

The Eye is the Lamp of the Body

Worldviews and their Impact



BJ van der Walt

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B.J. van der Walt



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CONTENTS

Preface: Prof. Derrick Mashau	ii
1. Introduction: Windows on the world	1

SECTION A: THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

2. How to view and read God's revelation, the basis for an integral Christian worldview	13
3. The popularity, history, structure, value and dangers of a worldview.....	49
4. The uniqueness of a Reformational worldview.....	85
5. The historical background of the postmodern view on normativity and on a Christian worldview.....	128

SECTION B: PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

6. Traditional African worldview and culture: a reason for the extreme poverty on the continent?	167
7. Antheunis Janse van Biggekerke (1890-1960): morning star of a Reformational worldview.....	189
8. The Christian worldview of Archbishop (emeritus) Desmond M. Tutu; (1) a general review.....	230
9. The Christian worldview of Archbishop (emeritus) Desmond M. Tutu; (2) his view on being human and on society.....	251
10. The Institute for Reformational Studies (1962-1999) as a Christian world- viewish organisation; its relevance for future Christian actions	278
Acknowledgements	304

PREFACE

I feel greatly privileged and honored to have been afforded this opportunity to introduce another important book from Professor B.J. van der Walt. I know the author as a great and respectable Christian philosopher who is not only a committed Christian, but also a good ambassador of Christ and Christian scholarship. He stands tall among Christian philosophers whose minds are informed and shaped by the Reformational worldview. Professor Bennie succeeded over the years to intertwine philosophy, theology and the Bible in his efforts to engage critically with various worldviews. When reading this book, it became once again clear for me that philosophy, theology and the Bible form the basis of his understanding and reflection about worldviews and related matters.

In this book, *The Eye is the Lamp of the Body: worldviews and their impact*, Professor van der Walt uses the concept of a light as outlined in Matthew 6:22,23 to demonstrate that a worldview is both a vision of and for life. Just like a light, a worldview not only illuminates our experience in life, but also prescribes how we should look and interact with the world and with one another – our whole existence. This book helps its readers not only to understand their worldviews, but it is also a toolkit to help us know how worldviews function in influencing our life. It propagates an integral Christian worldviews that challenges our narrow, relative and subjective way of looking at life as a whole.

This book is a wonderful toolkit in bringing about transformation in the world context wherein secularism, terrorism, poverty, political instability, crime, violence, corruption, racism, xenophobia and many more socio-economic and political issues are always top of the agenda. The book challenges its readers to embrace an integral Christian worldview that helps one to approach life holistically in an effort to impact and transform it from within. The author succeeded in demonstrating that the Reformational worldview is indeed an integral Christian worldview because (1) its is not stuck in the Calvinist tradition of the 16th century, (2) it propagates the Lordship of Christ in all spheres of life,

(3) thereby encouraging its adherents to be active participants in the renewal of all of life. In its scholarly form this kind of transformation is based on a Christian philosophy that seeks to acknowledge and apply God's will for all facets of our lives.

I highly recommend this book to all. It has the power to transform your life and enable you to look and interact with the world around you differently. It gives you the courage to stand up and be counted as Christians, Christian scholars and philosophers whose passion it is – just like the author of this book - to impact the whole of life as faithful ambassadors of Christ. I would like to conclude by congratulating Professor Van der Walt for this testimony regarding Christian scholarship. May the good Lord give you many more fruitful years ahead!

Prof. Derrick Mashau,

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North West University (Potchefstroom Campus)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: WINDOWS ON THE WORLD

By way of introduction the following matters are addressed: (1) An explanation of the title of this book. (2) Why a worldview is important to all people – for Christians too. (3) The fact that worldviews cannot be ignored. (4) The biased way most explanations are given of what a worldview entails. (5) In stead of such reductionistic expositions of worldviews, we subsequently give a broader analysis of this phenomenon. (6) Then attention is focused on the practical impact of worldviews. (7) The name for an integral Christian worldview is explained. (8) Finally mention is made of the intention to follow this worldviewish work with a philosophical one that will dig deeper into a Christian view of being human and a Christian societal philosophy.

* * *

1. The eye is the lamp of the body

The main title of this book was taken from the words of Christ in Mat. 6:22: "The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light." This is a loaded Eastern expression which has the following two related meanings.

On the one hand the eye reflects what the rest of the person looks like. The eye even reveals what lives deep down in the heart of a person. For instance, it can reveal jealousy, greed and hate, but also innocence, goodwill and love.

On the other hand the eye is a lamp that shows the way one should go. What the eye sees, not only influences the physical body, but one's whole existence. Here, too, there are two possibilities. If the eye is good, a bright light, one's whole existence will be lit up. But if not, one lives in darkness: "If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Mat. 6 verse 23).

People who explain the Scriptures give different interpretations to this passage. The light is seen, for instance, as one's mind or reason or as spiritual insight. I consider it as a good description of the nature and influence of worldviews.

On the one hand someone's lifestyle tells us what his worldview is like. It reveals the direction of his heart. On the other hand someone's worldview determines what his whole existence will be like. As will become apparent from Chapter 3, this interaction is important.

However, it also becomes clear from this passage that a worldview can be good or bad and can therefore have good or bad consequences – it can either light up one's life or darken it. It depends on one's attitude: obedience to God and his revelation or disobedience. Proverbs 4:18 (one of my favourite texts) reads as follows: "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day". But verse 19 is also true: "... the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble" (NIV).

With the title of the book we therefore describe its contents. The first part (chap. 2-5) deals with the *nature* and the second part (chap. 6-10) with the *impact* of worldviews.

2. Importance of a worldview

A basic question that Christians of all times (as well as people of other religions) have to answer is how their faith can be expressed so that it is relevant for their own time and circumstances. Differently put: How can one's religious convictions play a role in the domains of public life like the media, politics, art, science, economy, etc.? Attempts have been made during the course of history to answer this question in various – often unsatisfactory – ways. The answer of this book is that one's Christian faith should take the form of a holistic, integrally Christian worldview in order to be significant not only for one's *personal* life, but for the *whole* of life (marriage, family, business, education, professional life, etc.).

Acknowledging the importance of a (Christian) worldview, this book wants to help the reader in two ways: (1) Understanding *what* worldviews are, and (2) to point out *how* worldviews influence everyday life.

3. Worldviews cannot be ignored

The importance of worldviews has been underestimated or even ignored in four different ways: by (1) rationalism, (2) postmodernism, (3) privatism and (4) modern day experience culture.

- For a long time (1600-1900) modernists worked on the supposition that human beings – especially scholars – could look at reality in a neutral or unprejudiced way. Long before postmodernist (irrationalist) philosophers showed that this view held by modernists was untenable, Christian philosophers in the Reformational tradition already did it.

Therefore postmodern and Reformational philosophy agree that one's look on reality is always "coloured" by one's worldview – in other words it is not neutral or objective. Such worldviewish "spectacles" or "windows" on reality is thus human constructs and may not be absolutised, as – ironically - happens in the case of the rationalist view.

- Apart from this correspondence, there also are essential, most vital differences between the postmodernist and Reformational understanding of a worldview (cf. chap. 5). According to the first-mentioned movement no distinction is made between worldviews and ideologies. Worldviews are "great narratives" that oppress people. Therefore they have to be fought (deconstructed). Besides, postmodernism also lapses into truth relativism: there are as many realities as there are world-views! Of course it is impossible to think in a completely relativistic way. (Believing that everything is relative, is also a belief.) In reality the postmodernist worldview is the new hidden "great narrative" from the angle of which all other worldviews are judged and condemned.
- The Reformational view also differs from a third contemporary viewpoint that teaches that worldviews could still be admissible in the personal (private)

domain, but that they should be banned from the public domain, since they allegedly divide a country or nation. (Therefore this secular vision was designated above as "privatism".) The reason why a Reformational viewpoint rejects this kind of secularism, is that *shifting* worldviewish matters to the private domain does not mean that they *disappear*. They still have an influence – even in unacceptable ways. It is therefore much better to recognise from the onset the role of worldviewish convictions and grant them their rightful place in public life.

- Subsequently there is a fourth contemporary viewpoint that regards worldviews as insignificant: modern day experience culture. (Cf. Doornebal *et al.*, 2007 and Van der Stoep, 2007 for full expositions on what this newest of tendencies entails.) According to this view of importance is not worldviews, but personal religious experience; not systematic thought, but emotions; not objectivity but subjectivity. While religious convictions during the foregoing more rationally oriented cultural period had to be transposed into rational arguments, now primacy is given to personal experience. Convictions or opinions are only accepted when someone is personally touched by them. What feels good to a person, is the truth. Satisfaction fills the spiritual void. This reaction against the earlier rationalism is understandable, but it can lead to total relativism and subjectivism. Thus worldviews remain important, even today. (Cf. Buijs & Paul, 2007 and Paul, 2007.)

Our conclusion is that worldviews may not be regarded as unimportant when they are ignored by rationalism or relativised by postmodernism or marginalised by current secularism or underestimated by contemporary experience culture. Nobody can go without a worldview – however vaguely delineated it may be.

4. Biased explanations of a worldview

Contrary to other writings, this book presupposes that a worldview is a complex phenomenon with many facets. Some examples of one-sided approaches are:

- *Theologians* are inclined to see only the aspect of faith entailed in a worldview and neglect or ignore its social-economic-political sides.

- Some *sociologists* again emphasise that a worldview is merely a social construct and nothing more.
- *Linguists* may reduce a worldview to a mere language game.
- To *historians* (cf. e.g. the historicism of postmodernism) a worldview is often just a historical, transitory phenomenon that can hold no lasting truth.
- *Psychologists* are inclined to explain a worldview in terms of the emotional life of people. Different types of personalities explain the differences between worldviews.
- To many orthodox *Christians* a worldview is primarily a logical system. In reaction to this other Christians stress orthopraxis, in other words that a worldview is not in the first instance a pure *dogma*, but should entail a practical *Christian life*.

As will transpire below, all these views on a worldview contain a moment of truth: A worldview does indeed contain an element of faith, has a social side, a lingual facet, historical, emotional and logical aspects. Unfortunately these moments of truth are exaggerated so that they deteriorate into –isms (like historicism and rationalism). Such a reductionist worldview – in other words a peep through the key-hole of only one of the many facets present in a worldview – offers a warped image of reality.

Such a one-sided perspective on worldviews not only creates theoretical problems. When a worldview is, for instance, regarded primarily as a logical system (dogma), while its emotional or experiential aspect is neglected, in the long run it will not satisfy the adherents of such a worldview (for people are also emotional beings). This could lead to a reaction in which emotional experience may be over-emphasised. (Cf. e.g. contemporary charismatic reactions to the stress laid by reformed churches on orthodoxy.)

The true solution to such problems can only be offered by a broader, more encompassing explanation of the nature of a worldview.

5. A broader structural analysis

According to a Reformational philosophy everything in reality exhibits at least the following 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.

This analysis was not applied in Chapter 3, but is the outcome of further reflection after writing the chapter. It is added here because it can deepen and broaden reflection on the nature of a worldview.

6. The practical impact of a worldview

We often tend to separate our *view* of the world (our faith) from our day to day *walk* in the world. Then we fall into all kinds of dualisms. *Lifeworld* and *lifestyle*, however, should be regarded as an unseparable unity: one's *view* is part of one's *way of life*. A normal person does not simply walk in any direction, but looks carefully which way s/he takes!

From the above analysis it transpired that a worldview is not an abstract, logical construct, separated from the rest of life. It should be *lived* in everyday life with its many facets. (In real life one usually does not encounter a clearly formulated worldview, that has been committed to writing, but one has to deduct from the effects it has in practice what such a worldview entails.) Reflection on a worldview in which, for example, only the faith aspect is stressed, therefore does

not touch on the whole of life. (Cf. e.g. James 2:14-26 where it is emphasised that faith should lead to good *deeds*.)

History also proves that worldviews have “hands” and “feet” – they walk through history and change it for better or for worse. They leave a trail of salvation (blessing) or blood (violence) behind them. This usually happens when a worldview hardens or deteriorates into an ideology (cf. Goudzwaard, 1984). That we do not today live in a post-ideological era is evident from Goudzwaard's, *et al.* (2007) discussion of the environmental crisis, poverty and terrorism.

Therefore, after a theoretical reflection (in the first part of this book) on *what* a worldview is, the second main part explains *how* worldviews influence life.

In Chapter 6 it is demonstrated how the traditional African worldview can lead to (economic) poverty. In contrast to this the two following chapters show what the value of an integral Christian worldview can be in the life of people in various countries, times and circumstances.

First we deal (in Chapter 7) with the worldview of Antheunis Janse (1890-1960) from the Netherlands in the previous century. As an ordinary teacher he became the (worldviewish) forerunner of a Reformational philosophy. Then we investigate (in Chapters 8 and 9) the worldview of Archbishop (emeritus) Desmond Tutu (1931-) The Christian worldview of this world-renowned African leader not only contributed to the abolition of apartheid in South Africa. His worldview remains a critical voice against the post-apartheid regime after 1994.

In the following chapter (10) the focus is shifted from persons to an organisation. The emphasis is laid on the significant influence Christian worldviewish organisations (like the Institute for Reformational Studies) can have on a secular society. Furthermore it is proved from the history of this organisation (as set out in Chapter 4) that an integral Christian worldview clashes with dualistic Christian worldviews. Such a holistic Christian worldview is called a “Reformational” worldview in this book. This concept demands a brief explanation.

7. The name “Reformational”

Since the name by which I denote an all-encompassing Christian worldview could lead to misunderstanding, it is explained in advance – first in a negative way (what it is not) and then in a positive way (what it does mean.)

First, “Reformational” is not used here to refer to the Reformed *churches* resulting from the 16th Century Reformation, in other words in an ecclesiastical meaning. People not belonging to Reformed churches can also think in a Reformational way, while members of Reformed churches may have a worldview that is not Reformational.

Secondly it is not understood in a *confessional* sense either, referring to certain creeds which originated in the time of the great reformers like Luther, Calvin and others. These creeds originated in specific times and circumstances and do not address all the problems of contemporary life.

Thirdly, the concept is not used in a *theological* sense either. A worldview is something pre-scientific and therefore not of a theological or philosophical nature.

The Reformational worldview is not negatively disposed towards the above-mentioned, but may not be identified with them, since it has a broader meaning.

A Reformational worldview stresses in a positive way the following: (1) It emphasises the renewal of our thoughts, so that we can know God’s will (cf. Rom 12:1-2) for *all* facets of our lives. (2) The word “Reformational” (in stead of Reformed) points out that this worldview was not finished or completed in the past (for instance the 16th Century). It does not want stop with the past, but advocates *continual* reformation of our thoughts and deeds. (3) This worldview therefore does link up with what was good in the 16th Century Reformation, but also with the further development of this tradition (so-called neo-Calvinism) in the work of for instance, A. Kuyper, H. Bavink, D.H.Th Vollenhoven and H. Dooyeweerd in the Netherlands and their numerous followers across the world. (4) In contrast to a restricted ecclesiastical, confessional or theological meaning

the Reformational worldview has to be understood in a much wider, *cultural* meaning. For there is no domain of life in which God should not be served and obeyed.

In spite of everything said the concept "Reformational" can still be misunderstood as if it is (1) merely a reformulation – or even a servile repetition – of the past, in other words repristination; (2) an arrived, completed worldview, in other words a kind of conservatism that simply accepts the *status quo* as normative.

In the light of this the word "transformation" or "transformational" worldview could be useful. In "transformation" the *trans* more clearly denotes the new things that emerge from the past. If transformation meets God's norms (there are anti-normative transformations like revolutions too) I have no objection against using the word. But in the various chapters we speak mostly of a Reformational worldview since this is the term accepted worldwide.

The last explanatory note of this introduction deals with:

8. A sequel to this book

A worldview takes possession of one's heart – the centre of one's existence. This deeply religious source of one's whole life – to obey God or not to do so – directs everything one does. Therefore the Word of God says in Proverbs 4:23: "Above all, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."

As will become apparent from the book, a worldview is something pre-scientific – it is not something only academics have. (Philosophy is the scientific reflection on various other worldviews as well as one's own.) Furthermore a worldview offers only the main lines, a basic framework or "window" through which one looks at the world.

Therefore a particular need is felt to extend the "windows" on reality offered here into a complete house, a Christian philosophy. Thus the follow-up book we envisage will dig down deeper into a Christian view of being human (anthropology) and Christian societal philosophy.

9. Inspiring, motivating, liberating

My personal experience in life was that when an integral Christian worldview grips one's heart, a new world opens up. It brings light into the darkness. It orientates, motivates and inspires. It is liberating. Just as a ship cannot navigate the stormy sea without a rudder, chart, compass and anchor, one should not attempt one's life's journey without a dependable worldview. It is my wish that this book may contribute to readers experiencing the same: inspiration, motivation and liberation.

10. In conclusion

- Since this book contains the reworking and compilation of articles which were published formerly (mainly in Afrikaans) in various journals, repetition and overlapping between chapters were inevitable. Such repetitions may however be regarded as a re-emphasis of pivotal ideas. Permission to re-publish the articles in English is hereby acknowledged with thanks (see *Acknowledgements* at the end of the book.)
- I acknowledge with gratitude a donation from prof. Annette Combrink, Campus Rector, Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University to the printing costs of this book.
- I dedicate this work to my dear wife, critic and typist since 1964: Hannetjie. Her inspiration and assistance ensured its publication.

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* * *

Chapter 2

HOW TO VIEW AND TO UNDERSTAND GOD'S REVELATION

The basis for an integral Christian worldview

Without reservation most Christians will accept the Bible as the authoritative Word of God to be listened to and obeyed. However, a closer look at the different ways in which believers and scholars read and study the Scriptures reveals different viewpoints about the nature of the Bible. It is, for instance, regarded as a dogmatic, moral or historical text. In spite of the fact that all such viewpoints contain moments of truth, they fail to see the really unique character of the Bible as a book of faith. Consequently the Word of God cannot be correctly understood.

A Christian philosophical approach can (1) provide a better answer to the key problem, viz. the real nature of the Bible as literature. (2) It can also be clarified why and how the Word of God functions with authority in the entire life of Christians. (3) From this perspective it also becomes possible to improve existing methods of reading/studying the Bible with new approaches recognising the unique nature of God's biblical revelation. (4) It will also become clear how God's revelation can function as the basis for a broad, transformative, Christian worldview.

1. Introduction: the problem, how it will be approached and the set-up of the investigation

1.1 The issue

This chapter departs from the assumption that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God. Most Christians will agree with such a point of departure, yet they can use the Word of God in different ways and on that basis have diverse opinions.

Thus it appears that it is not sufficient to say that one accepts the Scriptures as authoritative. The problem is that one should know what the nature of the

Scriptures is to be able to know what kind of authority it has and how it should be exercised. With right Olthuis (1979:66) says: "... a simple affirmation of Scriptural authority guarantees neither a true doctrine of Scripture nor a true interpretation of Scripture... Biblical authority... is empty – mere lip service – unless we know to understand what the Bible means." Therefore this chapter would like to ask the basic question what the unique nature of the Scriptures is.

Although the writer is conscious of the fact that in theology shelves full of books were written about revelation in the Scriptures, this investigation will not go the theological way. It is an attempt to investigate specifically whether a Christian philosophy can also make a contribution to clarifying this vital problem.

1.2 Set-up

The problem will be viewed from the following angles. (1) The first step draws attention to the Bible as the written part of God's revelation. (2) Subsequently the issue is raised whether more about the nature of this Book can be learned from its contents. (3) A further step is to investigate what can be deduced about the nature of the biblical revelation when the different methods of exegesis are considered. (4) Then something more about its nature and authority is determined from the kind of language used in the Scriptures. (5) In the fifth main point (that links up with the previous one) it is investigated what it entails to describe the Bible by the metaphor of light. (6) The next main part will sum up some of the gains of such a new Christian philosophical approach to the Scriptures. (7) Finally some hermeneutic implications will be pointed out briefly.

1.3 Nature

It is not the intention of this article to evaluate the existing viewpoints of Reformational philosophers and/or put forth a new viewpoint. It is meant primarily for the uninitiated in this kind of philosophical thought. In line with this intention it is a simple, comprehensible, elementary introduction. So while it may not mean much to philosophical scholars in this field, it could be of great value to other readers.

2. The Bible as God's written revelation

The meaning of revelation lies in the idea of unveiling. (Like the unveiling of a statue, a bridegroom unveiling his bride or the drawing apart of curtains to open a play.) God reveals to us the meaning of things which would otherwise remain unknowable. True knowledge, therefore, comes by discovering God's works, retracing his ways (cf. Spykman, 1969:64).

The Bible is not God's only revelation and should not be read apart from his other revelations.

2.1 A threefold revelation

In the Reformed tradition it was usually confessed that the Bible is not the only way in which God has revealed Himself. In the Heidelberg Catechism (Lord's Day 6, answer 19) it says, for instance, that God already made Himself known in Paradise, thereafter had his Word proclaimed by the prophets and finally fulfilled it in his Son.

The Belgic Confession also differentiates in article 2 between two ways in which man can know God: (1) his creation, preservation and government of the whole world, and (2) his holy or divine Word. (3) The rest of this confession (cf. e.g. Art. 8) also calls Christ God's Word incarnate. Spykman (1969:64) distinguishes five forms of God's Word: (1) his *creative* Word, which brought the world into existence; (2) his *redeeming* Word, spoken through the prophets; (3) his *written* Word, the Bible; (4) his Word *incarnate*, Jesus Christ and (5) his Word of *proclamation*, in the preaching and teaching of the church.

2.2 Neglected in the past

Unfortunately for the greater part of the Reformed Evangelical tradition God's creational revelation was recognised, but without enough emphasis on understanding and applying it. The preponderant emphasis was laid on the Scriptures and its message of sin and redemption. "The dogma of creation has always been there, affirmed, in the church background of benign neglect, while

we concentrated on 'salvation' and 'sanctification' ... we have lacked to develop reflection true to Scripture on creation..." (Seerveld, 2000b:206).

This is not what was originally meant by *sola Scriptura*. This well-known slogan from the 16th Century Reformation originally was meant to take a stand against the Roman Catholic emphasis on tradition, the power of the pope, the authoritarian authority of the church and the monopoly of the church on reading the Bible. Later on it got a different meaning (cf. Kruger, 2000 and 2003): a facet of God's revelation (the Scriptures) was given preference while less weight was given to another part thereof (God's revelation through creation). This under-evaluation is evident for instance from the use of the word "general" in opposition to "special" revelation. Troost (1978) devotes almost a whole article to the way the Scriptures were made independent and absolute over against the way God's creational revelation was hollowed out and made sterile in most orthodox theologies.

Such a viewpoint had numerous unhealthy consequences. One of the more serious was that too much was expected from the Scriptures. It had to supply answers to all possible problems (a viewpoint called biblicism or fundamentalism).

With right another Reformational philosopher wrote the following: "We need to study not only God's Word but also God's world; we study the world in the light of the Word. We need to study not only Isaiah but also industry. Not only Philemon but also politics. Not only Acts but arts. It is not for us to choose between knowing the Bible or the world; we need to *know the world biblically*" (Marshall, 1998:58).

2.3 Honour restored in earlier Reformational philosophy

Before indicating how various Reformational philosophers saw God's revelation, attention is drawn to the fact that the well-known Reformed theologian H. Bavinck (1854-1921) already proposed his own "Philosophy of revelation". Three of his most significant insights were the following:

First it is important that he stresses the revelational character of the *whole* creation: "Revelation, while having its centre in the Person of Christ, in its periphery extends to the uttermost ends of creation. It does not stand isolated in nature and history, does not resemble an island in the ocean, nor a drop of oil upon water. With the whole of nature, with the whole of history, with the whole of humanity, with family and society, with science and art it is intimately connected. The world itself rests on revelation; revelation is the presupposition, the foundation, the secret of all that exists..." (Bavinck, 1979:27).

Secondly Bavinck emphasises the unity and interdependence between God's creational and Scriptural revelations: "General revelation leads to special, special revelation points back to general. The one calls for the other, and without it remains imperfect and unintelligible. Together they proclaim the manifold wisdom of God displayed in creation and redemption" (Bavinck, 1979:28).

A third central idea of great significance in Bavinck's reflections is that he regards the will of God as the contents of his revelation: "Revelation is a disclosure... What neither nature, nor history, neither mind nor heart, neither science nor art can teach us it makes known to us – the fixed, unalterable *will* of God... This will is the secret of revelation" (Bavinck, 1979:25).

What Bavinck says here, is not followed in many Evangelical and Reformed circles. As will transpire later on it is, however, exactly such viewpoints that are typical of the later Reformational philosophy.

2.4 Special attention within contemporary Reformational philosophy

I regard it as one of the vital contributions of Reformational philosophy (Vollenhoven, Dooyeweerd and their numerous followers worldwide) that they not only emphasised the revelational character of creation (following the line of Bavinck), but also laid special stress on God's creational revelation in unison with his written Word and Word incarnate.

We cannot go into the detail of their views here, but merely give an introductory overview. Therefore some of the most important figures who made contributions

in this field are mentioned beforehand so that readers can study them in detail on their own. They are (in alphabetical order) the following : Fowler (especially 1985 but also 1991), Hart (1989), Marshall (1998) Mekkes (1965), Olthuis (1976, 1979, 1987), Seerveld (2000a, 2000b, 2000c and 2003), Spykman (1973a, 1973b, 1985 and 1992), Troost (1978 and 2004) and Wolters (1985).

2.5 One revelation in three ways

According to Spykman (1973a:19, also cf. 1981:149-150) it is important not to misunderstand "the Scriptures alone" (cf. above): "... the *sola Scriptura* in the ablative case, meaning *by* Scripture alone, should not be interpreted to mean that the Bible is the only source of revelation. For taking the Scripture seriously as Word of God leads to recognize God's Word in all its fullness, as manifest in creation and incarnation". He who recognises the Scriptures as the only revelation of God, lapses into fundamentalism (cf. Fowler, 1985:9).

2.5.1 A Biblical example

A simple example (which the writer used to explain God's threefold revelation to his students) is found in Matthew 2 verses 1-12 (the history of Christ's birth). The men from the East are led on by a special star (God's creational revelation); from Jerusalem they are guided further to the place of his birth by God's Scriptural revelation (the prophecy in Micha 5:1); finally they reach the Word incarnate, the Child, Jesus Christ.

2.5.2 The necessity

Why it was necessary for God to reveal Himself in three separate ways, is explained by Spykman as follows. Although God's creational revelation is clear, man's eyes have been blinded by his falling into sin, his ears are deafened, his mind clouded and his heart hardened so that he suppresses this revelation and substitutes his own pseudo-revelations (Rom. 1:21-23). In his grace God "republishes" his Word, this time not in a "language" without words (Ps 19:1-4), but in the languages of the Old and New testament – his in-scripturated Word. As a result of our unwillingness to listen, God goes a further mile with us by bringing

his Word even closer to us in the Person of his Son, Jesus Christ – the Word incarnate. As a human being Christ came and lived according to God's will the way we should live. So not only does Christ make known to us God and his will, He also helps us to get to know ourselves as human beings and how we should live to experience true humanity. (Cf. Spykman, 1973a:20-21, 1973b:7,8 and 1992:78 *et seq.* where the key text references are also given on the threefold revelation in the Old and New Testament.) Thus God's threefold revelation links up with the three main moments in history, (1) creation, (2) the fall of man and (3) salvation.

Summarised: "God published his Word first in creation. After sin, that Word was republished in Scripture. In the fullness of time that Word was personified in Jesus Christ" (Spykman, 1973a:8. Also cf. Spykman, 1981:153). This viewpoint could wrongly create the idea that the threefold revelation is chronologically delineated. However, God already spoke to Adam and Eve in Paradise and the Word (Christ) was there from the onset.

2.5.3 One revelation

It is of paramount importance that the age-old nature-grace dualism is not applied to God's revelation. (Cf. especially Troost, 1978 and 2004.) Fowler emphasises that God reveals Himself only in creation (in nature, in human words in a book and in Christ who became human). "All revelation is natural in that it is given in and through the creation (nature), and all revelation is supernatural in that it is given by God who, as Creator, is above and beyond all that is created, and is known only by grace" (Fowler, 1985:7).

All Reformational philosophers therefore strongly stress the unity of God's threefold revelation. Spykman (1992:83) says for instance: "... there is but one Word of God, not ... three. From beginning to end God issues a single Word, a consistent message, an unaltered will." The most vital thing about God's revelation is therefore making known his will or laws/commandments for life. Since creation reveals God's ordinances to us, it is also the Christian's task to try

and ascertain the regularities in for instance biology, psychology and aesthetics (cf. Seerveld, 2000a:47).

2.6 The importance and correct understanding of creational revelation

Seerveld (2000a:47) further says that the scant attention paid to creational revelation arises from the fact that Evangelical Christians put all the emphasis on the message of salvation in the Scriptures. He stresses that creation is also a revelation of God. Day and night God speaks to his creatures by means of "glossolalia" (or language without words). We therefore cannot deduct everything from the Bible, but have to study the taxonomy of a plant, personality types and economic laws ourselves. To expect cut and dried answers to things like these from the Scriptures, is an abuse of the Bible and an evasion of our own responsibility.

2.6.1 Of paramount importance

Elsewhere he stresses anew (cf. Seerveld, 2000b:205) the importance of creation and creational revelation: "Perhaps the most redemptive message we people of God can bring to our world in crisis is an articulate, biblically rich confession of creation", for in this way we can get to know God's creational order again.

It is of paramount importance to see this creational order correctly. Spykman assists in this by pointing out that creation only reveals God's Word in a reflexive way. Only from the orderly functioning of the created things can we deduce which laws apply to them. In his own words: "The Word of God as such is transcendent. It is not directly accessible to human investigation. It is therefore misleading to say without qualification the creation *is* Divine revelation – that it *is* the Word of God. Such expressions carry pantheist overtones. Creational revelation is rather a *reflexive, responsive* concept. We gain insight ... by observing how God's various creatures respond to the holding power of his Word, each creature 'after its kind'. This holds for every aspect of reality: migrating birds, land use, human rationality, child development, ... reflection on our faith-life. Theoretical enquiry therefore calls for studying the *reflexive* impact of creational revelation as it

impinges on each creature's way of answering to the *response* side of God's Word for creation" (Spykman, 1992:81).

2.6.2 Understanding correctly essential

Seerveld (2000c) assists us still further in understanding God's creational revelation. First he points out that God's glossolalia (just as his Scriptural revelation) can be abused in three ways. The first way is to misuse it moralistically (cf. Seerveld, 2000c:161 on how preachers completely misuse what Proverbs 30 :24-28 says about the ants, locusts, conies and lizards). A second wrong use is the dogmatic, which attempts to prove the existence of a Creator from creation. The third wrong way is the secularist attitude which is only interested in the regularities of creation, while ignoring or denying the existence of the Lawgiver.

Secondly Seerveld (2000c:163) points out that it is easier to "read" God's creational revelation in the case of non-human things (matter, plants and animals). Just like the non-human the human can also have a revelational character, but it is not always the case. The reason for this is that God's ordinations in the case of humans – contrary to the so-called laws of nature for matter, plants and animals – have a normative or optional character. People can therefore answer in obedience or disobedience (cf. Spykman above on the responsive character of God's creational ordinations). Human feelings, historic events, economic similarities therefore are not as a matter of course God's glossolalia, containing his norms for life.

2.6.3 Guidelines

So the next question that stands to reason is how God's creational revelation can be read and used correctly. Seerveld (2000c:163) suggest two guidelines: (1) it should lead to the praise of and obedience to God; (2) it may not go further than the Scriptures, in other words it should be read in the light of the Scriptures.

This, however, leads to a next problem, namely the relation between the threefold revelation. Once more we give the word to several Reformational philosophers.

2.7 The relation between God's creational and Scriptural revelation

Departing from the viewpoint of a unity in God's revelation, Troost (1978) criticises in detail several differentiations (like "general" and "special" revelation) and even divisions made in God's revelation. It even goes so far (cf. Troost, 1978:103) that some (like K. Barth) deny God's creational revelation, while others again (like H.M. Kuitert) relativises his revelation in the Scriptures. When one wants to listen to the Bible alone, it leads to Biblicism. And when one studies creation without the light afforded by the Scriptures, the result is secularism (cf. Spykman, 1981:152).

2.7.1 The differences

Troost agrees with other Reformational philosophers (cf. above) that God reveals his creational order or will in the Scriptures as well as in creation. The Bible is something special because it makes it clear that God pursues his intention with creation in spite of the fall. Scripture pertains especially to God's work of salvation, to the liberation of creation, so that it can once more obey God's creational ordinance and be healed. (Cf. Troost, 1978:125.)

Therefore the Scriptures do not *take the place* of God's creational revelation, but is not merely a *repetition* of it either. Spykman's word "republication" can create the wrong impression. But Spykman explains it as follows: "In Scripture God's Word comes to us in *lingual* form ... Moreover, in Scripture God's Word comes to us in the language of *redemption* to renew our hearts, to open our eyes to see and our ears to hear what God has been saying to us from the very beginning" (Spykman, 1973a:9. Cf. also Spykman, 1992:125 for a full exposition.)

According to Fowler (1985:11, 12) the uniqueness of the Scriptures does not lie only in the form (as a revelation in language), but also in its contents: it was

inspired by God Himself (and is therefore authoritative) and fills a specific soteriological function (its message of salvation).

2.7.2 A restricted role

Fowler (1985:24) thus stresses what was stated above, namely that the Scriptures, although *indispensable*, still has a *restricted* role. We cannot solve all our questions and problems by means of it (the way biblicistic fundamentalism attempts to do). For most problems one has to study carefully the regularities in creation. (Wolters, 1985:32 uses the example of a choice of occupation. In such a choice one should consider a number of factors, like your own personality, financial and other circumstances, and finally take a decision in the light of the Scriptures.)

2.7.3 The Bible underestimated?

If within Reformational philosophy so much emphasis is placed on God's creational revelation, the question could be raised whether it perhaps tends to the opposite extreme to fundamentalistic theology by underestimating the Bible. Fowler (1985:8,9) is of the opinion that it does not do so, since it is only from the Scriptures that one can know "nature" as God's creation and therefore as revelation.

Spykman too (cf. above) emphasises that creational revelation can only be understood in the light of the Scriptures. According to him man is called "to discern the norms of God's creational Word for our life in this world, illuminated and directed by his Word in Scripture, under the regal authority of his Word incarnate..." (Spykman, 1992:84).

To use an image, the Scriptures play a similar role to an architect who explains the building plan of a house orally to a builder who does not understand the plan, so that the builder can erect the house properly (cf. Wolters, 1985:33). Another image is that of a miner who works in the dark mine shaft with an electric lamp on his forehead. He does not look *into* the lamp, but does his work *in the light of* the lamp. In the same way one does not look for answers to all possible questions in

the Bible. You investigate creation. But it should be done in the light of the Scriptures (creation, fall, salvation and consummation).

2.7.4 Interactive correction

Fowler (1985:9) differs from Spykman in that he goes further by stating that the believer should not only “read” creation in the light of the Scriptures, but also the other way round. It is not the intention that the two forms of God’s *revelation* should correct each other – they are equally true and authoritative – but that our *interpretation* of creation should be corrected by the Scriptures and our *interpretation* of the Scriptures by God’s creational revelation.

Reading the Scriptures in the light of God’s creational revelation may give the impression that the interpretation of the Bible is made dependent on something outside the Scriptures and that it is thereby relativised. Fowler’s answer (cf. 1985:9,10) to this is that it is a simple fact that one cannot understand the Scriptures in isolation from ourselves and the world around us. The Scriptures, for instance, use common words (like man, woman, children, slaves, princes) which can only be understood in the light of an ordered creation.

He explains: “We always relate to Scripture in the context of our prior experience of the Word-ordered creation... without that experience it would be impossible to understand the Scriptures. For this reason it is impossible to begin with ‘just the Bible’... our experience of creation shapes our understanding of Scripture and, because of sin, in certain respects is bound to misshape it” (Fowler, 1985:21).

It may therefore be necessary to revise our imperfect understanding of God’s creational order so that we may not misunderstand the Scriptures too. Therefore Fowler emphasises yet a third element, namely the communion of the believers.

2.7.5 Continual interaction

To summarise, Fowler stresses the interaction between (1) the Scriptural Word, (2) creation as ordered by God’s Word and (3) the believers saved by the Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. “There must be scope for a free movement back and forth from the Scriptures to the creation to the living faith of the

Christian community, a movement that moves not just in one direction but in all directions at different points" (Fowler, 1985:24).

Finally it is vital that this whole process takes place in the light of *the* Light, the Word incarnate. This is particularly stressed by Hart (1989:147). Not only should creation be read and studied in the light of the Scriptures, but the Scriptures should be regarded in the light of Christ – the culmination of God's revelation.

2.8 Valuable insights

Some of the most valuable insights from the above are amongst others that (1) the Scriptures are an important part, but not the only revelation of God and that they can therefore only be seen correctly in relation to God's complete revelation; (2) that the Scriptures come to us in a unique way as far as it concerns form (in language) and contents (inspired by God, having a message of salvation). Subsequently we will reflect on this message of salvation to determine more precisely the nature or character of the Scriptures.

3. The nature of the Scriptures seen from its contents or message

Within the Protestant Reformed tradition it is accepted (especially since the previous century) that the whole Bible, in spite of its various literary genres, have only one central message: the promise, advent and consummation of God's kingdom. The best scholarly work in this field is probably still that written by Ridderbos (1975). The whole revelational history of the Scriptures is also dealt with from the perspective of the covenant and the kingdom of God in the more popular four volume work of De Graaf (1977-1981).

3.1 A drama in six acts

In a more recent work Bartholomew & Goheen (2004:12) also emphasise that the Bible is not a hodgepodge of theological doctrine, moral lessons, historical, edifying or poetic pieces, principles, etc. The Bible contains only one "story", the "unified and progressively unfolding drama of God's action in history for the salvation of the whole world". This drama is concerned with the "unified, coherent

narrative of God's ongoing work within his kingdom".(Bartholomew & Goheen, 2004:12).

Six acts of the drama can be discerned: (1) at creation God *founds* his kingdom; (2) the Fall means *rebellion against* his kingship; (3) *salvation begins* with the choice of Israel as his covenant people; (4) *Salvation finally comes* with the advent of Christ; (5) then the gospel (the good news) of his *kingdom is disseminated worldwide*; (6) at the end of the world (Christ's second coming) *salvation will be completed*. (Also cf. Greidanus, 1988:235-238.)

3.2 A special kind of history

The history we find in the Bible (cf. Greidanus, 1988:86 *et seq.*), therefore, is not the usual economic, political, social or any other kind of history. It is history with a deeper dimension, namely the history of the kingdom.

3.3 A worldviewish book

In this way the Scriptures of God answer our most vital questions like the following: Who am I? Where do I find myself (in creation and history)? What went wrong? What is the solution?

Reformulated: the light the Scriptures offer is that of creation, fall, salvation and consummation (or: formation, deformation, reformation and culmination). These four are not only the peaks of God's revelation in the Scriptures, but without them creation is not intelligible either. Therefore they form the basis on which a Christian worldview is built with the aim of answering man's ultimate questions. (The Heidelberg Catechism summarises these central teachings of the Bible under only three headings: sin, salvation and service, or: guilt, grace and gratitude).

3.4 The result thus far

The redemptive nature of the Bible as a book can now be detailed further. It is not concerned in the first instance with people and personal salvation. It was written and should be read from the perspective of God's kingship which encompasses the whole of reality.

Since not everybody who reads the Bible reads it from such a cosmic kingdom perspective, we subsequently look at the various ways in which people interpret the Bible.

4. The variety of approaches to or hermeneutic keys to the Bible

A method should be linked or suitable to the subject at which it is aimed. (One does not cut down a tree with a razor or shave one's beard with an axe!) It is therefore possible to deduce much about their (intuitive or more explicit) views on the Scriptures held by both the ordinary reader of the Bible and the theologian from their various methods. What follows below is therefore not a detailed exposition on hermeneutics (see the valuable overviews of Rossouw, 1981 and Zuidema, 1971). It is concerned with the various views on the Scriptures which lie behind the different hermeneutic methods. Seerveld (2003:xii) says with right: "People have different Bibles depending on what they assume it to be – what is the main, true story of the Bible".

4.1 The various methods

It is important how one reads the Bible – just believing that the Bible is the Word of God, is not sufficient to understand it correctly (cf. Seerveld, 2003:xi). Although they often overlap, the following eight more popular and also scientific hermeneutic methods can be differentiated. (For details as well as valuable critique of each cf. e.g. Bartholomew & Goheen, 2004; Greidanus, 1988; Olthuis, 1976, 1979 and 1987; Seerveld, 2003; Spykman, 1973b and 1985 and Van der Walt, 2006:22-88.)

4.1.1 The allegorical method

This is one of the oldest methods in the history of Christendom which attempts to look for the "true" or "deeper" meaning behind the literal meaning of a passage in the Scriptures. (Cf. e.g. Van der Walt, 2006:82, 83 for examples of how the parables of Christ as well as the book Song of Solomon were explained allegorically.)

This method did have the idea that the Bible is a unique book which should be read in a different way from ordinary writing. Unfortunately it led to the reader reading his own thoughts into the Scriptures (eisegesis) rather than explaining (exegesis) the Word of God. Besides, according to this approach only the theologically initiated can recover the "deeper" meaning from the Scriptures.

This method and the view of the Scriptures on which it is founded, were rejected as early as the 16th Century Reformation in favour of the priority of the literal meaning of a passage from Scripture as well as access of common believers to God's Word.

4.1.2 The fragmentary method

This name denotes the popular five minute daily devotions in our rushed times taken from various Bible passages which have to present solutions for all kinds of personal problems. (One could thus also call it an *ad hoc* method.) It is often coupled with individualism ("Jesus and the soul") – while the Bible stresses the covenant, the communion of the believers and the kingdom of God (cf. De Graaff, 1979 (part 3):12).

The underlying view of the Scriptures is probably that it is an anthology with unconnected lessons for life or spiritual nourishment ("fast food") for every day situations the individual faces. Thus the Scriptures do not present a unity or a central, continuous message (cf. above). Seerveld, however, regards it of cardinal importance that the Scriptures should be seen and read as a unity and that every part can only be understood correctly in the light of the whole: "Reading and interpreting the Bible piecemeal does violence to its integrity as a single, unified text. Treating the Bible, wittingly or not, as a patchwork quilt of oracles or fragments or homilies encourages everyone to indulge in his or her whims" (Seerveld, 2003:xii).

4.1.3 The spiritualising method

This happens when readers ignore the basic historical and earthly things treated in a specific passage from Scripture in favour of a "spiritual" analogy. The real

story of Joseph in the well (Genesis 37:24) for instance is applied as comfort for contemporary readers who are “spiritually down in the dumps”. Or the story in Mark 4:35-41 (Jesus calms the storm) is spiritualised to “storms on the sea of life”.

In this connection De Graaff (part 3:13) warns against mysticism: “While there is indeed a mystical union or communion between Christ and His people, *mysticism* derogates from the written Word of God as it fixes the believers mind on his own inner experience. The believer’s certainty of faith is made to reside exclusively in some inner consciousness of a spiritual experience instead of being attached to the prophetic Word of God. And when adherents of mysticism study the Bible, it is more to reinforce this innate religious sense”.

Although it can be very easy to try and make the Bible relevant in this way, it amounts to a warping or skewing of the Word rather than an explanation of it.

According to this method the Scriptures are probably regarded as a spiritual or supernatural revelation – a viewpoint which has already proved to be unacceptable.

4.1.4 The encyclopedising method

While the method just treated expects too little of the Bible, this method expects too much. It turns the Word into an encyclopedia which offers information on all kinds of subjects and answers to every possible problem. Some so-called Christian scientists consider the Bible as a manual on for instance geology, agriculture, astronomy, politics, education and more!

In this way questions are put to the Bible that it is not meant to answer – too much is asked of it. The Bible is not a scientific manual, but is written in pre-scientific, everyday language. So this method, too, has the wrong view of the kind of book the Bible is. Its unique nature is not perceived.

4.1.5 The moralising method

In this case a passage from Scripture is turned into a simplistic, moralising programme of do’s and don’ts. It is a very simple and therefore popular manner

of reading and preaching the life histories of Bible characters. Their virtues are held up as motivation and their vices as warnings for contemporary readers or listeners. For instance the worldly attitude of Lot, the faith of Abraham, the obstinacy of Moses, etc. (Cf. Greidanus, 1988:116-118, 161 *et seq.* and 175-181; Spykman, 1985:53-61; Seerveld, 2003:22-28 and Van der Walt, 2006:83,84 for numerous examples as well as thorough critique of this method.)

Such a viewpoint maims the Bible or reduces it to a moral writing and extremely restricts its nature and meaning. From what was said above it has already become clear that the Word has a much wider, life-encompassing, cosmic meaning. Although the "ethical" manner of reading the Bible employed by Snyman (2007) does differ from the moralising method, in my opinion it still does not do justice to the true nature of the Scriptures.

4.1.6 The historical critical method

From the just mentioned work by Snyman (2007) it emanates clearly how vital the historical context of the writer and contemporary reader is for understanding the Bible correctly. Historical critical hermeneutics, however, approaches the Bible as a collection of ordinary historical documents and attempts to ascertain according to a positivistic idea of science how and when the various parts of the Bible originated and whether they can be regarded as historically dependable. Tales of wonder are usually rejected. (For a thorough critique on but also appreciation of this method cf. Seerveld, 2003:29-34.) With right Greidanus (1988:25-30) remarks that although this method has produced significant contributions, it approaches the Scriptures from an unbiblical worldview and causes great uncertainty for believers.

4.1.7 The dogmatic method

This method was and is rather popular with Evangelical and Reformed Bible readers. The Word of God is read and studied to deduce from it certain propositions, teachings or specific doctrines or (since they are already believed) merely to confirm these.

The work by Hart (1989) explains this approach to the Bible in detail and also offers thorough critique of it. It gives rise to Christians thinking that as long as they subscribe to certain biblically founded doctrines – while their hearts are unmoved – they are true believers. Seerveld (2003:34-37) also takes a close look at this approach. According to him the gravest risk of such a method is probably that one's own and preconceived dogmas or worldview prevent one from really being confronted and corrected by the Word of God. (If one reads the Scriptures like this, it is like looking into a mirror – one merely sees one's own image – instead of looking through a window to new things.)

This method implies a very narrow-minded, reductionistic view of the nature of the Word. It is seen in a one-sided way as a doctrinal book.

4.1.8 Various literary methods

Since the 16th century Reformation theologians have preferred a grammatical method (often combined with a historical element and therefore called "grammatical historical") of reading the Bible. The Bible was regarded as literature and the simple literal meaning as the most important. Meantime a variety of literary methods of reading the Scriptures has sprung up. So, for instance, Greidanus (1988:51) differentiates between "source criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism and historical criticism".

Once again it has to be said that all these methods are not simply discarded here as if they have no value. Text criticism can result in a better text; historical criticism makes one more alert to the historical context; form criticism draws attention to the original oral tradition, while editorial critique makes one aware of the possible editors and the original sources they might have used.

Yet even the various literary methods do not really solve the issue of the unique character of the Scriptures – it is more than an ordinary literary work.

4.2 In a wider philosophical perspective

As stated above, God reveals Himself in creation, in words (a book) and in a human being, Jesus Christ. In all three instances the means of revelation is

therefore something that was created. Since creation can be studied and analysed philosophically, it also applies to the Bible.

In Reformational philosophy this analysis usually takes place by means of a variety of modalities or aspects of reality. (Cf. Van der Walt, 2006:142-152 for an overview of the doctrine of modalities.) The following 15 modalities (from the simplest to the most complicated) can be differentiated: (1) the arithmetic or numerical; (2) spatial (3) kinematic, (4) physical, (5) biotic, (6) psychic or sensitive, (7) logical, (8) historical, (9) lingual, (10) social, (11) economic, (12) aesthetic, (13) juridical, (14) ethical and (15) faith aspect.

4.3 The multi-dimensional character of the Bible

When applied to the Scriptures, the above means that as something that was created, it shares in all these facets. The Bible, for instance, exhibits

- a *physical* side, for it is written/printed on parchment/paper;
- a *historical* side, for it tells what God did during the course of history;
- a *logical* facet: it is comprehensible;
- a *lingual* facet: it was first handed over orally, later committed to writing in the original languages and today translated into many languages;
- a *moral* aspect: it gives guidelines on how one should live in an ethically correct way.

4.4 The uniqueness of the language of faith

As can be seen from the account of the various hermeneutic methods, they did note some of these facets, e.g. the lingual, historical and moral. Most of these methods, however, do not do justice to the pistic or faith side, which is the most important facet of the Scriptures. The Scriptures do have a share in all the above-mentioned facets, but it is qualified by the last-mentioned, the modality of faith. Faith (15) therefore "colours" all the other aspects (14-1) This perspective on the Bible was worked out in more detail by some figures in Reformational philosophy – the next section.

5. The Bible as a book of certainty of faith

The three most important figures in this regard are Sinnema (1975), Spykman (1973b and 1985) and Olthuis (1979, 1987). Their views are summarised one after the other from which it will also transpire how they complement one another.

5.1 Sinnema's contribution

Sinnema (1975) did essential preliminary work by pointing out that language is not merely language but is always qualified by some or other aspect. So the language of court proceedings is juridically qualified, scientific language logically, business language economically and colloquial language among people socially qualified (cf. Sinnema, 1975:6).

5.1.1 The language of faith

In order to understand the Bible correctly, it is therefore essential to know what kind of language it uses. It is the language of faith, language qualified by the faith aspect. The language of faith is not supernatural language, but ordinary human language which is qualified in a different way from the other kinds of languages mentioned. Biblical language is not the same as scientific theological language either. (Ordinary language of faith expresses a specific faith, while theological language analyses it scientifically.) Sinnema denotes this kind of language as "certitudinal discourse".

5.1.2 Having authority over all aspects of life

Sinnema further points out the vital role the faith facet plays in one's whole life. Referring to the former aspects (1-14) faith integrates all parts of life, or "colours" them. There are no further aspects beyond 15. Therefore faith points out beyond creation to the transcendent God/god or man's last certainty. Via faith the Scriptures therefore have authority over all aspects of life.

In the light of the certitudinal language used by the Bible, Sinnema shows further that it is wrong to simply call certain books in the Old and New Testament "historical books". According to him they are "certitudinal, not historical writings."

5.2 Spykman's contribution

This Reformational philosopher continues building on what we find in Sinnema.

5.2.1 A confessional book

He does not use the word "certitudinal" but prefers "confessional" to qualify the Bible message, but he has in mind the same aspect of faith as Sinnema. He also indicates that the Bible is not primarily a political, economic, psychological or social book. (Spykman, 1073a:11).

By "confessional" Spykman (cf. 1985:63, 64) does not mean man's subjective experiences about God. He explicitly says (1985:49) that the Bible is the Word of God in the words of human language.

5.2.2 Examples

According to Spykman it is possible to learn from the Bible something about the political aspects of the reign of David or of the economic boom during the reign of Solomon. One can also study the apostle Peter psychologically. Or Paul's mission from a linguistic perspective. It is possible, because all these aspects of reality are present in the Scriptures. Otherwise the Bible would not have been a normal book and the history of salvation would not have been a real event. All these other facets are, however, subject to the faith facet which qualify or lead them all. (Cf. Spykman, 1992:130.)

5.2.3 More than just ordinary history

Spykman goes to a lot of trouble to indicate that the Bible does not present history in the normal sense of the word, but what he calls "prophetic history, interpreted history, history with a point" (cf. e.g. 1973a:11).

He also explains this type of confessional history by means of numerous examples from the Bible itself. Important kings of Israel, who in their time had great influence (e.g. Omri) are mentioned in the books of Kings or Chronicles in a few verses only, because their relationship with God was wrong. On the other hand, much is related about politically insignificant figures, because they lived in obedience. So he who wants to know more on specific kings is referred to the

original documents consulted by the writers when compiling these Bible books. (Naturally today we no longer possess these documents.)

Spykman summarises his own view on Scripture as follows: "At heart it is not a history book, but a confessing book, a book which confesses, testifies, witnesses, declares, proclaims the mighty acts of God in the history of redemption in a Christocentric way" (Spykman, 1973a:14).

5.2.4 Nevertheless history is important

While the one risk is to overemphasise the historical aspect of the Bible, so that the leading aspect of faith is obscured (cf. 4.1.6 above), the opposite can also happen. In Bultmann's well-known kerygmatic theology almost the only thing that remains is a message (*kerugma*) without any historical grounds. Spykman therefore stresses that the Bible is history of *salvation* as well as *history* of salvation. The Scriptures have a historical base, it emphasises itself that its message is anchored in real historical events (cf. Spykman, 1973a:14).

Subsequently we pay attention to a third Reformational philosopher who expanded the foregoing insights of Sinnema and Spykman.

5.3 The contribution of Olthuis

Although Olthuis expanded his insights into the Scriptures to his own unique hermeneutics (cf. Olthuis, 1987) we here concentrate on his view of the Scriptures.

5.3.1 A particular kind of book

According to Olthuis the Bible as a book is lingual by nature. However, there are many kinds of books, like telephone directories, books of verse, law books, novels, history books and many more. (A law book is of a juridical and a book of verse of an aesthetic nature.) To read a novel like a history book or a telephone book like a social register is a serious error which also violates the book .

In a similar way the Bible is abused and its nature infringed when it is read, for instance, primarily as a moral handbook, systematic theology, a compilation of psychological case studies, literary anthology or political history.

According to Olthuis the Bible is a book of "certainty", a certainty which can only be accepted in faith and cannot be proved rationally (cf. Olthuis, 1976:1). He also uses (cf. 1976:14) other terms when he says: "... the Scriptures rearticulate the Word of God redemptively in a specific focus which we shall call the certainty (or variously the doxological or confessional) focus". So he uses terminology already found in the works of Sinnema and Spykman.

5.3.2 Numerous examples for the Scriptures

Some of the examples mentioned by Olthuis, are here repeated briefly, since they serve to illustrate his view of the Scriptures.

When the Bible says in Matthew 6:26 that God feeds the birds of the heavens, it is not a denial that they have to look for food themselves. It is meant to convince the readers that God will take care in a like manner for them and that therefore they need not worry about food and clothes.

When Elizabeth says about her pregnancy that it is the Lord who did this to her (Luke 1:25) it does not mean she is denying the sexual and biological aspects of her pregnancy. But in the last instance one receives children as a gift from the Lord.

Psalm 127:1, which says that the builders will work in vain if the Lord does not build the house, therefore does not deny that building a house demands money, hard work, sand, bricks and lots more. Like all the other passages in the Scriptures the focus is different. In this case it wants to confess and proclaim that building not done in obedience to and with the blessing of the Lord, will not last.

The emigration of Naomi and Abimelech to Moab (cf. Ruth 1:1-5) in the Bible is not a mere matter of economy and politics. The confessional or certainty dimension is emphasised: their lack of faith that the Lord would provide for them in their own country.

Likewise the conquest of Canaan (cf. Numbers 13, 14) in the Scriptures is much more than merely a military operation – it was a matter of faith or no faith in God.

5.3.3 Authoritative over all aspects of life

When the faith aspect qualify in this way the rest of life, the Biblical message is not *restricted* according to Olthuis. (For instance to something spiritual or supernatural which spurns or denies the rest of reality.) Rather all of life is *channelled*. As pointed out in the work of Sinnema, faith not only plays an *integrating* part in all other aspects of human life. It also *unlocks* all of life in the light of the transcendent. Via his certitudinal dimension the Scriptures have authority over all of life (cf. Olthuis, 1979:82). The Bible need not be "made relevant" by means of all kinds of methods (like the allegorical or encyclopedic).

For this reason Olthuis cannot accept the historical or grammatical methods of reading the Bible, since these kinds of hermeneutics often do not do full justice to the Scriptures as a book of ultimate certainty.

Even more important: If the Bible was ordinary literature or history, it could not have authority over all aspects of life. (Under 4.2 above it was shown that the historical and lingual aspects are considerably "lower" on the scale of modalities of reality. They do not fill the leading or highest place that the faith aspect does.) In this connection we finally give the word to Olthuis himself: "History in the Scriptures is certitudinally qualified. It is no more or less historical than economic, political or general cultural histories. But just as these kinds of histories have their own focus, as do histories of music and art, sport and recreation, certitudinal history is written with a distinct focus: ultimate realities, ultimate questions and ultimate certainty" (Olthuis, 1987:42).5.4

5.4 Conclusion

From the fore-going exposition of the views of Sinnema, Spykman and Olthuis it becomes clear that – even though they use different terms – Reformational philosophy is able explain the unique nature of Scripture better than Reformed theology.

Since not all Reformational philosophers approach the Scriptures in the same way as these three philosophers, we finally have to say something about the viewpoint of Hart.

6. The Bible as light

In the Reformational tradition the Scriptures have also been looked at by Hart (1989) by means of the metaphor of light. First we point out the similarities between his viewpoint and that of other Reformational philosophers.

6.1 Similarities

Hart agrees with the Reformational philosophers we have dealt with already that the Bible is a book of faith: "The Bible is a book of faith, written in faith, to be read in faith, to be embodied in faith" (Hart, 1989:137). This he also applies to the more historical parts of the Scriptures: "Israel's history in the Bible is not a historian's history, but the history of faith, told in faith, to be heard in faith and to be incorporated in our own journey of faith" (Hart, 1989:48).

6.2 The Bible as a lamp

Hart, however, prefers to denote the Bible as a light (lamp). He regards such a metaphor as an antipode against all kinds of wrong views and explanations of the Bible, among which the intellectualistic and the legalistic. In his own words: "The Bible can be read as a book of light better than an infallible text of objective truth (doctrine), theological propositions or moralistic legal codes" (Hart, 1989:16). He therefore also rejects the dogmatic and moralistic hermeneutic methods dealt with earlier.

6.3 Intellectualism and moralism

The following descriptions of intellectualism and moralism are central to the understanding of Hart's viewpoint.

"... Intellectualism treats faith as an intellectual function: assent to revealed propositions, agreed upon explanations, understood doctrines, accepted

definitions, believed information, and other rational-conceptual matters" (Hart, 1989:97).

Moralism (cf. Hart, 1989:102, 130) again entails that faith is moralised; that one should stick to the literal rules of the Bible without applying it to our own times. In other words it implies the absolutising of historically relative criteria.

Intellectualism is about logical or doctrinal purity, while moralism pursues ethical perfection (cf. p. 104). However, according to Hart we do not know God by accepting a system of rules, but by following Jesus Christ in practice. To him faith is not in the first instance subscribing to ideas or being subject to laws, but of walking the road with a Person (cf. p. 109).

6.4 Christ, the heart of God's revelation

From the foregoing it has become clear that Hart puts great emphasis on the revelation incarnate in Christ. According to Hart *He* is the heart of God's revelation, his last Word to us (cf. p. 176). In *Him* is concentrated and fully revealed everything that God wants to say to us and asks from us - his total will (cf. p. 23).

6.5 Believers as light

Hart also stresses that not only is the Bible a lamp and Christ the Light, but that the light of the Morning Star should also shine in the hearts of the believers and should shine forth from their lives. The light they give off is not by way of something intellectual (dependable concepts or insights), but should take on flesh and blood or be incarnated in their lifestyle. "Seeing the Bible as lamp and Jesus as light requires that the light shines in Jesus' followers" (Hart, 1989:43). He calls it an "incarnational" or "embodied" view of the Bible instead of current intellectualistic and moralistic views.

6.6 More relevant for today

Hart (1989:43) is of the opinion that such a view of the Bible is more relevant for contemporary times. For, in contrast to earlier times, when all emphasis was put on the truth (doctrinal purity), believers today rather put the emphasis on

experience. He describes the difference in spiritual climate as follows: "Whereas redemption in the doctrinal tradition is one of the doctrines of whose truth we can be assured, in the contemporary climate redemption is an event believers want to experience, share and spread... to experience more and more that Jesus truly heals their wounds" (Hart, 1989:123)

Modern man is not concerned so much with a *faultless* truth as with a *lightgiving* truth, not an intellectual light, but a light on the road of life (cf. p. 88). To follow Jesus Christ is therefore much more significant than knowing and subscribing to a confession or a dogmatic system.

6.7 Summary

In short, in opposition to earlier dogmatism, Hart places a Person (Christ), and in opposition to the rules of moralism, the direction or way the Light shows is stressed.

Finally it is mentioned that Van der Walt (2006:80-81) independent from Hart also uses the metaphor of light when he deals with reading the Scriptures. He differentiates a fivefold light: (1) God Himself is Light; (2) He creates light; (3) Christ is the Light for the world; (4) God's Word is a light and (5) believers are called to be light bearers in the world. It should also be stressed that the five-fold light is not a mere metaphor but a reality.

7. Review: the value of the foregoing reflection

Briefly summarised the five main sections of the investigation rendered the following:

7.1 The Scriptures are not God's only revelation, but a part of his threefold revelation which can only be understood properly in relationship to God's creational and incarnated revelation. The Bible is unique as far its form (in human language) as well as its contents (a redemptive message inspired by God) are concerned.

7.2 The Bible contains the history of the origin of God's kingdom, the rebellion against it, creation's liberation from sin as well as the final consummation of his

kingdom. These main points (creation, fall, salvation and consummation) provide the basic building blocks for a Christian worldview which answers the most vital issues of life.

7.3 The various hermeneutic methods do recognise certain facets of the Scriptures, but are inclined to absolutise them and to reduce the Bible to one of them. In contrast to this, a Christian philosophy offers a view which both explains the multidimensional character of the Scriptures and highlights its unique character of faith.

7.4 When the Bible is viewed as a book of faith it can be read not only in a new way (the one-sidedness of existing methods are overcome), but it also becomes clear how it can have authority over all aspects of life.

7.5 Finally it was shown how yet another view of the Scriptures from the angle of the metaphor of light can help one further to avoid erroneous viewpoints (intellectualistic and moralistic) and to read the Word of God with new eyes: it demands personal surrender and a following of the Light, Jesus Christ.

This concludes the aim with this reflection on the unique nature of the Bible. In a following study the implications of this new view of the Scriptures for its reading and interpretation will have to be spelt out further. Now there is only space to jot down a few flashes.

8. Preview: the hermeneutic implications

Every believer desires to read the Bible in such a way that he/she clearly hears God speaking. In the light of the above insights, how can one ensure that this happens?

8.1 No simple undertaking

Actually reading the Bible in the light of the foregoing is not a simple undertaking. Seerveld (2003:89, 90) mentions the following: one should (1) delve deeply into the Bible text; (2) learn the original languages or consult different translations; (3) attempt to determine the original historical circumstances; (4) consult commentaries on the specific passage of Scripture; (5) preferably study the

Scriptures together with fellow-believers. More important still: "a person waits on the Lord, wrestles with the God-speaking text, and finally hears the Holy Spirit's voice of the text which humbles you to your knees... and a mission of redemptive service" (Seerveld 2003:90).

The following suggestions may be of further help (cf. Seerveld, 2003:90 and Van der Walt, 2006:84-89).

8.2 Points of departure

Only he/she who (1) believes that the Scriptures (read in connection with his revelation in creation and Christ) is the Word of God, (2) has a desire to listen seriously to it, (3) expecting God Himself to speak to him/her, and (4) does it while praying for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (the Author of the Word), will indeed be able to read the Bible in such away that he/she hears God's voice in it.

8.3 Unity

This key-word (unity) amongst other things implies that one should (1) attempt to determine the place of the particular passage (text, chapter, book) in the Scriptures as a whole, and (2) also keep in mind the Bible's focus on faith . (3) A difficult passage in the Scriptures can also be compared to other less complicated parts in order to get a better understanding.

8.4 Variety

The meaning of this key-word is: (1) that one should make sure what kind of text the specific passage is (a historical text, a song, proverb, parable, gospel, letter, etc.) to ensure that it is read according to its kind (genre). (2) Further one should also ascertain in which act of the drama of the history of God's kingdom the specific passage falls. (This is to prevent one from reading, for instance, a passage which foretells the advent of the kingdom as if it has already come, or the other way round.)

8.5 Context

(1) As far as possible the historical context should be investigated, the times and circumstances of the writer and the first readers. (2) Then the textual context: the context of a word is the sentence in which it appears, the context of the sentence is the paragraph, of the paragraph, the book, the Old or New Testament and finally the Bible as a whole. Working as if in concentric circles one should go from the inner to the outer circle, or the other way round.

8.6 Focus

One should continuously keep in mind the unique confessional nature of the Bible as explained above. (1) On the one hand it will help one not to expect too much from the Bible. (2) On the other hand not too little either, for via the focus of faith it is relevant to our whole life.

8.7 Presuppositions

Since it is a vital facet of reading the Bible which is mostly neglected, something more will be said about the influence of the reader's own context, especially his/her worldview on his/her reading of the Bible.

Many believers are of the opinion that a respectful and devout attitude towards the Bible is sufficient to understand it correctly. One should simply read the Scriptures and listen to it with an attitude of faith.

However, whether one is prepared to acknowledge it or not, one always reads with tainted glasses and one listens with one's own ears (cf. Olthuis, 1979:66). Reading the Bible literally is a myth, according to Snyman (2007:83-96). Hart, too (2006) criticises the so-called *objective* reading of the Scriptures and advocates a *responsible* reading instead.

Therefore Olthuis (1987: 13, 32, 46) emphasises that it is no use reading the same passage over and over when Christians differ among themselves. One should rather raise the question from which presuppositions the clashing groups are reading the text on which they ground their opinions. Everyone is inclined to

read into the text the worldview of himself or his group. In which case the Bible merely condones what one thinks instead of reforming one's worldview.

Therefore one's own worldviewish lenses have to be cut in the light of the Scriptures to understand God's Word correctly. Above (cf. 3.3) it was pointed out that the Bible is a worldviewish book. Thus Olthuis can say: "Interpretation is the dialogic process of a hermeneutic spiral between interpreter (and his/her vision of life) and the text (and its implied vision)" (1987:28).

There are many other factors besides one's reading of the Bible that work together to determine one's worldview. One lives in a particular location, in a specific time, within a certain culture and socio-political-economic and educational circumstances. Besides one has one's own life history and unique personality and emotions. In the light of these the following two matters have to be duly stressed.

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

Elsewhere he reiterates it like this: "... the more we are aware of the pre-understandings that we bring to the text, the more it is possible to avoid making the 'text conform to a *priori* speculation'. Its precisely when we are unaware of our pre-understandings that we are most in danger of imposing on the text. 'After all, we come to the text clean!'" (Olthuis, 1987:86, 87).

The second important point is that in the dialogue between one's own worldview and Scripture – something that should never cease – the message from the

Scriptures should be given the highest authority. The reader of the Bible should always keep open the opportunity for his/her own worldview to be tested, weighed, complemented, corrected and questioned by the Word of God. There are also other ways of testing the truth of one's worldview (which can unfortunately not be dealt with here) but the x-ray test of Scripture remains the key test to prevent one from becoming a captive of one's own worldview – even if it is a Christian one.

8.8 Obedience

Faith was mentioned (cf. 8.2) as the point of departure in reading the Bible. As a test of the preceding series of hermeneutic guidelines the *result* of one's Bible reading has to be stressed. Hart (2006:73) formulates it as follows: "A crucial test of responsible reading is what happens in our lives as a result of reading the Bible. Failure to act on the text, leaving it as merely grasped in our heads, assented to, and perhaps discussed, means failing to trust the text, since guiding us is what the text intends. Failure to embody its meaning is a form of failing to read the text properly."

Finally we have to keep in mind that one should not – even when equipped with the purest of views on the Scriptures and the best hermeneutic methods – attempt to own the Scriptures. Exactly the opposite is what should happen: The Word of God should take hold and deeply move our hearts and change our lives.

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Chapter 3

THE POPULARITY, HISTORY, STRUCTURE, VALUE AND DANGERS OF A WORLDVIEW

The question about the most essential characteristics of the Christian faith is as old as Christianity itself. How should the content of the Christian faith be "clothed" to be relevant to the entire life of believers? This crucial question has been answered in a variety of ways. One way of addressing the vital issue was to clothe the Christian faith in the "garment" of a Christian worldview. To conceive of Christianity as a worldview has been one of the most significant developments in the recent history of Christendom.

The aim of this exploration is therefore to have a closer look at and evaluation of the concept of a worldview. (1) The first section draws attention to the popularity of the concept 'worldview' amongst a section of Christians during the past century. (It also provides important bibliographical information.) The following questions are then discussed: (2) How did the idea of a worldview originate? (3) What does a worldview look like (its structure)? (4) When does a worldview experience a crisis? (5) Are there any criteria to judge the correctness of a worldview? (6) What are the advantages and disadvantages and even risks attached to a worldvish conception of the Christian faith?

1 The popularity of a Christian worldview – a bibliographical overview

This overview does not claim to be comprehensive. The intention is merely the following: First to point out how popular a worldvish approach was and still is among a certain group of Christians (mostly the evangelicals and reformed). In the second place the aim – even though bibliographical overviews do not make interesting reading matter – is to give an indication of the available material for readers who may be interested.

1.1 Earlier writings

Usually the *Institutio Christianae religionis* (final edition in 1559) by John Calvin is considered as the first worldviewish work in the Reformational tradition. However, he does not use the term yet, speaking of *philosophia christiana*.

As will emerge from the historical overview below the concept of "worldview" originated much later only. The first important contribution usually alluded to is the lectures held by Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) on Calvinism in the USA in 1898 (cf. Kuyper, 1899). Its popularity is evident from the numerous reprints it saw by various publishers in different parts of the world (cf. Heslam, 1998 for details).

A following contribution was that by H. Bavinck (1854-1921) made in 1913, although it did not have nearly the impact of Kuyper's work. J.H. Bavinck (1928) approached worldview in a more psychological manner – the influence of personality traits on a worldview.

Up to about the first half of the previous century the influence of the Calvinistic (later called "Reformational") worldview could be clearly discerned in the Netherlands. As far as I know, however, no further systematic expositions of it was published afterwards. It is true that in Reformational philosophy a Christian worldview was recognised as a prescientific point of departure, but with individuals like D.H. Th. Vollenhoven (1892-1978) and H. Dooyeweerd (1894-1977) and their followers the emphasis was more on its scientific elaboration in philosophy and other subject fields. (For an introduction into the Reformational worldview Dooyeweerd, 1979 is therefore more accessible than Dooyeweerd, 1975 in which his Christian philosophy is set out.)

It is interesting that in South Africa up to the sixties writings were published that dealt explicitly with a Christian worldview. Examples are Stoker (1961), Taljaard (1963) and Strauss (1964).

1.2 New interest

Since the eighties of the previous century, however, numerous new attempts were made to formulate the Christian faith as a comprehensive, integral worldview. This was done mainly by descendants of Reformationally thinking immigrants from the Netherlands to English speaking parts of the world like Canada and the USA, thereby exerting much influence on the so-called "Evangelicals".

This overview of the mass of material published since is divided into the following four categories: (1) more general introductions to a Christian worldview; (2) works focused on a comparison of the Christian worldview with other worldviews; (3) applications of a Christian worldwewish approach to various subject fields; (4) worldwewish applications to everyday life.

1.2.1 General works

The fact that works are being listed here does not imply an evaluation – they are not all equally valuable and not all explicitly Reformational. In England, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and the USA the following can be mentioned: Adeyemo (1993), Barcus (1977), Bradley (1996), Chaplin *et al.* (1986), Colson & Pearcey (1999a en 1999b), Gousmett (1996a and 1996b), Hoffecker (1986-1988), Holmes (1983), Klapwijk, (1989), Marshall & Gilbert (1998), Moreland & Craig (2003), Olthuis (1985, 1989, 1991, 2007), Pearcey (2004), Palmer & Horton (2002), Schlossberg & Olasky (1987), Shaw (1989), Sire (1990 and 2004), Smit (*s.a.*), Spykman (1985), Strauss (1990), Van der Walt (1994, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2006), Venter (1991), Walsh (1989 & 1992), Walsh & Middleton (1984) and Wolters (1983, 1985, 1988, 1989, 1992 and 2007).

The popularity of the three last-mentioned authors emerges from the fact that Wolters (1985) has been translated into various languages (i.a. Dutch, Japanese, Indonesian, Korean, Spanish and Afrikaans – cf. Wolters, 1992). I do not know whether Walsh & Middleton (1984) has also been translated, but it is clearly popular as can be deduced from the fourteen reprints it has seen. Judged on

quality (a clear Reformational voice) these last two works would be my personal choice.

1.2.2 Comparisons between the Christian worldview and other worldviews

Although the above-mentioned writings do compare – sometimes in passing and sometimes more in detail – their Christian worldview with other worldviews the following works focus more explicitly on such a confrontation. Blamires (1970, 1988) deals with secularism, Blamires (1999) and Middleton & Walsh (1995) with postmodernism en Clapp (1998) with the present day consumer culture. The following writers attempt to help readers in understanding a variety of other worldviews (and religions) : Brunett (1990), Geisler & Watkins (1990), Guinness (1995), Nash (1992), Roques & Tickner (1994) and Sire (1976 with several reprints).

1.2.3 Applications of a worldviewish approach to various subject fields

Walsh (1989:7,8) indicates how worldviews play an important role in sciences like cultural anthropology, history, the philosophy of science and Christian scholarship. Naugle (2002:187 *et seq.*) deals with the role of worldviews in the field of the natural sciences as well as (p. 209 *et seq.*) in the social sciences. Marshall et al. (1989) too, focus on the social sciences. The following writers approach various other subject fields from a Christian worldviewish angle: Goudzwaard (1981, 1984) the political-social-economic, Miller (2001) economic development, Aay & Griffioen (1998) geography, Kearney (1984) cultural anthropology, Hiemstra (1997) the broadcasting media, Griffioen (2003a, 2003b, 2006) cultural philosophy, Bartholomew & Goheen (2004) and Spykman (1985 and 1992) theology, Byl & Visker (1999) and Visker & Hoffman (1997) recreation and sport. Although many of the works already mentioned contain sections on Christian (higher) education (also those under 1.2.1) it is the specific focus of writers like Dockery & Thornbury (2002), Garber (1996), Gill (1989), Holmes (1985), Naugle (2004), Stronks & Bloomberg (1993) and Seerveld (2002).

1.2.4 Applications in everyday life

Here, too, I have to state that most of the sources already quoted contain numerous illustrations of and applications to practical problems of life. The following two works, however, are focused on this: Frey *et al.* (1983) and Frey *et al.* (1986).

This short, inevitably incomplete overview nevertheless portrays the popularity as well as the opportunities for applications of a Christian worldviewish approach. It transpires that it is a significant way of making concrete one's Christian convictions and is therefore worthwhile to be investigated. The first important question is when and with whom such a worldviewish approach to reality originated.

2 Origin of the idea of a worldview

Especially Wolters (1989:14-25) and Naugle (2002) and (more indirectly) Coletto (2007) present valuable research in connection with the origin and development of the idea of a worldview (cf. McConnel, 2004). Since these sources can be consulted, we merely highlight some moments from history. We are not in the first place concerned with the "biography" of the concept "worldview", but with understanding the concept itself better (and elaborating on it in the next section).

2.1 A bird's-eye view of history

Contrary to expectation the concept "worldview" is not of a Christian or biblical origin, but a product of Western secular philosophy. The German rationalistic philosopher, Immanuel Kant, uses the concept "Weltanschauung" for the first time in history in his work *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (1790) in the meaning of a rational concept of the world or reality (cf. Naugle, 2002:58, 59). Thereafter the word spread to the rest of the European and English world.

2.1.1 W. Dilthey (1833-1911)

Although other philosophers of the nineteenth century also (e.g. Hegel and Kierkegaard) are important in this respect, Dilthey is usually called the father of the idea of a worldview, since he designed a complete "Weltanschauungslehre"

(doctrine of worldview) in which he explains the origin and comparison of various worldviews. Important issues dealt with are *inter alia* what the world looks like, where I come from, why I exist, what I have to do here and what will become of me one day (cf. Naugle, 2002: 83).

According to this philosopher worldviews are culturally and time-bound phenomena. However, his historicism does not bring him – as happened with later philosophers – to regarding worldviews as totally relative phenomena. According to Naugle (2002:97, 98) Dilthey still attempts a middle way between metaphysical absolutism (worldviews are universally and timelessly applicable) and historicist relativism and scepticism.

2.1.2 F. Nietzsche (1844-1900)

In the work of this philosopher one sees the full consequences of irrationalistic historicism. According to him truth is an error without which some people unfortunately cannot live. In contrast to the idea that a worldview offers truth about reality, Naugle (2002:102) sums up his viewpoint as follows: : “There is no true truth, only subjective projections, linguistic customs, habitual thinking and reified cultural models. All worldviews are ultimately fictitious”.

Nietzsche’s viewpoint that a worldview always is a pair of coloured spectacles, is correct. So too, is his warning that worldviews can be reified, made more important than the reality they are supposed to portray. But this does not mean that they have to be rejected from the very start, for man – Nietzsche himself as well – cannot do without it (as will become clear later on). One should rather constantly be correcting worldviews – like all other human cultural products.

This philosopher on the verge of the twentieth century is therefore right that the rationalistic dogmatism of modernism, which tries to force reality into an intellectualistic scheme, is unacceptable. His “solution” of irrationalistic nihilism and scepticism, however, is unacceptable. But where lies the way out between Scylla and Charybdis?

2.1.3 The twentieth century

The irrationalistic (especially the existentialistic) philosophers like Jaspers and Heidegger continue the historicistic-relativistic line according to Naugle (2002:110 *et seq.*) and they regard the phenomenon of a worldview accordingly. This does not mean that these philosophers – contrary to what Christians sometimes think – were not aware of the self-destructing character of historicism. Naugle (2002:111) for instance says that Husserl realised “If historicism is true, then it must be false, for the principles of historicism must also be a product of historical forces, and therefore relative. If they are relative, then they can not be used in some absolute way to deny the objective validity of the sciences”.

2.1.4 Postmodernism

There are many who think that the (irrational) post-modern or late-modern philosophy from the end of the twentieth century spells the end of all worldviews. According to Marshall *et al.* (1989:12) we have entered a “post-worldviewish” era as a result of the extreme pluralism of philosophers like Lyotard, Kuhn and Feyerabend. According to these philosophers there no longer is a single world, but as many worlds as there are worldviews. Neither can there be a clash between different worldviews, for we can only speak of conflict if worldviews claim that they represent the same reality. Coletto (2007) is valuable for following the line of development Popper-Polanyi-Kuhn-Feyerabend-Rorty-Derrida. According to Derrida we are the architects of our own world, worldviews are our own constructions – which have to be deconstructed.

More or less the same is maintained by Berger and Luckmann with their idea of reification (cf. Naugle, 2002:178). By this is meant that people erroneously think that the products of their thought (e.g. facts of nature, cosmic laws or a divine figure) could be something other than purely human constructions. People forget that they themselves are the producers of their visions of the world. However, there is nothing permanent, transcendent or supernatural about the worlds (worldviews) we create for ourselves.

The French philosopher, Foucault, added another element to the foregoing, namely that since all worldviews are by nature totalitarian or comprehensive, they are also suppressive – they are always in the service of the power and even violence of the stronger party.

2.1.5 Conclusion

Naugle's conclusion (2002:185) after the long and insight-giving historical overview of the development of the concept "worldview" is that the transition of modernism (rationalism) to postmodernism (irrationalism) resulted in a total transformation in the nature, character and concept of a worldview. (This confirms that how one looks at a worldview is determined by one's own worldview.) The title of Middleton and Walsh (1995) states this concisely: *Truth is stranger than it used to be!* An immanent critical question like the following stands to reason: "Is not the postmodern denial of the cogency of any worldview itself a worldview, and therefore self-defeating?" (Naugle, 2002:186). But this does not dispose of the matter yet – in particular not for those who favour a Christian worldview.

2.2 The origin of a Christian worldview

Under 1.1 above it was mentioned that Kuyper (1837-1920) played an important role in formulating the Christian faith in an integral and comprehensive worldview and making it known in the Evangelical Reformed Protestant world. We have already spoken of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven who gave it philosophical depth. To this should be added the name of Schaeffer (1982) who by means of his writings and *L'Abri* played an important role in popularising a Christian worldview and philosophy.

All these thinkers as well as most works from the eighties of the previous century (cf. 1.2.1 above) take over the concept "worldview" without the totally relativistic colour it obtained in postmodernism. Still, it remains an "immigrant" that was admitted with its spiritual baggage to the Christian camp.

2.3 Two important questions

Among the numerous questions that emerge in connection with the historical survey by Naugle, the following two are of the most important. In the first place: What is meant by worldview – especially when used by Christians to formulate their faith? In the second instance the question whether it is admissible to use for one's own Christian purpose a concept which was coloured first by modernism and afterwards by postmodernism without infringing on the essence of the Christian faith? For the time being only the first question will be answered by means of a finer definition of what a worldview is as understood in the Reformational tradition.

3 The contours of a worldview

A full description of what a worldview is, should deal with the following: (1) a definition; (2) how it originated; (3) its characteristics; (4) components and (5) structure or "anatomy".

3.1 Names and the relation to philosophy

Different names are designated to the phenomenon of a worldview by different authors: life perspective, confessional vision, life conviction, lifeview, world and lifeview, worldview, philosophy of life, philosophy, system of values, the whole of a person's ideas or principles and ideology. Personally I prefer the word worldview. But when I use the word *worldview*, it should be kept in mind that it also includes a view about *God* (or another absolute) and a view about *law on normativity*.

From the list above it transpires that a worldview is sometimes called a "philosophy". These two matters are related but still different. According to Klapwijk (1986:1, 2) a worldview is a directing vision of reality in its totality, concerned with the deepest and most comprehensive questions of life which therefore orientates a person. Philosophy, too, is in search of such a view of totality. However, the difference is that, in contrast to the prescientific, deeply

personal character of a worldview, philosophy is a vision that is scientifically accounted for, and therefore more general.

The two phenomena therefore can be distinguished but not separated. Most of the modern philosophers admit that philosophy has a worldviewish core, that worldviewish points of departure lie at the root of all philosophies. Since philosophy is the "critical conscience" of the different sciences, they are not worldviewishly neutral either. We will not be going into the issue of what exactly the relationship between worldview and philosophy is, but refer to the reflection on it by Wolters (1989:14-25) as well as Klapwijk's reaction on this in the same volume (p. 41-51).

3.2 Definitions and kinds of worldviews

Here are some examples of how Christian philosophers define the phenomenon of a worldview:

3.2.1 Definitions

- "The comprehensive framework of one's basic convictions on matters." (Wolters, 1992:2 – it is afterwards clarified further.)
- "A world view is a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partly true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic makeup of the world" (Sire, 1990:29, 30).
- "A worldview (or vision of life) is a framework or set of fundamental beliefs through which we view the world and our calling and future in it" (Olthuis, 1989:29).
- "They (worldviews) are ways of seeing. If we want to understand what people see, or how well people see, we need to watch how they walk" (Walsh & Middleton, 1984:17).

- "... a person's worldview is intensely practical. It is simply the sum total of our beliefs about the world, the 'big picture' that directs our daily decisions and actions" (Colson & Pearcey, 1999b:14).
- "... worldview is best understood as a semiotic phenomenon, especially as a system of narrative signs that establishes a powerful framework within which people think (reason), interpret (hermeneutics), and know (epistemology)" (Naugle, 2002:xix).

Later on Naugle (p. 291) explains further that a worldview to him is a "vision of the heart" (kardioptical). By "semiotics" he means that a worldview is a "system of signs generating a symbolic world". It is mainly concerned with "narrative signs that offer an interpretation of reality and establishes an overarching framework for life" (p. 291).

- Our last example is from Walsh (1989:9-10): "A worldview is a vision of life. It provides its adherents with a vision of the world, a perspective through which to make sense out of life. A worldview always has a story because a worldview is a vision of life in history, in time. It provides us with a story that tells us who we are in history and why we are here... and gives us a sense of where we are going... worldviews are descriptive, they tell us the way things are. In this sense they are like a light, they illuminate our experience."

Walsh adds the following vital element: "A vision of the world is also a vision for the world... worldviews entail a call to social-cultural-historical action. They illuminate both what *is* and what *ought to be*... they illuminate direction."

In the first instance it emerges – apart from minor differences – that there is great similarity between the seven definitions. In the second place it is clear that *worldview* and *lifestyle* are inextricably connected (compare the descriptions by Walsh & Middleton and by Colson & Pearcey). In the third place the influence of postmodernism is obvious in the last two descriptions by Naugle and Walsh who emphasise the narrative nature of a worldview. This new accent is also very clear when one compares Walsh & Middleton (1984) with what Middleton & Walsh (1995) wrote ten years later on (a Christian) worldview.

Concisely put one could say that a worldview is the network/framework of confessional convictions which determines how one understands and experiences reality. ("Reality" is here understood in a comprehensive meaning of everything that exists – not only the earthly creation, but also God and his ordinances.) Stated even more briefly: a worldview is what people regard as real or important. (For a traditional African the spiritual world is real, while for a secular naturalist, only the material world is real.)

3.2.2 Kinds of worldviews

Aay & Griffioen (1998:126 *et seq.*) draws a distinction between a "world picture" ("Weltbild") and a "worldview" ("Weltanschauung"). The former, according to them, is more unreflective and implicit by nature, while the latter is more reflective and explicit. Since the latter is more explicit, it can more easily cause conflict than the former – especially in the field of socio-politics. In the field of science one finds both world pictures as well as worldviews. However, in this article we will deal no further with these differences.

What is interesting is that Griffioen later (2003b) differentiates between the following three matters: (1) life contexts (the institutional), (2) life situations (the cultural context) and (3) life views (the religious directions). The latter has a great influence on the other two but is also influenced the other way round by them. According to Griffioen life views therefore are more concerned with the *direction* of one's life. Later in his work (2003b:193) he connects it with the idea of a road or path one takes which gives coherence to one's life. (The first Christians were called "people of the Way" in Acts.)

3.3 Origin

A worldview does not only originate in confessional convictions (take note: *all* people believe something – it is only the direction of their faith that differs). Many factors play a role in its formation. The formation of a worldview also comes into being by means of other factors *within* its adherents, as for instance one's emotional life, personality type, intellectual development, gender, *et cetera*. Apart from this, factors *outside* the adherent of a particular worldview have a role to

play, as for instance a certain tradition, education (by parents, school, college, etc.), the influence of friends and soul-mates, the current social, political, economic and cultural circumstances and many more. So in the origin of a worldview a multi-dimensional network of influences has to be taken into account.

The work of Garber (1996) is a good example of how a worldview can be transferred in the impressionable years between adolescence and maturity and can take root in a young person (student). He reckons three factors as important: (1) the worldview has to be put over to them intentionally and they have to make it their own; (2) they must have a model (a mentor) in whom the worldview has taken concrete form, and (3) they have to be supported by friends and a community who can back them up in the development of their own worldview.

3.4 Characteristics

The main "characteristics" of a worldview are the following:

- **It is comprehensive.** The word "worldview" says it and so too the word "life view" – it wants to encompass one's *whole* life. A good word to describe it is therefore *cosmoscope*.

Although the words *life view* and *worldview* themselves do not make it explicitly clear, a worldview always includes a particular idea about God/a god and an opinion on regularity or normativity. (It can be the true God and his ordinances or something in creation which is deified and whatever normativity results from it.) The totality perspective of a worldview therefore includes at least three main elements: an idea of God (or some other absolute), a view of creation and of the guidelines for human conduct in the world. (Later on three more significant components of a worldview will be added to these three.)

- **It is foundational.** A worldview attempts to answer the most basic issues in life like the following: Where am I? Who am I? What is wrong in reality? What is the remedy for it? (cf. Middleton & Walsh, 1995:11). Sire (1990:31) adds four more themes to these: What happens at death? What is the significance of

history? How does one know what is right or wrong? How can one obtain reliable knowledge?

- **It is a way of seeing/looking.** Compare once more the words “worldview” and “life view”. A life view is a way of looking at the total reality, a perspective on it, a viewpoint about it.
- **It guides and orientates one in understanding the world.** A worldview does not *create* the world (or reality) but merely *directs* one in understanding it and living in it. The difference is important, for it safeguards one from relativism: “so many worldviews, so many worlds!”
- **It forms a unity.** A worldview is not merely a random collection of ideas. It is a framework or system of convictions in an orderly pattern, which shows an interrelationship and consistency (This does not preclude the differentiation between different “levels” in a worldview nor that some elements of a worldview can be more central or crucial than others.)
- **It is both descriptive and prescriptive.** A worldview is not merely a *picture* of the world (and life in it), it is also a *guideline* for life in the world. It does not merely state what the world *is* like (descriptive of what one sees) but also what the world *should be* like (prescriptive of what one should do). A worldview thus has both a factual and a normative side. It also is a standard according to which a judgement can be made on good or bad, right or wrong, ugly or beautiful, orderly or disorderly.
- **It requires devotion.** If a person (or group) does not devote himself (themselves) fully to his worldview, the worldview – albeit a healthy one – cannot be lived (in an actual lifestyle). On the other hand devotion means satisfaction, inner joy and peace.
- **It is something typically human.** A worldview is found in all people. It does not mean that all people are aware of it – most people unconsciously live from an intuitive frame of reference or point of departure. (In times of crisis, however, it comes to the fore more distinctly.) Further it stands to reason that not even those

who are conscious of their presuppositions, all possess a clearly worked out and systematised worldview. Further we have to mention that a particular worldview is adhered to individually but mostly collectively. Usually a worldview originates and is adhered to within a certain community.

- **It is prescientific.** This feature (already mentioned under 3.1 above) is connected with the previous one, namely that it is typically human – and not all people are scholars. A worldview may therefore not be confused with sciences like philosophy or theology, since it is something pre-theoretic. *Pre-scientific*, however, does not mean *unscientific* – worldview and science are two distinct ways of knowing, which each has a right to existence.

The pre-scientific nature of a worldview also means that the validity, truth or falsity, goodness or weakness of a worldview cannot be proved by reasonable argument (much less scientifically). It is the other way round: the confessional convictions of a worldview influence and determine one's reasonable arguments. Otherwise formulated: One argues *from* a worldview and not *towards* it. (This does not mean, that scientific developments cannot influence worldviews – cf. Coletto, 2007:17. Of particular value is his diagram [p. 18] differentiating between “deeper” and “shallower” presuppositions or points of departure on both the prescientific and scientific level.) The prescientific nature of worldviews means that it is more concerned with the knowledge of individual matters, while scientific knowledge focuses especially on the general/universal (cf. Coletto, 2007:13, 22).

- **It is a deep-rooted source of conduct.** This feature is connected with the above-mentioned prescriptive character. A worldview is a perspective on how the world should be changed. It therefore has transforming power, emphasising our calling in the world, our responsibility. Having a beautifully stated worldview without living accordingly has little value. Real, concrete, active conduct in the end makes the difference – it is the point where the worldview breaks into reality and changes it.

- **It is a definite image of reality but still fallible.** For those who adhere to a worldview it is the truth. Still, it has to remain open because of the fallibility of

human subjectivity. On the one hand one cannot but confess one's view of reality as true and act accordingly. On the other hand one may not canonise it as the only truth, since it is the work of humans and therefore full of weaknesses and therefore constantly has to be refined, reviewed and developed further.

- **It arouses intense emotions**, but also provides great stability, for it gives a sense of security, satisfaction, inner joy and peace.
- **It usually takes form in symbols** having a motivating, inspiring and uniting force for a certain group or community.

All these features are significant since they help explain the short definitions of what a worldview is (cf. 3.2 above).

3.5 Components

Although we have mentioned something about the contents of a worldview, it can be set out more systematically. Above (3.4) three components of every worldview was mentioned (an idea of God, of the law and the cosmos). We add three more elements, so that a worldview consists of the following six basic elements: an idea of God/a god, of law, cosmos or nature, about humanity, society and time.

- Every human being serves **God or an idol** (cf. e.g. 1 Kings 14:22-24; Rom. 1:22-25 and Phil. 3:18, 19).
- Every human being obeys the will of his god/God as it is revealed in certain **laws**, commandments or guidelines.
- Every human being treats **nature** (the non-human environment) the way he believes his god/God expects him to. If the divine imperative is, for instance, changing nature, man interferes in the course of nature. If the will of the gods is accepting nature the way it is, man has to adapt to that.
- Therefore every human being **himself** progressively looks more and more like the god/God he serves. His self-image is formed according to his image of god. If, for instance, he serves the god of money, he has to pursue riches at all

costs. (Cf. e.g. Ps. 115:8; Rom. 1:28, 29 as opposed to Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15 and Eph. 4:20-24)

- Together with other human beings of similar convictions one creates a human **society**. This society looks like him/herself and it therefore also reflects her/his idea about god. Further it gives form to a specific idea of law and nature.
- In this society a specific idea about **time** is respected. It could for instance be a *conservative* society (geared towards the *past*), a *status quo* society (the *present* is accepted) or a *progressive* society (focusing all attention on a better *future*). Thus a worldview usually contains specific opinions on history, what the past, present and future entail.

3.6 Structure

The understanding of a worldview can be enhanced by looking at it structurally. In this respect the analysis by Olthuis (1985 or 1989 or 1991) is valuable and is here given in a reworked form.

In the life of any person (whether he believes in the true God or in a surrogate idol) his belief plays an important role. This belief has a directional nature. It wants to take concrete form in everyday life. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, a worldview is the link, bridge or channel between the deepest confessional convictions of a human being and his everyday life. It gives hands and feet to his belief.

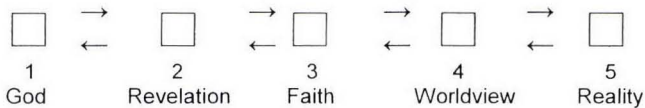
In this regard one could use the image of a lens as the medium between man's faith and his conduct (lifestyle). Maybe still more applicable is the image of a prism that breaks up the (white) light of faith into all the colours of the rainbow: one's deepest religious convictions are broadened, spelled out, specified, made applicable and relevant to a variety of domains of life.

3.6.1 Two-way traffic

One direction (see arrows from right to left in the diagram below) is from faith to conduct. Man forms a worldview according to his faith and then forms the world according to his worldview. It is a vision of faith *for* life.

The other, reverse direction (see arrows from right to left) is that the circumstances (life) of human beings also influence their worldview and finally their faith. The following diagram explains:

their faith. The following diagram explains:



This second direction and the resulting interaction are important, since they are often missed, or even denied. A worldview not only is the bridge from faith to life in general, it is simultaneously also the medium by which one's everyday experience can either confirm one's faith or doubt it, correct it. The worldview bridge therefore carries a two-way traffic.

3.6.2 Both absolutism and relativism give a distorted image of what a true worldview is

We already mentioned above (under 3.4) that a worldview is simultaneously a definite and yet fallible image of reality. We now want to look further into this problem, linking up with the bridge feature just mentioned.

As became clear from the historic overview above, some people (especially the older, more rationalistically thinking) are inclined to lapse into *absolutism* (or *dogmatism*). They are inclined to *canonise* their own worldview(s). Others (especially the present, more postmodernist, irrationalist-oriented) are inclined to become the victims of *relativism* (or *pluralism*) since they tend to *minimise* the phenomenon of a worldview.

The first-mentioned group believe that their worldview is definite, infallible, the final blueprint. For has it not been founded (in the case of a Christian worldview) on an infallible revelation (the Bible)? The latter tendency, on the other hand, emphasises the subjective human character, the situation or context and the

constant change during the course of the history of a particular worldview. In extreme form they adhere to the standpoint of: "so many views so many worlds."

Thus: either absolute certainty or no certainty. However, this is a false dilemma. The one is inclined to look at a worldview from the angle of the certainty of reason or (in the case of Christians) from the angle of faith and *absolutise* it. Others look at the worldview from the angle of human subjectivity and the changing practice of life and as a result attempt to *relativise* it.

3.6.2 Moments of truth

However, both viewpoints exhibit elements of truth. One should agree with absolutism that a worldview is worthless if one is not convinced of its truth. And one should grant the relativists that a worldview is extremely dangerous when it is over-rated. A healthy, balanced worldview will always be an open worldview. One that is willing to have itself tested, queried, refined and even overthrown (by both God's revelation in the Scriptures and the actual circumstances of life). Absolutisation means stagnation, fossilisation.

Keeping in mind the mutual influence sketched in 3.6.1 above, one would realise that where a worldview is "frozen", both growth and insight into reality and growth in confessional life is obstructed. In that case the worldview obviously no longer does the work of a good pair of spectacles *through* which one sees, but rather looking at oneself *in* a mirror.

3.6.3 Ideological deterioration

A worldview has then degenerated into an ideology. An ideology is a hardened, frozen or fossilised worldview that no longer has any interest in what is happening in reality or what it looks like, but only attempts to force its preconceived ideas onto reality. The two-way traffic over the bridge, so important in the case of every worldview, has therefore been replaced by one-way traffic (only from one's faith to reality). By means of various rationalisations such an ideology can exist for a long time until the realities of life become so overwhelming that the opposite way (from reality to faith) is broken open.

Somewhere the Afrikaans poet NP van Wyk Louw said: "Deliver us from the ideologies, Lord, then maybe we will see your world again."

So, however convinced the adherents of a worldview may be of its truth, it can land in a crisis.

4 Crises of and criteria for a worldview

Often the deepest reason for the collapse of a country or culture is a worldview crisis. Walsh (1992:68) uses the example of Communism in Eastern Europe. It did not collapse at the end of the previous century primarily because the food lines were too long or wages too low. It was basically the collapse of worldview or an ideology.

We first look at worldviewish crises and then answer the question whether such problems could be prevented by subjecting a worldview to certain tests.

4.1 Crises

A worldview can land in a crisis if/when it (1) is threatened by other, stronger worldview(s) (as a result of money, technology, peer pressure, power, etc.) or (2) the particular worldview no longer tallies with either one's faith or the changing realities. (3) A third reason may be situated in the adherent of the worldview himself (which could of course also be a consequence of the first two reasons): Half-hearted in stead of full surrender to and practice of his/her worldview.

4.1.1 The reactions

Which reactions may follow such a worldviewish crisis? Only two: either one sticks to one's worldview or one changes it.

In the case of the first answer the adherents of a particular worldview dig down deeper into their worldviewish trenches and refuse to face the realities of life with which they are in conflict. This may cause immense tension. When the two-way traffic over the bridge (see 3.6.1 above) can no longer flow, human beings themselves are affected. When one's "spiritual home" (worldview) threatens to fall in, it causes existential anxiety. It has to be kept in mind that a worldviewish

crisis also implies a confessional crisis: one's faith no longer makes sense in everyday life.

4.1.2 The solution

The normal course of events in such a case is that the messages from the side of the realities of life become so strong that the way over the bridge is simply forced open – the old worldview is queried. Then come the following steps: The lens of the worldview is once more fixed on the realities of the environment; the old view is revised; a changed view is adopted, one that can offer a better interpretation of the circumstances.

4.1.3 Closed and open worldviews

The lesson, therefore, is that it is much better to hold an open worldview from the start, instead of a closed one – one that can only be broken open by a crisis and forced to other insights. Closed worldviews are usually keenly traditionalistic, have no awareness of alternatives, believe in the holiness of their convictions and have an (abnormal) fear of their standpoint being threatened. On the other hand open worldviews are characterised by less emphasis on tradition, a greater awareness and recognition of other possibilities. They do not sacralise their own insights (a healthy sense of relativity), neither are they negatively occupied with everything that is new and different.

The fact that worldviews – even Christian ones – are not immune against such crises, evokes the question whether there are yardsticks by which one can measure one's own worldview and so avoid such problems.

4.2 Criteria

In the foregoing several criteria were implicitly contained, for instance in the characteristics (3.4), the structure of a worldview (3.6) as well as crises (4.1). These will now be summarised explicitly (cf. further also Colson & Pearcey, 1999b:131 *et seq.*, 243, 323; Walsh & Middleton, 1984:36-38 and Naugle, 2002:327, 340). They could be divided into three groups: internal, external and finally transcendent tests.

4.2.1 Internal tests (from the worldview itself)

In this respect we can look at the following: (1) Is the particular worldview *comprehensive* enough to cover the whole of reality? (2) Are the subdivisions of the worldview sufficiently *coherent*? Unless a worldview is comprehensive and coherent, it cannot lead to a holistic, integral lifestyle.

4.2.2 External tests (from the realities outside the worldview)

In this case the following five criteria can be distinguished (1) openness, (2) correspondence (3) normativity (4) balance and (5) liveability.

- By **openness** we mean in the first place that a worldview may not restrict or reduce life in its rich variety but should honour it. (All kinds of "isms" are examples of the reductionistic viewpoints – see below.) Secondly it means that – in the light of the limitations of one's own worldview – one should be open to learn from other views.

- **Correspondence** links up with the interaction between worldview and the reality it represents (cf. diagram under 3.6.1) Do the realities tally with my worldview about them? And the other way round: Does my worldview tally with the realities in which I live? Does it make sense or does it clash? (In spite of the hermeneutic circle it is still an important test.)

- By **normativity** is meant that every worldview – even the non-biblical – cannot evade making into concrete norms God's ordinances for creation. God's laws are clearly revealed in creation (cf. e.g. Ps. 19), so clearly that Paul (Rom. 2:14, 15) even says it is written in the heart of every human being, it is part of his/her humanity.

God's cosmic law structures and maintains creation. On the other hand creation is a response to this cosmic law. Therefore an important part of a worldview is the norms it prescribes. One's worldview is the on-going testing of the elucidating capacity of the norms you adhere to.

To the extent that a worldview succeeds in understanding this universal order correctly, it will provide its adherents with a feeling of certainty and security. In

spite of what current post-modern, irrationalistic relativism maintains, worldviews are not just subjective preferences. Every worldview in its own way clings to something above subjectivity, historicity and relativity. In spite of the distortion a worldview can sometimes present, there still is an order that it attempts to represent. This does not mean accepting the opposite viewpoint of the (rationalistic) absolutists, namely that a worldview gives a perfect picture of God's creational order, so that we can equate God's laws to our understanding of them.

Therefore the test for every worldview is: (to what extent) does it represent this order correctly and fully? Since God's laws are meant to enjoy life in its full wealth (John 10:10), various types of suffering can be an indication (red lights) that we misunderstand and put into practice God's creational order in the wrong way. Green lights, on the other hand, is when joy, peace and spiritual welfare (*sjaloom*) is experienced.

- **Balance** directs our attention to the many facets that reality presents. It has a numerical, spatial, physical, biotic, psychic, logical, technical-historic, lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, juridical, moral and confessional side. To be a vision of *reality* a worldview should do justice to every one of these aspects in a balanced way. Many worldviews, however, stress one (or more) of the facets and then attempt to explain the other facets in the light of this (the phenomenon of reduction). Such an absolutisation leads to isms which are not reliable worldviews. According to Walsh & Middleton (1984:132) three clear current examples of such isms are the following: "At the pinnacle of the secular pantheon stands an unholy trinity, one god in three persons, one idol in three absolutes. The three absolutes are scientism, technicism and economism".(According to their work of 1995 it still is the case.)

- **Liveability** as a test directs our attention to the fact that a worldview should lead to a specific lifestyle. The question is whether the adherents of a worldview are prepared to live it right down to its final consequences. Of course it depends on the meaningfulness of the worldview. In many cases where people have for instance an evolutionistic, scientific or economic worldview, one finds that

they recoil from the eventual consequences of their worldview – they flee to something that clashes with their own worldviewish points of departure. Pearcey (2004:217, 218) for example points out how many evolutionists in the end take an irrational leap from their untenable naturalistic worldview to something like love and responsibility. (Cf. also Colson & Pearcey, 1999b:243, 323.)

4.2.3 Transcendent test

Up to now internal and external criteria have been mentioned. We have looked at the worldview itself (4) and at reality (5) in the diagram (under 3.6.1 above). This last test is done from the angle of faith (3) and the revelation (2) of God (1). All the foregoing tests are indications of the reliability of a worldview, but in the last instance one appeals to one's faith which is founded in revelation (something outside yourself). In the case of a Christian worldview the Source of the revelation is extra-cosmic or transcendent, namely God who reveals Himself to us in creation, the Scriptures and Christ. In the case of non-Christians a revealing, and therefore divine character is allotted to something in creation (e.g. science).

To Christians it is important to distinguish between (3) faith and (2) revelation. The Christian faith is not absolute, God's revelation is. Human faith is fallible, God's revelation is The Truth. This means that our worldview (4) has to be tested by our faith (3), but that our faith (by means of serious study of the Scriptures and prayer for the guidance of the Holy Spirit) constantly has to be put to the test of God's Word (2). Even a Reformational worldview has to be re-formed constantly in the light of the Scriptures – otherwise it will be deformed.

Finally it has to be borne in mind that the truth of God's revelation cannot be proved by rational arguments. One either believes it or one does not. It is part of one's prescientific worldview which comes before all rational arguments and which determines them.

The same has to be kept in mind in connection with all the foregoing criteria or tests. Since a worldview is something of the heart (cf. Naugle above), one can never know on reasonable grounds alone that one's worldview is the correct one.

So what we recommend here as criteria are no more than pointers or aids for evaluating one's own or other worldviews.

The concluding part of this investigation points out both the possible advantages and disadvantages of a worldview.

5 The value and risks attached to a worldview

The significance of a worldview is foremost and is therefore dealt with first.

5.1 The value

First we summarise the significance of a worldview in so far as it gives form to the Christian faith (cf. introduction). Then it will be explained further by means of images.

5.1.1 Summary

One can look at the role or significance of a worldview from the angle of the two poles sketched above (3.6.1), namely faith and lifestyle. Seen from the angle of faith a worldview fulfils the following function: It bases life in the last certainty. (The true God or idol – something in creation raised to a final certainty.) Seen from the angle of the reality of life, it has the following role: it invites and insists on "incarnation" (a concrete form) in an actual way of life (lifestyle). It renders the confessional surrender to a final certainty meaningful or relevant to everyday life in its miscellaneous variety.

5.1.2 In images

Since metaphors can say much more than many words, we now use simple images to explain the significance of a worldview for its adherents who devotedly live it.

- **Coloured spectacles.** A *worldview* is, as the name denotes, a way of looking at reality. The image of coloured spectacles portrays the fact that different persons can see the same reality differently. No one looks at things in an impartial or "neutral" way. Such subjectivity, however, does not necessarily imply relativism.

- **An anchor.** A worldview gives certainty to one's thoughts and what one does. It requires surrender and trust.
- **A map.** A worldview orientates one in understanding reality and also shows one's place and task in it.
- **A compass.** A worldview also shows the direction that one's life has to take. You cannot live without understanding the meaning of life – one then becomes apathetic, fatalistic and can even commit suicide. However, the meaning given by a worldview is dependent on the following characteristic:
- **A carpenter's square.** This is a measuring instrument which determines whether something is square. A worldview is therefore not only descriptive (spectacles) but also prescriptive (a measuring instrument). Clear norms enable one to make the right choices.
- **A dynamo.** Like a dynamo a worldview motivates and inspires to action, it gives one a calling and responsibility in this world.
- **An adhesive.** Like adhesive a worldview bonds the life of the individual as well as the life of a group of people to a unity. It integrates one's whole existence, and gives integrity.
- **A dye.** A worldview supplies the individual and the community with identity and character.

From these few images it is clear that a worldview plays a pivotal role in the forming – either positive or negative – of individuals and communities. A correct, positive, balanced, open, life-promoting worldview builds one up. But a faulty, negative (anti-this and anti-that), unbalanced, closed worldview destroys a person. The former promotes and the latter impedes spiritual growth.

5.1.3 Summary

Naugle's final conclusion (2002:344) on worldviews is the following: "The first is that worldview has played an extraordinary role in modern and Christian thought. The second is that it is one of the central intellectual conceptions in recent times.

The third is that it is a notion of the utmost, if not final, human, cultural and Christian significance. As G.K. Chesterton once wrote, ‘ the most practical and important thing about a man is still his view of the universe’.

5.2 The possible risks attached to a worldview

Above (3.6.4) we mentioned that even a Christian worldview can degenerate into an ideology. Other risks have also emerged so that we will – just as in the case of the value of a worldview – merely sum them up more systematically (cf. also Walsh, 2000). These risks are usually the consequence of a wrong understanding of what a worldview entails. The following are some of the most serious threats (they will be treated in more detail under 5.2.1-5.2.7 of chapter 4):

- **Degeneration into a totalitarian system**, which cannot be queried, nor stimulates any growth, but rather suppresses it.
- **An intellectualistic dogma or doctrine**, which wants to explain everything, instead of being a vision that grips one’s heart and inspires one to live accordingly.
- **A claim to universal, timeless validity**, because one’s worldview allegedly holds the final truth – while any worldview is always imperfect and meant for a particular time and circumstances.
- **Used to justify the influence of one’s own group**: obsessed with the own group’s purity and power, closed for the wants and needs of outsiders.
- **Irrelevant to contemporary culture**, which happens when a younger generation merely parrots the formulations of previous generations – who lived and thought in completely different circumstances.
- **Loss of contact with the Word of God**, because people no longer (in the case of a Christian worldview) listen constantly and in earnest to God’s revelation which has to inspire, correct and give insight into their worldview.
- **Replacing a personal relationship with God** is what happens when a Christian worldview is confused with one’s relationship with the triune God or

even replaces it – instead of one's Christian worldview bringing one nearer to God.

6 Review

We have come a long way. This chapter started with the popularity of a worldviewish approach to the Christian faith. Then we traced the origin and development of the concept. Thereafter we described what exactly a worldview is. Then we looked at the crises and the criteria for a reliable worldview. Finally we focused attention on both the usefulness and the risks attached to a worldview. A worldviewish approach is not a *panacea* that solves all problems (cf. Clouser, 2003). Nevertheless it has great value.

Griffioen (2003b:180) remarks that a worldviewish approach to matters currently is enjoying renewed interest. That his remark is correct is clear for example from the popularity among many Christians of a book like *The purpose driven life. What on earth am I here for?* by Warren (2002). The reason for this popularity of a worldviewish approach is, according to Griffioen, the realisation that without it crucial decisions about life and death, politics, economics, technology, science – the future of the whole community – are simply turned over to the powers of money and bureaucracy. Without worldviewish debate the really essential matters of life are not dealt with.

May this investigation contribute to a worldviewish approach gathering momentum also in Africa and elsewhere so that there will be greater depth and relevance – also in the way that Christians think and act.

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Chapter 4

THE UNIQUENESS OF A REFORMATIONAL WORLDVIEW and strategies for teaching such a perspective to students

This chapter is focussed on the contents of a Christian worldview. (1) The motivation for this investigation is the problem that Christians today have very little impact outside the small circle of private life, family and church. (2) The reason for their irrelevance in the public sphere is not a lack of Christian worldviews, but the impotence of most Christian worldviews which are dualistic in nature. What is needed is a comprehensive and integral Christian worldview, firmly rooted in the message of the Bible. Can a Reformational worldview qualify for this position? (3) The next section therefore investigates the unique characteristics of a Christian-Reformational worldview. The conclusion is that such a perspective can be a genuine world-transformative worldview. It not only informs our minds, fires our imagination and moves our hearts, but can also shape our culture. (4) The last part of the chapter investigates the question in which ways such a liberating worldview can be transferred to the younger generation of students.

1 The failure of Christendom in the public sphere and the need for a Christian worldview

Since numerous writers point out the slight contemporary influence of Christians in public life, only Colson & Pearcey (1999) are given the word here. In the quotations below they state both the problem and its solution.

"The church's singular failure in recent decades has been the failure to see Christianity as a life system, or worldview, that governs every area of existence... our failure to see Christianity as a comprehensive framework of truth has crippled our efforts to have a redemptive effect on the surrounding culture" (p. xii).

These writers do have an appreciation for the commitment of evangelical Christians. The weakness of evangelical Christianity, however, is that religion for

them goes no further than their personal salvation and holiness. . . "Genuine Christianity is more than a relationship with Jesus, as expressed in personal piety, church attendance, Bible study, and works of charity. It is more than discipleship, more than believing a system of doctrines about God. Genuine Christianity is a way of seeing and comprehending *all* reality. It is a worldview" (p. 14).

According to Colson and Pearcey (p. xii) the *soteriological* is not the only important principle of Christendom (in other words being justified through faith) but also the *cosmological* (in other words the sovereignty of God over the whole of creation): "Christianity is more than a private belief, more than personal salvation... it is a comprehensive life system that answers all of humanity's age-old questions: Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? Does life have any meaning and purpose?" (p. xi).

Elsewhere it is formulated as follows: "Christ is Lord over all of creation... When we truly grasp this, we are compelled to see that the Christian faith cannot be reduced to John 3:16 or simple formulas. Christianity cannot be limited to only one component of our lives, a mere religious experience, or even a salvation experience. We are compelled to see Christianity as the all-encompassing truth..." (Colson & Pearcey, 1999:15).

With such statements these two writers pinpoint the problem (dualistic Christian worldviews) as well as the solution (a holistic, integral worldview). The following section will first deal with these dualistic Christian worldviews, for against that background the unique, liberating character of a Reformational worldview will be all the more vivid.

2 Dualistic Christian worldviews as the cause for a lack of influence

Cutting up Christian life into compartments is one of the greatest hazards. Naugle (2004:2) even judges it to be demonic. According to him it is one of the most effective strategies of the devil to restrict the message of the gospel to the

so-called personal, spiritual life, so that he himself can control public life. (Satan will do everything possible to fight a comprehensive, integral Christian worldview.)

This division into compartments is the practical result of an underlying dualism. Faith in salvation by Christ is set *over against* or *alongside* the world (creation). This puts Christians in the false dilemma of either serving Christ without the world or the world without Christ. Or they try to live standing with one leg in the sphere of holiness and the other in the profane area.

Apart from making the gospel irrelevant, dualistic worldviews also result in Christians living with a double vision, a divided loyalty, attempting to serve two lords. On top of this, so Walsh & Middleton (1984:115) point out, dualistic Christian worldviews are also the cause of present-day secularism. "... dualism opened the door to the triumph of secularism as the guiding spirit of Western culture. To put it bluntly: if it were not for the medieval nature/grace dualism, *modern secularism might never have arisen at all.*"

For a better understanding of the dualistic worldviews we pay attention to the following: (1) their causes; (2) the different kinds of dualism; (3) Christian worldviews that adhere to (a) dualism; and (4) the basic error in all such viewpoints.

2.1 The causes of dualistic worldviews

From amongst numerous causes attention is here focused only on four of the most important.

2.1.1 Wrong interpretations or use of the Bible

Departing from a dualistic worldview, one's own ideas are first read into the Scriptures and – with the sanction of the Bible – once again read out of it. In this way the words of Christ that one should not worry about earthly things (food and clothes) but rather about the kingdom of heaven (Mat. 6:21-34) as misinterpreted. Or that we should not accrue riches on earth but rather in heaven (Mat. 6:19-21). Does Christ not explicitly states that his kingdom is not of this

world (John 18:36)? Paul also reminds us that we should not become like this world (Rom. 12:2), that we should set our hearts on the things above and not on the earth (Col. 3:1-2). And 2 Peter 2:20 speaks of people who have escaped the pollution of the world.

Van der Walt (2000:14 en 2001:31,32), however, demonstrates that texts like these can also be understood in a totally different way. Moreover, there are many other parts of the Scriptures that draw attention to the goodness of creation. For instance, it is not wrong to eat some kinds of food, or to get married (cf. 1 Tim. 4:3-5 and Col. 2:16-22). According to the Word of God reality may not be divided up into domains of which some are naturally good and others less good or even naturally bad.

2.1.2 The search for personal holiness

According to dualists a holy life and seclusion from the world usually go together. Holiness consists of spiritual discipline and escape from worldly matters. According to 1 John 2:15 believers may not love the world or worldly matters; they must keep themselves pure from the pollution of the world (James 1:27) and would do better not to get married (1 Cor. 7:1).

In these cases it is ignored that the concept "world" in the Bible is used in two distinct meanings: the world as the (good) creation of God and the world as the fallen creation, in the power of the Evil One. Therefore Christ prays to his Father not to take his disciples out of the world, but to keep them from evil (John 17:15). Elsewhere the Scriptures teach that nothing in creation – therefore not matters pertaining to the body either – can not be holy.

2.1.3 Sluggishness

Spiritual sluggishness, laziness or deathliness can also cause a dualistic Christian life to seem more attractive. For it is easier to serve the Lord only on a small island of personal holiness or on Sundays only than doing so in all fields of life, 24 hours of the day and seven days a week.

In this regard Naugle (2004:14) writes the following: "It just takes too much effort – too much blood, sweat, and tears – to think through and live out the implications of the Lordship of Christ over the whole of life. This inordinate lack of love for the kingship of God, this failure to hunger and thirst for righteousness in all things, this sin of omission rooted in spiritual apathy balks at the farreaching implications of the biblical narrative, reduces faith to tiny proportions, and leaves it securely nestled in the individual believer's comfort zone".

2.1.4 The influence of history and culture

Walsh (1992:30, 31) emphasises the same point: "Perhaps we as Christians tend towards dualism precisely because the claim of our sovereign Lord is so radical, so all-encompassing, indeed, so total. Before such a God, dualism seems like a safe place. This God wants too much. If only we could limit his divine claim on our lives, if only we could domesticate God a little, so that he would'nt make such embarrassing claims on us. Such a limiting domestication of God is the stuff of which dualism is made of while a split life is disintegrated and not whole, it is *more comfortable* than the radical obedience that might entail a cross, *more safe* than a discipleship that calls us to risk for Jesus sake. Perhaps we are like the schizophrenic who feels secure in his schizophrenia and for whom healing is terrifying."

Dualistic thought is a deep-rooted tendency, almost as old as Christianity itself. It originated through the influence of pagan Greek philosophy, and many other tendencies that are foreign to the Bible afterwards confirmed it.

Modern-day, secular Western culture also promotes it. Most countries today have liberal constitutions according to which faith and politics have to be two separate domains. This dualism between private and public means that religions still have a small stand in the field of marriage, family life and the church, but that it has to keep out of the huge field of public life because this should be "neutral" – which is of course something impossible. (In actual fact public life is controlled by a secularist worldview.) Such a secularist set-up puts great pressure on Christians to yield to a dualistic vision and life-style.

This brings us to the next point, namely

2.2 Different kinds of dualism

The following kinds of dualism could be distinguished on different levels:

2.2.1 Ontological dualism is a division in reality itself, e.g. between holy and secular, spiritual and material or between heavenly and terrestrial things.

2.2.2 Anthropological dualism is a dichotomy in someone's view of the human being, as for instance that between body and soul, flesh and spirit. The first-mentioned "part" of the human being is usually regarded as higher and more important, while the second "component" is seen as lower and of less significance.

2.2.3 Epistemological and encyclopaedic dualism. The first means a division in the field of epistemology (theory of knowledge). Examples of this is the division between faith and knowledge, heart and mind, values and facts. The first way of knowledge affords knowledge of sacred matters and the second of the profane. The encyclopaedia of the sciences is also construed in this manner: naturally theology would be Christian and philosophy by nature "neutral" (in other words it cannot be practised in a Christian way).

2.2.4 Societal dualism is what we get when society is divided into church and world, church and state and the already-mentioned private-public distinction. Once more the first part of the dualism is the Christian one and the second the non-Christian.

2.2.5 A dualistic life-style. Since ideas have "feet", and life-views lead to a style of *living*, many Christians in everyday life lead a schizophrenic existence. On Sundays they may be convicted Christians, but from Monday to Saturday their faith makes no difference to their daily living.

From the above it becomes clear that the various kinds of dualism are interdependent or that the one leads to the other. An ontological dualism in creation leads to a dichotomy in the view of mankind, a split in one's theory of

knowledge and philosophy of science as well as a dualistic social philosophy and lifestyle.

Naugle (2004:11) uncovers the basic error at the root of all dualism: "... it is a mistake to draw a line of demarcation *within* the creation to designate between the superior (positive) and inferior (negative) things God has made. We tend to forget that everything God made is very good, and in our forgetfulness we promote some aspects of God's handiwork (like the soul) and demote others (like the body). We view spiritual things as good and physical things as bad and regard certain aspects of God's creation with suspicion or even as sinful. We have confused creation with sin..."

As will become clear shortly (cf. 2.4 and 3.5) the cause of a dualistic worldview is therefore the confusion of (creation) structure and (religious) direction. This confusion will be seen even more clearly when we go to the next point:

2.3 Different dualistic Christian worldviews

Van der Walt (2000:121 *et seq.*; 2001:5 *et seq.*; 2004:513 *et seq.* and 2006:109 *et seq.*) explains the various types of Christian worldviews in detail. He first gives a historical survey of their origin in early Christianity and their development through the ages up to Christianity in Africa today. Then follows a typology (using *inter alia* Wolters, 1990) as well as examples of the practical implications of each.

From the foregoing it has already become clear that dualistic Christian worldviews hold an erroneous conviction on the relationship between creation (the world) and salvation (grace). Within this dualism, however, there may be three different relationships. Certain Christian worldviews (cf. e.g. Tertullian and the later Anabaptists) set salvation *over against* creation. Others (e.g. classical Lutheranism) set salvation *alongside* creation. A third group (e.g. the Roman Catholic Thomism) sets salvation *above* creation – the higher realm of grace merely has to perfect the lower realm of nature (external consecration).

In opposition to all three these Christian worldviews the Reformational teaches that salvation in Christ should transform or renew creation. While the other

Christian worldviews to a greater or lesser extent disparage and even despise it, the uniqueness of the Reformational worldview is that it appreciates creation and wants to retrieve it from its state of being lost in sin (cf. the title of the book by Wolters, 1992). While other Christian worldviews to a greater or lesser degree attempt to withdraw from creation, the Reformational wants to be involved *in* the world in order to transform it. Wolterstorff (1983:43) with right calls the Reformational worldview one of the few forms of a "world-formative Christianity" since it offers "a penetrating analysis of our contemporary social world combined with a comprehensive Christian vision of history and society". (Cf. also the statement by Colson & Pearcey, 1999:487: "Only Christianity provides the power to transform the world".)

2.4 The basic error of dualistic Christian worldviews

The underlying error of dualistic Christian worldviews is at the same time the strong point of the Reformational worldview. While others disparage (a part of) creation, the Reformational worldview want to have it renewed.

The same idea could also be formulated in a different way (cf. Wolters, 1992:10). More or less all Christians could approve of the following confession: "God the Father reconciled the created but fallen world by the death of his Son and renews it to the kingdom of God by his Spirit." Most Christian worldviews limit the scope of the central terms in this confession (like e.g. "created", "fallen", "reconciled", "kingdom of God"). So for instance the kingdom of God is restricted to the church. In contrast the Reformational worldview emphasises the all-inclusive, universal meaning of these central biblical concepts. The fall affected everything and through salvation everything can be renewed (made holy).

The same thought could be expressed in a more intricate way: the basic error of dualistic worldviews is that they ascribe an *ontological* (or *structural*) character to the *religious* (*directional*) antithesis between obedience and disobedience to God's laws (cf. Van der Walt, 2001:7)

Van der Walt (2006:114) explains: "Since the fall there are two different religious directions in creation: obedience to and service of God or of something (an idol)

in the place of the true God. These directions for or against God are spiritual in nature. They are not of an ontological nature so that they can easily be located in specific areas of life. Obedience and disobedience, good and bad occurs *throughout* creation and cannot be *limited* to a specific thing or area... The tension does not lie between *two areas* of which the one is by nature good and the other by nature bad or at least neutral".

Spykman (1992:67) puts the same perspective into 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 (religious) antithesis is read back into the very structure of creation".

Therefore a Reformational worldview offers unique solutions to the weak points and errors of dualistic Christian worldviews. This brings us to the next main point, which will explain in more detail the uniqueness of this worldview.

3 The uniqueness of a Reformational worldview

What follows below is not a complete systematic exposition of a Reformational worldview – only some of its most unique traits are highlighted. With this aim in mind the following writers are quoted: Marshall & Gilbert (1998), Van der Walt (2000 and 2006), Walsh & Middleton (1984) and Wolters (1992).

The key moments which are more closely inspected here, are the following: (1) the distinction between God, law and creation; (2) the Scriptures as a criterion; (3) God's creational and Scriptural revelation; (4) creation, the fall, redemption and consummation; (5) structure and direction; (6) man as the image of God; (7) the cultural mandate and missionary command and (8) social change.

3.1 The distinction and connection between God, law and creation

Although not explicitly mentioned, underlying all the above works on a Reformational worldview is the distinction between (1) God, (2) that which he

created and (3) the laws he set for the different created things. *Ontologically* seen God is different, totally dissimilar to that which He created or his laws which apply to creation. The other way round there is nothing divine in creation. Nothing in creation may therefore be absolutised (deified) – something which regularly happens in different worldviews.

In a *religious sense* God is at the same time intimately involved in his creation. He not only called it into being, but maintains it daily by means of his creational ordinances which remain valid even though man transgresses them.

This clear distinction between God, law and creation renders the Reformational worldview something unique. For instance, other Christian worldviews do not recognise the radical (ontological) difference between God and man. (The human soul could, for instance, be regarded as something semi-divine.) God's religious presense in creation is confused with ontological equality to creation. Or they may not see clearly the distinctive (valid) character of God's laws and identify them with things (subjects) which are subjected to his laws and therefore cannot have the character of a law. (The "free market" for instance, is seen as an economic norm, while it has to be assessed normatively.)

In this way an answer is given to a first important question of life: Of what is the reality in which I find myself made up? Who/what does it comprise?

3.2 The Scriptures as a criterion

To explain this second trait of a Reformational worldview it could be useful to present it by four circles (numbers 1-4 from left to right) with arrows connecting them. Circle (1) depicts God's *revelation*; (2) man's *faith* which is based on it; (3) the Christian *worldview* based on this faith; while (4) denotes the *practice* of everyday life which is determined by the worldview. In this case all the arrows between the circles point from left to right, for a worldview is the "bridge" between one's faith and one's lifestyle. (Cf. diagram under 3.6.1 of the previous chapter)

3.2.1 A reversed test

Between the four circles there should, however, also be arrows that point in the reverse direction (from right to left). The reason is that one's worldview (3) has to be tested by one's faith (2) while one's faith in turn has to be corrected continuously by God's revelation (1). Unless this happens, one may not claim a biblically founded worldview.

To prevent one from simply reading one's own presuppositions (condensed in one's worldview) into the Bible (eisegesis) and then read it from the Bible again (exegesis), one should attempt to get one's presuppositions (worldview) from the Scriptures themselves. Formulated in an image: one's spectacles should be polished by the Scriptures.

3.2.2 A circle or spiral

This of course implies a circle: one tries to understand the Scriptures in the light of what one (pre-)understands about the Scriptures. However, no one can escape this hermeneutical problem. The issue is not *whether* one wants to be drawn into the hermeneutical circle, but *within which* hermeneutical circle one would work: One in which spectacles are used that are foreign to the Bible, or one in which the spectacles become more and more faithful to the Bible? Therefore the image of a spiral instead of a circle is more fitting: there should be progress in the dialogue between faith and revelation. With a praying attitude the believer puts questions to God's revelation. The Word answers. The answers are of such a nature that they question, transform, renew one's faith. During the next round in the dialogue the questions by the believer to the Bible text will be a little different, likewise the answers coming from the text. In the ongoing dialogue (Word-answer, Word-answer) one's faith and worldview are increasingly renewed, brought nearer to God's will (Rom. 12:2). The spiral route that one has to go is therefore from one's worldview back to the Scriptures and from the Scriptures back to a more purified and still clearer worldview.

3.2.3 Continuous study of the Scriptures

One should therefore be careful, to listen *too little* to God's revelation and clutch at a system *too soon*. A doctrine or system (like the Christian worldview) is not wrong. But a closed dogma is extremely dangerous. The Bible may not merely function as a midwife at the birth of a worldview, which then grows further independently and on its own. There should be living, continuous contact with God and his Word.

Unless this happens, one may be inclined to think that one's type of Christian worldview is not *a* form of Christendom, but *the* Christian system, the most pure, unadulterated and powerful revelation of Christendom! In that case there is a great risk that one's worldview becomes the norm instead of being measured by the norm of the Scriptures. Then the worldview becomes an idol standing between the believer on the one hand and God and his revelation on the other hand. God's Word and his Spirit must regularly remove the blinkers from one's eyes and the wax from one's ears, so that one can see and hear what one *should* see and hear, and not what one *would like to* see and hear.

3.2.4 Summary

Walsh & Middleton (1984:105) raise the question how we could constantly renew our thoughts in obedience to Romans 12:2. Their answer shows that a Reformational worldview takes seriously the Bible as the final benchmark: "Through letting the Scripture shape our world view. But we... saw that our world view in turn shapes our interpretation of Scripture. How do we break out of this hermeneutical circle? Usually we don't. It sometimes takes a world view crisis. We must at least be open to renewal and growth. We must allow the Spirit to correct and overthrow our unbiblical world view. The Scriptures are sharper than a two-edged sword and can shatter our preconceptions. The Holy Spirit, working through God's Word, can lead us in a new vision and new obedience."

3.3 The difference and connection between God's revelation in creation and in his Word

The foregoing point can give the impression that a Reformational worldview restricts God's revelation to his Scriptural revelation in the Bible. Another unique trait of a Reformational worldview, however, is that it also takes seriously God's creational revelation.

3.3.1 Mostly neglected

In the history of Christendom God's so-called general revelation was indeed included in some creeds (as e.g. in Article 2 of the Belgic Confession), but for the rest it was neglected. The result was that most Christian worldviews and theologies expected too much from God's revelation in the Scriptures by thinking that it would be able to answer all possible questions – the error of Biblicism. Wolters (1992:24 *et seq.*) on the other hand shows how important Reformational thinkers regard creational revelation and exactly what it entails. (For more details, see chapter 1. What was stated there already, may be repeated in this chapter.)

3.3.2 Creational revelation

In his revelation in creation (a revelation without writing or words – Ps. 19:4) God reveals his creational order or laws to man. (the "eternal power and divine nature" of Romans 1:19,20 reminds one of that). God's creational order is revealed so clearly that even people who do not know the revelation of the Scriptures, can understand it (cf. Rom. 2:14, 15). The wisdom of the book of Proverbs, for instance, is founded on this creational revelation, while great parts of the Psalms, Job and Ecclesiastes also draw our attention to it. A good example (cf. Wolters, 1992:27, 28) is a passage like Isaiah 28:23-29 in which it is told how one can be a good farmer by meticulously observing God's creational revelation with regard to how one should plough, sow and harvest. To know this creational order requires spiritual insight (cf. Eph. 1:17-18).

As a consequence of the fall, however, man has become "deaf" and "blind" to God's revelation in his creation, so that it is no longer sufficient to get to know

God's will. It is not God's revelation that has failed – that remains unchanged and clear – but man represses and replaces it (cf. Rom. 1:18, 23).

However, God graciously supplied a "hearing aid" or "glasses" in the Scriptures. Otherwise formulated: He "republished" – this time in a lingual form – his revelation. Therefore the Bible is not a completely new revelation, but as it were a second, revised edition. God's revelation in creation and in his Word are similar in so far as they reveal God's will for life (as expressed in different laws).

3.3.3 The difference and connection between the two-fold revelation

Still, the two ways of revelation are not the same, for the Scriptures add something. The creational revelation (a non-lingual revelation) does not tell the tale of history. It says nothing about creation, the fall, salvation and the end (consummation) of the world. The Bible tells this history in full from Adam up to the final coming of the second Adam. This historic drama with its four acts of formation, deformation, reformation and culmination (cf. Bartholomew & Goheen, 2004) is the extra "light" offered by the Scriptures or the "glasses" needed to understand reality correctly.

As mentioned already in chapter 1, Wolters (1992:32) compares the role of the Scriptures with that of a lamp on the forehead of a mine worker. He does not look *into* the light of the lamp, but *in* the light of the lamp he does his work in the dark passages of the mine. In the same way we do not look in the Scriptures for the answers to all our questions (=Biblicism), but we look for answers in God's creational revelation as enlightened by the Scriptures.

Another image that explains the connection between God's two-fold revelation is the following (Wolters, 1992:33, 34). A builder does not understand the building plan of a house to be able to erect it in the right way. He therefore has to consult the architect who drew up the plan to explain it to him (orally). Likewise the Scriptures once more explain God's "building plan" (laws) for life in simple human language.

Marshall & Gilbert (1998:58) formulated it concisely as follows (see chapter 1 again): "We need to study not only God's Word but also God's world; we study the world in the light of God's Word... It is not for us to choose between knowing the Bible or the world; we need to *know the world biblically*".

Hereby an answer is given to a second basic, vital worldwiewish question, namely: Where do I get a dependable light on this often dark world in which I live?

3.3.4 Summary

In summary therefore a Reformational worldview supposes the following: (1) That it should be founded on God's revelation. (2) That God's revelation includes not only the Scriptures but also his creational revelation. (3) That God's two-fold revelation particularly makes know to man his laws for the different walks of life. These creational ordinances or regulations point the way for the development of the various domains of life. (4) That the "light" offered in the Scriptures can be summed up in formation, dereformation, reformation and consummation. These four concepts demonstrate how man that initially lived in obedience to God's laws, fell into disobedience, as well as how salvation once more makes possible obedience to God's regulations. This is the deepest, religious perspective on history, concerned with the direction of human life. (5) There is an unbreakable connection between creation, fall, salvation and culmination. It is *creation* that fell into sin and is saved again. Redemption therefore is not *opposite to*, *next to* or *above* creation (see 2.3 above), but is meant to *restore* creation.

After these general remarks we can now look in more detail at the unique vision of a Reformational worldview on creation, the fall, redemption and culmination.

3.4 The meaning of creation, fall, redemption and consummation

From the versions of Marshall & Gilbert (1998:15-50), Walsh & Middleton (1984:43 *et seq.*) and Wolters (1992:11 *et seq.*) in particular, the unique vision of a Reformational worldview on these four central biblical concepts clearly emerges. Based on them a Reformational worldview offers answers to the

following eight basic questions (for answers to the first two questions cf. 3.1 and 3.3.3 above): (3) In what kind of reality do I find myself? (4) What is the origin of the evil in it? (5) Can it be repaired? (6) What happens to me after death? (7) What should my relationship with this earth be? (8) Who or what am I? (9) What am I doing here on earth – do I have a task? (10) How can I improve society?

3.4.1 Creation

Creation is the answer to the (third) worldviewish question: In what kind of reality do I have to live?

The goodness of creation

And the unique answer of a Reformational worldview is that I live in *God's* creation and that creation, the *whole* of it, before and apart from sin, is unequivocally *good*. God Himself said at the end of each creation day that what He had made was good. It reached a climax when we read in Genesis 1:31 that at the end He looked at all his work and declared that it was “very good”.

Marshall & Gilbert (1998:ix) say that the Bible clearly tells of being lost in sin, but that still the basic biblical message is the goodness of creation. This has to be emphasised, for “Unfortunately, among Christian believers, and especially among evangelicals, the theme of the goodness and permanence of the world is usually neglected, often forgotten, and sometimes denied entirely ... the world, along with every human achievement, is going to be destroyed. This ... position diminishes our place in God's world. Because of such misconception, many Christians today are, by and large, shirking their divinely given responsibility to sustain, nurture, renew, and really *live* in God's world”.

Summarised: “The simple ... truth is that *this world is our home*, that our service in this world *is* service to God, that what we accomplish here we accomplish forever...” (p. 250).

Wolters (1992:41), too, rejects the idea of scorning the world by referring to 1 Timothy 4:3-5 and then says that God does not make rubbish and does not throw it on the rubbish dump either. Since God does not make trash, we dishonour Him

when we refer to the work of his hands in a negative way – while He himself is so positive about it. He refused to destroy creation when man had spoilt it. Instead He chose to renew it and make it good once more – even at the cost of his own Son.

Denial of the good creation

This unique trait of the Reformational worldview clearly emerges when we keep in mind that most worldviews single out an aspect of creation as the cause of human misery. (Examples of this is for instance the physical body, temporariness, sexuality or emotions.) One or more of these things are used as a scapegoat instead of seeking the root of evil in man's rebellion against God. Over against this part of creation that is disparaged another aspect of creation is usually hailed and idolised as the saviour from the misery. From this it once more becomes clear how important the light of the Scriptures is on creation, fall and redemption.

An unexpected break-through

The Roman Catholic theologian Donovan (1990) is an example of how an honest wrestling with the Scriptures can change one's worldview with regard to God's creation. While one would expect that creation would be insignificant to him (only the natural part in a dualism of nature-grace), he says: "We must move away from a theology of salvation and redemption to a theology of creation. The saving God is the same as the God of creation ... To separate them and to concentrate only on saving and redeeming the world is to deny creation. We are not destined to be saved *from* this world, but *in* this world" (Donovan, 1990:112).

Elsewhere he says: "This gospel of creation is a corrective for a sectarian view of God, of truth, and of faith, and for an 'otherworldly spirituality' ... A gospel that is not as wide as the earth, that is without meaning for the whole earth, is not a gospel at all" (p. 128). Just as in the case of a Reformational worldview he therefore lays great emphasis of God's creational revelation: "We must come ... to understand that our primary revelation is creation, the unwritten book, as sacred as any published one" (p. 129).

The goodness of God's ordinations

As we have said above (cf. 3.1) God's creation and his laws that apply to it cannot be separated. The task of creation is to meet the requirements of God's own guidelines (cf. Walsh & Middleton, 1984:49). These creational ordinances are also consistent (not static) and good, for they have no part in the fall. To obey them means living to the full.

3.4.2 The Fall

This biblical perspective answers the next (fourth) worldview question: What went wrong? A worldview that has no room for sin is too narrow a worldview.

Comprehensive meaning of sin

The uniqueness of a Reformational worldview in this case is that it does not see the fall into sin as an isolated act of disobedience. It was an event with catastrophic results for the *whole* of creation – both the human and the non-human world (cf. e.g. Rom. 8:19-22). There is *nothing* that was not in principle affected by the devastating consequences of sin. It affects personal faith, marriage, family life, church, politics, art, labour – all of man's cultural labour.

The cause

According to the Scriptures and the Reformational worldview evil is to blame on man. All of it is the consequence of man's enmity towards God and his refusal to live in accordance with the guidelines laid down by God. In this respect the Reformational worldview, therefore differs from other explanations for the abnormality of reality. People usually look for the cause of evil in something outside themselves (cf. above) which can be branded as a scapegoat. The Roman Catholic viewpoint regard it as something from creation (supernatural grace) that has been lost. If the cause of injustice and suffering is not sin, naturally one has to look for other explanations to it: "... they must be the product of the environment: of ignorance, poverty or other undesirable social conditions; and all that it takes to create an ideal society is to create a better environment:

improve education, enhance economic conditions, and engineer social structures". (Colson & Pearcey, 1999:148, 149.)

The relation between creation and sin

On the difficult problem of the relation between sin and creation the Reformational worldview also offers an answer of its own. It clearly states that the fall into sin cannot destroy creation – God's work. (Prostitution does not destroy the good of human sexuality, nor does political injustice cancel the role of the state.) Creation and sin remain two separate things. Sin does not fit into the (good) creation. It brings to the fore a new element (evil) – which is of a later origin than creation itself.

Wolters (1992:46 *et seq.*) attempts to explain in several ways what exactly the relation between creation and the fall is. Evil is a *parasite* that causes a perversion of the good. (Which does not mean that evil originates in the good.) Evil further creates a *caricature* of the good – an image that nevertheless retains certain recognisable characteristics. Evil is an *infiltrator* (like an alien plant) which is foreign to creation.

Without using images we can say that the *structure* of what was created stays in spite of the erroneous *direction* (disobedience) after the fall. (This important distinction has already been mentioned above and will be treated in detail under 3.5 below.)

3.4.3 Redemption

Salvation offers the answer to the next (fifth) worldviewish question, namely : How that which has gone wrong can be remedied.

Once more a unique way

In the answer to this question, too, the Reformational worldview follows its own way. In the first instance it believes in the *restoration* of creation and secondly that the *whole* of creation can be restored. It differs for example from the Thomistic worldview according to which salvation is supposed to be merely the *addition* of that *part* of creation (grace) which was lost in the fall. However, the

only thing redemption added to creation is the remedy, the direction of new obedience to God's ordinations.

Examples

The following practical consequences highlight even more the uniqueness of the Reformational view. Sexuality and marriage is not something Christians should avoid, but they should be sanctified, saved from the power of their evil direction. Emotions are part of our structure as humans, and should therefore not be repressed, but chastened. Politics may not be regarded as something evil by nature but should be transformed. In the Name of Christ therefore perversion and decay should be opposed *everywhere*. In his Name the *whole* of creation has to be reclaimed.

The kingdom of God

Wolters (1992:60) in this connection refers to the biblical concept "the kingdom of God". In the Scriptures it denotes the fact that God is *King*, the *realm* of his kingship (creation as a whole) and the *blessings* his rule brings to creation (cf. Van der Walt, 1986). A Reformational worldview therefore understands the concept "kingdom of God" in a *comprehensive* meaning while dualist Christian worldviews regularly restrict it. It can be limited in a pietistic way to personal faith; ecclesiocentrically locked up in the church as an institute; eschatologically regarded as something of the distant future; it can also (as in the case of the "social gospel") be tied down to human social and political structures.

Creation regained

It is clear that the cross of Christ does not turn our attention *away* from creation, but inspires us to *return* to it. With his death on the cross and resurrection the kingdom of God gets a "hold" on creation. With the second coming of Christ complete victory will dawn with the final establishment of his rule as King over everything and everyone. We are now living in the time between his first and his second coming. Our calling can be summed up in a few words: to reclaim for

God the creation (which belongs to Him) in the power given by his Spirit. This is the appeal of a Reformational worldview.

3.4.4 Consummation

On this phase in world history the Reformational worldview also has its own message. It gives a clear answer to the sixth important worldview question: What happens to me after my death? Many Christians believe that our life on earth is merely a waiting room where people – as apprentice angels – are waiting anxiously for the day when they will leave behind temporary life for the eternal, to go and stay in heaven. Since according to them this earth will finally disappear, it is unnecessary to take the present life seriously or work hard to bring about something good.

This world is our abode

Such thoughts are rejected by Reformational thinkers on the basis of the Scriptures. Marshall & Gilbert (1998:11) say: "It is an unbiblical idea that the earth doesn't matter because we are going to heaven when we die. The Bible teaches that there will be *a new heaven and a new earth*. Our destiny is an earthly one: a new earth, an earth redeemed and transfigured. An earth united with heaven, but an earth, nevertheless". Walsh & Middleton (1984:104) stress the same idea. Instead of believing in the restoration of creation (earth) many Christians believe in a dualistic eschatology in which the earth is replaced by heaven – something that leads to a mentality of fleeing the world.

More continuity than discontinuity?

Van der Walt (2007:34-36) is of the opinion that there will be *discontinuity* (e.g. no more marriage or a church – cf. Mat. 22:30 and Rev. 21:22) between the present and the consummation, but at the same time some *continuity*. The discontinuity he explains mainly from the fact that all consequences of sin which we experience now, will disappear. (The Bible says for instance that there will be no more tears, illness and death. Cf. Rev. 21:4.) Creation will also be totally focussed on God alone. The means, too, by which we fulfil our cultural task, will

change *direction*: swords will be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks (Micah 4:3). Since the creational *structures* do not change (humans stay human, temporal, earthly beings), we should, however expect greater continuity than what Christians often envisage between the now and here and the life hereafter. (For more particulars cf. Marshall & Gilbert, 1998:231-245 and especially the work of Mouw, 1983.) This brings us to:

3.5 The difference between structure and direction

According to Wolters (1992:73) its emphasis on the difference between structure and direction is the deepest secret and power of a Reformational worldview. Since it has been mentioned several times and applied without being fully explained, we will now do so. For it offers an answer to the following (seventh) serious question for every Christian: What should my relation to the earth be like?

3.5.1 Distinction between structure and direction

"Structure" refers to the order of creation, the fixed plan according to which God made everything. The structure of every created thing is bound up in the law that applies to it. This law is valid, it determines the essential nature of everything and remains valid. However much it may be suppressed or violated, God's laws cannot be annihilated. "Structure" therefore also restricts the degeneration or deterioration that results from the fall. Thus structure relates mostly to creation.

"Direction" relates to the second and third phases of history, namely the fall and redemption. After the fall and redemption everything in creation is either directed away from God or once more directed to Him. This direction depends on obedience/disobedience to God's laws.

Wolters gives numerous explanations of this distinction of which the following is a good summary description: "... *structure* denotes the core or essential nature of something, that which it is by virtue of God's creational order or creational law. *Direction*, on the other hand, refers to the sinful deviation from that creational order, but it also refers to a renewed orientation towards Christ. A Reformational

analysis of every domain of life will continuously apply this biblical distinction. It will place equal emphasis on creation (structure) and on the spiritual opposite direction that permeates the whole of creation." (Wolters, 1992:73).

Walsh & Middleton (1984:88, 89) explain the distinction structure – direction with the image of an electric cable (the structure) through which an electric current can run in two directions. This image can of course not explain how intimately structure and direction are interwoven. What is at stake here is in the first instance the fact that they are – in contrast to dualist viewpoints – clearly distinguished.

3.5.2 Confusion of structure and direction

According to Wolters (1992:50) dualist worldviews are inclined to reduce direction to structure. This is wrong, for the contrast between good and evil is not an essential part of creation (cf. above). Such a confusion takes place (cf. above once more) when one aspect or the domain of God's good creation is singled out as the source of evil – instead of the real hostile element, namely the wrong direction in the heart of man. Walsh & Middleton (1984:95) formulates it as follows: "Dualism blurs the duality between obedience and disobedience because dualism identifies obedience, redemption and the kingdom of God with only *one* area of life".

3.5.3 The correct vision

It has to be stressed all along that the good creation *precedes* the fall and should therefore be *distinguished* from it. A creation without evil was possible at the time of creation and will one day at the consummation again become a reality. Nothing in the world is therefore without hope. This hope is based on the uninterrupted presence of the good (*structure*) of creation – even where it is violated in the most horrible way (as a consequence of the wrong *direction*) (cf. Wolters:1992:51).

Wolters applies the distinction between structure and direction to various matters (like the renewal of society, sexuality, aggression, etc.) His conclusion in the end

is that the rediscovery of the two-fold accent on structure and direction – the cosmic re-creation in Christ – can help one to look at the world with new eyes.

Van der Walt (2001:83) further clarifies this distinction. Both structure and direction 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.

To illustrate this viewpoint Van der Walt (p. 84) gives the following two examples: "A book, for instance, has to comply with the following *structural* criteria: understandable language, no spelling mistakes, clear typography, attractive technical workmanship, etcetera. 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 has 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, e.g. 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!" (Van der Walt, 2001:84).

3.5.4 Further clarification

In spite of the value of this distinction, Fowler (1991:98, 99) is of the opinion that to use the term "structure" for the structural law, and to make the distortion of sin wholly a matter of "direction", tends to obscure the issue of the *structural distortion* that results from the human violation of God's normative conditions for creation as well as the *structural reform* to which we are called in God's Word. Our world is full of *structurally* distorted marriages, families, schools, churches,

states, businesses etc. Not only their direction, but also their *structures* are distorted, because the humans who construct them ignore their divine normative structural conditions. It will also not solve these problems when individual people act obediently while the structure in which they find themselves is distorted. In spite of their best intentions, the distorted structure will cancel what they try to achieve.

Fowler therefore recommends a distinction between the structural *laws* that always hold good and the existent *structures* of the created order that functions under these laws. Stated differently: We have to distinguish between structures *for* and structures *of* creation. The first refers to the structural *law* and the second to the existent *structures* in creation.

3.6 Human beings as the image of God

This biblical perspective offers an answer to the next (eighth) vital question for every human being: Who/what am I? What does it mean to be human?

It has been mentioned above (cf. 3.1) that according to a Reformational worldview nothing about or in man can be divine. While other worldviews propagate a type of ontological relativism (*analogia entis*) between God and man, this radical distinction is maintained on biblical grounds. It is also applied in the case of the biblical revelation that man and woman were created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 27). Amidst numerous speculations on what this enigmatic statement could mean, Reformational thinkers have a unique viewpoint. Especially Walsh & Middleton (1984) and Middleton & Walsh (1995) explain its meaning in detail.

3.6.1 The meaning of man/woman as the image of God

To them (cf. Walsh & Middleton, 1984:52) being the image of God implies two things: (1) It has a broader meaning, which denotes the calling of man to rule over creation and look after it on behalf of God. It therefore denotes man's cultural task to develop God's creation. (2) The concept, however, also has a more restricted meaning, namely the choice which man (after the fall) in his

cultural activities faces to serve either the true God or idols in his place. He/she can either reflect God or something of creation as a substitute god.

Although Walsh & Middleton do not apply the above-mentioned distinction of structure and direction to man as the image of God, in actual fact this is what happens. *Structurally* seen man is God's authorised viceroy, a creator of culture. The fall did not destroy this essential nature of man, but its religious *direction* changed. Thus we can say that after the fall man has lost the image of God as a consequence of his disobedience to God's ordinations.

3.6.2 Idolatry

Walsh & Middleton (1984:65) in this connection also offer a new perspective on idolatry – a phenomenon that is just as rife today as it was in ancient times. (Think, for example, of the contemporary idolisation of science, technology and money.) At its root idolatry is a sign of man's refusal to image God in his life as a human being, to make obedience to God's laws visible in his everyday life. In idolatry man not only denies God his rightful place, but denies man/woman their rightful place as well. "Idolatry thus usurps not only God's proper place but ours too. It contradicts both God's rightful kingship as Lord of the universe and our fundamental human calling to represent him in daily, cultural obedience – to image him in our lives" (p. 65)

3.6.3 Restoration of the image

It is this usurpation that Christ came to repair. Walsh & Middleton (1984:83) explain: "The New Testament refers to him as *the image of God par excellence* (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3; 2 Cor. 4:4). Although these passages could be taken to refer to Christ's unique status as God, they also refer to his perfect humanity. Christ is the perfect image of God, the paradigmatic man who completely represented God and mediated God's presence in the full range of earthly, human life. Hence the classic statement in John 14:9, 'Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father', could just as easily refer to Christ's humanity as his deity. In fact, the Gospel of John is full of statements concerning Christ's perfect

obedience and oneness of purpose with the Father, an obedience and oneness we are called to imitate”.

If Christ is the perfect image of God, man/woman should be renewed to the image of Christ in order to be fully human again. Walsh & Middleton (p.84) proceeds: “... our imaging task of reflecting God’s rule in our lives is equivalent to our growing in likeness to Christ (Eph. 4:13). Just as Christ fully represented God in his earthly life, so we... are to manifest visibly the life and presence of Christ our Lord, here and now... He lives in us by his Spirit, who conforms us to his image”.

3.6.4 Practical implications

Finally it has to be mentioned that being in the image of God is not something vague or abstract. This emerges clearly from the fact that humans not only look like the God/idol that he/she serves. He/she also creates a society (marriage, family, church, school) according to his view of what true humanity entails. We could turn it around and say: every societal vision is based on a certain perspective of being human and every view of being human is based on a specific idea of a god.

Van der Walt (2001:50 *et seq.*) and Walsh & Middleton (1984:33) with right regard a worldview as the heart and soul of any culture. A worldview has a decisive influence on what family and church life, education, politics, legislation, health care, the arts, media, the economy – all our cultural activities – will look like. In the form of a Reformational worldview the Christian faith is broadened to influence one’s entire life – it does not relate to preaching the gospel or attending church only.

3.7 Cultural mandate and missionary command entail the same task

We now turn to the answer given by the Bible to the next (ninth) serious worldviewish question: What am I doing here on earth? Do I have a task/calling?

From the foregoing it has already emerged that the Reformational worldview does not attempt to *flee* life in a pietistic spirit, *destroy* it in a revolutionary

manner, or *concecrate it from the outside* in a Thomistic manner. It is not a narrow-minded preaching of the gospel but a broad, *world-forming worldview*. It breaks through the false dilemma of either preaching the gospel or getting involved socially. To grasp this, more must be said about the cultural mandate.

3.7.1 The first and permanent assignment

The first assignment given to man (Gen. 1:26-28), remarkably, is not to pray, build a church or to get involved in some or other so-called spiritual activity, but to cultivate a garden, rule the world and take care of it. Neither is it a secondary responsibility (in contrast to his "spiritual" duties), but his primary task, his comprehensive, religious calling. It is almost impossible to over-emphasise this very first assignment given by God to man.

3.7.2 The focus point and climax

On the sixth day – the climax – the divine "Production Manager" introduces us to the apex of creation: The two actors (Adam and Eve) are depicted as the "image of God" and they get a "pass-word", namely the cultural mandate. Thereafter God "rests" and the actors begin to play their roles in creation.

The fact that the human being is created in the image of God, (cf. above) denotes his/her *place* in creation (as God is *Lord* of the entire creation, man – in a derived sense – should *rule* creation). The assignment God gives man (the cultural mandate to rule and look after) denotes his *task* in creation. These two matters are inextricably related, as is demonstrated by a literal back-translation of the Afrikaans translation which would read: "Let us make man as our representative, in our image *so that he can reign...*" (Gen. 1:26 – the same close connection also transpires from Ps. 8:6,7).

Thus Genesis 1 and 2 is the prologue, "setting the scene" for the rest of the world's history that was to follow.

3.7.3 The key to history

In the rest of the book Genesis the different generations are described in ten different divisions. It denotes the bearers of history, the origin of historically

significant nations. In the rest of the book Genesis the writer simply shows how the various people and generations reacted to the fundamental command of "Be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it; rule ..." (Gen. 1:28) and how they carried it out. It relates in detail how people obeyed the cultural mandate – the first and fundamental assignment from God – or disobeyed it.

3.7.4 The foundation for the rest of God's revelation in the Scriptures

The rest of the Scriptures do not forget the dramatic moment during the climax of creation when God made people in his image and addressed them to tell them what his plan with them was, why He had set them in the world, and to give them "marching orders" for the long "march" in history that lay ahead. For on this occasion of cosmic meaning God made man a religious being, who has to answer to God's basic command in everything he does. All other subsequent revelations of God presupposes this first and primary command of God to man/woman. Unfortunately the rest of history from Genesis 3 onward is darkened by the fact that man fell into sin and could not fulfil the cultural mandate in obedience. Therefore the Bible focuses on the promise of salvation from sin which would culminate in the coming of Christ.

3.7.5 Re-affirmation by Christ

Salvation means being freed from demonic imprisonment to idolatry, so that man can once more enjoy his original freedom. Freedom to serve God again, obey his commands – a restoration of the original cultural mandate. It is in this way we should also understand the "missionary command" of Christ (in Matthew 28:19, 20). It is a re-affirmation of man's comprehensive cultural mandate in Genesis and not a new command only to evangelise. Christ sends out his disciples, so that people can be converted and obey the original, primary, comprehensive assignment given by God at the beginning of creation.

Therefore we should never look at Christ's later so-called mission command in isolation from this original cultural mandate, for then we would not be understanding it properly. When Christ for instance commands his disciples (who now become his apostles) to teach those to whom they preach *everything* He

had ordered them, it should be borne in mind that this refers to everything he had taught them concerning the comprehensive kingdom of God. "... the disciples are called to teach the nations to observe *all* he (Christ) has commanded. The Great Commission itself includes our tasks in the world. The Great Commission is a calling creation-wide and creation-deep: *it calls the nations to obey God*" (Marshall & Gilbert, 1998:209).

3.7.6. Evangelical dualism

Therefore neither the viewpoint of either-or, nor the more recent one of both-and of Evangelical Christians (cf. Van der Walt, 2000:124-128) is satisfactory, for in both cases there is an assumption that evangelisation and social involvement are *two distinct matters* between which either a choice must be made or a reconciliation has to be brought about.

"Many Evangelicals see that the gospel makes social action a Christian imperative. But fear of losing the gospel by focussing exclusively on social concerns makes them try to hold the two in a balancing act. They speak of caring for *both* the physical life *and* the spiritual life. But as soon as we speak of *both/and* in these terms, we are acknowledging a dualism: we are seeing two fundamentally distinct realities which we must somehow put together again. Perhaps it isn't the harsh dualism of the past, but it is still a dualism. And it cripples our social action because such involvement is always subservient to the 'higher' calling of evangelism" (Walsh & Middleton, 1984:102).

According to the Scriptures, therefore, man has to preach salvation in Christ not *alongside* but *in* his cultural activity. The two commands from God are one. One facet of it is not more important than the other, for being supposedly more spiritual or holy than the other. True Christian evangelisation always is social action. And true Christian, social action is always evangelising by nature.

3.7.7 The terms are unsatisfactory

Moreover the terms "evangelisation" and "social action" are confusing. Evangelisation does mean to make converts out of individuals, but also to bring

the full gospel (the good News) to the prisoners and the poor, and to call nations to obey all of God's commandments. For conversion and repentance mean to go over from one life (the old) to another (the new) in *every facet* of human existence. The biblical concept of "evangelisation" comprises things which many Evangelical Christians would rather call social involvement.

"Social action" usually includes a variety of matters which are concerned with help to people in need. But even this is too narrow. To sing and make music, for instance, is neither social action nor evangelisation. And yet God orders us to do it, and do it well. The same applies to playing, dancing, writing poems, to do business, plant vegetables, teach, sew and a thousand other activities which is part of our cultural mandate.

3.8 The Reformational worldview's own peculiar way of changing society

In the light of the preceding (our social responsibility) there still is a last (tenth) important question that has to be answered: How can I improve society? The answer given to this by a Reformational worldview once more underscores its uniqueness (cf. Wolters, 1992:74 *et seq.*; Van der Walt, 2006:295 *et seq.* and Buys & Paul, 2007). It differs from the dualistic, revolutionary and conservative views of society.

3.8.1 Sanctification versus consecration

According to the dualistic view (as in the case of Roman Catholicism) society should be declared holy (consecration). This means to isolate something from the world, to dedicate it to God. But this only implies an *outer* change. Marriage, which is regarded as something sinful, for instance becomes holy by making it a sacrament or having it performed by a priest/pastor in a church.

Over against *consecration* the Reformational worldview advocates *sanctification* – not *declaring* something holy but *making* it holy. In other words freeing it from sin, which means a cleansing from *within*. All of life, including every societal relationship should be made holy from the inside out according to the essential nature of each. That is why holiness can also be attained in the economic and

political fields. Holiness is not something extra which is added to the structures of society (a *donum superadditum*). It is concerned with a change of *direction*, with being *obedient* to God in every domain of life.

3.8.2 A revolutionary change

A second way of changing society is the revolutionary. While the first model tried to *add* something (as a result of the confusion between structure and direction), this one wants to solve decline in society by a violent *destruction* of the existing structures and by creating a totally new societal order.

Since a Reformational worldview lays equal stress on both structure and direction, revolution is rejected. Even under the worst form of decay, something structural remains that can be reformed towards religious direction.

3.8.3 Renewal versus conservatism

The preceding does not mean that a Reformational worldview advocates conservatism, which simply justifies the *status quo*. As a consequence of the continuous presence of evil the existing order is never fully acceptable. Every societal order needs inner renewal and reformation. By reason of the Reformational worldview's emphasis on the structural it therefore does not sympathise with revolution. And because of its focus on the religious direction of every society, conservatism is not acceptable either (cf. Wolters, 1992:79).

3.9 Accepting the value of a Reformational worldview with modesty

From the foregoing it has become clear that a Reformational worldview is able to answer at least ten fundamental issues of life in a unique way.

3.9.1 Value

Wolters (1992:96) closes his work on a Reformational worldview with a warning that such a worldview does not have all the answers and least of all offers a simple recipe for solving every problem of the present-day world. But it can at least help Christians to see and formulate the problems correctly instead of facing false dilemmas (often as a result of a dualist point of departure).

This investigation started off by drawing attention to the slight influence Christians have on the world around them. The question was raised whether a Reformational worldview might contribute to a solution to the problem. We agree to the answer given by Wolters (1992:98) at the end of his work: "All thinking Christians, wherever they are called to fulfil their responsible task, are under obligation to regard seriously the need for a biblical worldview and accept its guidance for their thoughts and deeds. He who neglects this task, thereby denies the practical meaning of the Scriptures for the greater part of our daily lives and work."

3.9.2 Modesty

In spite of its advantages, it should be kept in mind that a worldview approach is not without limits or even dangers. Fowler (1991:49) mentions the following difficulties on the scientific level: A worldview approach can isolate the Christian within the private world of a Christian worldview and limits the possibility for a Christian witness in the world of scholarship.

Walsh (2000:28) warns that even a Christian worldview can degenerate into an ideology in the following cases: (1) When it becomes a totalitarian system which may not be questioned. (2) When it is no longer a vision which grips one deep in the heart and is lived out in practice, but becomes an intellectualistic dogma. (3) When it claims universal, eternal validity. (4) When it is used to legitimise only the interests and power of the own group without seeing the needs of outsiders. (5) When it is outdated and not relevant for contemporary culture. (6) When a living contact with God's revelation is lost. (7) When a worldview usurps the place of one's personal relationship with God himself. (These dangers will be discussed in detail under point 5.2 of the next chapter.)

One may add to these warnings that the rich heritage of a Reformational worldview finally dies if it is not disseminated or handed on to the younger generation. This brings us to the final part of this investigation.

4 The need for teaching from a Reformational worldview

Griffioen (2006:14) notes *that* worldviewish forming has been and still is a central idea in many Christian educational institutions worldwide. The work by Garber (1996) explains *why* it is so important and *how* it can best be done. What follows below is mainly taken from his valuable book. By way of introduction we first look at the way he regards a worldview.

4.1 Worldview and lifestyle forms a unity

According to Garber (1996:111) a worldview is a pre-theoretical framework according to which one interprets and understands the world around you. This unites all the aspects of one's life and gives meaning and identity to one's existence.

He repeatedly stresses that our *view* of the world and the way we *live* cannot be separated: "Ideas have legs. What we believe about the world affects how we live in the world" (p. 56). Further he regards it as important that a worldview should not only form *culture* but also *character*.

4.2 The necessity for the worldviewish forming of pupils/students

From practical experience someone like Herrick (2007:66) bears witness to the great value of the worldviewish forming of his students. He says for instance: "... personal experience in the classroom tells me that the idea of a worldview is still new to many students here and abroad. Worldview is particularly exciting to young people who have never been asked by any adult to think about what they believe and who want to talk and think carefully about this aspect of who they are".

Elsewhere: "... worldview has been and remains a remarkable useful construct for thousands of students. The opportunity to talk about their worldviews... has for many graduates... been perhaps the most powerful, informative, and lifeshaping educational memory that they have taken away with them into what is often referred to as the real world" (p. 66)

The importance of worldviewish teaching clearly emerges from both the needs of students and the educational milieu.

4.2.1 The needs of students

One reason for its need is connected to the specific phase of life, namely the period between adolescence and maturity (more or less 18-25 years). "The span of years between adolescence and adulthood are the critical years in human development where basic beliefs about life and the world are settled" (Garber, 1996:29). By answering certain fundamental questions (cf. the ten basic issues of life and the answers to them above) students learn to make sense out of life. Garber mentions as examples: What do I believe? Why do I believe it? What difference does my belief about myself and the world around me make? (p. 31). Other similar questions which matter are: Who is God? What does life mean – my life? How do I decide between right and wrong? Is it possible to know the truth? (p.78).

During this difficult and critical phase of life principles for the rest of one's life as well as one's own character and identity are established. Therefore through the ages cultures have given particular attention to the education of the adolescent. It is tragic that modern (Western) educational systems neglect it.

A second important reason for worldviewish forming lies in the nature of the worldview itself: it builds a bridge between faith and life (cf. chapter 2: 3.6.1). It helps students to connect what they believe with their lifestyle; to understand their place and task in the world. For they are eager to know how their convictions influence their practice of science, but also how it links up with their eventual occupation/ profession.

4.2.2 The present-day educational milieu

The climate in which young people live today is one of great spiritual confusion. Herrick (2007:65) aptly describes it in the following words: "Students inhabit a phantasmagoric theatre of frantic media images, raw emotion, and powerful appeals that undermine the self to make the sale. In most cases their education

at home have provided them with precious few organizing moral concepts, let alone critical apparatuses for responding to this video arcade of the soul... Worldview... grants students a life-saving capacity to respond sensibly to the commercially funded circus they encounter every day with its incessant in-your-face sexual posturing, its lures and lies, and its lunatic substituting of careless intimacy for love and shameless self-exposure for emotional authenticity... To talk about worldview in the classroom ... that takes students' lived experience seriously can be to create an oasis in a desperate, bewildering desert".

According to Garber, therefore, the problem is that present-day education (secondary and tertiary) for the most part does not provide for the deepest needs of young people. For worldviewish issues like the ones mentioned above there simply is no place in the curriculum. Two reasons for this is that education has become commercialised and technicalised.

Commercialisation implies that institutions for higher education have degenerated into "industries" which award diplomas and degrees (p. 78). Their only aim is to train young people as fast as possible for a successful career (p. 75). Basically it is materialistic and only concerned with money. Students would say: "Teach me how to be a moneymaking machine. Give me only the facts, tools and techniques to ensure my instantaneous financial success. All the rest is irrelevant" (p. 79).

From this quotation also emerges the technicistic character of education. Garber (1996:77) explains: "There is no set of ideas or attitudes that permeates all parts of the curriculum. The curriculum is not, in fact, a 'course of study' at all but a meaningless hodgepodge of subjects. It does not even put forward a clear vision of what constitutes an educated person, unless it is a person who possesses 'skills'. In other words a person with no commitment and no point of view but with plenty of marketable skills". The "products" of such education thus do not raise *why* questions, but merely *how* one does something. Neither do they see their work as a calling, but merely as a lucrative career. All of this leads to an empty, cynical attitude.

Garber (p. 85) argues that education can only be meaningful when it gives space for the deeper questions of meaning, for worldviewish forming.

4.3 The way to do worldviewish forming

After answering the question *why* worldviewish forming for students is indispensable, it must be made out *how* it can best be done. Garber (p. 107) emphasises the following three key concepts: “conviction” (or worldview), “character” (or the role of a teacher/lecturer) and “community” (friends who are soulmates and the broader community). These three have to be developed together.

4.3.1 Developing one’s own worldview

In the first place students should be allowed to develop a worldview of their own, which can stand as the truth amid a relativistic and secular culture. It therefore has to be meaningful for their own context.

4.3.2 An inspiring role model

In the second instance students should find a mentor whose character and life are evidence that one can *live* with this Christian worldview; a teacher/lecturer in whose conduct the worldviewish convictions have become flesh and blood; a role model who is inspiring and worth following.

By his own embodiment of the Christian worldview the lecturer should inspire the student as an “apprentice” to live and think in a similar way. In opposition to the technicalised and commercialised present education in which teachers become less and less important, Garber (1996:140) says with right: “An academic system without the personal influence of teachers upon pupils is an arctic winter – a place of specialists without spirit”.

But role models only are not enough.

4.3.3 A supportive community

In the third place students have to forge friendships with fellow students and other people whose common lives afford a context in which these convictions are

respected, embodied and practiced. To undertake the journey of life together with such people with whom one shares a worldview, can confirm one's own worldview and promote its growth.

To put it in Garber's own words: "Community is the context for the growth of convictions and character. What we believe about life and the world becomes plausible as we see it lived out all around us... we discover who we are – and who we are meant to be – face to face and side by side with others in work, love and learning" (p. 146, 147).

Elsewhere he says: "I am more and more convinced that the people you choose to have around you have more to do with how you act upon what you believe than what you read or the ideas that influence you. The influence of ideas has to be there, but the application is something very hard to work out by yourself... so you work it out with a group of friends" (p. 149). Also compare Aay & Griffioen (1988:141) who emphasise the importance of a community for developing a worldview or at least for being prepared to support others who regard such a worldview as important.

4.4 Wider application

According to Garber's research it is the students who had the opportunity to (1) form their own Christian worldview, (2) with the help of an exemplary mentor and (3) in the community of a circle of friends, who one day after their training remain steadfast Christians, who are the salt and the light for their community.

Garber's research can have a wider application than merely the academe in for instance schools. It also applies to education in a family. Parents have an important role as examples for their children (Example is better than precept.) And the children also mutually influence one another.

Even as an adult one still has to work on one's worldview, one still needs guiding figures who embody one's worldview and to whom one can look up for inspiration; one still needs the support of a circle of like-minded friends to be able to persevere as a Christian.

5 Conclusion: the name, the way and the people

I close with three concluding remarks on the Reformational worldview: First its name, second something on its character and lastly something about its followers.

5.1 The name

I explained in more detail already in chapter 1 that the name "Reformational" does not mean belonging to a specific *church* (e.g. being a member of the Reformed or Dutch Reformed Church). Neither does it have a *confessional* connotation (accepting specific creeds from the sixteenth century). It cuts across the borders of churches or confessions. By "Reformational" is meant a transforming worldview with a broad *cultural* perspective, that calls us to renewal of the individual and the reformation of society according to God's norms. "Reformational" thus has a *worldviewish* meaning, it binds people from various churches who look at God's creation in similar ways and live according to it.

It is not called a *reformed* worldview, and intentionally so. It would too easily create the impression that this worldview was perfected almost 500 years ago and that we simply repeat what was then said. "Reformational", however, denotes something dynamic. It denotes the fact that life becomes *deformed* unless it is continuously *reformed*.

This attitude should also be applicable to the Reformational worldview itself. It should also continuously be tested and reformed. For what applies to the rest of creation, is also applicable to this worldview: It is shaped in the light of salvation in Christ, but at the same time it has a part in the defects of a world fallen into sin.

5.2 The way

The reformational way is not simple, easy or safe, but liberating.

- It is not *simple*, since it does not offer the simple solutions of the three dualist Christian views sketched above (cf. 2.3). It demands careful study of the Scriptures, daily prayer, and profound reflection – hard work.

- It is not *easy*, for one has to learn to distinguish between what is totally wrong or depraved, what can be reformed and what merely should be improved. Such an attitude is much more difficult than simply accepting or rejecting something (cf. again 2.3 above).
- Neither is it *without risks*, for when one stands *in* the midst of the world – to be able to reform it – there is a grave risk that one can become like the world (worldly).
- At the same time the Reformational worldview is *enormously liberating*. It shows that one need not take leave of the world if one wants to serve God, or deny God if one wants to be involved in the world. We can serve God in the world.

5.3 The people

This worldview also puts a stamp on the character and identity of its proponents:

- A Reformational Christian is firstly a *realistic* person. He/she takes seriously God's creation, as well as the fact that creation is lost in sin. He does not deny that evil seeps through into every domain of life. He does not look for evil in the wrong place, and thereby fights the wrong enemy. Further he does not deny (by shifting blame) the fact that he himself also is to blame for this situation.
- In the second instance the Reformational Christian is a *positive* person. The fact that the world is broken and the evil in it does not *paralyse* him. It *motivates* him, urging him on to action.
- In the third place a Reformational thinker can be a *hopeful* or *optimistic* person, since he knows that he is fulfilling his calling not in his own strength. He knows that in the end God Himself will let his kingdom come in full glory.
- Finally it means that he/she can also be *idealistic*, for no one can work for a greater, more glorious cause than for the kingdom of God.

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Chapter 5

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE POSTMODERN VIEW ON NORMATIVITY AND ON A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW

Usually the criticism of Christian thinkers on postmodernism includes that its representatives are normative relativists and that they furthermore do not apply relativism to their own viewpoint. Postmodernists in turn regard a Christian worldview as absolutistic – a legalistic, exclusivist, marginalising and oppressive ideology. This investigation intends to make a small contribution to this debate.

(1) As an introduction a brief characteristic of the contemporary postmodern spirit is provided. It is indicated that the spirit of a period is determined by its conception of normativity or its idea of lawfulness. (2) This is followed by a historical survey to trace the road which subjectivist Western thought about normativity has travelled until it reached radical relativism in postmodernism. (3) The question is then asked whether postmodernism can really maintain its historicist relativism. As an alternative to such a viewpoint a Reformational worldview suggests the stability of God's creational ordinances. (4) At the same time the postmodern warning that worldviews can be or become legalistic, suppressive ideologies should be taken seriously. Specific tendencies that may endanger a Christian worldview are therefore identified. (5) In conclusion it is indicated how, through a careful listening to God's revelation, these dangers can be counteracted.

1. Introduction

In this reflection an attempt is made to understand something of the present-day worldview and spirit and to test it from a Christian frame of conviction (1 John 4:1).

1.1 A postmodern time

The spirit of this age – as most people are aware today – is branded as "postmodern". We will not be going in on the debate (cf. e.g. Coletto, 2007:16)

whether we should speak of a *postmodern* time or rather of a *late-modern* time. All these concepts (including “modernism” – what is modern?) are relative to a large extent. Certain lines run through history (cf. e.g. 3 below), while the present-day relativistic tendency is more radical than it was earlier. For the sake of convenience the established expression to typify the contemporary age will therefore be used here.

1.2 A worldviewish approach

This investigation is more worldviewish (in other words pre-scientific) than philosophic. It seeks to uncover the worldviewish roots of postmodernism and comprehend something of the spirit of the present age. Although one cannot separate worldview and philosophy, they can still be distinguished (cf. Wolters, 1989). Nürnberger (2007:11) for instance makes a distinction between “postmodernity (the current lifestyle and culture) and “postmodernism” (the philosophic tendency). Although this contribution will be using these words alternately as synonyms, it should be borne in mind that we are primarily dealing with the worldviewish aspects.

1.3 Lay-out

The investigation could be divided into two main sections: In the first part postmodernism is criticised from the framework of a Christian Reformational worldview. Using a transcendental approach first the roots of postmodernist subjectivism and relativism are exposed. Then the immanent critical question is raised whether such a historicist viewpoint could be consistently maintained.

In the second part we listen to the critique by postmodernism of a Christian worldview. It is common knowledge that postmodernism regard all encompassing systems – including a Christian worldview – as totalising, exclusive and oppressive. Therefore we will look into the measure that a Christian worldview is exposed to the hazard of being ideologised and how we can face such threats.

1.4 Topicality

It is the author's opinion that this investigation is significant because the spirit of postmodernism is currently taking hold of thousands of Christians all over the world. This is quite apart from the influence this mode of thought exerts in the academic field – even in Christian theology. In South African Christian circles he finds that there is a too casual and uncritical acceptance of this present-day fashionable worldview and philosophy and too little attempt at testing it properly from the framework of a Christian worldview and philosophy.

2. Postmodernity and the spirit of an age

First a broad characterisation is given of postmodernist philosophy and worldview (spirit) before the question is raised what the crucial element of such a spirit is.

2.1 Postmodern philosophy

A brief introductory statement on what postmodern philosophy entails could be the following (cf. *inter alia* Grenz, 1996; Goudzwaard *et al.* 1998 and Heyns, 2002). Postmodern philosophy is an irrationalist reaction against the preceding reign of rationalist modernism (from about 1600 to 1900). Modernistic philosophy tried to rule the entire life by means of reason and science. Postmodernism, in contrast, regards rational systems as totalising and suppressing ideologies. Previously highly regarded theoretical knowledge is viewed by postmodernists as follows: All explanations of reality are local, historical, relative and subjective constructions, which may be useful, but do not contain objective truth. At the same time it is impossible for the one who knows to “step out of” his own construction. The philosopher's task therefore is to deconstruct these constructions, systems or great narratives. So the postmodernist likes to emphasise provisionality, changeability and variety. All approaches to reality are furthermore equally valid. Norms or benchmarks that are valid for all are under suspicion (cf. Nürnberg, 2007:12).

2.2 The postmodern worldview

One could distinguish between postmodernism in the specifically philosophical meaning and the postmodern worldview (called "postmodernity"). Grenz (1996:40) is correct in writing: "In a sense, postmoderns have no worldview. A denial of the reality of a unified world as the object of our perception is at the heart of postmodernism". He is right when he says that it is only true "in a sense" for even denying the possibility of any reliable worldview, implies a certain view.

According to Nürnberger (2007:11) the postmodernist worldview is simply modernism "taken to its extreme". This new worldview according to him links up closely with modernist materialism and hedonism: "Life must be fun; it must provide instant and constant highs; it must stimulate the adrenalin. Traditional boundaries, taboos, prohibitions, no-go areas, inhibitions and scruples are broken down. This is done very deliberately and effectively by the advertising and entertainment industries. Postmodernity links up effectively with the commercial motivation of modernity. People have to consume for profits to rise" (p. 12).

A new postmodern spirituality also came into being, which he describes as follows: "It is no longer a religious or scientific truth that demands one's respect and commitment; it is the quest for enjoyment that exploits the religious market place. In principle all kinds of spirituality are accessible and acceptable. From the vast variety on offer, one picks and chooses what seems exiting, and drops it when it is no longer fun. Postmodernism is a spending spree in the religious shopping mall" (Nürnberger, 2007:12).

2.3 Key concepts in postmodern thought

The "mood" of the postmodern worldview or spirit is represented in another way by Olthuis (1999:14) by comparing it to modernism by means of a number of key concepts:

Modernism

truth is logical

Postmodernism

it is more than logical

universality	particularity
closure	open-ended
clarity	ambiguity
unity	multiplicity
uniformity	diversity
sameness	difference
totality	partiality
stability	change
progress	discrimination, oppression
control	flow/attunement
neutrality	prejudice
timelessness	temporality
equality	uniqueness
faith is illogical	faith goes beyond knowledge
system	positions
identity	difference
cohesion	dispersion
rational	emotional
systematic	eclectic
continuity	discontinuity
predictability	unpredictability / surprise
what is seen	what is unseen
answers	questions
master narratives/stories	many narratives/stories

one truth

many truths

Such a contrastive comparison can be enlightening, but at the same time it does not fathom the spirit of the times profoundly enough.

2.4 What determines the spirit of an age

When one speaks of the "spirit" of someone or something (a movement or an age) one is stating what forms its very heart, that which makes it what it is. According to Hart (1968:1-17) the spirit of a person, group or age is also the characteristic "engine" that drives them and characterises everything they do. "Spirit" therefore denotes inspiration, motivation, guidance or direction on a specific way; it is the deepest religious motivation behind someone or something.

According to Hart (1968:9) two worldviewish perspectives determine this spirit or direction of a particular age. In the first place the idea of God/a divinity. Since human beings usually obey the laws or norms of Him/that which they regard as the highest authority, Hart (1968:14) calls attention to a second decisive perspective: "What makes my life is the spirit of it and the law which this spirit obeys". Thus the specific spirit of an age is determined by what is considered as normative in that particular age. Hart got this significant insight from his teacher, Vollenhoven. According to the latter the spirit of an age ("Zeitgeist") unites different philosophers – not counting their mutual differences on systematic problems – because they hold the same ideas on the place and status of the law. (For particulars cf. Bril, 2005a:15-38, 67-98).

Therefore, if one can pinpoint the idea of law or normativity of postmodernism, one would uncover the deepest foundation of this current of thought – the first object of this investigation.

2.5 The investigation in a nutshell

Postmodernism is not simply a reaction against modernism (cf. 2.1 above). This chapter will indicate that this contemporary worldview can also be regarded as the result of the long history – more than 2000 years – of Western thought. The

following summary in four steps may help the reader not to get confused in the details of the long historical development.

The author's own Christian starting point is (cf. 3.1) that God's laws should clearly be distinguished from the realities (material things, plants, animals, humans) to which they apply. Creation is subjected to God's creational ordinances.

In the following four main developments this Biblical perspective on God's laws were ignored: (1) Very early in Greek philosophy already the laws for reality were confused with the things subjected to these laws. This viewpoint is called "subjectivism". During the subsequent history of Western thought subjectivism was not corrected but rather radicalised. (2) The norms for life, previously located *outside* the human being, were located according to Hellenistic philosophers as a priori knowledge *inside* the human mind. Creational laws in this way lost their ontological status to be regarded as epistemological phenomena. (3) During the time of rationalism (approximately 1600-1900) the Hellenistic theory of a priori normative knowledge was converted into the idea of reason – the final measure of truth and conduct. It was believed that idolised reason can provide direction for life. (4) However, irrationalism (the prelude to postmodernism) was strongly influenced by historicism and therefore proclaimed that rational knowledge is not generally valid, but merely the product of a specific time, place and culture. The consequence of irrationalism's rejection of the rational certainties (norms) of modernism was normative relativism.

According to Walsh (1992:51,52) one of the tasks of a Christian worldview is to tell us what time it is, where we stand in history. According to his earlier booklet Walsh (1989) is of the opinion that we live in a time when the lights were turned out. The so-called Enlightenment ("Aufklärung") could not provide light – we today live in normative darkness. How should Christians respond to this situation? Walsh (p. 16) mentions four options: (1) We can wallow in the darkness, enjoying the lack of vision or direction that darkness entails. (2) We can deny it and act as if it is not really dark at all. (3) We can rationalise the darkness as a temporary setback to be remedied with quick technological

intervention. (4) Or we can acknowledge the darkness, enter the darkness and trust God to turn the lights on.

In this chapter we will follow the last option, but do so in a philosophical way. First (section 3) will offer a transcendental critique, indicating the basis of the crisis. Next (section 4) will follow with immanent critique. Finally a biblical alternative to the crisis will be offered.

3. The development of a subjectivist idea about laws/norms in Western thought

Studying the history of philosophy is not the same as taking a tour in a museum full of antiques. Amongst other things it will show that postmodernism is not – as many people suppose – something altogether new in Western history – bringing with it the conclusion that it should be enthusiastically embraced. Similar trends could be found in ancient Greek philosophy. Besides, it seems as if more rationalistic trends were repeatedly alternated in the history of Western thought with more irrationalistic “waves”.

3.1 Subjectivism

A Christian worldview that takes into consideration the light of God's revelation, would at least recognise the following three existing “entities”: (1) God who (2) brought into being reality (heaven and earth) and (3) laid down his commandments or laws for creation.

Since the ancient Greek thinkers did not know the true God and most of the present-day philosophers no longer acknowledge Him, they cannot consider the laws as separate entities (applicable to matter, plant, animal and human being). Since they acknowledge only one reality (instead of a threefold one) they have to find the laws or norms in some place or other in this reality – that which is subject to the law. That is why they are called “subjectivists” and their view “subjectivism”. (This meaning differs from the one usually ascribed to this term, viz. that the contents of knowledge is primarily determined by the knower). An

example would be that nowadays the economic market is regarded as a norm instead of being judged normatively.

Such a subjectivist viewpoint, of course, cannot offer the steadiness, direction and certainty that true laws/norms are supposed to bring. Ontological subjectivism irrevocably leads to epistemological relativism. From the short outline following below this will clearly emerge (cf. Bril, 2005b, 2005c and Bril & Boonstra 2002 for particulars).

3.2 The Sophists

In the work of the Sophist, Protagoras from Abdera (born 481 BC), subjectivism already is clearly present. Man is the norm for everything (his well-known *homo mensura* statement of fragment 1 – cf. Van der Walt, 1990:76). Not something *outside* man is the norm, but man *himself* is the norm. Man is – something that is in principle impossible – his own boss. Furthermore Protagoras – like most postmodernists today – is also an individualist. (“Individualism” is used here in an ontological and not sociological meaning.) Most important is not the universal or common, but the individual and particular. Knowledge that is universal or generally valid for all people, is therefore excluded – that which is true for me, is not necessarily true for others. Since it is impossible to consistently be a relativist, however, he is of the opinion that some viewpoints are actually better than others. Since one does not know whether the gods really do exist, rather be on the safe side and do not ignore them!

Georgias of Leontini (born 483 BC) radicalises the viewpoint of Protagoras. While Protagoras teaches that *everything* is true, he teaches that *nothing* can be true, or that everything is false. He and the Sophists coming after him therefore lapse into still more radical individualism and relativism. Initially they still believed that something could be good because it was useful (pragmatism) or pleasurable (hedonism), but later it was simply accepted that the power of the most powerful is the norm. Gods – thus ran the teaching of Kritias for instance – was invented by the powerful to ensure that out of fear of the gods their subjects would not transgress their (the rulers’) laws. Thus the Sophists rejected norms that were

generally applicable and therefore could not hold back decadence in Athens. Ontological subjectivism and individualism brings everything into confusion.

3.3 Socrates (469-399 BC) and after

The well-known Greek philosopher, Socrates, tried to rescue Greek culture from the chaos of scepticism (doubt about the existence of normative certainty) by emphasising the value of intellectual knowledge – which according to him would by itself lead to good conduct. However, he could not offer reliable norms for life since he still tried to anchor them in a subjectivist way in man (his knowledge and virtue).

In the schools of thought after Socrates society became even more decadent than during the time of the Sophists before him (cf. Van der Walt, 1990:86 *et seq.*) Knowledge is basically about the regularity of things. If, however, regularity is denied, reliable knowledge is unattainable. Philosophers from this period even claimed that marriage had to be abandoned and people had to live in one great flock, while shameful deeds done in public were considered as normal. Eventually physical pleasure (naked hedonism) was the only guideline (cf. e.g. Diogenes of Sinope and Aristippos of Kyrene). With right Kok (1996:144) says that this was a tragic picture of the bankruptcy of pagan thought.

The deepest cause of this decadence is that all rules, standards, criteria, norms or laws were sought *within* man himself instead of *outside* him. *Heteronomy* was substituted with *autonomy*. Firm ground can only be found when norms are accepted which are anchored in a transcendent source (lawgiver) and stay valid independent of human approval or disapproval.

However, after every period of lapsing deeply into subjectivism and relativism, there followed new attempts in Greek thought to overcome it.

3.4 Plato (427-347 BC) is an example of such an attempt. He looked for the solution to the decadence of Greek civilisation in the theoretical knowledge of a world of ideas *outside* the cosmos. Kok (1996:45) says for instance: "Plato's epistemology is outspokenly intellectualistic. The intellect, the mind, scientific

thinking, all open the door to salvation. The senses, in contrast, cannot be trusted”.

In the same way one can see clear parallels between the Sophists and the philosophers after Socrates on the one hand and the postmodernists of today, one also observes similarities between Plato and the much later modernism or rationalism. That is why Kok remarks: “... the intellectualism of Plato contributed significantly to the idea that our mind, our rational, analytic function, is the only human tool to be trusted as our sure guide in life. The rationalism and faith in science of a later age were the distant results” (Kok, 1996:47).

3.5 Aristotle (384-322 BC)

According to Kok (1996:53) the rationalistic line runs through to Aristotle, the next great Greek philosopher after Plato. Also Van der Walt (1990:72) shows how the law or essence (*ousia*) lies on the analytical level in the works of this philosopher. In this way the creational laws lose their independent, ontological nature. They are reduced to something logical or epistemological inside the human mind. This becomes even clearer in the following developments.

3.6 Hellenistic sceptis

Philosophy after about 320 BC is known as Hellenistic philosophy. As a consequence of the campaigns of Alexander the Great a cosmopolitan world had emerged. The mixture of various Eastern and Western cultures led to great uncertainty. As in the foregoing cases mentioned above, attention was shifted again from an interest in ontological to epistemological problems. Questions similar to those asked before and after Socrates were raised once more: How can we be sure of what we know? Still more radical: Is knowledge in itself really possible?

This is the type of issues raised in the Sceptic school, founded by Phyrro of Elis. According to him one cannot say something *is* like this, but at the most it *seems* to be like this. With right Kok (1996:60) remarks in this regard: “... consistent scepticism, like consistent relativism, seems to be an impossibility. If the Sceptic

says, 'All things are uncertain' then he has just stated one undisputed certainty, namely that all things are uncertain, just as the relativist contradicts herself when she claims that everything is relative: for such a claim asserts one absolute amidst the relativity".

3.7 The theme of the a priori

The "solution" to the epistemological problem "How can I know for sure?" which Hellenistic philosophy eventually reached, is the theory of the a priori. According to this concept every human being has inborn ideas on regularity or normativity. Such normative concepts is a part of man's make-up and therefore reliable.

Vollenhoven takes this to be an very important development in Western thought. Since we cannot go into detail here, a few references must suffice. Bril (2005c:39-40) gives a short definition of the theory of a priori as given by Vollenhoven himself. Bril & Boonstra (2000:272-274) moreover also give a brief overview of how the theme of a priori, after its origin in Hellenistic philosophy, developed further among rationalists, while irrationalism denies such innate laws (*ideae innatae*). Bril (1986:228-278) and Bril (2005a:67-98) is most valuable, since he deals with the historical development of this idea about normativity up to postmodernism, illustrates it with numerous examples from various subject disciplines and also explains the origin of the idea of an infallible reason and human autonomy.

What happens in the theory of a priori could be explained as follows: A law is no longer regarded as something extramental, outside the human knowing mind, of which intramental knowledge must be acquired, but as something intramental, something which in itself is a concept, knowledge. (Bril, 2005a:18, 70 *et seq.* calls it a process of interiorisation and subjectivising.) However, It differs from other concepts since it is not only universal, but is also supposed to have a valid nature, that is the nature of a law. Such concepts are not acquired by experience, they are prior to every experience, a priori. As Kok (1996:61) remarks, this theory was clearly the forerunner of later rationalistic thought (1600-1900).

Understandably the theme of a priori spread quickly within Hellenistic thought because it brought hope of a new certainty. But it was doomed to failure since it still sought the norms *for* creation *in* creation (a priori concepts in the human mind). Kok (1996:61) formulates it as follows: "The concept 'reason' as an independent a priori faculty, common to all men and functioning as an autonomous source and guide for life, is a myth, a pagan invention designed to give mankind, lost in uncertainty and sin, a solid mooring, an anchor. But man's 'reason' is no more trustworthy than anything else outside of the Word of God. To put one's faith in 'reason' is to worship an idol".

3.8 Rationalism (1600-1900)

During early Christian and Medieval philosophy the theory of a priori took the form of the "natural light of reason". It was still a kind of semi-autonomous reason, for faith (in the supernatural realm of grace) still had the final say. Christian norms could still be valid in the domain of the church. Rationalism, however, did away with the supernatural domain of grace and faith and declared the human being autonomous, in other words the maker of its own laws. (What Protagoras had begun, was completed.)

This human autonomy is rooted in reason. Kok (1996:125) explains: "The term 'rationalism' means an exaggeration and overestimation of *ratio*. What does *ratio* mean? It means 'reason', man's thinking ability equipped with aprioris. A modern adaption of the old Hellenistic theory of the a priori... As such, the term 'reason' is a pagan concept. God did not give 'reason' to man, but the ability to distinguish and to understand. The concept 'reason' with its attending aprioris is the product of an apostate illusion".

Although rationalism is a continuation of the Hellenistic teaching of a priori, the former is different since it has become even more subjectivist (cf. Kok, 1996:126). It is remarkable how this subjectivist thread runs all through Western thought and takes on ever more radical forms.

We will not be dealing here with the various trends within rationalism (cf. Kok, 1996:126-147). What is important, however, is that there was already protest

against the sole dominion of reason. It is clear for instance in the practicalism (of the older rationalism) and the neo-idealism (of the later rationalism). It is also true of a tendency like the neo-marxism of the Frankfurter School (Horkheimer, Adorno, Habermas, etc. – cf. Klapwijk, 1976:109). Although they still believe in the power of enlightened thought, the aim is freeing society.

3.9 Irrationalism

Irrationalism, which was foreshadowed in the course of history, became a definite tendency from the beginning and particularly the middle of the previous century. It is most significant for understanding postmodernism. (According to Kok, 1996:149 irrationalism can already be regarded as postmodern.)

Naugle (2002:253, 4) gives a good description of an important difference between modernistic rationalism and postmodernistic irrationalism: "In the halcyon days of the Enlightenment, the prejudice against any prejudice reigned supreme." But in the case of postmodernism "The prejudice against prejudice has been recognized as a prejudice, and the self-defeating nature of this aspect of the Enlightenment project has been exposed. In these 'postmodern' times many thinkers have perceived that it is virtually impossible, and indeed not even healthy to attempt to quarantine thought, and to rid all conceptual endeavours of the encroachment of personal and cultural contingencies".

Zuidema (1971:149) adds to this another important characteristic of irrationalism, viz. its historicism or overemphasis on the historical facet of reality. Irrationalistic historicism regards everything – including human reasoning – as historically determined. The unhistorical, abstract ideas of rationalism are rejected as myths.

"Irrationalism" therefore denotes an anti-rationalist reaction; it is against rationalist modernism; three centuries after Descartes it doubts the self-sufficiency of reason. Since it is a reaction, there is also continuity – in a threefold sense.

Firstly, irrationalism does not mean that man is unreasonable; he is *pre-* or *supra-*rational (Klapwijk, 1986:15). According to Brill (2005a:87) and Kok (1996:150) the

existence of reason is still accepted without criticism. But it now has limited meaning. Reason is pushed off the throne, but not completely abandoned. (Otherwise the irrationalist philosophers would have had to keep quiet!) It is therefore downgraded and sometimes disqualified, but not abolished (cf. Klapwijk, 1986:14).

Secondly, the complete autonomy of man – the idea that man is his own law-giver and creates his own future – is maintained unimpaired, just as it was during modernism. Formulated differently: irrationalism is no less secularistic.

In the third instance, it is clear from the previous two remarks that irrationalism has not taken leave of the age-old subjectivism of foregoing Western thought either. Since it also limits what little hold reason had, it rather becomes even more radically subjectivist and therefore relativist in nature.

3.10 Irrationalist tendencies

Although all three irrationalist tendencies look for the law in the subject – all of them in something "practical" – it happens in different ways (cf. Bril, 1986:256-278 and 2005a:86-92). The norm for the pragmatists is practical value (if something is useful, it is true). For the vitalists (philosophy of life) it is instinctive life. For the existentialists the norm is existential human freedom. (Degraded reason has to serve utility, life or freedom.) The subjectivism in the case of the latter emerges clearly when it is taught that what is true, is not something coming from outside, but that must come from deep within oneself, must be authentic. At the same time, however, existentialism is characterised by an underlying mood of fear, doubt, despair and disgust (cf. e.g. Sartre). With right Klapwijk (1986:122) asks whether such a subjectivistic kind of philosophy as existentialism can be more than autobiographical.

3.11 The situation today

The present situation is characterised by a complexity of worldviewish and philosophical currents and counter-currents, rationalism next to irrationalist postmodernism. Klapwijk (1986:116) is probably right that today not the

modernistic issue of *controlling* reality is the most prominent, but rather the postmodern issue of the *meaning* of reality. There is despair of any integrated outlook on life; unity and wholeness is supposedly out of reach; directional norms have disappeared. In short: Western thought has ended up in a *cul de sac*. Radical worldwiewish rethinking about the core points of departure of Western thought – especially is ideas about lawfulness or normativity – is sorely needed (Klapwijk: 1986:124, 125).

3.12 Looking back

Bril (1005a:92) summarises the 2500-year course of Western thought concisely in a few brief glances: "Plato looked for transcendent normative standards that hold for all. Centuries later, philosophers considered these standards as to be within the mind *a priori*. On Nov. 10, 1793, the French public honoured the 'goddess of reason' in Paris Notre Dame Cathedral... Within one hundred years... norms had become merely a personal and usually contingent creation. And the struggle continues concerning the place and the truth of divine order... The conflict concerning the truth of *Ordnungen* is the real substance of history".

The foregoing "bath" in history was refreshing. From it we have learned mainly three things: (1) Postmodernism is not completely new – it had numerous forerunners in history. (2) It may not be embraced without criticism by Christians – its relativism produces confusion. (3) Since postmodernism draws the (final?) consequences of the foregoing Western subjectivist ideas about law, the spiritual bankruptcy of Western thought most clearly emerges.

Above (2.4) it was stated that one's view of God and his laws determine the spirit or worldview of an age. The overview above confirmed it. Because of subjectivism, more than 2000 year ago the independent, ontological status of creational ordinances was lost in Greek philosophy. (Realities subjected to God's laws received a directional or normative status.) During subsequent Hellenistic and rationalistic philosophy this narrow ontology led to a very narrow view of normativity: laws were regarded as something logical in the human mind. In irrationalism this already reduced view is, as a result of historicism, relativised.

According to irrationalist philosophies rational principles are replaced by utility, power and freedom. Contemporary postmodern normative relativism is the end-result of the preceding developments.

Such epistemological and normative relativism of course cannot be maintained merely on logical grounds: "From a purely logical point of view it is clear that within such a world nothing can be 'true' – for the statement that relativism is true is valid if and only if it is false" (Strauss, 2005:iii). Naugle formulates the dilemma as follows: "If historicism is true, then it must be false, for the principles of historicism must also be a product of historical forces, and therefore relative. If they are relative, then they cannot be used in some absolute way..." (Naugle, 2002:111).

The next serious worldviewish question is whether one can live in such a relativist way. Can one consistently maintain it?

4. Critical reactions to the historical relativism of post-modernism

Up to now the historical background of postmodernism's idea about laws or norms has been uncovered through transcendental critique. Subsequently, first immanent critique will be given, before a Scriptural Reformational perspective is offered as a solution to the cul-de-sac in which Western thought has ended up.

4.1 Historicism

From the preceding overview it transpired that the root problem of postmodernism is their "anomy". "*Anomy* is a loss of *nomos* – the loss of any sense of meaningful order to the world... all order is arbitrary, imposed on the world by human beings, usually for self-serving reasons" (Middleton & Walsh, 1995:36). An important cause of this "lawlessness" is historicism – as already indicated in the case of irrationalism.

4.1.2 An untenable viewpoint

Klapwijk (1970a:3) describes historicism as follows: "Since it sets man and his culture on the axle and measuring rod of the times, in the encompassing

perspective on history, it *eo ipso* renders every opinion, every norm and conviction, however firmly believed, however ardently confessed, to a temporary phenomenon, a passing event. Everything is considered to be historically determined, seen as historically relative, in other words: *relativised*."

Historicism is an –ism, it exaggerates and absolutises one aspect of reality and attempts to reduce all other aspects of reality to the historic and explain them in the light thereof.

Strauss remarks that there is great irony lurking in such isms: "If everything is history, nothing remains that could have a history. This is the *cul de sac* of historicism (and of every ism): that which is exalted as one and all loses all meaning, since if everything is history, there is nothing which can have a history. Ultimately every one-sided *ism* produces a tragic irony: it always achieves the opposite of what it aimed for" (Strauss, 2005: 225).

Clouser (2005:9, 10) stresses the same point: How can anything have a history if everything is history? In other words if one reduces all the other aspects of reality (e.g. the biotic, psychic, social, logical, lingual, economic, faith, etc.) to the historic aspect, nothing remains that can have a history. The view that the historic aspect is the essence of everything is therefore self-destructive.

Therefore the solution is not to absolutise something else instead of the historic aspect, but to take seriously both the (modal) *diversity* in creation and the mutual *cohesion* (cf. Strauss, 2005:227). Against historicist relativism it should be stated that even ordinary change is unintelligible without accepting something constant.

4.1.2 Incoherence

Clouser (2005) points out three kinds of incoherence in historicism. It is "referentially incoherent, self-assumptively incoherent and self-performatively incoherent". I give the word to him to explain:

- "... if all beliefs are on an equal footing because none can be known to correspond to reality, this would have to apply to the theory of historicism itself... it cannot be true in the sense in which it claims to be true" (Clouser, 2005:5).

- "... historicism avoids self-referential incoherence only at the price of being self-assumptively incoherent. The unstated assumptions of the argument would be incompatible with the claim the argument is defending" (p. 6). The conclusion is: historicism is either false because it cancels itself, or false because every defence of it has to presuppose that which it denies.
- "This (self-performative incoherence) means that it is incompatible with either a state or activity of the thinker that is needed to form it" (p. 7, 8).

Clouser maintains (2005:10) that historicism also fails as an epistemology, for "It needs to be an exception to its own claim, may only be defended by arguments that assume beliefs incompatible with that claim, and cannot justify the status it confers on the culture-forming power, owing to the very activity of abstraction needed to distinguish that power in the first place".

4.1.3 A Hidden master narrative

Middleton & Walsh (1995:75 *et seq.*) focus their critique particularly on the viewpoint of postmodern historicism that great narratives are supposedly untrue and oppressive:

- It is not true that only great narratives are oppressive – local "stories" (cultures) can also legitimise violence (p. 75).
- Further they raise the question whether postmodernism itself does not presuppose a great narrative: "... isn't this (postmodernism) itself a tall tale, a meta-narrative of universal scope which is simply not acknowledged?" (p. 76).
- Therefore postmodernism is not consistent by also relativising their own worldview: "Do Postmodernists consider their own worldview as simply one opinion among many? Not at all. Postmodernity, as the master discourse which guides our understanding that all stories are mere human constructs, does not appear on the table. It is the table on which all the other dishes are served. Postmodernity thus functions as the larger interpretive frame that relativizes all other worldviews simply as local stories... The postmodernist is thus caught in a

performative contradiction, arguing against the necessity of metanarratives precisely by (surreptitious) appeal to a metanarrative" (p. 77).

So in spite of what it alleges, postmodernism is nothing but (another) grand narrative, for it is the *universal* base on the grounds of which all other viewpoints are regarded as *restricted* visions. For itself postmodernism claims common validity while all other positions are relativised.

- The following important consequence of postmodernism to which Middleton & Walsh point our attention is that one not only *is* a captive of one's own culture (one's own little narrative), but also is bound to *remain* so. : "... the postmodern worldview cannot sustain hope or empower us to live in the face of the ethical chaos and brutality that characterizes the ending of modernity. Indeed, if we seriously shaped our lives by the typical postmodern answers... we would be at the mercy of whatever socially embodied narrative we found ourselves in. We would be unable to resist oppression since we would have no coherent way of appealing to any larger, transcendent story which might call into question whatever story was presently dominant" (Middleton & Walsh, 1995:78).

Griffioen (1998:128) formulates it as follows: : "Postmodern thought resembles pagan gods that take with one hand what they have given with the other. It liberates scholarship from the obsession with certainty, but it fails to show a way leading beyond present pluralities and thus leads into a new form of captivity".

With right it is added that the problem lies deeper than in great narratives – it lies in the lack of love and in the violence of the human heart and therefore demands a much more radical remedy than the one proposed by postmodernists.

4.2 The solution to historicist relativism

Klapwijk says (1970b:32-33) the only true solution is for one to appeal to God's will or creational order (as revealed in creation and the Scriptures). This Word of God confirms itself – it need not be proved in a scientific way as true.

Although this appeal is *fundamental*, it is not *adequate*, since man's knowledge of God's will is and remains defective. So a distinction must be made between

God's law as we understand it (our "principles") and his perfect law. (God's Word and our answer to it may never be put on a par.) Yet they may not be separated either.

In this way any form of modernist *absolutism* can be rejected, for human obedience to God's ordinances are not the same as the ordinances themselves. But, as a result of the close link between our understanding of them and God's laws themselves, at the same time we reject postmodern *relativism*. Our norms – however deficient they may be – is an application of *God's* will. Only in obeying God's will can the meaning of life – which has been lost in the West – be found again (cf. Van der Walt, 2003:547-549).

If the biblical idea about God's laws or ordinances for life is so significant for presenting an answer to postmodernism, it is imperative to know what it entails – our the next main section.

4.3 God's creational order as the answer to the subjectivist normativity of postmodernism

The current Western world is the only one in human history that does not admit to a cosmic order. All other cultures – ancient and modern – adhere to some or other idea of normativity (cf. Wolters, 1994:43, 44 for examples). This also applies to a Christian worldview founded on the revelation of God. We subsequently give a few glimpses of a Reformational perspective on the lawfulness of creation or creation ordinances.

4.3.1 God as the Lawgiver

In contrast to modernism's idea that human reason itself creates order, or postmodernism, which consistently applies this modernistic idea and comes to the conclusion that all order is simply human constructions and therefore fiction, the Scriptures teach that God is not only the Creator, but also the Lawgiver of creation. Spykman (1994:40) puts it as follows: : "Biblical revelation tells us that God called into existence not a chaos but a cosmos (Isa. 45:18) – a normatively structured, and well-ordered world. God's Word defined the structures and

functions of all his creatures, and the creatures answered faithfully. The structures of creation answered fully to the divinely ordained structures for creation”.

Confessing that God is the Sovereign One, means accepting that his laws are valid. There is a correlation between law and subject (that which is subject to the law). There is a law that applies to each created being and, the other way round, for every law there is something which has to obey it.

4.3.2 Direction

God's laws point the direction of how man/woman should live to be fully human. After the fall of man these ordinances still apply, but now they can be either obeyed or infringed. The nature (character or structure) of the subjects (determined by the law) remains the same, but two religious directions are now possible. Therefore the creational *structures* are not changed by the religious *direction*. (The body, sexuality, marriage, politics, etc. are not sinful things in themselves.)

4.3.3 Comprehensiveness

God's laws are not only valid for moral and religious life, but for all facets and domains of life and for all people – believers or not. “The creation order is our one and only habitat. It is the same for all... It is God's world. He has called it to order. He maintains the orderliness from day to day – its lawfulness, ensuring the regularity and predictability needed for all life” (Spykman, 1994:35).

Emphasising the “omnipresence” of the law and the comprehensive obedience required in every domain of life, may create amongst postmodernists the incorrect impression of a legalistic worldview. Obedience, however, should be something spontaneous and joyful – a grateful duty – since obedience to God's signposts is the way to a full life.

4.3.4 Constancy

God's creational ordinances are not – as believed in historicism - subject to the changeability of history. However to describe this trait the word “unchangeable” is

not the most adequate. It could create the impression that God's ordinances are static. From this could be drawn the erroneous conclusion that because of God's creational order people should accept or condone the *status quo* (as happened in the case of apartheid).. The word "constant" or "stable" is therefore more applicable (Spykman, 1994:39 uses the term "dynamic constancy"). God's laws are founded on his own unwavering fidelity. According to Wolters (1994:54) this offers a strong protection against historicism and relativism.

4.3.5 Differentiation

The next trait of the Reformational view is that it makes a distinction between a variety of modalities (aspects of reality), concrete things and human societal relationships, each subject to its own laws or norms. Because each obeys its own norms, one facet may not be reduced to another or be absolutised. One societal relationship may not dominate another either, or interfere on the other's terrain.

4.3.6 Dynamics

God's laws are also valid in various ways. With regard to matter, plants and animals they have a *coercive* character, but since man is a responsible being, in his case the laws have a *demanding* character. God's laws also restrict evil and promote the good. When one understands creation in terms of God setting his ordinances for it, the law is not a static but a dynamic reality.

We give the word once more to Spykman (1994:39): "... The creation order continues to hold for the way we order our lives within creation. Indeed, its impinging power is so strong that disorder itself is discernible only in the relation to the established order. The holding and healing power of this God-given order exerts a corrective pressure even in the most obstinate cases of disorder". Therefore no human being escapes God's order. Even a band of robbers would have to obey his law to some extent: They do steal from others, but when they transgress the eighth commandment with respect to one another, the band disintegrates!

4.3.7 Knowledge of the creational order

Since postmodernism lays great emphasis on epistemology, it is essential to know how one can acquire knowledge of God's laws. The following quote from Spykman (1994:41) explains how: "The Word of God for creation, God's good order for creation, is in itself transcendent. It is beyond our reach. Thus we cannot get at it directly even by means of scientific investigation. All our knowledge of God as Creator is reflexive, responsive. We gain such knowledge by observing carefully how God's various creations respond to the holding power of his Word – each 'after its kind'". An example to elucidate is how a farmer knows to plough, sow and harvest – according to Isaiah 28:23-29 he learns it from God's creational order.

According to Wolters (1994:55) there need not be a contradiction between God's stable cosmic order on the one hand and man's changeable history on the other hand. For man's assignment is to let creation develop and unfold *according to God's order*. To do this people have to "positivise" God's creational ordinations or make them comprehensible and applicable for their own age and circumstances. It should always happen for a specific case or societal relationship in the light of the central commandment of love (Mat 22:37-40). According to Wolters (1994:59) this third way "rejects both the assumption (about the laws) of supra-historical metaphysical entities... and the relativist denial of all constants".

Thus in the Reformational vision great emphasis is laid on human responsibility. It is therefore no simple way. Norms cannot simply be had cut and dried from God's revelation in the Scriptures or in creation. Especially in the case of the *normative* creational order (God's laws specifically for human beings) the threat of subjectivism (here used in the normal meaning of the word, viz. that the view of the one who formulates norms determines their contents) is always present. How can one for instance be sure what the norms are for thinking, language, art, etc.? Are they self-evident (cf. Rom. 1:20 and particularly Rom. 2:14, 15)? Should one rely on one's intuition? Can the light of the Scriptures help one to discover them?

There is no room here to go into these issues and the debate within Reformational circles regarding the place and status of divine laws and human norms. To the interested readers the following are some of the major sources that may be consulted: Griffioen (1995), Hart (1984:37-84; 1995 and 2000), Venter (2001 and 2002), Wolters (1995) and Wolterstorff (1995).

4.3.8 A third way

What is clear, however, is that the intention of the Reformational tradition is to avoid two errors. In the words of Schrottenboer (1994:71): "One mistake is that we tend to equate our positivized form with the divine orders themselves. This is a form of pride. The opposite danger is that we see these positivized forms as only so many human constructions and then dismiss the idea of the underlying (divine) order to which they give expression. This is an example of throwing the baby away with the bath water".

The Redeemer University College (2003:8) also chooses this third way without ignoring the moments of truth of both rationalism and irrationalism. On the one hand it expresses appreciation for the emphasis modernists lay on the mind – it is a unique gift of God to man. On the other hand it is admitted that the emphasis laid by the postmodernists on the subjectivity of all human knowledge is also correct. They agree with the modernists that the search for truth is important, but acknowledge with the postmodernists that human knowledge is not neutral, but always conditioned and deficient.

At the same time, however, the brochure rejects both these influential "idols of our time". First modernism, since knowledge cannot be neutral. But then also postmodernism: "...we differ from the radically relativist point of view in two important respects. In the first place, the subjectivity that informs scholarship is, at its deepest level, religious in nature. That is, the paradigms and worldviews that mould theoretical work have not merely evolved to maturity under historical, social and cultural influences. Paradigms and worldviews are the products of that fundamental and directing power – the religious impulse that lives at the very heart of humankind. Religion is not merely one more element of human

subjectivity standing alongside all the others: it is what shapes and moves them all" (p. 10,11). What is meant here (cf. 4.2 above) is that religion is not merely a facet of reality, but something basic, comprehensive and pre-scientific and therefore not something that can be either proved or contradicted.

The second reason given by the Redeemer brochure for rejecting postmodernism links up with what was said above about the creational order: "Secondly, we reject the relativism that can arise from paying inordinate attention to the subjective elements in human knowledge and knowing. We believe that there is a given order of creation which can be known, and that we are called... to give a faithful account of what we perceive of that order. Though our knowing never occurs in a vacuum, and though our knowledge is always partial and imperfect, genuine insight into the order of what has been made (by God) can be achieved" (p.11).

With this principial critique on postmodernism the writer whole-heartedly agrees. But, as we observed above (at the end of 4.3.7), even after this rejection the "third way" will demand further in-depth reflection.

Up to this point *one aspect* of the postmodern worldview – its ideas about normativity or lawfulness – was investigated. In the second main part of this chapter the postmodern perspective on worldviews *as such* will be analysed. Because a Christian worldview can not agree with postmodern normative relativism, it is rejected by postmodernists as an oppressive ideology.

5. Postmodernism's critique of especially Christian worldviews

There is a significant moment of truth in postmodernism's idea that all worldviews – including the Christian one – are oppressive ideologies. I call it merely a moment of truth because in my opinion worldviews *as such* are not oppressive. (Even postmodernism – cf. above – does not regard its own worldview like this.) The moment of truth is however, that any worldview can degenerate into an oppressive ideology. Walsh (2000b:28) says with right: "A community's worldview *can* and often *does* easily become an exclusive, indoctrinating, and marginalizing ideology. And this has happened in our midst".

5.1 Rethinking among Reformational philosophers

Although we lack the room to go into it here – it is material for a separate investigation – Reformational philosophers who, in former years wrote much about a Christian worldview, took this postmodernist critique on worldviews seriously. Examples of this is Fernhout (1997), Middleton & Walsh (1995), Naugle (2007), Olthuis (2007), Seerveld (2007) and Wolters (2007). Everyone of them is trying to a greater or lesser degree to polish their previous viewpoints, or even to alter them altogether (cf. Olthuis, 2007).

With the help of Walsh (2000a and 2000b) we will now first try briefly (in the light of postmodern critique) to treat the dangers of a Christian worldview and afterwards to point out how it can be challenged.

5.2 The dangers threatening a Christian worldview

A Christian worldview can become that which postmodernism blames on all worldviews, namely degenerate into an ideology, in the following ways:

5.2.1 Deteriorating into a totalitarian, intellectual system

Most of these risks originate in the exaggeration of a moment of truth. In the first instance it is true that a worldview is comprehensive. But when one starts feeling that a worldview leaves no room for movement, may not be questioned or does not promote the growth of one's faith – when one becomes its prisoner – then red warning lights are beginning to blink.

This warning signal increases when the proponents of such a worldview in intellectual arrogance start to despise others with different worldviews. Or when they take it for granted that their correct way of thinking (worldview) will lead to the right conduct (lifestyle). For then it has been forgotten that a worldview is something pre-scientific – from the heart – and not a rational system. A system is something we can *learn*, but a worldview has to be *embraced* by the heart. While a system can be something timeless and static, a worldview is something historic (meant for a particular age) and therefore dynamic. Thus a worldview may never be closed (off) but must remain open to renewal.

Closely linked to this risk is the following:

5.2.2 A claim to being universally valid

This error, too, contains an element of truth which can, however, be exaggerated. One should believe with full commitment that your worldview is valid. Moreover, a worldview is not primarily something individual, but is usually of a societal nature. That is why it claims to be generally valid. It is also natural to accept that what is right or true for you yourself, would also apply to others.

The risk in this case is that of thinking that only your own worldview is the final, universal truth. Then you need no longer keep an eye or an ear open for other views and voices "from outside". But this would imply a complete overrating of something which – because our mind is clouded – will always be deficient, incomplete, and unfinished. The result is a closed worldview or ideology.

Even a Christian worldview based on God's Word is not immune against deteriorating into an ideology: From the angle of one's worldview one does not only do exegesis (explanation) but also eisegesis (laying things into a text). The next risk we run is:

5.2.3 For the sake of self-defence or the influence/power of one's own group

In this case, too, an element of truth is warped. A worldview creates an orderly world in which people can feel safe. This truth, however, becomes an error when it leads to isolation, an inward focus, closing off the worldviewish group, a mentality of forming a laager, an obsession with safety and purity.

This type of worldview is contrary to a Christian's calling to be a blessing to others. For Christians have to be busy not merely with themselves but with service to others. (In this Christ was the supreme example.) An authentic Christian worldview will reach out and will never be content to be a prisoner of its group. Reaching out like this should be motivated by love and readiness to serve, and should never be about influence or power.

5.2.4 Irrelevant for the current cultural context

The element of truth here is that any worldview is meant for a specific time and circumstances. The risk is that it can be locked up in the circumstances of its age. This happens when the old worldview is continued just as it is in new circumstances. For instance, the Christian worldview developed by Abraham Kuyper more than a century ago in the Netherlands to oppose modernistic Western culture, cannot fully be applied without change to a postmodern or non-Western situation.

A Christian worldview for this age must help us in understanding the unique problems of our current culture and suggest alternatives. A younger generation may not simply parrot the worldview of their ancestors. Earlier formulations of a Christian worldview is not without value, but should be re-interpreted to stay relevant and prevent it from becoming obsolete tradition.

5.2.5 A loss of biblical inspiration and dynamics

Proponents of a Reformational worldview are convinced that their holistic worldview of service to God and their fellow human beings in every domain of life – as opposed to various dualistic Christian visions – is a correct version of the biblical message. But with an attitude of having arrived, this moment of truth becomes an error. This will imply that it is no longer necessary to study the Bible since your worldview already echoes the gospel message one hundred percent.

Such an absolutised Christian worldview may silence the Scriptures – God's Word. Instead of the other way round, namely that – to prevent stagnation of your worldview – it has to be enlightened, inspired and corrected by God's revelation all the time. If the Scriptures never amaze, surprise, disturb and even confuse one, one's worldvewish alarm ought to be triggered. The same danger threatens us if the Bible is merely used as a compendium of ageless truths or moral lessons.

The antidote against such all too easy, simple answers is that we should not only *allow*, but also *expect* God's revelation to sharpen and transform our worldview.

The way this takes place is through daily, serious, personal and prayerful wrestling with God's Word.

Closely related to the above is the next threat:

5.2.6 Replacing a personal relationship with God

The correct relation is when one's relationship with God gives rise to a biblical worldview. And also the other way round: that a worldview founded on God's Word should bring one nearer to God Himself.

The threat is that Reformational philosophers could become so over-enthusiastic about their Christian worldview and the cultural value it has that they could forget whose Name is attached to their worldview. It is disastrous to confuse a Christian worldview with a personal relationship with God in Christ or even to put it in the place of such a relationship (cf. Clark, 1996). Then a worldview becomes and end in itself, a dangerous idol. On the contrary, a worldview should only be a means to grow in knowledge and wisdom, to love God with all one's heart, soul and mind (Mat. 22:37).

5.2.7 A gap between worldview and way of life

Walsh (1992:27 *et seq.*) adds another weakness to the list: the gap between one's commitment to Jesus Christ and the way one lives one's life. This gap creates a crisis of credibility in our relationship with non-Christians when they legitimately ask whether following Jesus according to a Christian worldview makes any difference. Does a Christian worldview really give rise to the healing of our secular culture? Mostly Christians are socially irrelevant – cultural *followers* and not culture *formers*. Also most churches are in a coma, asleep to their own cultural entrapment.

On the question: Why this gap?, Walsh blames both dualism and intellectualism. Since we have discussed dualistic Christian worldviews already (see chapter 4, section 2), only something about intellectualism follows (cf. also 5.2.1 above). According to Walsh especially the Reformed tradition is guilty of over-intellectualising the Christian faith. Then professing Christ becomes a matter of

saying "I do" to a system of theological dogmas rather than "I do" to a bridegroom named Jesus (p. 31). The problem with intellectualism is the unexamined assumption that *right thinking* necessarily leads to *right acting*. Getting our conceptual categories right, however, is no guarantee that an integral and restorative lifestyle will follow. An intellectualistic worldview also tends to be static, encased in categories of timeless truths. It further harms our imagination to be culturally relevant (p. 32).

5.2.8 The Christian worldview does not exist

In summary it can be said that one should be careful not to regard one's own view as *the* Christian view. Ebertz (2006) with right states that there is no historically grown worldview that may be labelled "*the* Christian worldview". We cannot do this if we acknowledge that we are historical beings whose knowledge is further limited and tinged by sin. Such a label would according to Ebertz not only be misleading, but also borders on idolatry (an ideology is the idolisation of an idea or a vision). *The* Christian worldview is then substituted for the Word of God. Besides, it also leads to a negative attitude towards outsiders and an unwillingness to learn from others – especially from those who do not hold a Christian worldview.

Ebertz is right except that one should not be deprived of the responsibility to choose what is in your opinion the best from among different Christian (and other) worldviews.

5.3 Preventing these dangers

One of the most important, if not the most important way of escaping the above-mentioned dangers, is the testing of one's worldview continually in the light of the Scriptures (cf. 5.2.5 above). The Scriptures should not only be read in the light of our worldview (the easy way), but our worldview should continually be reformulated in the light of the Scriptures (the hard way). Besides, our worldview should also be tested by the outside reality – something we cannot go into now.

The problem is that, according to postmodernism, the Bible itself is a “great narrative” which is totalising by nature. (Examples from the Old Testament are the patriarchal society as well as Israel’s violence against other nations.)

5.3.1 The Bible is anti-ideological

In the case of such an accusation it stands to reason that the Bible has to be studied anew. In this respect Walsh (1992) and Middleton & Walsh (1995) have already done valuable work in the second part of their work (p. 85 *et seq.*) (cf. also Walsh, 2000b and Walsh, Hart and VanderVennen, 1995:4-32).

Walsh (1992:10) correctly states that “... any worldview, if it is to be both biblical and illuminative of what human life is really like, must be a worldview that comprehends our brokenness and suffering”. Grief, mourning and tears are, however, not expressions of powerless acquiescence (p. 73). They are not simply frustrations with the present, but also anticipating the future. Grief can function as a critique of the present order, because it refuses to cover up and insists that we confront the brokenness, suffering, oppression and failed expectations of the present.

Also Middleton & Walsh discover new elements in the Scriptures which were may be too little or not at all emphasised in the traditional Reformational worldview (e.g. the whole issue of suffering.) But their conclusion is that the Word of God does definitely not advocate a totalising, violent or oppressive message (The history of violence in the Old Testament is no longer valid for today). One could rather say that is it full of contra-ideological, anti-totalising dimensions.

Two dimensions in particular are investigated by Middleton & Walsh in detail in the Scriptures. The first is that the Scriptures – instead of glossing over oppression – from Genesis up to the cross of Christ and in the rest of the New Testament show great sensitivity towards pain. The second is that God’s Word – instead of being exclusive, restrictive and partial – shows great compassion for the whole creation. It is important to say something more about both these facets.

5.3.2 Acknowledging suffering

The Bible does not gloss over, hide or even deny pain (the way ideologies usually do) but “embraces” it. It happens already in Genesis, in Exodus (God pitied the suffering of the Israelites oppressed in Egypt), in the penitential psalms, in the rescue from the Babylonian exile and in the prophets’ criticism on unjust societal structures. Eventually it culminates in the passion of Christ. Not by force or violence, but by love he overcomes suffering. Walsh (2000b:14) comes to the conclusion: “... this trajectory of pain and suffering serves to delegitimize any ideological use of the biblical story that will cause violence within any kind of exclusionary us/them polarities”.

5.3.3 The whole of creation and mankind is involved

Clearly the Scriptures are not ideologically partial in favour of a certain people or group and exclusive towards others either. God does choose Abraham and after him the people of Israel, but with the expressed intention that they would bring a blessing to *all* peoples and nations – the *whole* world. Therefore they were gravely punished when they refused to carry out this divine duty.

Walsh (2000b:14) says with right that every effort to defend oneself and claim the gospel of salvation for oneself only or for one’s own group, amounts to it being seriously distorted. For salvation in Christ also means that the ideological walls people are inclined to build between them, will be broken down (cf. Col.3:11). The gospel not in the least implies forceful exclusion of certain groups – on the contrary it means loving *inclusion*.

5.3.4 Putting it to the test

In the last instance even stressing the anti-ideological message of God’s Word will not guarantee the Scriptures from being co-opted for ideological ends. What Walsh says in this regard has to be underlined in the end: “Only the non-ideological, embracing, forgiving, and shalom-filled *life* of a dynamic Christian community formed by the story of Jesus will prove the Gospel to be true and render the alternatives fundamentally implausible” (Walsh, 2000b:16).

In the final instance the relativist error of postmodernism can only be proved wrong by a Christian lifestyle in obedience to God's ordinations. While one cannot *live* consistently as a postmodernist, the gospel of Jesus Christ is the way that leads to *life* in its fullness (John 10:10b).

6 Conclusion

Seeing that we came a long way in this investigation a brief overview could be valuable.

By means of a historic overview of the development of the idea of law or normativity in Western thought it was pointed out how in present-day postmodernism it finally culminated in radical but untenable ontological and epistemological relativism.

The second important question was whether a Christian worldview – as postmodernism claims happens in all worldviews – is not absolutist with all the unpleasant consequences. This warning issued by postmodernism was taken seriously in the second main part of this study by investigating the dangers of ideologising a Christian worldview. If, however, a Christian worldview is prepared to keep on listening seriously to God's revelation in creation and in Scripture, such dangers can be lessened or overcome.

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Chapter 6

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN WORLDVIEW AND CULTURE

A reason for the extreme poverty on the continent?

This chapter wants to illustrate the practical implications of a specific worldview, viz. the traditional African worldview for a concrete issue like economic development. Worldview is regarded as the heart or soul of a culture. Or culture as the manifestation of a worldview.

The chapter develops in the following way: (1) It is first indicated that worldview and culture may not be ignored in development. (2) Then different viewpoints and evaluations of traditional African culture are discussed. (3) This is followed by a detailed exposition of the viewpoint of an African philosopher who is critical about traditional African worldview and culture. (4) Next, different other African writers on the issue are reviewed. (5) The chapter closes by way of an overview and final conclusions.

1. Introduction: Worldview and culture makes no difference in economic development.

According to the well-known development economist, Sachs (2005) it is usually stated that Africa has a lack of modern values. Examples are that they do not like to work (are lazy), that the community suppresses individuals, and so forth (cf. Sachs, 2005: 315-318).

However, he points out with examples from all over the world that the idea that culture can impede development has a long history. As far back as 1870 it was for instance said about Japan – today an economic giant – that because of cultural reasons it would never develop. Again Max Weber contended that the Protestant faith was the secret of development, but today Ireland and Italy (Roman Catholic countries) are better developed than some predominantly Protestant countries. It was also alleged in the past that China would not develop due to Confucianism. When it did happen, it was turned around: its development

was then attributed to the traditional Confucian values! In the case of India the same predictions were made (because of the Hindu faith) wrongly, for since 1990 it is one of the fastest growing economies. Similar faulty predictions were made regarding several Muslim countries.

According to Sachs the African farmers are not lazy either, but they lack the necessary fertilisers, implements, roads, irrigation, transport and storing facilities to make a success of farming. He refers (p. 317) to the "World Values Survey" in which the question was posed how important it was for parents that their children learn to work hard. Up to 83% of Africans considered it important – in contrast to only 61% of Americans.

Those who maintain that Africans are lazy therefore cannot prove it, but usually land up in a circular argument : "They are poor because they are lazy. How do we know that they are lazy? Because they are poor!"

Earlier on in his book (cf. p. 57, 60) Sachs asserted that culture cannot explain poverty. Now his conclusion is: (p.317): "Culture-based predictions of social change are fragile and often incorrect even in the most culture-bound areas of human behavior." Two reasons are given for this: (1) Cultural customs are not unchangeable, but – even though it does not always happen fast – they change as a result of economic changes. (2) Cultural interpretations are usually made mostly rather on the grounds of cultural prejudice against another worldview or culture than on the grounds of measurable facts.

The question is whether Sachs perhaps underestimates the worldviewish and cultural factor in development. Van der Walt (1999:56-66) for instance quotes numerous sources on the importance of culture. For development itself is part of culture. (In this regard, cf. Arizpe, 1996 and especially Masini et al., 1994).

In several publications Van der Walt (2003 and 2006) has also shown that one of the most important reasons for the failure of numerous development projects in Africa (and elsewhere) is precisely the Western lack of sensitivity for indigenous worldviews and cultures.

It is clear that further reflection on the cultural “element” of development is necessary. Since preconceptions – especially from the West – play a significant role in this field, we will here give voice mainly to Africans. (The presumption is not that Africans would be more objective, but that their criticism on their own culture would denote an attempt in that direction.) We are not hereby denying the valuable contributions from Westerners with long experience in Africa and intimate knowledge of traditional African cultures (cf. e.g. Van Rooy, 1997 & 1999).

2. Two viewpoints

The literature comes up with two viewpoints. They amount to the effect that the one denies and the other acknowledges that traditional African worldviews and culture (or elements thereof) could present a stumbling block on the way to (Western) development.

2.1 There are no faults in traditional African culture

Many books on the field of trade and industry which were published after 1994 in South Africa, took this as a point of departure. (The Ubuntu worldview, for instance, is accepted without criticism.) For lack of space we quote only a UNESCO publication here: *Tradition and development in Africa today* (1990). In the final report by the group of Africans (p. 123-136) it is repeatedly stressed that development failed, because the old, traditional African culture was not taken into account (p. 125, 129, 131 and 132). On page 133 it is even stated that tradition need not adapt to modern development, or that there should not be – as usually happens – interaction between the two, but merely that modernisation should adapt to tradition: “It was not a case of adapting tradition to modern society; rather, the latter should be based on tradition.”

It is sufficiently clear that a very uncritical attitude towards the own culture lies at the base of such a viewpoint. It plainly emerges from theses 50 and 51: “The question should not be asked whether there were positive and negative aspects of tradition that were incompatible with development. In the opinion of the experts, there was no question of good or bad traditions. Traditions should rather

be referred to as being inadapted or else adapted to a particular activity or situation" (p132).

I was unable to ascertain whether this viewpoint is merely the result of a naïve idealisation of own traditions or whether it originates from present-day Post-modernism. According to many post-modern relativists all cultures are equally true. Therefore there is no possibility of judging one culture from the angle of another or from the angle of God's revelation.

Bennaars (1988:306) says with right that modern cultural relativism holds both positive and negative implications. On the positive side it means that any kind of ethnocentrism is rejected, so that relativism can contribute to a better understanding of other cultures. On the other hand, however, it promotes conservatism and traditionalism. He explains: "... relativism tends to encourage, almost inevitably, traditionalism and conservatism, characterised by a high degree of complacency and an uncritical endorsement of the *status quo*. If all cultures or ethical systems are valued to be the same, there is no urgent need to change; rather one is made to defend the old."

This first uncritical viewpoint therefore leads to the claim that the solution of Africa's problems are simply the revival of the traditional worldview and culture. This sounds rather unrealistic in a globalising world.

A second viewpoint held by Africans is:

2.2 Traditional African culture has shortcomings and examples are given

About this second view it should be stated that African writers do not always denote these as inherent *shortcomings*, but rather as *differences* with Western culture, which as a result may form stumbling blocks on the way to economic development.

As an example we can cite the difference between Western and African ideas on poverty and riches. Sizoo (1995:18) tells about the following development project in Senegal. A bank was established to grant credit to poor people who did not own land, so that they could buy, for example, tools for building, carpentry and

sewing machines. The people were enthusiastic. A lot of money was borrowed and after three years the project was evaluated. Although the loans were repaid, the result of the evaluation was negative. The economic situation of the people had not improved visibly. It was clear that the greater part of the money was not invested in things which would bring in a cash income. After investigation it emerged that the people partly invested in tools. But the greater part of the loans was invested in "more valuable securities" : the traditional lending schemes (*tontines*), the marriage of the daughter of a distant relative ("uncle"), the funeral of the daughter of a cousin, et cetera.

Histories like these only become comprehensible to a Westerner if he realises Africa has a different view on riches and poverty. "In Africa the notion 'poor' does not in the first instance mean to lack material means (food, housing, clothing etc.), but to be a 'social orphan', not to have social relations" (Sizoo, 1995:15). Being rich would then mean having good social relations with your fellow men – and being prepared to invest money in it.

3. Approach

The presupposition here is that, although the cultures of the numerous ethnical groups show great differences, they all share typical traits so that it is possible to speak of a traditional African culture.

Before mentioning the shortcomings in African culture, three other points have to be stressed.

3.1 Only some traits regarding economic development

Since readers can so easily misunderstand a writer (in this case they may think that he is negative towards everything in African culture and therefore only quotes Africans which make negative statements on it), I want to state explicitly: We are here discussing only *certain* traits in traditional African culture which may form stumbling blocks on the way to *Western* development ideals, which encompass mainly *economic* development. Hereby we do not deny that these

same traits of traditional African culture *in other respects* may make Africa more developed than the West.

Two examples may serve as an illustration. African communalism is a *stumbling block* for economic development, for it does not acknowledge and even suppresses individual initiative which is essential for Western development (proof will be given later). But this communalism should be *evaluated positively* in the case of Africa's emphasis on interpersonal relationships.

Africa's view of time is a *stumbling block* in the way of Western economic development. The reason is that according to them (in contrast to the way it is in the West) time is not something exploited for material gain. But it is *good* when time – in the African tradition – is “taken” to benefit one's relationship with a fellow human being.

3.2 The positive side not taken into account

Since Africa experiences serious economic problems, in the publications we mention here all attention is focused on (negative) cultural traits which can be the cause of these problems. It would be just as important – maybe even more – to know which traits of the traditional culture and worldview can promote economic development.

3.3 Suspended judgement

The elements of African culture which are regarded as negative for (Western) economic development by a number of Africans themselves, are given below without any discussion or assessment, for two reasons: (1) Development is a complex process that depends on several circumstances. (2) It would be better if the people from Africa would assess these aspects of their culture themselves so that possible Western prejudice from the author could be eliminated.

4. Nyasani on the “soul” of the African

Since the work by Nyasani (1997) was the only example I could trace of a full book from the pen of an African on the topic, this book will first be treated below.

(It will be followed by flashes and fragments from the other scant sources on this issue.) For optimal objectivity the writer himself is often quoted.

As we have said, this is a singular book. There is no other African author (at least as far as I know) who is so frank about his own worldview and culture and moreover puts it in writing – for public knowledge – than this philosopher from Nairobi. And it is not the first time he did it either (cf. Nyasani, 1988).

4.1 Objective

On the back of the jacket the objective with this publication is explained as follows: "The purpose of this book is not to indict or condemn the African ways but to generate a genuine debate on what Africa can do to pull itself out of the embarrassing economic rut... the book is a recipe for self-critique... that conveys one important message: Africa, change or perish!"

On page 134 it is stated as follows: "The principal objective of this book is to provoke criticisms of ourselves as a black race that is generally backward ... to identify the actual causes of the problems afflicting Africa."

At the end of the book (p. 157) the author emphasises how serious he is with these last words "...I have put down these thoughts without prejudice and without the least intention to make apology for what I have written..."

4.2 Three differences in the "mind" of Africa with that of other cultures

According to Nyasani (1997:57) it is generally accepted – and commended too – that the "mind" (or "psyche") of Africans (we could call it their worldview, the core of their culture) exhibit the following three unique characteristics. (1) Their sociality and sociability; (2) their patience and forbearance, and (3) their sympathetic nature and readiness to accept others. Is this true

4.2.1 Sociality

Nyasani (p. 64 et seq.) regards the typical trait of traditional African culture (usually called communalism or communitarianism) as exactly one of the major stumbling blocks for development. As a result of the impersonal "we" in which the individual loses himself, personal responsibility is often lacking – Africans are

inclined to wait for the group's decision or they pass their own responsibility onto the impersonal group.

Thus he points out the puzzle of the unsociality of the so-called natural sociability of his people: "the obnoxious practice of social indifference and lack of cooperation in the midst of a seemingly thriving atmosphere of sociality and mutual concern" (p. 66). According to him the acclaimed sociality of the Africans fails tragically – to such an extent that he tends to reject the whole idea of a tight-knit sociality because of their blatant egotism or selfishness (p.67).

This lack of a personal sense of responsibility also leads to (p.68) the people of Africa exhibiting a careless, happy-go-lucky attitude towards their environment. (He mentions littering as an example.)

He therefore raises the question whether Africans' communalism is really something deeply rooted or even positive in their culture or merely a pretext or even a cliché to impress those who do not know Africans well enough (p. 68).

He concludes that without doubt there is such a thing as a strong sociality among (especially traditional) Africans, but it can be debated whether it really permeates the whole community. So it should not be overrated (p.70). "... whenever there may be a talk about African brotherhood, sociality and other fraternal labels, the sensible position is that of caution and reticence" (p. 72).

4.2.2 Tolerance

According to Nyasani (p. 75-77) Africans are not more patient than people from other cultures. They are merely patient because, as a consequence of many circumstances in Africa, they mostly have no choice.

4.2.3 Sympathy

Even the idea that Africans are more sympathetic (ready to accept others) is rejected. According to him (p. 80) however, they are more emotional and therefore readily share in the joys and sorrows of others. (The importance that funerals and weddings have in Africa is mentioned as an example.)

4.3 Greater pliability of the mind

A second part of Nyasani's book deals with the greater pliability of the African mind for impressions from outside. (He uses words like "pliable", "impressible" and "persuadable".) This is the reason why the crowd has a great influence on the individual (p. 101), and why there is a spirit of conformism (p. 101) and the tendency to follow (p. 113), so that there is a lack of critical thought (p. 130).

4.3.1 African music and dance

In this connection Nyasani discusses the rhythmically repetitive (to Westerners sometimes monotonous) characteristic of traditional African music, singing and dance. According to him there is more at stake in music and dancing in Africa than mere entertainment: "...it assumes some occult ontological dimensions which culminate in the common sharing of feelings and emotions" (p. 115). Once more it is linked to the strong sense of communality: "... the African repeats himself because of his social existence" (p. 116).

However, it also has negative consequences. The repetitive nature of African music and dance "...express what seems to be an endemic and congenital trait of what could be described as a natural benign docility generally brought about by years of blind submission and unquestioning compliance to the mystique of higher authority..." (p.113).

4.3.2 Relationships of authority

In a subsequent chapter the writer explores the idea of authority in the traditional African worldview. It is a hierarchical vision of authority (top down) – in spite of the strong emphasis on the community. "Respect, reverence and obedience seem to operate in a vertical direction and always takes account of who is above and who in the subordinated order of beings... the members below... are not supposed to question that authority, neither are they supposed to hold dissenting views on what is handed down" (p. 126).

Such a view of authority (in the final instance derived from the ancestors) leads to traditionalism, conformism and a lack of independent thought and initiative.

"These rules are often so byzantine that they hardly permit flexibility or even exercise of personal judgment... They are responsible for forging a one-track mind and uncritical judgment... In a word, they undermine the power of independent thinking and surreptitiously deprive the African mind of initiative endeavours. Thus what we experience ... is the apparent stagnation or stalemate in social as well as economic evolution" (p. 130).

4.3.3 Gossip

Before the author attempts a solution for the problems of Africa, he comments on the results of the habit of African people to talk a lot, to natter or palaver. Once more we give the word to himself: "There is hardly any gainsaying that Africa is seriously plagued with circumlocutions and many cases of verbose and redundant language. What can ordinarily be articulated in one sentence may very well be expressed in four sentences in Africa due to the tendency to indulge in circumlocution or due to the lack of a practical logic of precision and economy of words. Very often a simple discourse... ends up becoming a protracted and insipid palaver and not infrequently degenerates into idle conversation" (p. 131).

The implications of this common trait among Africans he sums up as follows:

"... Africa's economic retardation is a consequence of the overindulgence in distractive activities, including circumlocutory verbal expressions in every-day discourse. It is equally true to say that the amount of man hours spent on elaborate but irrelevant palaver can transform the economic fate of Africa if usefully and appropriately employed on economic development programmes" (p. 131).

4.4 Self-discipline the solution

At the end of his book Nyasani (p. 134) still struggles with the problem of the possible (cultural) reasons for Africans' economic backlog in the world: "The question that haunts me is: Why is a black man generally backward and why can he not pull himself out of this shameful rut?" His answer is: "The answer I seem

to stumble on every time is his total disregard for discipline in the widest sense of the word" (p. 134).

Instead of being characterised by discipline, according to him the African worldview is characterised by indifference, casualness, laxity, negligence, distraughtness, indecisiveness and a planless lifestyle – in one word: a "happy-go-lucky attitude" (p. 140). These are all factors that impede the development of Africa. As a consequence little planning is done and the dispatch of urgent matters is delayed unnecessarily.

According to him discipline is an attitude or mentality whereby a person tries to reach a goal consistently, with perseverance and determination without compromising (p. 135). Self-discipline leads to a feeling of personal responsibility (p. 137). One need not be forced from above by the community to do something. Therefore self-discipline is to him a *conditio sine qua non* for developing mentally, socially, politically and economically (p. 141). For a disciplined person does not busy himself/herself with senseless and irrelevant trivialities in human relationships.

The lack of discipline leads to many other things. One of these is the poor culture of upkeep and maintenance: The streets, gardens, lawns and buildings of once beautiful cities become dilapidated, good roads have become impassable, machinery and technical apparatus simply no longer work.

4.5 Africa's view and use of time

Finally Nyasani points out that self-discipline particularly has to come to the fore in the way Africans view and use time. He is convinced that "no meaningful progress can be achieved in the absence of a well-co-ordinated programme that is managed within the specifications of time and space... no human progress can be achieved if the process by which it is attained disregards the flow of time..." (p. 145).

One instance of this disregard of the importance of time is Africans' lack of punctuality. According to him punctuality should be a sign of mutual respect – something which Africans – ironically – strongly emphasise!

Instead of attempting to meet an obligation, responsibility or promise punctually, he finds the following: "The good inhabitants of Africa wear fancy watches on their wrists but, alas, they are no more than ornaments or gadgets of 'gaudy' decoration. The watch or clock in Africa is strictly not supposed to tell the time when an event should be undertaken or should be terminated. Neither is it supposed to cause a stir for an undertaking such as a pre-arranged appointment or even a simple date... They entertain the conviction that time can wait or that time is no factor... This is a pathetic attitude indeed and one that has contributed substantially to Africa's economic woes and backwardness" (p. 151).

Nyasani's final summary words are a warning to the people of Africa "... unless Africa takes up its destiny seriously and re-examines its mental attitudes towards responsibility, self-discipline, time-management and time-exploitation, there is going to persist a real danger of being recolonized..." (p. 155).

4.6 Food for thought

It would be irresponsible to ignore Nyasani's frank – sometimes biting – critique on his fellow Africans without giving serious consideration to it. In order to make sure that Nyasani is not some exceptional case of exaggerated prejudice, one has to investigate whether other Africans mention similar – and maybe other – cultural stumbling blocks on the way to development. The emphasis in this case is not firstly on the specific adverse *aspects* of traditional African worldview and culture, but on the *fact* that Africans themselves remark on these things. (Interested readers would therefore at the end be able to make an inventory of the various facets of African culture which may impede economic development.)

Probably because it is so difficult to be critical of one's own worldview and culture, this kind of source is scarce. It took a long and intensive search to trace them. However, the immense distress in Africa seems to force Africans

(especially since the nineties of the previous century) to speak and write critically about it more openly. The result of this search is given below.

5. Kinoti and Kimuyu on negative traits in general

In 1994 Prof. Kinoti mentioned special traits of African culture as barriers to development, amongst others a fatalistic attitude, tolerance of evil, an erroneous perception and use of time, bad management, organisation, planning and maintenance, as well as a lack of work ethic (dedication and diligence).

In his later work with Kimuyu (cf. Kinoti and Kimuyu, 1997: 26,27) they once more touch on the cultural factors and mention similar matters like a lack of work ethic which stresses honest, hard work, the negation of the importance of time and the lack of good, effective organisation.

New worldviewish matters are also stressed, like the consequences of a strong belief in the spiritual world and witchcraft (p. 289-290). This causes the people of Africa to live in constant fear. Fear renders one powerless, apathetic and fatalistic. It leads to an approach of doing nothing. (People even avoid better housing for fear of being bewitched.)

Fatalism is, according to them, one of the main causes of underdevelopment, for it results in a limited vision of the future, unwillingness to invest in the future and lack of personal responsibility. People with a fatalistic attitude do not want to accept responsibility for the future, since it is unknown and you cannot trust your fellow human beings.

Further emphasis is laid (cf. Kinoti and Kimuyu, 1997: 290 et seq.) on the consequences of tribalism, like the numerous interethnic wars and the economic disruption and decline they entail. (Cf. in this regard also the excellent work by Turaki, 1997.)

6. Dembetembe on ancestor worship

The article by this African was the only example I could trace of an explicit acknowledgement that the deep-rooted belief in the ancestors could hold negative consequences for development. Even the title of his contribution makes it clear: "Ancestor worship among the Shona: an agent for national development retardation" (Dembetembe, 1988: 109-120).

Dembetembe first gives an explanation of the different types of ancestral spirits and their roles. Then he points out some positive traits of this belief. (For instance it played an important role in Zimbabwe's struggle for independence and it furthers close family unity). Subsequently he treats the negative consequences of this belief for development.

6.1 The festivals (*chisi*) which have to be observed in honour of the ancestral spirits of the region. On such days no work may be done on the land. Yet many of these days fall within the times that farmers have to plough, plant and weed. Sometimes two weekdays (apart from Sundays) are lost for labour in this way.

6.2 Essential provisions and money are wasted as a result of the belief that everything that happens to people is determined by the ancestors. Especially in the case of death – even when the natural cause of the death of the specific person stands to reason – a diviner has to be consulted to determine which ancestor is enraged and exactly why he punishes his living relations like this. The diviner will then prescribe a sacrifice, ceremony or "fine". There are cases where this belief brought about the economic ruin of a family, but they still adhere to the belief.

6.3 It dampens own initiative, since the ancestors first have to be consulted in everything.

6.4. It condones wrong conduct, since the diviner can decide that something was caused by some ancestor and the real culprit is exempted from his responsibility.

The writer concludes his article by pointing out what can counteract ancestor worship: education, better health services (ancestor worship thrives on illness), urbanisation and the Christian faith. (For an excellent, recent study on ancestor worship from a Christian perspective, cf. Nürnberger, 2007.)

7. Etounga-Manguelle's contribution

Etounga-Manguelle (in Serageldin & Taboroff, 1994:81) is another writer who criticises the worldview of Africans that will have to change. He talks about a "lack of a critical culture", which prevents Africa from assimilating and incorporating other cultures so that their own culture can progress. He further mentions specific weak traits like lethargy, jealousy and blind subjection to the irrational.

In a later article Etounga-Manguelle (2000:65-77) again says that Africans do not like work, that individual initiative is suppressed by the (communalistic) society and also mentions Africans' irrational conduct.

8. Dia's list

Another well-known author, Dia (in Serageldin & Taboroff, 1994:176-180) explicitly states: " ... whatever direction the development process may take, its success and sustainability will depend on how well it takes account of the needs and culture of the beneficiaries" (1994:180). He follows this up with a whole list of negative cultural factors:

8.1 As a result of Africa's **communalistic attitude** loyalty towards the group, harmony, social balance, equality and solidarity are preferred to individual economic performance.

8.2 **Riches is something that has to be shared** with others, in other words, it must be socially visible. But Westerners regard the huge sums spent on initiation ceremonies, weddings and funerals as a waste.

8.3 **The demands of an extended family** causes extra income simply to enlarge the circle of those who have to benefit from it. Whatever money may be

left, is exhibited in luxurious houses and expensive cars to show off, and on sumptuous feasts instead of for investment. Much of this seemingly irrational conduct can be ascribed to people's need for security (because I now take care of you, you will do the same when I have problems), and especially to social prestige.

8.4 A hierarchical and paternalistic perception of authority that leaves little room for movement to the subordinates.

8.5 Consensus in decision-making, however time-consuming, is very important to Africans.

8.6 Africans regard a lot of leisure time as essential and the associated involvement in rituals, ceremonies, festivals and other social activities. It is not regarded – the way Westerners often see it – as laziness, but as a means of strengthening the all-important social ties. Although it profits them socially, there is no economic gain in it for the people.

9. Nyang on land, family planning, the authority of older people and time concept

Prof. Nyang is convinced that "African policymakers succeeded or failed in their implementation of programs depending on the way they handled culture, religion and ethnicity. So long as donors, development scholars, policymakers, and the larger society deny or ignore the relevance of these cultural factors, home-grown development deeply rooted in the history, culture and psychology of African peoples will be stymied" (Nyang, 1994:429).

He then discusses in detail the following fields in which the African worldview plays a significant role.

9.1 Land ownership. The ownership and use of land is inextricably bound up with the traditional lifeview. Land does not only belong to the people who now live there. Even after death the ancestors remain the co-owners of the land where they lived and are buried, and they are entitled to the fruits it bears. Therefore the people of Africa are unwilling to transfer land. It not only means treason towards

the ancestors themselves, but it also implies that one voluntarily releases the protection of the ancestors (who still “live” on the land). Thus land has a meaning that transcends the physical and economical.

This vision is directly opposed to the Western purely economic and individualistic perception which sees land as a “valuable piece of personal property” which can be owned, subdivided and sold. In Africa land is tied up with history and the ancestors. It symbolises independence and freedom. Land has spiritual and practical value and offers much more than mere economic security. Nyang demonstrates by means of numerous examples what the disastrous results are when this is not taken into consideration in Africa.

9.2 Family planning is the next serious reason for worldview clashes (Nyang: 1994:44). The West says Africa’s “population explosion” is one of the most important reasons for its poverty. Africans, on the other hand, regard children as a gift from the ancestors. Besides they have an obligation to the ancestors to continue the generation. Descendants also serves as a kind of “insurance policy”, because one’s children have to take care of one when the time comes that one is too old to work. Furthermore there must be an offspring to “remember” one when one has departed to the world of the ancestral spirits. Fearing the revenge of the ancestors, traditional Africans regard Western contraceptives to limit births merely as a clever trick to disadvantage them.

9.3 The relationship between the older and younger generation is also determined by African worldview and culture (cf. Nyang, 1994:442). In traditional society older people are not only respected for their age and greater wisdom, but especially because they have a religious role. They serve as mediators between the ancestors and the younger members of the community. That is why they have great – most probably too much – authority.

9.4 Africa’s perception of time is a following factor which Nyang treats (1994:443-444). The issue is that Africa regards time as something that has to be made for one’s fellow human beings in stead of just using it to one’s own

advantage. Nyang also discusses the little interest Africans have in their future and their strong orientation towards the past.

10. The subordinate position of women in most African communities

It is a fact that according to the African worldview women for the most part have to take a subordinate, second-rate position in relation to men. Not only are they often oppressed by the male sex, but are commonly subjected to various forms of violence. This attitude towards more than half of the people of the continent forms a grave stumbling block on the way to development. Yet it is seldom mentioned in the literature – particularly the early literature on development.

Fortunately women from Africa are now beginning to make themselves heard. To get an impression of the precarious position of women in traditional Africa as well as their protest against it, consult for instance the three following books: Amoah (1997), Mbugua (1994), and Oduyoye (1997).

11. Conclusion

What are our most significant conclusions?

Culture and development can only in theory (in abstraction) be separated, when we speak of culture *and* development. More correctly we should speak of development as (a part of) culture.

Furthermore culture (and worldview as its “soul”) is a complex phenomenon which is hard to define and “measure”. The fact that it cannot be quantified, does not detract from its importance, however. Likewise (economic) development is an extremely complicated matter which has many sides to it. It is therefore doubly difficult to pinpoint the role of culture in development (even in a specific land/region/culture). Getting involved in a debate on “what was first” (the chicken or the egg) is futile. Some claim that poverty is the cause of the kind of culture one finds in Africa. Such a culture is therefore not something typical of Africans only, but is characteristic of all poor people (cf. Schoeman, 2000). On the other hand some people (cf. above) claim that facets of African culture can be the

causes of poverty. However, no clear distinction can be made between causes and results. Poverty and culture influence each other mutually.

Therefore development often poses a puzzle. How for instance is it possible that Japan (earlier) and Korea (in the last 25 years) could develop so fast economically, while the cultures of these two countries exhibit striking similarities to traditional African culture?

It seems as if culture (like religion) sometimes plays a positive role in development and sometimes a negative one. Sometimes – remarkably – the same cultural custom can promote development in some respects while in other respects it could be disadvantageous to economic progress.

Besides, one must bear in mind that we are here dealing with *economic* development only. People who are economically underdeveloped may enjoy a higher level of development in *other respects* (e.g. spiritually and socially).

And it is true: Statements on the worldview and culture of others are seldom made without any prejudices. Even the Africans we have quoted here, can therefore (*inter alia* as a result of their Western education) be prejudiced against their own worldview and traditional culture.

It is therefore also true that one should be very wary of forecasting that, on the grounds of certain cultural characteristics, a nation/country will develop economically or not (cf. the warning by Sachs mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.) But it is also possible, instead of making *predictions*, to call up to *self-examination* (as Nyasani above). In my opinion such a long list of examples from the pens of prominent Africans deserves to be deliberated seriously and investigated further. All the more so since people in Africa experience on a daily basis that they can confirm these observations on numerous points.

As a consequence of the brokenness and sinfulness of human existence any culture – including that of Africa – entails good, less good and weak elements. If we admit to this basic fact, the way is clear to appreciate the good – and to link it up with economic development as far as possible, so that we can retain what is

fine. At the same time, however, the negative elements have to be looked at critically, so that they can be eliminated or transformed (cf. Van der Walt, 2006:1-17). This needs to be done because the dreadful, inhuman circumstances of the lives of millions of people in Africa are simply unacceptable.

Our final question is therefore about the need of a worldviewish change in the heart of traditional African culture. Will an integral Christian worldview (as explained in chapter 2 to 4) not be able to remove the stumbling blocks mentioned above and transforms African culture from deep within?

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Chapter 7

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 Christian worldview and philosophy – especially anthropology – which originated in the thirties of the previous century in the Netherlands. The aim of this article 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 endeavours. (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 20th century reformation". (6) An addendum of his most important publications are 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 500 years ago and this is true not only of the church, but of all of 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 already 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 the Epilogue 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 Remsté (or Raimsté), 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. Very likely 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 worker's cottage on the Noordweg in Oostkapelle, near Middelburg. Antheunis and Jan thus had to work on their grandfather's farm during summer, and could go to school only during winter.

In *De betekenis der drie hoofdvakken (Bijbelse, Vaderlandse en Kerkgeschiedenis) voor de principiële vorming* (originally printed in 1938, reprinted in 1979, in *Gereformeerde Schoolblad*), Janse wrote a fascinating narrative about his youth memories. 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. Since childhood this kind of piety did not satisfy Janse.

Already 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 emphasises 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 man.

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 history to 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 until 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 career in education in Schoondijke (1910-1917). Shortly after this Europe was plunged into World War I (1914-1918), and the young teacher also had to fulfil 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 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 the dualism between church history and world history!

Because he believed in concrete, illustrated education, 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 already existed around 800 A.D. and the 16th-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. (Cf. his publications in the addendum.)

In those days a teacher could not, of course, be only a teacher. He had to serve in wider society. Besides 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* electoral association and much more. It was not always easy to work together on the schoolboard 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 at the beginning of the meeting preferred to share out his own better brand of cigars.

According to the testimony of his 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 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 behaviour, 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. Typically 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 nowadays would talk with his son(s).

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 reformatory 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 realise 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

In the second place, Janse 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 canonise the work of Kuyper, but also fell back into the Scholasticism of the seventeenth century.

Scholasticism is characterised by a dualism between the sacred (holy) and profane (secular) or the 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

emphasises the unity of life and obedience to God in all areas of life, Janse emphatically rejected this harmful and unbiblical dualism.

Reformed theologians landed in the grip of their dogmatic system to such an extent that they did not acknowledge the limits of theology as a science any more. Because the difference between human, fallible theological scholarship and the infallible Word of God was not seen clearly any more, 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 like prof. 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 (Reformatorische Beweging) of the thirties. If we keep in mind that the Reformational philosophy which originated in these years is known around the world today and inspires many people, we realise 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 realised 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 – also the Reformed ones – because Scholasticism did not cloud 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.

In the first place, Janse had at his disposal an astonishing knowledge of the Bible. In the second place, 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 – already 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 (Professor of Philosophy at Kampen, later called to the Free University of Amsterdam for 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 literally devoured it. His son, Rev. 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.

Rev. 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 *Römerbrief* (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 Rev. 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 realised, 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 about *Karl Barth en de waarheid*, ("Karl Barth and the truth") dated February-2, 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 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).

On 27 September 1918 Vollenhoven defended his doctoral thesis *De wijsbegeerte der Wiskunde van theïstisch 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 promotor, 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 kilometres 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. Already in 1918 Vollenhoven and Janse together published an article on "De activiteit der ziel in het rekenonderwijs" (Vollenhoven & 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 for 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 already struggled to formulate a more Biblically true anthropology before Vollenhoven paid attention to the issue.

Prof. A. 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 already 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 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 till Janse's death there was close contact between them as well as an extensive correspondence. He especially 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 the Second World War (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*. Due to 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. Still, 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. Bril, 1982: 113).

Instead of the traditional leadership of two (Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd) at the birth of Calvinist philosophy, we should therefore rather see a joint

leadership of three – Janse included – standing at the dawn of a new Reformational philosophy.

8.4 An unrecognised 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 of the *Epilogue*).

Janse became isolated because of the following circumstances: The war, political unrest, 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 also played a role. Especially as a result of his illness, he could no longer continue to participate. The second and third generation of Reformational thinkers have, therefore, for the most part 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. (The bibliography of his writings is more than 25 pages.) In addition to at least ten larger 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. Especially 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 since 1932 warned against ideologies like Fascism and National-socialism – far ahead of 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: *Que es politica cristiana frente a la del mundo?* (1977) and *Los justos en la Biblia I* (1984), *II* (1986) and *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 als "levende ziel"* (1937) definitely would be an easier introduction. For his view on theology, one should read his article "Dogmatiek als wetenschap en hare wijsgerige 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). Also 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 (compare 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), 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 the 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

Especially three people have benefited from Janse's anthropological insights: Prof. K.J. Popma, Rev. B. Telder and Rev. 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 (s.a. and 1963) 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. Because Janse did not follow this line of thought, 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, Rev. 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 (p. 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. Honour 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 honoured 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 honoured 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 experience no 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 Rev. 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 ziel'* (1939).

Especially 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” (not 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.

Especially 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: “honourable” so that Janse – by his own “Gereformeerde broeders” – received a dishonourable 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 Rev. 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 2/8/1944):

“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

Already earlier in his life Janse experienced another kind of pain: the sorrow of losing his wife to death. At the birth of their second son (C.J. in 1926) Debora (1885-1826) 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 (13/5/1929): “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, besides 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 the Second World War (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 Rev. 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 realised 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 Molengracht Street, where the Janses lived at the time, was renamed as Poolseweg.) 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 he – branded as a traitor – 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. Not until five o'clock the next day did they get anything to eat – 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 (N.S.M) were transported to the attic of the Military Academy. Apparently some of them were arrested on the false accusation that they had sympathised 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 (N.S.M). The Germans captured the Netherlands in 1940 and as a result of their ideology of "race, blood and soil", already in October all the teachers had to fill in forms about their ancestry in order to check if they were not Jews or possibly had any Jewish blood in their family. During the occupation teachers were forced to put the N.S.M. 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. (Rev. 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 behaviour 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

Since in that time many people asked Janse what their attitude in the war should be, Janse compiled a stencilled 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 N.S.M. 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* (idealising 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, got estranged from many of his friends.

According to Stellingwerf (1992:155,156) Vollenhoven had already in 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 behaviour during the Second World War is still a sensitive issue (cf., for instance, Kramer-Vreugdenhil, 2001 who gives an unhistorical and incorrect picture of Janse's position in 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 "crime" 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 teerste 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. Luckily, on 18 November he was transferred with ten others to the *Regentenkamer* in the prison. There were chairs and a table, light, water, a strawsack 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 Rev. B. Telder, his pastor in Breda, the contribution of Janse as 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 could celebrate 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 Rev. 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 Rev. 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*, Rev. Telder very appropriately quoted from Daniel 12 verse 1 to 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 shall arise Michael, the great prince ... And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." (R.S.V.)

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 summarised 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 marvellous creation and, at the same time, the realisation 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 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 of it. He did not regard the Bible as having a complete set of rules for living, or a book that should be used in a Biblicistic 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 time and also for 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 antennae for the disastrous results of attempts to synthesise 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 twenties and thirties of the past century 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 – more or less completed.
- Expansion of the Janse archives, for example, photocopies of still lacking important correspondence with his contemporaries.
- 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. That is also true of the Reformational worldview and philosophical movement which was started in about the thirties of the past century.

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 25th commemoration on the "Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte" (cf. Van Dijk & 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 (p. 89 & 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 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). Then already, I was 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 ideal 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 *Gereformeerde 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 1980/1981. 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 realised only too well that the limited number of pages devoted to him was entirely insufficient to do justice to the reformational 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, Rev. 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, Rev. J.D. Janse. At that time the Janse Archive had been organised 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 Rev. Jan J. Janse, emeritus minister. As already mentioned, he owns several books from Janse's library containing his comments, besides 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 (cf. Van der Walt, 1989).

19.2.4 The present English text

My original booklet in Afrikaans on Janse (cf. Van der Walt, 1989) was translated into Dutch and published in the Netherlands in 2000 without any changes in content (cf. 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. Apart from a brief biography, his article of 2001 provides details about Janse's letters, diaries, lectures, stencilled 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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Chapter 8

THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW OF ARCHBISHOP DESMOND M. TUTU

A general review

This chapter intends to be a brief, introduction to the thought of Archbishop Tutu – especially in the light of the fact that the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (now the North-West University) honoured him with an honorary doctorate for his significant contribution to Christian thought and life in South Africa and the rest of the world.

The focus of the chapter is not on Tutu as a person or his theology (which has been characterised in different ways), but provides an overview of his Christian worldview. (1) Firstly, the different sources of his worldview are investigated. (2) Secondly, an exposition is given of its six basic components: Tutu's idea of God; of God's laws for creation; of time and history and of our natural environment. The next chapter will deal separately with the two remaining components, viz. Tutu's view of being human and of society, because they should be regarded as his most important contribution in shaping a genuine Christian worldview. The relevance of Tutu's worldview cannot be confined to the apartheid era – it offers valuable perspectives and directions for Christian life in our increasingly secularised, contemporary world of the 21st century.

1. Background

1.1 Restitution of honour

On 27 November 2002 the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education conferred the degree Philosophiae doctor honoris causa on archbishop (emeritus) Desmond Mpilo Tutu on the grounds of his Christian faith

and life and his contribution to Christianity in South Africa, Africa and the rest of the world. The motivation for the conferral was *inter alia* his devotion to and realisation of an integral Christian worldview, faithful to the Word of God and relevant to the South African context. Standing on this worldview he campaigned for decades for peaceful change of the political-social-economic situation in South Africa without neglecting the personal and spiritual dimension of the gospel. In his life and biblical writings principles and values like love, compassion, justice, truth, reconciliation, peace, fearlessness, humility and humour were given clear form.

1.2 One of Africa's great sons

Regarding the honorary doctorate by the Potchefstroom University one could say: "Better late than never" – Tutu had already received about 100 other honorary doctorates from all over the world. Apart from this three festive volumes have been dedicated to him (cf. Tlhagale & Mosala, 1986; Hulley, Kretzschmar & Pato, 1996 and Human, 2002); two voluminous biographies were written about him (cf. Du Boulay, 1988 and Allen, 2006); several selections containing his writings were published (cf. N. Tutu, 1989; Tutu, 1982a, 1982b, 1984a, 1985a, 1985b, 1991a, 1991b, 1994 and 1997); a book on the Truth and Reconciliation Committee appeared from his pen in 1999 and in a volume on influential South Africans of the twentieth century he also got a place (cf. Kretzschmar, 1999).

In spite of the fact that Potchefstroom was a bit behind, this restitution of honour by a Christian, traditional white university was a significant step. While by others (cf. *Introduction to Tutu*, 1982a) Tutu was called "the Ghandi of South Africa" and an "outstanding visionary Christian" "who led the church back to the essential Christendom", by most (especially Afrikaans speaking) whites he was branded as "public enemy number one" (compare Mandela in his *Preface* to Tutu, 1994:xi) and was often ignored. Someone (cf. Anonymous, 2003) later wrote in *Kampusnuus*, the newsletter of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, about the event when the honorary doctorate was conferred: "One realised that something greater was happening there. One realised there was

more to it than the conferral of a degree. It was the culmination of years of emotional, political and social baggage being shed on that day" (Translated from the Afrikaans).

1.3 Enduring actuality

These two chapters are not a *post mortem* in defence of the honorary doctorate – research for this was already started early in 2002. Apart from the referral of the degree and the improper reaction it drew from a small number of white people, I consider it worthwhile to look closely at Tutu's Christian worldview. In these chapters Tutu himself would be given the word so that he would not be judged or condemned on hear-say. Since he not only criticised the previous (NP) government, but is also critical towards the since 1994 (ANC) government, his ideas and conduct not only give proof of consistency and integrity, but also have enduring value for the new dispensation and the new era we have entered into.

2. Focus

The aim with these two chapters can best be stated by first saying what we do *not* want to do – thereby eliminating possible misunderstanding or too great expectations.

2.1 What the focus will not be

2.2.1 In the first instance these two chapters are not about Tutu as a person (see biographies above), a leader (cf. Rensburg, 2002) or a Christian. Mazibuko (1986), for instance, calls him a warm, peace-loving, honest, compassionate and brave person with a lot of humour. In several other volumes (e.g. Tlhagale & Mosala, 1986:12, 19, 24 and Tutu , 1984a:17, 22) mention is made of his sincere Christian faith that kept him standing through all the difficult years of apartheid, as well as the fact that he considers himself as one called by God and not as a politician.

2.2.2 In the second instance I will not be describing and analysing Tutu's "theology". He has been characterised in various ways, for example:

- as a *theologian*, merely because he uses the Bible in his thinking;

- as a *liberation theologian* (cf. e.g. Pieterse, 1995), because he wanted to help liberate South Africa from the ideology of apartheid and its consequences;
- as a *prophetic theologian* (cf. Nolan, 1986), because he could read the signs of the times and reacted to them from the perspective of the Scriptures;
- as an *African theologian* (cf. e.g. Hodgson, 1996), since his Christian thinking was enriched by good traits of African culture.

However, it remains a moot question whether one of these characterisations really can do full justice to the "essential Tutu". Granted, Tutu does sometimes use the word "theology" but most probably in a very broad, undefined meaning. Dwane (1986:20) maintains with right that it was not Tutu's intention to develop a scientific theology in the traditional sense: "He has never been known to indulge in the pursuit of recondite and high-faluting ideas either for selfish enjoyment, or as an attempt to impress lesser mortals with his learning."

Tutu himself (1984a:75) also clearly differentiates between theology and the Word of God: "... theology can never properly claim a universality which rightly belongs only to the eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ. Theology is a human activity possessing the limitations and particularities of those who are theologising". Further he explicitly states (cf. Tutu:1985a:8) that he has not tried to write heavy volumes with blueprints for social change, since he himself is a dreamer. Dreamers dream, they see visions – something which is typical of a worldview (cf. the title of Tutu, 2000).

So maybe we are moving closer to the "real" Tutu if we consider his writings as an attempt to propagate a broader Christian worldview. With such a radically Christian worldview he wanted to unmask and challenge the derailed and dualistic Christian-national worldview behind apartheid.

2.2.3 In the third instance these chapters, since they concentrate on worldviewish aspects, will not go into detailed differences between different church confessions and dogmas. It has to be borne in mind that a biblical worldview cannot be limited by borders between churches, since it is of a much

broader nature than church confessions. That is how it happens that reformed churches can adhere to a very unreformational (e.g. Christian-national) worldview, while churches and individuals who are not called "reformational" can hold and practise a true, biblically founded worldview.

2.2 The specific focus

What, then, is the focus of these chapters? To give the readers a brief, systematic overview of Tutu's Christian worldview. (The issue of a possible development or change in his worldview is not dealt with for the time being.) To avoid the possible criticism that I merely use Tutu to voice my own thoughts, I will quote his own words as much as possible. The discussion is done by tracing the following six basic components of a worldview (cf. Van der Walt, 1999b:59-60): his idea of God, his idea of God's laws, his view of being human, vision of society, history and nature.

Tutu's view of being human determines his view on society. These two components of his worldview will be treated together in the next chapter, because Tutu himself in his writings gave more weight to it. It can be seen as his particular contribution to a Christian worldview.

2.3 Enduring value in the midst of increasing secularism

To the informed reader the enduring value of Tutu's worldview will become clear during the course of the chapter. Its relevance is not limited to the fight against apartheid which now lies in the past. Undoubtedly it also has a message for the increasing secularism we experience today.

For example, Tutu's worldview is critical of the following traits of the present secular worldview:

- a divide between public, so-called secular life, like politics (where religion has no place) and private, personal life (where everyone lives according to his/her own faith);
- the privatisation of the Christian faith to a few limited ethical problems;

- the thinning out of religion to something therapeutic meant to make one feel good;
- the commercialisation of the whole of life – including church and religion;
- the neo-liberal, so-called free-market ideology, driven by growing globalisation.

2.4 More appreciative than critical

I deliberately minimise my lesser differences with Tutu to concentrate rather on what we can appreciate in him. How could we expect Christendom to survive in our country if we as Christians continuously look for specks of sawdust in the eyes of fellow Christians, while we do not see the planks in our own eyes?

The first important question – before describing the six worldviewish elements – is what the foundation or sources of inspiration were for Tutu's Christian worldview.

3. God's threefold revelation as the foundation for Tutu's Christian worldview

I have no doubt that Tutu took the authority of God's revelation seriously, as long as we accept that God not only revealed Himself in the Scriptures, but also in a non-linguistic form in his creation.

3.1 The Bible as the source and foundation

In the first place the Bible is the benchmark for Tutu: "Everything we do or say must be tested whether it is consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ or not, and not whether it is merely expedient or even acceptable to the government of the day or whether it is popular" (Tutu, 1984a:153).

Because the Bible is such a radical book, it can however, be dangerous for those who do not want to listen to it: "... the Bible is the most revolutionary, the most radical book there is. If a book had to be banned by those who rule unjustly and as tyrants, then it ought to have been the Bible" (Tutu, 1984a:178; cf. also Tutu, 1999:11).

Tutu also points out that the Bible is in a genre of its own and therefore has to be interpreted with circumspection. For instance, about the biblical narrative about creation he says (cf. Tutu, 1997:24) that the Bible was not meant to tell us *how* everything originated, but *by Whom* and *why* it was created.

Further Tutu not only emphasises prayer in general (Tutu, 1995 is a book of prayers), but also that faith and prayer is essential to understand and practise the Bible correctly. Cull (1996:13 *et seq.*) points out that Tutu as an Anglican stands in an age-old Benedictine tradition in which spirituality is very important. Tutu practised the three Benedictine requirements of rest, prayer and work (in that order) very conscientiously in his own spiritual life. (His most recent book of 2004 provides a good example of this kind of spirituality.) Therefore he regularly devoted periods of time or a whole day to silence and meditation and even secluded himself for longer retreats. Numerous writers on Tutu stress how important he considers prayer to understand the will of God. Tutu himself (1989:28) says: "A church that does not pray is quite useless. Christians who do not pray are of no earthly worth."

However, since prayer and work (*ora et labora*) formed a unity in Tutu's spirituality, he did not degenerate into either a pietistic flight from the world or a worldly activism. Cull (1996:33) explains: "... his prayer informs his work, his work is an expression of his life of prayer". Tutu therefore does not tire of criticising various dualistic attitudes in Christians and on the foundation of the Scriptures he propagates an integral Christianity.

3.2 God's creational revelation

Yet, since Tutu wanted a relevant "theology" he also listened attentively, apart from Scripture, to the Christian tradition and God's "general" revelation in creation, and to current political, social and economic circumstances. Apart from this Tutu was convinced that a Christian worldview for Africa would also have to recognise the rich African culture as valid. In his book of prayers (Tutu, 1995) he includes besides Christian prayers also traditional African prayers.

His daughter (N. Tutu, 1989:14) rightly calls Christianity and the African culture the two basic foundations of his thought. For this reason Tutu is often called an "African theologian", because he laid so much emphasis on his viewpoint that Africans need not be ashamed of their own culture and therefore need not believe that they first have to accept Western languages, customs and clothes to be true Christians. After all, the Western form of Christendom is only one of its many forms: "Africans apprehend God and the things of God as Africans and have to express that experience of the divine in African ways ... We can express our faith through symbols of our own culture. We don't have to protect God; we don't have to be scared on God's behalf. The truth of God is powerful" (Tutu, 1997:28, 29).

Unfortunately I could not find literature in which Tutu explicitly puts into words exactly how he sees the relation between these two sources of his thought. It could help us to determine precisely what kind of Christian worldview he favours. On the whole however, it is clear that he does not accept traditional African culture without criticism.

3.3 Christ as our example

A special characteristic of Tutu's thought is the significant role played therein by Christ, God's revelation incarnate. (Cf. the exposition below for examples.) In Jesus Christ God's revelation in Scripture and in the creation were joined together and culminated. More clearly than ever before He came (in human form) to teach us how God wants us to live, what it means to be a true human being. Therefore Tutu repeatedly points to Him as our example – not to be *imitated*, but to be *followed*.

In summary the following conclusion: Because Tutu seriously studied God's threefold revelation, he succeeded in voicing not only an *integral*, but also a *relevant* Christian worldview. As will become very clear later on, on Scriptural grounds he rejects any dualistic vision according to which a Christian has to lead a schizophrenic existence between holy and secular things. Either God's Word is valid for him in every domain or we are not having recourse to God's Word.

3.4 A name?

Tutu does not give his worldview a name, something which could have helped us in distinguishing it from a variety of other Christian worldviews. The words *reformation* and *reformational* had a bad political connotation in his time because it denoted an *acceptance* of the *status quo* or, at best, an improvement instead of the *rejection* of the apartheid dispensation. However, I would not hesitate to call the main lines of his worldview "Reformational" or "Transformational" (cf. Introduction to this book and Van der Walt, 1999b:121 *et seq.* for a comparison of the Reformational worldview with other Christian worldviews. The one outstanding characteristic of the Reformational worldview is its integral, non-dualistic perspective on creation and our life in it.)

3.5 Inevitable impoverishment

We are now ready to give a systematic explanation of Tutu's worldview according to its six basic components: his idea of God, his idea of God's law, his view on history and nature and then (in the next chapter) his view of being human and of society. Such a systematic exposition unfortunately has drawbacks. The most important of which is probably that Tutu's vigorous language, examples, tales and humour will be lost to a great extent in my version. As several writers comment, he has a flamboyant, witty style, geared to real problems and situations. Perhaps my "colourless" version will encourage readers to read Tutu himself.

4. Tutu's idea of God

Here we will focus only on some characteristic traits of Tutu's idea of God. Since people in some circles maintain that he denies the sovereignty of God, we will take it as a starting point. For the recognition of the sovereignty of God in all walks of life is the typical trait of a truly Reformational worldview as opposed to the dualistic Christian worldviews, which limit in one way or another his sovereignty to, for instance, the so-called spiritual life.

4.1 God is the sovereign King of everything

Listening to Tutu himself, there is no doubt about the question whether he regards God as the Sovereign One, whose will should be obeyed in every domain. "We declare the Lordship and Kingship of God ... We declare that he is the Lord of all life" (Tutu, 1994:13). Elsewhere: "Man, this is God's world. He is in charge. The kingdoms of this world are becoming the Kingdom of God and of his Christ and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Tutu, 1994:39). And again: "All life belongs to God" (Tutu, 1984a:176). Even clearer: "...all of life belongs as a whole to God, both in its secular and sacred aspects" (Tutu, 1982a:15).

Since Tutu is always intent on practice, the implications of God's sovereignty are spelled out clearly: "The whole of life is important, political, economic and social, and none of these aspects is untouched by religion as we understand it" (Tutu, 1984a:177). From this it clearly emerges (and it will be confirmed over and over) that religion for Tutu is not merely a part of his life, but encompasses his whole existence. He has recourse to Christ, our example: "... we could not accuse our Lord of using religion as a form of escapism from the harsh realities of life, as most people live and experience it" (Tutu, 1982a:4).

4.2 God is near

God's sovereignty, God as the Lawgiver, to Tutu in no way means that He – as taught in the African tradition – is a far-off, uninvolved God. No, God is intimately involved in his creation: "... despite all appearances to the contrary, this is God's world. He cares and cares enormously ..." (Tutu, 1982a:11). Tutu clearly distinguishes between God's being ontologically different and his religious nearness.

In his typical humorous way he explains for instance God's involvement in the case of Daniel's three friends in the furnace: "The God we worship is not a God who gives good advice from a distance. He doesn't tell his people to wear asbestos suits before going into the furnace. He goes right in there with them" (Tutu, 1997:15).

Elsewhere he contrasts his own, biblical idea of God with the Greek idea: "God ... is a God of grace, of compassion and mercy. He is not God far away or an impotent God. He is moved by the agony and suffering of his people and cannot be an Aristotelian unmoved mover dwelling in an unassailable Olympian height" (Tutu, 1984a:79).

As we will see later on, as a result of God's religious nearness he is also intimately at work in history.

4.3 God is love

God is so near to us because He is a God of love. It is remarkable that in this regard Tutu does not only speak of God's great, incomprehensible love in Christ, but he sees God's love in creation too: "... God created us because God wanted us, not because God needed us ... We need never have been ... we were created by love, for love and so that we should love ... None of us is an accident ... We were loved, that is why we were created" (Tutu, 1995:xviii).

Tutu cannot emphasise God's love enough – for himself, too: "I am loved. That is the most important fact about me and nothing, absolutely nothing can change that fact. All I do now is an expression of gratitude for what God has already done for me in Jesus Christ my Lord and Saviour" (Tutu, 1984a:139).

4.4 God is merciful

From the quotation directly above it emerges that Tutu endorses the Reformational idea of *sola gratia* (by grace alone) and our duty to live a life of gratitude. He explicitly states it: "The Good News is that God loved me long before I could have done anything to deserve it ... God's love and compassion are given freely and without measure, they are not earned" (Tutu, 1984a:138). In this regard he refers to Paul who said that God loved us while we were still sinners.

By means of a lovely anecdote Tutu explains that God's great love – precisely because it is undeserved – may not be restricted to Christians. A famous scientist tried to persuade a humble priest with all kinds of arguments that God

does not exist, and he could therefore not believe in Him. But the priest was not tongue-tied: "Oh, it makes no difference – God does believe in you" (cf. Tutu, 1984a:144).

4.5 God takes sides

The next recurring accent in Tutu's idea of God was probably the most difficult to digest for those who had been advantaged by apartheid: "God is on the side of the oppressed, the marginalised and the exploited. He is a God of the poor, of the hungry, of the naked ..." (Tutu, 1982a:11).

Once more it is no abstract, irrelevant virtue or characteristic of God, but one that has a definite appeal to our own lives: "Our God is not a neutral God. We have a God who does take sides. Our God is a God with a bias for the weak, and we, who are the people of this God, who have to reflect the character of this God, have no option but to have a special concern for those who are pushed to the edges of society" (Tutu, 1997:13).

Tutu is attentive to the fact that it is not he himself who says that God takes sides. The Bible teaches it and he (Tutu) points it out by means of numerous parts from Scripture. Why does God take the side of the poor and oppressed? Because He is a God of love (cf. Tutu, 1984a:42), but especially because He is a God of justice (cf. Tutu, 1982a:40). Tutu likes to refer to the passage in Romans 8:31-39 with well-known verses like "God is for us, who can be against us" (verse 31) and verse 38, 39 where the firm belief is voiced that nothing, absolutely nothing can part us from the love there is for us in Christ.

In passing I have to say that I cannot agree with Tutu's exegesis that God is always on the side of the poor. As I personally understand Scripture, God does not discriminate but He loves people irrespective of their financial and other positions. What He dislikes and punishes is sinful disobedience – of both rich and poor. He will therefore be with the exploited poor and against the rich, not because of their wealth, but when they abuse their stewardship in the way they treat the poor.

4.6 The incarnation of Christ

Tutu's idea of God is trinitarian: it includes Father, Son and Holy Spirit. However, for lack of space we cannot discuss his beliefs about the Trinity. Finally only something about the Son, Jesus Christ.

In a typically Reformational way Tutu stresses not only the redemption by Christ, but also his incarnation – once more not as an abstract doctrine, but with significant consequences for our lives. The incarnation of Christ to him confirms the importance of man's life on earth. Therefore we have to be much more solicitous about our neighbour: where and how they live (in dire circumstances), whether they are treated justly, are kept in jail without a hearing, receive inferior education, have no political rights, and so forth (cf. Tutu, 1994:117). As usual he adds something biting and spicy : "If Christ returned to South Africa today, He would almost certainly be detained under present security laws, because of his concern for the poor, the hungry and the oppressed" (quoted by Du Boulay, 1988:262).

Because the biblical and Reformational idea that religion means to take seriously the creation (we can only serve God *in* his creation) is stated so strikingly by Tutu, I cannot resist the temptation to quote him extensively: "We often think of religion as life-denying – as a series of 'don't this and don't the other', as a spoilsport wet-blanket, stopping us from doing the things we most enjoy doing or letting us do them, but with a guilty conscience ... Let me tell you straight away that that is a travesty of what religion is all about – certainly the religion of Jesus. Jesus was splendidly life-affirming. How else could you explain His concern to heal the sick, to feed the hungry, etc., when he could have said: 'Let's pray about it, and it will be okay upstairs when you die'? He forgave sins, to relieve God's children from all that was unnecessarily burdensome." Then he continues: "And He celebrated life and the good things that His Father had created. He was often depicted attending dinner parties and weddings, and had provided wine once at a wedding when supplies had run out ... He declared by this his open and welcoming attitude to life, that all life, secular and sacred, material and spiritual,

belonged to God, come from God and would return to God. Many religious people think that long, sulky faces somehow are related to holiness – they often look as though they have taken an unexpected dose of castor oil and find it hard to laugh in church, being somewhat sheepish when they do ... Jesus celebrated life and He declares wholesome things good – we are meant to enjoy good food, glorious music, beautiful girls and lovely men, attractive scenery, noble literature, refreshing creation – they are part of what life is about” (Tutu, 1984a:141-143).

I think it is a pity that Tutu still uses distinctions like “secular and holy” and “material and spiritual”. It may reveal a hidden dualism in his thinking – in spite of his intention to overcome it. It is also possible that he uses this kind of standard terminology to explain his own integral vision better. (Compare also previous quotations.)

4.7 The resurrection of Christ

Apart from emphasising the incarnation of Christ, Tutu also – once more in a fully Reformational way – stresses his resurrection. In this case, too, the practical consequences is the main issue. Christ’s resurrection means victory over and liberation from every possible form of enslavement and oppression. As a “liberation theologian” Tutu puts great emphasis on the Exodus motive that runs through the Bible, and he continually stresses that liberation in Christ affects our *whole* life. It is not something super-terrestrial and supernatural – as can be clearly seen from Exodus in which it is described how God freed a *real* nation from *specific* circumstances.

4.8 Conclusion

From this brief, totally incomplete version it is more than clear that Tutu’s idea of God is an attempt to be true to the Bible. He does not propagate a vague idea of God, acceptable to everybody. Together with his tolerance of other religions (something we should judge as positive) he has always confessed his Christian faith unashamedly in public. In Tutu’s writings (which I consulted) I could not find a statement often attributed to him, viz. that the God of the Bible is also the God of the Hindus and Muslims. If he did make such a statement, its exact meaning

should be carefully considered. Does it imply that all religions are equal, in other words soteriological (saving) religions? One can know about God without serving him (cf. Rom. 1:21-23). Even the devil knows God!

5. Tutu's idea of God's laws

Accepting God as the sovereign Ruler over everything He created, already implies that his will, as expressed in his laws and commandments for creation, are valid for man and woman. As could be expected, Tutu's concrete and practical bent does not lead him to a separate discussion on his idea of God's laws. He simply accepts that God's will has to be obeyed in everything.

For instance, he stresses again and again that we live in a "moral reality" and that therefore right and wrong are consequential (cf. e.g. Tutu, 1997:71). "God is a God who cares about right and wrong. God cares about justice and injustice" (Tutu, 1994:201, also cf. Tutu, 1984a:42). (I would have preferred other terminology than "a moral reality", since the moral aspect is only one aspect of God's will for our existence – BJvdW.)

5.1 The central commandment

Further he lays great emphasis on God's fundamental, central commandment of love for Him and for our neighbour. And – we could have foreseen it – he does not tire from stressing the unity between both sides of this *one* commandment. Because we are people *of* God we have to be people *for one another!* "God who, when you worship him, turns you around to be concerned for your neighbour. He does not tolerate a relationship with himself that excludes your neighbour" (quoted by N. Tutu, 1989:84). By means of numerous examples from the Bible he shows that people who claim to love God and serve Him, but do not take compassion on their neighbour, mislead themselves and practise a false Christendom.

The two sides of the one commandment cannot be separated, for "Our love of God is tested and proved by our love for our neighbour" (quoted by N. Tutu, 1989:29). Elsewhere it is formulated as follows: "Our so-called vertical

relationship with God is authenticated and expressed through our so-called horizontal relationship with our neighbour" (Tutu, 1984a:84, 85).

As Tutu likes doing in this case, too, we are pointed to Christ as our example who is worthy of being followed: "Christ knows nothing about a pie in the sky when you die, a concern for man's soul only. Jesus healed the sick, fed the hungry, etc ... because He turned Godwards, He of necessity had to be turned manwards" (Tutu, 1984a:85).

The neighbour we must love includes everyone, without exceptions – in contrast to what the apartheid doctrine proclaimed. Therefore political justice is to Tutu not something apart from God's central commandment of love – it is a specific form of love.

5.2 Juridically sound is not necessarily morally right

In this connection Tutu underlines in several writings (cf. *inter alia* Tutu, 1984a:67, 98; 1989:52) that when something is legally correct, South Africans tend to accept it as morally right. We should, however, make a clear distinction between the two: something declared lawful by a government is not for that reason morally right (i.e. according to God's will). The many laws on apartheid provide telling examples of this.

This distinction today is equally important as at the time when Tutu used it to justify civil disobedience. The Christian should obey God's law above everything, even if it may mean disobedience to unjust, oppressive, human authority.

6. Tutu's vision of time and history

Definite proof that Tutu subjects himself to God's revelation and is not without criticism towards his own culture, is provided by his views on time and history. At the same time he also has criticism on Western ideas in this regard.

Since the discrepancy between doctrine and lifestyle can sometimes be quite huge, one often has to look at what a person does and how he/she lives to really

get to know their worldview, rather than listening to what they say or write. We will do this now in the case of Tutu's idea of time, because (as far as I could find out) he makes no statements in his writings about this.

6.1 No "African time"

He does not accept the traditional African idea that man is the master of time and can work with it in an irresponsible way, like turning up late for work on a regular basis. A person who worked closely with Tutu when he was the General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, tells the following: "Baba (this is what they called Tutu – BJvdW) dislikes lateness. Late coming prompted him to write memo after memo to the staff of the SACC ... In the seven years at SACC he has proved to all that there is no 'African time'. The few instances when he lost his cool were instances of not being punctual. He would notice anyone absent or late and would expect an explanation from the person" (Mazibuko, 1986:17, 18).

However, Tutu also rejects the Western vision of and attitude towards time, which amounts to the situation that we are not masters of time, but slaves of time and consequently always have to live in a rush. He criticises a society in which even our children have to take part from very young in the rat-race. "I long for a society which is ... not ruled by the rat-race" (Tutu, 1982a:85).

On the evidence of people who know Tutu well, we therefore have to conclude that he neither wastes time (as Africans often do) nor idolises it (as Westerners tend to do). According to Mazibuko (1986:18) Tutu's day began as early as 04:00 in the morning and ended long after normal working hours – while at the same time he regularly enjoyed his midday rest. Since time is a valuable gift, but at the same time a great responsibility given by God, he considered himself not a master or a slave, but rather a steward of time.

6.2 Accepts neither the African nor the Western view of history

Concerning his view of history too, on biblical grounds he could resist the suction of both traditional African and Western views.

Traditional Africa tends to be statically focused on the past as a result of a cyclical vision of history. but Tutu says: "An utterly novel thing happened with the Israelite belief in Yahweh, a god who took human history seriously. History ... was not cyclic but moved towards an end, telos, and so was linear, teleological and eschatological. It was open ended and not a deterministic or closed system, precisely because God was not a god of the status quo but a god who always took and takes the initiative *to create new things, surprising things*" (Tutu, 1984a:78, 79).

The Western, linear view of time corresponds with that of the Scriptures, but as a result of the belief in progress wrongfully lays too much stress on what is coming and therefore it becomes a mad race to a "better" future. This is one of the reasons why Tutu (cf. e.g. Tutu, 1982a:74, 85) is critical of the current capitalistic free-market ideology.

6.3 A biblical view

The most profound reason why Tutu differs from both Africans' and Westerners' view of history, is because unlike both of them, he does not want to separate history from God: "God is the Lord of history" (Tutu, 1984a:65).

The main points of God's guidance of history is creation, the fall of man and redemption (cf. Tutu, 1984a:154). This is a purely biblical perspective, one that also takes a central role in Reformational worldview and philosophy. Tutu (1984a:159-164) offers many Scripture-based perspectives in this regard. (For lack of space we cannot go into these here.) The last (fourth) phase of history under God's guidance is the consummation. According to Tutu the ultimate destination of history is what the Scriptures teach: the final advent of God's kingdom. (Compare for instance quotations in our exposition of his idea of God above.)

7. Tutu's view of our natural environment

In this, too, Tutu's point of departure is completely Reformational, corresponding with the Bible. He emphasises the important biblical idea that man is a steward of God in charge of creation. Therefore he evades both the pitfall of the traditional, animistic African view which demands that nature should be venerated since everything is full of spirits, and that of the current secular Western viewpoint that nature can be exploited in a reckless manner.

7.1 Stewardship as a norm

He explains the idea of stewardship as follows: "Human beings are created, so St. Augustine of Hippo tells us, by God, like God, for God. God creates man to become His viceroy, His representative to rule over the rest of creation on God's behalf ... That is the high privilege bestowed on each human person, male and female ... that each human being is God's own representative, own viceroy or ambassador, and no mention is made of race or nationality or colour ... note that they are expected to rule over the rest of creation on behalf of God" (Tutu, 1984a:160).

Tutu (1982a:99, 100) becomes lyrical when writing about our beautiful country: "... a beautiful land of rolling hills and gurgling streams, of clear starlit skies, of singing birds and gambolling lambs; a land God has richly blessed with the good things of the earth, a land rich in mineral deposits of nearly every kind, a land of vast open spaces, enough to accommodate all its inhabitants comfortably, a land capable of feeding itself and other lands of the beleaguered continent of Africa, a veritable bread basket; a land that could contribute wonderfully to the material and spiritual development of all Africa and indeed of the whole world."

7.2 Failed stewardship

Unfortunately Tutu has to admit that we have not been responsible stewards (cf. Tutu, 1982a:79, 80). He mentions various well-known examples like our ransacking of nature, the erosion of fertile upper soil, the irresponsible use of

irreplaceable sources of energy, the hoarding of dangerous nuclear waste, *et cetera*.

In the light of his appreciation for nature he does not hesitate to reprimand his own people strictly for their sloppiness and littering in many black townships: "We are losing our self-respect, demonstrated, it seems to me, most graphically by the ... dumping and littering in our townships ... we are not rubbish. Why do we seem to say that is what we are when we see how we treat our already poor environment?" (Tutu, 1994:229, 230).

He therefore encourages churches to get involved in clearing up: "We live in ghettos, many of us, but we don't have to behave like pigs ... We are not rubbish, but if we don't get rid of rubbish, then we soon behave as if we were rubbish ... Perhaps we will realise that littering is a crime as well as a sin. We are spoiling God's creation of which we are meant to be responsible stewards" (Tutu, 1997:53).

7.3 The African contribution

In the following words, it emerges how he relies, apart from on Scripture and Christendom, on the holistic, organic African worldview: "The world is discovering we are made for interdependence not just with human beings; we are finding out that we depend on what used to be called inanimate nature. When Africans said, 'Oh, don't treat that tree like that, it feels pain', others used to say, 'Ah, they're pre-scientific, they're primitive'. It is wonderful now how they are beginning to discover that it is true – that the tree does hurt and if you hurt the tree, in an extraordinary way you hurt yourself" (Tutu, 1997:70).

8. Preliminary conclusion

Up to now we have looked more closely at four elements of Tutu's Christian worldview. In the next chapter we still have to discuss what is to my mind his most significant contribution to a Christian worldview, namely his view of being human and his view of society. In spite of the fact that we have not fully treated Tutu's worldview, my preliminary conclusion is that I can find no reason for

dissociating myself from his views. On the contrary – unlike the dualistic Christian-national worldview to which Calvinism has degenerated in South Africa – it is an integral worldview. The relevance of his worldview is not limited to the apartheid era either. It offers important perspectives and guidelines for our lives as Christians in the midst of the growing secularism of the 21st century.

(For the bibliography see the end of the next chapter.)

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Chapter 9

THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW OF ARCHBISHOP DESMOND M. TUTU

His view on being human and on society

The previous chapter discussed the following components of the Christian worldview of Archbishop D.M. Tutu: (1) his view of God, (2) of God's laws for creation, (3) of time and history and (4) of our natural environment. This chapter completes the exposition about his worldview by paying attention to the last two – very important and relevant – components: (5) his view of being human (anthropology) and (6) of society.

In the exposition of his anthropology the following aspects are highlighted: (1) religion as integral, total surrender to God and service to our fellow human beings; (2) the need for humaneness and being human; (3) the idea of *ubuntu* or human interdependence and (4) human freedom and responsibility.

Regarding his perspective on society the following aspects receive attention: (1) his rejection of three unsound views of societal life (apartheid, communism and capitalism); (2) his proposals for a better society in future and (3) his inability to visualise a post-apartheid society in the light of the possible solution offered by a Reformational, pluralist model.

The two chapters are concluded by a brief evaluation of Tutu's contribution to a genuine Christian worldview.

1. The urgent necessity of a Christian anthropology and view of society

I regard one's view of being human and of human social life, which are closely linked – one's anthropology determines one's view of society – not only as the most important part of Tutu's worldview, they are also extremely relevant for today, in particular for Africa.

Already more than a decade ago Adeyemo (1993:4), then general secretary of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa, wrote the following on Christendom in Africa:

“For decades in Africa, evangelism and missionary activities have been directed at getting people saved (i.e. spiritually) but losing their minds. Consequently, we have a continent south of the Sahara that boasts of an over 50% Christian population on the average, but with little or no impact on society.”

His solution was the following: “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 “(Adeyemo, 1993:227).

A Christian worldview for the African context, and in particular a view of being human and of society, is sorely needed. It is exactly this that Tutu wanted to offer.

2. Tutu’s Christian anthropology

In my opinion the most important facets of Tutu's vision of humanity are the following: (1) the religious nature of being human, (2) human dignity, (3) interdependence and (4) freedom and responsibility. As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, in his view of being human he also makes use of the African tradition, especially in the third aspect where the idea of *ubuntu* will be raised.

2.1 Religion

The first important aspect of his anthropology is that man/woman is by nature religious.

2.1.1 Man as a religious being

For Tutu man is inherently a religious being who cannot but serve and worship someone or something greater than himself: “... we all have a God-shaped space inside us and only God can fill it. This means that we are created by God, we are created like God, and we are created for God. And since God is

infinite, you and I are created for the infinite and nothing less than God can ever really satisfy our hunger for God. St. Augustine ... once said, 'Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee' (Tutu, 1984a:146).

However, Tutu directly adds that not everybody honours the true God, but often people worship an aspect of creation, like money, ambition, drugs or sex.

2.1.2 Not an individualistic religion

Unlike in the West where Christendom is often seen in a very individualistic way – merely a relationship between the individual and God – Tutu stresses that true Christian religion “includes the love of God and the love of the neighbour. The two must go together or your Christianity is false” (Tutu, 1984a:147).

2.1.3 Comprehensive service

As became very clear from the previous chapter, religion for Tutu is not merely one compartment of our lives (like the church), but it encompasses our total existence. “I believe that religion does not just deal with a certain compartment of life. Religion has a relevance for the whole of life” (Tutu, 1994:204). Elsewhere: “... all life is religious” (Tutu, 1994:117).

In my opinion he could have stated it even more clearly by saying “all life is religion” (instead of “religious” which still denotes a facet). However, his intention is clear: “We are Christians not only on Sunday. Our Christianity is not something we put on, like our Sunday best, only for Sunday. It is for every day. We are Christians from Monday to Monday. We have no off day. We are Christians at play, at work and at prayer. They are all rolled into one. It is not *either* worship *or* trying to do all the good works in our community. It is both” (Tutu, 1984a:148).

Although Tutu does not state the significant difference (which is common within a Reformational worldview and philosophy) between *religious service* or worship (a more focused service as in personal quiet time and in the church) and *religion* (our broader service of God in every domain of life), it is actually what he has in mind with statements like these.

2.1.4 Involved with the world here and now

Tutu therefore does not agree with Marx who alleged that religion is merely something that dopes us for the present with a promise concerning the future life. "A church that tries to pacify us, telling us not to concentrate on the things of this world but on the other, the next world, needs to be treated with ... contempt as being not only wholly irrelevant but actually blasphemous. It deals with a pie in the sky when you die – and I am not interested, nobody is interested, in postmortem pies" (Tutu, 1997:14).

Tutu confirms this by referring, as he so often does, to Christ who healed sick people and fed the hungry. We are expected to do the same. And what we do in the present, is so important that it will determine our destination in future (cf. Tutu, 1984a:176).

2.1.5 Yet not to be absorbed in this world

Thus while Tutu lays great emphasis on our involvement in the world, at the same time he teaches according to the Benedictine tradition (cf. previous chapter) the necessity for spiritual retreat in prayer and meditation: "The Spirit of God sends us into the fray, as it sent our Lord, but we must observe the sequence of his life and we will see that disengagement, waiting on God, always precedes engagement ... Spirituality is really all we can give the world that is distinctive" (Tutu, 1997:27).

If "spirituality" (which to me remains a vague concept) is all we can offer the world, does this not reveal an inner tension in Tutu's thoughts? Does not spirituality then become something *separate* again? Should not our spirituality take form *in* the world? Or is his view in line with the Scriptures (compare for example John 17) where it is taught that Christ does send us into the world, but that we may never become like the (sinful) world? Could it be that Tutu's "spirituality" denotes what we would call *religious service* (worship) in a stricter sense as opposed to *religion* (the broader, encompassing service to God)?

2.1.6 Suffering is part of true religion

In an interview with a journalist Tutu says (cf. 1985a:13) that we cannot be followers of Christ unless we are prepared to bear the cross of discipleship (Luke 14:27). The suffering we have to bear, is part of our religion. It may even mean that we have to give up our lives for our neighbour. We cannot rise again in Christ unless – like the grain – we die first (John 12:24a).

2.1.7 Gratitude as a part of religion

While Tutu lays so much emphasis on a real, practical religious life, he does not neglect to state clearly that its purpose is not manipulating God or expecting something in return from Him. God showed his grace to the Israelite slaves in Egypt by freeing them and only after that did He give them his Ten Commandments. "This sequence is quite crucial, demonstrating that the religion advocated ... was a religion of grace. It was not a religion of performance in which the adherents had to impress God so that God would accept them ... as a reward for their goodness ... No, the law was given as a vehicle for expressing their gratitude for what God had already done" (Tutu, 1997:20).

Looking back on Tutu's vision of the total, encompassing and integral nature of religion we can have nothing but appreciation for it – especially in the light of the strong and even increasing pietistic, escapist tendency we find in numerous Christians and Christian groups in South Africa and Africa and the growing secularism which limits religion to the private sphere and wants to fend it from the public arena. His message should be widely heard.

2.2 Humanity and human dignity

A second important aspect of Tutu's anthropology concerns woman's/man's dignity.

2.2.1 The human dignity of man

With right Tutu says: "I lay great stress on humaneness and being truly human," for it is a recurring theme in his thought. Although the theme is

still equally relevant for today, it has to be seen against the backdrop of apartheid.

Tutu states repeatedly (cf. e.g. 1982a:39; 1999:35) that apartheid not only tainted the human dignity of the coloured population ("the oppressed") but also that of the white people ("the oppressors"). He stresses the right to a dignified existence to be able to experience "what it means to be really human" (Tutu, 1982a:53). His pleas to white people are sometimes touching: "Just a simple thing: we are human beings. We are not animals. We are human beings who have feelings, we are human beings who cry when our children die ... please, you, our white sisters and brothers, can you hear? Our cry is for you to recognize that God has created us as God has created you" (Tutu, 1994:246).

2.2.2 The foundation of human dignity

At the end of the statement quoted above Tutu says what his biblical foundation for the human dignity of man is. Because man has been created in the image of God, man is also important (cf. Tutu, 1982a:15): "Each human being is of intrinsic worth because each human being is created in the image of God. That is an incredible, a staggering assertion about human beings ... To treat a child of God as if he or she was less than this is not just wrong, which it is; it is not just evil, as it often is; not just painful, as it often must be for the victim: it is veritably blasphemous, for it is a spit in the face of God" (Tutu, 1997:8, 9).

While the image of God according to the Scriptures particularly points to a relationship of obedience to God, it seems almost as if Tutu understands it literally, almost in a pantheistic way: "You don't have to say, where is God? Turn round, the person on your right, the person on your left, the person behind you, the person in front of you, that is God" (Tutu, 1997:10).

2.2.3 The implications of human dignity

To be created in the image of God, implies that not only does each person have "infinite value", but also "intrinsic value" which does not depend on biological factors like skin colour (cf. Tutu, 1982a:119 and 1989:37). It also means equality – no one is better than another.

To Tutu this equality applies to both genders – remarkable for an African, since women in Africa (except in matriarchal societies) most of the time take an inferior place – for both have been created in the image of God (cf. Tutu, 1997:31). Male and female to him corresponds with something in God's own character – He is denoted as both Father and Mother in the Scriptures (cf. Tutu, 1989:61). Therefore Tutu found it a pity that women (at the time) could not fill offices in the church. "I believe that males and females have distinctive gifts, and both sets of gifts are indispensable for truly human existence. I am sure the church has lost something valuable in denying ordination to women so long ... somehow men have been less human for this loss" (Tutu, 1982a:91; cf. also 1989:59).

Tutu's impish character of course avails itself of the opportunity, amid the seriousness of the matter, also to poke fun at the way men usually evaluate women's managerial skills (cf. Tutu, 1984a:149).

Human dignity to Tutu also implies an injunction: "We are to labour with God to humanise the universe and to help His children to become even more fully human" (Tutu, 1984a:60).

Being the *imago Dei* also implies the interdependence of human beings. "We can be human only together, black and white" (Tutu, 1997:18). This is what he desires: "If we could but recognize our common humanity, that we do belong together, that our destinies are bound up with one another's, that we can be free only together ... that we can be human only together, then a glorious South Africa would come into being ..." (Tutu, 1994:121).

Tutu's struggle for the human dignity of man was not in vain: "human dignity" (together with "equality" and "freedom") became one of the three main values on which the new South African Constitution (1996) was built.

2.3 Ubuntu

A third outstanding aspect of Tutu's view of being human is:

2.3.1 The interdependence of *human beings*

Tutu elaborates on his opinion of man as an interdependent, social being with the aid of the African philosophy of *ubuntu* (cf. Battle, 1996 for more detail). On the whole Tutu sets great store by traditional African culture (cf. also previous chapter): "All of us (blacks) are bound to mother Africa by invisible but tenacious bonds. She has nurtured the deepest things in us blacks ... things we are often unable to articulate but which we feel in our very bones, things which make us different from others who have not suckled the breasts of our mother, Africa" (Tutu, 1989:78).

2.3.2 What *ubuntu* entails

One of the things Tutu then likes to mention, is *ubuntu*. He gives numerous descriptions of it (e.g. Tutu, 1985b:83; 1989:7, 8, 31, 65, 71) but the most elaborate one we find in his work of 1999: "*Ubuntu* is very difficult to render into a Western language. It speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise to someone we say 'Yu, u nobuntu'; 'Hey, he or she has *ubuntu*'. This means they are generous, hospitable, friendly, caring and compassionate. They share what they have. It also means my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in theirs. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'a person is a person through other people' ... 'I am human because I belong'. I participate, I share. A person with *ubuntu* does not feel threatened that others are able and good ... he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished ... Social harmony is for us the *summum bonum* – the greatest good ... Anger, resentment, lust for revenge, even success through aggressive competitiveness, are corrosive of this good. To forgive is not just to be altruistic. It is the best form of self-interest. What dehumanises you, inexorably dehumanises me" (Tutu, 1999:34-35).

2.3.3 The implications of *ubuntu*

This central idea of *ubuntu*, "that we can only be human together" (Tutu, 1989:71), have several consequences for the way in which society should be structured. Tutu (1999:51) for instance mentions the huge difference between Africa's *restorative* justice versus the West's *retaliative* justice.

On the whole it can be said that this African view of humanity gives form to a society that is totally different from the Western individualistic one. We could typify it as "communalistic". It should not be confused with Western collectivism (as we see it in socialism and communism) for collectivism, too, is *mechanistic* (an overarching state takes care of the unity in society), while African communalism is in essence *organistic* by nature (cf. Van der Walt, 2003:134, 135).

Tutu's great appreciation for *ubuntu* and for a communalistic society does harbour a serious one-sidedness in my opinion. The individual (emphasised by the modern West) and the social side of being human (stressed by traditional Africa) are only two *facets* of the whole human being who has many more sides. Neither the individual, nor the social, nor a combination of the two can therefore describe the human being correctly (cf. Van der Walt, 2003:154 *et seq.*). However, Tutu is right: the individual cannot develop in a balanced way without the social context. But the opposite also holds true and is equally important: for a healthy social life the full recognition of the individual side of being human is required. These two facets should complement one another.

2.4 Freedom

We now come to a fourth characteristic of Tutu's view of being human:

2.4.1 The freedom and responsibility of man

Against the background of the oppression and infringement of freedom by the apartheid policy, it is understandable that Tutu, the "liberation theologian" also pays much attention to human freedom.

2.4.2 God created freedom for us

Our freedom, according to Tutu, originates not in people but in God (cf. Tutu, 1997:110: "God created us freely, for freedom. To be human in the understanding of the Bible is to be free to choose ... free to choose to obey or not to obey ... To be human is to be a morally responsible creature, and moral responsibility is a nonsense when the person is in fact not free to choose from several available options ... It is part of being created in the image of God, this freedom which can make us into glorious creatures or damn us into hellish ones ... God, who alone has the perfect right to be a totalitarian, has such a profound respect ... for this freedom which he bestowed on us that he had much rather see us go freely to hell than compel us to go to heaven ... (Tutu, 1997:10).

So for Tutu freedom consists mainly in being able to choose.

2.4.3 Freedom is an inalienable right

Since freedom is a right, it is inalienable. (As far back as in 1984a:122 Tutu pleaded for a bill of human rights for South Africa.) So we need not ask someone to give us our freedom – even tyrants cannot stifle the inherent urge for freedom. "Our freedom is not a gift of the white people. They cannot decide to give or to withhold it. Our freedom is an inalienable right bestowed on us by God" (Tutu, 1982a: 63; cf. also 1994:183).

2.4.4 Comprehensive freedom

When Tutu deals with freedom as a central biblical theme (e.g. Israel's liberation from Egypt and the liberation by Christ as in Luke 4: 17-21), he points out that not only is it real, it is also comprehensive – it is not merely a case of liberation from sin (cf. Tutu, 1984a:55-59): "We have been set free and our liberation is total and comprehensive – it includes being set free from political, social and economic structures that are oppressive and unjust since these would enslave us, and make us less than God intends us to be" (Tutu, 1984a:59).

Elsewhere: "Indeed ... liberation is to be free from sin, the most fundamental bondage, but Jesus ... would have known nothing about an ethereal act of

God – God's liberation would have to have real consequences in the political, social and economic spheres or it was no Gospel at all" (Tutu, 1994:37).

This comprehensive and real liberation is the condition for human dignity (cf. above) without which we cannot be complete human beings (cf. Tutu, 1982a:72).

2.4.5 Positive and negative sides of freedom

In harmony with the Scriptures Tutu draws a distinct line between free *from* (negative) and free *towards* (the positive side): "People are set free *from* bondage to ... the Devil and sin, in order to be free *for* God, and to be fully human ... because Christ came that they might have life in its abundant fullness. He has set us free from all that made us less than God intended us to be ... and to serve God is really perfect freedom" (Tutu, 1984a:58; cf. also 1994:37).

When Tutu wrote the above there was still a struggle going on to be freed *from* (oppressing apartheid). After 1994 freedom *for* (toward) has however become pressing. Our constitution protects various types of freedom (of association, thought, movement, *et cetera*) as *rights*, but for a balanced idea of freedom we should currently lay greater emphasis on the *obligations* and *responsibilities* which are the consequences of true freedom. The importance of this was already confirmed by Tutu himself when he taught that freedom is "indivisible".

2.4.6 Freedom of some people only is impossible

True freedom for Tutu is only possible when everybody is free: "... the liberation of blacks involves the liberation of the whites ... because until blacks are free, the whites can never be really free. There is no such thing as separate freedom – freedom is indivisible" (Tutu, 1982a:61; cf. also p. 72).

Elsewhere this idea is repeated with an addition: "... at present nobody is really free. Freedom is indivisible. Whites cannot enjoy their separate freedoms. They spend too much time and resources *defending* those freedoms instead of *enjoying* them" (Tutu, 1984a:45).

Hereby we have sketched the main lines of Tutu's view of being human. He also lays great emphasis on reconciliation and peace between people in society. His social philosophy will be our next main point for discussion.

3. Tutu's view on society

In the limited space available we can only touch on the following important facets: (1) the kinds of societies which are unacceptable to Tutu (apartheid, socialism and capitalism); (2) how apartheid can be changed according to him, and (3) his uncertainty on how the new South African society of post-1994 should be structured.

3.1 The kinds of societies which are unacceptable to Tutu

As will become clear it is easier for Tutu – as it is for most people – to say what he considers as wrong than proposing the right alternative. He is therefore strong and convincing in his critique, but not so sure and clear about what he would recommend instead of those things he considers as undesirable.

Three types of societies are criticised by him: (1) apartheid, (2) communism and (3) capitalism.

3.1.1 Apartheid

Naturally Tutu has a lot to say about this model of society. Since it is now, – at least juridically and constitutionally – something of the past, I will not go into detail about it. I merely mention the reasons why Tutu rejected it and finally its consequences – for it will be with us for a long time to come.

Why Tutu rejects apartheid

From his writings the following emerge: (1) apartheid was dehumanising in many respects (cf. Tutu, 1989:42); (2) it put a question mark behind the human dignity of some people (cf. Tutu, 1982a:81; 1994:148); (3) it caused several forms of violence (cf. Tutu, 1982a:81; 1997:41); (4) it denied basic human rights (cf. Tutu, 1982a:25); (5) it was immoral, amongst other things because of migratory labour, lack of housing for families of migrant labourers, arbitrary expropriation of land and resettlement (cf. Tutu, 1982a:25; 1989:38);

(6) it taught that people were meant to be separate instead of a unity, while the essence of sin is that it divides people (cf. Tutu, 1989:39; 1994:148).

In reaction Tutu – in spite of his “rainbow people of South Africa” – emphasises not the diversity but the unity: “None (of us) is an outsider, all are insiders, all belong. There are no aliens, all belong to one family, God’s family, the human family. There is no longer Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free – instead of separation and division, all distinctions make for a rich diversity to be celebrated for the sake of the unity that underlies them. We are different so that we can know our need for one another, for no one is ultimately self-sufficient. A completely self-sufficient person would be sub-human” (Tutu, 1999:213, 214).

The most significant, comprehensive reason for Tutu, however, was that apartheid was an unchristian, unbiblical system of society. He was so serious about it that he said: “If anyone were to show me that apartheid is biblical and Christian, I have said before, and I reiterate now, that I would burn my Bible and cease to be a Christian” (Tutu, 1984a:155). To him apartheid is not only not founded on the Bible, but it also makes it impossible to be a Christian. He relates for instance how he could not minister the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper in the normal way to someone who was under house arrest. The first time it had to take place in Tutu’s car in the street in front of the person’s house, and the second time while the bishop and his church member were standing on both sides of the fence in front of her house! (cf. Tutu. 1982a:44, 45).

Therefore to Tutu apartheid was not something that could be “corrected” or “reformed” but only something that could be abolished, annulled (cf. Tutu, 1997:48). Since right through his life he rejected violence of any kind and propagated peaceful change, he saw no other way than to endorse economic sanctions against South Africa.

Consequences of apartheid

In his work (1999) on the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, of which he was the chairperson, he could write with authority on the miserable consequences of apartheid since he had not only observed them during his

lifetime, but also as chairperson of the Committee. Apartheid profoundly influenced not only black people but also the whites. About the whites he says: "All of us South Africans were less whole than we would have been without apartheid. Those who were privileged lost out as they became more uncaring, less compassionate, less humane and therefore less human" (Tutu, 1999:154).

About the black people he says the following: "Those who opposed apartheid could also end up ... becoming like what they most abhorred. Tragically, they themselves frequently became brutalised and descended to the same low levels as those they were opposing. The victims often ended up internalising the definition the top dogs had of them. They began to wonder whether they might not perhaps be somehow as their masters and mistresses defined them ... through the awful demons of self-hate and self-contempt, a hugely negative self-image took its place in the centre of the victim's being ... Society has conspired to fill people with self-hate which they project outwards. They hate themselves and destroy themselves by proxy when they destroy those who are like this self they have being conditioned to hate" (Tutu, 1999:155).

Much more than what Tutu says here, could be said on the on-going consequences of the destructive apartheid dispensation, but what he says here, is enough to demonstrate how serious the consequences really are.

A second way of structuring society, which Tutu rejects, is communism.

3.1.2 Communism

In the first instance we have to say that Tutu stressed that he did not – as the apartheid government alleged – regard communism as the greatest threat for South Africa (cf. Tutu, 1982:80). It was more a case that apartheid itself drove people to communism (cf. Tutu, 1994:100). However, in the second instance Tutu himself was not an adherent of communism – as some people maintain even today. He rejects it for two reasons in particular: because it is materialistic (it denies the existence of a spiritual world) and it is atheistic (it denies the existence of God) (cf. Tutu, 1994:154; 1997:54; Villa-Vicencio, *s.a.*: 278, 279 and 1986:40, 41). Christianity as well as traditional African religion reject both these ideas. In his opinion both a Christian Marxist-Leninist and an

African Marxist-Leninist are *contradictiones in terminis*. For this reason he could not see how a Christian could be a member of the South African Communist Party (cf. Tutu, 1994:206; 1997:55).

It is quite possible that Tutu was labelled a communist because, although he rejected the *doctrine*, he had no objection to co-operate with *people* who had communist convictions. About this he says the following: "My opposition to communism has nothing to do with persons. I am fond of Jo Slovo and I am particularly attracted to Chris Hani. Many black people were treated perhaps for the first time in their lives as human beings by white people who were, almost all of them communists. It was not the communists who oppressed us, it was not the communists who thought up apartheid, it was not the communists who killed our people in Sharpville ... It was Christians who killed us ... who was responsible for the Holocaust (Tutu, 1997:55, 56).

3.1.3 Capitalism

In his criticism of capitalism (an economic system rooted in the Western, individualistic view of society) Tutu was ahead of his times. Many of us (cf. Van der Walt, 1999a:59-74) have only recently come to realise what catastrophic consequences this ideology can have.

Tutu's antipathy against this ideology – which currently as a result of globalisation, has an even greater influence than at that time – originates partly from the fact that the capitalistic Western countries did not support the anti-apartheid struggle as seriously as did the Eastern socialist countries (cf. Tutu, 1997:43). However, he also has more principal objections as will become clear from what follows.

According to him capitalism firstly **clashes with the Bible**, especially with the life of the first Christians as described in the book of Acts: "I have to say that I don't like what I have seen of capitalism ... What does capitalism do? It wants to encourage what I believe are some of the worst aspects of human nature, that is you compete, you see the other person as a rival, as an opponent, somebody to be beaten, you actually use the laws of the jungle. The first Christian community was one that said those who are rich should sell what they have and share" (Tutu, 1997:54).

Elsewhere he says: "I loathe Capitalism because it gives far too great play to our inherent selfishness" (Tutu, 1982a:74). One could "translate" this by saying that the values of capitalistic economy is totally unbiblical.

A second objection is the **materialistic nature** of this ideology. In his opinion it does not differ essentially from socialism: "Both pay homage to a pure materialistic ideology, while Christendom proclaims the eternal truth that man cannot live by bread alone but by God's word" (Tutu, 1984a:173). Elsewhere: "We need an economic order that acknowledges that people are more important than profits, than things, than possessions. It must be people-friendly" (Tutu, 1997:69).

The next reason why capitalism is unacceptable to Tutu, is it's dominant **individualistic nature** (cf. Tutu, 1982:71) – it clashes with both the Christian and the African tradition in which he stands.

A fourth point of criticism is that capitalism fosters a so-called "**achievement ethic**" in a person: "At school you must not just do well, no, you must grind the opposition into the dust. We get so worked up that our children can become nervous wrecks as they are egged on to greater efforts by their competitive parents. Our culture has it that ulcers have become status symbols ... We don't mind how a person succeeds, or even at what he exceeds, so long as he succeeds ... Of course this rampant competitiveness takes its toll. We are hagridden by anxiety lest we fail ..." (Tutu, 1984a:137; cf. also 1989:24).

Elsewhere: "Our societies tend to be harsh with those it regards as failures. People feel less and less valued for who they are – they are valued for what they can achieve – for the ethic of the rat-race holds way ... while virtues such as compassion are despised by those who must succeed at all costs" (Tutu, 1982a:122).

In the last instance capitalism is also guilty of extortion: "Capitalism is exploitive and I can't stand that. We need to engage the resources that each person has. My vision includes a society that is more compassionate and caring" (Tutu, 1982a:74).

If Tutu rejects oppressing apartheid, socialistic communism and secular capitalism, what is his own view for an ideal society?

3.2 How apartheid can be changed and how a better society can be created

Tutu suggests the following:

3.2.1 The Bible should have a role

To Tutu (1994:99) there were basically only three options: (1) voting out the current government, but since the majority did not have the vote, it was impossible; (2) overthrowing the government by violence, but he did not want to do that – he was consistently against force on both sides of the struggle (cf. Tutu, 1982a:113); or (3) by a peaceful process (cf. Tutu, 1982a:108), the only remaining option.

He was also convinced that the gospel and the Christian faith could play a significant role in the process: "Christianity can never be a merely personal matter. It has public consequences ..." (Tutu, 1982a:9; cf. also 1984a:38, 39). He believed that the Christian gospel should also have meaning for what happens on the market, in the court of law and in parliament.

3.2.2 Peace, reconciliation, justice, confession, forgiveness and compensation

In this connection he then mentions central biblical concepts like *peace* and *reconciliation*. He explains that peace is not the mere absence of violence and war, but requires the presence of *justice* (cf. Tutu, 1989:13, 47). The same applies to reconciliation – it cannot come into being unless justice is done first (cf. Tutu, 1984a:180).

Besides, there has to be *confession of guilt*, mutual *forgiveness* and (where possible) *reparation* should also be made for the damage wrought by apartheid. "True reconciliation is based on forgiveness, and forgiveness is based on true confession, and confession is based on penitence, on contrition, on sorrow for what you have done ... confession, forgiveness and reconciliation in the lives of nations are not just airy-fairy religious and spiritual

things, nebulous and unrealistic. They are the stuff of practical politics" (Tutu, 1997:60).

The last step then is the following: "We blacks for our part are ready to forgive, but the other party must be contrite and ready to make reparation to demonstrate the seriousness of their contrition, and then reconciliation can happen" (Tutu, 1997:61).

Fortunately in 1994 we entered on a new social dispensation in a peaceful way, something to which Tutu also made a major contribution. To some extent the confession of guilt, forgiveness and reconciliation have already taken place and we experience peace compared to many other countries.

3.2.3 Consistent criticism

Even in this new dispensation Tutu has remained consistently critical of the new A.N.C. rulers. According to him they are only human too, and therefore by nature inclined to do wrong. That is why he refused to be co-opted by them – numerous statements in this regard could be quoted. What he emphasised earlier, as for instance that leadership is not enjoyment of power and self-enrichment, but means humble service (cf. Tutu, 1984a:70) he repeated later: "Note how in John 13 authority and power and glory are linked very closely with service, with a pouring out of the self for the sake of others and how that in turn is connected fundamentally with suffering, passion and dying ..." (Tutu, 1994:236, vgl. ook p. 237).

3.2.4 Uncertainty on the new dispensation of society

Yet there is a degree of uncertainty which is clearly articulated in the following words: "Facetiously one could now ask, 'What are we going to do without apartheid?' It was easy to be against. It is not, it seems, so easy to say what we are for. Although we may say we are for a non-sexist, democratic, non-racial society, there are so many options vying for support in the market place that there is a fair degree of confusion and disillusionment. We have been accused of being without a vision ... People are finding it difficult to change from struggle tactics and strategies ..." (Tutu, 1997:72).

After this Tutu gives some suggestions on the future, like the following (Tutu, 1997:72-74): “Freedom also brings responsibility and obligations and duties. We must get rid of the entitlement culture that only demands...”

“We must roll up our sleeves and put our shoulders to the wheel. We must not wait and expect that the government will provide ...”

“Law and order must be maintained, otherwise the dream that is the new South Africa will turn into a horrible nightmare ...”

“We must do all we can to cooperate with the government in the healing, reconstruction and development of Southern Africa. But ... we must always maintain a critical distance ...”.

All this is right and true. But what Tutu said in the first quote is also true: there is confusion as a result of a lack of vision. We do not really know what kind of society we would like to have.

3.3 Voids in Tutu's view for society

We will first look into the reasons for the void in Tutu's philosophy of society and then at a possible solution.

3.3.1 The reasons why Tutu's view of society falls short

Tutu has helped us a long way, he helped us get rid of the old apartheid view of society. But he has not helped us far enough. He has not really offered something for the second great need of Africa (cf. the quotation from Adeyemo, 1993:227 at the beginning) , namely a biblically inspired view of society for the new Africa and South Africa.

Lack of a structural analysis

He lays great emphasis on the integral and encompassing nature of the Christian religion (cf. 2.1 above as well as his article in 1984b: 136-145 – “What Jesus means to me”), but does not actually succeed in giving it structural form in terms of a new philosophy of society. His hope for a better society does not articulate how his dignified, interdependent and free society should be structured. As emerges from his own statements, he is more sure of what he rejects as an unhealthy society than of what he regards as guidelines

for a better society. (In this respect he does not differ from numerous other African leaders in their views of society for Africa after independence.)

Also in his latest book (cf. Tutu, 2004), Tutu did not provide a Christian structural analysis of societal life. *God has a dream* is a beautiful personal, inspirational book about the power of love, forgiveness, humility, generosity and courage to transform suffering into joy and hope. But these biblical insights are not build out into Christian perspectives for the variety of social relationships in which we daily have to live as believers.

A limited idea of law

In my opinion there are two reasons lying at the root of this. In the first instance his idea of the laws of God (founded on the sovereignty of God) is too limited. He does believe that God's will is also valid for society, but does not point out the variety of ways in which the law of love should take form in society. Stated in a different way: He does not see that God's word in the creational order and in the Scriptures clearly point out that *different* structures have to be distinguished in society, *each with its own norm, office(s), authority, power, responsibility and duties.*

Communalistic African culture

Perhaps the reason for this void is connected to a second facet, namely his great appreciation for traditional, communalistic African culture (cf. 2.3 above). Without doubt communalism entails some lovely traits, like for example the strong feeling for the community and care for one another. However, its organicistic, holistic trait – and this Tutu does not see – is in essence totalitarian, since a vaguely delineated “community” supplies the norms for man's whole existence, encompasses all of it and controls it. In accordance with this he continuously stresses the unity of humanity. The diversity is there merely for the sake of the unity. (Cf. Tutu, 1999:213, 214 quoted above.) Such a view of society, that does not emphasise the *diversity* of various human relationships just as much as their *unity*, cannot in the end prevent a totalitarian society. (Tutu is probably in reaction against apartheid. Such a pluralistic view of society, however, is completely different from the apartheid viewpoint.) On this point Tutu's view of society clashes with God's revelation

in nature and the Scriptures, which teach diversity *in* unity and is therefore anti-totalitarian.

3.4 The alternative of structural and confessional pluralism

Basically there are only three perspectives on society: the liberalistic-individualistic; the collectivistic-communalistic and the pluralistic. (Many combinations of these are possible.) The common root of the first two is the unbiblical idea that the individual, autonomous human being (in the first case) or the group (in the second case) structures society according to their own insights.

3.4.1 Liberalism, collectivism and communalism

According to liberalism the only reality is the individual. Human institutions or relationships is either an illusion or merely the manifestation of agreements or contracts between individuals. Societal relationships are therefore nothing more than the combination of individuals. Individual freedom is paramount and justice primarily means protecting the rights of individuals.

According to collectivism every person and institution is regarded as a mere part of the unifying whole. The (usually political) freedom is primary, it gives identity to the "parts". Individual freedom is not that important and justice is what is good for the whole. (For expositions of the different views on society, cf. Skillen & McCarthy, 1999:13; McCarthy *et al.*, 1982:13-30 and Van der Walt, 2002: 265-280.)

The view of society held by traditional Africa, and advocated by Tutu, is neither individualistic, nor collectivistic, but communalistic (cf. 2.3 above). Not the state (as in the case of collectivism), but an undifferentiated "society" is the comprehensive entity. To use an image, Tutu's societal house is a traditional hut with only one "room" which supplies all the needs of the inhabitants, like eating, sleeping, washing, socialising, *et cetera*. The "house" in the case of a pluralistic philosophy of society however, has a separate dining room, bedroom, laundry and lounge.

All three of these views of society – the liberalistic also, but indirectly – end up in totalitarianism. That is why today a new view of society are being sought after. Various forms of pluralism are proposed, which we cannot go into here

(cf. Skillen & McCarthy, 1991 and McCarthy *et al.*, 1982:30-36). One of them is the Reformational one, which already has a long tradition. (The person in this tradition who worked it out in the greatest detail, was Dooyeweerd, 1957:157-626 and 1986.)

3.4.2 Reformational pluralism

Reformational pluralism rejects the idea that mere human norms (the human being as an individual or as a community) may guide society. For all created things God has set their own norms – also for the different human relationships. These norms has a transcendental, non-arbitrary origin, since God reveals them to us in his creational order and "republishes" them in the Bible. Simplified we could say: Man has the assignment to give form to God's central commandment of love in various ways in the different relationships. For example, as fidelity in marriage, as stewardship in business, as justice in the state. The structures of society should correspond with God's will for society.

According to this a variety of societal relationships each with its own norm, assignment, office(s) and authority is recognised. These are much more than mere "contracts" between individuals (as in liberalism), nor are they simply "parts" of a greater whole (as in collectivism and communalism). Each is sovereign in its own sphere. At the same time they are not isolated from one another. The various "rooms" of the "house" (cf. the image used above) are connected by means of doors and passages. A pluralistic vision of society therefore recognises diversity *in* unity and unity *in* diversity and in this way guarantees true freedom in society instead of totalitarian compulsion.

4. In conclusion

This overview to get to know Tutu could not be anything but incomplete. No attention was given, for instance, to Tutu's view of the church, of the relationship between religion and politics (cf. Maimela, 1986 and De Gruchy, 1996), or his view on the relationship between Christianity and other religions (cf. Lubbe, 1996). Yet we could form an overall impression of his Christian worldview.

I would like to endorse Pieterse's evaluation (1995:55) when he says that Tutu "stands steadfastly in the central faith of the great Christian tradition". Without his particular contribution to a Christian worldview, Christendom in South Africa, the rest of Africa and even the world would have been the poorer.

At the same time Tutu's ideas – like that of every person – has shortcomings and limitations, which may not be passed by. But since the emphasis in these two chapters fell on the positive side and on what we have in common, the voids were not pointed out continually.

If today we can offer something better, it should be done with the same humility that characterises Tutu's life and thought. The age-old adage also applies here: a dwarf can only see further when he stands on the shoulders of a giant.

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Chapter 10

THE INSTITUTE FOR REFORMATIONAL STUDIES (1962 – 1999) AS A CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEWISH ORGANISATION

Its relevance for future Christian actions

During a period of 37 years the Institute for Reformational Studies (IRS) fulfilled a unique role at the former Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (since 2004 the Potchefstroom Campus of the Nort-West University). In spite of this, the IRS was closed down at the end of 1999. This happened while, in an increasingly secularised South Africa, there clearly is a growing need to provide direction in all domains of life. This chapter, therefore, addresses the question of the possible reasons for the termination of this Institute. The answer to the problem is given from a worldviewish perspective. The aim of the investigation is to provide some practical guidelines, derived from the history of the IRS, to future Christian actions.

1. Problem, hypothesis, goal and intention

The *problem* investigated in this chapter, is why the Institute for Reformational Studies (IRS) was closed down after 37 years. The *hypothesis* is that one important reason could be the clash between two diverging Christian worldviews. The *objective* with this investigation is not to offer a theoretical and principal justification for the need for Christian organisations and institutions, but to find some more practical guidelines for future Christian actions from a study of the history of the IRS.

In order to solve the problem and reaching the objective with this investigation, we propose to proceed along the following steps:

- By way of introduction we first deal briefly with the significance of Christian organisations according to the Reformational worldview.

- Then we explain the method of approaching the history of the IRS from a worldviewish angle. Reference is made to the sources used in writing its history.
- Subsequently follows a characterisation of the IRS – its aim, activities, character and place at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education follows.
- This is followed by a brief overview in three phases of its history from 1962 to 1999.
- Next, possible reasons for its closing are investigated.
- Finally some guidelines for future Christian actions are drawn from the successes of the IRS as well as the reasons for its closing.

2. Topicality, method and sources

2.1 Topicality

Secularisation in South Africa especially of public domains of life has taken on terrifying dimensions in recent times (cf. Van der Walt, 2004a; 2004b and 2005a). It would seem as if Christians, in spite of their numbers (more than 70% of the total South African population) are unable to stem this increasing secularisation. According to the Reformational worldview however, there is a way of curtailing this tendency in all domains of society: by means of Christian organisations and institutions. The IRS was such a Reformational Christian organisation. Reflection on its history (aims, activities and character) may therefore entail important practical implications for existing and future Christian actions. Since quite an amount of writing has been done on theoretical reflection on and justification for Christian organisations (cf. e.g. Buijs *et al.*, 2003; Klapwijk, 1995 and Van der Walt, 2003a) it will not be repeated here.

2.1 Method

Two matters have to be explained: (1) a worldviewish approach of analysing and describing the history and (2) personal accounts of history as acceptable historiography.

2.2.1 Worldviewish historiography

Like any other science the science of history can afford merely limited insights – it is fallible work done by man. Not without reason the Reformational philosopher Smit (cf. Klapwijk, 1987:12-42) speaks about “a divine mystery” in history. He calls it the “first history” in which the present (“second”) history is rooted.

Neither is historiography something objective and neutral. With right Wells (1989:8) says: “The facts of history simply do not speak for themselves: historians speak for them from an interpretive framework of ideas they already hold.” This frame of reference is the worldview of historiographers.

It is a typical trait of a worldview that it is seldom spelled out explicitly. The proponent of a certain worldview most of the time is not conscious of it and therefore can easily become its “prisoner”.

Wells uses the concept of worldview methodologically in two ways in his historiography of Western cultural history. He analyses the course of Western history first with reference to clashing worldviews, and in the second instance with reference to crises within the same worldview (cf. Wells, 1989:13).

Any worldview has a descriptive element (this is the way reality *is*) as well as a prescriptive facet (this is the way it *should be* changed). A measure of tension between the *is* and the *should be* is normal. But if this tension becomes too great, one's view *of* reality and one's view *for* reality no longer tally. One's worldview then lands in a crisis. In such a situation one's vision of reality has to be either adapted (changed) or rejected (replaced).

We will be using the same worldviewish method in this investigation. The hypothesis is that both the above-mentioned processes took place in the history of the IRS.

In the first instance the more integral Reformational worldview, propagated by the IRS, gradually came into conflict with the more dualistic Christian-national worldview at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (the PUK for short). The two worldviews differed in their opinions on what the South

African (especially the social and political) reality *is* like and also on what it *should be* like. (For the leaders at the PUK the *is* and *should be* were nearer to each other than for the IRS.)

In the second instance the Christian-national worldview of the leaders at the PUK, who accommodated the ideology of apartheid, gradually became problematic, and especially so since 1990. Their worldview and the reality surrounding them no longer corresponded as a result of changes in the social and political field. An existential crisis ensued. Initially one had the impression that (instead of reforming, renewing their worldview) they dug down deeper into their worldviewish “trenches”. It seems as if the final result was that the Christian-national worldview gradually lost its influence. Just as gradually and imperceptibly the worldviewish vacuum – partly because of political pressure by the new political dispensation since 1994 – was filled by a more secular worldview.

This personal point of departure (cf. later under 5.1 to 5.5) is given merely as a provisional hypothesis. Therefore it invites testing by future researchers. Something like this could be done by further research in the annals of the University (e.g. minutes of the Council of the PU for CHE) as well as personal interviews with university leaders of the time. It could be that a much broader – and possibly completely different – view of the history of the IRS may unfold. The intention with the hypothesis used here (conflict between two Christian worldviews) is to bring the investigation to a more impersonal, objective level. This approach would prevent what follows from being interpreted as personal allegations or reflections on the integrity of those who had to take decisions on the IRS at the time.

2.2.2 Historiography by involved parties

Without the necessary circumspection historiography by someone who was closely involved in a certain history can entail disadvantages (cf. Overduin, 1978:242-252, as well as Klep, Hoetink & Emons, 1005:57-83). A firsthand, personal version (a so-called participant's perspective) could, however, also have

advantages. But it falls outside the scope of this article to go into all the problems and possibilities of the more subjective, postmodern approaches to historiography. A few remarks will suffice.

Klep, Hoetink and Emons (2005:79) warns against the following two one-sided approaches. On the one hand there is the view that one should be involved with or at least be a contemporary in order to know what really happened and to assess it. On the other hand there is the view that one can only record history correctly as an uninvolved outsider, from some distance. As Wells (1989) also demonstrated, both involved and uninvolved historiography remains selective.

Up to a decade ago (when a modernistic ideal of science was still popular) academic historiography by an independent outsider was more or less the only acceptable way to ascertain the "truth" in history, since it was considered objective and neutral. However, Klep, Hoetink & Emons (confirmed by other more recent works) point out that, as a result of postmodernism, this is no longer the current paradigm. More personal versions are recognised as equally valuable and are even more popular than academic history books.

Therefore the latest tendency is that the two forms of historiography should not be in conflict, but should rather complement one another. This becomes clear for instance from Klapwijk (2006:101 et seq.). He differentiates between two kinds of history. The "first history" is the way we experience history personally "from the inside" and commemorate it. The "second history" is the way events from the past are reconstructed by historiography on the basis of critical historical research of the facts. (In short we could call the first mentioned *experienced* and the last mentioned *reconstructed* history.) According to Klapwijk there is a need for both.

In this investigation we have accepted this balanced view. The author of this chapter is conscious of *lacunae* in his own account of the history of the IRS (cf. Van der Walt, 2000:149), but is convinced of the value it could have. His wish is that his own "involved historiography" in future will be complemented and even corrected by the "uninvolved historiography" of an independent historian.

2.3 Sources

Some flashes and fragments of the history of the IRS are available (cf. Van der Merwe, 2000; Van der Walt, 1983a; 1989a and 2000; Van Eeden, 2005:168-170). There is, however, no overview of the whole.

An as yet unpublished version by Van der Walt, (2005b), is available for perusal at the archives of the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University. This work was based on the annual reports of the Institute for the Advancement of Calvinism (IAC) from 1974 to 1980 and the annual reports of the Institute for Reformational Studies (IRS) from 1981 to 1999, all available in the archives mentioned. (This approach was followed because the annual reports afford a dependable reflection of the proceedings of the IAC and later the IRS in one specific year. They have also been officially accepted by the Council of the IAC and the IRS as true reflections.) This chapter is a more factual summary of the manuscript mentioned (46 pages) which paints the more colourful history of the IRS.

The minutes of the Executive and Council of the IAC/IRS (and after 1991 those of the Senate Committee for Reformational Scholarship – SCRS) contain more detail for possible further research. The same applies to the conference reports and resolutions, of which most were published in the *Circular* and later in *Orientation*. Further there are the minutes of the Faculties and the University Council which can throw light on the broad context of the University within which the IRS existed.

3. A characterisation of the IRS as a Christian organisation and its place at the PU for CHE

In order to understand the course of the history of the IRS, the following is important: its aim, activities, character, place and changing role at the University.

3.1 Aim

The aim read as follows: "The IRS sets itself the objective to serve the Kingdom of God by studying and propagating the Reformational tradition, in particular as it has taken form in the Calvinistic worldview" (Van der Walt, 1983a:6, 17).

So the aim of the IAC/IRS had two focal points: both a theoretical or academic focus, namely research on the Reformational worldview, and the popularisation and practical application of this worldview in all walks of life (cf. also Duvenage, 1983:17 and Van der Walt, T., 1983:27).

As it will become clear later, especially the second focal point of the IRS caused a problem for the University authorities in the IRS's autumn years, when it transpired that the application of a biblical worldview could not justify the ideology of apartheid.

3.2 Activities

In accordance with its objective the IRS undertook the following activities – sometimes with a stronger accent on one than on others:

- Research was done on the Reformational tradition and its implications.
- Five different series of publications were published (F1 to F5 in the series *Scientific Contributions of the PU for CHE*) of which some (e.g. the F1 study pamphlets) were more popular and others (e.g. F4 and F5) were of a more scholarly nature, as well as (from 1975-1999) an international journal, the *Circular* (on behalf of the International Association for Promotion for CHE), which was later renamed *Orientation, international circular of the PU for CHE*.

In the annual report for 1999 it was stated that during its existence of 37 years the IRS published no less than 384 study pamphlets, 76 brochures and 51 compiled works. This does not include the numbers published in the series F5 (Studies on the the influence of Calvinism in South Africa) and the 90 numbers of *Orientation* or the many times that publications were reprinted.

- About 20 conferences of local and international scope on diverging topical themes were organised.
- Through its *International Clearing House* the extension and maintenance of contact with like-minded institutions and persons was undertaken, as well as dissemination of information which focused in particular on Christian Higher Education.

These activities of the IRS, too, were carried out on both the Christian academic and the Christian worldviewish (more practical) level. Therefore the IRS was no "ivory tower" institute, but one that combined theory and practice so as to be really serviceable in the comprehensive kingdom of God (cf. the objective stated above).

3.3 A reflective and guiding Christian organisation

According to Klapwijk's classification (1995:119-120) of Christian organisations and institutions into four categories, the IRS is typified by the third group. Klapwijk describes it as follows:

"Christian organisations/institutions that in the first instance attempt to influence society by means of a Christian conviction expressed in Christian (political) parties, labour unions, press and broadcasting organisations and diverse (higher and tertiary) teaching institutions [...]. The issue here is to give guidance and direction to society by means of scientific reflection (universities and academies), by means of political agendas (parties), by means of social action (labour unions) and by opinion forming (broadcasting and press organisations). In these contexts there is a continuous struggle that has to be fought, stands to be taken and priorities to be set. And these things are done to a greater or lesser extent from the angle of a worldviewish conviction." (Tr. from the Dutch.)

This description of a Christian organisation or institution fits the IRS. Yet it had a unique position, since it was attached to the PUK.

3.4 A closer characterisation of the IRS

With the following key words Van der Walt (1983a:8) characterises the IRS – at least until 1991 (when it was “incorporated” in the Senate Committee for Reformational Scholarship) : an *institute* (not for instance a society); a *university* institute (thus clearly of an academic nature); an *interfaculty* institute (therefore not restricted to one department or faculty); a *key* institute (for it was the organisation by means of which the University marketed its principal viewpoint on worldviewish level all through the country as well as internationally); an *interdenominational* institute (for the IRS co-operated with other Christian organisations across church borders, and these organisations were also represented on the Board of Management of the IRS).

As will transpire, it was most probably the characteristic of being a key institute which, in its autumn years, proved problematic to the University authorities, since the IRS questioned the acceptance of apartheid at the PUK.

3.5 Its position at the University

Since the IRS was an interfaculty institute and bodies from outside the University served on its board, it probably had more freedom of movement than a mere departmental institute. Still it was a part of the PUK. Although it earned some money from the sale of books and from membership fees, the IRS was financially dependent on the University for its existence. The University Executive who served on the Executive and Board of the IRS (the Rector of the university, for instance, was *ex officio* chairman of the IRS Board and Executive) also had great influence. (Prof. H.J.J. Bingle remained the chairman of the IRS up to 1977, Prof. T. van der Walt until 1987 and Prof. C.J. Reinecke up to 1999.) When the IRS (since 1991) lost its own Board and Executive (incorporated into the SCRS) it lost the relative independence it had had up to then.

3.6 A shift from window of the PUK to window on the PUK

As we have shown already, one of the explicit objectives of the IRS was to be a showcase to the outside world of the Christian ideals of the PUK. The IRS

succeeded in putting the University on the world map (especially concerning Christian Higher Education). Besides it tried all along to serve the PUK (students and lecturers) in various ways. Many ideas that originated in the IRS itself and were later developed by the University contributed to the strengthening of the PUK's image in the outside world. Some examples of this is the establishing of a Committee for Foreign Relations; the emphasis of the necessity of translating important publications into English; the study of the early Reformational tradition; the Calvin Research and Translation Centre. (For the background to the last-mentioned project, cf. Van der Walt, 1980b.)

3.6.1 Window on the PUK itself

As the IRS moved more outwards from about 1983 (cf. for instance Van der Walt, 1983b), more and more "windows" onto the world opened up for the IRS. Van der Walt (2000:151-155) mentions the following: window onto South African Calvinism; window onto the entire Reformational tradition; window onto Christian Higher Education; window onto Africa; window onto the world (for detail on this cf. Van der Walt, 2005c); and window onto South Africa and the PUK itself.

Gradually the one-way traffic (from the PUK outwards) changed into a two-way traffic (also from the outside back to the PUK). Reconnoitring the great unknown world "on the other side of the Mooi River" led to the IRS looking inward, to itself and to its "mother" (the PUK) – instead of just being a window *of* the PUK, the IRS also became a window *onto* the PUK.

The Director of the IRS uses the image of two-way traffic over a bridge (the IRS) and writes: "Controlled two-way traffic over this bridge is in my opinion the right strategy." This he considers as distinct from both isolation and accommodation:

"It is impossible for the IRS to do its work without taking cognisance of what is being sold on the South African and world markets by way of spiritual goods (ideas, opinions and ideologies). At the same time it should, in answer to a holy calling, serve as a missionary bridge to disseminate the liberating perspectives of a Reformational-evangelical worldview in the world" (Van der Walt, 1989a:5).

That this road would not be an easy one for the IRS can be judged from the following:

“Precisely because the IRS fulfills such an important function as a bridge, it often is controversial and it will (with the increasing polarisation in our country) in future probably become more controversial in fulfilling its calling. Controversy as such, however, is no proof that a person or an institution is wrong. According to Christ it could be evidence that believers are on the right way (cf. Mat 5:10, 11)” (Van der Walt, 1989a:5).

3.6.2 The conscience of the PUK

Since the IRS had become more and more of a window *onto* the PUK – the *conscience* of its mother – it also had to call her to account. A good example of this role as conscience, which the IRS played in its late summer and autumn years, was the struggle it had for years on end for the University to open its doors to students of other races on the undergraduate level and – eventually – also its residences. (Cf. Venter, 1984 and also Van der Walt, 1989b:54-67 for a full résumé of the contribution made by the IRS in this regard.)

The writer’s hypothesis is that this voice of the conscience of Potchefstroom – the window *onto* the PUK – caused the authorities at the University to feel uncomfortable, since it clashed with their own worldview.

4. A brief overview of the history of the IRS

After explaining the specific position of the IRS at the PUK, a brief investigation is done into how the IRS fulfilled its role.

4.1 The three main periods

On the basis of what happened to the IRS during its 37 years, its history can be divided into three phases:

- A *springtime*, running from 1962 to approximately 1974 (12 years). This was the time of spring blossoms, full of promise for the future.

- *A summertime*, covering the period of more or less 15 years from 1975 to about 1990. It could also be divided into two sub-phases, namely from 1975 to about 1983 when the IRS was still predominantly directed inwards, while from 1983 (cf. for instance the First Southern African Conference on which Van der Walt, 1983b reports) it moved outwards more vigorously. This “summertime” was the time to harvest the fruit that the spring blossoms had promised.
- *Autumn*, covering the period from about 1991 (the incorporation of the IRS into the SCRS) up to the closing of the IRS in 1999 (winter). As one can in autumn still harvest late fruit, it does not mean that nothing was happening at the IRS during this last period. But we call these the autumn years because the IRS was forced to “rationalise” and other kinds of pressure was exerted on it.

Van der Walt (2005b) deals with each of these “seasons” in detail. In this chapter the focus is only on the gradual shift in the thinking climate (worldview), which would eventually influence the IRS in a negative way.

4.2 Springtime (1962 – 1974)

During this time there were no differences worth mentioning between the worldvish orientation of the PUK and the IAC. Although some persons, like Prof JH Coetzee (a member of the IRS Council) began questioning the policy of apartheid, it was still done from the angle of the more or less acceptable Christian-national worldview – the form which Calvinism had taken on in South Africa (cf. Coetzee, 1987). (In Van der Walt (1980a) numerous instances of the justification of this worldview can be traced under the catchwords “Christian-national” and especially “Christian-national education”.) As has been said already, a worldview to a great extent determines the spiritual climate of a period, so that many more people supported it than the few who were outspoken on the subject.

Yet at the same time there were even during the springtime of the IRS indications of changing times. Examples of this (cf. Van der Walt, 2005b:17) are amongst others the following three IAC publications: *Reformasie of revolusie?* (*Reformation or revolution?*) (an anthology), JD van der Vyver’s *Menseregte*

(*Human rights*) and LM du Plessis's *Calvyn oor die staat en reg* (*Calvin on the state and justice*).

4.3 Summertime (1975-1990)

From 1975 onwards it gradually became clear that the existing political situation could not last indefinitely. The IAC/IRS began dealing openly with controversial matters in publications like, amongst others, *Geregtigheid in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing* (*Justice in South African society*) (1977), *Ideologiese stryd in Suid-Afrika* (*Ideological struggle in South Africa*) (1985) and *Calvinism does not teach apartheid* (Buys, 1987).

As early as in 1975 at the First International Conference for Christian Higher Education the international community criticised the PUK's support of the apartheid ideology. (For more historical details on this, cf. Peterse, 2000; Schutte, 2005:455-580 and Van der Walt, 2005c.)

As a result of the checkmate (covering about a decade) between the PUK and the rest of the international Christian community (under the leadership of the Free University of Amsterdam), from about 1983 the IRS focused more on Africa (cf. Van der Walt, 1989b). As a result of this broader exposure outside South Africa, the South African political and social situation could no longer be evaded (cf. Turaki, 1992.) In this way the IRS became more and more of a critical window *onto* the PUK, rather than a showcase *of* the Christian worldview of the PUK.

So, for instance, did the resolutions of the several African conferences of the IRS lead to recurrent criticism of the University, because it did not admit Christians from all population groups (also on an undergraduate level) for study at the PUK – the only outspoken Christian University in the country – or to use its residences.

Naturally it resulted in tension between the mother (the PUK) and the daughter (the IRS). Most probably this was one of the reasons for the curtailment of the independence of the IRS from 1987 (cf. Annual Report 1987). The constitution

("reglement") of the IRS was amended so that it resorted directly under the Vice-Rector (Academic Affairs).

From 1989 the IRS was curtailed even further when it was decided that from 1990 it would lose its own Council, Executive, General Meeting (of members) and Publication Committee, in other words its relative independence. The IRS was incorporated into the Senate Committee for Reformational Scholarship (SCRS). Its finances and personnel was rationalised, it had to downscale its activities and the director was transferred (full-time) to the Department of Philosophy. (However, he chose to remain the director of the IRS at the same time.)

Already at the end of the IRS Annual Report 1988, it transpired that views and ways were diverging: "The IRS does not make a choice for left or right in the South African political spectrum ... The IRS wants to go a third way in the light of the Scriptures, liberating us from the narrow perspective of either left or right. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us an example in this by not choosing *for* or *against* a particular party of his time, but rising *above* them all ..."

Subsequently it is stated that such a "third way" would not be strewn with roses, but would probably be a *via dolorosa*, for such a way would render the IRS vulnerable, and would cause it to land in the cross-fire between left and right. However, the fact that it could be a difficult way did not necessarily mean that it was the wrong way (cf. Mat. 5:10-11). From the last Annual Report of the IRS (1999:1) it is clear that to the very end the IRS attempted to persevere on this third way – Reformational, critical towards both left and right.

Such a Reformational approach rejected leftist revolutionary change. But it also rejected the rightwing, dualistic (so-called Christian-national) view of social change, which merely implied consecration, outward "decoration" (instead of integral sanctification), usually boiling down to accepting the *status quo*. (For details of these three perspectives on social change, cf. Wolters, 1992:74 *et seq.* and Van der Walt, 2006 *et seq.*)

4.4 Autumn (1991-1999)

During the last nine years (it's autumn time) fortunately the IRS could still proceed (cf. the relevant IRS Annual Reports and Van der Walt, 2005b:27-30 for particulars of its activities). In its publications (cf. Van der Walt, 1995a) the IRS clearly demonstrated why the Christian-national worldview did not really offer a radical biblical perspective on life, but was inherently schizophrenic and consequently could accommodate an unjust social order.

Since in these days it transpired that the days of the IRS could be numbered, pleas from several levels (from within the PUK but also nationally and internationally) were directed at the University authorities to support the IRS in the light of its value as a Reformational organisation and to retain it. These appeals were directed at management up to the highest level of the Council of the University (cf. Van der Walt, 2005b:28-30).

On 16/09/99 the Council of the University, however, decided that the IRS would be incorporated into the (new) Centre for Faith and Scholarship (CFS). In a last circular (on the title page: IBC-IRS-CFS) sent out during the course of 2000 by the CFS (by order of the University management) to members of the IRS the ideal is stated (on p.3) of a "combination of the terms of reference of the IRS, Philosophy of Science and the CFS, coordinated with teaching and research at the PU for CHE. Some of the previous functions of the IRS would go on ..."

In practice, however, it amounted to the IRS being taken up in the CFS, and going under in it – none of the activities of the IRS were continued in the end.

Neither were the IRS staff, supporters and members ever – at least not openly – informed exactly why the IRS was closed down. In the above-mentioned last circular (p.3) the following is merely stated: "Probing reflection has led to the resolution of the Council of the PU for CHE that strategically the University has to focus more sharply on the core tasks of teaching and research, concerning the issues of faith and science as well." According to this it would seem as if the IRS had lost its *function(s)* to such an extent that the *structure* itself also had to be closed down.

From the IRS annual reports, however, it is clear that the IRS did do research and that its publications were definitely used in various teaching situations – nationally and internationally. Besides, the IRS dealt with the issues concerning faith and science in numerous publications and conferences.

The author does not deny that the reason given by the University authorities could have played a role. But he doubts if this was the decisive reason and is of the opinion that the deeper, worldviewish differences between “mother” and “daughter” was the real motive for closing the IRS.

5. Possible reasons for closing the IRS

The worldviewish position of the University management is here approached by way of hypothetical questions. (For more detail, cf. Van der Walt, 2005b:32-38.) The personal integrity of members of the University management is neither questioned, nor is it suggested that the IRS itself at the time had a lien on wisdom.

5.1 Unfamiliarity with an integral Reformational worldview?

The question is whether the University management fully understood what a Reformational worldview really entails. This question is put in spite of the use of this particular concept and many university publications – also by the IRS (cf. Spykman, 1985; Van der Walt, 1995b; Veenhof, 1994 and Wolters, 1992).

5.2 Inability / disinclination to apply the implications of a Christian worldview to social and economic practice?

Even if Management continued on the dualistic Christian-national way, certain reactions of the University are difficult to reconcile with a Christian orientation. Instances of this is the reception of the Koinonia declaration of 1977 (cf. Van der Walt & Venter, 1988:31-44); the reluctance (1994) to confess guilt concerning apartheid in public (cf. Van der Walt, 1997 and 1998) and the aloof attitude (in 1996 and later) towards the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (cf. Van der Walt & Van der Walt, 1996).

5.3 A derailed worldview?

Most probably the reason has to be found in the fact that the Christian-national worldview was a derailed kind of a truly biblically founded worldview. Van der Walt (1995a:3-42) shows how this worldview departs from an inherent dualism; how the emphasis gradually shifted from Christian-national to National-Christian, so that Afrikaner nationalism became its major component and could condone the apartheid ideology. Goudzwaard (1981:40-48 and 1984:39-48) spells out the threats posed by such a national ideology. (Also cf. the warnings in this regard by Van der Walt *et al.*, 1984 and Van der Walt, 1989c.)

5.4 A clash between two worldviews?

As we have explained under 2.2.1 above, a worldview contains a descriptive and a prescriptive element (how reality *is* and how it *should be*). The question above therefore implies that the University saw the South African and the broader African reality (the existing or *factual*) and how it had to be changed (the *normative*) differently from the way the IRS saw it. The University's Management probably only had a choice between right or left, *status quo* or change, while the IRS wanted to avoid this dilemma by searching for a third way. When these two perspectives became opposed to one another, it almost stands to reason that the vision of the representatives of the University Management would triumph, since they had the administrative and financial power to curtail the IRS and eventually to close it down.

5.5 Disintegration of the Christian-national worldview?

As pointed out by Wells (1989) above – see 2.2.1 – a crisis develops in a worldview when the tension between the factual reality and the normative demands of the worldview becomes too great. This crisis could be observed even before 1994, but worsened during the last years of the IRS. Most of the Afrikaners – those at the PUK too – lost their political power (the national pole of Christian-national). Since the Christian pole was so closely linked with it, it eventually had to be given up too. (That this could happen was mentioned by the writer as early as the seventies – cf. Van der Walt, 1976.) What happened at the

PUK confirmed this: Since 2004 the University has had to give up its “surname”. The latest Vice-Chancellor of the North-West University had to admit that it was politically impossible to retain the “for Christian Higher Education” (cf. Van Eeden, 2005:537).

One could pose the question whether the PUK would have retained its Christian character if it let go of its Christian-national worldview in time (e.g. as early as the sixties). If it had gone against the National Party government policy could it have led to government subsidy being suspended and the closing of the University? To answer this question one would have to research the relationship at that time between a (Christian) university and the South African political dispensation.

5.6 Secularisation in the place of Christian-national?

Since after the loss of the Christian-national vision no renewal took place (meaning no integral Christian worldview replaced it), it would seem as if the vacuum was taken up gradually and imperceptibly by the growing secular worldview of the new South African dispensation (cf. Van der Walt, 2005b:36-37 for examples). One should, however, not claim that what happened to the PUK from 2004 onwards, can only be ascribed one-sidedly to (for instance political) factors *outside* the University – to a great extent the PUK *itself* (because of internal secularisation) paved the way for what happened to it eventually. The IRS had to pay the price a bit earlier than the PUK five years later.

6. Some guidelines for future Christian actions

The conclusion of this study is not that a secularist spiritual climate renders Christian organisations and institutions unnecessary or impossible. On the contrary, as a result of the growing secularisation of South African society, Christian organisations are today more needed than in the time of the IRS (cf. Van der Walt, 2003a). Keeping in mind both the success and the demise of the IRS, we finally give a few suggestions for existing and future Christian actions.

6.1 Some “keys” to the work of the IRS

The following are a few reasons for the success of the IRS:

- The infrastructure which the PU for CHE provided – even during the autumn years.
- The major contribution of loyal IRS staff members, IRS Council and Executive members, the IRS Publication Committee and various conference committees.
- Thousands of IRS members, subscribers and other supporters.
- The greater part of the IRS work was done *pro Deo*, gratis by volunteers, enthusiastic Christians (local and foreign). The IRS was privileged to depend on competent writers, counsellors, planners and others.
- The IRS conferences were a powerful tool to reformation. Exactly because the conferences were not mere intellectual and academic happenings, but deeply religious-worldviewish experiences, they were effective in changing people's hardened worldviews and ideologies – for some of them sometimes a very traumatic, but still a healing process.
- With its finger on the pulse of the times the IRS was able to proclaim the political, social, economic, academic and other implications of the gospel, while encouraging others to think and do the same.

6.2 Some suggestions in the light of the history of the IRS

Christian actions (organisations and institutions) should be mindful of what happened to the IRS and take note of the following:

- They should be motivated and managed according to an integral (non-dualistic) Christian worldview (cf. Klapwijk, 1995:93-114).
- They should never be there for the sake of being a showcase (in other words for their own interests) but should reach out – in the service of God and their neighbours. In order to attain this goal, they should constantly keep abreast of the times, issues and needs (context) of those they seek to serve.
- Since an ideology has a blinding and infatuating effect and is enforced with power, such organisations – even though they may be inspired by a Christian

worldview – should always be on the look-out so that they are not taken over by an ideology. This will mean that they will always stand open to be corrected (transformed) in the light of God's revelation in the Scriptures and in reality.

- Christian organisations/institutions must as far as possible be autonomous or independent (the Reformational societal principle of sphere sovereignty) and not linked to another societal relationship (like a church, political party or a university). Their "surname" (*Christian*) should constantly remind them that they do not belong to people or parties, but to their King, Jesus Christ.
- A further prerequisite is committed members who give their full support to the organisation / institution and are fully conversant with all facets of its management. This would prevent them from accepting authoritarian steps without criticism. On the other hand the management should be prepared to answer to the members on all its activities in a transparent way.
- Naturally Christian organisations today in the 21st century work in a completely different spiritual climate from the one in which the IRS originated in 1962 and subsequently functioned. In this regard the following could be kept in mind: a new liberal-secular South African Constitution; not only are all religions given freedom, but in principle they are regarded as equal; postmodern relativism; an increasingly secular society; a new kind of pietism ("inward emigration") in many Christians; a neo-liberal, global free market economy leading to the commercialisation of all the other non-economic facets of life; and new forms of churchism or denominationalism. All these factors together evoke completely new questions which also necessitate new answers given from a Christian perspective.

The new North-West University (including the Potchefstroom Campus) is at present being forced into a "pluralistic" direction. It could be merely a preliminary phase to its full secularisation, but it need not inevitably happen. For the moment there are possibilities of establishing new Christian growth points which could thrive in future.

6.3 The mystery of history

Since history is not a process taking place in this world only, but contains divine mysteries (cf. Klapwijk, 1987) things do not always take the course we would have wished. Above this uncertainty, however, stands God's promise that our labours in his service are never in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). Therefore we can be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord".

Although the IRS died in South Africa in 1999, it was revived in 2005 in Korea. The Kosin University in Busan in 2006 established an IRS "which wants to work further in the tradition of the IRS of Potchefstroom" and the retired director of the old IRS became Honourary Director of this new IRS.

7. Review

If the hypothesis of this investigation contains some truth, it has been demonstrated what an important role worldviewish differences (which include political convictions) can play – even among Christians. Such differences may contribute to the establishment but also to the termination of Christian actions. This fact stresses that it is essential at the establishment of Christian organisations to reflect on the motives behind them, the context in which they have to function, their character, aim, structure, functions and so forth. It is of the utmost importance that such organisations / institutions be sustained by a support community with a common, integral Christian worldview. Churches have a limited task in society. But in an increasingly secular climate, worldview-oriented Christian organisations can once more make a clear voice heard in numerous other walks of life.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

A worldview is both a vision *of* and *for* life.

- A vision *of* the world is *descriptive*, providing its adherents with perspectives to make sense out of their lives. It tells us *inter alia* where we come from, who we are, why we are here in history and where we are heading. Therefore a worldview is like a light - it can illuminate our experience.
- As a vision *for* the world, a worldview is also *prescriptive or normative* by nature. It indicates direction. It not only illuminates what *is*, but also what *ought to be*. It indicates our place and task in the world; it is a call to cultural historical action. In this sense a worldview is not something abstract and theoretical. It functions as a light on one's way in *all* areas of life. Every human being acts from an implicit or explicit worldview.
- Like everything else worldviews can, however, be either healthy or unhealthy. If your worldview eye is good, your life will be full of light. But with darkened worldwiewish spectacles the darkness which you experience and promote can be terrible (cf. Matt. 6:22,23).
- This book assists readers from all walks of life in assessing their own worldview by discussing in depth the following: (1) the nature of worldviews in general; (2) the uniqueness of a biblically-based worldview; (3) the impact of a Christian worldview on people, organisations and cultures.

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