source/basis of morality is the ancestors,

kinship and in- group. External and objective moral principles lack legitimacy and authority. This contrasts sharply with most Christians who accept God's will as the source and basis of morality.

Moral and ethical codes. Moral and ethical codes are derived from the ancestors and also from the ultimate interest and security of the blood group. Even though individuals might operate under national and universal moral codes, their loyalty and allegiance are first to their tribal/ethnic groups. The difference with mainline Christianity is again clear according to which the moral codes (like love) have universal implications and applications.

Right and wrong. Turaki explains:

What is right and wrong can only be committed against a member of the own ethnic group, race or tribe, but not against a stranger or an outsider. An outsider has no rights or protection and anything done to him has no moral or ethical value. It is an insider who has rights, privileges and protection under racial and tribal laws. Thus killing or discriminating against an outsider is not a crime (Turaki, 1997: 68).

Kollman (1988: 59) agrees: "The clan or tribe ... is in traditional Africa the only locus for justice ... outside of which all others are strangers and inferiors, if not enemies."

For this reason cheating, mismanagement, embezzlement etc. are not viewed as wrongs as long as it brings material benefits to one's own kinsfolk. Those are praised who have succeeded in looting a state's or company's treasury for the benefit of their group, for instance to build churches, mosques, and community centres! Again this is in stark contrast with the guidelines of the Bible which have universal implications.

Responsibility and accountability. In traditional Africa, according to Turaki (1997: 69), one is expected to carry responsibility in accordance with the wishes of the ancestors and the community of blood relations. One does not live in terms of objective principles. Similarly, one is not accountable to oneself, but to one's ancestors and blood relations. Patriotism and loyalty to the state or a church therefore becomes a problem.

Personal sense of sin, shame and guilt are always interpreted in terms of

the ingroup and blood community. It is the ingroup that is wronged or sinned against ... One sins only against kinsfolk, and feels ashamed or guilty because of them. The behaviour, attitudes and practices of individuals and groups within the context of the modern state do not carry with them any strong sense of sin, shame and guilt. It is on account of this that the state's moral and ethical codes are not always adhered to or respected. They are usually considered to be of the outside world, hence they lack legitimacy and authority (Turaki, 1997: 71).

In Christianity responsibility and accountability are to God and all fellow human beings. It is not limited to one's own ethnic group. The scope of one's duty has been enlarged to embrace the totality of humanity, transcending tribal values and interests.

Turaki's description of the traditional tribal morality of Africa is confirmed by authors like Kollman (1988) and Waruta (1992) who wrote extensively on the issue of tribalism in Africa. According to Kollman colonialism heightened the tribal consciousness of Africans. Also contemporary urbanization has not neutralized but strengthened tribalism. In the urban setting the African is lost in the impersonality of today's relationships from which he takes his refuge into tribalism. Tribal identities today play an important role in the competitive struggle for all-too-scarce political and economic assets. And because the goods and services are not distributed freely and equally, but according to ethnic criteria, tribalism should be regarded as discrimination and as serious injustice.

Waruta defines and describes tribalism, gives many examples of its manifestations and its detrimental effects and also suggests some solutions. At the end of this essay he warns against a new form of "tribalism:"

New groups not based on tribal relations but on class interests such as the rich, the elite, the military and so forth, are now on the increase to protect their class interests. A new form of 'tribalism', the 'Wabenzi tribe' or the Mercedes-Benz car owners tribe (the rich), is now a reality posing a greater danger and threat to society as a whole than the earlier tribalism (Waruta, 1992: 134).

3.1.5 *Shame-oriented*

Benedict (1946) was the first to distinguish between shame cultures (more communalistic cultures, like that of traditional Japan and Africa) and guilt cultures (individualistic cultures, like the West). Lienhard (2001), however, argues that the salient difference is an honor orientation versus a justice orientation, more so than shame and guilt. After a transgression an honor-oriented person experiences shame, while a justice-oriented person feels guilty. Restoration, therefore, deals either with shame by restoring one's honor in the community or with guilt by seeing that justice is done. Lienhard (2001: 136-139) also indicates that the Bible has a message for both honor- and justice-oriented people and that it has implications for how we communicate the gospel to the two different cultures.

The reasons why one refrains from doing wrong should not simply be shame or loss of honor when one's faults are exposed, causing one to lose one's position in society. Personal relationships are, however, often more important to an African than the truth. A westerner feels that he has the right to speak the truth. If an African realizes that speaking the straight truth is going to cause trouble and incite people to hostility and hatred, he will rather keep quiet. To say to somebody's face: "You are lying," is a great sin. Therefore you simply remain quiet, pretend to believe what he is saying or tell the truth in an indirect, roundabout way.

You will say to someone who wishes to drive with you that you will pick him up tomorrow – rather than saying that he cannot come with you. Another example: if your mother-in-law asks for a goat, you dare not say directly that you do not wish to give it to her. If she enquires again later, you simply say that you are still looking for a goat. It is much more important to respect people than to speak the truth. Fear of trouble often makes Africans say yes when they mean no.

This habit of pretending to be willing to do something (unreliability, according to the West) does present difficulties for the dissemination of the gospel in Africa. In the churches this tendency has had the result that the sins of the members and the officials of the church are concealed and not made

public. (Behind the person's back, however, gossip goes on unchecked!) The Bible teaches, however, that wo/man should fear God more than their fellow human beings.

3.1.6 A this-worldly morality

This last characteristic of African traditional morality indicates the fact that it does not believe in any judgement of our moral behavior in life after death. Beyond death there is only the ancestors who continue to live as they used to live in this world. There is no final judgement by God which can encourage one to live a morally good life here on earth. Bujo (1990: 61-62) quite correctly addresses the following question to traditional African morality:

Why so much effort and pain, why such an obsession to avoid wrongs and practise virtue, if, in the end, all turns into nothing? ... If all ends with the tomb, or certainly does not change after death, then treachery and loyalty, torture and justice, drunkenness and temperance, war and peace are all the same ...

If there is no expectation of a new creation, as promised in the Bible, there is no reason either to live a morally good life in this world.

3.2 Inherent weaknesses of traditional morality

From our exposition of traditional African morality it will already be clear that it contains inherent weaknesses that should not be ignored. People sometimes tend only to blame present or external circumstances for the moral bankruptcy of Africa while they idealize traditional morality.

In the preceding part of this chapter I have deliberately given the word to Africans themselves and have quoted extensively from what they have to say about traditional African morality, including its weaknesses. It is interesting to see how these weak points are in line with what a westerner, like Steyne (1989: 186-198) has to say. According to him animistic morality is characterized by the following:

The human being is in charge, s/he has to take care of her/himself. He can acquire everything he needs for life by manipulating the spirit-world successfully. The spirits respond to the correct rituals, not to a good moral life.

Humanity does not merit anything by being moral. Humanity's will and desire is supreme – it is a totally anthropocentric morality. Humanity does not have to change to be morally good. We can live as we please as long as we can acquire power through the manipulation of the spirit-world.

There is no basis or standard for moral action outside the human being. The norm is the securing of power for the individual. This can be acquired by any means, good or bad. The end justifies the means. In spite of the emphasis on the community, traditional morality is always about personal gain or advantage – it is a self-centered morality. Because the motivation is to be successful above and over one's fellows, abuse and mistreatment of the less privileged, and exploitive attitudes towards outsiders by a small elite which live at the expense of the poor masses, are tolerated if not fully approved.

There is no need for universal social concern. The neighbor is narrowly defined as the in-group, while all others may be deceived and exploited as fair game. Justice applies only to the in-group, and even injustice to the own group can be covered with the right means, namely a specific ritual for the spirit-world.

The human being's relationship with an untrustworthy god and spirit-world (both good and bad may issue from them), have a negative effect on social life. If he/she fails to exercise power over events, someone else is to blame and should be punished. The community, the ritual performed or the spirit-world could be guilty. In spite of the strong community spirit – or perhaps because of that? – humans will not hesitate to blame their close kin for natural or normal physical problems or calamities. Moral guilt is therefore not accepted by the individual.

Similarly a person's actions are not his/her own responsibility. Responsibility is shifted onto the community or the spirit-world. Guilt is also not related to an offence against the will of a God. There is no objective standard to measure guilt or "sin." Relativity reigns. If the right ritual is performed, such as making an appropriate sacrifice, humanity can circumvent all the consequences of their moral misbehavior and remove their guilt. In this way, should he be caught, the spirit-world can be appeased.

For an outsider the traditional African virtues mentioned above (like fidelity in marriage, hospitality to strangers, love and respect for relatives) seem praiseworthy and commendable until their deeper motivation is understood.

These virtues are motivated by fear. Fear because of the fact that the spirits are unpredictable and can never be fully trusted, but frequently respond to whim and fancy. Fear of not performing a ritual accurately enough to motivate the spirit-world. Fear of fellow humans – even those very close to oneself – who can cause one harm. Fear of not acquiring enough power to protect oneself.

What therefore appears to be objective standards for morality does not arise out of love or altruism, but is motivated by fear that you will be the loser. The question is whether a sound moral system can be built on such a pervasive feeling of fear.

Elsewhere Steyne (1989: 183) characterizes animist beliefs and morality as (1) anthropocentric (humanity exists for himself), (2) humanistic (everything from, to and for humanity), (3) self-centered, and (4) utilitarian (everything must serve humanity). This characterization shows remarkable similarity to our own description on previous pages as well as with Nyirongo (1997). This also makes us aware of the fact that, in spite of traditional Africa's emphasis on good human relationships (see the first part of this chapter), its morality can be very self-centered or egoistic.

3.3 External reasons for the contemporary moral crisis

The internal causes are not sufficient to understand Africa's moral degeneration. The following external reasons should be added.

3.3.1 The influence of western secular culture, especially western individualism and capitalism.

According to Mwikamba (1992: 86) whereas in the past Africans were much more community-centered, today they are becoming more and more ego-centered. Bennaars (1993: 23) expresses agreement in the following words:

In traditional Africa morality was always intrinsically linked to the

community ... the sole criterion of goodness was the welfare, the well-being of the community ... Any form of individualism was seen to have a negative value; it was seen as a potential threat and thus regarded as intolerable.

But today the situation has changed:

Individualism in various forms is increasingly evident in daily life. Education, religion, culture imposed from outside have all contributed, not to speak of economics and politics. Today, African individualism has largely replaced communalism, as both individuals and nations struggle for survival ... (Bennaars, 1993: 38).

Oruka (1990: 103) draws attention to the influence of colonialism. For a society so seriously disturbed by the invasion of a foreign culture to come back to cultural normality it needs at least to pass through five generations or a hundred years!

There can be no doubt about the fact that the influence of the West uprooted the cultural, social, political, economic and moral systems of traditional Africa and restructured them to meet the needs of the West (Nthamburi, 1992: 108). This was not only the case during colonial times, but it is continuing up to the present.

3.3.2 Materialism

One of the clearest influences from the West is the growing materialism in Africa (cf. Mwikamba, 1992: 102-103). Money and material well-being have become a semi-god. Economic activity, success, and material gain have become ends in themselves. People are subordinating and exploiting others for economic purposes. Materialism and consumerism erode both traditional and Christian morals. Hedonism (seeking only my own pleasure) has the upper hand. The idols which the African youth imitate are the business, sex, music, and football idols from the West. Human sexuality becomes a "tool" to be used and discarded, sexual violence, and rape are increasing.

3.3.3 The mass media

Another strong influence is the mass media, especially television and videos.

Most of the programs are imported from the West, especially the United States. They propagate the secular moral values of the West like materialism and free sex. In Africa young people, particularly, become die-hard worshippers of western ideals because they are considered to be "modern."

3.3.4 Education

Western education is another agent of cultural change (Mwikamba, 1992: 94), reinforcing alienation from traditional morality. Initially schooling was Christian-orientated (mission schools), but after independence it became secularized state education. The new morality fostered by this kind of education was materialistic in outlook. Above all, such morality was very private – it allowed the individual to pursue his or her own interests without much regard for the welfare of others (Bennaars, 1993: 25). Education, furthermore, often provided only intellectual or professional training without any moral "education for life." (See Kigongo, 1991 for more moral weaknesses of the western educational system as well as Mpinga's, 1990 proposals to improve the situation.)

3.3.5 The influence of Christianity

A number of authors express the opinion that Christianity did not always have a beneficial influence on the moral life of the Africans.

Richardson (1996: 129) is of the opinion "that the Christian understanding of ethics and the moral life, which has been shaped almost entirely by western culture, has seriously impoverished itself by not appreciating and learning from the customs, concepts and time-honored wisdom of Africa." The Christian ethics propagated in Africa was strongly influenced by western individualism, secularism, and dualism (Richardson, 1996: 135-139). Traditional African ethics is of great relevance for Christian ethics today because of its emphasis on community, religious rituals, and *ubuntu* (Richardson, 1996: 137-140). Christian ethics should therefore look to Africa for guidance and inspiration. (However, to my mind some writers are not critical enough about the idea of *ubuntu*, for example Teffo, 1998; Shutte, 2001; and Broodryk, 2002.)

According to Bujo (1990: 40-41) Christianity did not help the traditional African who accepted the Christian faith in two ways.

Firstly, Christianity was too often preached as “dos” and “don’ts”, a catalogue of sins – the virtues being for the most part only briefly mentioned. The negative (sins) were more important than the positive (virtues)! Morality was often transformed into a catalogue or code of dry laws, not leaving room for the love Christ came to bear witness to among humans.

In the second place, Christian morality tended to concentrate on the sixth commandment (“You shall not commit adultery”). “Immorality” was primarily understood as *sexual* immorality, while Christian morality consists of much more than sexual morality. The Bible is far too rich to let itself be reduced to a lesson in sexual shortcomings!

A third weakness of Christianity in Africa is mentioned by Bennaars (1993). Christianity waged a constant war against African traditional morals. Such warfare had serious, negative consequences for the Africans because their moral traditions were an integral part of communal life in Africa. If an African refused to reject the traditional morality – as was required from Christians – it implied a refusal to reject traditional social life in its entirety, the value system included. “The African Christian became thereby a displaced person, who had substituted for traditional social ethics a foreign kind of personal ethics” (Bennaars, 1993: 25).

This is a very important point mentioned by Bennaars. The individualistic, pietistic kind of western Christianity transferred to Africa was very much worried about *personal* morality (lying, drinking, smoking, cheating, adultery etc.), but it did not provide a new *social* Christian ethics to take the place of the rejected traditional social ethics. There was nothing to guide converted Africans in socio-economic-political life.

The same point is taken up and emphasized by other authors as well. According to Mwikamba (1992: 86) beliefs and morals were not private matters in traditional societies. In fact there was no distinction between private and public morality. However, with the advent of western culture and Christianity, life has been compartmentalized into private and public sectors. Today we have a growing trend in Africa to claim that what one believes and does in private is a private matter.

An example is when a corrupt politician is welcomed in the church and even given a prominent position. The church seems to give credence to the view that one can remain in good standing with the church – and even be saved – and yet continue to enrich one-self by paying poor wages to one's workers. In this way the church preaches against individual sins, but condones social sins – which are no less sinful in the eyes of God.

Nthamburi (1992: 107 ff) also rejects this dangerous distinction between private and public morality "Morality does not only concern the individual's behavior but the whole of society" (Nthamburi, 1992: 110). He also traces the origin of this idea back to the kind of Christianity proclaimed by missionaries who tended to overemphasize personal sin and salvation and neglected social or structural sins and the need of social renewal. By condoning the *status quo*, they have also condoned social sin and injustice. His urgent plea is that "Christians have to extend their witness from the personal so as to have an impact on political, social and economic systems" (Nthamburi, 1992: 117).

Haselbarth (1989: 67ff) and O'Donovan (2000) are two of the few authors, writing on Christian ethics in the African context, who took up this challenge by dealing in their books not only with sex, marriage, and the family, but also with urbanization, labor, industry, politics, etc.

3.3.6 *A variety of other causes for moral decline*

It is impossible to go into detail so only a few other reasons for the present moral crisis will be mentioned. (1) The disintegration of traditional religion, society, and culture removed important religious and social structures and sanctions (see above) against immoral behavior. (2) The disintegration of marriage and especially (extended) family life – the place where young people learned how to behave correctly – worsened the situation. (3) Urbanization disrupted traditional ways of life and commercialization – not only of agriculture but nearly everything – resulted in a materialistic way of life. (4) Increasing poverty and the struggle for survival also played its role. (5) It should also be kept in mind that today the people of Africa are encountering all kinds of new problems to which traditional morality cannot provide the answers.

4. The challenge

Few if any will disagree with the conclusion of Mwikamba (1992: 104): "The urgency of moral reforms both in theory and in practice are of paramount importance. The reforms must be radical at all levels: the churches, individuals and society." But these few words pose a formidable challenge.

The essence of the problem we are dealing with is this: where can we obtain reliable norms to guide moral life in contemporary Africa? I fully agree with Bujo (1990: 66) when he says: "Ethics ... by definition has to formulate ... norms of human behavior, without any concession to human weakness, otherwise ethics would renounce its guiding function."

What people today need in Africa, more than anything else, is guidance, which direction to follow in the daily choices they have to make. Like the hyena in the folk tale they are confused because they have to choose between two different kinds of roads, indicated by two different norms. As was the case with the hyena they cannot simply combine the two. The one road is that of traditional African morality and norms and the other is that of modern western morality and norms.

4.1 The traditional African road

If we take this road the following should be kept in mind: (1) that not everything black is beautiful. Traditional African morality contains many weak and even questionable aspects (cf. Bujo, 1990: 102-111). (2) To a great extent we have already missed the opportunity to save many of the good African moral traditions from disappearing. (3) We are confronted today with many new problems, not considered by traditional morality.

If we follow this road we will therefore have to listen carefully to the still living traditions in Africa which have withstood the savaging deluge of slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism and western Christianity and which are still pulsating in the hearts of Africans. At the same time we should be self-critical and not simply accept everything because it is "traditional." Tradition cannot be accepted wholly without careful discrimination.

4.2 The modern western road

The opposite, but identical danger exists in this case: to accept European moral values wholly and treat them as the only standard for being “civilized” and morally good, while castigating anything African as “backward.” It should also be strongly emphasized that “western” cannot be identified with “Christian.” Christianity in the past played a significant role in the formation of western morality, but its influence has steadily declined since the seventeenth century.

4.3 A third way

The most important reason why we have to look for a third way out of the dilemma of the hyena is because of the *wrong conceptions of the origin of moral norms* in both Africa and the West. As we have indicated, moral norms, according to traditional Africa, are derived from the community. For this viewpoint I have coined a new word “communomy” (from *communitas* + *nomos*). In the West moral norms have their origin in the individual. To describe this viewpoint, I use the word “autonomy” (from *autos* + *nomos*), meaning “I am my own law(giver).”

In actual fact there is not much difference between the two viewpoints. In both cases *moral norms have their origin in the human being* – in one case the community of humans and in the other the individual human being.

Simply from their practical results it is clear today that neither the norms of the group (majority) nor that of the individual can be reliable guidelines to a full human life. From the Bible it is clear what the reason is: humans cannot be their own law, but are subjected to a law *outside* themselves. We call this viewpoint “heteronomy” (from the Greek *heteros* + *nomos*).

God has not only created us. He has also given us clear guidelines of how to live in order to experience life in its fullness. We have to obey these guidelines or laws. They are the real origin of reliable moral norms. This viewpoint is called “theonomy” (from the Greek words *theos* + *nomos*), which implies that God’s laws are the origin of our moral norms.

Earlier in this chapter we have already drawn attention to the fact that traditional African morality obeyed God’s laws as expressed in the Ten

Commandments.

The norm that transcends humanity is, according to Turaki (1997), God's commandment of love: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Nthamburi (1992: 112, 113) agrees: "The basic principle of Christian moral life is love to the neighbour ... Love takes the first place among all other values." The same is emphasized by Eitel (1986: 98-99):

Love ... is one of the most powerful motivators in Christian living. It serves as the major, controlling factor in the moral life of a disciple. God's love for man draws out man's love for God which, in turn, spawns love for others.

Bujo (1990: 66) rightly is of the opinion that "in morality it is neither the majority nor the minority who should dictate what has to be done; only the validity of principles counts." According to him a morality based on the gospel goes far beyond what even the highest African, Marxist, or Hindu morality is able to give.

Our norms are, however, not to be identified with God's will as formulated in his laws, for example the Ten Commandments or the law of love. Not we, but God is laying down the law or order for life. We can only discover it, respond to it in obedience or disobedience. Divine laws are *infallible*, human norms are *fallible*. God's will does *not change*, human norms *may change*, because of our deficient or even faulty understanding and formulation of God's will, or because God's will has to be embodied differently in different times and circumstances.

God's written word is not culture-*conditioned*, because the word itself conditions every culture. Neither is it culture-*bound*, since it transcends every culture, it is trans-cultural. It is culture-*related*. God's universally valid word was revealed concretely in the local and temporal-historical particularities of Israelite and early Christian habits. But embedded in these changing conditions are enduring motifs which lay their claim upon us today.

Spykman (1985: 47) therefore distinguishes between the "then-and-there *form* of obedience and the here-and-now *norm* for obedience." Elsewhere he says:

Abiding norms come to us in Scripture couched in the historical-cultural forms of the day. This is nothing to regret. Nor may we play the contingent off against the permanent, neither absolutizing its forms, nor relativizing its norms (Spykman, 1985: 53).

In our altered situation the *formal* aspect of a certain law may no longer be relevant. Yet it also has a *normative* aspect which carries an abiding validity.

Christ, for example, instructed his disciples to wash one another's feet (John 13:14), but it does not imply that we today have to do exactly the same. In His times and circumstances (dirt roads, long walks, open sandals) it was necessary. In our times (tarred roads, travel by car, and wearing a different kind of shoe) we, firstly, have to acknowledge the different context. Secondly, we have to determine what Christ's will is that transcends the specific context. And, in the third place, we have to recontextualize His will of humble service for our own times; we have to formulate it as a norm for our own specific circumstances.

Both *absolutism* (the idea that norms are supra-historical entities, valid for all times and places) and *relativism* (the denial of any constants to guide us) should therefore be rejected. Because norms are *human responses* to God's will at a certain time and place, absolutism cannot be accepted. And because we believe that norms are applications or positivizations of *God's will* for life, relativism should be rejected.

When discussing moral issues, legalism is a constant threat. Therefore one last perspective should be added. This is the need of a living relationship with God in Christ Jesus – the only real guarantee for a morally good life (Col. 3:3-17).

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Postscript

- KUNHIYOP, S.W. 2008. *African Christian Ethics*. Grand Rapids: Hippo Books (an imprint of WordAlive, ACTS and Zondervan Publishers).

The shame-oriented nature of traditional African culture (3.1.5 above) was later discussed in more detail in:

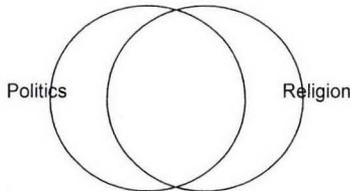
- VAN DER WALT, B. J. 2006. *When African and Western Cultures Meet*. Potchefstroom: Institute for Contemporary Christianity in Africa: 157-187.

GOD IN SOUTH AFRICA'S NEW POLITICAL DISPENSATION

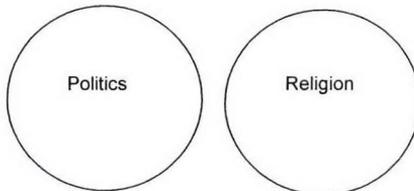
Many Christians nowadays ask where God is in South Africa's new political dispensation. I have tried to provide a brief answer by way of the following eight propositions. The diagrams are intended to eliminate long explanations and visualize difficult issues to enhance understanding.

Proposition 1: Religion and politics should be clearly distinct

Religion (Christianity too) is integral, total, radical and not limited to personal or church life. Religion and politics should not be *identified*. A *religious (Christian) state* or a *state religion* is detrimental to both.



Nor should the two be totally separate. This is a secular state.

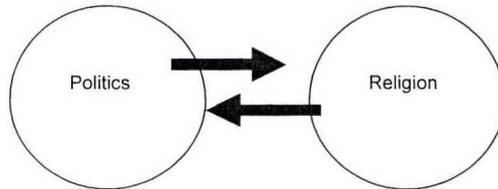


The term "secular" state is *acceptable* if it implies that the state acknowledges religious freedom for all its citizens and does not favor a specific religion. However, the term is *unacceptable* if it implies that religion has no role

to play in the affairs of the state (the so-called public sphere), in other words *total separation*.

A clear *distinction* between religion and politics without identifying or separating the two is the correct viewpoint, which implies:

- don't adapt (actively or passively) to the political status quo
- don't distance yourself as a Christian from politics
- but engage as individual Christians, churches, Christian political organizations/parties.



Result: God will become visible in South African politics.

God in our new constitution

God's name is only mentioned in the Preamble to the new constitution: "May God protect our people" and "God bless our people." This is of very little – if any – significance for the rest of the constitution. God's protection and blessing are important, but not important enough: a confession of His sovereignty over the state would have been of much greater consequence.

The new constitution is basically a secular-humanistic-liberalistic constitution (with social sensitivity). We now have to live according to this constitution, but from a Christian view of society in general and of the state in particular. A few basic aspects of this Christian perspective are spelled out in the remainder of the propositions

Result: using this Christian perspective means that God will not be a "dead" God in South African politics!

Proposition 2: The state cannot be Christian, but we can have a Christian view of the state

A Christian state is impossible, because of our multi-religious society. It is also not the task of the state to promote or favor one religion – we reject a religious state.

The God-given task of the state is to promote public justice. It should therefore only guarantee religious freedom for everybody. If it fulfills this God-ordained task (justice for all), it cannot be called a secular state.

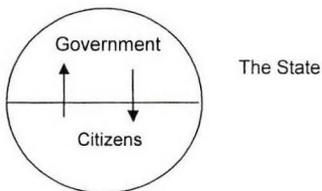
It is necessary to distinguish clearly between the task of the church (to promote the Christian faith) and the state (to promote public justice).

A Christian state is impossible, but a Christian political perspective (if possible, institutionalized in Christian political parties) is possible and necessary.

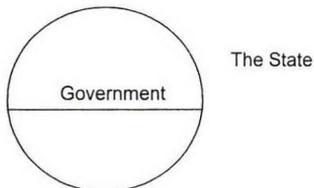
Result: through this Christian perspective (among others things, formulated by Christian political organizations) God can become visible in South African politics!

Proposition 3: Neither government nor citizens should be identified with the state, nor with each other

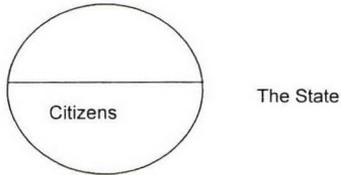
The government and citizens together comprise the state – the state is not only one of them.



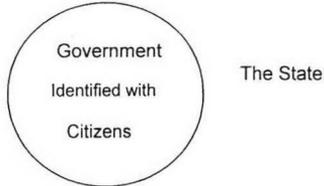
If government is identified with the state, (for instance, in socialism) and ignores its citizens, the result will be *tyranny* (everything is expected from government, the citizens are passive).



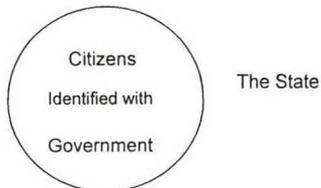
If citizens identify themselves with the state (for instance, in liberalism) and ignore government, the result will be *anarchy* (everything is expected from the citizens).



Government should not identify itself with the citizens in the sense that, once elected, they can simply continue to rule as they like, without continuously consulting the citizens. ("We simply execute their will!")



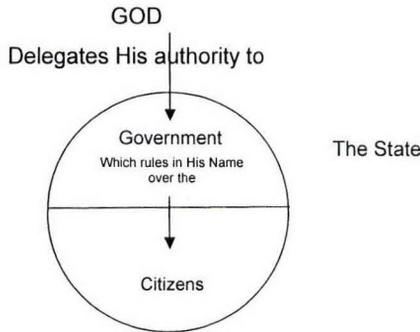
The citizens should not identify themselves with the government by becoming passive after an election, leaving everything to their elected government. ("The government will see to it that our will is done!")



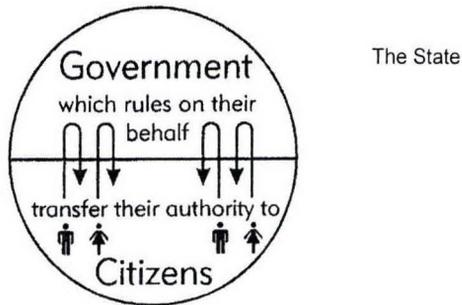
Result: if we distinguish the different responsibilities of government and citizens in the state. God will not be excluded from political affairs!

Proposition 4: The government does not receive its authority and power from either God or its citizens

Against the traditional Christian hierarchical viewpoint: God does not delegate His authority to government because then government authority could be regarded as divine and above any criticism by the citizens.



Against the modern secular egalitarian viewpoint: the citizens ("people") do not transfer their "will" (human autonomy) to government to rule over them on their behalf, because the result may be anarchy (if government is subjected to their will) or majoritarian totalitarianism.



God has determined *where* authority will be vested (in government) and

how it should be executed (by serving justice).

Result: God will be seen in politics when:

- we acknowledge that God has ordained the state as an institution and that government is not *de facto* bad, which should be reprimanded or even resisted;
- government views itself as a servant of God and its citizens; and
- government accepts the fact that it is accountable to its citizens, but ultimately to God, the absolute Sovereign.

Proposition 5: The state should have limited power

We should not *reject* the authority and power of the state, because it will lead to a powerless state. We should also not ascribe unlimited power to the state, then it becomes a power-state ("might is right") and everything the government wants to do, has to be accepted. Only when the state is viewed as a societal relationship with limited power, can abuse of power be prevented.

For a democracy to flourish, both the absolute authority of a single ruler/party and the absolute power of the majority should be rejected. Minority as well as majority rule can be tyrannical. (The number of people condoning something does not change it from bad to good!)

Human authority and power is not autonomous (not a law unto oneself), but always subject to the constraint of a law that is independent of both those in power and the people who have elected them.

The only proper control of state power is to recognize the limits God Himself placed on the exercise of that power - the authority of government is in principle limited.

Only God has absolute power; human authorities don't. To ascribe absolute power to government is therefore an act of idolatry.

Result: the will of God will be obeyed and He will be honored if we limit state power!

Proposition 6: The state has qualified authority and power

It is wrong to ask "How much power?" The correct question is "What kind of

authority and power should the state have?"

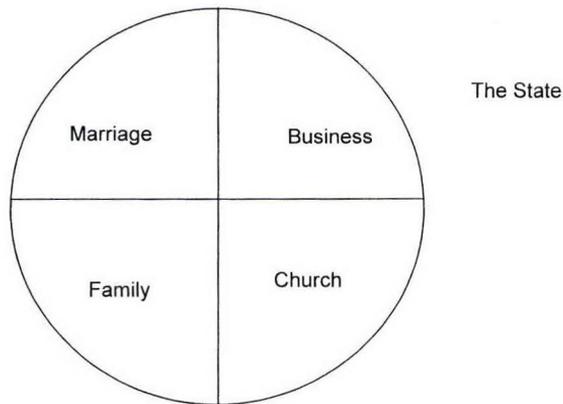
The state's "comprehensiveness" does not give it superior or absolute authority and power. It has a God-given, qualified mandate to serve in a specific area of life.

It should serve the common good as far as it is directed to the end of public justice. It therefore has a sword to restrict the powerful and a shield to protect (empower) the weak.

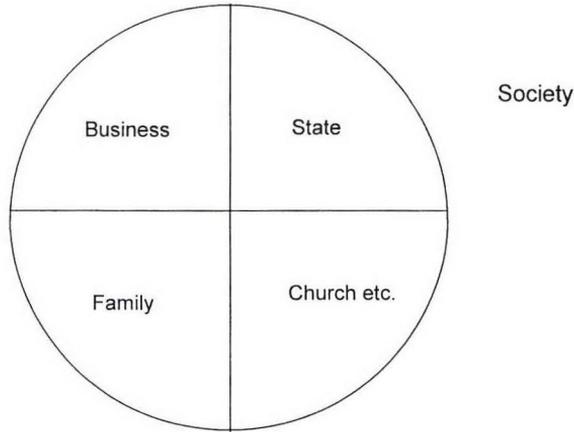
Result: if this is done, it will not be necessary to ask: "Where is God in South African politics?!"

Proposition 7: We have to depoliticize society and reject statism

It is wrong to identify the state with society. Society is not a unitary political organization with the smaller social units (marriage, family, school, church, business etc.) as mere sub-units of the all-encompassing state. Then everything becomes politics, in a totalitarian way civil society as a whole is politicized. A political order imposed from above will smother and not empower the diversity of societal relationships.



It is correct to *distinguish* clearly between the state and society. The social order comes before the political order and is much *wider* than the political order (the state) which is only one of its components.



Proposition 8: We should move beyond human rights in order to achieve real justice

Public legal, justice (the task of the state) entails the restoration of rights, giving each his/her due, creating equal opportunities. It is important, but not important enough: one can still hide behind the law while not doing justice.

Biblical justice requires more than legal or state justice. Restoration of rights is only a minimum requirement. Justice is also a matter of rights, but real justice exceeds rights. Full justice requires the acceptance of each other, recognition of each other's dignity, compassion with those in need, restoration in power of the weak and sacrifice of the privileges of the powerful.

Result: if this is done, we will be able to see God incarnate, Jesus Christ - the suffering Servant, who became weak to make us strong - in South African politics!

Conclusion

- We can be *glad* - and even proud - of many political changes and developments in South Africa.
- We can also *lament*, because, according to biblical standards, we haven't progressed far enough.

These basic propositions, however, explain that we as Christians need not *fear* that God will be absent in our new political dispensation. By obeying Him in the ways indicated above, both government and citizens could reflect His image. We as Christians, and even non-Christians, will be able to see Him *in* our political perspective and conduct.

In our political life - both in reflection and action - and *not separate from* it (only in our personal or church life) we can make His will visible!

PART IV

CHRISTIAN SCHOLARSHIP

**THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS OF A CHRISTIAN
ACADEMIC
A STORY FROM AFRICA**

Some of my most enjoyable experiences on the continent were hearing the fascinating proverbs and the stories told by African people. So much wisdom is expressed in a single proverb or in one short story. Africans themselves enjoy telling and hearing them. I do hope that this rich and beautiful part of their traditional culture will not be lost in the future. Only recently did the West, because of the influence of postmodernism, start to rediscover the value and power of story-telling.

I, therefore, have two strong reasons to relate in the form of a concrete history what I have, elsewhere, tried to explain in a more theoretical, systematic and abstract way.

One can, and should learn from experience. This is true of the broad history of humanity as well as the history of specific groups. But this is also true of the individual histories of people. At one of the Nazi camps in Germany where six million Jews were killed during World War II, there is a commemorative plaque with the words "He who is not willing to learn from history might repeat it."

I am convinced that you will also be able to learn from my story. You will probably recognize in it flashes from your own life. And possibly your careful listening to this academic biography might save you unnecessary struggle, stress, and also valuable time. I am aware of the fact that all of you – young students and experienced lecturers – do not find yourselves at the same academic level. I also do not believe that all of you of necessity went through all the stages like those of the person I am going to describe to you. Yet I would like to tell the story of my old student friend Thomas, right from the beginning.

When one looks back over the course of one's life it is easy to see a clear pattern to it. It is the same with this story. We can clearly divide Thomas's development into four main phases:

- Thomas: the Christian
- Thomas: Christian *or* scholar
- Thomas: Christian *and* scholar
- Thomas: The Christian scholar

In each of these four phases or stages one could further distinguish different sub-phases.

1. Thomas: the Christian

Thomas's full name is Thomas Jabulani Mkize. *Jabulani* means to be full of joy. His parents really did have cause to be very pleased because he was the first son after four daughters. Added to that he was a clever boy. The fact that he achieved the highest marks in the small rural mission school had shown this. It became even clearer when he passed his final exam in high school with flying colors. Had it not been for *umfundis* Ramapoza, he, like most of his friends would have had to go and look for a job in the city. This minister however, saw his giftedness and organized the inhabitants of Thomas's birthplace so well that he was given the unique opportunity of going to the university in a big city and enroll for a course in economics. (Economics was the field of study, which would help him one day to become a rich and important man, in contrast to the poor community where he had grown up.)

Thomas had a Christian upbringing at home and in his church school. He was a convinced Christian who had given his heart to the Lord and who had decided early in his life that he would like to serve his Lord. He would soon realize however, that it was not easy at all.

2. Thomas: Christian or scholar

The university where both Thomas and I had gone to study had originally been a Christian institution with a wonderful biblical motto and Christian phrases in its statute. But this was no more than history, because it had become an ordinary secular state institution. And when Thomas had enrolled, the scientific world was still clinging to a so-called objective or neutral

scholarly practice.

Among his lecturers in the Faculty of Economics there had actually been some Christians, who were also scholars, but no Christian practice of scholarship existed. They believed that one's Christian faith (like one's politics) and scholarly practice had nothing to do with each other. Even worse the two had to be kept strictly apart because, should one's Christian faith be allowed to play a role in one's academic work, one would be suspected of not maintaining a "pure," "reliable" science any longer.

For many of Thomas's lecturers – and therefore also his fellow students – it meant that one had to choose between one's Christian faith and one's studies.

It is unnecessary to tell you that this placed a convinced Christian like Thomas into a great spiritual dilemma. Now that he can look back over the course of his life he has also acknowledged to me that in his keenness to serve the Lord truly he also made mistakes. Instead of unmasking neutralism *as such* – and can one really expect this of a young student when thousands of brilliant scholars have failed? – he tried to serve God *in addition* to his scientific training instead of serving Him *through and in* his work.

In this main phase ("Thomas: Christian or scholar") we can therefore distinguish three sub-phases:

- a resignation to a schizophrenic existence;
- an effort towards evangelization of the campus; and
- an unmasking of the idea of neutral scholarship.

2.1 Resignation to being either Christian or scholar

At first Thomas was strongly under the influence of his so-called neutral lecturers. On Sundays he was a deacon in his church and from Mondays to Fridays he was a student. (Saturdays were usually soccer days and Thomas was a soccer fanatic.) For him the Bible was a book, which was applicable only to his personal life of faith. It taught him how to lead a good life, but said nothing about academic matters, politics, and the broad spectrum of social life.

You will be able to understand why this period could not last long in the life of an enthusiastic Christian such as Thomas. His holistic religious inclination as an African also came into conflict with this western religious schizophrenia.

2.2. Evangelization of the campus

At the time when Thomas started to become restless, a well-known para church organization started an evangelization crusade on the campus of the university. This aroused Thomas and started the next phase of his odyssey. He became aware of the huge spiritual need among lecturers, and wanted them to hear the redeeming message of Christ.

Thus he became the most committed member of the local "new" group of Christians. In every possible way (for example through pamphlets, T-shirts bearing Christian symbols, choirs, services, discussions, prayer, and Bible study groups) he tried to gain souls for Christ. He also firmly believed that if they could get a chapel of their own and a full-time evangelist, matters would change radically.

Thomas had almost forgotten that his first priority at the university was to study. He failed that year. He had only one desire and that was to be in the service of the Lord full-time. He thought that the only way to do this was to preach the gospel and to be "spiritually" involved all the time.

The worm of doubt had entered his soul however when after a year he began to realize that although a number of students had been converted the classes were still the same as before: the same (unchanged) lecturers, the same syllabuses, the same unbiblical theories. Perhaps my naughty remark had been the last straw: "Thomas, these days you have been serving the Lord with dedication *outside* the academic world, but not *within* scholarship."

To bring a student to kneel in prayer, to convert a lecturer, to help a lonely fellow, to improve the moral tone of the campus – all these things are important, but remain on the periphery of the real issue. Whoever limits himself to that, misses out on the more essential issues of a higher education institution, such as, for example the vision from which a syllabus ought to be constructed and taught, the underlying scientific and philosophical theories,

and ideologies, the methods according to which reality is interpreted, the broad university policy. In one word, the spiritual direction of the whole campus. The real problem at the "standard" university is thus far wider and more difficult to challenge.

2.3 Unmasking of the neutrality concept

A small discussion group of Christian friends, of which I was part, inaugurated a new period in Thomas's life. After many late-night discussions we came to the conclusion that we had to grab the proverbial bull by the horns – which was the so-called neutral scholarship idea. "Is neutralism in scholarship really possible?" That was the question that we had to concentrate on.

Our first problem was that it would be impossible for any person not to make a choice. For the Christian (who had chosen Christ) neutralism in scholarship would imply that he would have to deny his King should he want to be a student or a scholar. We were certain that Christ would not expect this of His followers.

Later we also realized that the idea of neutral scholarship was not nearly as positive a concept as it had been portrayed. *Neutral* comes from the Latin *neuter* which means "none of either." It therefore points to what someone is *not* – while a Christian is supposed to be a positive person!

The most important breakthrough which the few Christians made one night in Thomas's little hostel room was, however the discovery that the idea of a neutral scholarship was just a pretence.

One of Thomas's lecturers always stressed the fact that science should only work with the measurable, the weighable, the countable, and the visible *facts*. *Norms* (or values) were not mentioned – still less faith. The lecturer swore allegiance to the classical textbook of Lionel Robbins and his definition of economics: "It is the science which studies human behavior as a relationship between (given) ends and scarce means which have alternative uses." This definition only indicates means and purposes without any norms to direct them!

"But," Baloyi exclaimed, "then the prof. also believes! He believes that science only works with so-called naked, hard facts. "

"True," Pakamisa concluded. Because from what Thomas has told us, it is quite clear that his prof. selects and interprets his facts in accordance with a specific viewpoint."

"And," Zanele summed up, "that is the capitalist view."

With this key we could, that evening, gradually unmask the neutralist view of science. The whole concept that science had to be unprejudiced, without presuppositions, and absolutely objective was clearly a misconception. Not one of Thomas's lecturers would be able to prove this by means of their hard facts. Even less could they indicate that reality only consisted of measurable and countable things.

What is more, with their statement that science has to be neutral they have, without realizing it, fallen onto their own swords. Because, if they should maintain that science has to be practised free from presuppositions, they cannot at the same time demand that it be neutral. Neutrality – and this was the final conclusion of the group of Christians that evening – is therefore also a principle, the "principle of being unprincipled." Neutralists therefore have no reason - unless they are dishonest - to accuse Christians of dogmatism.

Thomas now had more courage. He was at least convinced that he as a scholar-to-be did not have to be ashamed of his Christian beliefs. He had not yet arrived at the final phase, however because the next problem that he had to solve was how he should bring together his Christian faith and his scholarship.

3. Thomas: Christian and scholar

However unlikely it might sound, Thomas graduated *cum laude* in economics, in spite of all his other activities. At that time university posts were still plentiful and he obtained an appointment as a junior lecturer. We were all very pleased because Thomas was an academic to his marrow. But this only served to intensify his (still unresolved) spiritual struggle. Now he was not simply a student any more but a lecturer, who would day by day be confronted with the question: how do I integrate my Christian faith with my scholarship?

In looking back, one could distinguish three approaches.

- The Bible as textbook.
- Theology as the solution.
- Practical application as the answer.

3.1 The Bible used as a textbook

Where previously Thomas had used the Bible as a book of the heart (to be used only for personal and moral instruction) he now began to lean to the opposite side: as well as all the other books in economics he began to use the Bible as a textbook.

While he was using the Bible as a book of the heart, he expected, to my mind, *too little* of the word of God. By using the Bible as a textbook for his scientific practice he now began to fall into the opposite error, expecting *too much* of it. (This, of course, we had not known beforehand, but only began to realize it once we had gone through this phase with Thomas.)

Our friend now tried to prove almost anything by means of biblical texts. At this stage of his life he was fairly strongly in favor of a socialist economic system. Therefore he tried to collect scriptural statements in favor of this and against capitalism. He did not at the time realize that both these economic systems really grew out of the same secularist spirit. (Both emphasize that autonomous humans have to work out their own salvation without having guidelines from above.) The only difference is that the one emphasizes society while the other one emphasizes the individual. A choice between the two systems is therefore, for the Christian economist, a false choice!

During this phase Thomas also wanted, with all the means at his disposal, to indicate that there was a radical difference between the scientific results obtained by a Christian and those obtained by a non-Christian. If there were no visible difference, then the scientific practice of the Christian could not be regarded as Christian.

I am not going to tire you with the many debates we had during this period of time. I would only like to mention a few of the lessons we finally learned.

- *The problem of the difference between the results of a Christian and a non-Christian approach to scholarship* we could not resolve. Some of us agreed

with Thomas that there had to be a difference. Others felt that this was not essential. Zanele was of the opinion that everything depended on the kind of science practised. Certain sciences (such as those which have to do with the human being) will immediately reflect one's Christian convictions, while in others (such as in the natural/ physical sciences) this will not show at all.

Pakamisa, also one of the members of the group, sounded a fitting warning at the time: "We have to be careful not to think that Christian academics are the only ones who can acquire truth. John Calvin has already said that a basic requirement for Christian scholarship is *humilitas*, humility or modesty. We have to beware of having an attitude of 'we are better and holier than you who are not Christians.'"

- Finally, however, we were all convinced that the method of trying to prove everything from Bible texts did not work. What it mostly amounted to was that Bible texts were violated in order to support one's own viewpoint. The Bible-as-textbook idea was therefore rejected. But how then should one use the Bible? We also could not accept that the Bible had nothing to say about Christian scientific activity – after all it is God's authoritative revelation for the whole of life. (The idea of Scripture as a *mere* book of the heart we had long ago rejected.)

Here too we could not reach a final solution. Apart from the fact – and this was later seen to be a good idea – that we had decided that it was not adequate to say that the Bible had authority, we also had to know how its authority functioned in the field of science. Peter noted the core of the matter when he remarked: "In order to find an answer to this question, we have to know exactly *what kind* of book is the Bible. If it is not a scientific textbook, what exactly is it?"

- In conjunction with this the idea was mentioned that our basic problem is possibly that we have too little theological knowledge. Perhaps theology, which has the Bible as its field of study, could help us out of this impasse?
- Finally, another insight began to take shape. As you recall, this was the phase of Thomas as Christian *and* scholar. Christian faith and science had therefore first been separated and then an attempt was made again to integrate them.

"Is this not perhaps the wrong point of departure?" we asked. Should faith and science be brought together, or is it *right from the beginning* that a certain faith *underlies every science*? The problem should therefore be formulated differently: not *whether* and *how* faith and science should go harmoniously together, but *what* kind of faith determines science. (Any science is thus a science embedded in faith, in service of the true God or of an idol.)

Christian scholarship, therefore, does not mean something *apart from* standard science. One therefore does not have to walk the whole path with "ordinary" science just to make a few comforting remarks at the end, or to close with some fitting biblical texts. No, right from the *beginning*, from the *root*, Christian perspectives must determine the character and content of one's scientific work.

3.2 Theology as the solution

As you recall, this was the second sub-phase in Thomas's development as "Christian and scholar." He thought that the solution might be found in more theological knowledge, so he enrolled for a correspondence course in theology.

His knowledge of Scripture really did benefit from that. But he could still not find an answer to his crucial question as to *what* kind of book the Bible was and *how* he could use it in the field of economics. For one theologian the Bible was the word of God, for another it was simply a record of human experience of faith, for a third a mixture of both. And this latter group could not indicate the boundary between the infallible word of God and fallible human words.

For quite a while Thomas still tried to contract a kind of "marriage" between theology and economics. According to such a viewpoint a Christian economics was the same as a theological economics. But it began to worry him that in this way his own subject, economics came too much under the yoke of theology. He did not want economics simply to become a handmaiden to theology. Theology was not the queen of sciences! It is possible to make the Bible the monopoly of theology. But, is it not true that *each* Christian

scholar has the responsibility of struggling with Scripture himself, instead of trying to do it in the (at times rather feeble) light of theology? Many modern theologians are not faithful to Scripture - or frankly they are even against the word of God.

In spite of these frustrations our friend had made some progress. It became clear to him, for example, that to study Scripture in isolation did not offer a solution for his struggle to develop a Christian approach. As an economist, after all, he was daily involved in ordinary worldly things. Would the solution not perhaps lie in the biblical text "In thy light we see the light" (Psalm 36:10)? This would mean that the Bible is merely the light that we use in order to see everyday economic phenomena, in the same way that I do not look *into* the light of my study lamp, but do my studies *in* its light.

The pieces of the puzzle had begun to fall into the right places, because one of the theologian's with whom Thomas had come into contact stressed the close bond between the dual revelation of God. God's original revelation (not in a lingual form) is visible in his creation. After humanity's fall, however, it became impossible for them to "read" God's creational revelation correctly. God, in his grace, "republished" his revelation in lingual form, namely in the Bible, so that we could read it again. The Bible is therefore, as it were, a pair of glasses for our weak eyes to enable us to read and understand God's creation (which also includes the economic facet).

In the second place, and concomitant with this, Thomas also stopped using biblical texts as "proofs," but he did not abjure the use of Scripture as such. If Scripture is a light, it gives perspective, it orientates. One should then look for Scriptural *perspectives* rather than specific texts. As regards his own subject he began to work on the biblical idea that God is the owner of all things, but that He had appointed humans as his stewards over creation. He started to research this concept of stewardship through the Scriptures and in the process discovered surprising new perspectives which he could apply in economics.

3.3 Practical application as the answer

Humanity does not always understand the ways of the Lord. Just when

Thomas began to see light in his struggle to become a true Christian scholar (and not simply a Christian *and* a scholar) his own personal life almost disintegrated. He and Zanele Dlamini, a member of our discussion group, became engaged and were married. We were all very happy for them, but soon afterwards we were all plunged into sorrow. On the way back from their honeymoon a careless taxi driver failed to stop and hit their car on the passenger side. Zanele was killed on impact.

Thomas could not cope with this disaster. It was heart breaking to see the always energetic, enthusiastic person losing his commitment. Very often I wondered whether his faith had not been permanently affected.

The once committed Christian began to think in relativistic terms. Where he had once fervently wanted a Christian economics to be something special, he now came to see it as only one of many possibilities: "Each scientist has his own vision and the Christian view is simply one of these."

It is of course true that a Christian practice of science is also a fallible human undertaking. But I got the impression that the crisis in my friend was more deeply rooted. He once said, "Everybody simply reads the Bible with his own personally tinted glasses." This is also true, but this still does not rob the Bible of its authority.

The very dangerous trend of postmodern relativism was paralyzing Thomas's life.

When later on I heard that Thomas had resigned as lecturer and accepted a position as a developmental economist in a rural area near his hometown, I was not surprised. The reason that he gave when I called him was: "I am tired of theoretical issues. In a situation of the most appalling poverty of my people I would like to make a practical contribution. The Christian character of any science lies in the way in which it is used an *applied* to improve life. It is not situated in what the science *looks like*."

I was glad to hear something of the old fire in his voice again. My reservations about his statements I kept to myself, because I found it hard to understand that Thomas could not understand that his statement could not be true: how can a science, which is not *inherently* Christian yield Christian

results? Does he not remember the parable that a thorn tree is unable to bear fruit? Was my old friend now going to become a pragmatist, as so many others had done, thinking that only things that have utility value is worth something? Could he really not understand that the choice between theory and practice was a false choice?

A dynamic thinker like Thomas Jabulani Mkize would understand this later. The deep wound that he had suffered merely needed time to heal. When his second name ("Be joyful") once again became stronger than the first one ("Doubter"), it happened.

When I tried to contact him again at the agricultural development project, I heard that he had already resigned two months earlier. Where had he gone? He had accepted a post at a small Christian college in a neighboring country. An expatriate who had started the college years ago had retired and Thomas has been offered the post as principal.

4. Thomas as Christian scholar

I had to find and see my old friend, even if the journey would hurt me financially!

The Thomas who now faced me was once again the fiery Thomas I had known for many years. And yet there was also something more: greater maturity, and a greater degree of clarity about his calling in life. The heartbreak had purified him, had made him stronger in his convictions. I would like you to share in this, and therefore I am providing a few flashes from what happened that day.

We first spoke for a long time about how he now thought about a Christian approach to science, and then about how he saw his task as leader of a Christian college.

4.1. Christian scholar

Thomas had no doubts any longer. He was not a Christian *and* a scholar, and even less was he a Christian *or* a scholar. He was now convinced that he simply wanted to be a Christian scholar and that he could be one.

"My religion and my life are not two things that exist side by side, much

less in opposition to each other. My life is religion, service to the only true God. And because I believe that my whole life has to be religion or else fall into idolatry, my scientific work is also part of my worship of God. I want to love God, and can also do so with my intellect. Academic life can also be to the honor of God!"

He still places a high priority on daily study of Scripture (not mere reading of Scripture). The Bible was, however, no longer for him a book just for the heart or a textbook. It had become a book of faith encompassing his whole life. It was a book, which in simple pre-scientific language, gave light for every field of activity.

"Although not an educational thesis, the Bible still teaches me a great deal about the education of young people. Although it is not an economics textbook, I can gain from the word very clear guidelines for buying and selling and how one has to handle money matters. Although it is not a political treatise I can still through careful reading discover in it specific norms for the behavior of government and citizen, so that I can apply them in this country too. To study the Bible like this is not easy, because most Bible study guides do not do this. But it is a challenge, and I enjoy every moment of the hour I use for this in the early morning, before I start with my daily responsibilities."

Apart from sustained Bible study principal Thomas also realized the important role that a Christian worldview and Christian philosophy should play in the make-up of a Christian academic.

"In the past I did not see this so clearly. But now I know that a Christian worldview is an absolute necessity for a Christian approach in scholarship. Through this pair of glasses the Christian scholar reads the Bible and through them too he looks to his field of study. His worldview develops into a philosophy. And this philosophy determines his scientific theories. It is thus not true that the scholar can direct himself 'neutrally' and 'objectively' at his field of study, without these 'filters.' For that reason I have begun a compulsory course for all students in a biblically founded worldview. And I would like to extend this as soon as possible into an elementary introduction to Christian philosophy. We can no longer afford to train students without vision."

At my request that he should briefly sum up his vision, he responded as follows:

“My first requirement is a renewed and enlightened mind (Romans 12:2 and Philippians 1:18) – something which can only be provided by God’s Spirit. My second requirement is the correct use of the light of God’s Scriptural word – without which we cannot study and understand his creational revelation, incarnated in Christ, properly. My third requirement is that the ‘filters’ (worldview and philosophy), of which I have just spoken, may not be dark, as they have to reflect the light of God’s Spirit and his word. Then follows my fourth requirement, which is the natural fruit: the result of scientific activity (the class you are presenting, the article or the textbook which you are writing) should also reflect this light. Lastly, the application of your scientific results will also testify to the true light because it really is in the service of God, your fellowmen and the whole creation. Because a Christian scholar has light *in* him and the light of God’s word *with* him, he can also radiate light *about* him.”

In response to my question as to whether we can then learn nothing from other (non-Christian) scientists, and whether such a view might not be considered arrogant, he had a balanced and clear answer:

“We should not think that science practiced by Christians and non-Christians should always (apart from some small, unimportant similarities) be different. The obverse is often true: great similarity and perhaps slight or no differences in the results. Why can we not be thankful for the similarities instead of being suspicious all the time?

“This does not mean that we should not also be critical of the results of the work of a non-Christian scholar. We should always, however, balance out criticism with gratitude for what has been correctly seen. We can also learn a great deal from non-Christian scholars because, even though our perspectives differ, we are all dealing with the same reality.

“Christian scholarship should therefore in the first place be qualified by fidelity to the true God. The difference with a non-Christian approach is therefore not a *condition* for science to be Christian, but rather the *result* of a faithful (Christian) practice of science.

"This might create the impression that Christian scholarship simply follows the way of the least resistance. A truly Christian practice of science, however, does not simply choose the best between existing scientific theories. It tries to obey the gospel in the practice of science in such a way that a new approach and original Christian alternatives can begin to take shape.

"Christian scholars therefore do not simply choose the 'best' among available textbooks and add a few critical remarks. No, at times they have to *rewrite* the standard works on educational philosophy, politics, ethics, and so forth. They really want to *transform* the practice of science, to shake up the old foundations, and to rebuild from scratch.

"This has to be done in humility, without an over-estimation of the extent to which it is possible to free our scholarship from secular influences, and without thinking that in this way we are better than others."

4.2 A Christian college

The time was too short to discuss this second issue in detail. What did emerge in the little time that we had left is, however, worthwhile to pass on. Thomas was clearly somebody with vision. He was also fully aware of the situation in his country and of our torn, bleeding, and (according to some) lost continent.

"I am grateful that this college came into being years ago as a result of the faithful work of committed missionaries. I realize, however, that this will not help us today at all to say that our origins were Christian if we do not make our Christian character true every day."

"How are you going to do it?"

"I think that we may never use our Christian faith as a cover for laziness. The opposite should rather be true. We have to do quality work, which will not be put in the shade by work done by secular colleges and even universities. I also think that the whole campus should be permeated by a Christian spirit.

"The church which has been built on the campus years ago for the purpose of evangelization, for example, can be used very fruitfully. Each Tuesday morning we are going to have a service. It will be different from an ordinary church service however. This service has to be directed at academic

life and should address the specific needs of students and lecturers. And the message that the lecturers will give should clearly and fearlessly open up the meaning of the gospel for the life and work that we do on campus.

“Furthermore we also plan a brief but clear credo for our institution, so that students and lecturers and also people from outside know who we are and what our ideals are.

“I think it is important that we should build an active Christian intellectual community on our campus. The discussion group that we had years ago meant so much to me. Here too we have to be able to criticize, stimulate and inspire each other. To achieve this we will have at least one meeting for discussions every two weeks.

“But it is of no use if we *think* as Christians and do not *act* as Christians too. Therefore we shall have to watch the ways in which students and staff behave. If there is no obedience to God and no love of each other, we cannot refer to ourselves as Christians.”

“You wanted to mention another point, Thomas?”

“Yes, it would also not be satisfactory to live in harmony with each other while the content of our syllabuses and the perspective from which we study reveal nothing of our Christian character. But we have already discussed that when I gave you my ideas about Christian scholarship”

“You do realize, of course, my friend, that we here in Southern Africa, where Christianity is the majority faith and we have freedom of religion, are in a privileged position to be able to study and to teach at institutions with a Christian identity. I would therefore like to question you about what a Christian strategy should be under less favorable circumstances, for example where Christians are in the minority. A colleague of mine, who is at present teaching in South Korea, writes about his own situation as follows:

‘The goal of Christian higher education in these circumstances is primarily evangelical. Christian colleges and universities on the mission field have been established not only to produce educated Christians, but more importantly to bring the gospel to the intellectual elite who is difficult to reach by other methods. The number of believers may not be the most

important aspect of Christianity, but without a minimum number of members, the church cannot function as a church at all and the gospel cannot play a liberating role in society. It is, therefore, very understandable that all available means, including higher education, have been mobilized to win more souls for the cause of Christ.

'In such circumstances, the curriculum of Christian higher education is of minor importance. It is not the content of education but the prestige and advantage attached to higher education, which is employed to attract students. An explicitly Christian curriculum would defeat rather than serve the main purpose of educational institutions established for this purpose.

'Paradoxically, Christian institutions of higher education should follow the curriculum of secular ones as closely as possible and even surpass them in fulfilling the curriculum if they are to be attractive and effective in achieving their goal. University education is still limited to a privileged few in most Third World countries. These few are not willing to sacrifice the privilege they have attained and the money they have invested to learn something that belongs to an exclusive social minority, hereby jeopardizing their promising future.

Consequently there is little choice left for a Christian institution but to adopt the curriculum of influential secular universities."

"What is typical of the Christian colleges is described in the following terms by Prof. Bong Ho Son:

'If there are any distinctively Christian elements in those Christian institutions they are not found in the curriculum but only in compulsory chapel attendance and some extra-curricular activities. Some Christian universities and colleges require all students to take courses such as *Introduction to Christianity* or *The Bible as Literature*, but the fruits of these requirements are mixed. Some non-Christian students come to understand the gospel message through the courses and become believers, but many students and some instructors, even the Christians among them, do not take these courses very seriously. Since Christian

universities or colleges, like nearly all private institutions, are mostly financed by the tuition fees of students, many students regard attendance of such lectures with benign tolerance. Since most Christian schools have to be satisfied with these token courses, a serious unbiblical dualism is forced on Christian higher education in these countries.”

“Does he accept the situation?” Thomas asked

“No, as a convinced Christian he planned another strategy. Let us listen to him again:

‘Even though an explicitly Christian curriculum is lacking and even impractical in most countries where Christians are a minority, some sort of Christian education can still be implemented if there are Christian lecturers on the campus. Making use of the academic freedom that higher education enjoys, a Christian teacher can present his Christian convictions to students personally as well as theoretically. The possibility of success in this Endeavour would vary from person to person and from subject to subject, but in any case, a believer can and should witness to his faith in Jesus Christ in his lectures, both implicitly or explicitly. This can in many cases more than supplement the lacuna created by the absence of a Christian curriculum. There are evidence of the success of such an approach in Japan and Korea where a relatively high proportion of intellectuals are Christians.

‘Many advantages accrue from what one might call this “hidden Christian curriculum.” One advantage is that it can achieve in some measure what Christian institutions are supposed to achieve without actually having them. A hidden Christian curriculum can turn the classroom of a secular university into a place of Christian education. It is easier in a certain sense and costs less than to establish a Christian college or university. If one does well with this Christian curriculum, one forces the government or other secular forces to pay the costs of Christian education.”

Thomas responded, “Bennie, that is an excellent example of how

Christians can fulfill the command of our Master given in Matthew 10:16 to be as gentle as doves and wise (cunning) as snakes.”

“Let me tell you how my Korean friend outlines further advantages of his hidden curriculum strategy:

‘This might sound dishonest and non-Christians would certainly regard this as hatching one’s eggs in another’s nest. One would, indeed, be dishonest if one pretended to be a humanist or neutral while, in fact, presenting his Christian conviction. But a Christian professor has the right to clearly state where he stands and acknowledge what he holds to be true. Christian professors can make full use of the academic freedom that most countries grant. It would be truly dishonest of a Christian teacher if he pretended and behaved as if he were a non-believer. Furthermore a Christian professor worthy of the name should be convinced that Christian truth is not valid only for believers, but as God’s truth, it is valid for all. It is not bigotry to hold and to teach Christian truth. We are convinced that education according to Christian principles would certainly benefit anyone, whether Christian or not, especially today when higher education tends to be one-sidedly technical and job-oriented.

‘Foremost among the advantage of a hidden curriculum, however, is that the best students of the country can be reached with the gospel and influenced by the Christian viewpoint. This is something an explicit Christian curriculum cannot achieve.’”

“This hidden curriculum method does not of course mean that an explicit Christian curriculum is not necessary, because it is only hidden to the students and (non-Christian) lecturers. The Christian lecturers themselves, however, have to have a very well-planned, explicit Christian curriculum in order to be able to implement their hidden curriculum fully,” Thomas replied.

“Correct Thomas, Bong Ho Son also acknowledges this. Seeing that most Christian scholars today work at public colleges and universities and that, seen in global perspective, many more Christian students will be studying at secular institutions, it seems to me an excellent strategy to realize the ideal of Christian higher education outside a small number of explicitly Christian

institutions.”

“Would it then mean that, at least for the present, attention should rather be given to the training of individual Christian scholars than to establishing Christian institutions for Christian higher education?”

“Thomas, if we note the crying need across the world and if we do not only look at our own privileged position, it would seem so. But Christian lecturers do have to be trained somewhere. Therefore it is not a question of either establishing Christian institutions or influencing the education at secular institutions. Christian institutions have to fulfil their calling (by means of the training and provision of Christian lecturers) on secular campuses. Conversely, Christian lecturers and students at secular institutions continually need the unique resources which can only be rendered by convinced, consistent Christian institutions. Such Christian institutions can, for example, write Christian textbooks, offer correspondence courses in Christian scholarship, organize short courses, forums, and conferences where colleagues from secular institutions can become involved.”

“Bennie, you are so correct when remarking that Christian institutions such as my own college also hold a danger. We can so easily use them to separate ourselves from the world. It can easily create an attitude of being ‘holier than thou’. It can even promote group egoism. Not to mention the danger that the distinction between God’s cause and our own cause can disappear so that something which was merely *a means* to serve God’s kingdom becomes *an end* in itself.”

“I know that you have a meeting soon, but just two more brief questions. Firstly, what do you regard as the greatest need in which your college has to provide?”

“Christian leaders for this country, but also for the whole of Africa. (We are drawing more and more students from neighboring countries because of our Christian character.) A famous Nigerian musician, Fela Kuti, referred to African VIPs as vagabonds in power. ‘With such leaders’, the late Ugandan playwright, Okot P’Biket, remarks, ‘there can be no hope for Africa’. And if you read Chinua Achebe’s *The Trouble with Nigeria* (especially chapter 4,

'Leadership, Nigerian style'), you will realize why on our continent there is such a great need for leaders in practically every field, leaders in the true sense of the word, leaders who serve and who are not only there to enrich themselves through corruption. I am convinced that a Christian institution is the best place to train such future leaders."

"My second – and final – question is: what ideals do you have for yourself?"

"I have never been so happy in my life as I am now. At the moment there is a great deal of management and administrative work, which I have to do myself. But I am not going to allow the situation to remain like this. I would like to be the spiritual leader of this place. I have to spend more time on reading and studying so that I can give direction to my students and staff."

When personal matters came to the fore, Thomas was usually very reserved. Therefore he did not reveal anything that day either. Later I did discover that he had also found personal happiness again. When he visited the late Zanele's parents during a brief holiday, he once again met her younger sister (who had a few years ago been a schoolgirl). The beautiful Mamphela really knocked him out.

5. We continue the saga

This was the academic pilgrimage of our brother Thomas. I hope that you learned something from it. I especially hope that the idealistic note on which it ended might be true of our young but especially also the older Christian institutions for higher education.

I have not gone into all the deep and difficult questions with regard to Christian scholarship and Christian higher education, because the pilgrimage is continuing. Thomas's story is not finished. You too will be writing part of it, because the ideal of Christian higher education is not that of individuals or individual institutions. No, it is the task of all of us on this continent who call ourselves Christians – and also of His children elsewhere in the world.

TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWAL OF YOUR MIND

In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Potchefstroom as an independent Christian university on 17 March 2001

I urge you, brothers [and sisters], in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1-2).

These verses contain at least the following: (1) a warning, (2) a command, and (3) a promise. We will look at each of these implied facets and (4) conclude with a ten-point vision for Christian higher education.

1. The warning

Paul's admonition deals with (1) this world and (2) tells us how our relationship towards it should be.

This world

"This world" is no longer the world of a few decades after Christ. It is our contemporary world, the twenty-first century. It is the African world in crisis. It is the global, secular world of which all of us are increasingly becoming part. Our task is to interpret the signs of our times (Matt. 16:3), to understand the world in which we live in order to become practically involved in meaningful ways. As Christians we are never allowed to succumb to pessimism or fatalism.

One of the most important ways to heed the signs of our time is to realize that what we see is the result of spiritual forces. We are engaged in spiritual warfare: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 6: 12). Paul starts with the visible forces (rulers, authorities, powers) and moves towards the evil forces inspiring them. What do the evil, dark spiritual forces of our time look like?

Many Christians look outside themselves to identify these forces and label them as witchcraft, demon possession, etc. Even though these forces are real, we do not have to look for "the world" outside ourselves. A secular worldview has already infiltrated deep into our own hearts and has infected our lives. Other religions, like Islam, are not our greatest enemies, but our secularistic worldview and way of life. We have to know this most dangerous enemy to be able to fight against it.

Five characteristics of secularism are the following:

- While one usually associates religion with specific rites or rituals, it is not necessary to engage in acts of worship to be religious. Secularism is such a kind of *alternative religion*. *It increasingly shapes the fundamental character of our societies in Africa.*
- In secularism we notice a shift from the worship of *spiritual powers (external to the human person)* to *secular powers (identified with the power of the human person)*. Humans themselves are worshipped!
- Closely related to the idolization of the human being is the idea of his *autonomy, of being a law unto himself*. This implies rebellion against God who is the Absolute Authority!
- Three of the most important means, which humanity today use to prove their power and autonomy, is through *science, technology, and economy*.
- The main feature of secularism, however, is not the *denial* of the existence of God or the "sacred," but the *separation* of the sacred and the secular, of religious faith from everyday life, including scientific knowledge. Secularism

does respect individual acts of worship. One should also not be deceived into measuring the secularization of our African societies by the place and scope that is given to formal acts of worship in public life. Secularism allows room in the public square for activities that pay homage to God. In many cases governmental, business, and educational activities may, for example, start with prayers and devotions, but what happens *following upon* such ceremonies, does not reflect obedience to God and His word.

Thus the important point is that faith (of any kind, not only the Christian faith) has no relevance for the practice of everyday life, because the will of God is not acknowledged in *all* areas of life. Human autonomy is the norm. Secularism has no problem with someone *confessing* his/her personal faith, but such faith should have no place in the *functioning* and *direction* of public, "secular" affairs – it remains an empty confession!

The result of secular religion is spiritual darkness. The "freedom" (autonomy) and "progress" of the West did not bring enlightenment to Africa, but a new kind of darkness, perhaps more dangerous than that of Traditional African Religion. Secularism's influence has become so pervasive on our continent that we do not even recognize it!

Our relationship towards this world

From the above it is clear that "world" should be understood in a negative sense: our contemporary cultural environment is dominated by the idea that God and his will does not really matter.

Through the ages up to the present time Christians advocated basically three different approaches or attitudes towards their surrounding culture.

- *Isolation* of Christianity from culture;
- *Conformity* between Christianity and culture; and
- *Reformation/ transformation* of its cultural milieu.

At times the first viewpoint can be very popular, as we have already seen

in the escapist tendencies of contemporary African Christianity. It is, however, difficult to uphold, because whether we like it or not, a Christian is part of his/her cultural environment - one cannot live outside a specific culture. Even when you reject the dominant culture, you create your own culture! It is also not what our text quoted above expects from us when it states we should not conform to the world.

What is rejected in this text is the attitude of accommodation: do not conform to the (cultural) pattern of the world. This second viewpoint is the easy way and the most popular - also on the African continent today.

The correct viewpoint is not to *flee* secular culture, neither to *conform* to it, but as Romans 12: 2 indicates, to *transform* it.

Unfortunately, not many adhere to this viewpoint, because it is much more difficult to practise than either world flight or world conformity – especially in the field of scholarship.

How should we challenge secularism in scholarship and education?

- Oppose the compartmentalization of life into a sacred or religious, and a secular or worldly sphere, because religion is fundamental to every human being's existence.
- Acknowledge the fact that faith and knowledge are inseparably interwoven. The basic question is therefore not *whether* faith influences science, but *what kind* of faith does so.
- Expose the illusion that scholarship and science is value-free. Secularism disguises, but in no way diminishes, the deep religious character of the contemporary academic enterprise.
- Recognize the secularist worldview, which is implicit and taken for granted in present-day academic work.
- Reject the way in which science is revered today as if it has unlimited religious authority.

We have now dealt with the first main idea of Romans 12:1-2, namely the

secular world of today and our attitude towards it. This is followed by a command.

2. The command

The divine command tells us where to start if we want to transform our contemporary secular culture, which both influences education and is simultaneously strongly promoted by higher education. Three points require our attention.

Our bodies as a living sacrifice

The first part of the command is that, as New Testament Christians, we should not only offer what we have, but ourselves to God. Because the Bible does not support a dichotomistic view of humanity, "body" does not indicate something separate from our souls, but our entire, visible human existence, all aspects of our lives - including scholarship.

Our vision therefore does not start with the renewal of our minds. It begins with a willingness to follow the example of Christ and offer ourselves. It warns that Christian scholarship will require persistent, hard work, total commitment, and sacrifice of ourselves. We will have to become humble servants of God and humanity.

The reason, I guess, for this surprising start with our bodies, is to remind us that our vision is not merely something of the mind, what we *think*, but what we are willing to *do*. I often get the impression that we regard a worldview as a conceptual and verbal thing that we *think* - instead of beliefs that we *live*. Our calling to promote Christian higher education will not be accomplished by cheap talk, but in sweat and tears. On the other hand, without a deep transformation in our minds, we will not even be able to see the necessity for Christian higher education.

Transformed by the renewal of our minds

If we do not want to conform to the world, we should not start with the world, but with ourselves. Usually we emphasize a change of heart: a reborn *heart* is an absolute prerequisite for being a Christian. But our text emphasizes a *renewed mind*. It should not come as a surprise, because Christ already summarized all God's laws not only as "love with all your heart and all your soul," but also as "love with all your *mind*" (Matt. 22:37). Only when our minds are also renewed, are we really totally transformed! What does it mean to have a Christian mind?

Three phases of Paul's missionary endeavors can help us to understand what is meant with a "renewed mind."

- He first proclaimed the gospel in order that people become converted, changing the direction of their hearts towards the true God. We may call this the *conversion stage*.
- Secondly, he planted churches, communities of faith to strengthen the individual converts in their faith. This may be called the *ecclesiastical phase*.
- In the third place, Paul indicated to the Christians the implications of their religious commitment and church membership concerning all the aspects of their everyday lives outside the church. We may call this the *kingdom stage*. Christians are instructed *how* to fulfill Christ's basic command, namely first to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

Evangelizing without wholehearted *conversion* results in mere adaptation, a superficial "Christianity." Evangelizing without the establishment of *churches* is incomplete. But evangelizing without a broad *kingdom perspective* is fatal. It leads to introverted Christians with a schizophrenic existence between a small "sacred" sphere (personal devotional and church life) and a large "secular" sphere (daily work, politics, economics, education, etc.).

It should be added that the mistake of many Christians is that they get stuck in the second (ecclesiastical) stage. They sometimes move beyond it, but their perspective is very narrow because they identify (and therefore limit) God's all-encompassing kingdom with the church. They hold to a truncated, inadequate gospel.

The renewal of our minds has to do with this indispensable third stage in the development of our lives as Christians. Our perspective on the world and our place and task in it is clarified. We acquire what is today called a Christian worldview or, in theological terms, a kingdom perspective.

For about a century evangelism and missionary activities have been directed at saving people spiritually, but losing their minds. Or stated more correctly: leaving their minds without a clear, biblical direction. The consequence is that while sub-Saharan African countries boast of an average of over 50% Christians, these Christians have very little impact on society.

A Christian worldview is founded on God's word and inspires us how to serve God in an all-encompassing way - with our whole bodily existence. Without a renewed mind, a Christian worldview and a Christian philosophy (the scientific reflection on our worldview), Christian scholarship will, however, remain a foreign concept. The obverse is also true: a renewed mind will have no peace with present-day secular scholarship, but will aim at transforming it in order to be pleasing to God.

What we have said above can be further elaborated in the image of a tree.

- Its *roots* symbolize the Christian religion. It is rooted in the fertile soil of God's threefold revelation in creation, in the Bible and in Christ. Religion is the root dynamo of our lives.
- The *trunk* indicates our Christian worldview. It is the pre-scientific broadening of our minds/vision/perspective on the world and our task in God's creation.
- The *branches* of the tree represent philosophy, diversified in different subject philosophies - the scientific deepening of our worldview perspectives.
- Finally, the *fruits* symbolize the different scientific disciplines like physics, sociology, economics, etc. Our religious, worldviewish and philosophical presuppositions influence our scholarly insights and result in these different disciplines.

In another very elementary way the process of Christian scientific

endeavor can be explained in the following way: (1) the *knower* (scientist) directs his/her knowing activity (2) on *that which is to be known* (a specific subject or problem) in order to (3) achieve a *knowledge result* (a specific scientific discipline). Something very important should, however, be added between steps (1) and (2), namely different *knowledge filters*. These filters "color" our scientific work and they are our religious, worldwiewish, philosophical, and other theoretical presuppositions.

With the preceding I want to emphasize that the ideal of Christian scholarship does not and cannot start with the different disciplines. It has to "grow" organically from (1) our Christian religious commitment, (2) develop out of a comprehensive, world-transformative worldview, and (3) should be grounded in a genuine Christian philosophy. Christian institutions which do not continuously nurture this threefold basis will not be able to produce integral Christian scholarship in the various disciplines.

It also implies that Christian scholarship cannot be achieved by a few elite without deep roots in a Christian community. The result will be a hot-house plant. No, the comprehensive vision of the service of God in all areas of life has first to be planted and grasped at grass roots level by "ordinary" church members. This was clearly illustrated in the Netherlands when Abraham Kuyper established the Free University of Amsterdam in 1880. For about the first eighty years of its existence this Christian institution was morally and financially supported by the Reformed Christian community. The same happened in the earlier years of the Potchefstroom University (1869) of which we were privileged to celebrate the 50th year of independence (since 1951) on 17 March 2001. In Africa we have the problem of an educated elite who often live a life remote from the "ordinary" people.

Our strategy in promoting Christian higher education should therefore not be a top-down approach. We should rather look for places where the Spirit is moving the hearts of the people, where the correct vision is developing in order to nurture, strengthen, broaden, and deepen that vision.

A concrete example is the many theological institutions in Africa. We should not alienate ourselves from them by ignoring them, because many of

them have such a narrow perspective. Right from the start we should get them on board in all our activities. We should also try to participate in their activities. In these ways we could plant our vision and encourage them to expand their curricula with, for instance, courses in a Christian worldview and philosophy.

Continuous transformation

In the last place we are reminded in our key text that the offering of ourselves and the renewal of our minds do not happen once. The use of the imperfect tense in Romans 12:1-2 clearly indicates that God requires an ongoing, continuous reformation. If we do not reform, we will conform to the deformation of this world. Our task is never completed in this life, because the pressure of secular culture to conform will remain with us.

This brings us to our third main point: the promise.

3. The promise

The encouraging promise is stated in the following way: "Then you will be able to approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom. 12:2b).

- We will firstly approve, accept God's will. It will replace our sinful human will as expressed in the idea of autonomous scholarship. God's will is expressed in his different laws and is "summarized" in his central commandment of love to others – God and our fellow-creatures. Everything is falsified if it is not inspired by love. The essence of reformation - also of reformational scholarship - is a return, in humble obedience to God's will.

- God's fundamental commandment of love has to be expressed or become concrete in a variety of ways in our different human activities. Examples are: truth in marriage, justice in politics, stewardship in economics, care of nature, etc. In the conclusion (§4 below) we will try to indicate how love can guide our academic work. For the moment let us keep it simple by saying it should be *service in love*.

- This new norm will change the basic aim of our academic work. It will, for instance, replace the following current one-sided goals: (1) knowledge for the sake of knowledge, because it is interesting to acquire more knowledge (the ivory tower idea of scholarship); (2) knowledge as a means to acquire personal status or fame; (3) knowledge as a means of nation building, of filling vacancies; (4) knowledge for the sake of economic, technological and military power. In addition the present-day disintegration of comprehensive normative frameworks offers a serious challenge to a Christian transformation of basic values in the academic world.

- The knowledge provided by different disciplines should be of service in many areas of life, but the central norm should be love and not fame, power or wealth. This implies that we as academics will become *servant leaders* of society.

- When we approve of God's norm for our academic endeavors, we will, according to our text, also discover that "his will is good, pleasing and perfect." Of all norms, values, and criteria it is the very best to follow! Our research, teaching, and administration - the entire life on campus - will be blessed.

- Adhering to this basic norm will not make us weak or powerless. It will, on the contrary, strengthen us to fight the powers of darkness in the world of academia. This will be done not with our own power. With the armour of God (fully described in Eph. 6:14-18) we will be able to stand firm. With divine power we will "demolish arguments and every pretention that sets itself up against the knowledge of God" (2 Cor 10:5a).

- The positive side of our task is also expressed in military terms: "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5b). The essence of our calling as Christian academics is expressed in these words: we should not conform to the deformation of secular scholarship, but we should *transform* it. This is done when it is made obedient to Christ, obeying his commandment of love.

4. The essence of transformational scholarship

Romans 12:1-2 is a clarion call for the transformation of the whole of life. It contains a rich and inspiring message. We have listened to God's (1) warning, (2) his command, and (3) his promise. We now know that our entire life should be a service of love in which we reform God's deformed creation according to his will.

This conclusion intends to elaborate very briefly on what exactly service in love implies in academic life. In the following ten points we will try to capture the basic norms for Christian scholarship. These criteria or values provide the basic contours as well as the challenges for Christian higher education. My catchwords are the following.

- *Visionary.* Christian scholarship is directed and inspired by the vision that we are called to loving service in God's all-encompassing, his eternal kingdom - of which our scholarly endeavor is an integral part.
- *Integral.* Grounded in a holistic Christian worldview and philosophy, it rejects every kind of dualism and demands that every discipline should be made captive in obedience to Christ.
- *Rigorous.* Christian scholarship may never be an excuse for sloppy, superficial work. Our high academic standards and integrity should be such that it gains the respect of our academic peers, non-Christians included. (It is therefore regrettable that some overseas institutions apply different – lower – standards in the case of students from Africa, both with regard to entrance requirements as well as in the eventual granting of degrees.)
- *Critical.* We will test the foundations of scholarly endeavor, uncover its worldview and religious presuppositions and not take the currently normative frame of reference for granted. We will at the same time apply self-critique, a willingness to lay our academic work before God to be tested by his word and Spirit. The development of a critical mind is one of the important things we still have to acquire in Reformed and Evangelical circles. It should replace the simple idea that we are in possession of the truth which simply has to be applied.

- *Open.* We should never use our Christian approach as an excuse to safeguard our work from the scrutiny of colleagues who do not share our faith. We should be open to dialogue about and criticism of our work.

- *Relevant.* Because Christian scholarship is service in love, it cannot be practised in isolation. It should be meaningful, relevant to one's time, country and people. It should be constructively engaged in solving the hardships daily facing people on our continent. Our education should not deliver "one-eyed intellectual idiots," but should contribute towards real wisdom. The biblical idea of wisdom implies both *insight* into God's will and *obedience* accordingly.

- *Culturally sensitive.* We will openly acknowledge that every academic discipline is in one way or another shaped by our cultural context. We will, however, not uncritically accept any cultural manifestation. Neither will we swallow the contemporary, superficial, commercialized Western culture, nor will we simply adopt the traditional African cultural framework. We will be critical

of both and open to the good present in both of them.

- *Communal.* Because Christian scholarship is not the task of individuals, it requires collaborative endeavor between those working in the same discipline, as well as interdisciplinary co-operation between a wide range of subjects. Only in this way can the burning problems of our continent be tackled effectively.

- *Global.* Christian scholars should not only work together in the same discipline, same country or region but, because we are so few, global collaboration is required. International organizations can play a vital role in providing a network that facilitates such co-operation and exchange of ideas.

- *Modest.* Christian scholarship should be aware of the danger of intellectual arrogance and be modest about its own insights. We should be willing to learn from the scientific results of scholars not sharing our basic beliefs. We should also acknowledge the value of the everyday knowledge of, for instance, a farmer and laborer and be humble enough to learn from them.

Modesty also implies that we cannot fulfill our task with confidence in our

abilities, resources, strategies and institutions. We have to realize how weak we, on this continent, really are.

Concluding remarks on a Christian educational institution

From my ten characteristics of Christian scholarship it should be evident that Christian academics at secular as well as at Christian educational institutions do not pretend to be the only ones in possession of the final truth! I reject such arrogance in our multi-religious and multicultural world.

At the same time an institution like the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education – and other similar tertiary institutions all over the world – has a right of existence based on two principles. First, that of *institutional pluralism*. This implies that schools, colleges or universities etc. are independent institutions with the right to organize themselves (without interference from the state in their internal affairs) for a specific purpose of service in the broader community. The second principle is that of *confessional pluralism*. It implies the right of people of different faiths to establish confessionally inspired organizations and institutions. In the case of Christians, examples could be a Christian political party, or a Christian school or university. According to the same principle, the Muslims, secularists etc. have the right of their own religiously-qualified family, party, labor union, university etc.

Many people may argue that such an institutionalization of confessional pluralism may be divisive in our diverse society. Personally I am of the opinion, however, that it is a much better solution to frankly *acknowledge* the existing religious plurality in our society as a fact - and provide acceptable ways of expressing it - than to try to *suppress* it - which will in the end prove to be impossible. It should be remembered that even the secular option implies a religious choice!

A CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

WHAT IT REALLY IS AND WHAT IT DOES NOT WANT TO BE

To date (1994) we have had, in South Africa, something like a medieval *corpus Christianum* society. The point of departure was that we were a Christian country with a Christian religion. The state could thus be expected not only to protect but also to promote the Christian religion.

However, we did not distinguish clearly between the task of the church and the state, so we tended, like Charlemagne who wanted to extend the kingdom of God with the sword, to justify the wars we fought because they were perceived as "necessary for the preservation of Christian civilization."

In this way we nearly followed in the tracks of Calvin (cf. also Article 36 of the Belgic Confession of Faith) who allowed Servetus to die at the stake because of his unbiblical ideas. An instance of this is the fact that the government officially promoted Christian (National) education.

Different tasks of the state and the church

The church and the state, however, each have a *specific* and a *limited* task. The task of the state is not to *promote* a *specific* religion but to *guarantee* the freedom of *all* religions.

Does this mean that a neutral dispensation of state government is being advocated? By no means. The God-given task of the state is to ensure that unbiased public (general) justice is maintained. The state cannot be neutral towards this: it either has to obey or disobey the God-given norm. The task of the state, however, does not involve interfering in the cultic-religious field. Christians, after all, will not approve of a government deciding to promote Islam or Satanism!

We therefore reject ecclesiastical imperialism as used by the state to promote Christianity. Scripture is very clear on the point that the kingdom of God shall not be promoted by violence or by the power of the sword.

Perhaps the new danger facing us in future is another kind of state absolutism. In this case the state might try to enforce a total division between faith and public life, and remove all religious activity from the public sphere. Religion would then only have a place in personal (private) life. In such a case, for example, the state could well prescribe that a university may not be Christian, but has to be absolutely "neutral" towards religion.

You will therefore understand, then, if I say that the Christian character of the Potchefstroom University might in future not be automatically guaranteed. It is therefore crucial to understand exactly what is meant when one speaks of a Christian university so that, if it should become necessary, we can defend its unique identity.

The earlier struggle to achieve freedom and independence

The struggle to be a Christian institution, which the Potchefstroom University had to wage in the early years, might have to be repeated. (It is an entirely different question as to whether it will succeed again.) At the time of the struggle the reigning viewpoint was:

That the state could prescribe to the university, probably because it finances the university. Our South African universities were then and are today still not truly free and autonomous institutions.

That scholarship has nothing to do with religion (the misconception of a 'neutral' scholarship).

The reason why the state advocated "neutral" education was probably because it was afraid of narrow, bigoted, dogmatic, and uncritical education, which could even be used simply to promote a particular religion. Should this have been the case, then the motives of the state should be applauded.

From what follows here, however, it emerges that this is not what is meant by Christian scholarly activity and the practice of science. A Christian institution for higher education can actually be strongly critically positioned

towards current trends in science and in society!

After a half-century struggle the Potchefstroom University, in 1952, finally succeeded in being released from the so-called conscience clause applying to South African universities. This clause determines that a university cannot refuse to appoint a lecturer on the basis of his/her religious convictions.

If we should want, however, to defend the Christian character of the university, it goes without saying that we should know *exactly* what is meant by it. From experience I know that many students - and even lecturers - are unable to articulate this. Many of them even have erroneous ideas as to what a Christian university is.

I would first like to mention the incorrect assumptions, and then state in positive terms what it means to be a Christian higher educational institution.

Six erroneous conceptions regarding a Christian university

It is not a neutral institution

The neutrality concept is unacceptable for the following four reasons.

In the first place this a negative concept. The word *neutral* is derived from the Latin *neuter* which can be translated as "neither one nor the other." Somebody is neutral if he does not belong to either of two parties. It therefore indicates what somebody is *not*. It is thus not a positive concept which clearly states what somebody *is* (for example, a Christian). Christians should be positive people, who live *for* Christ, and would therefore not like to regard their institution as neutral!

In the second place it is an *illusory* concept, because neutralism is also a belief. The neutralist viewpoint is itself a viewpoint; it is not impartial. Even the lack of a principle is a principle!

In the third place the concept of neutrality is *unclear*, because it determines its position with regard to the two poles between which it finds itself. And once the poles shift, the viewpoint of the neutralist also has to change. It can therefore happen that the neutralist assumes exactly the viewpoint which had earlier been assumed by the left or the right pole. The

neutralist is therefore *forced* to change position because of a shift on either the right-hand or the left-hand side.

In the fourth place neutralism is in fact *impossible*, because humans are not neutral beings, and can do no other but choose. The Bible teaches us explicitly that it is impossible not to choose and to try and serve two lords at the same time. Neutralism is therefore nothing other than a hidden betrayal of our King, Jesus Christ. This is also true in the field of scholarship.

Most misconceptions, as indicated by the following five, are the result of the fact that a clear distinction is not drawn between two different societal relationships, namely the church and the (Christian) university.

"Christian" should not have a merely historical meaning

The fact that a university developed from a missionary endeavor, a specific church, or a theological school (as was the case with the Potchefstroom University) is not in itself wrong, but is not enough to guarantee the Christian character of the institution. History offers many examples of such institutions that are today merely secular institutions.

The reason for this is that an origin in the church or the control or influence of a Christian theology does not guarantee the Christian character of an institution for Christian higher education. A *Christian* university is different from an *ecclesiastical* university or a university which is under the rod of *theology*, however true it might be to the Bible. In earlier times the Potchefstroom University also thought that by appointing as many ministers as possible (in, for example, the philosophy of science) the Christian character of the University could be promoted. Even a solid biblical foundation, striking aims, an inspiring mission, or a carefully formulated private act does not offer any guarantee that an institution will act in a Christian manner in its daily activities.

"Christian" should not be interpreted in terms of church activities on campus

Many institutions for tertiary education in the USA and especially the East (Korea, Taiwan, and Japan) call themselves "Christian," because they have a chapel on campus or have ministers on their staff. This is not wrong in itself,

but the same argument as before is applicable here: *church* work does not guarantee the Christian character of another societal relation, namely a *university*.

"Christian" does not indicate that Christian evangelization or missionary work is being done on campus

This work can be done by churches or by a whole range of para church organizations (such as Campus Crusade). They are often also very successful – students are converted to the Christian faith. However, the mere fact that this type of work can be done on *any* campus – including those of the so-called outspoken "neutral" or secular universities – indicates that this kind of work and the number of converts do not have anything to do with the Christian character of a university *per se*. Of course it would be hard to call a university Christian if the majority of its students were not of the Christian faith, but it is the task of the church and its confessing members to bring people to faith – and not that of the university. The task of the Christian university is to *build* on this faith and to indicate to students what the *implications* of their faith are for their calling at university, namely to engage in Christian scholarship.

"Christian" is not located in specific or additional subjects taught at an institution

Institutions often call themselves "Christian" merely because they offer a (compulsory or optional) course in, for example, biblical studies, or systematic theology (dogmatics), or something which other institutions regard as the task of a theological school or the Department of Religious Studies.

Of course, a study course that can improve the Bible knowledge of students and staff can make a valuable contribution to the Christian practice of other disciplines. The Christian character of an institution, however, does not lie in something which one can *add* (or *subtract*), but in the *perspective* from which one engages in a scholarly discipline.

A compulsory course in the philosophy of science will not therefore succeed in making or keeping the Potchefstroom University Christian if it is perceived as something *detached from* or *additional to* other courses. To the extent that it aims to offer students a *wider worldview and a more profound philosophical perspective* and tries to help them to concretize this perspective

in their different subjects, it does have value, however.

"Christian" does not only refer to the religious convictions of students and staff

It goes without saying that it is impossible to have a Christian university that does not have devoted Christian staff and at least a majority of students (not necessarily all) who are willing to listen to the staff.

But even this does not guarantee the Christian character of an institution. Why? For the simple reason that one could well be a devoted Christian (in the church, at home, and even in one's interaction with students) without revealing one's Christian commitment in one's *scholarly practice*. A lecturer can, for example, practice his discipline and teach it as prescribed by the current secularist belief without being bothered by it. His students could accept this in the same uncritical spirit, instead of both lecturer and student being aware of the schizophrenic dichotomy that they are indulging in – they serve God on Sunday and in their personal lives, but in their academic work they are the victims of scientism, the god of science.

The four basic requirements of a truly Christian university or college

Now that we have indicated what does not necessarily constitute a Christian institution, it is important to know what the essential conditions for its Christian character are.

Allow me to use the image of a table which needs four legs to stand solidly. The four "legs" needed by a Christian university in order not to "wobble," are the following.

It has to be a free university

In the section above, concerning what a Christian university is *not*, we have already implicitly indicated that a Christian university has to be free from domination by the church. It is not an *ecclesiastical* institution. The same is true with regard to the state: it should not be a *state* institution.

This does not mean that a Christian university has no links with the church or state. All societal relationships are mutually linked. A marriage, for

example, is not only something personal between two people, but the family, the church (in the case of Christians), and the state are also involved. Because a university is such an expensive institution, and because it trains essential high-level workforce for a country, the state should support it financially and also exert supervision over standards. This does not mean, however, that the state may dominate the university and impose prescriptions with regard to the internal affairs of universities. The principle of sovereignty in its own sphere applying to every societal relationship prohibits this. For that reason a state should not prescribe to a university what its character (be it Christian or secular) should be. A university should be free (from the state) and be able to determine its own identity.

The lecturers and (the majority of) students should not only be

(a) *devoted Christians*, but

(b) should also have the *necessary insight* into what true Christian scholarship means, and

(c) *be willing* to give themselves to the task. All three these elements are important. We cannot succeed without a *desire* to serve the Lord in this area too. But if we do not know exactly *how*, we will not achieve anything. And all the insight of what should be done, without the *will* to persevere in obedience would also be useless, because a Christian practice of scholarship is not something which merely drops into one's lap – it demands painstaking research, years of hard reflection, originality, struggle, perseverance, and prayer.

All the fields of study should be studied in the light of God's revelation in Creation, in Scripture, and in Christ

This revelatory light should be used to develop a Christian worldview, a Christian philosophy, and a specific Christian subject theory, for example in history or physics.

An academic who wishes to practise Christian scholarship and who thinks that he can limit himself to the "facts" relating to his field of study is in a cul-de-sac. A Christian scholar:

- has to have a Christian worldview;
- has to know how this worldview has to be worked into a Christian philosophy; and
- be able, in the light of these perspectives, to construct a theory for his own subject.

The Christian approach to science

This should, in the final analysis, not be limited to the heart or intellect, but – the proof of the pudding! – *it should be made visible in its results*. A tree is, after all, known by its fruit!

Of course it will not emerge equally prominently in all subjects. As one's Christian convictions are more visible in prayer than, for example, when one is gardening or driving (which does not mean that they do not play a role in these activities), so too in the field of scientific endeavor: we will more easily be able to pinpoint it in sociology than, for example, in mathematics. One also has to remember that the difference from a non-Christian scholarly practice is not the *condition* for a Christian practice of science, but the *result* of it.

From the results of a Christian scientific practice – the way in which one teaches, researches, the contents of publications, etc. – it should clearly emerge that one's work stands in the service of God and his kingdom.

In brief

A Christian university demands the following: (a) a free institution where (b) people redeemed in Christ, (c) study reality or a field of study illuminated through God's threefold revelation, and (d) in this way arrives at redemptive, liberating results which will be in the service of God and humanity.

PART V

APPLICATIONS TO SOCIAL ISSUES

CULTURE, WORLDVIEW, AND RELIGION

TOWARD A BIBLICAL-REFORMATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON DEVELOPMENT

This chapter contains the substance of a presentation to the "Transforming Directions for Africa" conference of the Heidelberg Institute for Christian Higher Education, South Africa in January 2000. It is an edited version of a much longer paper written for the International Symposium of The Society for Reformational Philosophy on Cultures and Christianity AD 2000 held at Hoeven, the Netherlands 21-25 August 2000.

Why is a biblical-reformational philosophy needed in Africa? Most western missionaries taught Africans a "broken" or dualistic worldview. Because reformational philosophy advocates the biblical, holistic approach it is welcomed on our continent. It is a healing and liberating message.

What Africans, however, neither want nor can afford, is an ivory tower philosophy, playing intellectual games; a philosophy which does not *do* or *change* anything. The crucial question is how to approach our topic so that it can become more alive, concrete, with direct practical value.

1. Approach and aims

I start, therefore, with the more visible, culture, and then move to the more invisible phenomena of worldview and religion.

In the second place, I discuss these three concepts in their relation to development. We could regard development as both one of the greatest

obsessions and one of the greatest failures of the latter half of the twentieth century. Seldom has so much effort produced so little! Most of the world remains “underdeveloped.”

The way in which I would like to illustrate the practical value of a reformatonal (i.e. biblically inspired) philosophy can be explained with the image of a tree. In its *fruits* we see the results of western developmental efforts all over the world. As already stated, these fruits are not impressive nor do they serve the wellbeing of humanity. With the “tools” of a Christian philosophy I intend to query that which lies “beneath” these fruits: (1) the *branches* (culture) of the tree, (2) its *trunk* (worldview), and (3) its *roots* (religion).

I believe that in this way we can achieve two objectives. We can arrive at a penetrating criticism and unmasking of existing models of development, exposing the deepest reasons for their failure. We can also move closer to the alternative of a really biblically inspired idea of what wholesome development should be, instead of simply modifying existing models.

2. Idea of development: origins, motives, and models

The origin of the idea

The concept “development” is of western origin—most non-western languages do not even have such a word. The word is first mentioned in 1944 in one of the sub-committees, which drew up a constitution for the United Nations. The concept acquired official status in the inaugural address of President Harry Truman on 20 January 1949. In the late fifties and early sixties, when decolonization reached its climax, the word “development” became part of the popular and academic vocabulary.

On the 19 January 1949 a great variety of countries existed, the very next day they were divided into one of two: “developed” and “underdeveloped.” From that day onwards there was only one solution for the “underdeveloped” world: it had to be “developed” according to the western model.

In spite of the difference between western capitalism and Eastern Europe's socialism, their ideas about development were basically the same: the repetition of the European success story of large scale industrialization. The whole idea was built on western cultural values. Development, therefore, was not something purely economic or neutral. Those who opted for development had to accept "superior" western culture as an inherent part of such a program.

Furthermore, "development" may mean a lot of different things to different people. "Underdeveloped," "developing," and "overdeveloped" are relative concepts. One should ask in what respect a people or country is developed or underdeveloped. It may, for example, be economically highly developed, but at the same time poorly developed in terms of human relationships.

In the light of this many authors today emphasize the fact that the West did not develop the rest of the world, but rather retarded its development—the underdeveloped state of the non-western world today is not the beginning, but the end result!

When we discuss the motives for the West to develop the rest of the world, it will become clear that they cannot be separated from western imperialism. Development provided a reason for the West to continue involvement in the rest of the world (economically, politically, and militarily)—even after decolonization. However, because it sounded like an open and more promising concept, it was accepted by the non-western world.

Two reasons explain why the concept of development was socially and culturally more disastrous in Africa than in the Far East. (1) Colonialism was applied more harshly and effectively (compare the slave trade); it had a much deeper impact on the African continent than in the East. (2) The East, like Japan, never regarded western civilization as morally superior to theirs. They only desired to master western science and technique in order to rectify their comparative backwardness in these specific fields.

Motives behind the western developmental mania

We should not deny that different humanitarian motives played a role in the

development of the underdeveloped world. But we should also keep in mind that altruism very seldom has a place in international affairs. Usually so-called “justifying beliefs” validate the real motives, for instance that African countries needed freedom and democratic government.

I mention only a few of the most important motives:

- The belief of the so-called superiority of western civilization and the supposed inferiority of Africa, regarded as uncivilized, backward, childish and even barbarian.
- A guilty conscience because of centuries of slave trade and nearly a century of severe colonialism, especially in Africa.
- After decolonization the existing world order, controlled by the West, was threatened. Development (aid) was chosen as a means for carrying out a strategy to preserve that order.
- While the USA portrayed itself as the champion of liberty and decolonization, it in actual fact also intended to eliminate the European colonizers in order to obtain the valuable raw materials and markets of the “Third World” for its own benefit.
- During the Cold War between the USSR and USA, both superpowers tried to win the poorer, Southern countries for their respective ideologies.
- As will become clearer in the course of the paper, all these motives combined are still not sufficient to explain the élan with which the West, not only outside but also in western countries, has pursued development as a sacred duty. We can only fully understand this zeal when we realise that development acquired a quasi or completely religious character. It has become a secular form of salvation!

3. Culture, worldview and religion

The purpose of this section is to briefly describe these three concepts. I will not try to *define* them precisely.

Culture

We have many definitions of culture. I only mention the following two: the

segmental and the *comprehensive*.

The *segmental* includes in the term culture only "spiritual" achievements like intellectual and artistic products (orchestras, performing and other arts, museums etc.). Culture is regarded as something that bestows luster upon life. It can therefore only be acquired by the wealthier and more leisured members of society.

The *comprehensive* view of culture regards human life in its totality as culture. It includes our ordinary attitudes, customs, behavior, values, beliefs, institutions, etc. It is not necessarily acquired by (formal) education and reserved for a section of the population. Every human being is a cultural being—prisoners and the poor included! Culture is our "frame of reference" for thought and conduct. We are hardly aware of it. It is like the air we breathe.

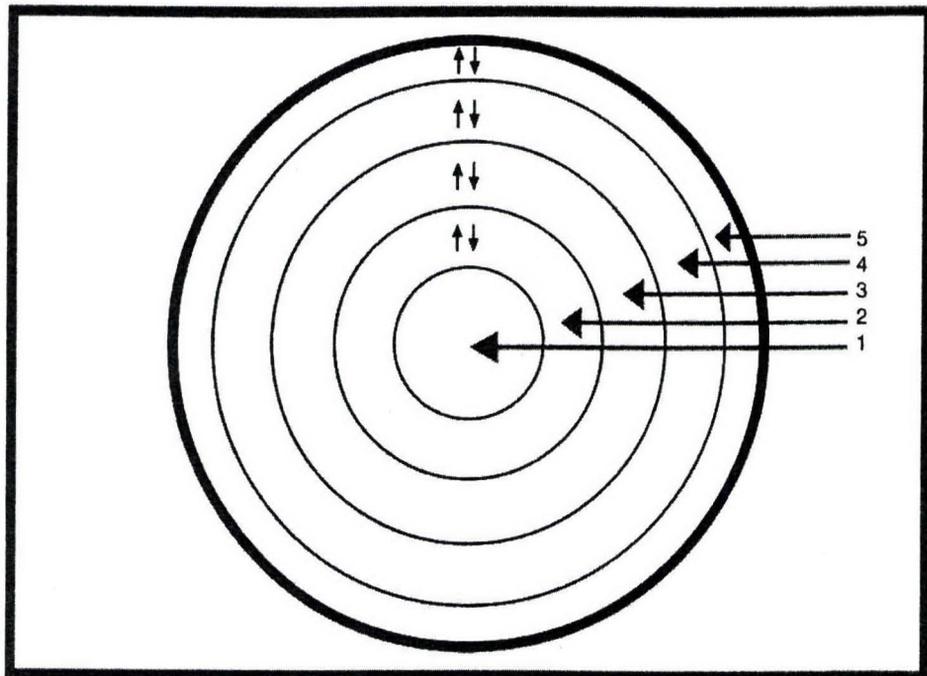
Important distinctions

I prefer the comprehensive view of culture, but realize that one should distinguish between different facets of a culture. The distinction made by reformational philosophy between different aspects of life can help us indicate *which aspect* of culture we have in mind: faith, moral or ethical, aesthetic, juridical or political, economic, social, lingual, technical or historical, logical, sensitive, biotic, physical, spatial and arithmetical aspects. Art is an example of the aesthetic aspect of culture and commerce of the economic.

It is important to realize that development is an aspect of culture. We should not speak of development and culture as if they are totally separate. Development is the "product" of a specific culture. We can gain more clarity when every time that we use the word "development," we ask ourselves: what kind of development (religious, political, economic, etc.)?

A layered view of culture

I am aware that a diagram oversimplifies and should therefore always be used with great care. However, to reduce the complex phenomenon of culture to comprehensible proportions, I use the following diagram, consisting of five concentric circles.



For the sake of simplicity, I distinguish between only five layers. Feel free to add and subtract to the number! My five layers symbolize the following aspects of a culture:

1. The *religious dimension*. We may also call it the directional dimension, because religion is the central directedness of all of human life towards the real or presumed ultimate source of meaning and authority. In the case of the Christian religion this directedness is our response to the true God who reveals himself in creation, in scripture, and in Christ. The response should be according to his will summarized in the central commandment of love.

2. The *worldview dimension* provides a perspective on the interrelated character of reality and our place in it. It provides us with eyes, ears, feet, hands, and a mind to serve the real God (or a substitute) in this world. I see the distinction between religion and worldview and their interrelatedness as

follows. The difference between the two is that religion is our relationship towards God, while worldview describes our relationship towards the world. But because we believe that this world belongs to God, we can never separate the two. Our service to God manifests itself in this world!

If religion is the direction towards God (or a god) and worldview indicates our place in creation, the remainder of culture indicates our task or calling. Culture is the historical manifestation of our religiously directed response to all God's mandates for life, indicated by our understanding of creation and of our place in it.

My diagram does not solve two important problems. The first is the distinction between our *central* religious commitment and the *dimension* of faith. This is a very important distinction because it prohibits the identification of *all-encompassing* religion with only *one aspect* of life—the faith aspect.

The second is whether we should regard religion and worldview as part of culture. The whole of human life is religion, that is service of God or of a substitute. Religion and worldview are influenced by culture; they have a cultural *side*. But is it correct to regard them *as such* as cultural phenomena?

3. The "*social*" *dimension*. Because I could not find a more appropriate term, I put "social" in quotation marks. It includes among others, morals, arts, politics, economics, language, styles of thinking, the way our emotions are expressed as well as the different societal relationships, like marriage, family, the state, business.

4. The *material or technical dimension* includes food, clothes, tools, machines, buildings etc.

5. The *behavioral dimension* includes our habits, customs, and behavior—our lifestyle.

The value of the model

It is integrated, holistic. I deliberately put light, dotted lines between the five different layers to indicate that we may distinguish them from each other, but can never clearly separate them. The two-way arrows between the different layers emphasize that they are mutually interrelated.

Visibility and describability. The diagram indicates that not only the more visible aspects of a culture are important, but also its deeper, invisible core facets, like worldview and religion.

Cultural change. The outer, “softer” layers of a culture usually change more easily. The “harder” core is more resistant to change.

The determining role of the core. The heart or soul of a culture is its religion and worldview. This directs the outer, more visible cultural layers. Only in the light of a specific religion and worldview can we properly understand the outer cultural manifestations. Real, deep change in culture is stimulated from the core.

Limitations of the model

All these reservations are related to the fact that real life is always much more complicated than our schematic, theoretical models. We should therefore never absolutize any model, but rather be willing to relativize it in the light of the complexities of reality.

- I would like to keep religion and worldview at the centre. As far as layers 3 to 5 are concerned, I have no order of priority in mind—in the sense that 3 is built on 2, 4 on 3 and 5 on 4.
- My model should not encourage the idea that religion, worldview, and other aspects of culture are static entities. All cultures change, some slowly, others more rapidly.
- My model should also not create the impression of a homogenous or pure culture. Culture is usually a hybrid or mixture— especially in our contemporary, multi-cultural world.
- We cannot (physically) see a religion or worldview. Therefore we will have to derive their features from their more visible, concrete manifestations in the other aspects of a culture.
- Not only does religion and worldview influence culture, but the rest of culture influences religion and worldview too.

- Such a change caused by the influence of the outer layers of a culture on the centre may result in a complete “power shift” in the core. Thus, the original religious commitment may be destroyed and replaced. More often—at least initially—the result is a dual, split religious and worldview loyalty.

We should therefore reckon with the fact that while older, “closed” cultures had a single religious core, cultures may have more than one religious centre in the contemporary, “open,” multicultural world. It seems however, that one of them gradually becomes dominant. This is noticeable in secularism, which marginalizes other religions so that they start functioning “outside” the core.

Cultural diversity

Today, more than in any previous time in history, we are confronted with cultural diversity. How is this great variety to be explained? How should we evaluate different cultures?

In a previous publication (van der Walt, 1997) my conclusion had been that every culture contains something good and beautiful, because it emphasizes an important relationship. At the same time every culture has its “valleys” and “blind spots,” because it does not acknowledge the equality of these four basic relationships.

I can therefore not accept ethnocentrism—neither Eurocentrism nor Afrocentrism—which believes that its own culture is the only true and wholesome culture. Neither can I accept present-day relativism that is of the opinion that, because cultures and their cultural traits or features are equally true or good, they should not be judged, criticized, or changed.

Cultural interaction

Evaluating different cultures becomes even more tricky when they interact with each other. Western development is a clear example of this encounter and interaction of cultures.

The older theories in this regard could be described as theories about “development and culture.” In the oldest ones, non-western cultures were

regarded as a stumbling block in the path of development. In more recent ones, traditional, indigenous cultures are viewed as something positive, which may aid western development projects. Nevertheless, the basic viewpoint has not changed. Culture and development are still viewed as separate entities. In the first theory they have to be separated and in the second you have to stir them together to get effective development.

Followers of more recent theories have realized that culture is not a facet of development, but rather that development is a facet of culture. I call this the theory of "development as culture." This realization that development is a part of culture enables us to be much more critical about different development paradigms. It assists us *inter alia* to view development as an encounter and interaction between the competing interests of different cultures; as the cultural intervention of one culture in another. It brings home the truth that "development" is a relative concept. It has diverse meanings in different cultures.

Worldview and ideology

As mentioned already, a worldview is our perspective on created reality. It is an indication of our place in the world in which we have to fulfill our cultural task. A worldview functions like a map, providing *orientation*; like a compass, giving *direction* from a deep religious commitment.

The danger of a worldview—even a Christian one—is that it can degenerate into an ideology. And ideology is an absolutized, hardened, closed, dogmatic orientation about the world, our place, and cultural calling. It forces reality into its own preconceived mould and wants to change it accordingly. Basically therefore, a worldview and an ideology have the same structure, but different directions. A worldview is something normal and healthy; an ideology can be very dangerous.

4. Worldview components of the development ideal

Six, interrelated and interdependent elements of a worldview have a decisive influence on the kind of development a culture will achieve: (1) a concept of God/a god (religious orientation); (2) specific norms or values; (3) a view on being human; (4) a notion of community life; (5) a view of nature, and (6) a

concept of time and history. These six elements in the western worldview that underlies the development ideal may be briefly described as follows.

(1) The concept of a god

Different scholars have already revealed the religious character of western development ideals. Some of these traits are: (1) the promise of a not yet visible, but better future (idea of salvation), (2) toward which the world is guided by the development experts (the “priests”), (3) providing precise prescriptions (norms), (4) which should not be questioned (because it is the only truth, the only way toward life). (5) In order to attain this all-important goal, it is considered a sacred duty to eliminate all “sinful” obstacles (like traditional cultures and religions). Unconditional obedience is required: to question the western way of development is to be automatically regarded as a modern-day “atheist”!

Two additional characteristics of this “religion” are that it is (6) a *secular* religion—the real God of the Bible has no place in it—and (7) a *materialistic* religion.

(2) Normative concepts

Words that occur regularly in western development language are *competition*, *progress*, *growth*, *achievement*, *production*, and *consumption*. Viewed from a reformational perspective, all these words indicate *things*. They should, therefore, be subjected to *norms*. This does not only apply to these development slogans, but also to development itself. Development can never be a norm, but has to be subjected to, or evaluated from a normative perspective.

Our most basic critique of the western worldview is its *subjectivistic* nature; the fact that it does not clearly distinguish between *things* and *norms*, between what *is* and what *ought* to be.

“Competition” may serve as an illustration. The concept as such cannot be good. In a normative evaluation we have to distinguish between good and bad competition. Despite some beneficial results, many writers have indicated the bad and even brutal sides of the contemporary competition mania. Finally it boils down to the “law of the jungle,” the “survival of the fittest”—wrongly

regarded as the “best.”

(3) View on being human

The contemporary western view of the human person tends to lose the broader view of the human person as a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional being. The human person is reduced to: (1) an economic being (economism); (2) the individual aspect of human existence (individualism); (3) a rational-scientific being (scientism); and (4) a consumer of things that provide immediate satisfaction (hedonism). This Promethean person appreciates and uncritically accepts everything (for example technology) that may contribute towards human power to control, dominate and exploit reality.

(4) View on community or society

The West's individualistic view of human nature leads to an individualistic view of community life. All human activities (education, politics, commerce, etc.) are geared towards the enhancement of the individual. It highly favors the rights of the individual. Individualism sees a kind of mechanistic, atomistic relationship between individuals and between different societal relationships.

(5) View of nature

In the modern western worldview, nature is viewed more or less as an object, separate from humans, their opponent. Nature should be conquered, used and even exploited for human benefit.

(6) View of time and history

The essence of the contemporary western concept of time can be summarized as follows (for more details, see van der Walt, 1996; 1997: 51-71; and chapter 13 in this volume). Time is a commodity “outside” the human persons “through” which they move. They have to use and fill it. This is evident from expressions like *time lost*, *saved*, *made up*, *passed*, and *time wasted*. Time is furthermore something abstract, independent of ordinary life, measured, and determined by a clock on the wall, or a watch on one's arm.

This view of time is impoverishing because it reduces humans to slaves of time. It results in the well-known rat race, tense human relationships, and alienation from one another. On the other hand, it leads to punctuality,

thorough planning, and tight schedules.

5. The development outcomes of this worldview

The general conclusion today—after 50 years of development efforts all over the world—is that the expected results have not materialized. Failure is not only a fact in the non-western world, but even in the West itself. Because the capitalist economy believed in the fairness of the “free” market, it could not alleviate poverty. Because it emphasized production, it could not value human labor. Because it viewed nature as a commodity to be exploited, it contributed towards ecological damage.

Goudzwaard and De Lange in their book (1994) list six paradoxes we face today: (1) the scarcity paradox: unprecedented abundance, but at the same time greater scarcity; (2) the health paradox: improved medical care, but the simultaneous increase in all diseases; (3) the time paradox: more and more time-saving devices, but less time to get through schedules; (4) the poverty paradox: increasing wealth alongside dire poverty; (5) the labor paradox: a greater need for jobs, but at the same time growing unemployment, and (6) the care paradox: increased possibilities for the care for humans and their environment, but practical decrease and deterioration.

6. The traditional African worldview

Although traditional African culture had been suppressed and modified, it has survived. And, in spite of great local variety, sub-Saharan Africa has a remarkable number of common cultural characteristics. We may, therefore, speak of a traditional African culture and worldview that remains influential in Africa. Limitations of space prevent a presentation of this, but the table on the next page summarizes its main features in comparison with the western and biblical-reformatinal views.

COMPONENT	WESTERN	AFRICAN	CHRISTIAN
God	A secular, materialistic, capitalistic god Post-Christian	Distant creator-god, Not demanding responsibility, replaced by unpredictable spirit world Pre-Christian	The personal God of the Bible, Creator, Sustainer and highest Authority Christian
Norms	<i>Individual autonomy</i> Subjectivism (things are laws) Self-interest, individual egoism	<i>Communal autonomy</i> Subjectivism (the kinship group is the law) Group-interest, group egoism	<i>Heteronomy</i> : God's will, revealed in his commandments (both directional and structural) to be positivised in norms for different areas of life
Man	A reductionistic anthropology characterised by individualism, materialism, hedonism, etc.	A reductionistic anthropology in which one aspect (the communal) is absolutised and the individual aspect subordinated, suppressed	A multi-dimensional anthropology: all the different aspects of being human to be developed in a balanced way
Community	Atomistic-liberalistic: Individual liberty and rights first Destroys communality, finally results in totalitarianism	Organistic-communalistic: First communal equality and duties Destroy individuality, leads directly to totalitarianism	Individuality and communality are complementary facets of multi-dimensional man; both to be developed to enhance individual and community Anti-totalitarian
Nature	Viewed anthropocentrically: Separate from man; to be used and exploited for wealth	Viewed holistically: Man a part of nature; it should therefore be revered and not interfered with	Viewed Biblically: Man distinguished from, but not separated from nature – has to use and protect it in a stewardly way
Time and history	A commodity to be measured and used for one's own benefit. Future-oriented (progress)	Something to be shared and enjoyed with others. Past-oriented (restitution)	Granted by God both to be used and enjoyed in a responsible way. Past, present and future are equally important

7. A Christian-reformational worldview

Only a reformational, biblically based worldview is capable of providing a framework for development that will liberate us from the distortions of the dominant western worldview leading to the life in abundance that Jesus Christ came to the world to give us— John 10:10.

Culture is historically determined. Every period in history reveals its own brand. This is also clear from the word of God which reveals that the history of humanity developed through three main phases: creation, fall into sin, and redemption in Christ. History will culminate in the final consummation, when Christ returns to live with us on a new earth.

We may call creation the time of formation, the fall the moment of deformation and redemption the period of reformation. At the moment we are living in the age “between the times,” the time of “already” and “not yet.” Christ’s redemption of the world, started during his first coming to this world, will be completed at his final, second coming when he will completely renew everything. The human direction, place and task were different in each of these three divisions of history.

In creation the *direction* of Adam and Eve’s lives was correct. They knew their place in God’s creation. They could, therefore, also fulfill their *calling*, the cultural mandate entrusted to them by God. They could perform their task in a balanced way, enjoying life in its fullness. When Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptation of the Evil One, everything changed.

Insight into what happened at the fall enables us to interpret present-day development programs. They are secular, without any *directedness* towards God. They are executed by human beings who have forgotten their proper *place* in creation: stewards entrusted with the task to serve God and their fellow human beings according to his laws. Instead, through development, humans now try to serve and save themselves according to their own norms.

8. Reformation as a return to the correct norms

We now live between the times. Christ redeemed the world, but the final result will only be fully visible when he returns to earth. We live in a different

historical epoch than that of creation or fall. The real biblical worldview does not want to return to an idealized past. Neither does it try, like the western worldview, to create a future utopia. In spite of the fact that it emphasizes our human responsibility in the present to reform the world, it believes that only God will finally bring about a new heaven and a new earth.

Each of the six components of a biblical-reformational worldview is important for reformation. If, however, we have to select the most important for our topic, it will be the normative component. Reformation in essence can be described as a return to the correct norms applicable to the different aspects of our lives.

The western worldview believes in individual human autonomy and the African worldview in communal autonomy. Both imply a subjectivist view of God's will. Instead of obeying God's laws, humans elevate themselves to the status of law.

The character of norms

In the place of both kinds of autonomy, Christians will have to reply with heteronomy: norms do not originate from ourselves, but from a Higher Authority.

We have to (1) obey God's will which is (2) expressed in different laws, for example the Ten Commandments but also revealed in the history of God's dealing with Israel and in the life of Christ. Because these laws were given to a specific nation in specific historical circumstances, we have to (3) "translate" them as norms relevant to ourselves, living today under quite different circumstances.

Briefly defined, norms are our human and fallible responses or answers to the real God or an idol whose will we regard as the highest authority.

Although our norms are time-bound and fallible—they have to be reformed continuously—they play a very important role, providing: (1) direction to our lives, (2) indicating limits to what may be done, as well as (3) what ought to be done. In other words, they teach us how to distinguish between what is bad as a result of the fall, as well as how we should reform life to attain

the goodness possible through Christ's redemption.

Because development is multifaceted, it is not sufficient to apply only one kind of norm. Even when we concentrate on one kind of development, for instance economic development, the rest of life cannot be excluded. Economic development has consequences for the rest of our lives. Therefore, the simultaneous application of all norms is necessary! This multidimensional character of development requires an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary approach when studied by scholars.

How do we know that we are following the correct norms?

We will have to test and retest norms continuously against God's laws or mandates as revealed in the Bible and in the person of Jesus Christ. God also reveals his will in our everyday lives. We have to watch creation carefully for "green lights" and "red lights." The green lights are signs that the norms prescribed by our worldview are the correct ones. This happens when people experience joy, physical and spiritual health, peace.

The red lights serve as warning signals. They flash in the case of disorientation, a lack of vision, pain (physical, psychological and spiritual), suffering (of different kinds), the death of humans and animals and damage done to the rest of creation. These signs are an indication that the norms provided by our worldview are wrong—in spite of the fact that they may be called "Christian."

Western inspired development in Africa should be subjected to this kind of normative evaluation from the perspective of the true experience of the African people. A clear direction, hope and genuine, full human well-being are green lights. Disorientation, hopelessness, damage to the environment, suffering, pain and death committed to the animal and human world, are however flashing red signals, warning that development is directed by the wrong norms.

I therefore believe that we should not only "read" creation in the light of Scripture, but that it is as necessary to interpret the Scriptures in the light of God's creational revelation.

At the same time we should keep in mind that the “voices from creation” are only aids to keep us on the correct normative tract. They cannot provide us with the final yardstick of what is good or bad, right or wrong. We may ignore the flashing red signals and try to explain them as “teething problems” or “necessary sacrifices” if we want to reach the final goal.

Structural and directional norms

Important in our normative approach is the distinction between *structure* and *direction*. *Structure* is connected to creation. Creation as it was meant to be, had to answer to God's creation order. *Direction* indicates obedience to God's central commandment of love towards him and our fellow-creatures. This direction was changed at the fall. Love towards God and our neighbor changed direction, away from God and from our fellow creatures towards ourselves. Through Christ's redemptive suffering, however, it became possible for our lives to be redirected.

Both structure and direction, therefore, are subjected to God's will. The first is subjected to his creation ordinances and the second to his fundamental, directional commandment of love. In the normative evaluation of any cultural product *both* have to be considered.

The same applies to development: it should be both structurally and directionally good to be really beneficial. We may encounter development projects which may be acceptable structurally, but when its direction is considered its wrong religious direction is revealed—it is not motivated by real love. The reverse situation is also possible. The direction may be correct, for example it could be inspired by real love towards God and our fellow creatures, but the people involved do not have the slightest idea of the structural requirements for effective development!

“Love” indicates the will of God in its fullness. In his commandments God “dissects” love into various kinds. We should keep in mind that “love” as such is an abstraction. It always acquires different shapes in different areas of life. In marriage it takes on the form of mutual troth; in the family of paternal and maternal love as well as the love of children towards their parents; in the church as brotherly/sisterly love; in the state as public justice and in business

as stewardship. In our task of development we should also manifest the central love commandment in a specific manner.

9. A biblical-reformational perspective on development

This concluding section unites the lines already drawn, providing the final result of the previous pages. It starts with a preliminary new definition of development from a Christian perspective:

Development is the (1) balanced unfolding of (2) all the abilities of the human being and (3) the potential of material things, plants and animals (4) according to God's purpose and (5) his will, to enable the human being (6) within his/her own culture, (7) to fulfill his/her calling (8) as a responsible steward of creation (9) in a free society (10) to the honor and glory of God.

Because the quality of development is dependent on all six components of a reformational worldview (as will become evident in the following exposition) I have included them in this definition.

Balanced unfolding

Development may be compared (but cannot be identified) with the *physical* development of a crystal or the *biological* development of a plant, animal or human being. The reason why we should also distinguish it from these kinds of development is the awesome historical power God granted humans when he gave them the cultural mandate. Such power implies not only physical-biological development. Humans have also the task to develop the emotional, logical, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, juridical, ethical, and religious aspects of reality to reveal its diverse richness.

All these aspects should, however, be developed harmoniously. Not only one aspect, like the economic, should be developed, but all of them simultaneously—even when the emphasis is on economic development. Otherwise the result is a one-sided, distorted development. Development does not mean more (quantity) of one facet, but better (quality) for the whole. Also, development in any one aspect cannot be continued limitlessly in a creation that itself is limited.

Harmonious, balanced development has another implication. Development does not only mean, “to take out of,” but also “to put back into” creation. Development should not exploit and impoverish creation, but rather enrich it. Against the western idea of restless progress, we should also emphasize that development does not only entail “evolvement” but also “involvement”; not only a “turning out” (of many products), but also a “turning in”—in other words to keep, maintain, protect, save and preserve.

Of all the abilities of the human being

The human person is multi-dimensional and not only one- or two-dimensional. Humans are not merely individual or communal beings nor even a combination of them. Human existence reveals a faith, ethical/moral, juridical, aesthetic, economic, lingual, logical, emotional, biological and physical aspect, ability or capacity—all of which have to be developed in a balanced way. To be involved in development from, for example, the perspective of humans as “nothing but economic beings” will result in a dangerous, one-sided development. Such development will lead to the treating of the human person as an economic “commodity” that has to produce and consume.

The potential of material things, plants, and animals

This section of the definition of development includes the next element of our worldview, namely our view of nature. We continue to discover the vast potential and immense richness of the material, plant, and animal worlds and their value for human life.

A Christian perspective on nature and its development can, however, not be divorced from our view of God. All creation belongs to him—Psalm 24:1. Every creature has an intrinsic value to him. They are not only valuable because they are useful to humanity. We are therefore not allowed to treat them simply as “objects” or “raw material.” They should not in the first place serve us. We, as stewards of God, should serve them, respecting and protecting them. Using nature is not prohibited, but misusing it is a sin against its owner and nature itself. Apart from religious sins (against God) and moral sins (against humanity), our ecological sins should also be acknowledged!

According to God's purpose

With this section of my definition I include the *time component* of our biblical worldview. As in the case of the other elements of a worldview, this one too, cannot be separated from our notion of God: our goal for development should be determined by his design for or aim for creation.

As indicated already, this world was created, fell into sin, was redeemed, and is moving towards its consummation in a new earth. Then God's kingdom will be visible in its full glory: (1) he will be acknowledged as the only King (2) of the entire new creation, (3) where we will fully enjoy the blessings of his kingdom.

This new creation will not be *another* creation, but a *renewed* creation (see , for example, different sections of Isaiah and Revelation). God is not rejecting the present, but will be renewing it in future, hence the positive results of our cultural task will be welcomed on the new earth—Revelation 21:24-26.

According to his will

The fact that the normative is the key element for a reformation of contemporary developmental ideas clearly indicates that we will have to think anew about the dominant ideas about development, not merely adapting or modifying them. We will again have to start asking some basic questions: Why is development necessary in the first place? For whom is it intended? What kind of development is planned? With what goal in mind? What will the results be? Who will benefit? And above all: According to what norms?

To enable human beings within their own culture

God gave us a cultural mandate. He even looks forward to the purified results of this task on the new earth. He does not expect us to serve him isolated from our own culture. We should do it through and within our own culture because we cannot do otherwise. As indicated above, the fact that God's word associates itself with different cultures (relative continuity), implies that he simultaneously liberates and transforms them (radical discontinuity).

What should be emphasized, however, is that every community has the

right to develop according to its own cultural criteria, provided that people are not uncritical about their own culture. There is no reason why there should only be one ideal of development, e.g. a western, African, or Japanese.

To fulfill the human calling

With his cultural mandate God calls all human beings to fulfill a task. Development, as part of our cultural task, is also a divine calling. We cannot divorce any aspect of development from our relationship to God. We may, therefore, not call it a “secular” duty, next to or separated from our “religious” duties of praying, reading the Bible, and attending church on Sundays.

God not only calls ministers and priests or church officers. All of us are called to a calling in which we fulfill our task of developing different aspects of life: the social, political, economic, etc.

As a responsible steward

God’s cultural mandate, that is the basis of our development task, does not imply that humans are the owners, proprietors or rulers of creation: they are only God’s deputies, managers, trustees, or servants. The word *steward* summarizes all of them.

To be a steward does not indicate less responsibility than an owner. God placed a huge responsibility on our shoulders when, at the beginning, he created our ancestors, Eve and Adam, as stewards. Stewards have a double responsibility: towards the owner of creation as well as towards creation! And as far as creation is concerned, we have the difficult task of both using and protecting it. As stewards we have to use it for our real needs, but protect it against our own sinful, selfish desires.

In a free society

This section of my definition brings into focus another element of our worldview: the communal or societal. We have a calling to serve God in different offices in a great variety of societal relationships. In each one of them we encounter officers and members. The officers need authority and power to fulfill their task. Authority and power as such are not wrong, but their misuse

is. When misused, it robs the members of specific societal relationships of the necessary freedom to fulfill their calling of developing themselves and the rest of creation.

Real authority from a biblical perspective does not mean domination for own benefit, but service to others for their benefit, empowering them to be able to fulfill their diverse divine callings. Real authority, therefore, requires (1) insight into God's will for the specific societal relationship; (2) a willingness to obey this norm; (3) the protection and promotion of the interests of those subjected to one's authority, and (4) combating evil as it is manifested in the specific societal relationship.

Development, therefore, cannot simply be planned and executed in an authoritarian way from the top down. Leadership has to empower people at grass roots, from where real development has to germinate.

To the honor and glory of God

This last section of our definition is not a pious attachment. The six elements of a Christian worldview may be distinguishable, but are inseparable. In the explanation of the previous parts of my definition, it was already clear that not one of them could be detached from our idea of God. We should live before the face or in the presence of God. Life—our entire life—is religion.

At the same time, God did not only call us to live in his presence in everything we do, but that he himself should also be the final goal of everything we do. The highest norm according to which we should measure our development projects is to ask the question: Is it done to the honor and glory of God? If it is merely done for the benefit of the individual or the community, it cannot qualify as genuine development according to biblical standards. It may structurally speaking be fine, but its final direction is wrong.

10. Review

This chapter dealt with the influence of culture, worldview, and religion on development ideals. At the beginning I explained why I have focused on development. It was not merely because of a theoretical interest, but because

of an existential urgency.

The African continent has become more or less irrelevant in the world economy. Two thirds of the less developed countries of the world are in Africa. Investment in education has in the last ten years dropped by 25% and health care services by no less than 50%! About 10,000 children die daily because of malnutrition and/ or being underfed. Africa's foreign debt has increased faster than any other region in the "Third World": from 6 billion US dollars in 1970 to 300 billion US dollar in 1993. In my own country, South Africa—one of the "rich" countries on the continent—more than 40% of the people live below the poverty line.

This is the reason why as a philosopher I could not but get involved in the issue of this chapter. I am no development expert, having but little practical experience in this field. Yet, I wanted to make a contribution from my field of study, however small.

"Rather than shouting against the darkness on our continent, we should light a candle. Because with only one small candle, our continent will not be absolutely dark anymore." A Christian brother in one of our African countries gave this advice to me long ago when I felt very pessimistic about the future of this vast continent with its huge potential for development. I have tried to follow his advice.

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Postscript

For other publications by the author on development in Africa see the postscript at the end of chapter 13.

GLOBALIZATION

THE NEW SPIRIT OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

"Development," during the past fifty years of the previous century, was the key word. The ideal of development was not totally rejected at the beginning of this century, but it is now regarded as the hoped for result of "globalization," the new buzz word of our time. This chapter is an attempt to get a theoretical grip on globalization by paying attention to the following: (1) a brief preliminary description of the phenomenon; (2) a few of its characteristics; (3) an indication of some of its consequences; (4) a more in-depth analysis of the new capitalist economy as the driving force behind globalization; and (5) in conclusion some ideas on how, from a Christian perspective, globalization should be viewed.

1. Introduction: from development to globalization

The time of development – at least theoretically – is past. Rist puts it dramatically:

"End of the game. The lights that made the hope glow have gone out. The huge enterprise with the aim of accelerating 'development', has come to a complete end. The messianic fervor that was supposed to bring worldwide plenty will no longer mobilize people's efforts." (Rist, 1999: 220).

Some development scientists (for example, Navavhandi, 2002; Rahnema, 1997) have, therefore, from around the turn of the century, been using the term "post-development" to describe our present time.

1.1 "Globalization" the new buzz word

"Globalization" has become the new buzz word. The ideal of development has been relegated to the background, but it has not disappeared completely.

When globalization came to the fore, "development" could not be discarded as, despite its failures, it had acquired a certain legitimacy.

So it is incorporated into the process of globalization, but with a difference (Rist, 1999: 225, 229). Development is not the *a priori justification* for globalization but the (very uncertain) *result* of the process of globalization. So development has not completely lost its role of creating the illusion of a better future. Development work still continues but without the strong justification of before.

1.2 Difficulty of getting a hold on globalization

Globalization, like development, is a matter of extreme topical interest since Africa has also become part of the "global village." Thus if Christians and churches neglect to reflect on it, it is to their own detriment. However, the following are some of the factors which complicate taking a stand on globalization.

In the first instance it is (still) not clear what is meant by this cliché - as some describe it. Every writer seems to have his own idea about it. (At the end of this chapter I will give my own view.)

Secondly, the market is currently flooded with literature on the subject. Apart from the avalanche of books and articles, so much subject matter is available on the Internet that it takes weeks of reading - often a useless task as afterwards it still is not exactly clear what is meant by "globalization."

In the third place writers are not unanimous on whether the phenomenon is something positive or negative (cf. for example Lechner and Boll, 2000). There is a division between the "globalists," who see nothing wrong in globalization and would like to have it happen as fast as possible, and the anti-globalists who only point out its dangers. (Recent examples of the optimistic globalists are Norberg, 2002 and Moore, 2003 while Klein, 2001 is an example of an anti-globalistic pessimist.) If as a Christian one believes in the power of sin as well as of salvation, both extremes are unacceptable and a more balanced view would be nearer to the truth.

In the fourth instance the formulation of one's own view on globalization is complicated by the lack of help from fellow-believers - few penetrating

reflections from a Christian perspective are available.

Thus this chapter endeavors to be a small contribution, albeit in the form of an overview, to gaining a better insight in the phenomenon of globalization. Sections 2-4 (definition, characteristics, and consequences) serve as an introductory background and thus could be omitted by the informed reader. The emphasis falls on the contribution from a Christian perspective in §5 and §6.

2. Defining globalization

2.1 Definitions depend on focus

There already are numerous descriptions (cf., for example, Mulder, 2002) of this phenomenon which affects everyone even in the remote corners of the world. Often the description depends on which facets and consequence(s) of globalization the focus lies. *Economically*, for instance it has the result that countries can no longer plan and regulate their economies on their own. In the *political* field governments lose power, since multinational concerns have acquired enormous influence. Globalization can also lead to social and *cultural* disintegration of traditional, local communities. (For example, Klamer, 2002, as well as Maurais and Morris, 2003, provide data on how English as a world language currently threatens the existence of indigenous languages.) At the same time it leads to cultural integration and the forming of a new world culture.

If the focus is only on the economic aspect globalization could be defined as the current shift from local and national markets to regional and global markets or the opening up of all national economies to the world economy (cf. Goudzwaard, 1996: 99; Jongeneel 2002: 204 gives a similar description).

2.2 A multidimensional process

However, it is important to realize that globalization is a multidimensional process. Chaplin (2003: 31) is right:

"Many analyses of globalization are construed too narrowly. ... They concentrate on one sphere of human society at the expense of others, and so

fall into various forms of reductionism. They shrink the full complexity and diversity of human life down to only one of its dimensions. This is evident when globalization is seen as an essentially *economic* process, at the cost of attention to the parallel transformations occurring in distinct social, cultural, intellectual, moral, and indeed religious dimensions, and which are not mere effects of economic change."

Since globalization is such a multifaceted process and consequently very difficult to define, many writers on the subject choose the simple definition that globalization is the compression of the world. Such a description is not very satisfactory, for apart from leading to integration, globalization also leads to accentuating local differences ("localization"). Furthermore this definition does not answer any normative questions such as whether globalization is something neutral, something good, or even inevitable.

2.3 A possible key to a definition

In his *Globalization and the Kingdom of God* (2001) the Christian philosopher, Goudzwaard, regards globalization as a further normative historic opening up of the innate possibilities of creation and of the human being. In the current form of globalization this process is distorted, however, by the predominance of one aspect, namely the economic. Goudzwaard's interpretation looks promising and opens up perspectives towards a positive evaluation of (the correct form of) globalization since humankind was created by God to live in mutual enrichment of, and interdependence on, one another.

Chaplin (2003: 33), another reformational thinker, builds on Goudzwaard's train of thought by defining globalization as "a normative disclosure of the *spatial dimension* of our created social possibilities."

These two philosophers offer important keys to a better understanding of globalization which will be worked out in more detail below (§§ 5-6). In the meantime outlining some outstanding characteristics of this modern phenomenon may help to understand it better.

3. Some characteristics of globalization

Here I lean strongly on the description and analysis of Goudzwaard (1996; 2001; 2002a; 2002b; Goudzwaard and De Santana Ana, 2002 and Goudzwaard et al., 2008). From these works it transpire among other things, that globalization does not differ essentially from development but actually entails an intensification of it. This becomes apparent in the characteristics listed below.

3.1 Five characteristics

The following are some of the most important characteristics.

- Globalization, just like development, still means *one-way traffic* from the West to the rest of the world. Western culture and economy are to become global and not the other way round.

- The *power of multinational or transnational business concerns* which already increased sevenfold during the previous century is still on the increase. No less than a third of the whole world's export is currently in their hands. The trade of the poorer, southern countries is controlled by only fifteen of these mega-corporations. As in the past, these companies are becoming even richer while many countries and individuals within them are becoming even poorer (Klein, 2001 provides valuable data).

- *Modern technology* undoubtedly promotes this process of globalization. (One of the standard works in this field is Castells, 1999.) Electronic commercial transactions (like bank transfers, buying, and selling of shares) are much greater than the buying and selling of real goods and services. The present economy more than ever before, is dependent on and controlled by the worldwide movement of capital in the hands of rich individuals, banks, investment funds, and speculators. Their objective is maximum profit for themselves and not the responsible use of money for broader goals. An unknown reckless speculator on the stock market in New York can for instance cause a concern, or even a country in Africa to collapse in a moment.

- The *belief in the free market* is still seen worldwide as the only acceptable and "civilized" model for human society. In fact the market gets preference over considerations like justice, job creation, and protection of the

environment. The only difference is that the commercialization of the whole of society is continued with greater intensity. Institutions which are not at all of an economic nature are increasingly considered, treated, and managed as if they are.

- In concurrence with the previous point *economic competition* is also strengthened. "Competitiveness" sounds better than "war," but essentially it is nothing less than a furious, destructive war. If a smaller company or a poorer country can no longer keep up this war, there is no mercy - it is simply excluded and marginalized. It is manipulated in favor of the stronger ones. Life is only about survival and the only norm is greed and self-interest.

3.2 A preliminary balance sheet

In summary Goudzwaard (2001) sees the following dangerous, one-sided features in the process of globalization. It is grounded in (1) a mechanistic worldview in which a supposed self-regulating market takes the place of human responsibility, (2) it is capitalistic (cf also Goudzwaard, 1979), (3) economic-materialistic, (4) consumption-directed (the more the better), (5) determined by competition (the competition mania), and (6) technicistically oriented

This does not mean that for Goudzwaard an anti-globalistic attitude is the solution, because then we would be walking away from our God-given responsibility. For him – and I agree – the central question is not *whether* but *which kind of* globalization. He emphasizes the following: (1) The Christian church is supposed to be a worldwide community; (2) the earth and everything in it belongs to God (Psalm 24) and this fact also implies worldwide economic developments and technological breakthroughs; (3) our common stewardship over the earth (God's command) has an eschatological dimension, it points forward to the coming unity of the kingdom of God

4. Some results of globalization

From the above features more results of globalization can be envisaged. Only four of the most important ones are mentioned below.

4.1 It benefits those who are already rich

The most important result is that (for the time being) only rich individuals and countries benefit from it and the gap between rich and poor simply widens. In many countries it leads for instance to a "double" economy: one for the small group of rich elite who can play along in the globalization process, and the other (informal economy) for the great mass of poor people. The reason is easily understood. The world market does not include the poorer countries, but excludes them; there is a lack of capital to compete in these countries, as well as the necessary infrastructure and technology. In spite of increased exports many countries cannot pay their debt to rich countries or supply the basic needs of their own population – 600 million people are currently starving. (For details, see Verbeek, 2005.)

For Africa, this portends nothing good according to Kiza. His conclusion is "the ideology of the 'global' market only serves to enrich the economic nationalism of the world's industrial giants" (Kiza, 2001: 44). Chisinga (2001: 60) agrees globalization "produces gains for a few, marginalization of many, and polarization between the poor and the rich." Elsewhere he writes, "Globalization paints a picture of gloom and despair in which Africa lies at the periphery of the globalizing world economy" (Chisinga, 2001: 68).

In many cases however, it is not yet clear whether the effect of globalization on a country is positive or negative. Regarding South Africa, Loots (2001: 17) can only conclude in general that "the process of globalization is a very uneven process with a relatively small number of countries benefiting from this process." Elsewhere he describes the benefits of globalization for South Africa as "at best, tenuous, and at worst, doubtful" (Loots, 2002: 2).

4.2 The state loses power and society is commercialized

According to experts (cf. Hertz, 1999) a "silent take-over" is taking place worldwide. Consciously or unconsciously politicians are losing more and more latitude. The business world is gaining more and more influence and may eventually take over the role of politics. Traditional tasks of governments (like education, different care-taking services, and an equitable distribution of

income) have been thrown open for commercial powers who know little responsibility – except profit for themselves. Gradually all of society (health services, education, and even religious institutions) is commercialized.

The fact that states gradually lose their power, does not necessarily mean that the state as an institution will disappear but that it will become merely an instrument to further diverse economic interests (even of those outside the particular state). The South African government for instance, is forced to privatize. However it benefits others for in the end we have to take care of the thousands of jobless people. In this debate, namely whether the national state will still play a role in the midst of globalization, there are, according to Held (2002: 22-23), at least three different viewpoints which we are not going into now.

4.3 The antipole is "localization"

Globalization also has an antipole: it does not only lead to internationalism but to upcoming nationalisms as well, which try to fight the American-western "Coca-Colalization" and "Macdonaldization." According to the book by Barber (2000) – in which he puts Jihad versus McWorld, the rebellion against the market-driven western world - 11 September 2001 was among other things an example of the reaction to the expansion drive of western culture.

4.4 On the way to an ideology?

From the brief overview it is already clear that the globalization process can end in an ideology: globalism. In this respect it does not differ from its predecessor; the development ideal ended in "developmentalism." Goudzwaard is not the only one who classifies globalization as an ideology. It is also said by other writers from whom one would not expect it – especially when they are dealing with the economic facet of globalization. Thus for example Stiglitz (2002: xiii) says of the International Monetary Fund that its policy is based not only on poor economic analyses but also on a "blind ideology." Earlier Mihevc (1995) after a penetrating analysis came to a similar conclusion concerning the World Bank's policy in Africa.

Perhaps one should be a little more cautious than to decide too quickly that globalization is *inherently* ideological in nature. It may be safer to say that

it shows tendencies in that direction because there are strong ideological powers in the way it is currently developing. This will become clearer in what follows below.

5. Globalization driven by the neocapitalist economy

We have referred to two reformational thinkers Bob Goudzwaard and Jonathan Chaplin, who regard globalization as a further opening up or disclosure of the innate capacities of humanity and nature. (This concept will be worked out further in §6.) This idea of opening up or unfolding in reformational philosophy is a theoretical elaboration on the biblical theme that humanity is a steward of God's creation (cf. Genesis 1:28 and 2:15). So globalization as such is not wrong

5.1 The reason for the imbalance

According to Goudzwaard the process of globalization, however, is warped by the dominance of its economic side. Globalization is suffering from reductionism, because (1) it puts economics first in a one-sided way and (2) it either neglects other aspects of life or reduces them to the economic (the phenomenon that all life is commercialized). We are dealing here with something which in the Reformed tradition is indicated as an “-ism.”: economism. Since economism amounts to an absolutization of one aspect or side of a multicolored reality (to the detriment and consequently the domination over other equally important facets) it could easily lead to a full-bloodied ideology.

By determining the characteristics of the neocapitalist economy – surely the most important driving force behind the present process of globalization – it is possible to indicate how unbalanced or warped globalization itself is, which in turn promotes neocapitalism worldwide (cf. Verbeek, 2005: 151 ff).

5.2 The main traits of neocapitalism

Although there are several forms of capitalism Heslam (2002: 12) is of the opinion that the following three trends characterize all of them: (1) private ownership, (2) automatic markets with the (3) maximization of profit as the goal.

According to Heslam capitalists believe that the market functions like a machine according to fixed laws to ensure the necessary equilibrium. In practice,

however, it becomes apparent that this is not true, since markets today have become uncertain and unpredictable. Furthermore capitalists believe that (unlimited) growth can only be to humanity's advantage. According to Heslam (2002: 13) economic growth which harms society and nature cannot be regarded as a "profit." Heslam also criticizes the one-sided profit motive of capitalism because mostly it will not honor other norms like the ethical.

These are characteristics of earlier capitalism. Later (neo)capitalism exhibits four additional basic traits: (4) the involvement of huge (often multi/international) business concerns, (5) the severing of the ties between the financial sector and the real economy, (6) still greater emphasis on relentless competition, unlimited growth, and abundant consumption (the transition from the former production-oriented to a consumption-oriented economy), and (7) the freedom of the market to organize society as a whole.

The latter, the most important characteristic of late capitalism, Heslam describes in more detail as follows:

"Because the global market-mechanism is autonomous and acceptable in itself, it should be free to cross all social and cultural borders, regardless of short-term costs.

Since the decline of the political left, the new capitalism has become so much the dominant mindset of the west that most are prepared to agree with [the] famous remark [by Margaret Thatcher] 'there is no alternative'. Thus the market principle is applied in areas of society previously considered free from the market's constraints. The kind of society that emerges is not only one that has markets, but in some real sense constitutes a market. So the term 'the market' becomes, in the language of the new capitalism, a metaphor for the whole of life – an all-embracing worldview. When applied to the world as a whole, it finds expression in the promotion of a global 'free market'." (Heslam, 2002: 12).

5.3 The main and supporting values of new capitalism

Fowler (1998; 2002) helps us in fathoming the dominant new capitalist component of globalization even deeper. As becomes clear from the following he calls a spade a spade:

"...the free market ideology ... must be judged as a dehumanizing ideology. It is an ideology that, by subordinating all other human interests to commercial interest, leads to inadequate human development within a distorted social order that fails to provide a social environment in which human life can flourish ... the human person is defined as a market unit, both in the input and on the output side. On the input side, a person is valued by the market value of the input of the person, on the output side a person's life is valued by the person's, capacity for market consumption. Whatever else may constitute the human person, they are qualities that are attached to the basic market person" (Fowler, 1998: 433).

What is it that brings Fowler to calling new capitalism a "dehumanizing ideology"? It is worthwhile to go into the detail of his analysis from a Christian perspective.

He distinguishes between the main value (or mother idea) and four supporting values (or convictions) found in this kind of economy (for further detail see van der Walt, 1999a: 17-28).

The main value

The main value (cf the quotation from Hesham above) is the idealized market as the savior or rescuer in every field of life. It has to be allowed to organize freely, regulate and dominate every sector of society - even the non-economic (the commercialization of everything). According to Fowler this is completely new in world history, since formerly the field of economics was regarded as merely one facet of the rich variety of society as a whole.

The supporting convictions or values

The following four are given.

- *The good or advantageous nature of the impersonal power of the markets.* As Adam Smith taught (in the eighteenth century) there is a naïve belief in an "invisible hand" which will take care that markets act to the advantage of everybody.

- *The reconcilability of economic interests with other social interests.* It is believed that commercial action is the most effective means to further every

type of social welfare. Therefore all non-economic societal relations (married life, family, school, university, church, etc.) are subjected to commercial interests (they are commercialized) with the supposition that it will not harm them but will serve their interest. Managing methods according to commercial practices are for instance used to bring even educational institutions under commercial control.

- *Abundant, ever-growing consumption as the basis for a good life.* Life can become better and better by owning more and more. (By means of the media this belief about realizing human well-being is propagated.)

- This goes hand in hand with *individualistic greed* and *selfishness*. I must feel good, my feeling of well-being and personal fulfillment is the most important thing in life.

5.4 The danger of warped values

Before judging the above-mentioned main and supporting values from a Christian perspective, first a remark on the danger of warped economic values illustrated by three examples from the current economy (efficiency, quantification, and competition).

Values are important for they (1) give direction, (2) set boundaries, (3) give wisdom or insight (4) on what is to be done (they differentiate between what *is* and what *should be* done), and thus they determine the whole of a community.

Efficiency

Efficiency is a *thing* and not a norm. It should therefore, be judged *normatively*. (A murder which is planned and carried out with great efficiency - so that the perpetrator cannot be rounded up - is not therefore something good, it is still murder.) One should also distinguish between various types of efficiency. Something which is economically efficient is not necessarily good in the religious, or ethical sense.

Quantification

Quantification, too, is misleading and can have harmful consequences. Norms and values cannot be determined numerically. (If 51% of the people vote for

abortion on request it definitely does not mean that it has to be accepted by everyone.) Numbers only determine quantity. It can for example, only determine that I have 100 apples. Only when the *norm* of good or bad is applied, can it be determined that half of the apples are bad.

Competition

Competition between individuals and also between nations is propagated today as an economic "gospel." There is a belief that it will lift all economic misery. But we should not regard competition as a norm, but judge it normatively. Then we will realize that competition can be good as well as bad. Good competition can prevent waste (but also cause it), limit laziness, and inefficiency and thus raise standards. Bad, wrong competition, however, can be a cruel, hard master. This is clear from the following. (1) There must always be winners and losers - an assumption which is not true. (2) Competition offers no guarantee of quality (which is the supposition), because the winner is not necessarily the best - there are different ways of winning. (3) People always regard fellow-humans as opposition that has to be eliminated. It is possible that cooperation could prove to be much better. (4) Competition easily destroys relationships. (5) The weak are forgotten, rejected, or eliminated, so that justice is not done. (6) Competition causes an unknown rush and anxiety. (7) It can prevent other very important values from being realized. (8) It never stops. (9) The impression can be left that a person who has failed in the economic field has failed in all respects. (10) Competition is not even economically effective since it mostly eliminates variety.

We should not try to live according to one type of norm or value (the economical) only. Even with a so-called purely economic problem (something that in my opinion does not exist) we may not apply only economic norms. Juridical norms (justice), ethical norms (love, compassion, trust), norms of faith, and many more should be obeyed *simultaneously*. An economic concern should not consider its "social responsibility" as an afterthought.

5.5 A wrong priority in the main value of neocapitalism

From a Christian perspective we first evaluate the main value of neocapitalism and subsequently the four supporting values.

The basic belief of the free-market economy is the following "Seek first the abundance of food, drink clothes, and other consumption goods which the market offers, then you will automatically receive all the other good things." In reality it is said "You may, if you prefer, also thank God for the goods, but remember that you will only enjoy them if you agree that the interests of the market is your first priority."

According to the Bible our preferences should be exactly the other way round – the free-market economy has turned God's priority upside down. We read "So do not worry, saying 'What shall we eat' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans [the current new capitalist economy] run after all these things, and our heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:31-33).

Christ does not deny that the market (economic matters) also has a place in life. But he does say very distinctly that we will not find human fulfillment and well-being if we make the things the market offers (food, drink, clothes, and many more luxury goods) our highest first priority or goal. We can only receive these as a *gift* if we subject the market - like everything else - to God's kingdom and his will.

5.6 Critique of the four supporting values of neocapitalism

From a Christian perspective the following questions should be put to the four supporting values of neocapitalism.

The goodness of the market or the goodness of God?

The free-market ideology believes in the goodness (benefit) of the impersonal market as a matter-of-course, instead of the merciful goodness of a personal God. A few remarks to elucidate.

- Actually there is no such thing as a free-market, for there is no freedom *within* the market itself – not between buyers and sellers not even between sellers mutually. By a free market is meant the freedom *of* the market to expand its actions to every country (globalization) and every sector of society (commercialization).

- In many respects it is not at all a frugal market but a very extravagant, wasteful one.

- Furthermore the belief in the obvious "goodness" of the market undermines humanity's own responsibility. We create the market, thus we are responsible for its actions. Just like when we try to develop our marriage, family life, or church life in disobedience to God and it ends in catastrophe, so it also happens in the case of the market. Something can only be called good if it obeys God's norms for life.

- Likewise the ideal of an ever-growing market production should be seriously questioned. Continuous, unlimited growth is impossible in a world with limited resources. The environment cannot be exploited indefinitely, and the productivity of people cannot be increased indefinitely.

Thus growth is not a benchmark or value, but something to be judged normatively. What is good healthy growth and what is harmful, unhealthy, destructive growth? Anti-normative growth is growth that does not respect the boundaries set by the norms of God. It can almost be likened to a cancer that keeps growing and so destroys itself in the end. Normative growth, on the other hand, can be likened to a fruit tree: at a certain point it is a full-grown tree which grows more slowly to be able to bear fruit.

Of course economic growth is necessary, so that our basic human needs can be satisfied to enable us to fulfill our calling in life. However, research has revealed that economic growth can only increase human well-being up to a certain point. Economic development not only solves problems, but it can also (if it goes too far) cause serious problems like greater poverty for many in spite of greater riches for some.

In summary, prosperity can only be a *means* to human well-being. If you make it a *goal* in itself, it becomes an idol - with all the consequences attached to idolatry.

Commercial efficiency or socially applicable efficiency?

The belief of neocapitalism is that all societal relations can be served best by following the organizational model of the "efficient" business enterprise. In the case of a successful business enterprise the market output should be

optimized with a view to profit, while the costs should be kept as low as possible. In this case, efficiency is an acceptable benchmark.

However, other relationships in society (marriage, family, educational institutions, the church, arts, and many more) have other God-given objectives. Of course, they each have an economic *facet* (a family, for instance, cannot survive without finances) but they are not like the market, economically *qualified*. (If one were to view and run a marriage or a family as an economic concern it would soon be ruined.) Therefore in their case efficiency would not necessarily mean keeping costs as low as possible (as in the case of a business concern or the market). It might mean that their efficiency, which is in a class of its own and is directed towards reaching their own unique objectives, would be lowered or even completely thwarted. So we do not need an economic model only, but different models of efficiency which fit every relationship in society. Our task is not to commercialize society as a whole, but to de-commercialize it.

Consumption or serving in love?

The belief of neocapitalism is that self-satisfying consumption will promote happiness and human well-being.

In this respect, too, the free market is opposed to the word of God. Naturally we cannot live without consuming (food clothes, accommodation, etc.). But it may never be the one and all, the *foundation and goal* of our lives. The Bible sees the goal of life (towards which consumption is merely a *means*) as serving one another in love (Gal. 5:13 and Phil. 2:4). Such an attitude in life means real fulfillment.

We do not need ever growing consumption. Neither is it healthy - spiritually or physically (compare Phil. 4:11 and 1 Tim. 6:8). True life, according to Scripture, does not consist of the abundance of our possessions.

Satisfaction by chasing our desires or contentment as a gift of God?

The belief in the free-market economy entails that a good life is measured by the optimal satisfaction of one's own desires and greed.

In this case, too, Scripture teaches exactly the opposite values

"everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:16-17). There are also many instances where the Bible rejects jealousy and selfishness.

It does not mean that the conveniences and other advantages offered by modern economy may not be used and appreciated. God gives everything abundantly to enjoy (1 Timothy 6:17, cf. Ps. 115:16).

Since, however the values of neocapitalism and of the Bible are contradictory, a choice has to be made. Pursue the gratification of your desires as a goal, and your desires will never be fully satisfied. Or pursue serving in love as your aim in life, and you will experience satisfaction of your desires (be content) and have a meaningful life.

Warped values do not remain something abstract. They have concrete consequences, because people live according to them and even structure a whole society according to them.

5.7 A warped society

From the Bible we can make out the following: (1) one serves God or an idol, (2) one reflects more and more the image of the God or the idol one serves, and (3) one creates a society according to one's own image, which also reflects one's view of God or a god.

The same applies to modern day neocapitalism: (1) the commercial interests of the market are in control and are served, (2) the individual is shaped according to commercial principles, and (3) society as a whole is redefined in order to serve the primary commercial interests.

Many examples of this can be seen in our own society today.

- *Education* (especially tertiary education) was formerly meant to broaden and deepen insight in reality and the goal of our lives. Today it has been redefined as a mere preparation to fill one's role in commercialized society (so-called occupational or professional training). Subjects which cannot serve the economy (like theology, philosophy, and other humanities)

are being eliminated. The result is people who are set to upholding and promoting the kingdom of the market. But for the rest they are one-eyed, uninformed on the broader – more important – life issues. Their attention is distracted from the essential questions of life (What is good and true? What is the deepest goal of human existence?) so they do not realize that they are trying to live on bread alone.

- *The media* by uninterrupted propaganda reinforce the new capitalist values and so support the same commercial interests.

- *Sport* has long since ceased to be relaxing social interaction, but has degenerated into relentless competition (for those who partake) and commercial entertainment (for spectators).

- Even the *churches* are becoming more and more efficient marketers of spiritual consumer commodities and services.

- For the *state*, too, public justice often no longer is its main goal, but the regulation - as far as it can still manage it - of clashing financial interests.

Thus we are currently experiencing a new worldwide one-sidedness, and the process of economic globalization is reinforcing it. Kwame Nkrumah (president of Ghana) once declared "Seek first the *political* kingdom and you will receive all the other things you desire." Today it is said "Seek first the *economic* kingdom of the free market and the rest will follow." Both these visions are equally dangerous and both contradict the divine law for life "Seek first the kingdom of God." The first viewpoint subjects life as a whole to politics, while the other simply exchanges this error for another (that of economism).

A one-sided economically driven society can never be a (fully) developed society. It leads to warped human development and finally to the dehumanization of humans, since it does not create an environment in which human life can grow and flourish. Full human dignity is reduced to a "market unit" which has to produce on the one hand and on the other hand must consume that which is produced. It is the complete opposite of what it should be. The economy (cf. the original meaning of the word) should serve humanity,

5.8 Important biblical perspectives

In answer to neocapitalism the following has to be stated regarding the human being and society.

Being human

- In the first instance humans are *religious beings*. Therefore they cannot live on bread alone (Matthew 4:4). One has to struggle with difficult but fundamental questions like our origin, existence, meaning, and destination. These extremely important questions are ignored in the West today (the only "civilization" where this happens) hence we have a seriously ill civilization. Blinded people - and therefore spiritually ill people - take decisions on the future of millions of people in other parts of the world.

- In the second instance humans are *multidimensional beings*. He/she has many capacities which all have to be developed *simultaneously* and in a *balanced* way. (Not in the first and final instance the economic aspect supposing that the rest will develop automatically.)

- In the third place a human being can only develop correctly if it happens *according to the right values*. Such norms or values are caring, sharing, serving in the relationship with fellow human beings, and enriching the environment

We have to *consume* to be able to live, but it is not the goal of our existence. We may *enjoy*, but if this is our only aim, life becomes empty, hollow, and senseless. Productivity is important, but not in the sense of how much we can get out of the earth and other human beings, but rather how much we can put back, how we can make it more fertile and richer. Self-centeredness, individualism, and self-satisfaction is a distortion of being truly human.

Society

According to the above-mentioned norms we need a new society. It is not one in which the market is rejected. (The viewpoint of "no growth" poses no solution.)

Our critique was that not *every* form of growth is necessarily good. It is a society in which the growth of the market serves not only the limited goals of the market (economy) itself, but promotes a much broader development of

human beings and society.

In order to reach this ideal, the ideal will first have to be in line not only with our individual norms but also with our social norms.

In the second place we also need, apart from a consensus on social norms, a society's structural change in present day society to ensure that society's structures (the various societal relations) underpin these values and live up to them.

5.9 A schematic comparison between neocapitalist and Christian values

Finally the foregoing comparison between neocapitalism and the Christian alternative to it can be summarized in the following overview:

The ideal society according to the values of the neocapitalist free market	The ideal society according to biblical norms
<p>6. <i>The end result: warped development</i></p> <p>As a result of one-sided economic development there is scarcity, poverty, inequality, decreasing care-taking, increasing illness, less time, violence, dissatisfaction, boredom - dehumanization instead of human well-being and fulfillment.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>	<p>6. <i>The result: true development</i></p> <p>Full human well-being (not mere prosperity) and peace (<i>shalom</i>)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>
<p>5. <i>The needs</i></p> <p>Never enough, never satisfied, since needs have been replaced by desires, greed.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>	<p>5. <i>The needs</i></p> <p>Just enough to sustain multifaceted human existence, enjoy freedom and bear fruit.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>

<p><i>4. The social structures</i></p> <p>Structural impoverishment, because all other societal relationships are shaped according to the (economic) market model. No freedom to fulfill a variety of life vocations. Spiritual poverty in society in spite of material prosperity.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>	<p><i>4. The social structures</i></p> <p>Structural diversity of marriage, family, school, university state, business enterprise, different kinds of organizations. The freedom and opportunity to realize our human calling in all of them in a balanced way.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>
<p><i>3. Social values</i></p> <p>Blind trust in the market, prosperity, material abundance, commercialization, competition, globalization.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>	<p><i>3. Social values</i></p> <p>A diversity of social values like faithfulness (in marriage), care (family), stewardship (business), justice (state), etc.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>
<p><i>2. Personal life values</i></p> <p>Acquire and consume as much as possible, as fast as possible to satisfy your own desires.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>	<p><i>2. Personal life values</i></p> <p>A responsible reply to God's central commandment of love in a variety of ways: service, sharing, care, enrichment, etc. in relationships with fellow humans and environment.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p>
<p><i>1. The underlying driving force</i></p> <p>Obey Mammon, love of possessions, money, and yourself.</p>	<p><i>1. The underlying driving force</i></p> <p>Obedience to the will of God, love of Him and of our neighbor (Matthew 22: 37-40).</p>

6. A Christian-reformational analysis of globalization

After this critical focus on only one - nevertheless an outstanding - facet of globalization, it is now time to return to the important question which has been dangling in the air all through this chapter: what exactly is globalization?

One of the reasons it is so hard to determine exactly what globalization is, is that it comes to the fore in almost every field of life. The three-volume work by Stackhouse *et al.* (2000; 2001; and 2002), for instance, discusses the following areas: transnational corporations, war and peace, the family, and the media (in Part 1), education, ecology, and morality (in Part 2) and different religions like traditional (tribal) religions, Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam (in Part 3). Globalization has an influence in all these fields and in their turn they also influence the process of globalization. But what is globalization itself?

6.1 A key

To get a theoretical grip on globalization we first listen to Held (2002: 11-17). He uses the following expressions to describe globalization: "dramatically compressed space," "interconnectedness," "increasing interpenetration," "a borderless world," and "a significant shift in the spatial form of relations." All these concepts (even though they are not all purely spatial in nature) point out that the spatial is the core of all forms of globalization. Globalization simply means the spatial expansion of something right across the world.

This corresponds to the key which Chaplin (2003: 33) gave earlier (cf. the end of §2 above) globalization is "a normative disclosure of the spatial dimension of our created possibilities." Unfortunately, Chaplin does not work out his definition any further. However, because he is a proponent of reformational philosophy one can make certain deductions of how he would do it. From a Christian philosophical viewpoint I will subsequently say something more, first on "the spatial dimension" and then on "normative unfolding/disclosure."

6.2 The spatial dimension

According to representatives of reformational philosophy the spatial dimension is an aspect, facet, or modality of reality. Between twelve and fifteen

modalities are usually distinguished. They denote the various ways *in which* things exist, not *what they are*. Thus the *spatial aspect* may not be identified with the concrete *space* which we experience. (As will become clear, concrete space participates in all the modalities.)

All proponents of reformational philosophy agree that the core sense of the *spatial aspect* is (*continuous*) *extension*. It is clear why Chaplin links globalization with the essence of space, namely extensiveness. All the different forms of globalization (cf. the quotation from Chaplin, 2003: 31 under §2 above) correspond in that they broaden or expand something to encompass the whole earth.

Each of the modalities is unique, irreducible to any other modality and also supposes a unique norm. At the same time they are intertwined in an incredibly complex way. Since it can help us to a better understanding of globalization we only point out the analogical relationships. The *spatial aspect* points both "backward" (retrocipates) to an earlier modality (the arithmetic) and "forward" (anticipates) to the other later modalities so that the following analogies can be indicated:

- *the space of faith* (not only of the church, but also the "space" in which we stand before God)
- *ethical space* (in which one acts ethically wrong or right)
- *juridical space* (as allowed by a particular law)
- *aesthetical space* (of a painting, for instance)
- *economic space* (for example, an outlet for products)
- *social space* (in which one feels at home or not)
- *lingual space* (created by a language)
- *historical space* (the specific age for example the twenty-first century in which we live)
- *logical space* (for example the room one has within an argument/debate)
- *psychical space* (emotional space)
- *biotic* (life space)

- *physical* space or three-dimensional space (in the air, on earth or in water)
- *kinematic* space (moving space)
- *numeric/arithmetic* space, in which we are concerned with the amount/volume of space. (Globalization can make the world look "bigger" but we can also at the same time experience it as "smaller.")

The above is complicated even further when we keep in mind that the dimension of time is applicable to all these modalities - including the spatial. In the process of globalization it seems as if both space and time have "shrunk." Apparently the tempo of time has accelerated as a result of the increasing disclosure of the spatial element.

As has been said, the spatial is not something concrete, but it is a facet of concrete things. But globalization is something real, however difficult it may be to define it. Therefore, all the above-mentioned modalities, from the arithmetic to the pistic (faith) are facets of globalization. Globalization is a multidimensional phenomenon - much more diverse than many writers on the subject acknowledge.

However, the spatial aspect is the characteristic qualifying or leading modality in the process of globalization.

A few words, first about unfolding and then normative unfolding.

6.3 Unfolding

According to the cultural mandate set by God at the beginning of creation (Gen. 1:28 and 3:15) human beings are called to cultivate the earth and unlock or open up its enormous potential. In globalization we can now see for the first time in history to what extent the spatial dimension can be disclosed. What is happening today was formerly unthinkable and impossible.

Globalization was made possible by the historical (cultural) power of humanity (for instance in science, technology, organization, and economy). While the spatial aspect of globalization is the *leading* aspect (cf. above) the historical is the *foundational* modality. Opening up space is founded on and made possible by modern humanity's cultural power. Opening up space therefore presupposes human freedom and responsibility. This brings us to

the next point.

6.4 Normative unfolding

Not without reason did Chaplin include the word "normative" in his short definition of globalization. We have seen above (§5) how globalization can be warped when only one facet of reality (the economic) is unduly emphasized. The same could happen if any one of the remaining modalities should be absolutized. In such a case (spatial) unfolding does not happen normatively – at least not according to the right norms – but one-sidedly or warped.

Stated in a different way globalization *as such* is not wrong, but its *direction* (which is denoted normatively) can be wrong. And of course the direction determines the contents.

A *balanced* unfolding means that all the different facets of globalization (from the numerical to the religious) should be opened up *equally*. Since each modality supposes a norm of its own (for instance justice in the juridical, stewardship in the economic, trust in the case of faith, and fidelity in the case of the ethical), globalization has to meet a variety of norms *simultaneously*. It may not, for example, respect only economic norms. To put all emphasis, as happens today, on more, bigger, more productive, etc. amounts to a one-sided disclosure of only the arithmetic aspect (quantity).

6.5 Back to development

In the preceding chapter (20) I have discussed the problem of development . "Normative disclosure/unfolding" finally brings us back to this topic, since development is nothing more than broad, normative unfolding. Spatial disclosure (globalization) is a subdivision of it and should make a contribution to development.

Such being the case I would like to return to my own definition of development (cf. the previous chapter) to elaborate as follows the seventh point "(7) to fulfill his calling *right through the world*" (italicized words added).

Merely saying that development and globalization should take place in a balanced way (i.e. multidimensional cf. van der Walt 1999b: 46ff) is only just the beginning. The question is *how* exactly? The answer to this will have to be

postponed for further reflection. To stimulate further research the following three questions are put on the table to think about.

(1) What role does everyone of the (twelve to fifteen) modalities play in the development/globalization process? (2) Are some of them (for example, the religious aspect) perhaps more important than other in the whole process of unfolding? An answer to this question can help to know which facet of life is the best starting-point for development. Should development, for example first meet the basic physical-biotic needs, or is this actually the wrong starting-point? Should all the different facets of life always be developed simultaneously? (3) What exactly is the relationship between the different modalities in the process of opening up? For instance, we have seen above that many of the other facets of life cannot unfold without economic development. But if economic growth is taken too far as it is in the present globalization it can also harm the other facets of life instead of promoting them.

7. Conclusion: the whole world in focus

What exactly is globalization, the new spirit of our times? With our limited insight we tried to test this spirit (1 John 4:1). Although there are many facets of globalization which worry or even disturb us, the spirit of the times draws our attention to an important aspect of our stewardship: unlocking of the spatial potential in God's creation. As became clear above, it can and should happen in a variety of ways.

For readers of this book it entails among other things that Christians and churches should see their mission as something wider than their own churches, nations, countries, or continents. Globalization today not only brings to our attention the wide world, but also affords numerous means of reaching the whole globe - in this way enabling us to carry out Christ's command in Matthew 28:18-20 "go and make disciples of *all* the nations..." and Acts 1:8 "and you will be My witnesses to *the ends of the earth*."

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THE ETHICS OF ECONOMICS

NORMS, MEANS AND ENDS¹

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels (Luke 9:24-26).

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well (Matthew 6:33).

Our economy and our management practices are in crisis. Think of persistent inflation, increasing unemployment and the shocking poverty of many. And think of all the practically insoluble problems, difficult choices, agonizing racking of conscience, and unbearable stress to which many managers of business enterprises are subject daily. I am talking of a crisis because we have to do with an accumulation of persistent problems, and because there is no unanimity about the course to be followed in their resolution.

1. Is the solution to be found in ethics?

Many thinkers wish to find the solution for this crisis in an economic or business ethics. Economics and ethics have drifted apart; economics prevents us from doing what ethics prescribes as a duty. Economics, it is maintained,

¹ The original version of this paper was presented in January 1989 at Harare, Zimbabwe, on the occasion of the Writer's Course of the Christian Literature Committee for Africa.

has to do only with money, while ethics has to answer the questions of good and bad, right and wrong. A solution would be to give ethics a renewed place in economic life.

A superficial effort

I do not see this as an adequately radical solution. It is not true that economics is a neutral science which has nothing to do with norms, or that ethics holds a monopoly on norms.

Economic activities do not only have to do with making money. They cannot do other than touch on the basic questions of life, for example, What is humanness? What is the purpose of life? They cannot do other than take root in deeply religious convictions of life. "Economic activity may be differentiated from other aspects of life, but it is religious, it involves the basic issues of life at every turn" (Storkey 1979: 335). In the same vein Goudzwaard (1975: 23) writes that "Socioeconomic life is always a kind of confession in the sense of making known, or even unconsciously betraying, what a person's life is all about, what he really lives for, and where the meaning of his life lies." Each economist then, could well begin with "I believe that" This would enable us to understand his or her economic policies much more easily.

Current economics and business are thus not without norms but also emanate from norms. The problem is not a lack of norms (an impossibility), but the wrong norms. Moreover, ethics can also work from a wrong presumption when it comes to norms.

The tension is therefore not between ethics and business, but between right and wrong in the fields of both ethics and economics. Stated differently: the antithesis is rooted at the deepest level in the religious contrast (between obedience to God or an idol) which emerges in both the economic and the ethical fields. (Contrary to what Karl Marx believed—that the economic determines the religious—we believe the obverse: that our religious commitment determines what we will do and think in economics.)

What would therefore help us out of the present crisis is not to moralize the economic field but to ask what God's will is for our economic activities.

Stated succinctly: if we really have a Christian economy, will it be necessary to have something like business ethics? "We should not try to add 'Christian ethics' to economics. Instead, we should strive for a Christianly inspired economics itself: one which is rooted in a Biblical view of stewardship" (Marshall 1985: 6).

I do not wish to maintain that there is no room for something like business ethics. I only object to the idea that we should want to perform cosmetic surgery by imposing a little ethics upon an economy and business world which bases its practices on the wrong norms. Traditionally, ethics has been defined as the science which has one or other of the following as its field of study:

- (a) practical life;
- (b) persons (their character, customs, behavior, virtues, duties, pleasures and life objectives);
- (c) the norms or principles governing human behavior, which distinguish between good and bad behavior;
- (d) the relationships between people;
- (e) love between people.

All these definitions are too far-ranging. If ethics studies *practice*, almost no field will be excluded. If *human behavior* is studied, ethics becomes a totalitarian field of study. All sciences have to do with *norms* in their specific ways. *Relationships* between people also offer too wide a field of investigation to ethics, and would result in it dominating other sciences; economic relationships between people is the field of study of economics, just as juridical relations are studied by the juridical sciences. If we do not more clearly demarcate its field, we will end up with an imperialistic ethics and moralization of the whole of life.

A business is an economically qualified societal relationship and not in the first place an ethical entity. As in the case of all other societal relationships, however, it also has an ethical facet. And this ethical aspect of the business world is the field of study of business ethics.

A new view about the ethical

The previous viewpoint mentioned, that *love among people* typifies the ethical or the moral, approaches the core but should be specified more closely. God's fundamental love commandment is many-faceted. In various fields of life it reveals a different facet. Careful husbandry or stewardship, for example, is an expression of the love commandment in the field of economics and the same central commandment finds expression in the juridical field in the concept of justice. Although it is difficult to say in one word what the form of expression of God's central commandment means in the field of ethics we can try to capture this in words like truth, genuineness, integrity, loyalty, respect, honesty, scrupulousness, solidarity. Perhaps we can use *troth* to capture the whole meaning.

Ethical *relationships* are therefore relationships in which mutual reliability or reciprocal troth is prominent. The ethical *norm* will be that we should be true, loyal, honest, etc., in our dealings with each other. The *science* of ethics studies specific human relationships which answer to this norm (ethically good relationships), but also relationships which do not comply with this (the ethically bad or the unethical), such as, for example, false, disloyal, capricious, unreliable, or untrustworthy behavior.

The field and task of business ethics

With this clarification, business ethics is placed in sharper focus: the ethical and the unethical relations among people in a business. There are many kinds of relationships: those between management and employees; between employees mutually; between the business and its clients, rivals, shareholders, suppliers, and consumers; between management and other societal relationships (such as marriages and families of employees); between the business and the natural environment (from which it has to draw its resources without creating pollution or over-exploiting it), and even international business relations. One may distinguish between the internal relations in the business itself and the external relations of the business with outside interests.

Business ethics wishes to stress that management is not only concerned with skills, methods, efficiency, and results. The manager has to make daily

choices, and it is impossible to make well-considered choices without clear norms. Business ethics also wishes to stress that economic norms play an important role in the making of economic choices. A business is not an ethical societal relationship like a marriage, but an economic one. But ethical criteria will not be applicable only when the business can afford them! To act ethically in a business is not unrealistic; God's commandments are never unrealistic but are the only avenue towards life. Ethical norms should definitely augment the codes of conduct, organizational mission, labor relations, profit policy, marketing strategy, advertising, and promotional activities, and so-called social responsibility of a business.

A more thorough reflection about norms (for example, what a norm is, where it comes from, how it can be known and how it should be applied) is of the utmost importance in this regard. I would like to concentrate especially on the place of the normative in business life. What norms are striven after? Are norms correctly perceived, or are they confused with objectives, and replaced? And what about the means—does the end justify the means, or are they also subject to norms? Our field is therefore the norms-means-ends relationship, and the main emphasis is on norms.

2. The meaning of the word “normal”

What is meant by “normal”? I will mention the following three meanings.

- *The good and healthy* (for example, a normal person in the sense of somebody who has a healthy mind); the idea of useful, working, functioning, for example a normal organ such as liver, heart, or kidneys.

- *The usual, the ordinary* (for example, normal people with normal customs and habits); here “normal” is seen in the sense of that which is generally accepted by the majority, that which occurs most often.

- *In line with or answering to the norm*, rule, standard, criterion or example. This meaning is more directly derived from the Latin word *norma*, which originally meant “carpenter’s square,” the instrument or criterion used to ensure that the carpenter would not make a skew product. The same thought is captured in the earlier use of the term “normal” for a school or college where

students were shaped for their calling as teachers.

We are especially interested in the latter meaning of the word (and its opposite, "abnormal"). We wish to go back along the road, from normality to normativity. This is very important, for there is a strong trend today to accept normality as normativity: the ordinary, the average, that which is mostly seen as normal (the second meaning above) should be the norm; so, if most people regard abortion as "normal", it should be legalized. This puts the cart before the horse!

We are therefore compelled to reflect on exactly where and how norms fit into a Christian vision of life.

3. God's laws: thrice revealed

We believe that God is the Creator: he called everything into being. He is also the Legislator: he subjected the whole of creation to laws, such that we live in an ordered world. The Bible uses different words to express this. Think of Psalm 19 and its hymn of praise directed at the words, teachings, commands, demands, and instructions of the Lord. They are perfect, reliable, clear, right, good, and more precious than gold, because they offer insight, wisdom, direction, and joy to those who obey them.

This order which God set for his creatures has been revealed to us in three ways: his creational word, the scriptural word, and the incarnated word.

Creational word

In the first place we can find it in creation itself. From the regularities to be discerned in nature, we can read the laws. From the regularity of creation we can deduce rules *for* creation. God allows people to transgress his creational ordinances, but at one time or another one runs into a wall. If in politics we do not observe the criteria for righteousness and justice, we come to a point of not being certain of a future in our own country. If in economics we exploit the earth and our fellows, we are faced by pollution, unemployment, poverty, and even famine.

Scriptural word

After the fall disobedience to the law entered into the world, and also affected our ability to know God's laws. Stated differently: after the fall we live in a world where the abnormal has become normal. If abnormality (in the sense of disobedience) is now the norm, how can we know what is really normative? Now that we cannot any longer read God's creational word or will clearly, he helps us with his scriptural word, the Bible, in that he "republishes" in clear human language his will. I put the "republishes" in quotation marks, because the Bible is not a simple or full repetition of what God has already revealed in creation. Apart from his non-lingual creational revelation God expressed his will even more clearly in lingual terms in the Bible. His law-words thus came very close to us (Dt 30:14). It is true that we cannot simply use the Bible as textbook and apply what it contains without more ado in our day and age. We have to distinguish between the *erstwhile form* and the *permanent norm*, so that we can formulate *contemporary norms* along those lines. (If we don't do that, we face the danger of either absolutizing the historical form or of relativizing the permanent norm.)

Incarnated word

God's goodness extends so far that he clarifies his will to us in a third way. He does not only speak to us: he also incarnates his word concretely, in a human being like us. Christ is not a Platonic model, which we should *imitate*. He is our example, whom we can *follow*. In Christ we do not only see a perfect embodiment of God's will. He also saves us from disobedience through his Spirit, so that we can once again voluntarily and joyfully obey God's laws.

With the strength and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and with the aid of the glasses of Scripture, we can once again know and obey God's original creational will.

It is true: creation is still caught in the sin of disobedience, so that we often have the difficult task of deriving the positive (which is obedience) from the negative (disobedience). God's laws remain valid, however, even if they are transgressed. Illuminated by the Spirit, the Bible offers us clear examples of what true obedience to law entails.

Creational word, scriptural word and incarnated word: three guiding stars in a dark world, God's directions for the whole of our lives!

4. Human norms

God's laws are valid, they demand obedience. For humanity, the image of God, a responsible being, the "must" of the law assumes the nature of an "ought to;" the law does not only command, it also demands. Where matter, plant and animal *are forced* to "obedience," humans *ought to be* obedient. Some try to express the difference between the laws applicable to humans and to the rest of creation by speaking of norms in the case of people and natural laws in the case of the rest of creation. (Humanity is also bound by natural laws such as the law of gravity.) Norms then indicate especially those facets of human life in which it totally differs from the rest of creation.

Norms, however, are not the same as God's creational order (called normative principles by some). They are human *responses* to these. Our investigations bring us into contact with God's order for creation, but our thinking does not *create* this order. For that reason our formulation or positivization of God's laws cannot be set on a par with God's order. That would mean that instead of *discovering* the order, we *lay down* the order.

Because (divine) law and (human) norms are not the same, it is also possible that norms can and even should change. They might be a deficient understanding and formulation of God's will; and God's will has to be embodied differently at different times and for different circumstances.

An example to illustrate this is found in how we have to cope with the Bible. Scripture gives us examples of how people have been obedient or disobedient, in other words, the norms of specific people from specific periods under specific circumstances. If we apply Scripture in our own lives, the following steps are therefore necessary: first, we have to see it in the specific context; second, we have to determine what God's universal will or law is which transcends the specific context; and third, we have to recontextualize God's will for our own time, to formulate it as a norm for our own specific circumstances.

We cannot simply transfer most norms the Bible gives us to our own lives. This would not only imply that we are lazy, but would also mean disobedience. As we said earlier, God's laws have to be made valid for people through people themselves — each person and each generation anew.

Norms are of the greatest importance in human life. They are not only criteria for judgment, but are also indicators of how to act meaningfully. Norms indicate the route to a truly meaningful existence.

We have distinguished between God's *laws* for that which has been created, and human understanding and formulation of these laws in the shape of *norms*. The third phase is that people should accept these normativities and arrange their lives in accordance with them. Behavior which is in accordance with these normative indications is then to be regarded as *normal*, while deviations are to be regarded as abnormal. The transition from the second to the third phase is therefore from normativity to normality. Just as we should never equate our formulations of God's ordinances with the ordinances themselves, so our behavior (in accordance with norms) is never normative. Normality is not the same as normativity and still less can it be equated with (divinely stated) laws.

This mistake is often made by people who like to use the word "values." Values are things which have to be realized when people obey or disobey God's commandments, for example, the biblical concepts of good/evil as the result of obedience/disobedience. The good is valuable and the evil is valueless. Value is therefore situated on more or less the same level as the concept of normal. For that reason values cannot be regarded as being normative. Values do not offer the norm, but exactly the opposite: norms, which are adhered to, give rise to values.

5. How norms are determined today

In the previous century the philosopher Nietzsche certified God as dead. In our own time even the theologians have expressed a willingness to bury him. Nietzsche, however, already realized that as the Legislator disappeared, the laws themselves would become obsolete and be consigned to the rubbish bin.

A disappearing God also means disappearing laws. It was only a matter of time—and our own time is witness to this—before the final(?) consequence would manifest itself: even the distinction and contrast between good and evil, right and wrong, true and false, have become vague and have disappeared. This does not only mean double standards, but more than this: evil can be good (or good evil), wrong is considered right (or the obverse), murder becomes a noble deed, a criminal a saint, and “yes” need not mean “yes” but can also mean “no.”

Naturally one cannot consistently maintain this. We have to choose. To be able to do this, we need norms. Without the distinction between good and evil, people simply cannot be human!

Let us look briefly at some ways in which we do try to keep our heads above water in this subjectivistic maelstrom. These various ways are only superficially to be distinguished from each other; in reality they overlap and one person can grasp at more than one of these straws in trying not to disappear into the threatening quicksands.

Do as the majority does

The normality of “hit-and-run sex” has been elevated to normativity, when premarital sex is accepted as normative simply because 50% plus one of the community in a questionnaire respond that they find it normal.

The most important point here is not only to realize that the majority is not always right, but especially that norms cannot be quantified. The aspect of number does not determine norms, but rather is itself determined by (numerical) norms. In the final analysis humans do not determine norms, but God’s law determines our norms.

Do as your own intellect, feeling or conscience tells you

The only difference here is that instead of many people setting the criterion only one person determines it. The human brain, however, cannot create norms, because it is subject to norms itself. Personal feeling or conscience, likewise, does not rise above the law, but remains under the law, so that it too cannot give final judgment about norms and guidelines. (This emerges clearly from the biblical meaning of “conscience” as “co-knowledge” with God.)

Yet the idea of, "I do my own thing, exactly as it pleases me" has become the vogue. We are living in the "I"-period, the period of the religion of narcissism. The individual is no longer merely the criterion for all things; s/he is not simply an egoist, but far more: the centre of all things.

A recourse to authority

The outside authority to which you take recourse can vary from an important church leader to a famous film star, from the leader of your party to the commander of your terrorist squad. Their wish is your command. You may not—and fortunately need not—ask questions.

Or you might take recourse to something as impersonal as "science." For that reason many people maintain today that if it is possible for science to create an annihilating weapon, it also has the right to do so. Science is the norm instead of science being normatively structured.

Basically the same subjectivist mistake is made here. But this standpoint also implies that one's own responsibility is shifted onto someone or something else.

Let's see what the best thing will be under the circumstances

Naturally we have to formulate God's laws in norms, which will then provide direction and guidance to us as adequately as possible in our concrete circumstances. Situationism is something different, however. According to this the norm is not made applicable for a specific case, but the situation itself creates the norm. Opportunism (the "best" as the "most useful"— for oneself) also peers around the corner here.

Keep sight of your ultimate objective

Formerly there was a proper distinction between principle and objective. Today the objective has devoured the principle; instead of thought based on principle, we have thought based on final ends.

At first sight this does not seem to be so bad. But it is very dangerous. The biblical way is that the principle should determine the end. One cannot cherish objectives which have not weathered the test of God's commandments. Objective-directed thought, however, has the implication that

the ends become the principle. For that reason there is the saying that the end justifies the means. If dishonesty or violence is necessary for me to reach my objectives, then they become legitimized. As will emerge, this last method of dealing with norms is the foremost one in the field of economics.

After this general outline, we will direct our attention to norms for the field of economics. First, we will look at the current situation. Then, with the aid of the light offered by Scripture, we will attempt to point a new direction.

6. Presuppositions of current economic theory and practice

Faith, however small, has the strength to move mountains. What are the main traits of the faith of the current economic and business world? Even if we have to generalize, we can still point out seven striking “-isms” which have for long controlled the scene.

Deism

Adam Smith, the founder of economics as a science, was a dedicated deist. This implies a specific concept of God, which leads to a specific kind of anthropology. Like a watchmaker, God (may we still write the word with a capital “G”?) put together the world, and it works as perfectly as a machine. The natural order is so faultless, so nothing remains for God to do. He could simply stand back and let the “clock” of creation run by itself. The mechanism is so perfect that even people in the field of economics who let themselves be driven by their own interests will not stand in the way of community interests. The “invisible hand” of the natural order will see to that.

This god, who only plays a role in creating and then guarantees the natural order, stands back, however, to make room for the autonomous human being who takes the initiative. The deistic god does not judge, and people need not account for their deeds any longer.

Naturalism

All that exists is natural reality and the natural order, which will also determine the economic actions of humanity. According to cause and effect everything runs in a deterministic manner. Economics is regarded as a complex natural

machine which runs according to its own laws (Storkey, 1986: 5-7). The task of the economist is only to find out how it works and to make sure that it is properly maintained. The economist is not supposed to ask what *ought to be* the case, but should only determine what the case is. If the economy is characterized by competition and self-interest, then this is how it should be.

Storkey says that in this view the business world looks like a lorry which goes in a specific direction without somebody driving it; the economist has climbed out of the driver's cabin and is now merely a fatalistic spectator who throws his hands in the air or washes them in innocence. In another image, one thinks of somebody who first builds a railway track and then wants to decide where it has to lead.

Evolutionism

According to evolutionist dogma the only thing humans can do is to adjust to the economic process. Life is a struggle for survival, the protection of one's own life and prospects. Nature determines that the economically most viable will in the end survive. It is not norms such as justice and fairness which direct economic life, but rather power and the personal urge for survival.

Utilitarianism

In this view, utility (from the Latin *utilis*, "usefulness") is central to human life. Jeremy Bentham, for example, reasons that because everyone is propelled by the acquisition of the maximum utility, therefore everybody *ought to be*. Here it is a case of *the fact* becoming the *norm*. Human economic actions need never be judged in terms of motives. The only thing that counts is the useful result, the effect of a deed; if an action offers a useful outcome, then it is good, regardless of the motives which might underlie it. The economist is not supposed to try to have a corrective effect on the free market processes. Such an economic ethic sees the purpose of business only as producing as much as possible for the market, and accumulating prosperity at as low an expenditure of energy and cost as possible. "Efficiency" is most important.

One can agree with Schumpeter, who has described utilitarianism as the "shallowest of all conceivable philosophies of life."

Profitism

Profitism indicates that the kind of utility striven after is profit and money. The business world is money-oriented; anything which cannot be expressed in terms of money is useless, without value. This is the gospel of money! Labor, resources, capital, everything in the production process has to do with money: "the business of business is business." The objective has become the norm. Criticism about the way in which profit is maximized has been excluded by definition. The mere fact, however, that profit is made does not mean that certain norms are complied with. More profit also does not necessarily mean a better business or industry.

Autocentrism

Should the norm for economic life be efficiency, then it is limited to merely the creation of material and financial surplus. But the norm is also twisted to become mere self-interest. The utility, the profit which is pursued, is a matter of profit for *me*, for *my* company.

There are two Greek words which indicate economic activity: *oikonomia* and *chrematistike*. The latter indicates autocentric, egocentric self-enrichment. The former (from which our word *economy* derives) means stewardship, trusteeship. Humans in the field of economics are God's stewards, which implies that they have to serve their neighbors too. If this is replaced by autocentric self-interest and self-enrichment, whether of an individual or a company, nothing remains of the response to God and neighbors in business life.

Hedonism

This is the ultimate result of the life vision which we have outlined. A person is nothing other than a "pleasure-pain calculating machine," pursuing the maximum of pleasure with the minimum of pain. And it is material prosperity which is thought to offer joy or pleasure.

However, the big question is whether people are such one-dimensional beings, merely a *homo oeconomicus*. Do we not in our deepest being look for *meaning* in life rather than only the *joy* of life?

Alexander Solzhenitsyn rightly stated in a lecture at Harvard in 1978 that the purpose of life cannot be:

...unrestrained enjoyment of everyday life. It cannot be the search for the best ways to obtain material goods and then cheerfully get the most out of them... How did the West decline from its triumphal march to its present sickness? The mistake must be at the root, at the very basis of human thinking in the past centuries ... and could be defined as humanistic autonomy—the proclaimed and enforced autonomy of humanity from a higher force above them. It based modern Western civilization on the dangerous need to worship humanity and their material needs.

We might add here that economic prosperity and human welfare are not necessarily identical. More income does not necessarily mean more happiness. Christ warns against the abundance of possessions (Luke 12:15). Humans cannot live by bread alone, but are dependent on the word of God (Matt. 4:4). A full stomach and an empty heart will not bring happiness. Happiness is not an *end* to be striven after. It is a *gift* from God which he offers out of grace, when we are obedient to his will.

7. Dealing with norms in current economic practice

From the preceding it should emerge clearly that the idea of “neutral” economic thought and practice is simply a self-deception. Lionel Robbins (initially in 1935) offered a definition of economics that has become so renowned that many western textbooks on economics still echo it: “the science which studies human behavior as a relationship between (given) ends and scarce means which have alternative uses” (Robbins 1984: 16). We cannot analyze this definition here (cf. Goudzwaard 1980: 7-13), but what is striking is that it contains no reference to (economic and other) norms. This omission implies that means and ends are not normatively directed.

The order inverted

An explanation for what is happening is that profit and prosperity (good gifts from God) are put in a central position. Something that is temporal becomes an absolute certainty, an idol. This all-determining purpose (instead of the

determining norm) is striven after with a sort of obsession. And from this absolutized end (for example, economic progress) the norms are also determined. Stated differently: the norms simply have to adjust to the all-dominant purposes. Seeing that the end is simply a fact, that which is (for example, *that* people strive for their own gain) determines what ought to be (people *should* strive for their own self-interest). Normality is elevated to normativity. The correct order which God established is simply inverted.

Naturally the end still contains something normative in this inverted order (because it really replaces the norm), but these remains no longer have the original force and binding validity of real norms. It is humans themselves, after all, who set these ends for themselves.

The end justifies the means

The further result is that the means will be determined by the end, and will not be tested against norms. Such a viewpoint cannot offer resistance against the popular idea of the end justifying—and necessitating—the means. And once one means has been justified by the end, why not any means?

No end, however holy, elevated or noble, may in itself sanction any means. This is true of both personal objectives and those of companies, groups and even nations. If we allow the end to sanctify the means, we are acting in direct contravention of the word of God.

This obsession about ends inevitably has a very impoverishing effect on life: everything is simply directed at the single ray of light at the end of the suffocating, dark tunnel where utility, abundance, and happiness will be found.

Great confusion

In summary, in the current vision the ends determine the means and finally also the norms, instead of the norms acting as criteria for the means and also for the ends. If a deep respect is not resuscitated for divine normative principles, if we do not once again learn to listen to God's will, there is little hope that we will be able to emerge from the deep economic crisis.

There is not only confusion between objectives and norms, but also between objectives or ends and means. Scripturally I cannot see that, for

example, profit, prosperity, economic progress, and power can be ends in themselves or have meaning of their own. They can only be means to the goal of serving God and our neighbors.

Totalitarian power

Business people more and more realize that the totalitarian demands made on them by the business are not right. Somebody stated it as follows: the manager's faith is total commitment to the business enterprise; his love is unlimited loyalty; and his hope is situated in the expectation that it will go well with the business.

Many are also forced into double moral standards. On the one hand they are expected to live like robbers and frauds, while on the other hand, in their marital, church, and family lives, they conduct a respectable life. Recently somebody in top management confessed to me that "I feel as if I have lost my soul. There is no real room for Christian service in my work. Outside my daily job I am active in the church, evangelization, and our Bible study group. But I see no possibility of how I can positively and purposively serve God and my neighbor in my work."

Only in retrospect

An escape route which is often used is that the expression of ethical and justice norms should not be seen as the task of the business but as that of other societal relationships. The state, church and social organizations have to try to set right what was done in business. Norms are only allowed to play a role in business *after* economic production has been completed and not *during* the economic process. Thus it is taught today that the company, apart from its primary role of making money, also has a "social responsibility." This is a mere *afterthought*, however, and the normative corrections applied in this way are very limited—so that they cannot do too much economic damage!

Simultaneous realization of all norms by business itself

Is it necessary once again to state that economism (according to which the economic is the alpha and the omega) is wrong? For the business world, it is not only economic norms which are valid, but also other norms (such as the ethical one of reliability and the juridical norms of justice and fairness). These

norms should be expressed fully by the business world itself (and not through other institutions). Further, in business all norms (economic, social, ethical, etc.) should be realized *simultaneously* rather than as an afterthought. God's commandment is undivided and norms should therefore be obeyed within the framework of their reciprocal coherence. It might therefore even happen that a non-economic norm should be more important in the existence of a business at one specific point than the purely economic norms (cf. Goudzwaard 1980: 27). Another example could be that ecological principles should enjoy a privilege over the economic when industrial development is disrupting the sensitive balance in nature.

8. On the way to a Christian paradigm

In the preceding section, criticism has been directed against current economic practice from a Christian perspective. We have not yet, however, arrived at the positive content of Christian norms for business.

Managers have a great influence on their whole enterprise. The level of a business as a whole can hardly be higher than the spiritual level of the managers. May the ten perspectives which I offer here help Christians to achieve a higher level. They are stimulatory only, not detailed prescriptions. I hope they may provide the necessary inspiration to be worked out and applied more concretely

We return to the basic biblical idea of stewardship (cf. Gen. 1:28 and the many parables of Christ, such as Luke 12:15-21 and 42-48; 16:1-13 and 19-31; 18:18-31; and 19:11-27). Our stewardship does not only involve the economic field but the whole of life.

The concept of stewardship cuts off at the root the idea that we are owners of creation and all its wealth

God is the Creator and he does not relinquish his ownership to us; he only appoints us as managers to act on his behalf.

The fact that we are not owners does not mean that we have less responsibility

It means in reality that we have an even greater responsibility. We constantly have to offer God an account of how we act as trustees for his property. Our responsibility in the business world therefore does not cease with our report to the top management or the board of directors. Neither can we fatalistically say that the economic system is hard and merciless and that we cannot change anything about it. We are the creators of the system and we are responsible for it.

Stewardship demands that we cultivate God's creation, so that it will come to fruition in all fields

The parables mentioned speak clearly here, and the rest of the Bible also teaches that if somebody is not willing to work he also will not eat (cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:10). Labor is not simply a means of production towards a consumption end: then we underestimate labor. Nor may we overestimate labor by seeing it as the source of liberation. Labor is not simply a commodity, but has its own value. It is seen as a calling of God; the purpose of the calling in which he sets us is service.

Together with cultivation goes care of the creation of God

We have to see that it is carefully used, that waste is prevented, that exploitation and pollution do not take place. Our care includes the opposition of selfish economic ideas, which in the end will lead to the destruction of creation and of humanity itself.

Stewardship entails a careful distinction between real needs and mere urges

Here one thinks of the prayer of Agur (Pr 10:8,9) that God should not give us poverty or wealth but just enough to live by because wealth can lead to pride in the face of God, while poverty can also seduce us to sin because we might steal. We tend so much to think that more is the same as better!

Stewardship requires the limited use of goods for our own needs and help to those in need

God's commandment must be obeyed: "there shall be no poor among you"

(Deut. 15:4); we may not close our hearts and our hands against a poor person (15:7,8). This commandment is not only applicable to short-term personal relationships, but also to long-term structural provision so that unemployment, for example, may be limited.

Stewardship in the economic field is not only concerned with the gathering of things, but also with relationships among people

Economics is for people, and not people for economics! Economic decisions have a fundamental influence on the lives of many people. It is widely acknowledged that business has been one of the most influential shapers of modern western society and that today it plays a more influential role than practically any societal relationship.

As stewards we therefore not only have a responsibility towards God but also towards our neighbor. If the Lord asks us about the well-being of our neighbor, we may not, as Cain did, ask whether we are our brother's keeper (Gen. 4:9). We are his keepers—in the economic sense also. The commandment that we should love our neighbor as we do ourselves is not a mere ethical law: it is God's central and encompassing law which has to be applied fully and comprehensively in all spheres of life.

Stewardship means service to the neighbor

A current definition of a business enterprise could read: "A workplace where efficient production means are forged together in order to make a profit in the marketplace." The ends (or the "norm" determined by the specific objective) are therefore profit and self-seeking enrichment and not firstly service. The service motif can at most be realized afterwards in the form of community service or social responsibility.

Profit and interest are not wrong *per se*. How can a business, company or bank exist otherwise? But profit may never be an end in itself, especially not for personal gain, but only a means towards service to the neighbor. The following would therefore be a better definition of a business enterprise: "It is a community of workers and shareholders (employers) who serve each other and the public (consumers) through available means." The service therefore occurs

in the business or the company itself (for example, between employers and employees), but also between the business and the public (clients or consumers) to whom goods and services are rendered.

Because we live in a sinful world, stewardship also implies that we should confess our failed responses to God, to his creation and to our neighbors

Confession of guilt is not something that is limited to our personal lives, to the church and to theology. "Sin" means to have missed the purpose which God has set for us. Confession opens the way to self-criticism, the willingness to ask honestly what is wrong in our economic system and economic sciences.

The final perspective which flows from the crucial idea of stewardship is that of grace

If the preceding nine points have made us realize that a totally new paradigm will come into being in the economic field if we listen to God's word, then this last perspective is the more important. It means no less than a radical overturning of the ordinary economic order.

God gave the wealth of creation as a gift to humankind, but not only that. What we take from it is also his gracious gift. A rebellious business world will not like this, believing that the profit they make is their due because of their own hard work.

God can but smile at this. And rightly he remonstrates with us not to be so foolish: "It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, for so he giveth his beloved sleep" (Ps 127:2). And: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it" (Pr 10:22). Here we come up against something deep and impenetrable but at the same time glorious: God's undeserved mercy and blessing.

This goes together with a basic law in the kingdom of God, which we quoted at the beginning of this chapter (Luke 9:24-26). The norm which God sets there contains a promise but also a threat: whoever wishes out of selfish motives to preserve his life, will lose it. What does that help?

The promise is there, however, for whoever lays down his life for the sake

of the Lord will preserve it. Who among us is really willing to relinquish personal gain? The puzzling thing is that the only way to retain it is to relinquish it. Are we prepared to take Christ at his word? Christ expects that we should not be ashamed of his words. Yet how ashamed are we when it comes to applying his words to the economic field?

In the second text used as motto for this chapter, we find the same basic idea. Although not stated explicitly, Christ's words do contain a serious warning: should we not put the will of God first, then he will withhold from us those things which we are so feverishly pursuing—profit, progress, prosperity. (Luke 16:13 explicitly states that we should not only serve God first of all, but only God. A compromise in which we try to serve both Him and Mammon is excluded.)

The promise of his blessing in this verse, however, is obvious: If we are willing to set as our first and highest objective the kingdom of God, and to obey him, then he will bless us even with those things we had not actively sought—enough to live by, joy and happiness.

The most important things in life—happiness, joy, peace, in one word, blessing—are not things we can attain by our own power, with hard work, good management or whatever. God alone holds these in his hand and they remain a merciful gift from him alone. How terribly, arrogantly stupid we are if we still try to *earn* the most glorious things in life!

9. Some points about the business enterprise

In order to concretize the foregoing, it is necessary to know what exactly a business enterprise is, what its objectives are and how authority is structured within it.

Business in the cross-fire

In our modern society the business enterprise assumes a central position. According to some it is too central, with far too much influence. The power of business emerges from how it can affect family life (in the case of overtime, shift work or workaholic fathers), how it can kill a whole town (by withdrawal of

job opportunities), or let it live, or even influence the whole of a country's politics. We need a reformation of the business enterprise, so that it does not gain a totalitarian, demonic hold over social life.

Critical questions include the following. What is the enterprise for? Only for prosperity? Does it create happiness? Does profit for one not of necessity mean a shortfall for another? Is money (therefore the capital providers) the basis for authority, or should all those with an interest in the business (including the employees and the consumers) have a say in the management? Is the business a private or a public institution, and would privatization or nationalization be a solution for the present economic crisis? Should the business not also assume full responsibility for the non-economic effects of its activities, instead of ignoring these as peripheral issues? Is there not too deep a chasm between the ideals and the deeds of business people?

What a business is

If I may venture a definition, it would be the following: "A business enterprise is an independent community of people (management and workers) who in reciprocal cooperation and with the aid of available means at reasonable remuneration provide meaningful labor as well as rendering goods and services to the community at reasonable prices."

This definition includes the norm of stewardship towards God and service of neighbor (both within the business and towards the clients).

Freedom in bondage

By "independent community" I wish to indicate a third way. Capitalism regards business as an absolutely independent project of individual providers of capital. Socialism sees the business merely as an extension of the national community, so that it becomes a totally dependent entity, which can never become a true community, because it is torn between the entities of capital and labor.

The biblical idea of freedom, however, is different from the capitalist one. Basically it means freedom from sin in the service of God and neighbor—and thus, bondage to norms. Hence, if a number of firms collude to destroy a competitor, and the state intervenes, the firms should not see this as a limitation of their freedom, but rather as a restoration of it; or if firms exploit their

workers and a trade union complains, this also is not an attack on their freedom but a support of it because freedom is subject to God's norms, which involve that one should have respect for the interests of one's fellows. Because freedom is determined and limited by service to God and neighbor, there is no such thing as the "free enterprise"—which mostly amounts to an abuse of freedom.

Our idea of freedom is also different from the socialist one. The business enterprise is an independent societal relationship with its own norms, aims, and idiosyncratic way in which authority is practised. Both the independence of the enterprise and its bondage to the rest of society should therefore be maintained.

A community of people

A business is an economically qualified community in which people cooperate by using the means of production provided by capital providers. The conclusion may not be drawn from this, however, that the providers are the owners of the business. This would amount to the possession of people as property. The Christian vision, however, forbids the ownership of people; this would amount to slavery, which denies the equality of all people before God. Those who provide the money can therefore never be the owners of the business—a social relationship of people. They are at most the owners of the means of production. Their right of ownership is limited and can never encompass the whole business and the activities of the people in the enterprise. Shareholders are therefore not members of the business, but only members of the corporation. Only the employer and the employees are members of the enterprise (cf., Antonides, 1978: 181).

Authority in the enterprise

Current ideas about right of ownership are closely linked to the views of authority in the enterprise, seeing that authority is usually derived from the right of ownership of the (capital) investors. But if the providers of capital are not the owners of the enterprise, their authority only extends over the capital and not over the people in the business.

The management is therefore the authority in the business. What is their

task? To see to it that the enterprise renders as much profit as possible? Is this the norm for the exercise of their office or should biblical concepts of stewardship to God and service of neighbor rather be put in the forefront?

H. Antonides (1978: 178-179) responds thus:

"The realization of the norm of stewardship entails a careful use and allocation of natural resources, labor, managerial talent, capital, etc., so that an *economic surplus* is attained as a result of economic productive activity. The economic surplus can be measured in a financial manner in terms of *profit*. But as soon as we mention the word profit, a warning is in order, because of the loaded history of that term. A business enterprise must respond to a broader variety of social norms than merely the economic; it must take into consideration a broader variety of interests than merely the financial yardstick of profit. A business enterprise ... must take into account the interests of investors, but also the interests of the suppliers of natural resources, of the workers, of the consumers and of persons and social structures—especially families—that are directly or indirectly affected by the enterprise's productive activity. An economic enterprise is never closed off from its social environment and the slogan of "free enterprise" should not blind us to this fact... . To be sure, profits are necessary in industry, for without profits an industry cannot continue to exist... . But *making a profit* is, by itself, not at all indicative that an enterprise is guided by the norm of stewardship, and the other social norms that are to structure industrial production. For *making a profit* can simply mean the *accumulation of capital* for the benefit of the particular industry itself, or for the investors, or for excessively salaried management personnel."

The management therefore has to give such guidance (in accord with the norms for the enterprise) that the enterprise (as well as the consumers outside it) will be enabled to fulfill its calling of service. Thus, there is mention in our definition of meaningful labor at reasonable remuneration and goods and services at fair prices.

Unhealthy tensions in business

If there is a true striving towards community in business, then the relationship between management and employees should also look very different from

what it does at present. Usually they are viewed as opponents, even enemies. Management is keen to ensure as high a profit for their shareholders as possible, while the trade union leaders in turn attempt to negotiate the highest possible salaries for their members. As soon as one party wins, the other loses. The two opponents try to squeeze as much as possible from each other and their final settlement is simply a ceasefire in an ongoing battle. In this fight for monetary gain it often happens that many important aspects of labor in business never receive their due attention. Increased salaries—to ensure a good life outside work hours—will never truly compensate for the emptiness and meaninglessness of many types of work.

Apart from excessive wage demands other symptoms of the deteriorating relationships between managements and employees include: increasing strikes with their awful consequences, a monopolistic control over job opportunities as a result of forced membership of trade unions, corruption, defiance of laws, contempt of courts of law and even violence.

How can a societal relationship be healthy with such a deep chasm between its members? Would it not be far better if the workers, now practically excluded from responsibility in the enterprise and regarded as dangerous outsiders, could be acknowledged as partners in the enterprise and included in decision-making up to the highest level?

Storkey (1986: 112) sees this as the solution to many problems:

“The answer remains the full incorporation of the employees into the structure of the company in recognition of their commitment to it. There are other ways in which the employees can share more fully in the company through flexible wages, profit and loss sharing and the contribution of capital, but the basic issue remains the recognition of the work force as an integral part of the company at the highest level on the board.”

10. Nonsense for the world

We could go more deeply into the relationships of the enterprise with other societal relationships such as banks, families, governments and the world community, but the scope of this chapter allows only a few glimpses of a

reformational view. Should I have stimulated readers to study the literature to which I have referred, my humble intention will have been realized. It is to encourage you to take the gospel of Christ seriously in the field of economics too. Paul's warning in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (1:27-28) is also applicable to us: "But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are."

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THE BIBLE ON POVERTY AND WEALTH AND OUR TASK AS CHRISTIANS¹

In traditional Africa a person has been regarded as “poor” when he/she does not have a family or is not socially accepted. By contrast, a person has been regarded as “rich” when she/he is married, blessed with many children and is also part of an extended family and tribe. The economic aspect is not totally excluded, but it is not of primary concern as in the West where poverty is regarded as a lack of money, and wealth as material abundance.

Unfortunately, we have to survive in an increasingly commercialized and globalized world today. As many Africans no longer live in an agricultural environment, they experience a new kind of poverty of an economic nature. Economic poverty is one of the main reasons for (as well as consequences of) Africa’s contemporary crisis. In the light of the fact that poverty is the main problem in Africa, as well as the fact that Christianity in Africa has not been very effective in dealing with this problem – least of all the prosperity gospel – we will have to listen again carefully to the biblical message about poverty and wealth.

The reality of poverty in biblical times

In the Bible poverty is presented as part of reality. In Old Testament times God took care that every Israelite owned a piece of land in the Promised Land, because it was an indispensable way of survival in an agricultural society. When someone for some reason or other lost his land, he had to sell his labor to others, and became a day-laborer.

¹ With acknowledgement of the insights taken from a paper by Dr T. van der Walt at a conference on “Church and poverty,” Pretoria 25 June 1991.

In biblical times those who had nobody to take care of them – widows and orphans – suffered. In the New Testament the Greek words *endeos*, *penes* and *ptoochos* describe the downward spiral of poverty: need, poverty, and destitution. According to some sources more than 70% of the population in Israel lived below the breadline (the pay of a day-laborer) during the time of Christ.

Neither acceptance nor optimism is the solution

It seems as if the biblical perspective implies that we will have to accept the reality of poverty. Only two periods in history can and will be regarded as free from poverty because humanity fell into sin: the brief period in paradise and when Christ will return again and the world will be renewed. Between these two periods of time not much hope exists that the phenomenon of poverty will not be part and parcel of human existence (cf. Deuteronomy 15:11 and Mark 14:7).

Biblical texts like the afore-mentioned should, however, not be understood incorrectly. They do not imply that poverty should be accepted fatalistically. In many instances (like Deuteronomy 15: 11) God commands his people to be open-handed toward their brothers and toward the poor and needy. In the case of Mark 14:7 (cf. also John 12:8) some commentators are of the opinion that when Christ says, "... the poor you will always have with you," He does not mention a *rule* but merely states a *fact*. There is no implication that poverty *should* necessarily always be part of human existence, or that we should accept it as a *norm* for life on earth. Jesus' statement also includes a reproach: if you live a selfish life, you will always have the poor among you.

Therefore, instead of merely accepting poverty, it is regarded as one of the terrible consequences of humanity's sinfulness and should be opposed and alleviated. To combat poverty is an echo of paradise as well as a sign of God's coming kingdom.

While resignation or acquiescence does not represent a biblical approach, neither does over-optimism. No political or economic system could in the past or will in the future be able to eradicate poverty in its totality.

Socialism could not do it and it is already clear that capitalism only benefits those who are already rich. The Bible does not ignore various structural causes of poverty, but the word of God cautions against utopian dreams of a world of plenty for everyone because new structures are also not immune against sinfulness.

Neither poverty nor wealth advocated by the Bible

During the history of Christianity two extreme viewpoints have been encountered again and again: either an emphasis on poverty or on wealth.

Christ's words "Blessed are you who are poor" (Luke 6:20) over against "But woe to you who are rich" (Luke 6:24) lead some astray to idealize poverty, viewing it as a higher, holier state. This happened in the past when Catholic friars joined mendicant orders. It is also the case in (some types of) liberation theologies that communicate the message that God unconditionally takes sides with the poor, irrespective of how sinful their behavior may be.

The opposite error is that of the present-day prosperity gospel, which is very popular among poor Africans. According to this viewpoint a person will automatically become rich when he/she truly believes in God. This point of departure uses Scripture in a selective way to prove its point. Other sections of the Scriptures, that clearly indicate that sincere believers sometimes have to bear the burden of poverty, are simply ignored.

The Bible itself has a balanced view on poverty and wealth, as is clear from Proverbs 30:7-9: "Two things I ask of you, O LORD; ...give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God." (cf. also James 1:9 and 1 Timothy 6:6-10). The biblical message is that of contentment with what God, in his wisdom, gives us.

The danger of being rich (cf. 1 Timothy 6:9,10) is that people are not contented, but the richer they become, the more they desire. The love of money is the root of all evil.

In the same chapter (1 Timothy 6:17-19) Paul warns rich people not to be arrogant or to put their hope in wealth but in God, who richly provides us with everything. Paul commands those addressed to be rich in good deeds, to be generous and willing to share and in this way preserve a treasure for themselves. To be rich is not a sin as such. What is important is what a rich person does with his wealth.

In this light we should also understand Christ's remark (Matthew 19:23) that it is hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God. In James 2:6 and 5:1-6 wealth as such is not condemned, but what is is the wrong conduct of the rich towards the poor.

In everyday life, we find divergent reactions to richness and poverty: either flattery of the rich and scorn of the poor, or sympathy for the poor and abuse of the rich. Jesus Christ did not indicate preference for either the rich or the poor. He chastised *both* for their sins, because both poverty and wealth can be a curse. When He, however, reprimanded the poor, He did it in a gentle way, but when He called the rich to account, He used much harsher words.

Viewed in the light of God's word the excessive wealth of the western world over against the extreme poverty of Africans has to be called a glaring injustice. Similarly, the huge gap between a small group of very rich elite and the masses of dirt-poor people in Africa has to be condemned.

Biblical motives for fighting poverty

It has already been indicated that an attitude of resignation towards poverty is unacceptable to God. He Himself is the Helper of those who have no one to help them (Deuteronomy 10:18-19). The biblical motives for alleviating and, if possible, eradicating poverty, should also be our motivation. They are the following.

We should be followers of Christ

Our King was born in a stable (Luke 2:7); after forty days his parents

consecrated Him to the Lord by bringing the sacrifice of the poor (Luke 2:24; cf. Leviticus 12:18); He often slept in the open, was hungry (Matthew 4:2), made bread for others (Mark 6:35-44 and 8:1-9), but never for Himself; He blessed the poor and the hungry (Luke 6:20-21) and the night before his death He did the work of a slave by washing the feet of his disciples (John 13:1-17). Why? Why was Christ himself poor?

One reason was that He had to carry the burden of poverty – a result of sin – in our place. Another reason was that He provided us with an example to be followed. Christ identified Himself to such a degree with those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, without clothes, sick or in prison, that what we do to them is regarded as done to Him (cf. Matthew 25:31-46). Apart from Christ as our example, the Bible also provides two clear principles to guide us: love and justice.

Love

Aid for the poor that is not inspired by true love, is regarded as “only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1). According to the same chapter (verse 4) love is not proud, it does not boast or act out of own interest. These images may explain why so many development projects for the poor have failed in the past: they were not sparked by compassion but were exercised in a paternalistic way and were initiated for own benefit.

When efforts to promote development are initiated by true love, these efforts will not be forced upon the poor. The poor will consequently be permitted to decide themselves what their needs are. Their human dignity and own initiatives will also be respected. If this approach is not followed, the best development efforts will be a failure. Charity does not yet imply Christian love – charity may be regarded as offensive to the poor. We have to give ourselves – not something of ourselves – like our time and expertise, to solve the problem of poverty. God’s judgement on aid for the poor not motivated by genuine love is harsh: “If I give all I possess to the poor ..., but have no love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3).

Mother Teresa, who devoted her life to the poor in India, once

said:

Hunger is not only for bread, it is for love. Nakedness is not only a lack of clothes, but of human dignity. Homelessness is not only lacking a brick house, but being unwanted in a big city full of riches.

Justice

That the kind of love required does not simply imply favors, goodwill, or kindness from the side of the rich, is evident from the second biblical principle, namely justice. Charity does not imply that justice has been done. The Bible emphasizes the *right* of the poor, the widow, and the orphan (cf. Psalm 82:3). We have to maintain and defend their right for a better life.

The fundamental motive for aid to the poor is therefore not “goodness” or philanthropy from the side of the rich, but the right of the poor to be helped. If this was not the case, it would have been difficult to understand why Christ could have condemned those who did not take care of the poor to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).

A true follower of Christ, driven by love and motivated by justice, does not help the poor to earn something, like the blessing of God or eternal salvation. Neither because God clearly commands us to do so, but simply because we cannot do otherwise (cf. 1 John 3:17; James 1:27; 2:26).

How poverty was alleviated in biblical times

The word of God does not merely motivate us to fight poverty. It also provides examples of how to do it.

A comprehensive approach

It was already realized in biblical times that poverty was not simply a financial problem that could easily be solved by providing money.

Even before Israel entered the Promised Land, in many laws and regulations (cf. especially the book Deuteronomy), the Lord gave detailed

instructions, encompassing the entire life of the people. Examples are the Sabbatical Year, the Year of Jubilee, laws concerning the possession and inheritance of land, emancipation of slaves, remission of debt, interest-free loans, prescriptions not to harvest everything from your land or vineyard, but to leave something for the poor, etc. Read, for instance, Deuteronomy 15 for the Lord's instructions about cancelling debts and freeing slaves, and think about the implications for present-day Africa. We cannot, however, directly apply all these measures to prevent, alleviate, and eradicate poverty today, in a totally different world. We can, however, learn a lot from the ways in which God's central commandment of love was positivized or concretized for the socio-economic-political life of his people. It may serve as an inspiration, in a specific way and relevant for our own time, to do likewise.

In the New Testament the book of Luke and the letter of James should be studied carefully. What, for instance, is the implication for today of Christ's command to lend without expecting to get anything in return (Luke 6:35)? Or His advice not to invite your rich neighbors for dinner because they will repay you, but rather to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind, who will not be able to repay you? Probably a huge gap developed between the rich and the poor already in early Christianity. Therefore James (cf. Chapter 2 and 5) was forced to expose it mercilessly.

Often development work is merely intended to *alleviate* poverty. We should learn from the Bible that we should try our best to *prevent* it from occurring. And if poverty is a fact, we should also try to end or *eradicate* it to enable the poor to make a new start, because the dependency-syndrome among the poor is a destructive phenomenon.

Nothing is too small to make a difference

It is a fact that the economies of African countries as well as the world economy are responsible for much of the nature and extent of poverty. Individuals, organizations, and churches should not be silent about this injustice. They should, however, not only talk but do something themselves. If giving a cup of cold water to a child can have eternal significance (Matthew

10:42), nothing can be too small or insignificant.

The situation of “you will always have the poor among you” (John 12:8) should be reversed to “there were no needy persons among them” (Act 4:34; cf. also Acts 2:44 ff). In different instances (Acts 11:29-30; Romans 15:25) we also read about the aid of early Christians to the poor congregations in Jerusalem and Judea. There is no reason why this cannot happen today. If we have real love and are concerned about justice, such kind of help can today be given much easier.

Thus the lesson from the word of God is that development and aid need not be undertaken on a huge scale. Small-scale projects are often more effective, because the human aspect is acknowledged and people do not lose their own initiative and identity.

The poor themselves should not be excluded

We usually think of the poor as people who should *receive* and not *give*. However, the Bible does not exclude even the poor of their responsibility towards poverty. If we absolve the poor from their responsibility, we do not recognize them as human beings and we encourage self-destructive dependency. Therefore the Bible emphasizes that the poor should, as far as possible, take care of themselves and that they should also be willing to help those who have even less than themselves.

Concerning the first point, listen to the following command: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Keep in mind that this reminder applies to those who are not *willing* to work. Today there are many who are willing, but they *cannot* find a job. 1 Timothy 5:3 ff emphasizes the same principle and concludes (verse 8): “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

With regard to the second point (that the poor have to help others who are poorer), listen to the following command of John the Baptist: “The man with two tunics should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same” (Luke 3:11). The poor widow did not ask to be

excused to give (Luke 21:1-4) because of her financial position (she donated two copper coins), but she also did not perish from hunger because she gave everything she had. Also the poor congregations in Macedonia had good reasons to be exempted from collections for the poor in Jerusalem. They, however, gave beyond their ability (2 Corinthians 8:2, 3).

We should never take away the responsibility – and joy – from the poor to give to those who are even poorer. We should also not underestimate the knowledge and resourcefulness of the poor to solve their own problems. Our own “solutions” should not be forced on them. Such an approach is bound to fail, because the poor will experience it as something strange to them – even as offensive paternalism.

Only the beginning

We have learned a lot from the Bible about poverty and wealth. We should never think that we have learned enough – much more can be learned. We should also not be satisfied about what we have heard. The biblical message about poverty is very clear: we have to do something about it!

Africa lost much during the previous century – land, dignity, peace. Let us as Christians, however, not succumb to Afro-pessimism. Africa can be reborn; it can experience a real renaissance in the twenty-first century. The president of South Africa, Mr Thabo Mbeki, is fully aware of the numerous problems we are facing on this continent, but, in spite of that, he dared to declare at the end of the previous century: “Africa’s time has come ... the new century must be an African century!”

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LEAVE, CLEAVE UNTO, AND BE ONE

THE THREEFOLD MYSTERY OF MARRIAGE

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh..."

Genesis 2 verse 24

Everything has its own mystery or secret. This is true from the simplest forms of vegetative life to humanity. This is also true of human society such as, for example, the family, the business enterprise, the state, the church, marriage, and many more.

On this special day in your lives, bride and bridegroom, you will naturally wish to know more about the mystery of marriage. Those who are still looking forward to it will also want to know it, and for those who have been married for years it would be good to hear it anew.

The Bible, God's word to us, is the only book which can reveal the deep secret of marriage. Many of the clever ideas expressed in magazine articles and books about the "ideal marriage" appear to me like so much straw in the wind of the biblical wisdom.

The remarkable thing is that the word of God gives away the secret right at the outset already - in its second chapter. And this is repeated throughout the Bible like a refrain. (Compare, for example, Matthew 19:5; 1 Corinthians 6:16; and Ephesians 5:31.) And yet we often read this verse without noticing the profound secret contained in it.

The inspired writer of the Bible sums up the secret in three simple words: leave, cleave unto, and be one. But before we are going to see what the three

concepts together mean, let us look at what gave rise to the revelation of this secret.

1. The Prelude

God gave Adam a lovely *paradeisos*, a wonderful garden with streams, flowers, trees, birds, and animals. Adam's happiness, however, is not perfect, because he has no one with whom to share his thoughts, feelings, desires, and his whole existence. He longs for something, even though he does not know what or whom. God in his wisdom first makes man realize the emptiness of his existence before he shows him what he really desires!

This leads to the first successful costectomy in history - which does not mean that men have since had fewer ribs than women have! But from this it clearly emerges that man and woman have been made from the same "matter," are both people, and should be together. God could also have made Eve out of the dust of the earth!

Subsequently there is the part that I find so beautiful, where God himself brings the woman to Adam. This, as we confess in the marriage formulary, He still does today with every man and woman. That you two have "found" each other is no coincidence.

When Adam woke from his "anaesthetic" there is something - no, somebody - next to him whom he has never seen before: somebody like him and yet different. Adam is surprised and entranced by this attractive being. Before this, he simply named the animals, but now, on viewing this enchanting creature, he becomes a creative artist, a poet (verse 23 is poetry in the original Hebrew).

From this first love song in history it emerges how pleased Adam was to have found someone like him (I assume that he was just as pleased about the differences!). From the name he gave her (wo-man he called her, because she was made out of man), one can see that he saw her in the first place as a human being, albeit different from him. Also his helper, but not in the sense of a weaker servant - rather in the biblical meaning of the word, namely, supporter (as God is also our Helper).

After this wonderfully romantic moment - the first meeting between man and woman in history - Adam becomes silent and the Bible leaves the rest to our imagination. The biblical author, however, takes over, and reminds us that this miracle of marriage contains a secret, a mystery. Whoever does not know it - and does not obey it - will not know the joy of marriage, will not keep singing Adam's song of joy.

The prelude (verses 20-23) is beautiful, but the core, the nucleus, lies in the closing, in the threefold mystery (verse 24) to which we must now turn. (Seeing that in Old Testament times society was still patriarchally structured, the command to leave, cleave unto, and be one is given to the man only, but this does not mean that it is not as fully applicable to the woman too.)

The first keyword is leave.

2. Leave

Why do mothers cry and brides and bridegrooms have radiant faces on their wedding day? It is precisely because mothers know that their children are now leaving the family home. And the bride and bridegroom beam because they are pleased - finally - to be leaving the parental home.

This is right and normal, because marriage is different from the family. Today a new, independent marriage came into being from two families. It is also done here in public, and (because you will now be regarded as legally married by the state), the leaving also has a legal character. Other claimants on either of you are hereby excluded!

In the spatial sense you are also leaving your parental homes by beginning your own home. Economically, too, you are going to provide for yourselves. Although I know from experience that a little financial help from the parents from time to time won't be unwelcome!

The most difficult aspect of this leaving must be the emotional. Parents tend still to advise their married children and even to prescribe to them - even without being asked. This creates unnecessary tension. Parents have to

realize that their son or daughter, while still their child, has now primarily become the spouse of another.

For the married couple this leaving is easier and yet it still happens that the bride clings too tightly to her father's hand. Or that the young husband - even though he might not say it - might think that his mother could do many things better than his bride (such as cooking!). He has not let go of his mother's apron strings.

The leaving, however difficult it is, is an inherent part of marriage. If the parents do not accept it, they will render their children very unhappy. Therefore they have to be willing to commit themselves to it even though their son or daughter might not, in their eyes, have chosen the perfect spouse.

3. Cleave unto

This "cleaving unto" each other has been noticed by your parents for long time - with them often worrying that it will go too far!

According to a book like the Song of Solomon, however, this is entirely normal.

Our sex-obsessed times will probably cause us to interpret this "cleaving unto" ("uniting" in the Good News Bible) as jumping into bed together. For many people today marriage simply means obtaining the exclusive right to sleep with somebody. Then marriage becomes no more than "legalized prostitution" or bestial copulation.

What is really meant by the old-fashioned term "cleaving unto"?

In the first place I think that it points to the warm and intimate bondedness to each other. It is a matter of two people having to live very closely to each other. (A double banana looks like two, but is in reality only one.)

There is more to it, though. In the Bible "cleave unto" also indicates that a dependent takes refuge in a stronger one (like Israel does unto God). The man and the woman are interdependent on each other.

With this the meaning of the simple little word has not been exhausted, however. In the original Hebrew this points especially at strong love or committed, unbreachable troth. And troth is essentially different from sex. It means reliability, genuineness, honesty, integrity, and fidelity.

If one is going to get married, it does not in the first place - as already said - mean that one now has legal rights to the other's body. Marriage means that troth is promised to each other in public.

And - however old-fashioned the Bible and the marriage formulary might sound - this is a promise for a lifetime. Only death can bring an end to it.

Of the three words, leave, cleave unto, and being one, the middle is the most important, as it uncovers the deepest mystery of marriage. The leaving might be imperfect, and the unity, being one can fail, but if you do not cling to each other in troth, your marriage will inevitably be doomed.

It is wonderful to be in love with each other, and as you know it is not difficult, as it practically falls into your lap like a gift. However, to remain in love asks effort, it is a duty. At times the wife - for the sake of peace and love - must be willing to pick up her husband's clothes from the floor. At times the husband will have to have infinite patience with his wife because she is "crying for nothing" again - simply because he loves her.

4. Being one

In a certain sense the cleaving unto already implies being one. (If one cleaves unto the other, loves him/her, has troth and fidelity, two become one.) The cleaving unto has already made clear to us that marriage is a permanent union.

Yet a new element emerges here: the sexual. This is the playful, spontaneous, free, joyful, and complete bodily surrender to somebody else and the equally joyful receiving of somebody else. The Old (Authorized) Translation refers to becoming one flesh.

The book the Song of Solomon does not hesitate to describe this physical attraction of man and woman in the minutest detail. We should not

spiritualize marriage - God Himself created man to have sexual urges and wants humanity to enjoy this.

However, in the biblical secret for a happy marriage the cleaving unto (fidelity) does not come before the physical union without reason. The order is of crucial importance here. Reciprocal truth leads to physical union - and not the other way round. Sex does not create truth. The inverse is true: sex reveals, confirms, reinforces, and deepens the truth to each other. First reciprocal truth and fidelity and then it is sealed - the cherry on top - in becoming one flesh.

Sex and reciprocal truth may, therefore, according to God's commandment, never be separated. Sexual intercourse without truth is playing with satanic fire and can only bring seeming happiness, because it is nothing other than mutual exploitation and abuse.

The sexual union in marriage is very important. This is not the one and only union, however. (The "sex appeal," the physical attraction, will later begin to disappear, and then the marriage still has to go on.) We have already seen that it is accompanied by truth. If there is not unity among man and wife in many more aspects, and if their unity does not grow, then the sexual bond will also lose its efficacy soon. Let me mention a few.

Financially and economically there has to be unity. What was mine is now yours too. And what was yours is now mine too. Everything has to be shared - poverty and wealth!

There has to be emotional unity. Joys and sorrows have to be shared. Be serious about each other, accept each other, open up to each other, and try to understand each other.

As with being true, so with being one: it is not only a gift but also a duty; not only a present, but also a command. Tensions will arise in your marriage, but be consoled: it is only a dead or dying marriage that does not have conflicts!

The most important facet of this unity, dear bridal couple, I have kept to the last: unity in faith in God. It is this deepest unity in faith that will carry your marriage through every possible crisis. Even when marital truth begins to

fade, it is the strength of God's grace in Christ which can carry you through. You might therefore neglect many things, but the mutual growth in faith has to be your highest priority. Interaction with God in prayer and Scripture reading will give your marriage the dimension of the deepest and most indissoluble unity.

5. A threefold mystery

This then is the threefold secret of a happy marriage: leaving, cleaving unto, and being one. Without the leaving it is not possible to cleave unto each other (because then you remain bonded to your parental home). And without the cleaving unto (reciprocal troth) the being one flesh (sexual union) is empty and dangerous. These three together form the one great secret. We find the heart in the central one of the three: reciprocal, lifelong troth.

Dear bride and bridegroom, what a privilege that you do not have to enter marriage not knowing - like so many other couples today - the mystery of this way of sharing your lives. By opening up the secret, the mystery, to you, God Himself today gave you the greatest wedding present that any couple could ever hope to receive!

May you never, never, forget or neglect it. Because if you should live according to this secret, God Himself will bless you together and your cup of happiness will always run over.

AMEN

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY, INTOLERANCE, FREEDOM, EQUIVALENCE, UNIQUENESS, AND TOLERANCE

The six concepts in my title have turned up frequently in many of the papers and discussions thus far during our conference. But what exactly is meant with these concepts? How are they related? The way we define these six concepts will also determine how we view Christian (higher) education – especially in this part of the world (Asia-Oceania) where Christians are in the minority.

Personally I do not have knowledge of a situation such as most of you experience. In my country South Africa, Christians are in the majority, comprising about 75% of the population. I am of the opinion, however, that we as Christians should not only emphasize good relationships with people of other religions but that we need principal clarity about the six basic concepts to guide our relationships. (Truth, according to the Bible, does not only mean that one has to act correctly but also think correctly.)

1. Religious diversity

In spite of the fact that during the previous century secularist thinkers in the West predicted that religions will decline and finally disappear, today age-old religions are experiencing revivals and brand new ones are appearing. It was reported recently in a survey that one European city alone (Hamburg) counted eighty different religions!

The following list gives you an impression of the great variety of religions that exist.

- (1) Primal religions (like the Traditional Religions in various parts of the world);
- (2) World religions like Christianity (with all its subdivisions and denominations),

Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shintoism, Confucianism etc.;

- (3) Eastern religions (like Hare Krishna) adopted in the West;
- (4) New Age Movements;
- (5) Neo-paganistic religions (like the Celtic and Germanic religions);
- (6) Implicit religious movements;
- (7) Vague superstitions and many cults.

This list should also include the growing religion of secularism. In spite of the fact that it does not believe in God, it is a religion which competes with others.

What were previously regarded as *foreign* religions because of globalization have today become *neighboring* religions? In many cases, closer contact heightens the possibility for conflict between the adherents of the religions. Such conflict could be prevented or minimized if one would distinguish clearly the following three types of diversity.

Religious (or *directional*) diversity. In spite of all the different religions, only two directions can be distinguished: obedience towards the true God or obedience towards a substitute god or idol.

Structural (or *associational*) diversity is the diversity of different social structures or societal relationships, such as marriage, family life, the school, church (temple, mosque, synagogue), business, or state.

Cultural (or *contextual*) diversity is the diversity of different cultures, like western, African, Eastern (Japanese, Indonesian, Nepalese, Indian), and many more.

Since these three kinds of diversity are often confused (one's religious identity, for example, can be confused with one's cultural identity), they need to be clearly distinguished. However, they can never be completely separated, because they are inextricably related. Structural diversity is an expression of deep-seated religious and cultural diversity. (The way we structure society is not done in a neutral way.) Cultural diversity, again, is a reflection of religious and structural diversity. Religion is the "soul" of a culture. And the societal

structures we create are important parts of our culture. It is therefore clear that religious diversity cannot be separated from the associational and contextual.

This is exactly what western secularism wants to do: it tries to organize the “public sphere” as if God does not exist or his ordinances do not matter. Religion, it believes, must be limited to the so-called private domain. This secularist viewpoint clashes directly with basic biblical teaching that the Christian faith should be expressed in everything we do, including education.

As Christians we can accept structural and cultural diversity, but we can never accept religious diversity as normative. We can only do so if we believe that all religions are true (see below). Because religious unity only existed before the fall into sin and will only be realized again at Christ's return, in this dispensation we have no other option than to tolerate religious diversity (see below).

2. Lack of religious freedom, intolerance and violence

Religion is of basic and ultimate importance, hence it is difficult to tolerate on a personal level people of other faiths who contradict one's deepest and sincerest convictions. Intolerance occurs in all religions – Christianity included.

The reason for intolerance on a structural level, however, is usually that a clear distinction is not made between religion and politics (the state). Directional and associational diversity (cf. above) are not distinguished when a religion misuses political power to advance its own beliefs or, when a government misuses religion for political advantage. Such a state of affairs is not to the advantage of either religion or politics. In the case of religion the results are compulsion, superficial religious commitment, and deformation.

Religious intolerance often leads to violence. Many examples of “holy” wars throughout the world –not only in the past, but also today - can be enumerated.

The violent clashes between Muslims and Christians maybe cited as a present-day example of a clash between religions. What could the reasons be? According to some researchers the causes could be the *differences*

between the two religions. Muslims, for instance, reject the Christian acceptance of western secularism (where religion is confined to the “private” realm), because Muslims want to live their faith holistically. Other writers draw attention to the fact that Muslims and Christians clash because of their *similarity*. Both religions are holistic, exclusive (they brook no rivals), and monotheistic with a strong zeal to evangelizing non-believers.

Some writers have even asked the question whether religion *as such* is violent by nature because of persistent religious violence through the ages. Do people do bad things *as a result* of their religion?

The answer to this question has to be “no.” Most religions exist because people do bad things; religion is an important means to fight against what is wrong. A careful study of religions reveals that for most of them love is a central norm. Therefore religions are not bad in themselves, but they have a positive aim.

Why then violence in the name of religion? Most of the material I have studied emphasizes that structural and cultural diversity are the main culprits, not religious (directional) diversity. In a threatening cultural or structural (political, social, or economic) situation religion can function in two ways: either as a sedative to accept the situation passively, or as justification for a “holy” war. In the latter case the holy teachings of the religion maybe interpreted as the reasons for justifying violence.

3. Religious freedom

If we don't distinguish but mix religion and politics, a state (political) religion is the result — one of the main reasons for religious conflict, as already indicated.

A total *separation* of religion and politics will result in a secular state, which is also not the ideal, as is becoming clearer at least in the western world.

The only solution therefore is to *distinguish* clearly between the *different domains* and *tasks* of the church/synagogue/mosque/temple on the one hand and the state (government and citizens) on the other. The church (like other

religious communities) is a community of *faith* which has the responsibility to promote the (Christian) faith. The state is a *legal* societal relationship which must ensure that justice is done to all its citizens. It includes the guarantee of religious freedom.

This does not imply that the state is an all-encompassing societal relationship and therefore the owner and creator of all kinds of rights (like the right of religious freedom). The state (through its constitution and law enforcement) can only recognize, formulate, protect, and promote *existing* or *inherent* rights and balance the rights of individuals and communities. We should appreciate the fact that most modern secular constitutions (for example in a bill of rights) guarantee freedom of conscience, belief and religion. A secular constitution is a blessing especially in countries where religious groups are the minority (like the Christians in many Eastern Countries).

It is a mixed blessing, however, because religious freedom as a constitutionally guaranteed human right is not the final solution. In many countries (some of them represented at this conference) religious freedom is accepted in theory but denied in practice. (The Hindu culture and religion may, for instance, still be promoted by a government.)

In many western countries the crux lies in how religious freedom is interpreted, for example, by the courts. In the United States, for instance, freedom *from* religion (the negative) but not freedom *of* religion (the positive) is becoming the rule. In other words, the state and its courts are no longer *neutral* towards all religions (the original intention of the constitution), but hostile towards religions.

This is, by the way, a clear example that a secular state is not a guarantee of religious freedom – its secular religion threatens and replaces all other faiths! Therefore, to base human rights on one or other form of human autonomy (humans as a law unto themselves) is a very insecure foundation for religious freedom. The only solid foundation is God's central commandment of love towards our fellow human beings. Human rights, in my opinion is therefore a good *beginning*, but is not *sufficient* for a free and just society.

An example (from my own country) of state discrimination is that my government— in spite of its very modern secular constitution—discriminates against religiously oriented schools (Christian schools included) in that it only gives them a 30% state subsidy.

In my mind the only way to eradicate any discrimination is for the state to acknowledge that religious or confessional plurality may also be expressed structurally (cf. the three kinds of diversity mentioned under point 1 above). Religiously oriented schools, organizations and pressure groups have to be accepted as something normal and beneficial for societal life. (Note, this should apply to every religion.)

4. Religious equivalence

Often the state/government argues that the *juridical equality* of religions (the right of every citizen to religious freedom) implies the *principial equivalence* of all religions. An example, again from my own country, is the fact that the government (the Department of Education) recently introduced a compulsory subject in all schools, called religious studies, in which all religions are not only *treated* equal juridically but *made* equivalent principally.

Many viewpoints exist about the truth of religions: (1) only one religion is true (the most common viewpoint amongst the adherents of the different religions); (2) no religion is true (the atheists); (3) some religions are truer than others (semi-relativists); and (4) all religions are true (radical relativists).

The last viewpoint is most common today but it has a long history. It originated as a philosophical viewpoint (during the Renaissance) which taught that every aspect of culture – including religion – is historically determined. In other words, it can only be true for a particular group, time or place. For example, Christianity was true for the Europeans in the past, but not necessarily at present.

My viewpoint is that we cannot determine the truth in a historical way. To argue like that implies the overemphasis of one aspect of reality: the historical-temporal. We have to distinguish between (1) *God's revelation*, which cannot be proved true or false (not by any science, including the

science of history) and (2) *religion, as a fallible human response* to God's revelation. In the same way we have to distinguish between God's will (as expressed in his ordinances/laws) as supratemporal and (2) our fallible human understanding or formulation of his will in the form of principles or norms.

In summary, we should reject both *relativism*, because we are always responding to God's will, and *absolutism*, because our human response to His will will always be fallible.

The consequences of present day relativism are, however, real. If all religions are true or equivalent, there is no need to try to convince someone else of your own faith. But even worse: evangelization comes to be regarded as something arrogant, fanatic, sectarian, and intolerant.

Such a viewpoint is unacceptable to a Christian. *Apart* from the fact that all religions are not true (see the reasons below), the following should be kept in mind: (1) preaching the gospel is not something voluntary but an imperative in the Bible; (2) it should not be done in pride but in humility and with respect for others; (3) people of other beliefs should never be manipulated or forced but implored; (4) the correct kind of Christian evangelism is not driven by something negative (for example, threats of hell) but by the positive, that is the love of God. I think these guidelines should also be applied in the case of Christian education.

I am, therefore, in favor of serious dialogue between people of different religions. (If one believes that all religions are equally true, dialogue is not important or necessary.) The purpose of such a dialogue is, however, not primarily to convert others or to finally abandon your own beliefs, but to be enriched and strengthened in your own faith. To achieve this aim it should be a real dialogue and not a disguised monologue.

To summarize why I believe that all religions are not true or equivalent: (1) in the first place, if one believes that they are basically all the same – only different routes to the same mountain top or different pain killers for the same headache – then no critique of any religion is possible. Criticism will immediately be regarded as intolerance, fanaticism etc. (2) Secondly, relativism itself is also a viewpoint (that is the view that all religions are

equivalent) and therefore often dogmatic and intolerant. (Cf. the example above of the relativistic secularism in the US which propagates freedom *from* all religions and is therefore not neutral but *hostile* towards every religion except its own.) (3) Thirdly, relativism does not offer a practical solution to religious pluralism and conflict at all. People (including the relativists themselves!) still believe that only their own faith is the truth. (4) Finally, it is also clear from the perspective of God's threefold revelation why all religions are not equivalent. Non-Christians know only God's *creational* revelation. Christians are privileged because, in addition, they have God's *inscripturated* revelation (the Bible), in the light of which they can understand God's revelation in creation even better. They furthermore enjoy the exceptional privilege of belief in God's *incarnated* revelation in the Savior, Jesus Christ, and his Holy Spirit.

5. Religious uniqueness

To say that the Christian religion is unique does not say much; every religion is unique in its own way. The question we want to answer is rather: what is special about the Christian faith? Why is it the only saving faith? In a way we have already answered this question: Christianity is not only based on God's creational revelation (his so-called general revelation), but also on his revelation in the Scriptures. This is important in spite of the fact (see above) that we should never identify the Christian religion with God's revelation - religion is something human and is by no means immune to sin.

Let us approach the uniqueness of our Christian faith from another angle emphasized in God's word. All non-Christian religions are autosoteriological in nature. They try to attain self-salvation by *inter alia*: observance of the law, mystical experience, the power of magic, wisdom (or knowledge), and many more. Against all these efforts the Christian religion is unique, because it is the only really theosoteriological religion, rejecting all the ways of self salvation. We do not have to move "up" to God. He comes "down" to us (in his incarnated revelation in Christ) to redeem us. The essence of Christianity (in my mind, at least) is that we are saved through God's grace

alone (*sola gratia*). I was reminded of this again during the conference when I asked a conferee from a Buddhist country why he rejected Buddhism to become a Christian. Without hesitation and extended theological argumentation he gave a straightforward answer "Because according to the Christian faith I do not have to earn salvation. It is impossible to deserve redemption. We simply have to accept God's grace in faith." Christianity's uniqueness is also evident in the fact that Christ is not simply a prophet (similar to those in other religions) but also a priest, who in addition offered himself. Therefore there is no other Name through which we can be saved.

I am aware of the fact that today various viewpoints are held by theologians about the role of Christ in our redemption. I will not discuss them here, because I firmly believe - and I hope you do also - that Christ is the only source of our salvation. (I do not agree with the viewpoint that no salvation is possible outside the church.)

However, I don't think it is appropriate to call Christianity "exclusive" or "absolute." By their nature all religions are, to a greater or lesser degree, exclusive. Even those which welcome different religious viewpoints are exclusive of religions which do not accept such a relative viewpoint.

To me only God and his word can be called absolute. As something human and full of sin, even the Christian religion cannot be absolute.

The absolutists usually stress only the differences between the Christian faith and other religions, while the relativists one-sidedly emphasize their similarities. A more balanced viewpoint would be to acknowledge both differences and similarities.

God's creational revelation (in nature and culture) is personally directed to every human being. We can therefore expect moments of truth in all kinds of religions. All non-Christian religions are not simply "pagan idolatry" to be rejected. Apart from such "black" areas (clear idolatry), there are also "grey" areas. (With more time at my disposal I could mention examples of prayers uttered by non-Christians to God, which reveal remarkable similarity to the prayers of Christians.)

But can we not call Christianity the best of all religions? Even here we

have to be careful. Christianity is the best if it sincerely and correctly believes in the triune God and also practices what it believes. But it is clearly not the best if Christians are full of pride, live an unconverted life, exploit, and suppress others, etc. In such a case Christians - this is my personal experience - could learn from atheistic Marxists about, for instance, what political justice entails.

6. Religious tolerance

I have already stated that tolerance is the only solution for the tensions, conflict, and even violence in our present multi-religious world, because religious unity will only be possible on a new earth.

When I presented this chapter at the conference in Chennai, I proposed the following brief definition of tolerance: "The degree to which we accept things of which we disapprove." Note "the degree to which," because I don't think we should tolerate just anything, that *everything* should be accepted as religion and consequently enjoy religious freedom and tolerance. What would we then do with human sacrifices (still practised in traditional African religion in my country), the caste system (in this country [India]) and the mass suicides by different cults (in the USA, Switzerland, and Japan)?

Because my definition of tolerance is somewhat contradictory ("accept things of which we disapprove") a few suggestions were made during the discussion of this chapter to change the word "accept" to "recognize" or even to "appreciate." I think the idea was to make sure that tolerance is not something passive or negative but active and positive. I am still not sure whether these suggestions (especially "to appreciate") are real improvements of my definition, which intended to emphasize how difficult it really is to practice tolerance. Perhaps we should distinguish between different levels of tolerance. Some aspects of other faiths can be appreciated, others definitely not – the latter simply have to be accepted in spite of the fact that we totally disagree.

It is, by the way, also important to distinguish between different types of tolerance. Apart from (1) religious tolerance there is also (2) cultural tolerance

and (3) structural tolerance (cf. again point 1 above). The latter includes tolerance in marriage, family, labor, politics, etc. If one confuses these types, then one can easily say for instance, that because someone does not agree with you politically he/she is religiously intolerant or vice versa.

With the help of our preliminary definition of tolerance, it becomes possible to identify various misconceptions about tolerance. Tolerance is not the same as (1) spiritual poverty or the lack of our own convictions; (2) boundless religious openness; (3) indifference; (4) aloofness or pride; or (5) hypocrisy. It is also not (6) the popular contemporary idea of politeness, civility, courtesy, decency, non-defensiveness, "political" correctness, moderation, refinement or good manners (a shift from "to tolerate others" to "being tolerable to others").

Our definition of tolerance plays an important role: one disapproves of another viewpoint because one believes in a different truth. When one simply believes that all religions are equal, then tolerance is not necessary. In that case, other religions do not present a challenge, but only another viewpoint.

When we study the relationship between tolerance and truth the following historical development becomes clear.

- (1) During the Middle Ages and the time of the Reformation (cf. the Inquisition, the Crusades, the burning of heretics, and the religious wars between Catholics and Protestants), no clear distinction was made between Christianity (the truth) and God's revelation (the Truth with a capital T). The two were perceived as more or less identical. Consequently Christianity was absolutized. Little or no tolerance was displayed towards people who disagreed with the (absolutized) Christian truth.
- (2) During the seventeenth century, however, tolerance was accepted because people realized that force and violence (truth without tolerance) were not solutions. They believed that it is the Truth and power of God's revelation and his Spirit that will change people's lives. They firmly believed in salvation through Christ alone.
- (3) This *exclusivist* faith, however, was replaced soon afterwards by the doubt of rationalism. Because no one can really know which religion is true, an

inclusivist viewpoint was accepted.

- (4) Subsequent irrationalism replaced inclusivism with *pluralism*, because it was believed that all religions are equally true.
- (5) Finally we experience today a shift from *pluralism* to *intolerance*. The simple reason is that nobody can consistently think in relativistic terms. The viewpoint that all religions are equivalent is not something neutral; rather it is in itself a religious belief. Therefore those who believe it are intolerant against those who do not accept it, but still believe in the truth of their own religion.

In summary, we can distinguish at least three viewpoints about the relationship between tolerance and truth: (1) *truth without tolerance* (the Middle Ages, and the following period of religious wars); (2) *tolerance without truth* (rationalistic inclusivism and irrationalistic pluralism – the first is a mild kind of relativism, while the second is a more radical relativism); and (3) *tolerance based on truth* (the original idea about tolerance which finally ended the religious wars in Europe). This last viewpoint is the correct one, based on the Bible, because it teaches both tolerance and conviction of the truth.

When we study the Bible we discover the following about tolerance. First, we learn that God himself is patient, kind, and tolerant. He gives rain and sunshine even to those who do not believe in him. Secondly God's word expects the same from us as believers. Therefore the deepest ground of our tolerance is not our obligation to God but his own amazing tolerance. Thirdly, because it is much easier to be intolerant, we have to rely on the power of his Spirit to be tolerant.

At the same time the Bible is clear that tolerance and conviction cannot be separated. (Compare, for instance, Elijah's struggle against the worshippers of Baal and Paul on the Areopagus.) Christians can speak with an authority based not on their own cleverness, but on the truth of the Gospel. Again and again we find examples in the Bible of loving tolerance towards others combined with holy intolerance towards sin.

We are confronted with so many wrong ideas about the nature of tolerance, so let me close with seven statements which clarify, on the one hand, what tolerance *should not* mean for a Christian (the negative) and, on

the other hand, what it *should* be (the positive).

- (1) Tolerance can never be loveless and proud, claiming arrogantly that we “have” the Truth. The Truth calls on Christians to love and in love to witness to that Truth. This should be done in humility since we as Christians *do not possess* the Truth, but *received* it in grace.
- (2) Tolerance should not mean indifference or aloofness, but involvement in the lives and thoughts of those who do not know or have not accepted the Truth.
- (3) Tolerance should not originate in opportunism which tolerates people of other religions merely for the sake of peace or to be able to evangelize them. Christian tolerance implies that we are sincerely interested in these people and are eager to know through dialogue as much as possible about them and their religious convictions.
- (4) It is not true that intolerance is something active, while tolerance is passive in nature. Real Christian tolerance is an active deed of involvement in other peoples struggle for the truth.
- (5) Real tolerance does not originate in doubt, relativism, or uncertainty but from a deep conviction of the Truth of God’s revelation.
- (6) Intolerance and fanaticism are signs of weakness. Real tolerance is not weak and sentimental. One has to be strong to endure things of which one does not approve.
- (7) Finally, Christian tolerance is not negative. The prevailing (secular) kind of tolerance without truth can only say that one should not be uncivil, discourteous, impolite, tactless, unpleasant, or opposing. Christian tolerance however, originates in a positive attitude to life; its purpose is a peaceful and just society.

FRIENDSHIP

WHY IS IT SO RARE AND HOW SHOULD IT BE RESTORED TO A PLACE OF HONOR?

Today friendship is ignored and rarely celebrated. In trying to improve this sad state of affairs, this chapter proceeds through the following steps. (1) A brief historical review which reveals that already in the past friendship was confused with other relationships and its real value was not acknowledged by Christians. (2) From the perspective of a Christian philosophy of society, it is next indicated that friendship is a unique relationship of love which should be clearly distinguished from other forms of love, for instance the love of marriage partners, brotherly love, and neighborly love in general. (3) This is followed by a structural analysis of the friendship relation, indicating what real friendship entails. (4) In the light of the preceding it becomes possible to discriminate between acceptable forms of friendship and unacceptable "friendships." (5) The next section provides, apart from the already mentioned historical causes, different reasons for the rareness of friendships in our contemporary, especially secular western, societies. (6) In conclusion the special value of friendship is emphasized as a unique gift of God and simultaneously an important human obligation.

1. Introduction: friendship has become rare

Numerous writers call attention to the fact that friendship has become something rare, both in the western world and in Africa. Lewis sums up the situation in the West as follows:

"To the Ancients, friendship seemed the happiest and most fully of all human

loves, the crown of life and the school of virtue. The modern world, in comparison, ignores it. We admit of course that besides a wife and family a man needs a few 'friends'. But the very tone of the admission, and the sort of acquaintanceships which those who make it would describe as 'friendship', show clearly that what they are talking about has very little to do with the *Philia* which Aristotle classified among the virtues or that *Amicitia* on which Cicero wrote a book. It is something quite marginal, not a main course in life's banquet, a diversion, something that fills up the chinks of one's time." (Lewis, 1990: 55).

Olthuis has the same conviction:

"...the modern world generally ignores friendship. We admit that everyone needs a few friends, but we don't become very excited by their presence or absence. Today we rarely celebrate friendship. Very few sing the praises of friendship because very few have experienced its heights."(Olthuis, 1975:108-9).

Similar utterances can be read in the works of Woldring (1994: 11), van der Walt (2000: 417), and Linden (2003: 162). The latter writes, "close friendship is rarely experienced."

This void is also found in Christian ethical literature. Brillenburg Wurth wrote (as long ago as in 1953: 137) that it was striking how little was written on friendship in Christian circles. Important other works on Christian ethics (cf. for example, Fairweather and McDonald, 1984; Henry, 1965; Reid, 1961; and Stob, 1978) confirm this.

This also applies to Reformed theologians. In the four-volume *Van's Heeren Ordinantiën* (About the Lord's Ordinances) by Geesink (1907-1908) there is not a word about it. In the same writer's later two-volume *Gereformeerde Ethiek* (Reformed Ethics) (1931) comprising more than a thousand pages, a mere two pages (part 2, pp. 295-296) are devoted to friendship. When Aalders (1947) writes about ethics, not a word is said about friendship. The same holds true for Brillenburg Wurth's three-volume *Het Christelijk Leven* (The Christian Life). It deals with many diverse subjects but not friendship. Likewise, later works on ethics from the circle of Reformed theologians in the Netherlands (cf. for example

Schippers, 1955; and Von Meyenfeldt, n.d.) offer nothing on friendship. In South Africa the situation is no better. Van Wyk (1986; 1991; 1998; 1999; and 2001), a prominent Reformed ethicist, does not deal with friendship in any of his works – despite it being one of the most important ethically qualified human relationships. Friendships between different age groups played an important role in traditional Africa, and yet I could not find a single article on the topic. The problem that is treated in this study is therefore how it is possible that something as essential as friendship receives so little attention from most Christians? Maybe history can shed some light on this.

2. Friendship through the ages

The quotation above from Lewis (1990: 55) shows how differently friendship was valued during the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans and later by Christianity, in the former it was *over-rated* and in the latter *under-rated*.

2.1 Among the Greeks and Romans

Since the intention here is to investigate the traditional Christian view of friendship, we give only a few glimpses of friendship in antiquity (for a short summary compare Ritter, 1972: 1106-7).

Among the ancient philosophers Aristotle made perhaps the most important contribution (cf. Woldring, 1994: 37-49). Even contemporary writers on friendship return to his work as a source of inspiration (cf. for example, Ladikos, 2000; and Stortz, 2002).

Despite a great variety of interpretations of friendship in antiquity (cf. Woldring, 1994: 15-66) it was always seen as a form of love. The word *philos* (friend) is derived from the Greek verb *philein* (to love). The Latin word for “friend” is *amicus*, which goes back to *amor* (love) and the verb *amare* (to love). But the specific kind of love is not specified. (Linden, 2003: 157 states for instance that the word *philia* by Aristotle was wrongly translated by “friendship” in the past instead of simply with “love” in the general, broader sense.) The foundation of friendship was

correctly seen as the psychic attraction between two people.

So there is much to be learnt about friendship from the Greek and Roman philosophers. The most important criticism from the Christian side was that they attached too much value to this intimate human relationship. (According to Woldring (1994: 15), we can compare the place they gave to friendship to the place given nowadays in the West to a family, namely "the corner-stone of society.") An important reason for this opinion is found in the nature of friendship, namely that it is selective, while God's commandment of love applies universally to the neighbor. However, it is a fact that Christian thought on friendship, in reaction to the "over-rating" by the Graeco-Roman world, has gone to the other extreme by under-rating it.

2.2 Friendship in the Christian tradition

Before investigating what the Bible itself teaches on friendship we take a brief look at what Christians think about the matter. We will deal briefly with the viewpoints of four prominent Christian philosophers.

Augustine and his influence

Although the Christian tradition goes far back, we could start with the Christian reflection on friendship at the great church father, Aurelius Augustinus (354-430 AD). For a full exposition see Hartmann (1955), McNamara (1958), Woldring (1994: 69-78), and Andresen (1973: 128-130) who provide more literature under *liebesbegriff* in the writings of Augustine.

Friendship is important according to Augustine - without it the world would have been a wilderness. He regards it as a gift from God, hence friendship may not be a sideline, a mere casual relationship in the life of a Christian. He regards friendship as a relationship of mutual love, founded on a certain equality in interests and ideals. So Augustine is strongly under the influence of the Greek and Roman philosophers' high regard for friendship.

Unfortunately, we find in his work a kind of dualism which would have a decisive

influence on Christendom after him. To be acceptable to the Christian, *amicitia* (friendship) must be elevated and brought on a higher level, namely that of *caritas* (love). This idea is clearly a forerunner of the nature-grace theme which divided life into two domains: a natural and a supernatural or spiritual. The natural is the first step and the supernatural the perfection. According to this unbiblical dualism friendship is something natural and only then becomes really acceptable when it is reformed and perfected by the so-called supernatural love of God and the neighbor.

This tension between friendship (*amicitia*) which is selective and exclusive and Christian love (*caritas*) which applies to all is a problem that is prevalent in all Christian philosophy right through the Middle Ages. We have to add, however, that Medieval and Roman Catholic philosophy also did make an important contribution when it reflected on how friendship (and love in general) is enacted in the context of faith, and emphasized that the love in friendship cannot be seen separately from one's relationship with God. Stressing this connection (even though it was worked out in a dualistic manner) is a much better vision than the current secularist viewpoint in which friendship is completely separated from the religious relationship with God and is reduced and downgraded to a horizontal relationship between people.

The fact that the Renaissance returned to the high regard for friendship found in Greek and Roman culture, only increased the reaction against it among the sixteenth-century Reformers.

Three modern Christian philosophers in whose work this under-appreciation of friendship is still evident are the following: Brunner, Lewis, and Brilenburg Wurth.

E. Brunner

The tension between friendship (something "natural") and (true) Christian love (something "supernatural"), which we found in Augustine's work, is also present in Brunner's work. Brunner (a dialectic theologian) was most probably strongly under the influence of S. Kierkegaard (1813-1855), the Danish irrationalist Christian

philosopher, who is regarded as the father of both existentialist philosophy and dialectic theology (for detail on his viewpoint, cf. Kierkegaard, 1962 and Woldring, 1994: 129).

Brunner writes:

"Friendship ... does not spring from ethical impulses but from our *natural* spiritual impulse. We are not driven to it by a sense of compulsion or duty, but we are drawn to certain people by a certain attraction ... Friendship begins with pleasure in the individuality of the other person ... From the point of view of faith, friendship is a *natural* fact which can only become ethical through the love of our neighbor. Real community, *Agape*, is foreshadowed, *naturally* in friendship ..." (Brunner, 1949: 517-518, italics added).

A tension, therefore, exists between friendship and the commandment of love. (The same dilemma we also find in *Agape and Eros* by Nygren (1957).)

C. S. Lewis

In his well-known work *The Four Loves* (1990) this universally known Christian writer grapples with the problem of how the human love in friendship can be connected with divine love (cf. his chapter on "Friendship," pp. 55-84 and the one on "Charity," pp. 107-128).

Lewis (1990: 83) is right that friendship is a gift of God. His motivation for this, however, is to be questioned: "Friendship, like all other natural loves, is unable to save itself ... it must ... involve the divine protection if it hopes to remain sweet" (Lewis, 1990: 82). Friendship ("appreciative love") is something natural and insufficient over against the supernatural, divine love ("charity") which has to perfect it.

In both "gift-loves" and "need-loves" Lewis distinguishes between natural and supernatural love – confirming that he had not escaped the age-old dualism of the nature-grace theme. It is stressed all the more when he writes the Divine love does not substitute itself for the natural - as if we had to throw away our silver to make

room for gold. "The natural loves are summoned to become modes of charity while also remaining the natural loves they are" (Lewis, 1990: 122).

The dialectic tension caused by the unbiblical scheme of nature-grace is quite clear: on the one hand the so-called natural loves (in friendship and marriage) are something good – they may not be abolished. But on the other hand they are not good enough unless they are elevated to the sphere of grace. A more biblical view would be that we should obey God's commandment to love one another *in* our loving relationships in friendship and marriage (and in many other fields).

G. Brillenburgh Wurth

The above-mentioned dualism is evident at the very beginning of Brillenburgh Wurth's short chapter (1953:1 37ff) on "Liefde als vriendschap" (Love as friendship) and it pervades the whole of his argument. According to him friendship is "natural" over against brotherly love which is "spiritual." Friendship is a mere "humane greatness" (p. 147, 139):

"We could put it like this: in friendship the specific and characteristic of Christian love is not seen as much as in brotherly love or in charity or the love of an enemy" (Brillenburgh Wurth, 1953: 137).

In opposition to this it must be stated that all kinds of love is something "human" and that friendship therefore is not an *inferior* kind of love - there are no grounds for such an opinion in the Scriptures (cf. §2.3 below) – but a *different kind* of love from brotherly/sisterly love or love of one's enemy.

It seems as if it is the very nature of friendship love (as we have indicated above) that causes Brillenburgh Wurth, too, to degrade it. Since friends choose one another, since preference comes into the picture – something which may not apply to love for the neighbor – it is supposedly of less value. He more or less ensnares himself with this presumption though, since love in marriage also rests on preference for a particular person and he cannot for that reason regard it as less important or even wrong. In spite of this he perseveres – evidence of how the nature-

supernature scheme determines his train of thought: "With this ... the relative value of friendship is given. Friendship is surely not one of the highest forms of love. And something like friendship may therefore never take such a great place in our lives that it encroaches on the other task of loving" (Brillenburgh Wurth, 1953: 138).

When freed from the unbiblical nature-grace doctrine of two domains, one no longer needs to choose between lower/higher, lesser/major kinds of love. It then becomes possible to acknowledge that there are different God-given appearances of love, which each has its own nature and thus is equally important for a full Christian life. It is of such importance to clear up the confusion over the different kinds of love that section 3 below will deal with it in detail. It is one of the main reasons why something as valuable as friendship is so underestimated.

2.3 The Bible on friendship

Before discussing the confusion, we must first hear what the Bible itself teaches on friendship. From this it will become apparent that it is wrong - as in the Christian tradition – to regard friendship as something inferior. We give only a few glimpses from Scripture to counter this wrong perception (for more detail, cf. for instance Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982: 271-272; and Adams, Irwin and Walters, 1968: 237- 238).

- The writers of the Bible were fully conscious that friendship also participates in sin. So Jeremiah (9:4-5) complains that one could no longer trust one's friends. Micah (7:5) says that one should trust no friend. (According to these texts friendship presupposes trustworthiness, integrity.) Proverbs 18:24 warns that one should distinguish between mere pals or fair-weather friends, who can disappoint you, and a friend who is nearer than a brother. (The fidelity of a friend can thus be stronger than the love of a blood brother.) According to Deuteronomy 13:6 one's "friends" can also lead you astray – even into idolatry.

- Contrary to this true friendship, as a gift of God Himself (cf. Job 6:14), is of special value. Although Job's friends did not understand what was happening to him

and why, they still tend to support him in love (cf. Job 2:12-13). Christ Himself said that there is no greater love than giving one's life for a friend (John 15:13). Friendship love – faithfulness until death – was definitely not regarded by Him as third-rate love.

- From the words of Christ it became apparent that the form of love in the case of friendship is fidelity. This fidelity must be mutual. That is why David complains in Psalm 55 verse 13-15 that he was betrayed, not by an enemy – from whom it could be expected - but by his good friend with whom he had such close ties.

- According to the Scriptures it does not mean that friends may not reprimand one another. Proverbs 27:5,6 says that one can rely on a person who sometimes opposes one. And Proverbs 27:17 uses a beautiful image: as iron sharpens iron, friends sharpen one another.

- When in Deuteronomy 13 verse 6 there is talk of "your friend who is as your own soul" (RSV) the foundation of true friendship comes to the fore, namely like-mindedness. A friend is a "soulmate."

- If friendship was not a serious human relationship, why then is the Bible positive about the love of Jonathan for David (cf. 1 Sam 19, 20) and David's great love for his friend Jonathan? In his lament after Jonathan's death he says, "I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women" (2 Sam 1:26). Nowhere in the Bible is there a correction of what David says here. In the New Testament we read of the love between Peter and Andrew, Philip and Nathaniel – without any negative comment as if it was not good.

- Defending the viewpoint that friendship is something insignificant becomes even harder when we read that God Himself called Abraham his friend (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23). Christ not only calls his disciples his friends (John 16:14-15), but the Bible also says that He loved some of them particularly (John 13:23). Apart from his disciples He also had other friends like Martha, Mary, and Lazarus (cf. John 11:11).

From these few glimpses it is quite clear that the Bible never downgrades friendship. On the contrary it values it highly. Equipped with these biblical perspectives we can more clearly see the misunderstanding and confusion around friendship and the subsequent neglect of it in the Christian tradition.

3. Four misconceptions in the Christian tradition corrected

Four misconceptions now have to be cleared up: (1) the idea that friendship, as something "natural," should belong to a lower order than other types of love; (2) the confusion between friendship and love for the neighbor in general; (3) the idea that friendship should be in competition with marriage and family; and (4) the lack of a clear distinction between friendship and brotherly/ sisterly love.

3.1 Friendship downgraded in comparison to other types of love

Since friendship is a human relationship given by God we may not devalue it. One of many ways to love God is to be good, faithful friends. *In* the love friends have for one another - not separately from it - they also love God, they fulfill his commandment of love.

The distinction between "natural" love (friendship) and "spiritual" love (other forms of love) is unbiblical. Olthuis briefly describes it as follows:

"Dividing life into things natural and spiritual is contrary to the basic thrust of the Scriptures. When Paul told the Colossian believers to seek the things above where Christ is, he did not urge them to leave the world. On the contrary, he called them to live in a spiritual way in all of life's relationships. *Spiritual* does not refer to an additional, higher realm; instead it describes a life in its totality driven, motivated and guided by the love of God. If all our relations are spiritual – driven by the love of God – there must be a place for genuine, renewed friendships. The only important question is whether it is moved by the love of God or gripped by the lie of the Devil." (Olthuis, 1975: 119-20).

3.2 The difference between friendship and love of the neighbor in general

In an attempt to retain friendship, many Christians have identified it with Christ's central commandment of love - that we should love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-40). This way the unique nature of friendship is lost, however. Besides it would mean that all human activities should be normed according to the model of friendship.

This misconception is not limited to Christians. It can be seen in the (humanist) idea that all are "brothers," and among communists who address one another as "comrades."

This confusion also reigns in contemporary scientific literature. Of course friendship can be reflected on from the angles of various subject fields. But then friendship should be acknowledged in its uniqueness, as something with a nature all its own and not as the (only) solution for all kinds of *heterologous* human relationships. In our individualistic times, with its lack of communion, friendship is seen for instance as a solution to problems in the field of sports (cf. Pienaar, 1995; and Steyn, 1996), social problems (cf. Dunstan and Nieuwoudt, 1993), illness (cf. Linden, 2003), psychological disorders (cf. Liddell, 1987), the care of AIDs patients (cf. Decker, 1997), sociological issues (cf. Wuthnow, 2003), issues of leadership (cf. Dreyer, 2002), in the political field as "civil friendship" (cf. Woldring, 1994: 183-191) and even applied by criminologists to correctional services (cf. Ladikos, 2000).

However, friendship cannot be the central model for our whole life. Nobody can have a special (friendship) relationship with everyone he/ she meets. If we confuse friendship with love for the neighbor, we eliminate variety from human society and cause it to become a drab, insipid uniformity. What is more, "friendship" then becomes something meaningless - if everyone is my friend, then (in reality) no-one is my friend.

The biblical commandment of love for the neighbor presupposes a *variety* of loves. In a court of law it is not the fidelity of friendship but *fair justice* (also a form of love) that should be the norm. Children are not their parents' friends, but owe them the love of *children*. A business concern cannot be built on friendship either, for

economic principles are at stake (cf. Olthuis, 1975: 121). Brotherly or sisterly love (in, for instance, the church) is love qualified by *faith*. It differs from the *ethical* love for brothers and sisters in the family. Although one cannot have one's enemies as friends, the Bible still demands that we *love our enemies*.

In short: if we fail to distinguish between the broad encompassing command of love for our neighbor and friendship (which is but one of the many ways of loving God and our neighbor) then (1) friendship is being robbed of its specific meaning, and (2) it leads to an erosion of the central commandment of love. (The commandment should then have said that we should love our *friends* like ourselves!)

Apart from the *difference* between the various forms of love we may not forget the *connection* between them either. This happens because an interpersonal relation like friendship (something which is ethically qualified, with fidelity as its norm) takes on its own "color" (modal differentiation) in different qualified relationships and societal contexts.

So for instance, the relationship between acquaintances is *logical* and *social* by nature. The relationship towards a companion is *socially* qualified. For comrades the *political* and *military* aspect is foremost. In the case of colleagues the characteristic aspect may be *academic* or *economic*. And in the case of good neighborliness it is probably *spatial*.

In the light of this my examples above should be altered as follows: children and parents are indeed friends, but also *more* than that. Marriage partners should also be each other's (best) friends, but are at the same time much *more* than that. Even in an economic context friendship plays an important role (as mutual trust). So the researchers who offer friendship as a solution in various fields of life (compare above) do stress an important element of truth.

3.3 Love in friendship and marriage

When no distinction is made between friendship and love for the neighbor, it is also not possible to *distinguish* between the relationship in friendship and marriage so

that the real *connection* between the two cannot be seen.

The result of the age-old confusion between two distinct human relationships (friendship and marriage) was that Christian churches devaluated friendship to a mere preparation - sometimes even a threat - for marriage. The result was social poverty, because it limited intimate contact between people to only one societal context and to one relationship, namely with the spouse. Unmarried people were affected by this even more seriously - they were doomed to solitude. Any intimate friendship outside marriage was in this way regarded as questionable.

As a result of this unfounded fear marriage was thus isolated, cut off from the stimulation, support and advice that spouses could receive from people (friends) from outside their marriage. It also expects too much from marriage: marriage can become too tense if it is the only way for close contact and sharing of one's problems and thoughts. Precisely this fact - and not true friendship - can lead to the lure of extra-marital affairs.

Woldring (1994: 162) puts his finger on the pulse when he says that the widely held and deeply rooted marriage and family ideology (the belief that the meaning of life is to be found par excellence in married and family life) has blinded many people in the West for the meaning of friendship.

Lewis (1990: 68) rightly says that friendship and marriage are not to be confused. Friendship may eventually develop into a marriage. The mere fact that we can say it *developed* into a marriage, however, means that it became something of a different nature.

Van der Walt (2000: 421) remarks that nearness and love are also possible without physical, sexual communion which is peculiar to marriage. Intimacy is not the same as sex - not even in marriage. Even when one is married it is still possible - and necessary - to also love other people (friends, relatives, oneself). It is extra-marital sex that is wrong, not extra-marital *love*.

Once more Olthuis gives a good summary:

"We need to recognize the God-willed possibility of friendship being friendship;

marriage, marriage, and family, family. Certainly in actual living they are linked to one another, but this very intertwinement reveals that the contours of the husband-wife relationship are not identical with those of father-mother and friend-friend relations. Troth plays a key role in all three relationships, but the troth in marriage is different from the troth in friendship and the troth in family. Since each of these relationships are unique, none can be defined in terms of the others." (Olthuis, 1975: 123. Also compare Olthuis, 1986 in which he further works out these insights with particular regard to marriage.)

A reformational philosophy of society (cf. Dooyeweerd, 1986) can help us to make a clearer distinction. Friendship, marriage, and family are all ethically qualified. The norm is mutual fidelity (compare Olthuis above). The ethical is the *leading function* or modality. However, their *foundational functions* differ.

Friendship is founded on mutual *psychic* attraction. This spiritual bond, the foundational alone, however, is not enough for friendship. The primary leading one is mutual fidelity. In marriage the foundational aspect is biological. On the biological foundation the sexual is possible, which is deepened psychically and unfolded ethically. Here the foundational is not the most significant either. Mutual loyalty should lead to sexual unity and not the other way round. Sex does not create fidelity. The opposite is true: sexual intercourse confirms, strengthens, and deepens the promise of fidelity to each other.

In the case of the family the foundational aspect is the *biological* (blood relationship). But it has to be opened up for the social and eventually the ethical function.

All three of these therefore are ethical relations of love, but the love between friends is of a different nature from that between spouses. It also differs from the love parents have for their children, children's love for their parents and the love between brothers and sisters in one family.

3.4 Friendship and brotherly/sisterly love

Friendship is one way of being a neighbor. Another way is that of being a

brother/sister in faith for your neighbor.

Geesink (Vol. 2, 1931: 296) is of the opinion that one of the reasons why so little attention was given to friendship within Christendom, is the fact that it was supposed that friendship has to yield to brotherly love.

The other "solution" (which Geesink does not mention) is of course to regard all your brothers and sisters in faith as your friends. Many Christians still think - and this is wrong - that they should reckon everybody who is in the same church as friends. However, (sometimes bitter) experience shows that friendship and brotherhood shouldn't be confused. There are many true Christians with whom one would not like to be friends - simply because one does not feel drawn to them. And this is not necessarily wrong. It depends how the actual situation is dealt with. If one tries to give a special place in the church to one's friends while ignoring those who are not your friends, then it is wrong. For, although all members of the church cannot be one's friends, they are all still one's fellow-believers who have to be treated with brotherly/sisterly love (cf. for instance Romans 12:10; 1Thessalonians 4:9; 2Peter 1:7; and Hebrews 13:1). Brothers and sisters should support, encourage, and sincerely love one another.

If you think that every fellow-believer should be your friend, you will have a guilty conscience since only a few can be your friends in the true sense of the word. (Friendship is by nature selective, it gives preference to certain people.) In such a case one does not really know what friendship is. A still greater threat is that the Church may lose its character, since it could develop into a "club for friends."

Also in this case the structural analysis of a reformational philosophy can be enlightening. The church is a societal relationship in which faith is the leading function, while it is founded on the social aspect. As we have shown already, the qualifying function in the case of friendship is the ethical (fidelity) while it is founded on mutual psychic attraction (a spiritual bond). Every societal relationship participates in all the aspects or modalities of reality (for example, the judicial, economic, lingual, social, psychic, biological), but every societal relationship is unique - and is thus distinguished from the others - because it has its own leading or

qualifying function and its own foundational function that characterizes it.

So the conclusion is: *everyone* you come across is your neighbor; *many* are also your sisters/brothers; only *a few* can be your friends.

Having made clear the difference and connection between friendship and other human loving relationships, we now need to go into the detail of what friendship actually is, so that it may be restored to its rightful position.

4. What is friendship?

There is so much confusion, so a clearer delineation is needed. Numerous writers become lyrical about friendship - without saying clearly what they mean by it!

4.1 An inter-human relationship

In the first place it is vital to state that it is an inter-human relationship ordained by God. It is not based on a personal whim.

4.2 Qualified by mutual loyalty

In the second instance God's norm of fidelity applies to this relationship. We could put it in a different way: in friendship the central commandment of love is positivized in the form of fidelity.

Most of the writers mentioned above (for example Lewis, 1990; Olthuis, 1975; van der Walt, 2000; and Woldring, 1994) regard fidelity as the core of friendship. Olthuis (1975: 110) for instance says "troth characterizes, constitutes and qualifies" friendship. Geesink (part 2, 1931: 296) also writes "True...friendship, founded on congeniality for each one's individuality, creates a relationship of faith and loyalty, so that one can depend on the other" The definition given by Woldring, (1994: 175-177) who merely describes friendship as "mutual love" is therefore still too vague, since this also applies to other relationships (like marriage and family).

4.3 Founded on a spiritual bond

In the third place friendship also has a specific foundation. This escapes Woldring (in the places quoted directly above). Lewis (cf. 1990: 62-68) deals with it in detail.

According to him friends are bound by something deep down or spiritual which can hardly be expressed in words. It entails more than just common interests. Friends share a common worldview. (Van der Walt, 2000: 420 calls it a "mutual spiritual bond.") Elsewhere Lewis (1960: 68) speaks of "affection" which he maintains is the matrix or seed-bed in which friendship develops. In this he hits the nail on the head.

Olthuis (1975: 110, 111) aptly puts it:

"... psychic attraction or congeniality is the foundation for friendship. It cannot be forced: either people are attracted to each other or they are not. Still, this sudden attraction is not yet friendship; it is merely the first spark which will eventually produce the flame of friendship."

4.4 A summary description

I would like to voice my endorsement for the following definition by Olthuis: "Friendship is a pledged vow of troth between two persons based upon psychic congeniality" (Olthuis, 1975: 112).

From this concise description many other characteristics of friendship follow: (1) the pledge of troth is usually tacit and yet one *knows* who one's friends are; (2) friendship loyalty needs time to develop; (3) without asking for it, friends support one another; (4) it is something spontaneous which doubles joy and shares grief; (5) friends respect one another and therefore manipulation does not fit into such a relationship; (6) this does not mean, however, that a friend simply accepts everything one does or says; (7) further it is a relationship which is characterized by intimacy, openness, involvement, solidarity, and durability.

4.5 Friendship has a part in all facets of reality

A fourth important point which has to be stressed is that, since friendship is something real, it mirrors or has a part in all sides of reality. In reformational philosophy the following facets or modalities (from the lowest to the highest) are distinguished: (1) the numerical; (2) the spatial; (3) the physical; (4) the biotic; (5) the psychic (=the *foundational* function in friendship); (6) the logic; (7) the historical; (8) the lingual; (9) the social; (10) the economic; (11) the aesthetic; (12) the juridical;

(13) the ethical (= *leading* function in friendship); and (14) the pistical (faith).

We lack the space here to show that although only two facets characterize friendship, all of them has a place in a friendship. Different sciences (cf. §3.2 above) can therefore study friendship from a religious, juridical, aesthetic, economic, social, and all other angles. Friendship, for instance, can have great biological value. Linden (2003: 162-4) shows that research has proved convincingly that friendship not only prevents serious illness, but also play a significant role in the process of convalescence after serious medical intervention.

Does this apply to any kind of friendship? In other words, is any type of friendship good and right?

5. Acceptable and unacceptable forms of friendship

Like all else in life, friendships, too, can be either good or bad, acceptable or unacceptable. Even a band of robbers cannot but maintain (to an extent) God's norm for friendship, namely mutual fidelity - otherwise they would betray one another and begin stealing from one another. It is true that such a relationship is *structurally* a kind of friendship, but its normative *direction* is wrong and therefore it is unacceptable. Lewis (1990: 75) correctly remarks that friendship can be "a school of virtue and a school of vice."

5.1 Significant influence of society on friendship

By way of introduction it must be stated that the juncture in time and the society in which one lives play important roles in the form(s) which friendships will take. Woldring particularly (1994: 120, 158) showed clearly that friendships take on different forms among different nations and at different times. The forms of friendship also differ in different layers of society, as in aristocratic circles, among laborers and other occupations. Friendship clearly is not only the expression of mutual needs but also the result of social circumstances and processes.

During the time of the knights in the Middle Ages the prevalent opinions on power, fidelity, and honor was conducive to heroic friendships. Times of conflict and

disruption usually foster friendships characterized by courage and an attitude of sacrifice.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth century friendships were mostly founded on *social* status (compare for instance how aristocracy was overrated). In the twentieth century *political* (ideological) friendships were important, while today it has more and more of an *economic* (materialistic) basis.

Currently in the secular western world mainly two things stand out: (1) friends appreciate one another's *company* (the social side) and (2) friendship is singly approached in a pragmatic way - it should be useful to both parties, for instance to serve common interests and material advantage (cf. Woldring, 1094: 12-13). What kinds of friendships will our present, increasingly secularized South African society bring forth?

However, Woldring is right, a society not only produces certain friendships, but that the kinds of friendships which we foster can also have a significant influence on the society in which we live - all the more reason to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable friendships.

5.2 Various kinds of acceptable friendships

Although friendship can take on many good forms, we mention only the following as examples.

Youth friendship

In spite of the fact that most school and adolescent friendships do not have the depth and durability of ripe, adult friendship - they are easily forged and easily broken - they still are valuable. It helps children to get past the stage where they are bound to their parents alone and to broaden their experience. They get to know themselves better, they learn to associate with others and in this way progress to adulthood. However, the process of forming an identity - in which friendship plays such an important role, takes place not only during childhood and adolescence, it is continued in adult life.

Friendship with the opposite sex

Diverse answers are given to the question whether unmarried people and especially married people may have friendships with someone of the opposite sex. Brillenburg Wurth (cf. 1953: 142-3) does not regard it as wrong in principle, but since being human and sexuality can in practice not be separated, he disapproves of such relationships.

Olthuis, too, acknowledges that whether one is married or unmarried, it is difficult to maintain a friendship with someone from the opposite sex. The reason is that people do not make a clear distinction between friendship and the sexual (which belongs in marriage). Such relationships (between persons of different sexes), are therefore suspect. Friendship across the borders of sex is, however, acceptable to him. Nevertheless, he also warns (cf. Olthuis, 1975: 115-6) that intimate physical contact (which, unfortunately, he does not spell out clearly – does he mean *sexual* contact?) between a man and a woman or two men or two women is a sign of danger, that the friends no longer maintain the norm for friendship and therefore should break off the relationship.

5.3 Various kinds of unacceptable friendship

Like anything else, friendship can be inspired by the spirit of God or by the spirit of the devil. The previously mentioned forms of friendship may meet all the *structural* requirements for friendship (the member of a band of robbers may for example be prepared to give his life for his friend) but its religious *direction* is wrong and therefore it is unacceptable. However, the focus will not be on such clearly wrong forms of friendship, but on more subtle kinds - which are therefore all the more dangerous.

Acquaintances and comrades are not friends

Many, whom we like to call friends, are not really friends in the sense described above. One can have an easy, hearty relationship with acquaintances, comrades,

business colleagues etc., but the promise of fidelity (the qualifying characteristic) is lacking. Such relationships are mostly logically, politically, socially, or economically but not ethically qualified.

Linden (2003: 158) gives an example of this “buddyhood” in places from hair salons to bars. However, it never reaches the depth, durability, and intimacy of true friendship, since only pleasure (the social) and usefulness (the pragmatic) are of importance to the buddies.

Cliques are dangerous

It seems as if the formation of cliques is normal for the youth nowadays, belonging to the nature of their phase of development, but it is - fortunately - also something fleeting. Brillenburg Wurth (1953: 139) is correct in warning that a clique is no longer a relationship of friendship since it is dominated not by love, but by pride, selfishness, and group egotism. Lewis, too (1990: 74-5) warns that cliques look inwards to themselves, slap each other on the back and look down in pride on those outside, and that they become deaf for any correction from outside.

Since this is a very serious matter and Olthuis (1975: 125-6) characterizes it very aptly, he is quoted at length:

“Sometimes friends form cliques that turn in on themselves to the exclusion of everyone else. The clique overflows the bounds of friendship and attempts to swallow up all other relations by becoming a privileged circle serving itself - an elite that doesn't care what anyone else does, says or thinks. The clique emasculates true friendship for the sake of selfish pride. Cliques offer the prestige of belonging to the ruling coterie, of obtaining positions of esteem and honor, of having the privileges of power. Personal growth, truth, and enrichment – the plant of friendship – are choked by the weeds of corporate haughtiness and self-aggrandizement. The group exists for the group, a self-elected aristocracy. Everyone outside the circle must be reminded frequently that he is not in it... . Such false friendships so misuse the relationship that they become tyrannical.”

Among Afrikaners, too, there is an organization which (especially in the past) fitted perfectly into this description.

Contemporary kinds of "friendship"

A separate paper would be needed to go into the nature of all kinds of modern friendships. Modern society offers possibilities to enter into relationships of which our forbears would never have dreamt. By means of e-mail and "chat rooms" one comes into contact with an unlimited number of people and you can express your deepest emotions without any inhibitions. Most probably such relationships originate from a lack of true friendship in our modern day individualistic society. Can we call it "friendship"?

Linden (2003: 157-8) has no doubts and makes it clear why electronic "friendship" does not qualify as friendship:

"Though one may experience emotional release in a chat room, such exchanges cannot have true reciprocity Cyber friendships lack commitment; the society of cyberspace is a faceless society and can easily be a faithless one ... such friendships can become a form of electronic egotism, often degenerating into isolated narcissism Despite expressing depth and feeling, distance and anonymity allow these relationships to be intrinsically superficial."

This once more raises the question why true friendship has today become so rare – so rare that people even find refuge in cybernetic friendships.

6. Why friendship has become so rare in our day

A number of factors which can harm friendship has already been mentioned on the preceding pages. Among them are (1) the fact that Christianity has generally underestimated and under-appreciated it; (2) that it was confused with other human relationships and therefore could not flourish with the richness and value it

could have; (3) the concept of friendship suffers from inflation by being associated with other relationships which cannot truly lay a claim to being proper friendship.

Without doubt present western culture also has its drawbacks. (I have already pointed out above that a particular society can have a decisive effect on friendship.) These causes for the lack of true friendship have been gleaned from several already mentioned sources and are summarized here. (For lack of room the causes are given point by point since the implications for friendship should be clear.)

Modern western secular society is characterized by the following:

- *Individualism*, in which everything centers on the self (egotism).
- It is *economic-materialistic* and *pragmatic* in nature since everything is weighed in terms of its usefulness.
- It is founded on relentless *competition*.
- Furthermore it is an extremely *rushed* society.
- It is a very *mobile* culture – people no longer stay in the same job or the same place for a long time.
- It is a *technocratic* society, which sacrifices human fellowship on the altar of professionalism, efficiency, and results with a resulting void and loneliness.
- The *electronic media* (TV and computer) replace or supplant personal human contact.
- *Work (occupations)* are so over-emphasized that other human relations are neglected.
- It is a *therapeutic culture* in which not the counsel of friends but various specialists and therapists have to solve people's personal problems.
- Deep down it is a *fearful* culture in which people are afraid of opening up themselves to others, because they may be disappointed or even deeply hurt.
- Furthermore it has a *fixation on sex* which is detrimental to true friendship.
- Compared with most of the preceding civilizations, present western culture

is extremely *superficial*.

- Differences of *political opinion and a racist* nature also obstruct friendship (especially in South Africa).
- Finally it is a cold, *loveless* society with a lamentable lack of involvement with fellow human beings.

Olthuis concludes that the kind of friendship which existed in former ages is no longer possible today. We live in a secular society which, where it is not hostile towards friendship, certainly does not stimulate it. "Society just does not allow the freedom for the growth and development of genuine friendships" (Olthuis, 1975:127).

The question is whether this sad state should be accepted.

7. A wonderful gift and a great obligation

The dilemma is: since many people today seldom or never experience sincere friendships because of the factors mentioned above (and there are some more), they do not appreciate or develop it either. And if they do not try it, they will never experience the great value of friendship themselves. We have to emphasize two significant points in this regard.

7.1 A wonderful gift from God Himself

God knows what people need – otherwise something like friendship would not have existed. He knows that without close friendships few people can survive. But there is more at stake than survival. With the divine gift of friendship life is infinitely enriched and deepened and one experiences a special kind of joy. To go into the great value of friendship would require a chapter by itself. (The literature cited dwells on this in great detail.) The important point here is that, if friendship is a gift from God Himself, not only is it a sin when it is not accepted, developed, and fostered with gratitude - it also is neglected to one's own disadvantage. Therefore this great gift from God is at the same time also a task or an obligation. It is not

merely an option.

7.2 A great responsibility

In this case one should not only think about the great void in one's own life when one tries to live without friends. You should also think of what you do to others when depriving them of your friendship. Olthuis says that to withhold friendship from someone

"... is to condemn them to a life of aching loneliness and pain which others cannot even imagine. For them friendship could mean a bounteous share in the spice and joy of life. For many it could even mean the difference between experiencing life as a cruel trick or a rare treat" (Olthuis, 1975: 128).

Therefore Christian society should actively create circumstances which can allow friendship to flourish. This can be done in many ways. Perhaps it is most urgent to remind society that the essence of friendship is mutual fidelity. When you live in a society where you can hardly ever take a person's word for something, how can friendship - in which trust is everything - survive? That is why Olthuis says:

"Troth (a more modern English word would be 'fidelity') must be recovered ... our culture requires a new life-style - a biblical life-style - in which keeping troth is an essential mark" (Olthuis, 1975: 129).

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SPOTLIGHT ON SPORT

A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEWISH-PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

The problem dealt with in this chapter is the fact that most people are involved in sport (as participants or spectators) without knowing *what* kind of activity it is or should be and *how they* should participate. Such a situation may result in the many defects *sport* is suffering from today. By way of a Christian-philosophical analysis of this prominent phenomenon in modern society an attempt is made to provide an answer. To attain this goal, the following steps are followed. (1) A brief overview of the present situation in sport serves as an introduction. (2) This is followed by three current wrong attitudes toward sport. (3) Attention is then turned to the fact that, in spite of the deterioration in sport ethics, the necessary theoretical reflection - also among Christians - is lacking. The theoretical exploration which follows includes the following points. (4) A review of some biblical perspectives and the influence of different Christian worldviews on sport. (5) An effort to determine the nature of sport from a comparison between leisure, play, game, and sport. (6) Then follows a philosophical analysis of the structure and direction of sport with a few examples of the practical implications of such a theoretical approach.

1. Problem, hypothesis, and method

Worldwide millions of people – more than ever before - are involved in various kinds of sport - as participants and as spectators. And then there are the coaches and the great number of professionals involved in sport, like psychologists, dieticians, sports doctors, physiotherapists, biokineticists, and other sport scientists. It is also generally accepted that sport has a great influence on our contemporary society. Sport is synonymous with money, fame, and health. Certificates, diplomas, and academic schooling in sport science are

offered by technikons and universities. A football, rugby or hockey "academy" enhances the prestige of such institutions. But more and more voices are heard saying that sport does not primarily bring to the fore the good in a person but rather the bad. Sport evils occur in most kinds of sport. People complain that sport is no longer really sport, but has become a belligerent activity. Hoogland (1998: 21), for instance, regards sport as a "useless activity" and Evink (1998: 17) says that some kinds of sport (like soccer) is merely a provocation to criminality.

On closer inspection people no longer know *what* sport is and therefore they do not know *how* it should be practised either. The presupposition or hypothesis of this investigation is that philosophical-theoretical reflection on the what and how of sport may help combat the problems surrounding this activity. The method will be to analyze the structure of the phenomenon (what it is) and its direction (what it should be) from the angle of a Christian philosophy.

Before starting on it, much more background is needed for a proper analysis.

2. Background sketch of the present-day sport scene

In order to understand better the problems surrounding sport we will (1) first give a short historical survey; (2) subsequently, we will point out what an important place sport has today; (3) then some reasons will be given why sport plays such an exceptionally important role in contemporary society.

2.1 A short history

Looking at history there is much to be learnt on how work and rest (including sport) was regarded through the ages.

- *Ancient Greece* is the cradle not only of western thought, but also of sport. Competitive sport had already become important at that time. The ancient Olympic Games - dedicated to the chief god Zeus from 776 BC - is an outstanding example of this. Furthermore fame and hero worship already played an important part: the victors were for instance crowned with wild olive leaves, received material gain, and were honored in temples (cf. Verhoogt, 1998: 11). These games were prohibited in 393 AD by Emperor Theodosius and took place

for the last time in 394. In this way a tradition of more than a thousand years was interrupted until it was re-instated with the modern Olympic Games (from 1896).

- The *Romans* were more soldiers and jurists than sportsmen. In their time however, an element of our contemporary sport emerged: the role of the spectators. In the Roman circus there were many more spectators than participants. They had to be amused by a few participants.

Marshall (1991: 2-3) shows that with both Greeks and Romans those who could afford leisure time, did not hold work in high esteem. It can be seen for instance in the fact that the Greeks did have a word for "leisure" (*skole*) but not a separate word for work. Work (*ascolia*) was simply the opposite. In Latin we find the same: *otium* (relaxation) and the opposite, work, is non-relaxation (*negotium*). Activities of the spirit were also regarded as having higher value than manual work - a thought taken over by Christian philosophers in early Christian thought (for example, Augustine) and in the Middle Ages (for example, Thomas Aquinas).

- During the *Middle Ages* (approximately 500-1500 AD) it was actually only the privileged class of the knights that participated in sport. Ordinary people did not have the time or opportunity and the clergy did not consider physical activity of any great value - the *vita contemplativa* was much more eminent than the *vita activa*.

- Among the *sixteenth-century Reformers* we find a more balanced view (cf. Marshall, 1991: 4). Work as well as contemplation and relaxation were seen as good gifts from God, a part of man's divine calling. According to Luther (cf. Marshall, 1991: 23) contemplation is not something better than manual labor, which can also be done to the honor of God. Also Calvin regarded all kinds of work - not only the "spiritual" - as divine callings (cf. again Marshall, 1991: 23 for references).

- The *Renaissance* (1600-1700) reverted to ancient Greek culture, including their emphasis on physical education. Ball games for instance became popular in Italy and spread from there across Europe and to England.

- As early as the eighteenth century hand ball, cricket, basketball, and gymnastics were practised in Europe. But up to the beginning of the twentieth

century sport remained a peripheral phenomenon for the better part, only the privilege of the elite society.

- After the World War II, that is more or less since the second half of the previous century, sport flourished. Some speak about an "unprecedented zest for living" which took hold of humankind after the carnage of two wars. The important place that sport took since then in the West gradually spread to the rest of the world.

Since people's views on sport and on work have a mutual influence, we have to add something concerning the modern outlook on work. Marshall (1991: 5ff) shows how present-day humanity – in contrast to the ancient Greeks – attach a beatific or redeeming, almost religious value to work: "the society we live in, is focused on and centered around work. Our hope is a hope in work. Work defines our ultimate concern" (p. 8). Johnston (1994: 11) says: "we have allowed ... commitment to work to become our ideology."

Further work has become commercialized, so that only paid work is still regarded as work. However, it does not bring satisfaction: "Work has ceased to be a calling, and become a pain, and money is the compensation for it" (Marshall, 1991: 14). No wonder that people today live for the sport and relaxation of the weekend. "We manufacture distractions and entertainments, we live for Friday and Saturday nights, we count the days to vacations. These activities try to negate work and, hence, are controlled by it. Our most characteristic 'leisure activity' is consumption, an activity that has itself become more hectic and more akin to work" (Marshall, 1991: 19).

2.2 The situation today: the great influence of sport in society

A quarter of a century ago Opperman (1969: 183) called sport "the mightiest social power in this world" and said: "In comparison with other cultural activities sport enjoys by far the greatest support among participants as well as those interested in it" (Translated from Afrikaans).

Later writers confirm this statement. Visker (1994: 164) said that sport today has a greater impact on our lives now than during any previous time in history. It influences our time, energy, and finances. Other writers in the same volume even call sport an obsession with many Americans.

This fact is confirmed by Timmer (1999a: 137) when he points out that sports news (especially on TV) is nowadays regarded as more important than political, economic, and cultural news. Sports heroes are held in greater esteem than eminent leaders in the political, scientific, and other fields. According to him sport is now the greatest common factor among people – it unites them and it is the subject of most conversations.

MacFarland (1999: 155) summarizes it as follows:

Everywhere we turn, we experience sport. We schedule our church and family time around the media sporting event of the week. We idolize men and women who display superior athletic ability. We spend thousands of dollars annually to purchase shoes and clothing which represent us as athletes. We miss church services... We socialize our children into the realm of sport... Sport constitutes much of our conversation, media attention, reading material, leisure activity and discretionary spending... We have eagerly embraced this social phenomenon with little or no discussion or evaluation.

He rightly questions such an obsession.

Another writer demonstrates the result of this obsession: "sport is not leisure anymore. Sport has become a ... new cultural currency, a kind of social cement binding a diverse society together. Instead of ... family or religion, increasingly large numbers of Americans are choosing sport as the focus of their lives" (Hall, 1994: 214).

This obsession is coupled with great passion: "The passion raised by sports in our community are amongst the sharpest and strongest of all passions. More of us get worked up, more quickly, over sport than over any other aspect of life, including work, religion and politics. This strongly suggests that the attachment we have to sports borders the idolatrous ..." (Gidman and Turkington, 1999: 189).

Other writers go even further: sport not only borders on idolatry, it is idolatry, the secular religion of contemporary society (cf. Evink, 1998: 18). Van Reken (1999: 230-231) describes this religion in the following words:

Fans and players alike are sometimes so devoted to their team that it becomes their religion or object of worship. Then pep rallies are

orchestrated rituals of allegiance. In them homage is paid to the heroes, and the faithful are encouraged. Bumper stickers become professions of faith. Tail-gathering lunch in the parking lot before the game with hot dogs and beer is a kind of sacramental rite. Proclaiming the mighty deeds of your team to others is evangelism In our culture sport celebrities are turned into gods and all-star teams as pantheons.

He rightly adds: "This religious fervor for sports is neither innocent nor benign." Sport is no longer for the benefit of the human being, it is the other way round: the human being is captured in the service of the sport god.

The great influence of, for example, soccer is described by authors like Roques (2003), Kuper (2006), and Foer (2005).

Although most of these writers are describing the situation in the UK and USA, it also applies to other parts of the world. Rugby, cricket, and soccer crazy South Africa is only one example that confirms it. The power that sport can wield in society – in this case in the field of politics – was clear during the time of apartheid with various sport boycotts against South Africa.

2.3 Possible reasons for the great influence sport has on contemporary society

Sport and broader society can be differentiated, but not separated. Sport not only influences society, but also reflects its environment at the same time. This environment is characterized (cf. Ryken, 1994: 36) by among other things unlimited competition, the worship of success and the pursuit of money which dominates everything - all characteristics which are also found in sport. Therefore we will subsequently look at factors in contemporary society which contribute to the prominent place sport occupies.

More leisure time

During the sixties and seventies of the previous century attention was drawn to the fact that people would have more leisure time as a result of, among other things, the following: shorter working hours (a five-day working week), more regular vacations, a definite retirement age, and numerous time-saving inventions. Today, however, it seems as if this is no longer true. For instance, in the volume edited by Heintzman *et al.* (1994: 44, 79, 85) it says that the leisure

time of Americans has not increased, but has decreased by ten hours a week. Since 1990 they work harder and longer. "More Americans are working than ever before and many of them are working more hours, days, and years than a decade ago. Furthermore, the 'leisure revolution' has itself (how ironic!) become a major generator of jobs" (p. 85).

Many other factors

Other factors which are mentioned, are the following: (1) the artificial working conditions (for example, the sitting position of many occupations) and the huge demands made by contemporary occupations on body and soul; (2) little joy in routine work results in escape outside work; (3) huge-scale urbanization which causes people to escape during weekends; (4) the rushed pace and stress of modern culture; (5) faster traffic and communication facilitates events; (6) schools, colleges, and universities stimulate sport from an early age.

Commercialization

One of the weightiest factors seems to be the increased wealth and the accompanying commercialization of all facets of life - including sport. Timmer (1999a: 139) correctly remarks: "Sport at the professional level is a business. The product to be sold is the specific sport and, therefore, every item connected to the business is used to make money, including the players in the arena. In this sense the players become commodities and are therefore in danger of being dehumanized." The players become mere producers and the spectators mere consumers! (For further reflection on professional or paid sport, cf. Van Zijl and Putter, 1992: 129ff.)

Deeper reasons

Having mentioned all the above possible reasons, we have not yet touched on the deeper worldviewish reasons for the great influence of sport in society. When we pointed out above that sport has begun to play a religious role, something of this was mentioned. Modern secular life has renounced the old "spiritual" religions. We live in an increasingly materialistic-naturalistic spiritual climate. The earlier contempt for the body has been rejected and the vacuum left has been filled by a new religion of worshipping the body. This will become clearer still when we subsequently discuss three different attitudes towards sport.

3. Three diverging stands on sport

Various writers distinguish the following three main stands – or rather attitudes, for few people really reflect consciously on sport: (1) The *workaholics* expect too little from sport – this is something unworthy especially for Christians - because they put all emphasis on work. (2) The *hedonists* expect too much from sport, because for them it has become a religion. (Hoffman [1994: 139] calls sport "the newest and fastest growing religion in America, far outdistancing whatever is in the second place.") (3) The *utilitarianists* take up a position between the two extremes. They neither despise nor worship sport, but see it as a means of reaching higher goals. It is important to understand fully what each of these viewpoints entails.

3.1 Workaholism

Not only was sport and relaxation considered as of minor importance by many Christians (cf. §2.1). Several years ago Ryken (1994: 48) wrote: "Leisure is the subject of neglect in the contemporary church. When did you hear a sermon on the subject...?" He is right, such an attitude is wrong. Not only work but also relaxation and sport is an inherent part of our divine cultural mandate and stewardship.

Heintzman (1994: 27) confirms this impression when he writes that Christians in the USA usually have a well-developed theology of work, but not of rest, relaxation, or sport. From the Netherlands, Hoogland (1998: 22) writes that sport is too serious a phenomenon for Christians and churches not to reflect in earnest about it. Dahl (1994: 89) is of the opinion that Protestants are still afraid of the three s's: sexuality, the sensual, and silence (rest and relaxation). For if something feels good (the sensual) then it must be sinful!

The consequence of this viewpoint is that many books are written on work ethics but very few - if any - on the ethics of relaxation/sport. (At the Institute for Reformational Studies, for instance, there appeared studies no. 188, 254, 281, 311, 329, and 346 on work ethics and only one (no. 354) on relaxation, play, and sport!).

3.2 Hedonism

Dahl (1994: 87) points out the following significant shift that has taken place (at

least in the USA). Work is regarded as boring and senseless and has thus begun to lose its traditional value. It is no longer – as previously – regarded as a calling or at least an important means to self-realization end enhancing one's own identity. These values are now sought in something much more pleasant – relaxation and sport. Thus sport is also no longer considered as a means to recovery (recreation) after work, but as an aim in itself – something in which one can express and develop oneself, feel valuable, and find true satisfaction.

Timmer (1999a: 142, 146) joins in this viewpoint, but does not speak of hedonism. He uses the term "narcissism." By this he means that the individual himself/herself becomes the central focus point in sport. One sees it particularly in talented athletes how they become more and more self-centered and expect to get far more attention than ordinary people. They live in the dream world of the "celebrities." They are brimming over with themselves, over-evaluate themselves and in comparison to other - more important occupations - also earn far too much (cf. Hawthorne and Hawthorne, 1995).

Being directed at the self and self-gratification is coupled (according to Byl and Visser, 1999: 62) with an idolization of the human body - especially the youthful body. Modern-day people strive for eternal youth.

In opposition to the work ethics of the workaholics we get the "worth-ethics" of the hedonists (cf. Dahl, 1994: 85ff). Anyone who watches the television advertisements in South Africa and many other countries will know what this means. One should smell good, look beautiful, and young and afford many other things "because you're worth it."

The irony of the hedonistic view is that something like sport which should be relaxing, now becomes a new effort. ("Americans work at their play.") As a result of the commercialization of sport, this exertion amounts to ever greater production (by the athletes) and greater consumption (by the spectators)

3.3 Utilitarianism

As we have stated, this vision amounts to a position between that of expecting too little and too much from sport, between rejection and idolization. This too, is not a correct attitude, because the inherent worth of sport is not recognized – sport is only acceptable because it can be useful for something else.

External aims are for instance the following: sport is supposed to promote bodily health, psychic welfare, or important virtues. Among the virtues or characteristics which are usually enumerated (cf. Opperman, 1969: 387) are the following: a healthy lifestyle, co-operation, camaraderie, good social relations, reliability, honesty, mutual respect, self-restraint, a spirit of sportsmanship, courage, perseverance, obedience to rules, competitiveness, learning to lose, and other "values" which can build character.

Various sport scientists (for example, Miller and Jarma, 1988; Pooley, 1984; Priest *et al.*, 1999; and Walton, 1992) have great expectations about the physical, psychic, moral, and other values of sport. These high ideals about the value of sport have in the meantime proved to be a mirage.

In the first instance it must be stated that sport is not merely good because it enables a person to work better. Rest, relaxation, and sport have their own value and meaning. To enjoy it, is not wrong either. If sport were only to be used in the service of "higher" goals, it would erode the value of sport itself (cf. Evink, 1998: 17).

In the second instance empirical research has proved that sport does not necessarily contribute to physical and psychic health or character building. Hoffman (1994: 144) points out the opposite. As a result of the winning mania and the increasing violence in sport more and more serious injuries occur (cf. also Scholtz, 1992: 161ff). Besides modern-day sport excites strong passions rather than calming them down. The moral value of sport, too, namely that it supposedly promotes certain virtues, is today questioned. Research shows (cf. Hoffman, 1994: 144) that the influence of sport to instill good values is "dismal, even alarming." Hoffman (1994: 144) even quotes with approval someone who says: "Sport: if you want to build character, try something else."

Timmer, too (1999b: 265) confirms that there is unfortunately no empirical proof for the earlier idea that sport improves one's character or behavior. The conclusion is that sport - just like other activities - can indeed promote certain virtues, but does not necessarily do so. In any case there is no direct link between sport and an upright life. Current research rather uncovers many vices and sport evils. (Actually this is no surprise. Depending

on the religious direction – see below §7.2 – sport can, like any human activity, be either good or bad and therefore have either a good or a bad influence.)

Finally we have to mention that sport can also be used in a utilitarian way as a means to many other goals, such as to canvas students, make money, and even to spread the gospel. Concerning the latter, van der Walt (1992: 13ff) points out that the challenge to Christians is not to serve God *before* or *after* a match, but *in* the way they practise their sport. In the same volume Van Tonder (1992: 176ff) gives a balanced viewpoint on this popular tendency, especially among young Christian sportsmen, to use sport for evangelization.

If the conclusion is that none of these three views on sport is acceptable, what then is the correct one? Before turning to that we first have to say more on the current evils of and in sport and how little (Christian) reflection is done about it.

4. A crisis in sport ethics - with little reflection

To speak about a crisis in sport may sound like an overstatement. Therefore a few authorities are quoted.

4.1 Many evils

Concerning sport in the USA, Zuidema mentions the following evils "the stress on winning-at-all-costs, the increasing incidence of violence, a stress on combativeness, the promotion of games as only entertainment for fans, and an over-emphasis on personal glory." In the same volume, Heintzman *et al.* (1994: 201), the following structural evils are also mentioned "racism, sexism, cheating, irresponsibility, the abuse of drugs and steroids"

Further on (Heintzman *et al.*, 1994: 214) it even says: "Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard for rules, and sadistic pleasure in violence, in other words, it is war without the shooting." Still more writers in the same volume claim that sport does not bring to the fore the good in people but rather the bad (p. 317).

If there is one fault which almost all the writers point out, it is the first one

mentioned above, namely the obsession to win at all costs. Hall (1994: 215) writes "Winning seems to be the great American obsession, and our win-at-all-costs philosophy has distorted our sense of values." In the volume edited by Byl and Visser (1999: 180) the following is said about this "Our society applauds the biggest, the best and the first. For many athletes, self-worth is derived from the number of victories obtained. If you do not win, you are worse than a non-winner, you are a loser. An over-emphasis on winning demeans the best characteristic of play, that is enjoyment."

In South Africa the situation is no different. All the above-mentioned sport evils are found among us. If the Springboks, Proteas or Bafana-Bafana win an international game, they are heroes, if they lose it is regarded as a national catastrophe and they are jeered at.

More than ten years ago Putter (1992: 44) wrote "In sport, too, the chaos of sin can be clearly seen. We see it in bribery, in dishonest refereeing, in the use of stimulants, in the violation of rules, in the worship of the scoreboard, in the humiliation of the opponent, in self-exaltation, in arrogance and in many other forms" (translated from Afrikaans). Even earlier Scholtz (1977) found it essential to write about an exaggerated spirit of competition leading to aggression. Aggression is not limited to the participants, but also occurs between participants and referees, and among spectators (cf. Scholtz and Willemse, 1991).

4.2 Very little Christian reflection

Amid all such malpractices very little theoretical - particularly Christian - reflection takes place. Works like those by Groenman (1976), Van der Walt (1992), Heintzman, Van Andel and Visser (1994), Visser and Hoffman (1997), Byl and Visser (1999) and Roques (2003) are valuable exceptions which are only known within a limited circle.

Visser (1994: 164) hits the nail on the head when he writes

For the most part, we have allowed this phenomenon to permeate our lives without giving adequate attention as to how it ties into a biblically directed life style. Little effort has been made to determine the proper place for such activities or just how a Christian ought to behave while

participating in sport events. The attempts to integrate one's faith life with sport participation has too often resulted in nothing more than a pre-game invocation.

Christians in South Africa and other places in the world would also agree fully with the following words:

It is ironic that the aspect of leisure which has experienced the greatest participation rates, has been neglected the most by Christian scholars. With few exceptions, play, sport, and athletics have not been scrutinized as to their appropriateness for Christian involvement. Consequently, we run the risk of adopting secular standards for our participation in this area" (Visker, 1994: 138).

He proceeds with what is exactly the goal of this chapter: "Clearly, what is needed is a philosophical basis for participation in play, sport and athletics which is firmly based in the Holy Scriptures" (p. 138).

4.3 A sports ethics alone is not enough

Usually the solution to all the evils in sport is sought in sport ethics. An Internet search produces within minutes a wealth of recent data on "sport(s) ethics" or "ethics in sport." It is a general tendency today when in a certain field things are not as they should be, to take refuge in an ethics for the specific field. The writer deliberately avoids this "solution" since in many cases it merely amounts to a "moral sauce" without any inherent change in sport itself (cf. Van der Walt, 2000b: 305ff). One will have to dig down deeper!

5. Biblical and Christian perspectives

First some biblical guidelines are mentioned. Then we point out the implications of various Christian worldviews for sport. Subsequently attention is given to a Christian view of humanity – as a foundation for a view of sport.

5.1 Biblical perspectives

A difference can here be made between specific texts and broader biblical perspectives.

Texts

In their search for guidance on how to take part in sport Christians often look for specific texts. Then they quote for instance Ecclesiastes 9:10-11 (an injunction to enjoy life). Or they refer to various places in the New Testament where a life of faith is compared to different kinds of sport: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 (an athlete and a boxer), 2 Timothy 4:7 (a race) and Hebrews 12:1-2 (once more the metaphor of an athlete partaking in a race). Unfortunately not much can be inferred from such texts, since they use images from the world of sport and give no guidelines for sport itself.

Since sport is a bodily activity, parts of Scripture which point out how one should treat one's body is of more value. Examples are 1 Corinthians 3:16 (our bodies belong to the Lord); 1 Corinthians 6:13, 19-20 (our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and we should glorify God in our bodies); Ephesians 5:29 (one does not hate one's own body). These texts do not provide guidance specifically on sport either. So we have to look for more relevant biblical perspectives.

Broader biblical perspectives

We mention only three more inclusive perspectives without elaborating on them: the Sabbath, rest and the cultural mandate.

Sabbath

Heintzman (1994:17-26) discusses in detail the different biblical Sabbaths (the seventh day, seventh year and fiftieth year). According to him the biblical idea of the Sabbath denotes both a particular life rhythm (rest-work-rest) and a specific attitude. About the former he says: "the Sabbath as a day of abstaining from work, is not entirely for the purpose of restoring one's strength and enhancing the efficiency of one's future work. Rather than an interlude between periods of work, it is the climax of living... a taste of eternity - the world to come" (p. 26). About the latter he says: "it inculcates a spiritual attitude of rest, joy, freedom, and the celebration in God and the gift of creation" (p. 32).

Rest

Heintzman also discusses (pp. 26-32) with reference to different sections of Scripture the biblical concept "rest" and says it denotes "a pleasant, secure, and blessed life in the land ... peace and contentment of body, soul, and mind in God" (p. 32).

From the laws on the Sabbath and biblical emphasis on the necessity of rest (cf. Christ's invitation in Matthew 11:28-30) he therefore reaches the conclusion that relaxation, play, and sport is something essential and

Cultural mandate

Often the cultural mandate (of Genesis 1:28 and 2:15) is understood in such a way that human beings only get a command to work. In the light of the rest of the revelation in Scripture rest and relaxation, however, form part of the cultural mandate to human beings (cf. for example Cooper, 1999: 17). Marshall is right when he says (1991:18): "one part of our calling is the calling to rest." He proceeds to say something so significant that we quote it in full:

Thus rest is more than recuperation from and preparation for work. It is a God-given human response in its own right. ... it is not the inevitable result of spare time, a holiday, a week-end or a vacation ... rest and work may involve similar activities, but activities done in a different spirit... Resting is tied to faith – which is one reason why most of us avoid rest. ... The Scriptures frequently relate lack of rest to unbelief (Ps. 95:8-11; Heb. 3:7; 4:10) (Marshall, 1991: 19).

He goes on to explain:

When we rest we acknowledge that all our striving will, of itself, do nothing. It means letting the world pass us by for a time. Genuine rest requires acknowledgement that God, and our brothers and sisters, can survive without us. It requires recognition of our own insufficiency... It is a real surrender to the ways of God. It is a moment of celebration when we acknowledge that blessing comes only from the hand of God. This is why rest requires faith... When we rest we accept God's grace: we do not seek to earn, we receive; we do not justify, we are justified (Marshall, 1991: 19).

5.2 Various Christian worldviews

Apart from Bible texts and broader biblical perspectives, Christian sportsmen can also be guided by a Christian worldview. This is the way in which as a believer one views and interprets reality, and makes choices.

Although all Christian worldviews appeal to the Scriptures, they do not all see the Christian's place and task in reality in the same way. Byl (1999: 311ff), for instance, shows how Calvinists and Mennonites in the USA hold diverging views on the Christian and sport.

Van der Walt (2000a: 133ff; see also chapter 8 in this volume) differentiates (with reference to different views on the relation between creation and redemption) between different Christian worldviews and also shows what their implications are for the Christian's attitude towards for instance politics, technology, scholarship, etc. If his classification is applied to sport (cf. also van der Walt, 1992: 13ff), we get the following:

- Where redemption is set *over against* creation, it means that the Christian stands *opposed to* sport. Since it is something inferior that does not suit a Christian, he must abstain from it.

- When redemption is set *next to* creation, the implication is that to be a Christian and to practice a sport are two distinctly different matters which each have a right of existence, but have nothing to do the one with the other. One can be a Christian *and* a sportsman/sportswoman, but not a Christian sportsman /sportswoman. Sport is something neutral - it has nothing to do with one's Christian faith.

- If (in the next view) a Christian is elevated *above* sport, we can pray *before* or *after* a match (religion as a little "icing") but sport *itself* cannot really be done in a Christian way. Sport does have a right of existence only when it is utilized for some higher goal - like evangelization.

- The fourth (reformational) worldview teaches that redemption is meant *for* creation - to renew, re-create, and transform it. The ideal for a Christian sportsman therefore is not to be *either* a Christian or a sportsman (the first view above). Neither to be both a Christian *and* a sportswoman (the second and third worldviews above). This is the integral viewpoint of the Christian

sportsman/sportswoman – someone who does not seek to serve God *besides* his sport activities, but *in* them.

5.3 A Christian anthropology

Every worldview comprises at least the following six components: (1) an idea of God, (2) an idea of the law, (3) a view on being human (anthropology), (4) a view on the community, (5) an idea of time and history, and (6) a view of nature (see chapter 20 in this volume). Although all of these influence one's view of sport, the view of the human being is probably the most important. Although sport is not only something of the body, one is involved in it with one's whole being (cf. Spykman, 1994: 59), the bodily aspect is nevertheless very prominent.

Therefore, Cooper (1999: 7ff) and Williams (1999: 21ff) trace what the Bible reveals about the human body. In contrast to the belief held by many Christians that the Scriptures talk primarily about the soul or the spiritual aspect, they demonstrate that the word of the Lord lays great emphasis on one's physical needs, like food, clothes, health, a place to live, etc. That the bodily facet of being human is important to God, transpires from the Scripture's teaching on the resurrection of the body from death, and further from the incarnation of Christ. By numerous examples Williams shows (cf. pp. 21-29) how much emphasis the Gospel of Luke puts on bodily matters.

The fact that the bodily facet should not be despised (the past) does not mean, however, that it may be worshipped (today). Several writers stress that in the numerous contemporary "wellness" programs we encounter a "deified body." The most important of all is that one should feel good about one's body and experience bodily self-fulfillment.

I use the word "bodily" and not "body" on purpose to help avoid the age-old misconception that the body is supposedly a separate substance apart from the soul or spirit. Van der Walt (2000a: 336 and chapter 9 of this volume) explains that biblical concepts like "soul," "spirit," "body," "flesh," "heart," and others are all different *angles or perspectives* from which the Bible speaks about the total human being. These concepts therefore do not denote *separate parts* of being human. As we have just seen above, there is no

question of the "soul" or "spirit" being higher or more important than the "body." The implication of this is that a predominantly bodily activity like sport is not inferior to, for instance, an intellectual or artistic activity or even a confessional (faith) one. All these activities are part of one's inclusive religious life and can therefore be practised to the honor or dishonor of God. What has been said up to now was important preparation for placing sport in a broader perspective. It is now time to reflect on what sport is and what it should be.

6. The nature of sport inferred from a comparison with leisure and play

The word "sport," which first appears in literature in 1303, is probably (according to the *Reader's Digest Universal Dictionary*, 1987) derived from a Middle English word *disporten* which means "divert" or "amuse." Most sources consulted accordingly attempt to determine the particular nature of sport by comparing it with three related activities, namely leisure, play, and match or competition (game). From the difference and connection between the four concepts they then attempt to specify what the particular features of sport are. (Often - since relaxation/leisure can also entail effort - a further distinction is made between "leisure" and "recreation." "Leisure" would then denote the element of time, while "recreation" denotes how the spare time is spent.)

6.1 Three examples

We mention three examples of such an approach.

Byl (1994: 157) uses a schematic representation to distinguish between play, game, and sport. Play to him means something which is chosen freely and enjoyed. Competition is a voluntary attempt to overcome non-essential obstacles. Sport is an "extension" of play and competition, in which non-essential obstacles have to be overcome successfully with still greater dedication.

Timmer (1999a: 138) also says: "... sport is fundamentally an extension of play." Consequently he criticizes current sport which ignores the element of play, since it has made a job out of sport. He will therefore also have problems to accept professional sport as sport. Apart from (1) the element of play Timmer (1999a: 138) mentions the following three features which characterize

sport: (2) it is competition - there are losers and winners; (3) it is regulated by rules; (4) it demands physical skill. The question is whether (2) and (3) are indeed typical of sport alone. Does it not apply to a board game like "Monopoly" too?

Visker (1994: 170-4) follows the same scheme, but makes a much clearer distinction between the three. He says:

In summary, the structure of play was described by eight characteristics: (1) freely chosen; (2) has its own place in time; (3) is seriously engaged in; (4) is tran-serious, (5) autotelic; (6) has outcomes such as pleasure, joy, fulfillment, and renewal; (7) creates order; and (8) is fun. Game has all the characteristics of play in addition to more restrictive rules, established goals, obstacles to achieving goals, and possibly competition. The structure of sport entails all the characteristics of play and game with some modifications: more restrictive rules, more difficulty in achieving goals, the development of physical skills and use of physical exertion, and the necessity of competition.

Most probably we have to differentiate in this context between different levels or degrees of sport. Coetzee (2000: 162-3) for instance differentiates between top sport, achievement sport or professional sport (in which achievement and the motive to win are foremost), and ordinary sport (which is geared towards achievement and victory to a lesser degree, since the emphasis falls more on relaxation and social contact).

6.2 Why the distinction does not satisfy

Although it is important to differentiate between relaxation, play, competition, and sport, the question is whether such a comparison succeeds in bringing out what is typical of sport (what exactly it is). From the above it emerges how volatile the borders are. (One could say that sport is more than play but less than war!)

Further the impression is created that on a scale of leisure-play-competition-sport, sport is the best developed. Is this really the case? Is a game of chess not something intricate too? In my opinion the difference between the four activities is not merely a difference of degree, but is

something more *essential* - each one is an activity *of its own kind*.

Besides we have to pose the question whether any sport that meets the above characteristics is also good sport. We demonstrated above that the competition element, for instance, can degenerate to an obsession with winning at all costs. In the light of many other sport evils we have already mentioned, the normative question of *how* sport should be practised should not be neglected.

This type of analysis of what sport is therefore does not answer in a satisfactory way the two basic questions put at the beginning, namely exactly *what* sport is, and *how* it should be practised. A deeper philosophical reflection is needed.

7. An analysis of the structure and direction of sport according to reformational philosophy

Interesting research has been done on the influence of bodily development on the flourishing of the human person (cf., for example, Kugel, 1979; 1982; and 1989). According to a Christian reformational philosophy (as developed by D. H. Th. Vollenhoven, H. Dooyeweerd and H. G. Stoker and further developed by their followers) there should be a clear differentiation – without separation – between the *structure* and *direction*. "Structure" denotes the form or nature of something -it is either this or that. "Direction" denotes the good-evil determination of everything. At creation everything was good, directed to God in obedience. At the fall of Adam and Eve evil was introduced. As a result of Christ's work of redemption the unfaithful direction however, can be changed into a good one – obedience to God's will for life. What the implications of this distinction are for sport will now be investigated.

7.1 The structure of sport

Sport is much more than an attitude or an activity. As we have shown above, it plays a huge role in our society next to political, church, and economic life. Therefore Spykman (1994: 56) and Timmer (1999a: 146) speak of it as a social relationship. Sport not only differs in degree (cf. §6 above) but also essentially from leisure, play, and competition – the last three are not separate

societal relationships.

Different social relationships

According to the reformational philosophy – even though they are connected – a clear distinction has to be drawn between different social relationships. A marriage is not the same as a family; a church is not a social club; sport is not an economic enterprise. (For an elementary introduction to the reformational philosophy of society cf. van der Walt, 2000a: 387-416; and McCarthy *et al.*, 1982. More advanced works are those by Dooyeweerd, 1975; 1986; as well as by Skillen and McCarthy, 1991.)

To explain the difference between the separate social relationships the doctrine of different modalities is used. Modalities are different facets or aspects of reality. (The distinction between *this-that* denotes different structures. The *good-evil* determination denotes two religious directions. The distinction between *one aspect or another* differentiate between the dimensions or facets of reality.) The following aspects can be distinguished the arithmetic, spatial, physical, biotic, psychic, analytical, lingual, social, historical, economic, aesthetic, judicial, ethical, and the aspect of faith

Foundation and destination

Every social relationship reveals all these facets. Two of these modalities, however, play a more important role since they characterize the specific social relationship and are therefore distinguish it from other relationships. These two aspects are called (1) the founding and (2) the leading, qualifying, or determining function.

For instance a marriage is biotically founded (in the sexual), but is led or characterized by the ethical (mutual fidelity). The sexual aspect is necessary but is not the most important.

Application to sport

Since it is a differentiating characteristic of sport that it demands bodily fitness and skill (cf. above under §6) the physical-biotic can be regarded as its founding aspect. (It differs for instance from a logical or a language game.)

It is harder to determine the leading or qualifying element of sport. It has

become clear above that sport – just like work – is part of humanity's cultural mandate. But this historic forming ability is valid for all human activities. Of all the higher modalities the social seems the most suitable to characterize sport further. Even though today sport is commercialized to a business, it still does not mean that it is naturally something economic.

Sport also has a psychic side (emotions), a lingual (sport terminology), economic (cost implications), a judicial (sport rules), ethical (for example, integrity), and an aspect of faith (sports peoples' relationship with God). Not one of these facets may be ignored in sport. However they do not typify this activity and social relationship.

Practical implications

It has already become clear that this theoretical reflection on the structure of sport is not without practical benefit when we referred to the commercialization of sport. If sport is socially qualified the contemporary sport business implies a serious distortion of what sport actually should be.

The emphasis on winning at all costs is another example. Social contact and the joy flowing from it, should be much more important than winning. Byl (1994: 159) rightly points out that the word "competition" is derived from the Latin *cum* (together) and *petere* (strive, pursue). Thus it means pursuing a goal *together with* – not in the first place *against* – someone. In accordance with this Zylstra (1999: 123) suggests the following new definition of competition: "Each of us doing our best in order to prod the ones with whom we compete to do their best while they do the same for us."

The spirit of competition and especially the winning mania is clearly a product of modern western individualism. Among traditional non-western people one still often finds the social, communal character of leisure and "sport." The writer witnessed a first race for Bushmen organized in Namibia. All competitors reached the finishing line almost simultaneously. When the one who was clearly the fastest and who could have won, was asked why he was not first, he answered that he thought he had to wait for the others so that they could reach the goal together and all be happy!

From the reflection on what sport should be there already follow

important implications for its transformation. This necessity will become clearer still when we subsequently investigate the direction (the *how*) of sport.

7.2 The direction of sport

Not humanity's but God's will indicates the direction of the whole of life and therefore also of sport. His will clearly comes to the fore in various laws and mandates in Scripture. So for instance in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), the sermon on the mountain (Matthew 5-7), the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22) as well as in important virtues which are commended (for example Philippians 4:8).

The Ten Commandments as indicators

According to Visker (1994: 175-9) much can be inferred from the well-known Ten Commandments which also applies to sport. (In the case of some of the commandments (for example the fourth and seventh) his application to sport may be somewhat forced and therefore problematic.) The first and second commandments for instance warn against sport being deified - the way it is today - and therefore becoming a substitute for God. The third commandment prohibits not only the abuse of his Name (for example, in expletives or swear words), but also superficial prayers - even to be granted victory - before matches. The fourth commandment stresses a balance between work and rest. So sport should not – as is done today – be turned into work.

From the fifth to the tenth commandment much can be inferred on how sports people should act towards their "opponents." The fifth deals with recognizing authority and rules. In the sixth not only murder but (implicitly) anything that could lead to it is prohibited. Therefore hate, anger, revenge, violence, and winning at all costs are forbidden. The seventh commandment not only applies to married life (sexuality), but it forbids everything that is unethical. The eighth forbids amongst other things that victory be "stolen" in a dishonest way. The ninth stresses that the truth should not be distorted (for example, fiddling with the score). Finally the tenth commandment warns against jealousy and envy. A Christian should be able to win with humility and be a good loser - otherwise the joy and fulfillment which sport may offer are obstructed.

Structural laws, the law of love, and positive laws

The idea of God's laws as indicators for life could be elaborated even further in a philosophical manner. Vollenhoven, for instance, differentiates (cf. Toll and Bril, 1992) between God's threefold sovereignty which He applies by means of three kinds of laws. (1) In creation God reveals His *structural laws*, clearly visible in the orderly functioning of the various creatures. (2) In his word he lays down the *law of love* which points the direction for us (for example, Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:8-10). (3) Human beings (especially bearers of authority in the various societal relationships) have to formulate *positive laws* (norms) for the different human activities and social relationships, taking into account the structural laws and the law of love. (Therefore the positive laws or human norms form the "bridge" between the structural law and the law of love.) To do this properly, the guidance of the Holy Spirit is indispensable.

Simply put, it means that God's fundamental commandment of love should take form and be lived in its own unique way in different societal relationships. In marriage love takes form in mutual fidelity. In the state (politics) it takes the form of justice. The same should happen in the case of sport. If love were to take its own particular form in this part of our lives most of the sport evils mentioned above would no longer be there.

Sport values

Since sport is most likely socially qualified (see above) social values are of special importance. A few of these are: respect for fellow sportsman, referees, and spectators, loyalty, goodwill, co-operation, friendliness, reliability, and unselfishness.

Although they are not always in the foreground, other life values should be pursued *together* with social values. (Values of faith, for example, do not only play a role before or after a match.) Some of these are the following:

- *Biotic values*: respect for one's body, health, and life as well as for those of fellow human beings.

- *Psychic values*: emotional balance, sensitivity, self-restraint, perseverance.
- *Analytical values*: power of discernment, clarity of thought.
- *Language and communicative values*: clarity, truth, credibility.
- *Economic values*: responsible stewardship, which includes sobriety in spending and concern for those who have less.
- *Aesthetical values*: harmony and graceful movement
- *Judicial values*: justice, fairness, equity, obedience to rules, and respect for authority.
- *Moral values*: fidelity, integrity, honesty.
- *Values of faith*: trust, dedication, surrender, service to God *while* practising sport

8. In retrospect: redeemed sport

At the onset we stated that sport currently faces great *problems*: it often elicits the bad rather than the good in human beings. The *hypothesis* was that a reason for the problem could be that people do not really know *what* sport is and *how* it should be practised. After giving important background data on sport to understand the issue better, a *method* was followed according to which the structure and direction of sport could be ascertained. Without being in a position to work it out in detail, we found that the *result* of the theoretical investigation was that it held surprising practical implications for the contemporary sport world. Many sport evils can be combated with these new insights. There is no reason why sport should develop into a secular endeavor. Viewed and practised correctly, it can become a very important part of the Christian's calling in God's kingdom.

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*Like the first gleam of dawn:
reformational studies -
a B. J. van der Walt reader*

serves both as an introduction to the writings of the South African Christian philosopher Bennie van der Walt and as an introduction to Reformational Philosophy.

The book comprises an introduction and bibliography by Steve Bishop and five sections dealing with the sixteenth-century Reformation, Reformational Philosophy, Africa, Christian scholarship and Applied Philosophy.

The book looks at the tools provided by Reformational Philosophy, philosophy done in the light of the inscripturated word, the incarnated word, and the creational word of God. This distinctively Christian approach is then applied to diverse topics such as culture and development in Africa, globalization, sport, friendship and economics. This is testimony to the breadth and depth of Bennie van der Walt's work and to the comprehensiveness of Reformational Philosophy.



Bennie van der Walt studied Theology and Philosophy at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education and the Free University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. He holds a ThB in Theology and a doctor's degree in Philosophy. From 1970 - 1974 he was senior lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Fort Hare; from 1975 tot 1999 director of the Institute for Refomational Studies at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education and since 1980 he was also professor in Philosophy at the same univirsiry. He retired in 2002. He was awarded the Stals Prize for Philosophy in 2010.