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DEEL 53 NOMMERS 1 & 2, MAART & JUNIE 2012

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VAN DIE REDAKSIE

Die *NGTT* is daarop gemik om navorsing in uiteenlopende teologiese vakgebiede, maar ook uit ander vakrigtings in gesprek met die teologie te publiseer. Lesers van die jongste uitgawe sal merk dat bydraes uit die Bybelwetenskappe (Potgieter, Snyman, Van der Watt, Viljoen), die praktiese teologie (Cilliers, Dames, Tucker), die sendingwetenskap (Duncan, Venter en Jurgens), die kerkgeskiedenis (Neele), die kerkreg (Strauss), die sistematiese teologie (Conradie, Hesselink, Leder, Smit) en die etiek (Du Plessis) aan die woord kom. Afgesien hiervan is daar navorsingstukke uit die godsdienstwetenskap wat op die ontleding van die kultusbegrip (Pretorius) en aspekte van die Hindoe-tradisie (Sukdaven) fokus. (Verskeie van die artikels wat hier vermeld word, sou onder meer as een van die genoemde vakrigtings geklassifiseer kan word.)

Ewe belangrik is die verskeie universiteite waaruit bydraes in die loop van jare aangebied is en die feit dat artikels in veral Afrikaans en Engels gepubliseer word. 'n Voordeel van die aanlyn-publikasie is dat 'n tydskrif in meer as een taal – wat byvoorbeeld Xhosa, Nederlands of Duits as hooftaal vir publikasie gebruik – beskikbaar kan word deurdat 'n anderstalige weergawe van 'n publikasie in 'n uitgawe elders op die internet toeganklik kan wees met 'n elektroniese skakel daarna in die betrokke tydskrif.

Verder kan lesers gerus daarvan kennis neem dat aanlyn-gesprekvoering oor elke tydskrif kan plaasvind. Akademiese skrywes bied geleenthede nie net vir kennisname nie, maar ook vir deurlopende gesprekke.

Lesers word verder daarop gewys dat boekresensies nie per uitgawe van die tydskrif gepubliseer word nie, maar op die deurlopende verskyning van sulke bydraes aanlyn op hulle eie by <http://ngtt.journals.ac.za/pub/issue/view/7/showToc>.

Dr Gerrit Brand

Redakteur

Junie 2012

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Disabling God in an able world? Analysis of a South African sermon¹

ABSTRACT

In this article the Heidelberg Method of sermon analysis is used to analyse a sermon preached in South Africa one month after the first general democratic elections, held in April 1994. The fundamental hermeneutic structure of the sermon is revealed to consist of three parts: a historical view of God's acts in the past; a particular understanding of God's intent and possible actions in the future; and an activist imperative that seeks to collapse and condense past and future in the present. The basic question that is posed concerns the God-image in the sermon: how is God pictured, if at all? And: how is this related to experiences of fragmentation in (post-apartheid) South Africa?

1. SOUTH AFRICA: THE END OF LEGALISED FRAGMENTATION?

Apartheid could be described as *legalised fragmentation*, i.e. legalised isolation and enforced exclusion of designated groups. For centuries, from the times of colonialism, South Africans were kept apart in various ways – and in the time of legalised apartheid they were also separated in a *geographical fragmentation* of the country, with the fragments euphemistically called “homelands”. South African citizens were separated and society fragmented not only on beaches, train stations, public amenities, work places (so-called “petty apartheid”), but more importantly also in the spheres of political power and economic affluence (“grand apartheid”).

The release of Nelson Mandela,² leading to the first democratic general elections on 27 April 1994, was described by many as “nothing short of a miracle”. This dramatic event was hailed across the globe and scenes of seemingly unending queues of people waiting their turn to vote – the majority of them for the first time in their life – were splashed onto television screens for millions to witness. It seemed like the end of legalised fragmentation: the dawn of a new era of unity, reconciliation and connectedness.³ South Africa once again became part of the international community, experiencing the fruits of the *video-sphere* with its technological networking by means of the internet, television, cell phones etc. – so that one could say that, at least on a technological level, we were no longer fragmented, but rather *enabled to become part of the connected globe* (cf. Debray 2000: 166).⁴

1 Paper delivered at the 9th International Conference of the *Societas Homiletica*, held in New Haven, Connecticut, USA, 1-5 August 2010. The theme of the conference was: *Picturing God in a fragmented World*.

2 Time and space constraints do not allow me to describe the momentous events leading up to this breakthrough in detail. For an overview of this period, cf. Gilliomie and Mbenga 2007: 330ff.

3 This is perhaps best epitomised by the events of the Rugby World Cup in 1995 (when South Africa was crowned as the world champion) and more recently the Soccer World Cup (June 2010), being hosted by South Africa.

4 Television, for instance, was withheld from South Africans until as late as 1973.

Obviously, this fundamental reconfiguration (or *defragmentation*) of our society also found its way into countless theological debates and analyses, before and after the elections. It was articulated in thousands of sermons, South Africa being a religious⁵ country with a myriad of churches.

As an example of these homiletic reflections I chose a sermon that was delivered in a radio broadcast by a Presbyterian minister⁶ from a middle-class suburb near Cape Town on 29 May 1994 – about a month after the April general elections. It grapples with a profound theological question, namely *how to picture God in a fragmented world*, here with the added dimension that this sermon was preached in the immediate aftermath of one of the world's major political attempts to create unity within a country renowned for its fragmentation. This article is written sixteen years after the sermon was preached and obviously certain things have changed in the process of rebuilding our country and reconnecting to the international community. On the other hand, it could be argued that many of the issues of apartheid are still with us, haunting us, and might even have intensified. Sixteen years later we are still fragmented in some regards, with people such as the ANC Youth Leader Julius Malema singing “Kill the farmer, kill the Boer”, and white extremists re-organising for possible civil war. On the one hand, we *are* connected – South Africans carry more cell phones per person than those in any other African country! – and yet, on the other hand, we still seem to be disconnected in many ways. The question is: did sermons like this one help us in our time of transition? Did they launch us on a path of healing, or the contrary?

In what follows I offer an in-depth analysis of the sermon, utilising the Heidelberg Method.⁷

5 According to the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, published in Washington in April 2010, 89% of South Africans are Christians. The complete report can be viewed at www.pewforum.org.

6 For the sake of anonymity, the name of the preacher is omitted.

7 The constitution of the *Societas Homiletica* states that sermon analyses, done in collaboration with international colleagues, should always be part of the agenda of the *Societas*. I offer this analysis in remembrance and in honour of Rudolf Bohren, who passed away on 1 February 2010. Bohren was my Swiss mentor, my *Doktorvater*; to whom I am indebted for many things, also fundamental theological formation. Briefly put, the Heidelberg Method could be described as follows: the method originated from research done by homiletical study groups at the Practical Theological Seminary of the Karl Rupprecht University of Heidelberg, Germany, during the late 1970s. After the theoretical basis had been formulated, it was published for the first time at an international symposium on preaching held in Heidelberg on 8-12 October 1986. Here the Swiss practical theologian Rudolf Bohren, the German author Gerd Debus, and others shared their experiences in applying this method with a broader homiletical community. Generally speaking it can be called an intra-textual approach, which intends, by means of a “close reading” of sermons, and by implementing rhetorical and theological criteria, to interpret the Word of God in, and often against, the preached Word. Simply put, it asks: to what extent does the preached Word articulate the Word of God? Or in the definition of Bullinger: is the preached Word of God indeed the Word of God (*predicatio dei est verbum dei*)? As an analytical method it naturally represents a framework of interpretation. Its intention is therefore not to be the final word on specific sermons, but rather to open up a dialogue concerning these sermons. It wishes to serve the maturing of preacher and congregation, the latter to its full stature as complete church (*ecclesia completa*), a church that has both the ability and right to judge the preached Word (Luther). It therefore literally takes preachers at their word(s), trying to truly understand them, sometimes even up to the point of understanding them better than they understood themselves; trying to grasp the pivotal, and often subconscious hermeneutical decisions which underlie their sermons. In doing this, the most basic questions are asked, such as: How is the biblical text implemented in the sermon? What congregation is presupposed and/or invoked? What role does the preacher play? And, of specific importance for this paper: *What (kind of) God is pictured in the sermon?* (cf. Bohren/ Jörns 1989: 55-61). There are of course also other methods of sermon analysis, for instance the Heidelberg model with the use of the Kwalitan computer program; the hermeneutical model developed by Vaessen; the model for researching the sermon as a Word of God by Stark; the combination

This method aims, *inter alia*, to disclose the *fundamental hermeneutic structures* of sermons. In the following analysis I will focus⁸ on this, while also venturing a *theological interpretation*.

2. ANALYSIS

2.1 The God of the past

At first glance the sermon⁹ looks inspiring and comforting (i.e. theologically “correct”), indeed like a word fitting the times. However, deeper analysis of the fundamental hermeneutic structure reveals that there is more going on beneath the surface than meets the eye. The sermon takes as its text Joshua 3:1-17, which depicts Israel in transit, on the point of crossing the river Jordan, and then uses it to draw a parallel with a South Africa that faces an uncertain future, wherein property, political power, security of jobs and businesses are threatened. Against the backdrop of these uncertain times, the congregation is called upon to trust God, to acknowledge and accept God since they need – as was the case with Israel facing the Jordan – God’s **divine intervention**.

The sermon is characterised by *two tensions*, the first obvious and on the surface, so to speak, the second somewhat hidden, but nonetheless dramatic and essential for the understanding of the hermeneutical structure of the sermon. The *first tension* flows from the preacher’s assessment of the South African transition. Looking back at the election of April 1994, i.e. *historically speaking*, the preacher can describe what has happened as **nothing short of a miracle**. None other than *God* has delivered us from **oppression and exploitation**. Looking to the *future*, however, the preacher speaks for people who are nervous and uncertain, *en route* to an unsafe, unknown destination. For them the transition is **painful and difficult**, not without **dissatisfaction with the way things are going on in this country**. While the past provides much reason for gratitude, the future constitutes an *impossible destiny*.

The *second tension* in a sense runs parallel to the first. Looking back at the great deeds of God with regards to Israel (again: *historically speaking*), as they are proclaimed in the biblical text, the preacher can stress the *initiative of God* resulting in the faith of Israel. **God said it and they believed it to be true**. That is the order, the (theological) sequence of events. Quoting from Hebrews and Joshua, the preacher underlines the **miraculous working power of God amongst the people of Israel**, how **God cares... rescues... sets them on a new path**. What God *has done* (in the recent past) in South Africa is cited as yet another example of this miraculous initiative of God – so much so that the order: God acts and people respond, is now reduced to God’s initiative alone: **We may have stopped believing and trusting in God in the measure of those people of Biblical times, but God is still very much present and very much alive today in the world**. *This is indeed the preacher’s basic intention in his sermon: to elevate the faith of his listeners to the measure of those people of biblical times, to transform them into champions of faith*. One could say: he intends to *empower and enable* them to achieve the level of faith of these biblical examples.

2.2 The God of the future

In order to achieve this, he asks four questions, taken from the example of Jordan, and once again

of the Heidelberg model and Stark’s model by De Klerk, De Wet and Letsosa; and the grounded theory model for inductive analysis of sermons in order to develop a theory from the data. For an overview of these approaches cf. Pieterse 2009:1.

8 This implies that not every sentence and/or word of the sermon is necessarily reflected in the analysis.

Obviously the preacher also says some moving and noteworthy things, but insofar as they do not impact on the basic hermeneutic structure, they are not mentioned or analysed.

9 The complete sermon is attached as addendum. It represents a *verbatim* reproduction of the sermon as it was preached. Direct quotations are done in bold.

he confirms the sequence: **How a people among whom God works are moved and prompted to respond in faith.** It is interesting to note that the first three of these four questions (where, how, when and why God works; are *all answered in an indicative fashion, ending in a personal note in the present tense*, for example: **Jesus is with you. He is there...** ; **Through the Spirit God is at work in your life right now, right this minute;** **The same is of course true for you and me today.** But then comes a *telling switch*: the last question does not end in the present, indicative tense, but as a *future possibility*: **He wants to encourage faith in us so that we might trust Him. He wants us to embrace his Lordship.** Now we hear of God's intent.

Why this sudden change in tense? A possibility might be that the preacher *wants to prepare the listener for the second part of his sermon* in which he "applies" what he has said so far to people living in uncertain times and facing an uncertain future. Therefore the break and contrast effected by "But", as he states: **But what does the Jordan story have to say to us this morning?** *"But" forms the bridge between God's deeds and God's intent, signalling the tension between what God has done and what God wants to do in South Africa in a time of transition.*

The second part of the sermon indeed slants towards the future, stressing *possibilities*. This is expressed grammatically in a flood of future tenses. A few prominent examples: **God can take the worst and turn it into his very best. God can take your impossibilities and turn them into probabilities. He wants to do that for you, right here, right now; He can and will see you through...** (131); **God will be your strength and refuge**, etc. Perhaps the best example of this *tension between salvation history and salvation possibility* is seen here. Looking at the biblical text, the preacher states: **Friends, Joshua was not afraid because God went before him...** Addressing the congregation, he says: **How are you crossing your Jordan today? Is it alone? Is it on your own strength? God wants to go before you. God wants to lead you. God wants to help you.** One could say, with due respect, that God is put on hold. God *wants* to act, but apparently does not. Why? Something has to happen first; certain conditions must first be met. But what are they?

2.3 *Homo intactus*: the human of the hour

The listener must first act. Between God's acts in the past and God's acts in the future stand the acts of the congregation in the present. Therefore it is quite logical that the preacher continues and starts the *third part* of his sermon with: **The Jordan story tells us what we must do.** Now the emphasis no longer falls on what *God has done* according to the Jordan story, but what *we must do*. Indeed, *while the present indicative dominates the first part of the sermon, and the future tense the second, the imperative now structures the third.* The preacher repeatedly says: **you must... we must... we must... you must.**

If I am not mistaken, and this is said not lightly, the preacher falls prey to a fatal trap of *religious activism*,¹⁰ born out of an inappropriate God-image. I believe that he does not do this deliberately. His *bona fides* should not be questioned; in fact, as preachers we probably do not have the conscious and deliberate intention to proclaim lies (Augustine: *mendacium est enunciato cum voluntate falsum enuntiandi*; cf. Cilliers 2006:2). We should have sympathy with the preacher. The difficulties in crossing the "Jordan in South Africa", here and now, the pressures of the present,¹¹ cause the preacher to interpret, albeit subconsciously, this present

10 This could also be called *moralism*, but in my opinion this classic concept has been contaminated to such an extent that it needs revisiting. Postmodern people, for instance, often equate (a call for) moral values with moralism, which is of course not the case. The notion of *religious activism* is current, often used in debates of inter-religious nature. A case in point would be the vehement reaction, and indeed activism, of Muslim people recently in South Africa against a satirical depiction of Mohammed by the renowned cartoonist Zapiro. The debate spilled over into Parliament and almost also into the courts.

11 As experienced 16 years ago. Cf. the previous discussion on page 2.

as a *vacuum between God's deeds and God's probabilities*, a vacuum into which steps none other than the religious human being, (*homo religious*), who is also an intact human being (*homo intactus*). This human being must now salvage the precarious state of affairs. Through his and her choices the future – that which God wants to do – will indeed be like the past – that which God has done. This intact, religious human being must ensure that past and future coincide in the present. In effect God's acts hinge on what the listener “must” do in the present.

This is stereotypical of religious activism, stating what God has done and what God will do, but more importantly: what people must do to activate God's deeds now (cf. Josuttis 1966:24). In principle, or at least *linguistically*, it leaves the present devoid of God's acts. Ironically the preacher goes to great lengths to stress the fact that God and Jesus never change, that they are **unchanging**. But the preacher's dogmatic confession about God is short-circuited here by his homiletical methodology. God in fact does change, or rather: is changed by the sermon from present and active to absent and inactive. This *image of the absent and inactive God* is underlined by the stereotypical structure of religious activism (cf. Cilliers 1996:98), which could be described in a nutshell as follows:

1. God did (in the past)
2. God wants to (in the future)
3. We must (in the present).

2.4 Disabling God in an able world?

But, one could ask, is God not present? Of course God's presence should not be understood in a mechanical or deterministic way. God's presence is always an *elusive presence*; God's revelation is always also an act of concealing (Terrien 1978: 321, 470). God is, simultaneously, a *deus revelatus* and a *deus absconditus*. God is often revealed in paradoxes – even as One wearing masks. According to Luther, every part of creation in fact forms part of God's masquerade (*Ideo universa creatura eius est larva dei*; W.A. 40:1:174; 17: II: 192). But this is not what is at stake here. In sermons like these, God is *taken out of the picture* by human beings. God suffers subordination according to the conditions of human beings, suffers *anthroponome subordination* (cf. Landau 1981:191). *The actions and abilities of human beings, which are ironically intended to activate God, in fact disable God*. Religious activism could in this case be called *the act of disabling God by means of religious rhetoric*. The preacher is so influenced by the paradigm of (or in this case: the longing for) an empowered and enabled¹² post-apartheid South Africa that the fundamental hermeneutical structure of his sermon disables God. The religious activism of the *homo intactus* results in the depiction of an *incapacitated and disabled God*. Again: this is not said lightly. On the contrary.

The way in which the preacher steps into the activist trap of *disabling God by means of religious rhetoric* is nowhere better seen here. The preacher prepares the listener for what is to come by first asking **a little more** of the congregation (euphemistically?), and then quoting Joshua 3:5 to substantiate this. In the process the quoted text is twisted ever so slightly, given a seemingly innocent but altered nuance, with far-reaching results. The preacher states: **You must consecrate yourself to God... What happens when you consecrate yourself to God? The Lord will do amazing things among you. So you see, my friends, when you commit your life to God**

12 The notion of an *able world* comes into play here: in a consumerist and market-driven society weakness and failure and lament have no place. Success is the key word. Arbuckle finds this mentality a sad state of affairs and contends that “This is a thoroughly pathetic and frightening picture of a death-denying culture, for just as we seek to deny physical death, so also we are apt to ignore all kinds of painful personal and social loss. We have developed a pervasive mythology in which success is the hallmark of Western identity and failure or loss has no place in it” (1991:44).

that's precisely what you will see.

The biblical text of course does not say this. Although the text *does* speak about consecration to God, as the first part of the preacher's statement articulates, it is the second part of his statement that derails the intention of the text. Joshua 3:5 says: "Purify yourselves, *because* tomorrow the Lord will perform miracles among you" (GNB). *In his eagerness to fill what he senses as a vacuum between past and future, the preacher changes the preconditioned action of Israel into a conditional action, which must be duplicated by his hearers.* A homiletic slip takes place between the cup of the text and the lip of the preacher, with devastating effects. God's action now *depends* on whether we can purify ourselves **most completely**. *Because*¹³ now becomes *when*. Theological *grounding* is changed into activist *temporality*; *God's initiative* is transformed into *human timing*.¹⁴

Of significance here is the use of the superlative. Extensive sermon analytical studies have shown that superlatives and tautologies are often characteristic speech-patterns of religious activism (cf. Josuttis 1966:20ff.). The implication is disheartening (not comforting, as the sermon suggests at first glance; cf. 2.1). It could even be called cruel: must we consecrate ourselves *most completely* – *before* God can act? No! It could even be called a form of *sermonic pathology*: to manipulate (activate) people to activate (manipulate) God, i.e. to utilise an inappropriate God-image in order to address, but also manipulate the needs of people. No!

2.5 Rhetorical camouflage?

One could of course argue that the preacher merely strives to balance the first part of the sermon with the latter, to complement the indicative with the imperative (analogously to what Paul does in some of his letters). I do not believe that this is the case. *The first part of the sermon rather serves to camouflage the last and indeed focal part*, where the preacher now in fact does expect his listeners to elevate their faith to the **measure of those people of Biblical times**, as already hinted at in the introduction of the sermon. *These biblical characters become examples that the listener must copy, and as such become a law unto themselves.* They become non-human beings,

13 The Hebrew word for because, *kī*, is a particle which means: because, for, when. It denotes reason, in this case because of the acts of the Lord. The temporal possibility (when) is also linked to the active subject, the Lord.

14 *The analogical schematism that is used in this sermon (i.e. between Israel and the South African nation) in fact dispels unilaterally the tension that characterises the dialectic relation between God and time.* God is revealed in history, and this is no deceptive revelation, but God's Being that is revealed to us; it is God who makes history in this revelation. Between God's Being and God's revelation, there is no tension. Yet God is also more than God's revelation. God's reality is not dissolved in God's work. Because God is more than God's works, God can work; because God is greater than God's revelation and precedes it, God's Being can be revealed (Durand 1976:47). Neither has God, in God's revelation, been given to us as manipulable in our hands. In the analogical schematism, however, God cannot be viewed as One who acts differently and surprisingly in the relative times. God rather becomes *bound and thus idolised* in the relative times. By implication, God is divided into two. On the one hand, God is written into an ancient situation (e.g. the time of Joshua). On the other hand, God becomes trapped in the present day. Strictly speaking, God cannot act freshly and differently. Ironically, by God being so trapped in history and in proclamation, God is taken from history and God's sovereignty over history is taken from God. If I interpret this correctly, through this, God becomes an *unhistorical principle*. Actually, this kind of analogical schematism is a way of escaping from time, from the continuation of time, and from God's self-revelation *in* time; it is a grasping back into history to avoid contemporary realities and the future. It represents a particular form of anti-prophecy that does not dare to jump ahead, but rather arrests time and reproduces history. In this arrest and reproduction, God becomes comparable and inactive; God is incapacitated and disabled (cf. Cilliers 2006: 20-23).

and are in fact held forth as legends, as people who *never failed to put their trust in God... never gave up on God*. Never? Really?

The description of Joshua gives fuel to the present-day *homo intactus*, enabling him/her to be *unshakeable*. Joshua is pictured as anything but vulnerable, the perfect allegory for *able* believers, for people who have a (tautological) **believing faith**. He does everything absolutely right, never failing, never faltering. And the question following this, of course, is: **Do you have such faith...?**

Jordan itself no longer stands as *symbol of God's faithfulness*, but becomes a *paradigm for manipulation*, based on the presupposition that there is an undisputed *link and identification*, i.e. a *situational analogy* between God's acts within the nation of Israel and the needs of various groups in South Africa today. As a matter of fact, *the use of such an analogous scheme is symptomatic of a search for security in a time of emergency* (cf. Cilliers 2006:15 ff.). The analogical use of the Jordan narrative serves to address the **uncertainty and fear** of present-day South Africans. But more importantly: the hinge on which this paradigm of manipulation turns is the imperative to act according to the unshakeable examples of Joshua and other biblical champions of faith. "Jordan" becomes a pious, inner state of strength that we can derive through duplication of these champions of faith – *then* we can face experiences like changing of jobs, buying new houses, entering into marriage, etc. Then we are indeed *able*. In the process, **The Ark of the Covenant of God**, which **represents the actual presence of God**, becomes a symbol of power, of human enablement; God's presence is utilised for empowering and enabling. In short: the Ark becomes the elongation and ultimate legitimisation of a religious activist agenda.

In my opinion, the introductory passage of the sermon already harbours in itself, and in fact prepares the listener for, this activist end. In the very first sentences of the sermon we hear: **The scriptures abound in examples of men and women who took God at his Word... Can the same be said about you and me this morning?** This basic question, which forms part of the backbone of the sermon, is repeated: **Do you have such faith to believe that God will rescue you no matter what your situation?** Rhetorical questions such as these are characteristic of classical religious activism (Josuttis 1966:20ff.). What answer does the preacher expect? Yes or no? Of course we do not "have" such faith! "Must" we now generate it? "Must" we now consecrate ourselves so "most completely" that we are able **to see the Triune God** as the preacher implores as elsewhere?

It is ironic and inevitable: in the very beginning of the sermon already lies its manipulative end. In the last paragraph we hear of *God's invitation* which is still open, but this becomes subject to *our invitation* of Jesus into our lives. The question indeed is: *who in fact invites whom?* It would seem as if the whole sermon is geared towards this end, as a type of "altar call" to listeners over the radio: to admonish them to "invite Jesus into your lives".

God's miracle now only takes place **as I entrust myself to thee**. The sphere in which the sermon operates remains the inner state of the religious hearer; the hermeneutical space remains reduced to the pious inner circle of the *homo religious* and *homo intactus*. The same pious material is used again and again, and ultimately, all sermons like these end up with "an invitation to invite Jesus into your lives" – as if we are *able* to do that. This stereotypical pious encircling of biblical texts bypasses the reality outside the circle, in this case the reality of a South Africa in a time of transition. The hearers finds themselves in uncertain times, but they are not called to make decisions and act *within* this situation; they are rather *taken out* of this to a pious sphere where they must (for how many times still?) make a decision for God and to "invite Jesus into their lives."

In a sense, the first part of the sermon is sabotaged by the second and especially third part. All the glowing indicatives of the first part (where the preacher spoke *historically* about what

God has done) are funnelled through, and coloured by, the God-image of the second part (where the preacher spoke about the *future intent* of God), and ultimately by the *imperatives* of the third part; for instance, God's choice to work amongst us becomes subordinated to our choice to invite Jesus into our lives; the fact that God works in God's own time is shackled by people's timing – *when* you consecrate yourself to God, most completely. As a matter of fact, the four questions of the introduction – where, how, when and why God works – are all subjected to the way in which we “must” now cross our Jordan. God now indeed does work under **force or pressure**, namely that of the *homo religious* and *homo intactus*; God no longer is **in control**, no longer holds the initiative, no longer acts as *prima causa*, no longer goes before us *so that* we may follow, but rather follows us *as we go* before God.

2.6 Deus debilitatus?

It is clear that the sermon contains many ironies. The preacher speaks about the unchanging God and yet his sermon changes (disables) God; he intends to picture what God will be doing (*futurum*), but does not understand that God is (continuously and actively) coming into the present (*adventus*); he calls upon his hearers to understand that God works in God's own time, and that we are **often frustrated by what seems to be God's slowness in responding to our needs**, even stressing that we have to wait like Moses and Joshua did, because **the same is of course true for you and me today**, and yet his religious activism does not allow him to wait. The God of the future (*deus futurum*) must be brought into the present through pious activities, instead of waiting for the revelation of the presence of the continuously coming God (*deus adventus*).

Perhaps the biggest irony of all is the fact that the preacher presents (pictures) the image of a disabled God in his sermon, not understanding that there is indeed another picture of the disabled God, a picture not created through the activism of the *homo intactus*, but through the revelation of God's *incarnation and inhabitation*. God's presence (the Ark of the Covenant in Joshua) is not “a mighty power” that blows everything and everybody away. God does not side with the mighty.¹⁵ God's indwelling power (or ability) is rather of a different order: it is that of a God crucified, resurrected and poured out on all flesh. Not within an able world, but within a disabled world, *for the sake of this disabled world*. In the process God is *not* left intact, but is shattered; God is not whole, but fragmented; God is not able, but disabled and incapacitated (*deus debilitatus*).¹⁶

In a moving account the theologian Nancy Eiesland, herself being a disabled person, speaks as follows of her epiphany in regard to the image of God:

I had waited for a mighty revelation of God. But my epiphany bore little resemblance to the God I was expecting or the God of my dreams. I saw God in a sip-puff wheelchair, that is, the chair used mostly by quadriplegics enabling them to manoeuvre by blowing and sucking on a straw like device. Not an omnipotent, self-sufficient God, but neither a pitiable, suffering servant. In this moment, I beheld God as a survivor, unputying and forthright.
(1994: 89)

God is on the side of, with and within, suffering (disabled) humanity. The preacher, as a South

15 One is reminded of President Zuma's recent claims that God is on the side of the ANC, being there since its conception, and that the ANC will rule until “Jesus comes again.” We are reminded of the questions that we posed at the beginning of this article, namely: did sermons like these help us in our time of transition? Did they launch us on a path of healing, or the contrary? Dare we say that sermons like these contributed towards picturing a God that can be activated to “be on our side”? A God that can be “called in” to legitimise our search for power? And that ironically, through this, God is in fact incapacitated and “taken out of picture” in post-apartheid South Africa?

16 *Debilitatus* is the past participle of *debilito* – to debilitate, weaken, disable.

African, should have known this.

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ADDENDUM

CROSSING THE JORDAN SOUTH AFRICA, MAY 1994

The Scriptures abound in examples of men and women who took God at his Word. God said it and they believed it to be true. In spite of the context, the conditions and circumstances they never failed to put their trust in God. Now let us not for any moment believe that they had it easy. In fact, they suffered more than we can possibly imagine but they never gave up on God. Why? Because they knew God, they knew that they could trust Him; they knew that they could depend on Him. Can the same be said about you and me this morning? That no matter what we are going through in this life right now we will not be shaken or uprooted from our position in God? But like the psalmist in Psalm 46 we will find our refuge and strength in God our Creator?

The writer to the Hebrews in chapter 11 commends people like Abraham, Noah, Moses and Enoch as the champions of faith, as those, who in spite of their adversities, surrendered to God in hope. In fact, for most of them, their situation was indeed of nothing less than a miracle. The Jordan story we read this morning is another example of the miraculous working power of God amongst the people of Israel. It is a story of how God cares for his people, of how God rescues them out of bondage and of how God sets them on a new path of discovery and hope.

Perhaps we as South Africans can understand that today. For many in our country the present transition is nothing short of a miracle. Who would have believed that in 1994 we would have seen changes that we are now witnessing in this country, in our government as a whole? Indeed, the days of miracles are not yet over. We may have stopped believing and trusting in God in the measure of those people of Biblical times but God is still very much present and very much alive today in the world. The world may be modern and our perceptions of God may be changing with the modern world but the good news is that God is still the same – yesterday, today, and forever. Though it may change, but Jesus – never!

The Jordan story is one example of the miraculous activity of an unchanging God. It suffices to tell us where God works, how God works, when God works and why God works. But more importantly, it serves to tell us how a people among whom God works are moved and prompted to respond in faith.

Getting back to the Jordan story then, we find the people engaged in a determined but in a somewhat impossible destiny. They wanted to break free from a land of oppression and exploitation and enter into the Promised Land where they could establish a city of God. But they realized that they could not do this on their own human strength. They needed God's divine intervention. Perhaps this answers the question on where God works. He works wherever there is a need, especially wherever there is a need for Him to be recognized, accepted, and appreciated as God. He's always at work, bringing people to faith and transformation. The gospel writer Matthew tells us in chapter 8 that Jesus is always there in the middle of the storm and what is the purpose of Him being there? To bring peace and calm. Maybe you have a serious need right now; maybe you are experiencing a storm in your life right now. My plea to you this morning is this: do be assured that Jesus is with you. He is there, restoring peace and calm in your broken life.

Let's tackle the second question: How does God work? The Bible tells us that He works in a variety of ways. The Elijah story tells us that God works in a whisper. The psalmist tells us that God works in a thunderstorm or in an earthquake. But the Jordan story this morning tells us that God stills the waters, divides the seas and breaks down the walls of oppression of whatever kind. Through the Spirit God is at work in your life right now, right this minute.

That brings us to our next question: When does God work? The Bible tells us that God does not work under force or pressure. On many occasions Jesus is compelled by the crowd to show signs bearing testimony to his claim that He is the Son of God. But in each given moment Jesus refuses to do so. There is one fact that Jesus establishes in all of this and that is that God works in *his* time. Sometimes we have to painfully discover that for ourselves. Our desire to get quick answers is often frustrated by what seems to be God's slowness in responding to our needs. Moses and Joshua can ask of God but they must trust Him, and wait. The same is of course true for you and me today.

Let's then look at the last question: Why does God choose to work amongst us? The Bible tells us that it is his intent on reconciling us unto Himself. He wants to encourage faith in us so that we might trust Him. He wants us to embrace his Lordship.

But what does the Jordan story have to say to us this morning? Friends, I believe that each of us, whether we know it or not, whether we admit it or not, whether we have seen it or not, have a Jordan to cross. The Jordan I am talking about is the pain, suffering, and hurts of life. Jordan represents the impossibilities. Jordan represents those moments in which we need divine intervention. Jordan refers to the situations which require nothing less than a miracle. In the words of CS Lewis: Jordan refers to those moments when we say: "Lord, there's nothing I can do. I'm depending on You." Jordan is not necessarily "giving up" in as much as it is "giving over". It's taking God at his Word. It's trusting God for the future. Jordan means crossing the frontiers of the known into the borders of the unknown.

Perhaps that is exactly what we are doing in our country right now. Many people are very anxious and nervous about the New South Africa. They are afraid of the unknown. We are not certain about so many things – about the security of our jobs, about our properties and businesses. We are afraid of losing our power, influence and privileges as a people. Yes, we are crossing the Jordan and it is painful and difficult. There are many of us who are crossing from the known into the unknown zone in life. Perhaps you want to change your job but you are not certain of whether you are doing the right thing. Maybe you want to buy a new house but you

are not sure whether you can afford it in the long term. Maybe you want to enter into a marriage but you are not sure if that's what you really want in life. Maybe you want to reconcile a marriage that is already broken but you are not sure whether it is going to work out again. You want to change your lifestyle but you are not sure whether you will survive the changes. You want to improve the home situation but you don't know if it's going to work out in the end. Yes, we cross the Jordan of uncertainty almost every day of our lives, don't we? In fact, many of us are probably already saying "It's going to take nothing less than a miracle to save my marriage, my business, my family, my home, my house, and my life." But friends, let me assure you this morning that God is in the business of miracles. You thought that dividing the sea was scientifically impossible, right? Wrong! It's possible with God. God is the God of all impossibilities. God can take the worst and turn it into his very best. God can take your impossibilities and turn them into probabilities. He wants to do that for you, right here, right now.

Jordan, then, does not represent uncertainty and fear. Instead it stands for hope and faith. Joshua trusted God. When God told him "I will take you and my people with you across the waters of the Jordan" Joshua did not stop to ask if that was scientifically possible. He knew his God. He trusted in his God. And so it is that Scripture tells us that no sooner they touched the water's edge, the waters divided. The faith that Joshua expressed and exercised was not a foolish faith but a believing faith. Do you have such faith to believe that God will rescue you no matter what your situation? That God will save your home, your marriage, your business, your job and our country? Friends, Joshua was not afraid because God went before him. In verse 14 of chapter 3 we read that the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord went ahead. How are you crossing your Jordan today? Is it alone; is it on your own strength? God wants to go before you. God wants to lead you. God wants to help you.

Psalms 27 says "The Lord is my light and my salvation; I will fear no one. The Lord protects me from all danger; I will not be afraid." God wants us, like the champions of faith, to be sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see. The gospel writer Matthew tells us the same in chapter 6:25 following. He says that we should not be worried about what we will eat, what we will wear, what we will drink. Instead we should put our trust in God and He will see us through. Why? Because God is in control.

A joke is told about a man who fell down a cliff. Fortunately for him, he managed to grab onto a branch of a small tree. He couldn't move or do anything to save himself from falling further to the bottom. So he looked up and prayed to God for help. Then a faint voice came: "Let go." The man looked up and again a voice said, much louder: "Let go." The man looked up, he looked down again and he looked up again and then he shouted at the top of his voice: "Is there anybody else up there?" Friends, crossing the Jordan means letting go and allowing God to take over. But faith in God does not mean resigning. Instead it means reassigning. Not looking to one self any more but depending on God, assigning the task to God.

The Jordan story tells us what we must do. So right now you are in life's deep end and you are asking: "What must I do to cross this Jordan?" Let's see what God says to Joshua and his people. In verse 3 of chapter 3 the leader said to the people: "When you see the Ark of the Covenant of God you are to move out from your positions and follow it." You see, my friends, the Ark represented the actual presence of God. So what they were really saying is this: "You must follow God." Friends, this is my advice to you as you cross your Jordan this day. Move out of your positions of depression, hopelessness, security, fear, discomfort, and sadness and follow God. Trust God. Very often people with problems get preoccupied with themselves. They narrow and limit everything to their depressing circumstances. When crossing the Jordan we must learn to see beyond ourselves. We must see the Triune God.

But following God involves a little more. In verse 5 the leaders said to the people: "You must

consecrate yourself to God” meaning that they must give themselves to God most completely. Friends, as you cross your Jordan I implore you to do the same, to embrace the Lordship of Jesus Christ, you give yourself to Him most completely, to know for sure that He can and will see you through, to know that He is powerful and most able to carry you through the rough seas of life’s experiences. What happens when you consecrate yourself to God? In verse 5, continued, we read: “The Lord will do amazing things among you.” So you see, friends, when you commit your life to God that’s precisely what you will see. Things may not necessarily change for you, you may still struggle to pay the bond, you may still suffer the loss of a loved one, you may still suffer with the sickness of alcoholism, your marriage may still end in divorce, you may still not be satisfied with the way things are going on in this country, but in all that you will not be alone. God will be your strength and refuge, your ever present help in trouble. And therefore you will not fear, though the earth gives way. You will say with the prophet Habakkuk: “I will rejoice in the Lord of my salvation.”

Friends, you cannot cross your Jordans alone. Not on your own strength. You need divine intervention. You need God to put you on a new path of discovery, recovery and hope. Perhaps that’s what you need right now. Maybe you have forgotten God. Maybe you have given up on God. Maybe you don’t know God. As you cross your Jordan God’s invitation is still open to you right this very minute. He says: “Call unto me and I will answer thee. Come to me and I will in no way cast you away.” I trust that’s what you will choose to do – to invite Jesus into your life. If you should desire that right now, why not say this prayer with me. Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, I invite you into my life. I know that I cannot cross my Jordan alone. I confess my need for your divine presence. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, work your miracle in my life right now as I entrust myself to thee.

Amen.

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A theological re-description of the emergence of religion: In conversation with John Calvin on the *semen religionis*¹

ABSTRACT

Where does religion come from? This article suggests that this question may be addressed from the perspectives of various disciplines. An investigation of theological re-descriptions of the emergence of religion may provide insights on the relation between theology and the study of religion. The article explores John Calvin's views on the *semen religionis* as a case study of such a theological re-description. Calvin's account is then compared with Karl Barth's Christological account. It is observed that a fully trinitarian account of the emergence of religion may be required in this regard. The author concludes that any adequate theological account of this question would provide an ultimate perspective on the emergence of religion that cannot be captured under the generic rubric of "religion". To do so would amount to a form of reductionism.

INTRODUCTION

Where does religion come from? The emergence of religion can be accounted for from the perspective of a variety of disciplines. Although the question is formulated as a historical one, best to be discussed from the perspective of a history of religions, it has been addressed in several other disciplines, including Christian theology, sociology, palaeontology, the cognitive sciences (such as neuro-psychology), socio-biology and also genetic biology – the famous explanation of religion in terms of the "selfish gene" by Richard Dawkins and others. In this paper I will not discuss such recent accounts of the emergence of religion. Instead I will focus on theological accounts of the emergence of religion with specific reference to the reformed tradition. My hope is that the distinctness of the disciplines of "religion" and "theology" will be illustrated in the process.

Although the question is seldom formulated in precisely this way (it should not be confused with a theology of religions), such theological accounts of the emergence of religion are evident in the work of most major theologians, from Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin to Karl Barth. One standard approach to this question may be found in both Thomist and modern liberal positions. Here the emergence of Christianity is grounded in the emergence of the human species, human self-consciousness, experiences of transcendence and, subsequently, in the history of religion. Accordingly, Christianity is portrayed as one example of the generic phenomenon of religion. In this way its claims are often relativized from the outset. Although this may lead to a reductionist approach (in liberal and secular theologies), this is not necessarily the case since one may also allow for a hierarchy of increasing complexity where Christianity is portrayed as the highest manifestation of the human quest. This approach may be found in the work of Thomas Aquinas, Karl Rahner and Teilhard de Chardin alike.

1 This article is based on a paper read at a conference on "Claiming Conceptual Space: Re-imagining the Study of Religion and Theology: Changing Contexts and Social Discourses" hosted by Huguenot College and the Society for Theory of Religion and Theology, Wellington 6-9 April 2010.

In the reformed tradition such theological accounts of the emergence of religion are typically regarded as suspect. Here one may mention the critiques of relativism, reductionism but also of foundationalism. Often, this is captured under critiques of natural theology. To ground Christian views of the triune God in something else is to turn it into something that it is not. The deepest intuition embedded in such critiques is related to an affirmation of the sovereignty of God. If God is indeed the Creator of heaven and earth, the sovereign Lord of history and the ultimate destiny of the cosmos, then the emergence of religion must be understood with respect to the universal scope of such claims. Put bluntly, religion is the by-product of God's work; "God" is not merely a product of religious imagination.

One may argue that Calvin's notion of the *semen religionis* could be understood accordingly. He does not offer a closet form of natural theology, but seeks to demonstrate that the widespread presence of moral conscience and notions of the divine in other religious traditions could be understood in terms of the revelation of the triune God in God's works (of creation and providence).² In other words: Calvin seeks to offer a theological re-description of the emergence of religion. Of course, his point is that such religiosity remains insufficient for true knowledge of God and for salvation, but that it does render humans without a proper excuse. Clearly, this is a function of Calvin's famous insistence of God's sovereignty: nothing, not even sin or the devil, and therefore no form of religious expression, falls outside God's domain.

From the perspective of many modern theologies such theological accounts of the emergence of religion remain contrived. The core of the critique is that such theological claims cannot account for their own emergence. How is it possible to speak of God and from God's perspective in the first place? How does anyone know anything about God at all? If all discourse about that which transcends us come "from below", then those who speak with any degree of certainty about God (as if they could sit in on the eternal counsel of the triune God) are actually dishonest. Hermeneutically and historically, some form of natural theology is therefore regarded as inevitable. The problem with theological critiques of natural theology is that they become self-referential and circuitous. Accordingly, they rest on assumptions about the notion of the divine that are not acknowledged. In short, Christian truth claims simply has to be understood in terms of the history of religious ideas.

On the basis of such preliminary reflections I will investigate in this paper the theological account of the emergence of religion offered by John Calvin in terms of his notion of the *semen religionis*. I will compare that briefly with the Christological account offered by Karl Barth in his discussion of the "lesser lights".

JOHN CALVIN ON THE *SEMEN RELIGIONIS*

Calvin's views on the *semen religionis* are classically articulated in Book 1, Chapter 3 of his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.³ The opening statement reads:

There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity (*divinitatis sensum*⁴). This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretence of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all men a certain

2 See my recent essay entitled "All theology is natural theology: In conversation with John Calvin on the human senses" (Conradie 2011).

3 I am using the English translation of Calvin's *Institutes if the Christian religion* by Battles Ford Lewis, edited by John T. McNeill (1960).

4 In his footnotes on *divinitatis sensum* and *semen religionis* McNeill (1960:43) comments that both terms refer to the "numinous awareness of God" and that this is closely related to conscience as a moral response to this awareness.

understanding of his divine majesty (I.3.1).

What Calvin regards as beyond controversy here may be granted to him, even by atheist critics. The phenomenon of religion is indeed quite widespread. An elusive sense of transcendence emerges in numerous contexts, including mathematics. Whether or not such an experience may be described as one of “the divine” may be disputed, but some numinous awareness of transcendence is recognised whenever you know that there is something that you do not know or grasp. The following statement is of course not beyond controversy, if only on the basis of gender concerns. Calvin here offers a theological re-description of this observation: “God himself has implanted in all men a certain understanding of his divine majesty.”

The term “seed of religion” appears within the same paragraph. Again Calvin moves from a generalised observation to a theological re-description that this amounts to a “tacit confession” that was “inscribed [by God] in the hearts of all”:

Yet there is, as the eminent pagan [Cicero] says, no nation so barbarous, no people so savage, that they have not a deep-seated conviction that there is a God. And they who in other aspects of life seem least to differ from brutes still continue to retain some seed of religion. So deeply does the common conception occupy the minds of all, so tenaciously does it in here in the hearts of all! Therefore, since from the beginning of the world there has been no region, no city, in short, no household, that could do without religion, there lies in this a tacit confession of a sense of deity inscribed in the hearts of all (I.3.1).

In a delightful further exposition Calvin pre-emptively but also refutes a Marxian critique of religion: Therefore it is utterly vain for some men to say that religion was invented by the subtlety and craft of a few to hold the simple folk in thrall by this device and that those very persons who originated the worship of God for others did not in the least believe that any God existed. I confess, indeed, that in order to hold men’s minds in greater subjection, clever men have devised very many things in religion by which to inspire the common folk with reverence and to strike them with terror. But they would never have achieved this if men’s minds had not already been imbued with a firm conviction about God, from which the inclination toward religion springs as from a seed.

Again, the closing sentence from this quotation offers a theological re-description of the emergence of the “inclination toward religion”. Calvin concludes on this basis that “actual godlessness is impossible”: “a sense of divinity which can never be effaced is engraved upon men’s minds” (I.3.3). “Engraved” is further qualified by “naturally inborn” and “fixed deep within, as it were in the very marrow”. In conversation with Cicero, Plato and Plutarch, Calvin adds that “it is worship of God alone that renders men higher than the brutes, and through it alone they aspire to immortality” (the concluding sentence of I.3). Religion is thus seen as something positive and ennobling.

On this basis the opening sentence of Book I.4 then reads: “As experience shows, God has sown a seed of religion [*semen religionis*] in all men [and women!]” The argument from experience is interesting here given subsequent controversies over natural theology. However, it should be noted that Calvin’s argument can only be valid as far as the presence of religiosity amongst “all men” is concerned. Experience cannot be used to confirm the theological explanation of such an observation, namely that it is the triune God who has sown this seed of religion in all men.

The rest of chapter IV of Book I is devoted to Calvin’s contention that such knowledge of God “is either smothered or corrupted, partly by ignorance, partly by malice”. This Calvin espouses with his considerable rhetorical skills. Essentially his argument is that, “Since, therefore, men one and all perceive that there is a God and that he is their Maker, they are condemned by their own testimony because they have failed to honour him and to consecrate their lives to his will” (I.3.1). Irrespective of this critique, Calvin maintains in the conclusion to this chapter that: “Yet

that seed remains which can in no wise be uprooted: that there is some sort of divinity; but this seed is so corrupted that by itself it produces only the worst fruits. From this, my present contention is brought out with greater certainty, that a sense of divinity is by nature engraved on human hearts.” From this point of departure, Calvin then offers an account of where true knowledge of God (piety) may be found, namely on the basis of God’s revelation. He famously structures this in terms of knowledge of God as Creator (God as manifest in his created works – covered in the rest of Book I) and knowledge of God as Saviour (in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit – covered in Book II-IV).

The controversy over how, according to Calvin, such knowledge of God as Creator is related to knowledge of God as Saviour cannot be discussed here.⁵ Instead, the question that I will address is what role this *sensum divinitatis* plays in relation to knowledge of both God as Creator and Saviour. These three themes should not be confused since knowledge of God as Creator can precisely not be equated with this *sensum divinitatis*.

The question is therefore whether a hermeneutical function could be attributed to the *sensum divinitatis*? Is knowledge of God as Creator built upon such a *sensum divinitatis*? And is knowledge of God as Saviour then built upon knowledge of God as Creator (i.e. what can be derived from God’s works as opposed to God’s words)? If so, would the emergence of religion have a certain historic and epistemic priority over Christian truth claims? Does the *sensum divinitatis* offer a “point of contact” for Christian apologetics or to relate the Christian faith to other religious beliefs – since the Christian faith emerged from such a *sensum divinitatis* in the first place? If some form of natural theology is indeed hermeneutically inevitable, how can the dangers of such natural theology (which Barth rightly fulminated against) be avoided?

Alternatively, is the order in which Calvin introduces these three themes perhaps merely for rhetorical and pedagogical purposes (the elusive “order of right teaching” in I.1.3). If so, is Calvin’s actual point of departure the faith in God as Saviour in Jesus Christ so that knowledge of God as Creator is merely an extrapolation of this faith? Then the *sensum divinitatis* could merely be seen as a rhetorical skill to exclude any other claims or excuses from the outset. This position would beg the questions raised in the introduction above, namely where Calvin obtained such knowledge of God in the first place. How did Calvin come to have such intimate knowledge of God? From Scripture and the fathers, yes, but where did that come from? What role did the emergence of concepts of the divine and (prior to that) concepts of transcendence play in the history of the Jewish-Christian tradition, the history of religions and indeed the history of humanity and of the earth’s biosphere? What role does human experience and the human senses play in coming to knowledge of God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ?

It should be clear that a lot is at stake in this regard, also in terms of how the relationship between Christian theology and the study of religion and of religions may be understood. Not surprisingly, these questions are heavily debated in contemporary Christian theology. Such debates obviously influence Calvin scholarship as well. Given Calvin’s style of writing, which often allows creative tensions to remain unresolved, it is quite easy to merely read one’s own position into Calvin’s texts. This was already evident from the contrasting descriptions of Calvin’s position in the famous controversy between Brunner and Barth on natural theology (see Conradie 2011a & 2011b).

5 See my recent essay entitled “Calvin’s views on creation and salvation – on the distinction between ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’” (Conradie 2010). Calvin described the relationship between knowledge of God as Creator and as Redeemer in terms of a duplex cognitio Domini. Thomas observes that traditional Calvin interpreters (e.g. Warfield and Kuyper) assumed that Calvin treated knowledge of the Creator first because it comes first in experience. By contrast Barthian scholars reversed the order. Faith in the Saviour is the presupposition of the Christian confession of the triune Creator. John Thomas suggests that Calvin’s understanding of this relationship is probably a dialectical one. See Thomas (1992).

My sense is that Calvin's position is typically more dialectical and more dynamic, allowing for unresolved and creative tensions,⁶ than what commentators on him (including myself) can stomach. This applies to understanding the relationship between the *sensum divinitatis* and true knowledge of God, between knowledge of God as Creator and as Saviour, between God's works and God's words, between "general" and "special" revelation and so forth. One of the best recent expositions of these relationships is found in Randall Zachman's excellent study on *Image and word in the theology of John Calvin*. It may be helpful to briefly explore some of his crucial insights.

ZACHMAN ON IMAGE AND WORD

How is knowledge of God possible in the first place? If God is essentially invisible, can God nevertheless be seen? Given Calvin's insistent emphasis on God's transcendence, he was able to fiercely reject human attempts to establish symbols of God's presence on earth. The scholarly consensus is that, instead, Calvin's theology "is overwhelmingly a 'theology of the word'" (Edward Dowey). The only feasible way of communication between God and the fallen world is through the Word. Knowledge of God is attained primarily through hearing rather than by seeing. The word is the primary means of grace.⁷ Yet, how can we hear that word? How has Calvin come to know what he claims to know about God? Through the biblical texts, yes, but how can we recognise the ordinary human words that we find there as *God's* words? How can we gain a sense of God's transcendence if it is indeed transcendent? How can we escape the sceptic conclusion that Calvin's claims amount to little more than his own constructions of the divine – which he communicated with considerable authority and rhetorical skill in his sphere of influence?

In his recent study Zachmann addresses these questions from the outset. He recognises that Calvin developed a highly sophisticated understanding of signification, especially through his views on the sacraments, to address these questions. In short, Calvin recognised that a sign can carry meanings that transcend the material signifier by far. In this sense he pre-empted insights emerging from contemporary palaeontology, namely that it is a distinguishing feature of the human species that we use symbols to communicate, giving us a competitive advantage above other animals. Calvin also recognised that such meaning (the signified) can only be discerned on the basis of the material signifier. In exegesis it is therefore crucial to understand the "spirit" of the text (that towards which it points and towards which it leads), but we gain an understanding of that which is signified only on the basis of the "letter" of the text.

We as humans can gain access to the material signifier only through the human senses. To his credit, Zachmann recognises to what extent Calvin emphasised the role of the human senses – not only the ear, but certainly also the eye, not to forget the role of smelling, tasting and feeling. Calvin often uses dramatic visual images for the knowledge of God – lightning, illumination, spectacles, blindness, seeing reflections as if in a mirror, being spectators in the theatre of God's glory, the "eye of faith", the role of fabric and clothing, and so forth. The role of the eye is also pertinent to perceiving gestures and actions. Zachman's (2007:20) book offers an extended commentary on the dialectic between image (accessible to the eye) and word (accessible to the

6 See Thomas (1992:123), with reference to Hermann Bauke who argued that a "complexio oppositorum is absolutely constitutive as a formal determination for Calvin's theology."

7 This emphasis on the verbal nature of salvation as a dynamic event, through which God's word of forgiveness is heard, is also evident in the contributions of South African reformed scholars such as Hennie Rossouw, Willie Jonker and Flip Theron – my teachers in philosophy and systematic theology, following their Dutch teachers such as GC Berkouwer and Oepke Noordmans. See my earlier article (Conradie 1992), also Rossouw (1963), Jonker (1981), Koornhof & Jonker (1987) and Theron (1987).

ear) in Calvin's theology. He shows that Calvin appealed as much to the eye and affections as to the ear and the intellect. In short he argues that...

[Calvin] insisted that the Word of God never comes to us alone but is always accompanied by the visible self-manifestation of God and the corresponding self-manifestation of the human heart. We must always hear the Word in order to be able to see the living image of God; but concomitantly we must always open our eyes to see the living images of God even as we hear the Word of God (Zachman (2007:2).

On this basis Zachman investigates the dialectic between manifestation and proclamation in Calvin's theology.⁸ He shows how visible signs and words are interdependent: the word (itself a palpable sign) explains the meaning of the sign while the sign reinforces the word, painting a picture of its meaning that is accessible to the senses. The ear guides the eye towards the meaning of the sign (the signified). Here Calvin draws on Augustine notion of the sacraments as "visible words". Zachman (2007:13) explains:

Unlike the use of rhetoric, in which words are used to portray the reality before the eyes of those who hear them, in the sacraments things are used to portray in a graphic and iconic way the words that God proclaims to us in the promise. The words are not only portrayed as in a painting in the sacramental symbols; they are essential to setting forth the analogical and analogical relationship between the symbol and the reality it represents.

One may conclude that Calvin recognised the role of experiences of transcendence through the human senses. These experiences help us to gain an understanding of that which is signified through a host of images and words. For Calvin, these signs clearly point towards God's presence, especially in Jesus Christ (the clearest image), but also through the Scriptures, Christian proclamation and the sacraments. Calvin describes such intimations of transcendence in terms of human receptiveness for what lies beyond – and not merely in terms of imaginative human constructions. He then re-describes such human experiences in terms of God's work in the world. In short, he maintains that God manifests Godself through multiple signs of God's presence (2). Such a theological re-description may be investigated further with reference to Calvin's famous emphasis on *accommodatio*: God accommodated Godself to the capacities of human beings so that we can measure God's immeasurableness by our small measure.⁹

This re-description is based on a distinction that Calvin made (according to Zachman) between "dead images" that human beings create and the "living images" or "icons" of God's presence that God alone can create. This is not merely a difference in emphasis, because the distinction coincides with true and false forms of religion. Dead images can be identified in terms of the illusion that the image can somehow enclose, contain or circumscribe God's presence. Zachman (2007:8), explains this contrast in a paragraph worth quoting at length:

First, Calvin thought that living images live in the field of tension created by the essentially invisible, infinite and spiritual God becoming somewhat¹⁰ visible in finite reality. This field of tension that the God who cannot dwell in temples made by human hands nonetheless dwells in a Temple made by human hands – keeps the living image from creating the illusion that it can somehow enclose or contain God in itself, as is the case with dead images.

8 See also the analysis of the dialectic between manifestation, proclamation and emancipatory praxis by Tracy (1981:193-230).

9 See Balsarak (2009:372-8), Battles (1998:35).

10 Zachman (2007:53) emphasises that Calvin always says "somewhat visible" and not simply "visible".

He explains: "Since God is invisible, only God has the ability to render Godself somewhat visible in the beautiful fabric of the universe, which ... unveils God precisely by veiling God. Since God is invisible, only God has the ability to make living images of God that do not contradict, but maintain the essential invisibility of God, even as God renders Godself somewhat visible before our eyes". Note the theological re-description here in terms of God's action in the world.

Whereas Calvin thought that dead images were forged in an attempt to drag God from heaven, living images represent God's descent to us so that we might use them as "ladders" or "vehicles" whereby we might ascend to God.¹¹ Second, Calvin thought that living images transform the person contemplating them into the image of God, from one degree of glory to another, so that we might become more and more like God in order to be united to God. Dead images, on the other hand, attempt to transform God into our own image, in order to make the spiritual and carnal God finite, a prisoner of the image that we create to represent God. Third, living images have both an analogical and anagogical function relationship to the reality they represent. They refer the mind and heart of the one contemplating them to the reality being represented, by means of the similarity and dissimilarity they have with that reality, and raise the mind up anagogically to that reality. Dead images lack this analogical and anagogical relationship to God but instead contradict the reality they claim to represent and keep our minds firmly planted on earth. Fourth, living images not only represent and portray reality but also offer and present the reality being represented. To take but one well-known example, the bread and wine not only represent the body and blood of Christ; they also offer and present that body and blood to us for the nourishment of our souls unto eternal life. Dead images, on the other hand, simply present a reality that is and remains absent from the representation. Human beings are incapable of making images that offer the reality they represent – only God can do this.

On the basis of this affirmation and confession that God is present in and active through these living icons, Calvin then proceeds to explain the content and the significance of the Christian faith in elaborate detail. This insight enables him to re-describe everything else. On the basis of an investigation of Calvin's sermons and commentaries, Zachman (2007:3), traces Calvin's use of the dialectic between word in image in great detail and with reference to the major themes of the Christian faith. In each case he shows how we need the truth of God's Word in order to discern the beauty of God in God's works – so that we might be "ravished [a word that Zachman uses lavishly] with admiration for the beauty of God's goodness".

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THEOLOGICAL RE-DESCRIPTION

The ways in which a theological re-description of ordinary and extraordinary experiences is offered in this way, form a crucial step in the argument of this essay. Such theological re-descriptions may of course be explained in terms of the experiences from which they follow. That would, however, constitute a reductive explanation. It would fail to fathom how such a theological re-description is able to illuminate literally everything else. If the transcendent referent of a sign is indeed cosmic in scope, it offers an interpretative frame within which everything else is understood. The penultimate is understood in terms of that which is ultimate. For Calvin, Ultimate Reality is not a generic concept under which a number of divinities and ideologies may be encapsulated; the triune God is the Creator and Saviour of the entire universe and therefore the sovereign Lord over everything.

It is on the basis of such a theological re-description that Calvin addresses the question of the emergence of religion. All forms of religious expression, including Christianity, ultimately come from the symbolic presence of the triune God in the world. This is the work of God who has implanted in all people a certain understanding of the divine majesty (I.3.1). Historically, Christianity emerged from such a numinous awareness of God's presence. However, this does

11 Zachman (2007:15) also shows how Calvin draws on Augustine's notion of the sacraments: "The sacraments are like ... 'steps', 'ladders' or 'vehicles' by which we ascend from the temporal and visible world to the eternal and invisible God".

not imply that Christianity is merely one form of religion alongside others, that Christianity may be based on some generic form of religiosity. No, such religiosity is re-described in terms of the work of the triune God. All forms of religion, including deviant forms, become possible because God has not left us without witnesses (icons, images, symbols) of God's presence. Nothing (not even sin or the devil) is possible outside the sphere of God's sovereignty.

This emphasis on a theological re-description of the very emergence of religion suggests that discourse on an apologetic, kerygmatic or missionary "point of contact" is typically misconstrued. Calvin probably took the possibility and hermeneutic necessity of such a "point of contact" for granted. Moreover, he recognised that this applies to the emergence of the Christian faith as well. We can only come to faith by being led toward the symbolic meaning of signs that transcend their material signifiers. We can only fathom the presence of God through contact with such material signifiers (not directly or intuitively). The role of the human senses is therefore crucial. However, this does not imply that Christian truth claims can be based upon or explained in terms of such a point of contact (as Barthians may fear). This would turn Christianity into an epiphenomenon, a particular example of a generic form of religion. The availability of such a point of contact is re-described, from an ultimate perspective, as an act of the triune God's *accommodatio*. Moreover, according to Calvin's understanding of signification, it would be disastrous to focus on such a "point of contact" without sensing where the sign is pointing towards. As Zachman (49), points out, "The same powers of God that reveal God to us in a way suited to our finite capacities simultaneously reveal the infinite nature of God, due to the incomprehensibility of the powers themselves... Thus the living image of God that is clear enough for infants and children to contemplate, reveals that the powers of God set forth in that image vastly transcend all human understanding, and leave us with the experience of being ravished with astonishment, unable to speak".

Of course, Calvin continues to argue that the knowledge of God that is possible though God's symbolic presence in the world has become smothered and corrupted. It only leads to idolatry, vanity and hypocrisy. The difference between deviant forms of religion and "pure and real religion" (see I.2.2) is not to be understood in terms of the hermeneutic path that is followed (as elucidated in terms of a theory of signification). This path is the same for all human beings. Although we are blinded (and deafened) by sin, we retain some form of sensibility. As human beings we are still able to use and understand symbolic meaning. Or, to switch the imagery, we are still able to see, but the cloudy night around us is too dark to find our way – so that we got hopelessly lost. We need sustained light (more than a flash of lightning) to find our way home.¹²

The difference therefore cannot be understood in terms of human efforts. According to such a theological re-description, true knowledge of God only becomes possible through God's own work – through God's electing grace. This has to do with the (s)election of particular signifiers where God's symbolic presence emerges with a certain clarity (providing enough light) – in the history of Abraham's children and adopted children as the economy of God's self-manifestation. This follows from the confession that Jesus Christ is indeed the Light of *the World*. This story provides

12 See Calvin's wonderful image: "Certainly I do not deny that one can read competent and apt statements about God here and there in the philosophers, but these always show a certain giddy imagination. As was stated above, the Lord indeed gave them a slight taste of his divinity that they might not hide their impiety under a cloak of ignorance. And sometimes he impelled them to make certain utterances by the confession of which they would themselves be corrected. But they saw things in such a way that their seeing did not direct them to the truth, much less enable them to attain it! They are like a traveler passing through a field at night who in a momentary lightning flash sees far and wide, but the sight vanishes so swiftly that he is plunged again into the darkness of the night before he can take even a step, let alone be directed on his way by its help. Besides, although they may chance to sprinkle their books with droplets of truth, how many monstrous lies defile them!" (II.2.18).

the spectacles that enable Christians to see God's presence everywhere else; it provides the light that illuminates the whole world.¹³ As Zachman points out, Calvin was passionately interested in the contemplation of the universe (especially astronomy and anatomy) as a living image of God (19, 25-54). In his commentary of Romans 1:19-20 Calvin said that we were "endowed with eyes for the purpose of being led to God himself, the Author of the world, by contemplating so beautiful an image" (54).

KARL BARTH ON THE "LESSER LIGHTS"

In his mature work (see the *Church Dogmatics* IV.3.1, section 2) Barth returned to the theme of the possibility of knowledge of God outside the revelation in Jesus Christ (his understanding of natural theology). In this discussion he also offers an account of the question addressed here, namely on the emergence of religion. He retains a distinct Christological focus on the basis of the notion of the existence of "lesser lights".

Barth (1961:38-165), begins the lengthy section in the English translation) with an uncompromising and extended affirmation that Jesus Christ is indeed the "Light of Life". He insists that Jesus Christ is not merely one light amongst many others, the clearest perhaps (1961:87), or one with particular illuminating power. Jesus is not merely one among many witnesses, or the leading witness, one which is perhaps normative. That would fail to do justice to the ultimate nature of the Christian confession that Jesus Christ is indeed the Light of the world. It would employ the existence of such lesser lights as the point of departure and interpret Christ in that light. Instead, Barth claims that, if Jesus Christ is indeed truly God, the existence of the lesser lights should be understood in such light. Barth says: "these lights shine only because of the shining of none other light than His" (1961:96).

Barth (1961:92) also addresses the question how this confession emerged in the first place. He is well aware (as were the biblical authors) of the presence of nations other than Israel and the historical impact of their histories, religions, pieties, orders and divinities. However, this awareness does not imply that some validity is ascribed to such divinities or that possible alternatives to the Christian confession are even considered. Barth's account of the emergence of religion is evidently not historical or phenomenological, but confessional in nature. If Jesus Christ has been the light of the world before the foundations of the world, then religions (including Christianity) could only emerge on that basis. Barth draws conclusions from this confession with remarkable consistency.

Nevertheless, Barth (1961:114) acknowledges that there are "other words" besides the one Word. These include first and foremost the words of the prophets and of the apostles. These words do not stand beside it in their own right or by their own light. They are not independent, but are best understood in the light of the Light of the World. Moreover, there are true words that are spoken outside the Bible and the church. The church, Barth says, must admit that there are such words since it would be foolish and ungrateful not to do so. This does not imply that words saying anything contrasting to the one Word must be accepted. However, such other words can illumine, accentuate, explain or confirm the biblical witness in a particular time and situation by speaking from a different source and in another tongue (1961:115). Barth concludes that such words "will lead the [Christian] community more truly and profoundly than ever before to Scripture" (1961:115).

13 Zachman (2007:41) says: "The assistance of the Word does not replace the image of God in the universe but rather clarifies our weakened vision so that we can see more clearly the powers of God set forth in the works of God. In this way Scripture acts as spectacles for bleary-eyed people". See also Postema (1992:142).

Where do these lesser lights come from? In a sub-section on the world as *creatura* Barth (1961:136-151) affirms that these lights have a light of their own, provided to them by God through the creation of the world (Gen 1:3) and maintained through God's faithfulness with a view to the reconciliation in Christ. The lesser lights constitute the theatre, the setting or location within which the Light of Life shines forth (1961:137). These lights remain distinct from God and from the one Light and are not extinguished by this Light (1961:139). They confirm that the world in which the church has to work has not been abandoned by God. Barth thus affirms: "The divine work of reconciliation does not negate the divine work of creation" (1961:139).

To explain the veracity of these lights, Barth uses the image of partial segments of a circle. These segments may be on the periphery, but can be identified as pointing towards the centre. They contain true words only insofar as they refer back to their origin in the one Word (1961:122-123). These lights offer "terrestrial truths" but no divine disclosures (1961:141). Because of their presence the world is not absolutely deaf or dumb. We live with this ability to communicate and cannot live without that (1961:141). The lesser lights are only created lights, but they certainly provide some light (1961:144-5). The world contains its own mysteries (alongside its mere existence, rhythms, contrariety, regularity and freedom – which Barth also examines), but this remains the world's mystery, not God's mystery or even that of the revelation of God (1961:149). In what they reveal, the lesser lights also conceal and declare this mystery; they do not provide information on why or wherefore the world exists (1961:150).

How, then, do these lesser lights relate to the Light of the World? Here Barth maintains both a sharp distinction and a relatedness. The distinction is necessary in order to preclude a natural theology that would suggest that the lesser lights reveal anything about God. They only illuminate the world. Barth's affirms that against any Gnostic tendencies:

They cannot be compared or considered together as though for all their difference they were only two rays from one and the same light, or two sides, aspects or parts of one and the same truth. This would imply an original truth superior both to the truth of the world and to that of God. The truth of God would then be, like that of the word, a mere manifestation of this original, superior and proper truth. ...In God's self-declaration in Jesus Christ we do not have a mere irruption of some higher, original and true light, and therefore a mere expression of truth, but the one true light of the one truth above or alongside which there can be no other, rival truth (1961:152).

Barth maintains that the lesser lights cannot be regarded as independent sources of light but can only reflect the Light of the World: "But as this light rises and shines, it is reflected in the being and existence of the cosmos which is not created accidentally, but a view to this action and therefore to this revelation. As it shines in the cosmos, it kindles the lights with which the latter is furnished, giving them the power to shine in its own service. The latter cannot do more than become bright in this light. They cannot replace the one light and truth of the divine self-declaration" (1961:153). What is reflected in these lesser lights is God's faithfulness to God's creatures as demonstrated in the revelation of grace in Jesus Christ (1961:153). The Light of the World gives a new radiance to the world. In this way Barth refused to merge the lesser lights with the Light of the world but also avoids their separation (towards the "unfortunate doctrine of two kingdoms" (1961:151).

This exposition therefore does not relativize Barth's critique of natural theology. He insists that by way of natural theology nothing more than "abstract impartations concerning God's existence as the Supreme Being and Ruler of all things" (1961:117) can be attained. He contrasts this with the self-impartation of God who acts as Father in the Son through the Holy Spirit and affirms the clarity and the testability of the biblical witnesses to such self-impartation. Indeed, he has no desire to leave the "sure ground of Christology" (1961:117).

In my view Barth's confessional logic is impeccable here. However, his position still requires an explanation as to how this confession was reached in the first place. What connotations are attached to the confession that this Jesus is indeed "truly God" (*vere Deus*)? What notion of divinity is at stake here? Here Calvin's use of semiotics and his recognition of the role played by the human senses are superior to Barth's Christological short-cut. Since Barth denies any (independent?) human capacity to know God and the one Word of God, he is forced to regard true words of God as "miraculous" (1961:118). Instead, he focuses on the capacity of Jesus Christ to create human witnesses inside and outside the sphere of the church: "He will use his capacity to make of men, quite apart from and even in the face of their own knowledge or volition, something which they could never be of themselves, namely, His witnesses" (1961:118). Barth emphasises that this comes through no human capacity by insisting that human beings are blind and deaf through sin and need to be healed by Jesus before they can become such witnesses. The difference with Calvin is striking on this point.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A TRINITARIAN ACCOUNT

While the account of the emergence of religion in the work of John Calvin is *theo*-logical (or patrological) in nature, Barth's account is distinctly Christological. One may surmise that several contemporary theologians would tend towards a pneumatological account in their theological reflections on dialogue with people of other living faiths. Accordingly, the Spirit of God was also present amongst our African ancestors – long before the missionaries arrived with their message of Jesus Christ as Saviour. The presence of the Spirit offers an account of the emergence of religion through the rise of human consciousness, wonder, story-telling and reflection. This may also explain how first Israel and then the early Christian church could draw upon the notion of the divine embedded in other religious traditions, even though it also adapted and transformed such connotations within its own all-encompassing orientation of faith in the triune God. Admittedly, such a pneumatological account of the emergence of religion would confirm Barth's worst suspicions.¹⁴

These observations would suggest that only a fully trinitarian account would be able to do justice to Christian reflection on the presence of other religions. Such a trinitarian account is to the best of my knowledge not readily available and certainly cannot be developed here.

Instead, it may be necessary to return to the relationship between a theological account of the emergence of religion and other possible accounts. This may aid a better understanding of the relationship between such disciplines.

My contention is that a theological account of the emergence of religion may be legitimate if regarded as a (trinitarian) re-description of insights derived from other disciplines. In this way justice may be done to such insights without reducing the universal scope (the ultimacy) of the Christian convictions from the outset. Although such a re-description may indeed become self-referential, this is a function of entering and inhabiting the "strange new world of the Bible", where everything else may be viewed from the particular perspective or vision that the Christian confession invites. If such a vision of the world and what may transcend the world is indeed ultimate, it is not possible to view it objectively, as it were from the outside. One can express that only from the inside by "indwelling" this story (Leslie Newbigin) and by living and acting accordingly. Such inhabitation is indeed typical of the language of Christian piety, prayer and proclamation.

14 In his polemic with Emil Brunner Barth commented: "It seems that behind his re-introduction of natural theology a 'new' doctrine of the Holy Spirit wants only too logically to break forth. Against this doctrine it will be even more necessary to protest." See also Barth (1937:45-46).

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The relevance of pedagogical narrative maps: The Confession of Belhar as a practical theological narrative searching for a pedagogic-therapeutic methodology.

ABSTRACT

This article explores the pedagogic value of the Confession of Belhar within a practical theology narrative framework as a potential therapeutic practice for racial (pre- and post-1994) traumatic experiences. Recurring and hidden occurrences of oppression, injustice, inferiority and disunity engender psycho-social dysfunctionality in church and society (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:50-52). The deconstruction of structuralist hegemonic paradigms will be undertaken. Secondly, a contextual analysis of liberating poststructuralist paradigm/s serves as foundation for the article. Thirdly, the appropriation of narrative pedagogical maps is explored. Fourthly, different narrative maps within a pedagogical framework are applied to illuminate two (Koopman 2008; Strauss 2005) opposing narratives. Finally, suggestions are provided of how narrative pedagogy could be applied to address pre- and post-1994 conditions of oppression, injustice and disunity. The Confession is proposed as a narrative pedagogical model in addressing ecclesial and psycho-social dysfunctions. The objective is to explore how racial trauma and hegemonic conditions can be addressed and transformed into alternative living possibilities, respectively.

1. INTRODUCTION

Many South Africans and certain life conditions, it could be concurred, suffer from post-apartheid hegemonic practices, trauma or stress and are in need of transformation and healing (Koopman 2008; Landman 2009; Van Rooi 2010). Racism feeds on hegemonic power, fosters and assumes cultural and logical inferiority (Koopman 2008:160). Koopman (2008:159) concur that his identity and humanity was deformed during the apartheid era through direct and indirect violence of racism. The Confession of Belhar (the Confession henceforth) with its formative and transformative nature embodies historical and contemporary suffering of marginalised communities (Dames 2009; De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009; Koopman 2008). The current racial depiction (on the internet – “the Facebook Racist”) and generational conflict in society highlights the dangers of racial fundamentalism and growing leadership intolerance (<http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/?gclid=CKL-ys6r-aoCFdAJtAodKBlllg>; <http://www.news24.com/Galleries/Image/Images/MyNews24/Malema%20Luthuli%20hearing>). Young leaders in South Africa are in need of an appropriate historical framework. Members of society require conversations of remembrance and re-authoring if we are to treasure the 1994 democratic achievements of a new South Africa. Suffice it to argue that these conditions were fostered by the lack of addressing pre- and post-1994 hegemonic practices of apartheid through pedagogic and therapeutic interventions. The hidden powers or unintentional rationalisation of racism amongst Black, ‘Coloured’ and White communities complicate and even duplicate historical

apartheid-like oppression, injustice and inferiority (Koopman 2008; Strauss 2005:563). A recent inappropriate argument about the Confession illuminates the potential re/production of pre-1994 hegemonic and inferiority notions:

Therefore, a confession must correlate with the core issues of “God’s revelation in Jesus Christ” without entertaining “beuselagtighede” [nonsense] (Strauss 2005:563).

Strauss’ (2005) reference to “beuselagtighede” or nonsense could be regarded as a paternalistic attempt to disregard the audience’s authentic faith expression and values embodied in the Confession. It characterises ‘White’ supremacy enacted in the re/production of oppression, injustice and inferiority through hegemonic discourse (Van Dijk 1993). What or who defines the abovementioned “core issues of “God’s revelation in Jesus Christ”? Strauss (2005:563) notion of “core issues” reminds of historic paternalistic discourse within DRC circles (Botha & Naude 1998). Koopman’s (2008:162) depiction of decades of insufferable suffering and the emergence of a new transforming story constitutes “the core issues of “God’s revelation in Jesus Christ” for millions of Black, ‘Coloured’, Indian and White South Africans during *and* after apartheid. Bam (in Botha & Naude 1998:34-37) declared a *status confessionis* on the basis of apartheid and apartheid theology’s threat on the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Apartheid and apartheid theology engineered collective and structural contexts of violence through racial prejudice, separation, discrimination, exclusion, alienation, enmity, injustice, humiliation and dehumanization. It culminated in the Dutch Reformed Church’s (DRC) racial based missionary policy and nationalist (“volkgesentreerde”) ecclesiology (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009).

2. STATUS CONFESSIOINIS AS A PEDAGOGICAL TRANSFORMATION NARRATIVE

A transformed narrative, however, dawned with the declaration of a *status confessionis* in 1982 and the adoption of the Confession in 1986 (Naude & Botha 1998). It was this very same faith response of the Confession that sought consolation, comfort, redemption, liberation, hope and healing for *all* South Africans (Koopman 2008:162).

Koopman’s notion of the Confession as the God-given event of consolation, liberation, hope, etcetera illuminates the confession’s formative, transformative nature and therapeutic function. We concur that the Confession embodies both a therapeutic and pedagogical function in fostering unity, reconciliation and justice. The pre-1994 apartheid context was renowned for separation, discrimination, alienation, enmity, racism, injustice and oppression. The Confession redressed these ideological and structural hegemonies with liberational intent (cf. Botha & Naude 1998). A new narrative or discourse on “solidarity and cohesion, embracing and participation, compassion and human rights” was introduced (Koopman 2008:162-164). This therapeutic narrative transformed structural injustice, separation and racism and engendered the formation of a new kind of citizenship and or Christianity (McLaren 2001). Particularly, in the light of Polany’s (in McLaren 2001:151) notion of meaning formation for everything in life within its location/context in society.

The hypothesis of this article holds that hidden pre-1994 hegemonic practices continues to threaten the moral and spiritual fibre of churches and society; that it require a narrative pedagogical methodology in reaffirming our Christian and democratic ideals and values; and in fostering healing for psycho-social dysfunctionality in church and society.

2.1 Defining narrative pedagogical methodology

Goodson, Biesta, Tedder and Adair (2010:133) refer to unexplored and underdeveloped methodologies in engendering narrative learning; and calls for the exploration of new learning resources and new learning environments. This article seeks to address familiar, albeit critical

issues within a new methodological framework. Narrative pedagogy reveals deeper perspectives of life, interprets and analyses data from reality in engendering social consciousness (Clough 2002:8). Postmodern conditions require methodological accountability for complex moral issues: “Self-reflexivity [within the written story] unmask[s] complex political/ideological agendas” (Richardson 1994:523 in Clough 2002:9).

Narrative pedagogy from faith traditions constitutes an important method in redressing old and in forming new worldviews (Ploeger 1995:275). Novelli (2008:6-8) in his book *Shaped by the Story* offers a new pedagogical framework based on the narrative methodology. Narratives are powerful in incorporating people into new spaces – it opens up new perspectives and places and introduces us to new people. Narratives illuminate and form personal and communal identity and character. Narratives are a dialogue-centred approach in forming new knowledge, values and praxis. Novelli (2008:7) argues that narratives are “guided by imaginative listening, creative retellings, and interactive discussions”. It is an inspirational method for learners to discover themselves in sequences of events that include characters, dialogue, context, and plot. Narrative pedagogy engenders a revised perspective, reorganised and prioritised new style and mode of living. Suffice it to warn that we do not intend to disregard the conceptual, theoretical principles of the Confession of Belhar in favour for a mere imaginative methodological project (Murphy 2007:1). We contend with Novelli that [the Confession] as an embodied narrative is a pedagogy of formation and transformation – especially in the light of post-1994 communities confronted with psycho-social *and* socio-economic scars of apartheid. Narrative therapy is ideal in redressing tangible, hidden and silent re/occurrences of oppression, injustice, discrimination and isolation (Landman 2009; Freedman & Combs 1996; Morgan 2000; White 2007).

Life stories are linked through certain events and in a particular sequence over time: “The key distinction that emerges is that between the use of life narratives as tools for learning, agency and identity construction and the ongoing process of narration itself as a site for learning” (Goodson et.al 2010:131). Plots are formed for dominant or alternative stories to inculcate and engender new meaning. “A narrative is like a thread that weaves¹ the events together, forming a story” (Morgan 2000:5). Narrative therapy attends to the self and the Other regarding personal and communal life stories. We tell stories in order to make sense of ourselves and our circumstances (Winslade & Monk 1998:1). Narrative pedagogy is a respectful, non-blaming approach that centres people as the experts of their own lives. People possess various skills, competences, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities. These traits could help them to change their relationship towards injustice, inequality and hegemony. Narrative pedagogy is determined by people or communities in terms of their own outcomes (Morgan 2000:4).

2.2 Narrative pedagogical therapy and social construction

The *narrative* metaphor represents a discontinuous paradigm within hegemonic structuralist social and institutional contexts. This paradigm shift is also referred to as “post-structuralism, deconstructionism, the interpretive turn, new hermeneutics, and postmodernism” (Freedom & Combs 1996:14).

Structuralism and or objective study methods were developed to analyse the laws/structures in life and things to provide supposedly reliable, valid and universally applicable knowledge of the physical world (Thomas 2002:85). This objective worldview emphasises facts, replicable procedures, and rules. It, however “**ignores the specific, localized meanings of individual people**” (Freedman & Combs 1996:9; Thomas 2002:85) (own accentuation). We contend that the uniqueness of the former Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC hereafter) and the Uniting

1 See also the book *A Chorus of Voices. Weaving Life's Narratives in Therapy and Training* (Kotze 2000).

Reformed Church in South Africa's (URCSA² henceforth) members were and are still being disregarded by some white supremacy practices (Strauss 2005:563,572-575). Structuralism implies that people are studied, perceived and treated objectively in posing paternalistic pedagogical guidance and therapy (Koopman 2008:161; Strauss 2005; Thomas 2002:86).

Today post-structuralism or postmodernity is challenging the abovementioned assumptions of structuralism. The French philosophers, Michel Foucault³ and Jacques Derrida⁴, are the founding fathers of post-structuralism. They influenced disciplines in which hegemonic objective/structuralist methodologies are applied (Thomas 2002:86).

Social realities, *the taken for granted conditions in life (injustice, etcetera)*, are constructed by the members of a particular culture through reciprocal relationships. Social construction provides individuals and communities with hegemonic or liberating frameworks through which they interpret their world. We contend that the Confession, as theological and social construction, functioned as a liberating and pedagogical therapeutic framework during the pre-1994 period – it reconfigured the lives and world views of DRMC/URCSA members (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009; cf. Freedman & Combs 1996:12; Hartney 2011; Koopman 2008:162). Narrative pedagogy, within a postmodern and social constructionist worldview deconstructs power, knowledge and truth and, informs how it works in diverse communities and cultures (Freedman & Combs 1996:22). The Confession, for instance, as a deconstruction of hegemonic structuralist and objective worldviews; reframed the aforementioned realities into post-structuralist, intersubjective, postmodern life-giving world views (Koopman 2008:162; Hartney 2011; Ploeger 1995).

2.3 The transformation of structuralist practices

The Confession transformed the structuralist philosophy, identity and culture of apartheid ideology and its theological justification. The Confession embodies Christ's creativity, transformation, social cohesion, compassion, reconciliation, love, hope and peace (Koopman 2008:166; cf. Louw 2008). The Confession assisted the former structuralist DRMC to decentre itself, and to embrace a new identity with an alternative narrative (Koopman 2008:162-166). The following perspectives of Thomas (2002:88) underlines the pedagogical contribution of the Confession in terms of alternative possibilities (cf. De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:54-58), namely: (1) identities are not fixed, but in a constant process of being created; (2) identity is being created in relationship to changes to which others are reacting and witnessing; (3) identities are socially (by history, culture, gender, sexuality, class and power relations) created; (4) people's identities cannot be known by *the truths* of scientific methods; (5) therapists do not possess objective, neutral or value-free understandings, and should not impose their perspectives on

2 References to both the former Dutch Reformed Mission Church and the new Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa are used to describe its rich historical and contemporary narratives. The DRMC was founded on racially segregated grounds – the URCSA was formed as a decentred ecclesial denomination between the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa and the DRMC (reserved for Black and 'Coloured' people, respectively). The Dutch Reformed Church (henceforth DRC – for White people) previously referred to itself as the 'Mother' of the aforementioned 'daughter' churches. The DRC was the brain child of the apartheid ideology/narrative.

3 Foucault's (in Morkel 2008) contribution should be noted. He focuses on language as an instrument of power; distinguishes between the tension of normal/abnormal, power/resistance, life giving/life taking; dominant narratives as units of power and meaning; truth claims which constitute discourses that dehumanize and objectify people.

4 Derrida (in Morkel 2008) is also essential in this regard. He argues for the following: the meaning of any symbol, word or text inextricably bound up in its context; deconstruction of structuralist's meaning systems; the absent but implicit in meaning; taking a term under erasure, to undo not to destroy; and the binary opposition of: not either/or but both/and possibilities in meaning.

others; and (6) the (un-harmful) quirks of people's lives (times, places, events, ways of being that do not fit the normal) and its formative meaning in people's lives. To concur with Thomas, the Confession therefore shaped the lives and conditions of the marginalised majorities in our country through existential, social and communal identity formation and transformation. The Confession remains appropriate in the reconfiguration of dysfunctional identities (xenophobia, homosexuality, HIV and AIDS) and hegemonic discourses (Dames 2009; De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009; Koopman 2008).

2.4 New possibilities for co-existence and co-operation

Post-structuralism is capable of opening up new possibilities for creative forms of listening to and working with [URCSA and DRC] people (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:58; Thomas 2002:88). Theological deconstruction through the Confession demonstrates the value of a poststructuralist pedagogical methodology (Koopman 2008:162-164). It illustrates how theological transformation as well as deformation could exist between two identical, but different confessional narrative versions (Koopman 2008; Strauss 2005). Albeit, from the *same* confessional tradition, *the traditional confessions* (Strauss 2005) and the *new status of confessionis* (Koopman 2008). The essence of the comparison between the two narratives is that the confessions' traditional confessional text did not change. The way the traditional *and new confessionis'* narratives were read reflects how the DRC audience have objectified the Confession as a political discourse or just as a piece ("stuk") or "document" (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:63; Strauss 2005). Members of the DRMC embraced it as an intersubjective (liberation, communal) life-giving praxis (Hartney 2011; Koopman 2008). The *setting* in which the Confession and the traditional confessions' narrative functioned changed, but not the traditional confessional textual intent. The new status of confessionis demonstrated that a poststructuralist culture is essential for a transformed worldview. Traditional confessions were projected by the DRC as a preferred culture of structuralism, certainty and normativity – it was claimed as the product of a preferred paternalistic institutionalised community (Strauss 2005:560-572; cf. Taylor 2005:19-29). The Confession represents a changed worldview, a postmodern culture in which narrative pedagogical therapy has a distinctive function. It provides a new vision and therapy for audiences through their local and particular social and cultural poststructuralist contexts (cf. De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:58,63). A break between the way things used to be and the way it is today, was realised. De Beer and Van Niekerk (2009) presume to capture the Confession for the DRC's ecclesiological and missionary legitimacy; instead of embracing it as a liberating witness in confessing the atrocities of apartheid and the theological justification of apartheid. The pre-1994 context of the Confession provides us with a good example of how a therapeutic pedagogical community (DRMC/URCSA) engaged in and through mutual formative and transformative opportunities with its fellow members and the public.

We will consequently apply the Confession as a therapeutic narrative pedagogical methodology within a growing poststructuralist context.

3. DEFINING NARRATIVE MAPS

White (2007:5-6) holds that maps for therapeutic practice should serve as a critical reflective guide in the development of therapeutic conversations. Maps as a metaphor could inform narrative pedagogy in addressing existential psycho-social concerns, dilemmas and problems of communities. Narrative therapy within a pedagogical perspective could empower communities to reconfigure their goals or to embrace new objectives to transform their lives (cf. White 2007:4). Partnerships for transformation result in the acknowledgement and embracing of

diverse cultural relationships (White 2007:5; Ploeger 1995). Maps engender opportunities for people to explore neglected life events and existential psychosocial problems. It fosters constructive and creative engagement with oppressive, unjust and existential problems (White 2007:5). Narrative pedagogical therapy maps can be constructed in terms of White's (2007) narrative frameworks, namely: externalizing; re-authoring; re-membering; unique outcomes; and scaffolding conversations. White's framework is ideal in addressing pre- and post 1994 hegemonic conditions by helping suffering communities to externalise, re-author and re-member the past in recreating a new hopeful future through scaffolding conversations of unity, reconciliation and justice as unique outcomes.

3.1 Externalizing conversations identifying the thin descriptions in narrative pedagogy

White (2007:9) proposes the externalizing conversations map as an antidote (not as a skill/technique) to psychological self understandings. Externalizing conversations detached the person/community from their problem or suffering (injustice, separation and inferiority). It deconstructs practices of injustice, discrimination and the objectification of people or organisations as inferior. The collective existential experience of the DRMC during the 1980's characterised such practices and perceptions (Koopman 2008:159-162; cf. White 2007:9; Freedman & Combs 1996:47). Narrative pedagogy should help oppressed people or communities to separate their personalities, identities and culture from hegemonic conditions (White 2007:9; Morgan 2000:17). In the context of externalizing conversations, inferiority ceases to represent the truth about people's identities (White 2007:9). Narrative pedagogy assists people in naming their problems (plots of suffering, inferiority, injustice and separation) in search of tangible problem resolution (Koopman 2008:159-162; Morgan 2000:17; White 2007:9).⁵ This is realised through the Confession as an example of creative and authentic linguistics with a therapeutic narrative pedagogical intent and orientation. The Confession, however, was initially and may still be perceived as a "mistaken problem-identity" of the former DRMC and contemporary URCSA (Strauss 2005:572). Bam (in Botha & Naude 1998:34-37) concurred, however, that it is a confession on the same level as the other confessions of the church. The Confession is ultimately the personification of liberation from injustice, separation and inferiority and the embodiment of its rich ecclesial and confessional identity. The shift in the Confession's narrative plot during 1982/1986 constituted it as a pedagogical therapeutic and transformative agent.⁶

3.1.1 The development of externalizing conversations

Externalising conversations focus on different aspects such as psychosocial, cultural, economic-political and theological challenges between people, diverse cultures and social practices as well as complex ideological, philosophical and metaphorical problems (Morgan 2000:20-21). The internalization of communities' problems (apartheid and its theological justification) impact negatively on their philosophical disposition (their attitudes, values, character, believes) (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:50-52). An untransformable DRC have become a stuck and maintenance institution with a silo mentality and culture (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:57; Strauss 2005). The aforementioned dynamics could lead to a cycle of pathological problems without alternative outcomes (White 2007:9, 24-25). However, the Confession's poststructuralist theological context

5 People should name their own problems, and not the therapist (Morgan 2000:20).

6 The use of historical and contemporary symbols and art like films could be applied to address "unpleasant, serious, chronic and intractable problems in their social consequences ... (White 2007:23-24). Especially through deconstructive listening by accepting and understanding people's narratives without "reifying or intensifying the powerless, painful, and pathological aspects of those stories" (Freedman & Combs 1996:46).

and inclusive denominational culture (shared by the SACC, USA Presbyterian Church, Germany, The Netherlands, broader society, etcetera) have proved to shape its new found theological conviction (Koopman 2008:162). This socially and culturally influenced church developed its own self understanding, habit of thought and faith and moral practices. URCSA have a natural tendency that instructs its self understanding, due to the mere habit of thought of her moral, cultural and theological heritage (Koopman 2008:162; Hartney 2011; cf. Morgan 2000:9; White 2007:25). The Confession was and remains as such a hermeneutical practice embodying core truths of Scripture (Hartney 2011:103). McLaren (2001:151) refers elsewhere to “the story of God’s work in the human community”.

Externalising conversations are counter-practices against the objectification of people/communities’ identities (Koopman 2008). The notions of inferiority, disorder, dysfunctionality, incompetency or inadequacy are challenged (cf. White 2007:26). The Confession as an externalising conversation acted as a counter practice in distinguishing the DRMC/URCSA from the DRC and the former oppressive National Party regime. De Beer and Van Niekerk (2009:56) hold that it exposed the DRC’s integrity crisis and its crisis for missionary relevance. It decentred the DRMC/URCSA from pathological inferior philosophies and opened up new possibilities to redress the theological justification of apartheid and its psychosocial effects (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009; 56-57; Koopman 2008:162; cf. White 2007:26; Freedman & Combs 1996:56):

This language partnership provided [the Confession of Belhar] with the necessary scaffolding to cross pathological [political and theological] zones to new life possibilities (White, 2007:263) ... and created a new reality of meaning (Freedman & Combs 1996:29).

The deconstruction of oppressive and inferior philosophies is the ultimate objective of externalizing conversations (White 2007:27; Morgan 2000:24):

... our deepest convictions in the words of the Belhar Confession ... helped us to resist apartheid with resilience and hope, and that eventually helped us to overcome this evil system (Koopman 2008:162).

The intention is “not so much problem-solving or direct power struggles”, but rather actions of “cool engagement” in expressing anonymous [oppressive] previous life [pre- and post-1994] experiences (White 2007:27-29). Communities’ sense of vulnerability in existential life problems and stressful circumstances decrease as a result (White 2007:29). The DRMC was empowered/ liberated through the Confession and accepted responsibility for being socio-politically conscious in deconstructing the DRC’s discriminatory theology, antisocial ideas, beliefs and actions (Koopman 2008:160-164; cf. Morgan 2000:45).

The Confession re-authored the DRMC’s sense of being part of a preferred democratic community and multiracial church. The notion of the Confession that *God is in a special way on the side of the sufferer, poor and oppressed* (Botha & Naude 1998:4-5) opened public space for a concrete understanding (a catharsis moment) of her life and identity in constructing new stories (White 2007:31; Freedman & Combs 1996:56ff). Metaphors are basically not intended as battle and contest metaphors to defeat or vanquish injustice, separation and inferiority (White 2007:30-31). The DRC’s constant tendency in problem totalising (negative perception) of the Confession, should be challenged (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009; Strauss 2005). Relentless theological discourse by the DRC obscure[d] the context of apartheid, injustice and its effect during the 1980’s until today (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:61). It attempts to invalidate the DRMC/URCSA’s identity, humanity and culture (Koopman 2008:161; White 2007:35).⁷ Strauss’ (2005:572-573) remark, that the Confession occupies itself with peripheral issues and not with central faith issues, totalised the DRMC/URCSA’s pre- and post 1994 authentic experience into

⁷ “This totalizing of the problem is founded upon the dualistic, either/or habits of thought that have been quite pervasive in Western culture ...” (White 2007:35).

moral and peripheral issues (Hartney 2011). Metaphors of battle and contest and a totalizing of the Confession as a problem are only appropriate for some people in the DRC - those who are fighting for their White supremacy survival since and during 1982, 1986, 1994 and beyond (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:60-63; Strauss 2005, cf. White 2007:35).

Externalizing conversations were used in the revisioning and redeveloping of the DRMC's strengths and resources (Koopman 2008; Van Rooi 2010; cf. White 2007:38). Koopman's (2008:166) post-1994 observation embodies an externalizing conversation in the DRMC and URCSA:

In the quest for the restoration of human dignity, i.e. in the quest to build an ethos of social solidarity and social cohesion, embrace and participation, compassion and justice we drink from the wells of the Christian tradition. ... The threefold office of Christ might enrich our theological contents ...

It could help the DRC to begin revisioning her life and to gain renewed strength in herself – to “tap” into her traditional neighbourhood and friends as a therapeutic and narrative pedagogical resource (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:58,61). The different, absent but implicit metaphors used by both Koopman (2008:166): *restoration of human dignity*; and Strauss (2005:574-575): the confession's “*afgeleide gesag*” [assumed authority]; illustrate the therapeutic and hegemonic power of externalization conversations, respectively. Strauss' (2005:575) notion of the confession's “*afgeleide gesag*” [assumed authority] resonates with hegemonic dominance and power which led numerous times to power harassment (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:53; Van Dijk 1993:255). Bam (in Botha & Naude 1998:34-37) redressed White hegemony and spearheaded the DRMC's 1982 *status confessionis* in witnessing:

I came to a place where I understand apartheid regulations as a contradiction to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I experience this faith clash so sharply that it forces me to witness and reject the false doctrine that threatens me. I find myself in a situation where I either witness confrontationally against the powers which threaten to neutralise and disempower my faith confession, or am silenced and crumble to nothingness. When I find myself in a *status confessionis* then the word which speaks in this situation should have the status and character of a confession (own translation).

The appropriation of Bam's external conversation for the URCSA in the aforementioned and following paragraphs is crucial to inculcate the values of the Confession and in redressing complex contemporary issues.

3.2 Position map: four categories of inquiry

The “statement of position” map applied to a narrative pedagogy context, facilitates externalizing conversations, distinguished by four principal categories of inquiry (White 2007:38-39). The “statement of position” map functions as a narrative pedagogical therapeutic inquiry guide; where people present problem-dominated life issues and or individual/relational pathological identities (White 2007:39). Narrative pedagogy takes on a decentred position in helping people to name their own problems and to voice their concerns in their positions to their problems (White 2007:39).

3.2.1 Naming the problem

The first task of narrative pedagogical therapy is to assist URCSA as well as DRC members in the naming of their current existential problems. Their existential and psychosocial problems are richly characterised through their experience-distant (global) problems by rendering it experience-near (particular) problems (White 2007:40). URCSA's unique knowledge, capabilities and skills are central in readdressing existential problems (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:62-

63; White 2007:43). Pedagogical therapy, in this instance, could use language in a particular manner to foster decentred specific problem-identity conversations (Morgan 2000:18). The Confession as a missional witness (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009), is not “‘n lirie se ontboeseming of emosionele ontlading nie” – it is a daring act of conflict (Bam in Botha & Naude 1998:37). The Confession became the DRMC/URCSA’s liberating moment, and renamed and transformed its own pathological position into one of unintentional care, compassion and healing for the DRC and broader public (Koopman 2008:163-164; De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:62-63).

3.2.2 Mapping the effects of the problem

It was and remains important to address the effects or influence apartheid had and continues to have on people’s lives (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:52-53; Koopman 2008:164; Van Rooi 2010:176-177). Narrative pedagogy should appropriate the impact of the dominant [apartheid] story in people’s lives (cf. Morgan 2000:39-40; White 2007:43). The tactics/methods and consequences of apartheid, discrimination and unjust conditions should be addressed. For example, how has the Confession affected how the DRMC functioned during the 1980’s and thereafter? (Botha & Naude 1998; Koopman 2008:159-162; cf. Morgan 2000:40). The DRMC/URCSA critiqued the DRC’s hegemonic tactics of influencing discourse and meaning regarding the Confession (Hartney 2011:94,103; Koopman 2008; cf. Morgan 2000:33-38,40). The Confession constituted an alternative story. The manner in which the DRMC/URCSA coped in the face of unjust and oppression was due to her psycho-social and spiritual competence (Koopman 2008:159-162; cf. Morgan 2000:41). The transition from internalizing conversations in the DRMC/URCSA became evident in its public missional witness (Botha & Naude 1998:34-37; De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:56-57; cf. White 2007:43). Externalising conversations shift pathological philosophies to enable decentred identity formation and transformation (White 2007:44).

3.2.3 The effects of oppressive/unjust practices

Apartheid and its effects on contemporary people’s lives should be redressed (Koopman 2008:166). Appreciative enquiry should be applied in guiding people to consider and articulate their opinions in this regard (White 2007:44; Morgan 2000:42). Therapeutic narrative pedagogy should articulate the complexities of peoples’ positions on the effects of apartheid (White 2007:46; Morgan 2000:42). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) started this process, but left a narrative therapeutic vacuum after it was dissolved (<http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/>). The DRC’s prophetic and pastoral voice in terms of the “what, why and how” questions of apartheid, would have helped to transform its identity (Koopman 2008:166; cf. Morgan 2000:42). However, the DRC’s attitude (Strauss 2005) towards the Confession inspired the URCSA’s missional witness, informed and emphasised its meaning in life (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:58).

The “why” question motivated or justified how people evaluate the effects of apartheid in their lives (cf. White 2007:48; Morgan 2000:43). It is not associated with moral judgement and values (Hartney 2011:103). It gives people a voice and develops their framework (intentions, values, skills, competences, preferences and praxes) for living (Koopman 2008:165; White 2007:49; Morgan 2000:43). It also helps to develop positive identity and preferences for living. People can decentre themselves from [apartheid-] saturated stories to aspire for rich story development and alternative stories (White 2007:49,51; Morgan 2000:43). The Confession succeeded in decentring itself from the DRC’s justification of apartheid (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:51-52).

3.2.4 *Thickening the alternative stories*

Towards a renewed role of the Confession in the URCSA – the introduction of narrative pedagogy in churches, schools and communities could support communities to stay connected to their new and preferred stories (cf. Van Rooi 2010). Thickening and enriching the alternative stories of unity, reconciliation and justice may involve witnessing in the articulation of new stories (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009; Koopman 2008:164ff; Morgan 2000:74-75). De Beer & Van Niekerk (2009:56ff) interprets the Confession in terms of its missional value/witness and highlight it as an alternative narrative. The Confession however cannot be reconfigured through creative linguistics to argue for an alternative confessional identity in advancing church unity. Especially for those DRC members who continues to resist the Confession's original intention and full implications. The Confession is in nature subversive and prophetic (Bam in Botha & Naude 1998:35). Re-authoring conversations, re-membering conversations and the unique outcomes methodology will henceforth be applied in order to thicken the pedagogical therapeutic value of the Confession as the URCSA's alternative narrative (Koopman 2008:159-162). The aforementioned narrative frameworks are crucial in fostering authentic historical memory and pedagogical therapeutic space for the younger and future generation leaders.

3.3 Re-authoring conversations

Narrative pedagogy should explore unique outcomes for pathological socio-economic, political and theological conditions through historical analysis and hermeneutics (Hartney 2011). New plots and alternative stories could emerge – described with new meaning and linked to past events (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:52,62-63). In the retelling and reliving of stories lies the rediscovery of a story which relates to a new situation (Freedman & Combs 1992:33). People can shift from oppressive-saturated living to a reconnection with communal preferences, hopes, dreams and ideas (Morgan 2000:59):

These themes often reflect loss, failure, incompetence, hopelessness, or futility. Along with this, people routinely refer to the figures or protagonists that feature in the story, and they share with therapists their conclusions both about the identity of these figures or protagonists and about their motives, intentions, and personal characteristics (White 2007:61).

The embodiment of White's (2007) notion of communal praxis was demonstrated in the TRC process. The TRC initiated an unprecedented project of reconciliation and social justice, but failed to sustain its work. Current socio-political and moral conditions in the country require similar projects to facilitate reconciliation and social justice (Dames 2009). The URCSA should renew its own confessional vocation to redress contemporary challenges. This re-authored DRMC/URCSA situation (1982/1986) was a defining moment in search of reconciliation, restitution and justice from both the DRC and apartheid government. Such re-authoring conversations are crucial for traumatised and fragmented societies due to ongoing violence, corruption, poverty, xenophobia and renewed instances of discrimination and prejudice.

Re-authoring conversations are defined by *landscape of action and landscape of identity* questions (White 2007:78,81-82). Events, action and beliefs which do not fit with the [URCSA's] dominant story are explored (Morgan 2000:60; cf. Strauss 2005). Landscape of action and landscape of identity create a context or open space in which South Africans can give meaning to and assimilate overlooked, but significant events, of their lives into a coherent storyline (White 2007:83). The landscape of action develops over time through a sequence of experiences, events and contexts by creating a specific plot. The landscape of identity seeks to understand the knowledge, thoughts, or feelings, or absent knowledge, thoughts or feelings in people's actions (White 2007:78). De Beer and Van Niekerk's (2009:63) notion of the missionary value of

the Confession, if authentically appropriated, is an example of its pedagogical and therapeutic potential. The potential outcome is God's preferred future – people become engaged with many of the lost experiences and events in their own living contexts (Keifert 2006; White 2007:81). The refinement and development of future conversations become critical (White 2007:81). People's lives become multi-storeyed as their landscape of identity is identified and thickened (White 2007:81). We can distinguish between interactive plots in the narratives of Koopman (2008) and Strauss (2005):

The most significant landscape of action and of identity played itself out in [Koopman's 2008 narrative], after decades of suffering of injustice and oppression poses an open externalised question to [his fellow theologian colleague, Strauss 2005]. His question signalled a catharsis moment in the whole story, but in the views of his fellow colleague, one could sense the perplexity of being confronted with reality and personal agency and responsible action (White 2007:266).

Koopman's narrative is the catalyst for pedagogic therapeutic healing and reconciliation between the URCSA and DRC.

3.4 Re-membering conversations

Re-membering conversations anchor on an understanding that identity is grounded in communities (White 2007:129; Morgan 2000:77). Isolation and disconnection from meaningful relationships are generally experienced by postmodern people faced with problems. Dominant apartheid stories minimised Black and "Coloured communities" collective histories. Re-membering conversations deconstruct these dominant apartheid stories. It "powerfully incorporates and elevates significant people's contribution in the lives of those consulting the [narrative pedagogy] therapist" (Morgan 2000:77). The Confession's voice was formative with regard to the construction of DRMC/URCSA's own new identity (Koopman 2008; De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009; cf. White 2007:129; Morgan 2000:83ff).

Re-membering conversations provide URCSA and the DRC with an opportunity to critique the authentic membership of the church. Suffice it to state that silent voices gain authority in claiming its community identity and in challenging other hegemonic [unjust and oppressive – DRC] voices (White 2007:129). Historical events, experiences and contexts which stand outside the influence of apartheid are sought through the landscape of action and landscape of identity (Morgan 2000:78). In so doing, communities can reengage with their history or revision their relationships with significant Others. New contemporary identities and projected futures are reconstructed (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009; White 2007:136).

The Confession became a therapeutic narrative pedagogical agent and an outside audience for the Others' [DRC, society] stories (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009; cf. White 2007: 208ff).

3.5 Conversations that highlight unique outcomes

It could be contended that many DRMC/URCSA members still live consciously/unconsciously with the scars of unconscious hegemonic stories of suffering (Koopman 2008:159-162; Van Rooi 2010). Hidden or unconscious stories could be significant and are defined as unique outcomes or exceptions in favourable circumstances. Unique outcomes do not necessarily fit with the dominant story. It may be an action, statement, thought, belief, ability and commitment (Morgan 2000:52). The identification thereof engenders alternative storylines. Many neglected unconscious, lived experiences of the URCSA became public through the Confession (Koopman 2008:159-162; cf. White 2007:219). Unique outcomes function[ed] in the past, present and future – free from dominated apartheid-saturated stories (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:52; Naude & Botha 1998; Morgan 2000:54). People are liberated or healed to voice their own

intentions, values (White 2007:220), alternative stories and rich descriptions for their lives and social relationships (Morgan 2000:55). These facets become motivators for transformative action in the DRMC/URCSA (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:51; White, 2007:220). Unique outcomes are related to events that are linked to both the dominant and invisible storylines of people – towards collective and preferred values (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:52-53; White 2007:232-233; Morgan 2000:55). Alternative storylines are generated and transcends the dominant and oppressive-saturated storylines (White 2007:233-243). A new DRMC/URCSA community identity resulted with reconstructed social-meaning (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:51).

4. DRINKING FROM OUR OWN WELLS

The shift from structuralism to post-structuralism has a direct theological implication. Theology itself has made paradigm shifts which have impacted society on multiple levels. Liberation theology, black theology and feminist theology changed the way people, society and institutions should be perceived, approached and valued (Boesak 1975; 1977; Beyers Naudé in Berkhof, H. et al. 1985; Cone 1975 & Wimberley 1979). This shift represents a departure from traditional held assumptions and philosophies about life, people, the church, etcetera. Key to such a paradigm shift is the fact that the church or theology does not hold all the truth and authority in people's lives. The existential context of any society and its people should duly be recognised and respected in therapeutic narrative pedagogy (De Beer & Van Niekerk 2009:52-53; Bonino in Berkhof et al. 1985:139-155; Cone 1975:39-80; Wimberley 1979:20).

5. CONCLUSION

The missional nature of Church unity should not substitute the authentic witness of the Confession and its subversive enactment against hidden apartheid and paternalistic theology ideologies and practices. Such is the potential for narrative therapy, that it unlocks the hidden treasures that lie dormant in the rich lives of people who are blindfolded by modern as well as postmodern – hegemonic, structuralist religious beliefs. The Confession of Belhar holds and exposes such hidden, albeit public practical theology treasures to engender pedagogic narrative therapy for divisive, broken and traumatised communities.

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The covenant as fundamental building block of marriage

ABSTRACT

Marriage is an institution of God, a social institution, a multidimensional experience, as well as an intimate personal relationship between a man and a woman. In the Bible the marital relationship is used to describe the covenant relationship between God and human beings. The covenant relationship between God and human beings gives man a secure and safe space where he/she can grow to spiritual and emotional maturity in God, through Jesus Christ. When spouses understand and accept the covenant as a fundamental building block in their marriage, and live accordingly, it creates a profound union and intimacy. Marriage then becomes a safe haven in which spouses can grow to spiritual and emotional wholeness. The question this article explores is how the covenant as the pastoral point of departure may contribute to marriage pastorate. The empirical research has shown that marriage counselling is currently executed reactively, rather than pro-actively.

ABSTRAK

DIE VERBOND AS FUNDAMENTELE BOUSTEEN VIR DIE HUWELIK

Die huwelik is 'n instelling van God, 'n sosiale instelling, multidimensionele ervaring, asook 'n intieme persoonlike verhouding tussen 'n man en 'n vrou. In die Bybel word die huweliksverhouding gebruik om die verbondsverhouding tussen God en die mens te beskryf. Die verbondsverhouding tussen God en die mens gee aan die mens sekuriteit en veilige ruimte waarbinne die mens tot volwassenheid in God deur Jesus kan groei. Wanneer huweliksgenote die aspekte van die verbond as fundamentele bousteen in hulle huwelik begryp en daarvolgens leef, ontstaan 'n diepe eenwording en intimiteit. Die huwelik word dan 'n veilige ruimte waarbinne beide huweliksgenote geestelik en emosioneel kan groei tot heelheid. Die vraag wat in hierdie artikel ondersoek word, is op watter manier die verbond as pastorale vertrekpunt kan bydra tot die huwelikspastoraat. Die empiriese ondersoek het aangedui dat die huwelikspastoraat tans eerder reaktief as pro-aktief geskied.

1. INTRODUCTION

The pastorate could possibly operate from four categorical choice options, namely bipolar (Heitink), change (Gerkin), communication (Clinebell), and koinonia (Louw). According to Louw (1984:22-26), eschatology can function as a fifth angle in order to resolve and correct the deficiencies and obscurities in each of the other options. However, according to Van Rensburg (1996:153) this approach cannot escape from unilateralism and incompleteness; therefore the covenant, as another point of departure in the pastorate, is advocated by him. The covenant as paradigm can analyse and evaluate all five categorical angles of approach mentioned and correct them where necessary (Van Rensburg, 1996:153). The impact of the covenant as a paradigm for pastoral care is further described by Van Rensburg and Hoffman (2003). According to Van

Rensburg (1996:153) the covenant as a paradigm is *chosen*, as the covenant and predestination form the two central structures in the Bible and Reformed teaching. It is clear from a doctrinal perspective that the covenant and predestination together form the most comprehensive set of theological principles, encompassing all other supposed biblical principles. A paradigmatic choice for the covenant avoids the necessity to choose one biblical principle at the expense of the others, and fragmentation of the poimetic is avoided (Van Rensburg 1996:153). From this point of view, the covenant has a more extensive impact on pastoral care than any other paradigm (Van Rensburg & Hoffman, 2003:239). According to Van Rensburg and Hoffman (2003:250) pastoral care will serve its purpose more effectively, the closer it is to the covenant relationship.

Helberg (1996:223) emphasises the pivotal place of the covenant in Reformed theology. In the 1960s Eichardt convincingly showed that the theology of the Old Testament rests on the covenant concept. Helberg further refers to the parallel between biblical covenants and old Middle East vassal agreements. In the Reformed tradition the covenant between God and his people is separated from its historical bounds, and thus the covenant is a timeless abstraction (Helberg, 1996:223). This abstract concept of the covenant is used as a cardinal concept to describe the nature of the relationship between God and human beings. Paul uses the marital relationship to describe the covenant relation between God and his church (cf. Eph. 5:21-23). Therefore the covenant can, and should be used as cardinal concept to describe the nature of the marital relationship between husband and wife.

Against the background of these introductory remarks, the focus of this article is to illustrate the impact of the covenant as a paradigm in marriage pastorate. First the nature of the covenant between God and humankind is investigated; and secondly, the nature of the covenant between husband and wife in marriage. In both cases various definitions, the establishment and promises of the covenant, the obligations of the covenant and life in the covenant relationship are considered.

2. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The covenant as a paradigm has a significant impact on the pastorate, and in marriage pastorate the covenant forms the fundamental building block.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study is based on a comparative analysis and interpretation of existing literature about the covenant between God and humankind, and the significance thereof for the marriage. The literature was studied to detect the role (or function) the covenant has in marriage pastorate. Thereafter, the information was empirically tested through a qualitative study that included questionnaires and group discussions¹.

4. THE NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND HUMAN BEINGS

4.1 Covenant definition

The aim of a covenant is to provide a guarantee to a commitment (Helberg, 1996:224). A

1 A limited qualitative empirical study has been done during the presentation of three marriage seminars.

The respondents were requested to complete a questionnaire, followed by group discussion. The first seminar took place in Rustenburg on the 15 January 2011, the second in Potchefstroom on 11 April 2011, and the third in Carletonville on 7 May 2011.

covenant is thus a specialised requirement or undertaking boosted by a self-damning oath or pledge². A covenant between God and the one with whom He made a covenant is defined as follows:

1. "A covenant is an unchangeable, divinely imposed legal agreement between God and man (a human being) that stipulates the conditions of their relationship" (Gundem, 1994:515).
2. "A covenant is an agreement, established between two parties, whereby a bond is made between the parties and whereby they, standing on equal basis, mutually undertake certain commitments. A covenant between God and man (human beings) is a conditional promise, sealed by blood sovereignly administrated by God (Gen. 17:9-11), with blessings for those who obey the conditions of the covenant and curses for those who disobey its conditions (Ex. 19:5-6). The covenant is God's plan and pledge for accomplishing the redemption of sinning man" (An, 2001:59).
3. The covenant of grace is the particular form of the divine dispensation in which the Triune God is bound by covenant and oath to the believers and their seed, to be their Father, Redeemer and Sanctifier. Through the covenant, human beings are united with God as His bondservants in order to do His will. It is only due to man's unbelief and disobedience to the covenant that he can be lost (Postma, 1980:9).
4. Van Rensburg and Hoffman (2003:241) refer to the covenant as "wholeness of a relationship of community, a state of harmonious equilibrium, balancing all the demands and needs between two parties".

The covenant relationship between God and human beings provides security to man; the certainty that God Himself is bound to the relationship, thus creating a safe environment where man is able to grow towards spiritual and emotional maturity.

Although believers frequently use the term "Covenant God" or "God of the Covenant" and even sing of it in the Totius rendering of Psalm 146, this appellation is not found in the Old Testament (Helberg, 1996:226). In addition to this, in Exodus 3, God refers to Himself as "*the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob*". In this reference, it is obvious that a strong connection exists with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob with whom the covenant was established. It is significant that God reveals Himself in terms of His relationship with people (the Earthly Fathers) and does not describe His relationship with them in covenant terms. The conclusion can be drawn that for God, His relationship with people are of primary importance and different from His relation to things, places and concepts. The term "Covenant God" can easily direct the focus to a more formal, structural sphere and structural requirements and effects, as if God is more interested in the covenant than in man.

4.2 Covenant making and promises

The covenant of God with man (Gen. 15, 17) – also called the covenant of grace – has its deepest roots in the will and goodwill of God to save fallen humanity (Marais, 1977:3). Fundamental to

2 The basis word for covenant is translated from the Hebrew words *Berit* and the Greek word *Diatheke*. *Berit* normally refers to a deed or ritual in the making of a covenant or contractual agreement between parties (Marshall *et al.*, 1996:234). *Diatheke* is the Greek version of *Berit* used in the New Testament. The Greek lexicon offers two words for covenant, namely *Diatheke* and *Sintheke*. According to Tenney (1967:186) *Sintheke* is indicative to a covenant whereby two parties agree to the conclusion there off. Van Gemeren (1997:746) indicates that *Diatheke* refers to the word "testament" in the Septuagint. It indicates the monopoleuric character in the covenant, because God independently from man and initiated only by Himself, enters into covenant with man. In this process *Diatheke* includes man only on his reaction on acceptance of the covenant or the rejection there off. Man's reaction makes it dupleuristic (Parker, 2008:15). The term *Berit* is referring to a sovereign and merciful engagement from God in relationship with His people.

the covenant is the powerful promise of God. Postma (1980:9) explains the promise as follows: “The covenant of grace is the promise of salvation in the form of a covenant. The Scripture teaches that every covenant of God with man is nothing but a promise given in the intensified form of a covenant.”

The promise of the covenant is paramount and is indicative of its monopoleuric character (Marshall *et al.*, 1996:235; Postma, 1980:10). The promise includes salvation for time and eternity. The covenant gives the disproportionate dimensions of God’s wisdom, the breadth of His love and the length of His patience and loyalty (Van Rensburg, 1996:153). In the covenant with Abraham the divine gift is evident (Helberg, 1996:225). In Genesis 15 God confirms His promises to Abraham through the ritual of the contractual model for the confirmation of a covenant. Walking between the pieces of the animals, the parties undertake to honour the agreement. The one who breaks the agreement can be cut in half just as the animals. In this case, Abraham does not pass between the pieces, but only the embodiment of God’s presence – a smoking fire pot with a blazing torch – performs this ritual. The covenant is therefore a fixed security whereby God alone commits Himself to the execution thereof (Marshall *et al.*, 1996:235; Snyman, 2010:131). For sinful mankind it is totally impossible to offer payment for his/her sins; and God, through His grace, decided to provide a Mediator so that mankind could receive righteousness as a gift (Marais, 1977:4). God Himself, in the person of his Son, made the sacrifice and in this way Jesus Christ became the Mediator and Saviour, and thus a new covenant came into being. In terms of the contractual ritual Jesus was “cut in pieces”, on the one hand due to the unfaithfulness of human beings, and on the other hand due to the fixed assurance that God is faithful to the covenant relationship. Through the crucifixion Christ became the perfect sacrifice for the new covenant (cf. Heb. 8).

4.3 Covenant obligations

Closely associated with the promise of the covenant are the covenant obligations or demands of faith and repentance (cf. Gen. 15:6 & 17:9). All covenants have two sides. In its progress the covenant is therefore dupleuric or double-sided. The promise always comes first and faith is required to accept the promise – the appropriation of the promise. Every person within the covenant therefore receives not only the promise, but also the requirement of faith and repentance (Postma, 1980:10). Without faith and repentance the promise will not be fulfilled. The sin of Israel, among other things, lay in their refusal to acknowledge that a relationship with God also brings *obligations* (Hoepfner, 2009:16). God connects the promised salvation to the promise through the bond of faith. Because of unbelief, human beings separate what God has joined together and disconnects the promised salvation from the covenant promise. Such a human being will not participate in the promised salvation and he loses what God has already given to him through the promise (Postma, 1980:13). The covenant relationship is therefore a truly personal relationship, not just a superficial or formal ritual, but a deeply intimate experience (Helberg, 1996:230). A human being’s heart is moved by the covenant relationship. It is the personal nature of the covenant relationship that gives this relationship a reciprocal (dupleuric) character. God’s relationship with man requires a response. Because the relationship is personal, it cannot exist unilaterally, so God sometimes makes explicit demands regarding the covenant. The conditions are in unison with God’s relationship, and consequently the conditions are not merely impersonal and legalistic by nature (Helberg, 1996:231).

4.4 Living in covenant

According to Van der Merwe (2004:88), the covenant is not just a matter of perspective or pure and true definition. Rather it is a living comfort and hope for those who fall into sin because of

weakness, so that they don't doubt the mercy of God and remain in sin (Baptismal formula). The covenant of God represents a joining of extreme disharmonies – between God and sinner a unique bond of union is established. The covenant serves to bring about salvation that comes from the Lord alone and it becomes a divine reality in the life of human beings, through which they can live and die (Van der Merwe, 2008:88). The covenant relationship opens the way so that man has both the courage to state his case and his struggles to God through earnest lamentations, and the grace to give praise and obedience to God. In light of this, breach of the covenant is therefore perceived as a matter of sorrow, while restoration of the covenant cultivates joy (Van Rensburg & Hoffman, 2003:242). Man in a covenant relationship with God has the certainty that he is reconciled with God, and the Holy Spirit creates in him the openness to have an intimate personal relationship with God. The emphasis in the New Testament is that God, through His Spirit, is present in the hearts of believers, and because of this human beings encounter the full reality of God's love and they can rejoice in the intimate contact with God.

5. THE NATURE OF THE COVENANT BETWEEN MAN AND WOMAN IN MARRIAGE

Currently, Western secular circles increasingly regard traditional marriage as obsolete and more voices are raised for alternatives (Collins, 2005:476; Adams, 1983:ix). Consequently, research is in progress to investigate the possibility to link a fixed term to a marriage relationship, after which the parties will have the option to renew the marriage or to dissolve it (Lowery, 2002:6). Marriage without the necessary commitment creates an undesirable situation. Considering the sinful nature of human beings, it is inevitable that problems in the marriage will occur at some point. Where there is no deeper commitment, the marriage is without hope and divorce sometimes seems the easier choice. In light of this, the church must take on the responsibility to teach and equip people regarding marriage and especially regarding the covenant as the fundamental building block of marriage. Without a covenant relationship with God, human beings are without hope and future (cf. Eph. 2:12-13). Marriage is also without hope and future if spouses do not understand their relationship in context of the covenant and do not live accordingly. A covenant between husband and wife, based on the covenant between God and human beings, gives true hope to the marriage relationship (cf. Heb. 6:13-20), and brings God as witness and protector into their relationship (Lowery, 2002:82).

5.1 Covenant definition

The covenant between a man and a woman in marriage is defined as follows:

- The right attitude towards marriage as a covenant is to believe that marriage is based on a covenant relationship that God established as an unbreakable, fulfilling and lifelong relationship between a man and a woman; which is distinguishable from all other relationships in terms of an attitude of constant unconditional love, reconciliation and sexual purity, while the spouses continually strive towards purposeful growth in the covenant relationship (Lowery, 2002:70).
- Marriage is an institution of God and a complex multidimensional experience (De Wet, 2005:11; Collins, 2005:476).
- Marriage is a social institution, as well as an intimate personal relationship (Ponzetti & Mutch 2006:216).
- According to Louw (2005:45), the husband-wife relationship creates a space in which God's attitude, his grace and constancy should be demonstrated and manifested in a unique way. Hence, the fact that marriage is considered as a permanent, unbreakable commitment of love.

The Jews regarded marriage as an obligatory religious ritual that all the Jewish laws endorsed. For Jews the ultimate success of the covenant rested on marriage and reproduction (Ponzetti & Mutch, 2006:216). In Greco-Roman times marriage was seen as essential to the sound basis of society and social order. The central expectation of marriage was reproduction. The government laid down marriage laws and the institutionalisation of marriage was of central importance in Roman civilisation (Ponzetti & Mutch, 2006:217). Roughly up to the time of the Reformation, the Christian view regarding marriage was dominated by the Roman Catholic Church. Marriage was seen as a natural, contractual and sacramental entity. However, they believed that celibacy had greater value than marriage. During the Reformation, Luther and Calvin mostly agreed with the view of the Roman Catholic Church regarding marriage; but in addition, they also saw marriage as the solution to human sexuality (cf. 1 Cor. 7:9; Ponzetti & Mutch, 2006:223). Louw (2005:44) states that marriage is not a brothel that has to fulfil the sexual needs of the partners. He refers to sexual intercourse (*koitus*) as an act of personal love-communication, which is intrinsically part of the development of human identity.³ Marriage is thus seen as a safe space for demonstrating salvation, reconciliation and forgiveness (Louw, 2005:45). From the eighteenth century, changes such as longer life expectancy and better living conditions revolutionised the perception of marriage and attraction – love and affection were recognised as *sin qua non* in the marriage relationship. Since the start of the previous century, the concept of romantic love has been over-emphasised and marriage became more of a private, rather than a social matter (Ponzetti & Mutch, 2006:223). However, Christians share a rich tradition which aspires to a deeper meaning in the marriage bond and this is why the fundamental value of the covenant in marriage is emphasised. In essence the covenant is about relationship. Christianity is based on the covenant promise of God and fellow-believers. The legally binding contracts that dominate all agreements in contemporary society, cloud the understanding of the covenant as fundamental building block in marriage. Yet, it is the duty of the church to educate prospective wedding couples in the covenant aspect of Christian marriage.

5.2 Covenant making and promises

Genesis 2:18-25 provides the foundation for entering into a marriage relationship and five key features can be distinguished, namely: a common desire, appreciation, commitment, trust and conviction (Bellesi, 2007:24). In the New Testament Jesus and Paul quoted Genesis 2:24 as a fundamental building block of marriage (cf. Mt. 19:5; Eph. 5:31). Leaving, cleaving and union are three pivotal aspects emphasised in the marital relationship (Lowery, 2002:67). The success of the marriage depends on the strength of the parties' covenant promises to each other, and their covenant relationship with God. In this regard Lowery (2002:69) is quoted:

“I didn't marry you because you were perfect. I didn't even marry you because I loved you. I married you because you gave me a promise. That promise made up for your faults. And the promise I gave you made up for mine. Two imperfect people got married and it was the promise that made the marriage. And when our children were growing up, it wasn't a house that protected them; and it wasn't our love that protected them – it was that promise.”

According to Palmer (1972:639), the significant difference between a contract and a covenant is the following:

3 Louw (2005:44) explains as follows: The word sexual intercourse (*Jādā*) suggests personal knowledge of the other. *Jādā* (*koitus*) is therefore more than just sexual intercourse; it describes a personal process of communication whereby the humane of the other person is unveiled. Sexual intercourse is meant to focus on treating the other person in a dignified manner and to establish a bond. For example whenever a man has had sexual intercourse with a woman, he must take responsibility for her. He cannot reject her nor can he ostracise her (cf. Deut. 22:28-30).

“Contracts deal with things, covenants with people. Contracts engage the services of people; covenants engage persons. Contracts are made for a stipulated period of time; covenants are forever. Contracts can be broken, with material loss to the contracting parties; covenants cannot be broken, but if violated, they result in personal loss and broken hearts. Contracts are secular affairs and belong to the marketplace; covenants are sacred affairs and belong to the hearth, the temple, or the church. Contracts are best understood by lawyers, civil and ecclesiastical; covenants are appreciated better by poets and theologians. Contracts are witnessed by people with the state as guarantor; covenants are witnessed by God with God as guarantor. Contracts can be made by children who know the value of a penny; covenants can be made only by adults who are mentally, emotionally, and spiritually mature.”

The marriage covenant is personal and relationship-oriented – not self-oriented. It provides security and a safe haven, and contains the promise of strength (Lowery, 2002:86). The Christian marriage is thus distinguishable from secular marriages in terms of the quality of their covenant promises. Christian marriages are distinguished both by the quality of love and the commitment to care – based on the covenant promise. According to Adams (1983:23) a marriage begins at the wedding ceremony when a husband and a wife make wedding vows to each other before God. Just as the covenant between God and human beings, the covenant between husband and wife rests on a promise. Marriage is not merely the signing of a contract. A legal contract is concerned with rules and regulations, and can be broken when the conditions are not met. A covenant is concerned with a relationship. When marital partners understand the full impact of a covenant relationship and live accordingly, they will experience ways and depths of love for each other which they never thought were possible.

5.3 Covenant obligations

The covenant of God with man has its deepest roots in the will and goodwill of God to save fallen humanity (cf. 4.2; Gen. 15, 17; Marais, 1977:3). This is another aspect of the Christian marriage which uniquely distinguishes it from secular marriages. The covenant marriage allows the spouses the opportunity and supports them to grow towards spiritual and emotional healing in God through Jesus Christ. Although the Bible describes successful marriages (e.g. Boas and Rut), there is also evidence of marital conflict (e.g. David and Michal; Collins, 2005:476). Though these cases are mentioned in the Bible, marital problems *per se* are not analysed or discussed. Intimacy in the marriage is created when spouses live according to their covenant promises and obligations. This encompasses mutual understanding, faith, openness and respect, with the purpose to love and accept each other unconditionally. Intimacy in marriage is linked to the degree and quality of the spouses’ spiritual and psychological maturity (Louw, 2011). Stress in marriage is often a symptom of deeper emotional baggage and unspoken, suppressed feelings. Spiritual and psychological immaturity includes unfounded fears, selfishness, and lack of love, being unforgiving, anger, communication problems and behavioural problems. The covenant relationship between God and human beings creates a safe space for human beings to grow towards spiritual and emotional maturity. An understanding of the covenant aspect, as fundamental building block in marriage, allows spouses support and space for spiritual and emotional growth. Van Rensburg (1996:154) points out that the kingdom of God is the domain within which the divine covenant and promises are to be concretised. Evidence of the kingdom is thus constructed through pastoral care when spouses are guided to salvation in Christ and thus find true unity in marriage. This is where the will of God, as included in His council and promised in His covenant, is put into operation. Ultimately the covenant is mainly a relationship-oriented reality. König (1991:17) describes it as follows: “We are already joined to each other

in the covenant with God. Our relationship with each other is defined through our relationship with God.” A deeper bond between a husband and his wife is created by the understanding of this concept. Wholeness is found along the road of restored relations – more so when the marriage relationship is founded in the covenant relationship between God and human beings (Van Rensburg, 1996:157).

Stoop (2007:376) refers to research done by Barna regarding spiritual intimacy in marriage. His findings show that the divorce rate among marriage couples who daily worship God together, is only 1 in 1 100. This is amazing in light of the fact that the overall divorce rate shows that one in two marriages ends in divorce⁴ (Famsa, 2011). Marriage couples, who understand and live by the spirit of the covenant, will not only experience growth in their relationship with God, but their marriage relationship will also deepen. Van Rensburg and Hoffman (2003:242) indicate that the dupleuristic nature of the covenant assumes reciprocity in the pastoral process; whereby the spouses take responsibility in the pastoral process to solve problems, and do everything necessary to facilitate healing in the relationship.

5.4 Living in covenant

The conclusion can be drawn that the biggest responsibility of spouses is to love each other unconditionally, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her (cf. Eph. 5:25). Thus, they will grow in complete union (intimacy) with each other and with God. To live within the covenant as a fundamental building block of marriage provides the spouses a safe, secure and peaceful environment not only in times when everything is good, but also in times when conflict arises. Jesus experienced something similar in the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. Mt. 26:36-46). The cup is a metaphor of Jesus’ discomfort. Jesus’ complete surrender to God became apparent when He uttered the words, “*Yet not as I will, but as you will*” (NIV). With this, Jesus became the Mediator for the new covenant that was established between God and human beings (Hagner, 1995:783). Covenant love is so strong that it does not exclude discomfort, but recovery and healing can also be found along this path. Therefore, for spouses to live within a covenant relationship with each other is a matter of faith for *both*. The endurance and stability of this relationship is not determined by the inconsistency of emotions, sexuality or love, but by the faithfulness of God and His grace (Louw, 2005:51). The survival of the marriage is then a choice to stay true to the covenant promises.

Balswick and Balswick (2006:38-39) distinguish four core principles for the covenant marriage, namely the agreement – to love and to be loved; grace – to forgive and to be forgiven; empowerment – to serve and to be served; and intimacy – to know and to be known. These principles also become manifest in the covenant between God and human beings.

The similarities in the covenant relationship between God and human beings on the one side, and the covenant marriage between a man and a woman on the other side, are remarkable in that both are initiatives of love inviting a response and creating a relationship. Just as God’s covenant of grace is secured by an oath, so the essence of the marriage covenant is the vow of consent – a vow that protects and guarantees the relationship. The existence of both are based on faithfulness of the parties; both include the promise of blessing to those remaining faithful to their covenant obligations and both require self-sacrifice (Lowery, 2002:xvi).

4 Yarber (2009:918) writes in a review of the book by Nock *et al.*, *Covenant Marriage*: “*The movement to reclaim tradition in marriage* that the city Louisiana in the United States of America has already declared the covenant marriage legal in 1979 as part of the marital law. This is done in an effort to reduce the high divorce rate. This implicates that future bridal couples have the choice to be wedded according to the covenant values and before a couple can be divorced, proof must be given of efforts to resolve the marriage conflict.”

6. EMPIRICAL STUDY

For the purpose of this research the qualitative method was used. Qualitative research makes use of the logic of the praxis (Strydom, 1999:14), which makes it easier to determine the emotional state of humans in certain situations (Lindeque, 2006:197). Qualitative research emphasises the importance to understand the social order and the context thereof (Neuman, 1997:330). The meaning of a certain chain of events depends to a great extent on the context in which they occurs (Steyn & Lotter, 2006:106).

A limited empirical study was conducted at three marriage seminars, where the concept of the covenant as a fundamental building block for marriage was shared with those attending. The participants were Christian believers, active members in their Church activities, and they have shared testimonies of their personal relationships with God. The participants were all married in the church, where they made vows to each other before God and the congregation. The first group consisted of four couples. Two couples, who were married for more than fifteen years, had received intensive marriage counselling during the preceding three years, which resulted in a dramatic change in their marriage relationship, as well as in their relationship with God. The second group consisted of five couples in their first marriages. The third group consisted of eight couples of which five couples were in their first marriages. Overall the marriages ranged from 14 months to 34 years.

Even though intensive empirical research still needs to be done, and granted the fact that this research was only done on a very small scale, the following conclusions can already be made.

A huge gap exists with regard to pre-marital counselling. Seventy percent of the couples who formed part of the research received no pre-marital counselling. Twenty percent of them said that they had received proper counselling, while the remaining ten percent spent an hour with their pastor to receive counselling prior to their wedding. Ignorance regarding the expectations and demands of married life will inevitably result in problems and needs to be addressed.

Only twenty-five percent of the participants indicated that on previous occasions they had been made aware of the covenant aspects of marriage. For some of the participants the idea of a covenant marriage was completely unfamiliar, because they were of the opinion that a covenant could only exist between God and a human being, and not between people or, for the purpose of this study, between a man and a woman in marriage. A basic consensus was reached concerning the fact that the covenant promise in marriage is a promise before God, a binding contract, a promise to be faithful, a promise of submissiveness of a wife to her husband and a lifelong commitment. It was evident that all the participants had only a vague idea of the covenant aspects and were not aware of the importance of the covenant as the fundamental building block of marriage.

During the group discussion several issues were discussed and the participants agreed on the following:

- Firstly, the importance of the responsibility that wedded couples have towards each other has been pointed out. The phrase "*as Christ*" brings a major paradigm shift in the marital relationship.
- Secondly, the permanency of the marriage relationship, due to the covenant aspects, was discussed. This fact should urge married couples to deal responsibly with conflict, rather than to avoid it. Problems in marriage are no longer seen as the result of conflicting personalities, but as perception blockages that can be resolved. The prejudices regarding the problem can be recognised.
- Thirdly, the view that greater intimacy is possible when marriage couples live according to covenant principles was raised. These principles enable husband and wife to accept

each other unconditionally and emphasise their love for each other, without the fear of rejection.

These three key elements were highlighted, but the many different facets of the covenant still offer opportunity for further exploration. I am of the opinion that, although this was a limited empirical study, it already gives an alarming indication of the broader situation – that contemporary marriage counselling is done on a reactive, rather than on a pro-active basis.

7. CONCLUSION

The marriage relationship is an important relationship among human beings. If the marriage relationship grows and flourishes, it is one of the most fulfilling and satisfying experiences of human existence. If it is unhappy or even static, it can be a source of utmost frustration and unhappiness. God Himself introduced marriage as an institution, because He wanted to create a human model of the covenant relationship Jesus Christ has with his church. In a marriage relationship, which is built on the covenant as fundamental building block, the husband and wife have the opportunity to express God's grace towards each other. Intimacy in the covenant marriage is therefore an expression of grace and hope. It is an unqualified "I do".

The Bible recognises the reality of broken marriages (cf. Mal. 2:13-16), but this does not mean that marriage as an institution has failed. When the Pharisees asked Jesus about divorce in order to test Him (cf. Mt. 19:1-12), Jesus answered that it was the hardness of human beings' hearts that destroyed marriages. Marriage, since God Himself determined the foundation thereof, is not merely the implementation of a contract. It is a sacred blood covenant of which God is the witness and guarantor. It is unconditional, unlimited and perpetual – based on trust rather than on terms. It appeals to the characters of those involved, rather than focusing on their comfort, and it is concerned with what they build into it, rather than with what they can get out of it.

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‘Pull up a good tree and push it outside’? The Rev Edward Tsewu’s dispute with the Free Church of Scotland Mission

ABSTRACT

The Tsewu secession or dispute took place in the context of the emergence of African Initiated Churches during the latter part of the nineteenth century as a response to mission Christianity and an assertion of a distinct form of African Christianity. Tsewu’s brand of response falls within the genre of the Ethiopian-type church which tended to retain most of the outward expressions of the denominations which they left, eg. liturgy, polity and doctrine. Tsewu led the first secession from the Presbyterian fold in 1896 and this prepared the ground for a further secession in 1898.

INTRODUCTION

There is an assumption (eg. Denis 2010:32) that there was only one secession from the Presbyterian fold in South Africa during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Within Presbyterianism, the Mzimba secession is relatively well known. What is far less well known is that in 1896, two years prior to Mzimba’s secession, there was another disruption to Presbyterian church life in Johannesburg led by Rev Edward Tsewu¹. This occurred within the context of the growing phenomenon of Ethiopianism as part of the African Initiated Church movement.

THE AFRICAN INITIATED CHURCH MOVEMENT

During the second half of the nineteenth century there was a rise in protest and resistance against political and economic domination in South Africa. This was linked to the emergence of a black elite who had received their education at mission establishments, ‘yet who were progressively restricted in their activities to their own areas’ (Duncan 1997:67), and were excluded from white society. Concurrent with the rising tide of protest and resistance in the secular sphere, a movement was coming to birth which grew rapidly in ecclesiastical life, giving expression to feelings of resentment which could not easily be expressed otherwise. This was the African Initiated Church (AIC) movement. While this movement originated as a negative response to ecclesiastical oppression, it had positive features which account for its rapid growth and sustained existence for ‘AICs have the potential of embodying a type of Christian spirituality and faith that does not merely contextualize some superficial elements of a Western interpretation of Christianity but rather represents a legitimate version of Christian faith, a non-Western religion, that has taken root in the distinctive heritage of that continent’ (Kärkäinen 2002:195). Whether successful or not, ‘Independent Churches have,... attempted to make a creative synthesis of traditional and Christian beliefs..., they represent radical indigenisation and Africanisation of Christianity’ (Motlhabi in Mosala & Tlhagale [ed] 1986:80). Seen in negative terms, AICs are a protest against ‘the experience of religious manipulation, deculturalization and racial subjugation’ and in more positive light as ‘a part of the broad and long term process

1 I am grateful to Dr Joan Millard, formerly of UNISA, for this insight offered as long ago as 1996 when I was studying for my Master’s degree.

of national politico-economic emancipation (Lamola 1988:6; Claasen 1995:15). AICs were a 'catalyst for this political surge' (Cuthbertson 1987:84) of black nationalism which spread through mission stations towards the end of the nineteenth century. Mission and evangelism in the mission churches had 'separated the gospel from the historical and material context of the people addressed' (Cochrane 1987:156). However,

Both missionaries and Africans were victims of social and political change outwith their control but missionaries showed themselves unable to identify with the African aspirations they had engendered and also unable to liberate themselves from the prejudices and mores of their race and class (Brock 1974 : Abstract)

In sum, it can be said that the AIC movement accommodated Christian beliefs to the realities of black peoples' lives; they related Christianity with black history and identity and were, therefore, 'Ethiopian'; and they wished the organisation of churches to be under the control of blacks.

ETHIOPIANISM

The roots of Ethiopianism may be traced to the early years of the nineteenth century with the struggle of the anti-colonialist Nxele and the development of African indigenous theology by Ntsikana. Both developed a religious synthesis of African traditional religion and Christianity which 'demonstrate the turbulence in the symbolic world occasioned by the coming of the Europeans...' (De Kock 1996:56). Nxele operated by resistance and Ntsikana by adapting the beliefs of mission Christianity. And so a politically significant movement was born (Cochrane 1987:90) into the context of a self-awareness of oppression. It was a source of challenge to whites' western dominated understanding of the gospel.

Sundkler (1961:13,33) claims that 'Ethiopian- type' churches 'originated as a result of secession from white churches on political and racial grounds'. While an early secession from the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society occurred in 1872 in Lesotho, in a situation of political instability, it displayed three features of later secessions: 'the resentment of white control, the possible political implications, and the resistance to disciplinary regulations' (Hinchliffe 1968:90).

The actual beginning of Ethiopianism in South Africa is attributed to Rev Nehemiah Tile who left the Wesleyan Missionary Society and formed the Tembu National Church in 1882. This was the first AIC in South Africa. Tile was followed by Rev Kanyane Napo who left the Anglican Church and formed the African Church in 1891; and then by Rev Mangena Mokone and Rev Samuel James Brander who left the Methodist Church and Anglican churches respectively in 1892 and founded the Ethiopian Church based on the text of Psalm 68:31: 'Ethiopia shall lift up her hands to God'. It was consciously non-tribalistic and was based on 'a philosophy of African self-consciousness and unity' (Lamola 1988:9). Unlike earlier secessions which were 'national' in a tribal sense, the Ethiopian Church was 'national' in a racial sense. Nehemiah Tile defected from the Methodists in 1883; Khanyane Napo from the Anglicans in 1891; Mangena Mokone from the Methodists in 1892; Samuel James Brander from the Anglicans in 1892; Jacob Xaba defected from the Methodists in 1893 and James Mata Dwane from the Methodists, also in 1896. Rev JC Xaba stated the positive aim of Ethiopianism: 'to promote Christianity and unity in the whole continent of Africa' (CE August 1897 in Wilson & Perrot 1972:155). Its aim was, therefore, not divisive but incorporative with regard to all blacks. This could not take place within the denominationalistic mission churches. The Anglican Church of the Province displayed more insight with regard to the incorporation of the Order of Ethiopia: 'our church would have failed in her duty if she proved incapable of welcoming, and of comprehending such elements of native thought and devotion as have thus been working out their own development'. This is the church which was composed of:

a large crowd of natives who had been rejected by other churches as incompetent, or who had seceded from other missions, or who had entered into the ministry in a state utterly incompetent so far as education, training and moral insight were concerned (Pastoral Letter of CPISA, *Christian Express* [CE] October 1900, in Wilson & Perrot 1972:157-158).

These were regarded as churches which will be filled with the American 'negro spirit ... [which] is decidedly anti-white. It aims to bring about a cleavage between white and black' (Pastoral Letter of CPISA, CE October 1900, in Wilson & Perrot 1972:157-158) as if such a division was not already apparent in society. And now blacks are to be blamed for causing it!

A major criticism of the Ethiopian-type churches was that they missionised areas where the mission societies had already worked and drew members away from them. So long as this did not happen their aims were considered to be legitimate. But when they began to proselytise they were accused of having 'no connection with any of the well known Missionary societies, which have done the whole work of planting Christianity among the natives of this country' (CE April 1897, Editorial, in Wilson & Perrot 1972:153). Ethiopian-type churches have intruded on the territory of 'those societies which have done the *real* [emphasis mine] missionary work of this country' (J Stewart in CE vol. xxvii April 1, 1897 no.324). Stewart accused the secessionists of 'not doing mission work among the natives'. To a large extent neither did the missionaries for much of the work was done by black evangelists, eg. at Burnshill and Pirie missions, it was black converts who acted as teachers and catechists (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:72). The mission churches clearly saw their work in terms of exclusivity and the Ethiopian movement as an intrusion.

Ethiopianism altered the means of black political protest and challenged 'those who believed in evolutionary change through constitutional means' as they 'were impatient with white control and pessimistic about protest for evolutionary change' (Odendaal 1984:23). It was based on the idea that blacks had a right to self-determination through 'self-pride, self-reliance and service to humanity' (Lamola 1988:9), rejection of the accommodation approach favoured by JT Jabavu's newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu*, and the recognition of a need for economic power. So it was not just a spiritual or ecclesiastical movement as is confirmed by Alexander Roberts of Lovedale's deprecatory assessment at the General Missionary Conference (1904): 'First, it is a race movement; second, it is political; third, it is a church' (Kuzwayo 1979:17 in Lamola 1988:9). However, the Lovedale based *Christian Express* adopted a reasonably positive attitude to Ethiopianism, suggesting that the AIC movement provided 'meaningful material benefits within a highly exploitative economic environment' (Cochrane 1987:92) although after it began to be affected by it, it changed its attitude as we can see in the lack of perception, bordering on propaganda, displayed in the false assessment: 'The virtual, if not actual, collapse of the Ethiopian Church' (CE vol. xxix, September 1, 1899 no. 349), a view not borne out by the facts or subsequent history. Cuthbertson (1991:64) is correct in seeing Lovedale's 'encounter with Ethiopianism as a formative stage in the rapid politicisation of an African elite'. Lovedale had to bear the result of educating blacks even if it seemed its education was thrown back in its face.

Ethiopianism's political credentials are attested by its rejection of 'the liberal assumptions of a common non-racial society' (Odendaal 1984:xi), and Rev JL Dube's newspaper *Ilanga lase Natal* as well as in Chief M Majosi's *Ipepa lo Hlanga* which was considered 'a seditious propaganda organ for the Ethiopian movement' (Lamola 1988:9).

The 'native problem' was *the* issue of the day and Ethiopianism was part of it being the sole national religio-political body. The Native Affairs Commission (1903-1905) met 'under the cloud of Ethiopianism' and resulted in 'a consequent obligation to give some recognition to the increasing number of educated, civilised Africans' (Brock 1974:335) but with little concern for the remainder who constituted the vast majority of the people. It had enabled several regional organisations to form the South African Natives' National Congress (SANNC) in 1912, despite the

fact that it had suffered from internal dissension and breakaways, eg. by Reverends S Brander and J Dwane. By the 1920s, numerous groups had broken away from mainstream missionary churches. Lamola (1988:11) argues that the years 1910-30 witnessed a 'new convergence of black political opinion' stemming from black alienation arising out of the Treaty of Union (1910) which 'sealed their inferior political position'. And this fell within 'the classical period of Ethiopianism', i.e., 1882-1928 (Bridgman in Brock 1974:409).

It is clear that Ethiopians saw a convergence of the political and the religious motives and methods. However, in conceiving the reason for the founding of the Black Church as being primarily missiological even to the extent of visualising the principle of the ecumenical dimension of Christian mission, they were the formulators of the concept of Pan-Africanism. They preached that the church in colonial South Africa and the entire African population should be so developed, freed and equipped that it can go out and serve other people, — "Africa for Humanity" (Lamola 1988:12). This appealed to such as Edward Tsewu.

THE TSEWU DISPUTE

Rev Edward Tsewu

Edward Tsewu was born in Grahamstown in 1856. He (SANAC IV, 43,754:803) claimed to be 'an Amaxosa, a Gaika'. He was the son of a deacon of the Lovedale congregation of the Free Church of Scotland. He attended school at Gqumahashe village near Lovedale (Millard 1999:73). At the age of fifteen, he went to Lovedale Institution to train as a teacher from 1872-1875 (Lovedale Missionary Institution[LMI] reports 1872:16 [where he is described as coming from Buchanan, a mission situated north of Mthatha], 1873:17, 1874:1717, 1875:18) gaining the Elementary Teacher's Certificate. Moir (1898:2) describes him in retrospect as having made 'credible efforts to help himself and suffered somewhat from the worldliness of others'. Tsewu then taught at Adelaide. Following the receipt of a call to the ministry, Tsewu returned to Lovedale to study Theology (LMI 1880:27; 1881:25; 1882:20; 1883:35). Despite 'a slight feeling, even then, of uncertainty about him' (Moir 1898:2), he was licensed a probationer of the Free Church and sent to Cunningham mission, Toleni in the Transkei in 1884. In 1886, he was transferred to Idutywa (Millard 1999:73) and Main but 'Nowhere did he do well', according to Moir, and:

when a proposal was made to promote him to a more independent sphere at Johannesburg ... and when the question of his ordination to the full status of a minister was raised in connection with this proposal, the Presbytery did not feel justified in declining, though again some members hesitated (Moir 1898:2).

This 'hesitation' was to have a subsequent problematic outcome for the Presbytery. Another reason for ordaining Tsewu may have been that, between 1856 and 1910, 'only about twenty-two African Presbyterians were ordained' (Switzer 1993:125, 126). This was the heavy price paid for maintaining high educational standards and an unwillingness to ordain men to equal status in ministry (Switzer 1993:123, 125): 'Missionary enthusiasm for ordaining African pastors was declining by the 1880s, as the arbiters of a segregationist culture began to separate church congregations and limit contact between white and black clergy' (Switzer 1993:125). Consequently, Switzer (1993:187) argues that "[t]he mission's subordination of the ordained clergy, in particular, was a major factor in the schisms'. Stewart must bear some responsibility for this state of affairs for his segregationist views and policies had begun to cause anxiety among church leaders by the 1880s to the extent that they 'could no longer trust Lovedale and Stewart to act or speak in their best interests' (Brock 1974:344, 345). He and others, Moir included, had been involved in producing men who:

sought a share in the power structure as decision makers – in allocating funds, controlling

and administering property, choosing suitable candidates for the ministry and promoting them to positions of authority. In short, the ordained African clergy wanted to become equal partners with the missionaries in the ongoing life of mission and church. When they were denied this role, they felt they had no choice but to separate (Switzer 1993:187).

For instance, Rev PJ Mzimba was one of the first graduates in theology (1874) under the system introduced by the new Principal of Lovedale Institution, James Stewart. This was a significant development and change of policy which allowed black ministers trained in South Africa to join the ranks of the Free Church of Scotland Mission. African clergy wanted to upgrade their status through ordination. '[F]inancially strapped parent boards of several mission bodies [including the FCoS] also began urging their missionaries to establish autonomous "self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating" African churches' opening up to them the 'most prestigious vocations open to the upwardly mobile elite during the colonial period' (Switzer 1993:123). However, there were reservations concerning this policy change. Stewart was unwilling to adhere to Scottish mission policy concerning the ordination of blacks 'In an agitated moment he *seems* to have claimed that the main cause of Ethiopianism was to be found in the interfering European mission boards in the matter of the ordination of Africans' (Sundkler 1961:39).

The Johannesburg Congregation of the Presbytery of Kaffraria

In 1890, Rev PJ Mzimba, minister of the Presbytery of Kaffraria of the Free Church of Scotland [CoS] at Lovedale, was sent to Johannesburg to evaluate the work in the Free Church of Scotland congregation there which was mainly composed of young men from the Eastern Province who were migrant labourers. This led to Rev Edward Tsewu being called as minister to the Johannesburg congregation in 1891 (Tsewu to Smith, 31 January 1891, NLS 7797). The Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) of the FCoS refused to take responsibility for this congregation and the Transvaal Presbytery did not want to be involved in this placement, and denied Tsewu a seat in presbytery as well as financial support. As a consequence, the Presbytery of Kaffraria retained responsibility though it was almost impossible to exercise authority from such a great distance. He was subsequently transferred to Johannesburg. His work went quite well until a group in his congregation accused him of 'irregularities' (Millard 1999:73).

The Tsewu Secession

In the meantime, by 1896, Tsewu was alleged to have become involved in the Ethiopian movement and Mzimba was sent by the Presbytery of Kaffraria to assist in dealing with the problems in the Free Church Mission in Johannesburg led by Tsewu as the result of charges of mismanagement of the congregations affairs 'with a view to worldly gain' (UFH, HPAL, Proceedings of the Synod of Kaffraria of the Free Church of Scotland, July 1897:7). However, Tsewu denied that he was a member of the Ethiopian Church. He informed the South African Native Affairs Commission [SANAC] on 14 October 1904: 'I do not belong to the Ethiopian Church, except the word Ethiopian may mean black. I am a Presbyterian ...' (SANAC IV, 43,618:793). He claimed that often the Ethiopian term is used 'by others saying "This is an Ethiopian" as if they were doing something quite apart from other Christian brethren'. He then made a comment that suggested that the missionaries were stirring up emotive responses: 'I do not blame the Government so much as the missionaries, who go to the Government and say, "Look at these people who are rebelling against you"' (SANAC IV, 43,618:793). In this regard he employed the metaphor of a tree: 'pull up a good tree and push it outside' (SANAC, 43,621:793). He regarded this as a great mistake 'without investigating the thing fully, or they might spoil a work which was intended to do good in the hearts of man'.

A congregation of four hundred members, by this time reduced to one hundred as a result

of an inter-tribal dispute in Tsewu's Johannesburg congregation, led Mzimba to the conclusion: 'They have joined the Independent or Ethiopian churches' (Mzimba to Stewart, 12/8/1896. UCTL, Stewart Papers, BC106:C167.8). At this time, Mzimba favoured following the procedures of the church and thus gained experience of the situation and circumstances of blacks in the Transvaal who enjoyed less legal protection than those in the Cape. On the issue of land, for instance, Tsewu believed 'that the Natives ought to be allowed to buy land in their own names, and have title deeds in their own names' (SANAC IV, 43,552:787). Mzimba concluded that 'uniting the native has increased the Ethiopian Church' (Mzimba to Stewart, 1/9/1896. UCTL SP BC106.C167). However, Brock's (1974:362) critique of the situation was, in a retrospective sense, prophetic: 'In the immediate past, as has been seen, the record of the mission in opposing discriminatory legislation had been fair, but they [ie. the missionaries] could not make a positive stance for equality within their own ecclesiastical domain'. Subsequent events were to prove how little they learned from the incident.

The inter-tribal dispute had resulted in the amaZulu withdrawing from the congregation leaving a majority of amaXhosa. This was followed by a dispute concerning a church building which Tsewu had erected. At its meeting at Burnshill on 14 November 1895, the Presbytery of Kaffraria received a report that led them to conclude that 'a change seemed desirable both for the sake of the mission and for the sake of Rev Tsewu' (Synod of Kaffraria, July 1897). On 16 July 1896, the Presbytery of Kaffraria decided that Tsewu should be replaced by Rev Elijah Makiwane of Macfarlan Mission, adjacent to Lovedale (Presbytery of Kaffraria, 16 July 1896; Synod of Kaffraria, July 1897:5). Tsewu refused and on 21 July 1896 sent a letter from a different group of his congregants to affirm that they were happy with his work (Millard 1999:73). Presbytery was rather sceptical about the source of the letter stating that it was 'purporting to be from his congregation' (Synod of Kaffraria, July 1897:5).

Revs Pambani Mzimba and James Stewart [Principal of Lovedale Institution] were sent as a commission to Johannesburg to investigate and Mzimba was to conduct services and provide pastoral care in Tsewu's congregation. Mzimba went alone and Stewart followed later. This was probably the first direct contact Mzimba had with the secessionary movement. In a letter to Stewart (12 August 1896. UCTL, Stewart Papers, BC106:C167.8) he stated:

I have now been three days my impression is that these men (the office-bearers) are going to separate themselves from the Free Church and that the congregation practically does not exist. Mr Tsewu represented I think that there was a membership of 400, I fear there is not even 100 now. They have joined the Independents and the Ethiopian churches and some time ago the Zulu left in a body. They have closed the door against services being held by me in the location Church which was built by Tsewu and the new one is not opened yet though completed. ... Ever since the Burnshill meeting [of Presbytery] the work of separating has been going on. ... The field is very important, money must not be grudged to give the cause a good start. What the Presbyterian Church now has is a church stand with an iron church building and rooms for a minister. Practically the work must be started afresh. All this is in the supposition that Mr Tsewu is removed or changed to another sphere of labour whether he should be removed or allowed to remain that will be the result of the investigation. The idea here is that he is already removed as he is practically suspended.

It seems clear that Tsewu was supported by at least some of his office-bearers. A subsequent letter of Mzimba to Stewart (11 September 1896. UCTL, Stewart Papers, BC106:C167.8) gives confusing figures regarding congregational statistics, though these figures probably relate to the different Free Church congregations (Tsewu's location church and the town congregation). The Zulus may have gone to the Congregationalist church as a result of the strong Congregationalist missionary activity in Natal and Zululand. However, at least Mzimba was able to operate in the

town congregation of the Free Church;

The place open for me to preach is the town church because the stand belongs to the Free Church. There is a church at the location a few of Mr Tsewu's supporters have closed the church. It is plain they are leaving the Free Church where they are going to I do not know. The services are well attended. In the morning the church is nearly full. It holds about 250. In the afternoon it is quite crowded and in the evening others cannot get in. A good many of these are strangers and others had left the Church, some have not returned they have gone to the Wesleyans, Ethiopian Church and Congregationalists.

This appears to be largely supposition on Mzimba's part, though it is probably true.

Mr Tsewu's salary is now due as he is paid monthly. The Treasurer Mr Bilbrough consulted the Deacons' Court they decided not to pay him until the moneys collected by Mr Tsewu are handed in. There are certain moneys in his hands This seems hard but I fear they may have no choice. Church moneys are not being collected or they are not given in at the Deacons' Court and therefore there is no money for paying the minister. And it is known that Mr Tsewu has certain monies given to him and that those who support him are not handing in any moneys. I understand Mr Tsewu has consulted lawyers and threatens to go to court. ... Church work especially finances is blocked that is endeavouring to have everything stopped that is if the seceding party succeeds. I think they will fail. They are not strong enough.

As was often the case in disputed situations, money became an issue and this hampered the work of mission and caused suspicion. It is not clear why Bilbrough consulted the Deacons' Court about whether or not to pay Tsewu if there were no funds available to do so. Whatever monies Tsewu held, they were never returned. 'It is noteworthy that Tsewu's actions, namely, his refusal to return church money, correspond closely to those later adopted by Mzimba himself' (Burchell 1979:121-122).

When Mr Tsewu went to the King William's Town Presbytery in July (1896) the Deacons' Court here (Johannesburg) had decided to open the new church which was finished on 9th August. When I came here I went over to the location where special services were held by a man appointed by Mr Tsewu in the location church during the week. The man who had charge of the meeting asked me to address the meeting. I did so. This man Faka and another Japheth Mathews ordered the meeting to be closed and that they have the authority to lock the church. This was Monday evening the day I arrived 10th August. The building belongs to Mr Tsewu but used by the congregation to hold services in. On Sabbath 16th I preached in the town church as this is Presbytery property. It was not closed against me. The Deacons' Court when they met, they decided that the church be opened and that we hold services in but Faka and Mathew have the key, they could have had the church closed against me. ... I have been here now 4 Sabbaths a few partisans of Mr Tsewu's have closed that church. The rest of the people are most anxious that I should preach there as well as in town. However I have not gone to open the church. I shall wait your coming.

There are people however in the location who are anxious that services be held (Mzimba to Stewart, 12 September 1896. UCTL, Stewart Papers, BC106:C167.9).

It is clear from this that not all of Tsewu's location congregation was opposed to Mzimba carrying out the functions assigned to him. The issue of ownership was also contentious as it would appear that Rev Tsewu had not funded the building since it was sanctioned by the Presbytery of Kaffraria and they would not have agreed to the erection of a building owned by an individual. The building would be owned by the General Trustees of the church. The use of the building would also have been an issue because in Free Church law, the minister has almost total control of their use except 'for any purpose not connected with the congregation, without the acquiescence both of the Session and the Deacons' Court' (BPCSA 1958:8,17-18). The BPCSA

adopted Free Church law on its formation in 1923.

The commission sat during the latter part of September into October 1896. Tsewu accused James Stewart of undermining his work by dividing the congregation by not hearing the witnesses in his defence. 'The evidence produce was very full' (Deposition² 1897:1). A report was submitted to the Presbytery meeting at Lovedale on 9 December 1896. As a result, Tsewu was cited to appear before the Presbytery on 22 January 1897 and was paid until the end of December 1896. Tsewu did not appear on the date cited but sent a telegram stating that he would arrive late. He did not arrive. On 16 April, Presbytery decided to institute a case of libel against Tsewu and he was cited to appear on 5 May 1897. Again, he did not appear. Neither did he appear on 21 May and 2 June when he was again cited to appear (Synod of Kaffraria 1897:6). In any case, the Presbytery referred to matter to the Synod for action. The charges were included in a slightly expanded form (Synod of Kaffraria 1897:6) but still without details. Despite this, the Presbytery decided that there was substance to the accusations, and Tsewu was accused of making false reports, not calling banns for marriages and charging unreasonable fees for performing marriages during the week. In addition he was accused of not acting according to church law and procedure in the election of elders and forcing members to pay church dues (Millard 1999:74). The Synod of Kaffraria noted in 1897 that 'for some time past the condition of the congregation under his care has been in an unsatisfactory state' (Deposition 1897:1) and that the charges were of a serious nature. The charges were '*wilful deception, abuse of ministerial functions, as well as dubious conduct* in connection with various matters about church property' (Deposition 1897:2). These were very non-specific charges. Under these heads various comments were made but these were also non-specific though it is noted that 'A fuller statement will be found in another column containing the report of the meeting of Synod' (Deposition 1897:2). Sadly for Tsewu 'No counter evidence of any value against the many serious charges of very non-ministerial conduct was ever produced' (Deposition 1897:3). This was the first case of so serious a nature in the history of the Scottish Missions of the Free Church of Scotland in South Africa. The reason given for such a strong judgment was:

But for the credit of mission work and that of the native ministry as well as in justice to his unfortunate congregation ... and prevent him doing further mischief. If any error has been committed it is that of leniency, and of considerable delay in the hope that such a sentence might have been avoided (Deposition 1897:3).

Non-appearance, according to church law constituted an admission of guilt. So, due to Tsewu's non-appearance, the Synod decided to:

hold him as having confessed and to deal with him according to his offences – therefore the Synod did by their vote depose the said Edward Tsewu, like as they hereby do in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone King and Head of the Church, and in virtue of the power and authority committed by Him to them, depose the said Edward Tsewu, from the Office of the Holy Ministry; prohibiting and discharging him to exercise the same or any part thereof (Synod of Kaffraria 1897:7).

This decision was transmitted to the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland. Tsewu had allowed himself to be placed in a corner by the vagaries of church law by not appearing when requested to do so. Yet, it is strange that so harsh a sentence was meted out to him for a first offence by any legal standards. Perhaps this was meant to be a signal to like-minded ministers to warn them against similar action in the prevailing and growing secessionary movement (see above).

2 It is interesting that an article from the *Christian Express* [CE] was included in the Minutes of the Synod of Kaffraria as the official record of the Tsewu secession. The CE, published at Lovedale Institution, was the major ideological instrument of the Free Church of Scotland Mission. Its views were identical with those of the Mission.

The *Christian Express* (August 1897) article, following the outcome of the Synod case ends with an apologia for the training of ministers: 'In the Presbyterian Church every precaution is taken by long training and moral supervision to prevent unsuitable men entering the work of the ministry. The moral failures have been comparatively few...' (Deposition 1897:4). This constitutes a damning indictment of Edward Tsewu. He had refused to attend Presbytery meetings giving various excuses including the death of his child and his brother-in-law which prevented him from leaving Johannesburg. These were considered inadequate reasons: 'Courts cannot postpone grave business for such a cause as Mr Tsewu pleads (Moir 1898:4). However, Tsewu's bereavements were substantial enough reasons according to African custom and culture. He was required again to appear before the presbytery and refused and resigned from the ministry.

The Rev WBJ Moir of Blythswood Institution and Moderator of Presbytery, wrote a negative review quoting directly from a document entitled 'Defence of the Rev Edward Tsewu of Johannesburg, on Dispute in Church Matters', a letter also reprinted in the Synod minutes from the *Christian Express* (Synod of Kaffraria, 1898). Moir had taught Tsewu at Lovedale and claimed to 'know most of his people' ('Defence', Synod of Kaffraria, 1898). Tsewu had claimed that he was not heard in his own defence. This was true. He had not had or taken the opportunity to defend himself. Moir (1898:2) challenged this by explaining that the Presbytery had devoted five days in February 1897 hearing Tsewu's defence in a preliminary enquiry in an informal setting, according to church law, to try to avoid a formal hearing. Moir (1898:2-3) is correct in his assertion that this was a hearing and not a trial, but with such patience 'that native auditors remarked to us we were having far too much patience with him'. This could not, however, be considered exoneration of the Courts of the church since they had well established procedures to follow. Then he tried to subvert the process by challenging the jurisdiction of the court and then resigning. He was the victim of deposition by default. Tsewu claimed that the problems which arose in his congregation were 'purposely and largely planned' (Moir 1898:3) to which Moir replied that it would be incomprehensible for the FCoS Mission to destroy its own missionary efforts or one of its ministers. Tsewu also claimed that his membership roll was greater than, in fact, it was and Moir (1898:3) gave downwardly revised figures drawn from the Communion Roll. To the charge that Dr Stewart had maliciously attacked Tsewu, Moir (1898:3) responded by saying that the charges had 'nearly all, brought by church-members and office-bearers. The words were the words of the Presbytery, but the facts were the facts of church-members and office-bearers'. Tsewu's charge was "'The very point that caused a split in my church" was "the refusal of Dr Stewart to have the witnesses of the accused (myself) heard fairly"' (Moir 1898:304). But the division was evident before Stewart became involved and that was why Stewart was sent to Johannesburg.

Regarding the congregation's petition in favour of Tsewu, Moir (1898:5) reveals that it was not only Tsewu who was disciplined but also his office-bearers after colluding with him. He even admitted to the Presbytery that 'some came to him, and withdrew their names, when they heard the nature of the petition, and one or more of the names he erased with his own hand'.

The Aftermath

In response to his deposition, Tsewu established the Independent Native Presbyterian Church (SANAC IV, 43,774:787) Open for Reunion and, thereby, led the first secession from the FCoS. However, Tsewu did not regard it as a secession or schism. He made it quite clear to the South African Native Affairs Commission (14 October 1904, IV, 43,561:787; cf 43,562, 43772): 'The Independent Presbyterian Church is the separation [not secession] of our church from the Free Church on a church dispute at present, but we are open for re-union'. This constituted a prelude to the Mzimba Secession but in itself had little its long term effect. In the midst of all this, Tsewu

then took his story to the press (Millard 1999:74), probably to expose the matter and solicit support for his cause. The sad situation arising out of Tsewu's discipline was exacerbated by his replacement by a white missionary, Rev CB Hamilton, as requested by the Presbytery of Kaffraria, supported by the Synod of Kaffraria, to the FMC. This decision of the Synod of Kaffraria in 1899 worsened the situation. Rev John Lennox, writing to Dr Stewart commented:

Affairs in the Johannesburg congregation are at a deadlock. The office-bearers refuse to collect contributions even from those who are ready to give. It was felt by all in the Presbytery and Synod that a deputation should go there without delay, and Erskine and I were thought of. Stuart [of Burnshill] cannot leave his two stations and there is no one else who can go from this side, or who knows the circumstances fully (5 August 1899, UCTL Stewart Papers[SP] BC106: 167. 31).

It is not surprising that such problems arose considering the great distance between the Presbytery in the eastern Cape and Johannesburg. It was even difficult to be fully apprised of the intricacies of the situation.

Reverends PJ Mzimba and E Makiwane, raised the race issue by commenting on the Presbytery's, ie. white missionaries, view that 'The Free Church Native Congregation at Johannesburg is fit only for a white missionary' (15/4/1898-16/4/1898, Minutes of the Presbytery of Kaffraria, 14/4/1894—27/1/1900, Lennox Papers, UFH). Rev J Don, Clerk to the Presbytery of Kaffraria, in a letter to Lindsay, Secretary of the FMC of the FCoS, emphasised the inequality of whites and blacks, 'We cannot afford to act upon the assumption that the native is equal to the European' (24/1/1898, NLS:7798). Yet, Don did not see this as a factor in Tsewu's dispute, according to Tsewu: 'Before the late Mr Don died in King William's Town we spoke on that point, and he said to me, "So far as you are personally concerned, I know it is not a matter of white *versus* black". It was a church dispute' (SANAC IV, 43,621:793). Sundkler (1961:17) picks up this point:

the problem arises when the more repressive view tacitly or openly becomes dominating in churches which in principle are egalitarian or liberal but which, by "practical necessity" ie. consideration for the race-conscious White membership of a particular church, have to conform to a general segregation policy within the church.

This led Mzimba to conclude that black ministers would always be allocated subsidiary roles and never attain full equality with their white counterparts and that there was little hope of the development of a self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating church. This became one of the main causes of the subsequent Mzimba Secession in 1898. In addition, the Tsewu Secession demonstrated that 'it was possible to disagree with the Presbyterian church authorities' (Millard 1995:215) and survive.

By 1903, the Johannesburg congregation was transferred to the care of the Transvaal Presbytery. Tsewu remained in Johannesburg and subsequently joined the American Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) contrary to his protestations about being a Presbyterian. Perhaps he had concluded that re-union was no longer a possibility after his replacement with a white minister. Millard (1999:74) notes that in 1905, Tsewu along with other AMEC members, Marshall Maxeke, John Mtshula and James Tantsi challenged the refusal of the Register of Deeds which would not register land on the name of an African by bypassing the official channels of the provincial administration and achieved his wish. This was significant for African Initiated Churches as it gave them the right to purchase land in urban areas. Millard (1999:74) affirms 'His desire for religious freedom became channelled into a struggle for political freedom'.

However, it is important to note that there were other localised secessions from the Free Church Mission in Qumbu, Port Elizabeth and Mafeking, all predating Mzimba's secession, perhaps demonstrating the potential of the Ethiopian movement as a national political movement. It was in this context that the better known Mzimba Secession occurred.

CONCLUSION

One question that arises with regard to Edward is should he have been ordained in the first place given the misgivings about him, despite the pressures emanating from the policy to ordain black ministers? Either, he met the requirements or he did not. That he became a problem to the Synod and Presbytery of Kaffraria must be attributed in some measure to these courts of the FCoS. It also appears from the evidence available that Tsewu had a disruptive personality. There is no evidence that he tried to heal the rifts in his congregation. He was also defiant in the face of the Presbytery's attempts to bring him to justice, but clearly the parties were operating with differing concepts of what constituted justice. As in the case of other secessions, money became a confusing and complicating factor. Despite accusations to the contrary, Tsewu was not against European practice and influence. For instance, with regard to marriage, he took the view that he should 'encourage the Christian native in the way of marrying according to European custom' (SANAC IV, 43,579:789). As in other secessions, it appears that when a decision is made to separate from a parent body, there is no going back. Perhaps it would go beyond the evidence in this case to conclude that this was a matter of 'Pull up a good tree and push it outside'.

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Law and Gospel or Gospel and Law? Karl Barth, Martin Luther and John Calvin

ABSTRACT

For Calvin the order of the law-gospel relation may be put this way: Law of creation (natural law) – revealed law (the law of Moses) – the gospel – the gracious law (third use) as a norm and guide for believers. The same outline would follow for Luther except that the third or positive use of the law plays a minor role in his thinking. On the surface Barth would seem to have more affinity with Calvin but the differences are significant because of Barth's rejection of any notion of the antithesis of law and gospel and his subsuming the law in all its functions under God's grace.

INTRODUCTION

Karl Adam, a German Roman Catholic theologian, is reported to have said that Karl Barth's Commentary on Romans "dropped like a bomb on the playground of theologians."² It immediately established Karl Barth, then a pastor in a small Swiss village, as a theological force to be reckoned with. It was a striking challenge to the German liberal theological establishment of the first half of the twentieth century from which it never completely recovered.

Not long afterwards Barth published a little monograph entitled *Evangelium und Gesetz* (Gospel and Law) in 1935 in the journal *Theologische Existenz heute*, No. XXXII.³ Barth had planned to give this as a lecture in Barmen that year but was prevented from giving it by the Gestapo. As he was being escorted across the border to Switzerland by the German police, someone else read the lecture in his place.⁴ This little treatise did not evoke much of a response in either the liberal theological world nor the evangelical world in Britain or the United States, but it was regarded as a frontal attack on a key Lutheran doctrine by the Lutheran establishment. For in Lutheranism the only doctrine that has higher priority than the Law-Gospel schema is the doctrine of justification. Whereas conservative Reformed and evangelical scholars were principally concerned with Barth's doctrine of revelation, many Lutheran theologians found this reversal of the law and gospel approach to be a serious flaw, if not a heresy, in Barth's theology.⁵

Eventually there were responses and more moderate critiques by theologians from other traditions. Several of the standard treatments of Barth's theology have been less polemical in their treatment of this subject in Barth's theology.⁶ Two of the earlier and more penetrating analyses were by the Dutch Reformed theologians Hendrikus Berkhof and G. C. Berkouwer.⁷ In recent years, however, this topic has not attracted much attention.⁸ Nevertheless, quite apart from the dispute caused by Barth's reversal of the law-gospel order, the question of the role of the law in the Christian life, in particular Calvin's emphasis on the third use of the law (*usus legis tertius*) – the law as a norm and guide for the Christian life – continues to be of relevance both for soteriology and Christian ethics. The situation ethics movement may have run its course, but Christian theology and the church will always be challenged by the question of the nature of the law and the gospel, however one conceives of their relationship.

KARL BARTH

At the outset it must be noted that Barth's reversal of the law-gospel order is not simply a rejection of the traditional ordering of these topics. Nor is it a modified version of the Reformed stress on the third use of the law as some Lutherans have suggested. Rather, a careful scrutiny of Barth's use of these terms reveals a radically new understanding of both the law and the gospel. Despite the fact that Barth does not devote a section to this subject in his *Church Dogmatics*, he deals with it again in various contexts: in his prolegomena (CD.I, 2), in his doctrine of God (CD.II, 2), his ethics (CD.III, 2) and his doctrine of reconciliation (CD.IV, 1 and CD.IV, 3).⁹ Granted, there is no extended discussion of this theme in these volumes, with the exception of IV, 3 where Barth takes on his Lutheran critics. Nevertheless, even where this subject is not explicitly discussed, it is central to understanding Barth's whole theology. A brief summary of his monograph *Gospel and Law* will show why.

Barth begins by conceding that "the traditional order, 'Law and Gospel,' has a perfect right in its place, "but he quickly adds, "Anyone who wishes to approach our subject must speak first of the *Gospel*."¹⁰ Barth bases this approach on passages like Galatians 3:17 where the Apostle Paul points out that the law followed the promise. Moreover, the law is fulfilled in the promise. Hence, "the law would not be the law if it were not hidden and enclosed in the ark of the *covenant*. And the gospel, too, is only the gospel if the law – that which 'came in between' – (Romans 5:20) – is *hidden* and *enclosed* in it as in the ark of the covenant."¹¹ Then follows the thesis of this treatise.

The gospel is not the law, just as the law is not the gospel, but because the law is in the gospel, comes from the gospel, and points to the gospel, we must first of all know the gospel in order to know about the law and not vice versa.¹²

At first glance it may seem as if Barth is saying what is obvious: the law and the gospel are interrelated but are not the same. This is affirmed again in a later context: "We would contradict the whole of Holy Scripture if we were unwilling to distinguish between the two." At the same time, Barth adds, "We would also contradict the whole of Holy Scripture if we wished to separate the two."¹³ Moreover, both Luther and Calvin taught that the law serves the gospel by making us aware of sin and thereby leading us to seek grace and forgiveness, the so-called *usus elenchticus* (for Luther the second and primary function of the law, for Calvin the first of three uses or functions). However, neither Luther nor Calvin ever speaks of the law being *in* the gospel. That this is more than merely a terminological difference is seen in the following sentence which is the most frequently quoted statement from his monograph, *Gospel and Law*, viz., "The law is nothing else than the necessary *form of the Gospel* whose content is grace." Or, as he puts it in his *Church Dogmatics*, the one Word of God "in its content is gospel; in its form and fashion it is law."¹⁴ It is particularly this claim that has evoked the antipathy of so many Lutheran theologians, as well as raised questions among Reformed and other theologians.

First, one must understand what Barth means by describing the law as the *form* of the gospel. Does this mean a virtual amalgamation or synthesizing of the two? Hardly, for Barth goes on to say that "the differentiation between content and form also designates an infinite distinction."¹⁵ Unfortunately, in this context Barth only says what this distinction does *not* mean. Here I agree with Gerhard Ebeling that "this formula is, quite apart from its theological intention, unclear from the point of logic. ...The concept of 'form,' so overloaded in view of the history of philosophy remains unclear."¹⁶

Herbert Hartwell, an able and sympathetic interpreter of Barth's theology indirectly answers the question in this way:

The gospel, i.e., God's grace in Jesus Christ, manifests itself as God's gracious claim on man, on his obedience. ...The grace of God in Jesus Christ is therefore also a demanding and commanding grace, calling man, as Jesus Christ's disciple and witness to the active service of God and his fellow-men. This is why this grace, and therefore the gospel is said to have the form of the law. The latter is the instrument whereby, and the form in which, God's grace in Jesus Christ accomplishes its purpose.¹⁷

In short, the law is the form of the gospel in that "it bears witness to the grace of God."¹⁸ Here we see the Christ centric nature of Barth's ethics which at the same time is grounded in Barth's doctrine of election. The law, for Barth, no longer has an accusing function. It does command but only as the law of the gospel, the law included in the gospel. And the gospel is summed up in Jesus Christ who has fulfilled the law and is the end (*telos*, not *finis*) of the law (Rom 10:4).¹⁹ The Word of God is ultimately not a duality – or two words as some Lutherans put it – but one Word and that Word is grace: "free sovereign grace, God's grace, which therefore can also mean law, which also means judgment, death, and hell, but *grace* and nothing else."²⁰

"The law is also *God's Word*, if it is further grace that God's Word is spoken aloud and becomes audible, and if grace means nothing else than *Jesus Christ*." Thus the will of God "is visible as grace in both form and content."²¹ Moreover, the grace of God, even in the form of the law, has already been accomplished for us by Jesus Christ in his once-for-all intercessory work on our behalf. "He intercedes for us, however, *by believing in our place* – it took the eternal Word incarnate to do that – and that means by saying 'yes' to God's glory and thus to man's misery" (emphasis mine).²² Consequently, in the gracious work of the law there is "a prior decision concerning man's self-determination. It is the claiming of his freedom."²³ Thus the law of God "requires from us nothing more or less than that we should be what we are, namely, men elected and saved by Jesus Christ."²⁴

It should be clear that Barth's reversal of the law-gospel approach has profound implications. It is not simply a terminological change. For, according to Barth,

The law is a summons to participate in the gospel. But it is not the sort of summons that is usually accorded the law in Protestant orthodoxy, viz., to convict of sin as a prior preparation for the gospel... Its true function is to call men to realize their true being which they have already in Jesus Christ.²⁵

Quite apart from Barth's view of election, which differs fundamentally from that of Luther and Calvin, we see here also another significant difference, viz., in regard to the accusing function of the law. Barth does not seem to take seriously this use of the law which in Romans and Galatians is so prominent (see Rom 3:19-20; 7:7-11; 8:2; Gal 3:19, 24-5. Cf. 2 Cor 3:6-11) and for Luther was the principal use of the law. Barth, of course, is aware of these negative references to the law, but he gets around them by insisting that such references are a misunderstanding and distortion of the law as graciously given to the people of Israel, the law praised by the psalmist. In his monograph, *Gospel and Law*, Barth refers again and again to the "misused, desecrated corrupt, and deformed and distorted law."²⁶ It is the law, "dishonoured and emptied by sin's deception," which is an instrument of the wrath of God.²⁷

That this interpretation does not do justice to Paul's understanding of the law has been noted by several theologians, and not all of them Lutheran. One of the first, as noted above, was Hendrikus Berkhof, the Dutch theologian who in general has been a very sympathetic interpreter of Barth. In a booklet published in 1953 Berkhof complained that preachers in the Netherlands who were influenced by Midden-orthodoxie no longer preached the law, particularly the accusing function of the law.²⁸ This, Berkouwer points out, is a result of Barth's viewing the law as "nothing more than the *form* of the gospel, a conception which has many consequences."²⁹

Another sympathetic Barth interpreter, and also Reformed, Otto Weber, also points that Barth does not “see clearly” or take “sufficient account of a passage like Galatians 4:4f., and “the fact that the law in the old covenant was the unfulfilled law.” In short, Barth “demonstrates a static character which does not correspond to the enormous tension and movement of the biblical witness.”³⁰

Lutheran interpreters, on the whole, have been even sharper in their criticisms, although a few have sought rapprochement between Barth and Luther on this issue.³¹ Others have suggested that the real difference is more between Barth and Lutheranism than Barth and Luther,³² and that basically Barth “does not reverse the sense” of the Lutheran and Pauline sequence of law and gospel.³³ I question both of these suggestions, although it is true that in modern day Lutheranism the preaching of law and gospel has often been taught in a dogmatic fashion unlike that of Luther.³⁴ Even more erroneous is the claim by Herman Sasse, a German Lutheran theologian of a past generation, that “Barth adheres to the Reformed Church with respect to ... the teaching about the relation of law and gospel.”³⁵ There are more affinities between Barth and Calvin than Barth and Luther because of the more positive view of the law and the Old Testament by Barth and Calvin, but it should already be apparent that the differences are not insignificant.

This brings up a related issue in regard to Barth and Luther in particular, although here again Luther is closer to Calvin than to Barth. That is, Barth’s insistence that it is not the proclamation of the law, as such, but the gospel that brings us to a knowledge of our sinfulness. “No law,” says Barth, “not even the law of Moses, can judge a man as the New Testament judges him.”³⁶

The Christian concept of sin is not to be gained in a vacuum, *remoto Christo*, but from the gospel to the extent that the gospel itself, as the good news of man’s liberation by and for the free God, has also the character and form of the true law of God, the promise of the grace of God containing his no less gracious claim, as the ark of the Old Testament covenant contained the tables of the Decalogue. In all its forms sin is man’s perverted dealing with the stern goodness and righteous mercy of God addressed to him in Jesus Christ.³⁷

The gospel – or the law contained in the gospel – not only brings us to an awareness of our sin but also reveals to us the true nature of sin. “God’s grace (and thus the law) irrefutably and unambiguously illuminates the fact and meaning of our sinfulness.” The depth of our sins “can only be realized when we are confronted with the Christ who died in our place and respond in faith. This also “discloses the *nature* of sin, against which God contends in Jesus Christ, the forgiveness of which he has prepared for us in him.”³⁸

There is something to be said for this, but it need not be either/or, i.e., either the law makes us aware of our sin or the gospel. One cannot dismiss the clear teaching of the Apostle Paul on this issue, but at the same time it must be conceded that the depth of our sinfulness is revealed above all when we stand before the cross of Christ and sing, “Were you there when they crucified my Lord?” In this regard, the approach of the Heidelberg Catechism may be instructive. In the first part on sin or guilt, Question 3 asks, “How do you come to know your misery?” Answer: “The law of God tells me.” Question 4 asks, “What does God’s law require of us?”³⁹ Now comes the surprising answer, for it is not the ten commandments that are cited here but rather Jesus’ teaching about the two great commandments. Thus, it is when we are challenged by the love commandments that we come to see the depth of our sin. The ten commandments, however, appear in Part III of the Catechism where the theme is gratitude! This is an illustration of the third use of the law whereby it provides guidance for the redeemed Christian.

In conclusion, it should be quite apparent that Barth’s reversal of the law-gospel sequence touches on almost every aspect of his theology. One can only understand the full significance of this issue when his whole theological system is taken into account. Jüngel is therefore probably

correct in stating that “Whoever attacks Barth here is going for the jugular.”⁴⁰ Barth, in effect, confirms this judgment in one of the very last volumes of his *Church Dogmatics*. Here he lists five areas where he says he “cannot understand the counter-thesis [to his gospel and law proposal], advanced with varying degrees of sharpness and consistency” by various Lutheran authors,⁴¹ that the gospel and law differ and are even antithetical in significance and function.”⁴² He prefaces these remarks with the telling statement that his conception of gospel and law, as delineated in various sections of his dogmatics and in *Gospel and Law* “belongs to the bedrock (*eisernen Bestand*) of my dogmatics as hitherto presented.”⁴³

MARTIN LUTHER

Martin Luther can be dealt with more briefly, but not because his understanding of the law is all that simple. For example, it is generally assumed by most Lutherans that Luther did not believe in a third use of the law, thereby separating him from both Calvin and Barth. There is a good basis for this view because in one of his most important works, his commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Galatians, he states that there are only two uses of the law. At several points in this commentary he refers to the uses of the law, but only lists two. The first for him is the civic or political use of the law (for Calvin this is the second). This use of the law “is to restrain the wicked.”⁴⁴

This civic restraint is extremely necessary and was instituted by God, both for the sake of public peace and for the sake of preserving everything, but especially to prevent the course of the gospel from being hindered by the tumults and seditions of wild men.⁴⁵

Calvin uses different terminology to describe this use of the law and they are agreed that this is an important function of the law – but for Calvin not the most important one. For Luther that is the *usus elencticus*, “the theological or spiritual use,” as he describes it. Not only that, “this is the primary purpose of the Law of Moses, that through it sin might grow and be multiplied, especially in the conscience.” Luther finds this use discussed “magnificently” by Paul in Romans 7.⁴⁶ However, whereas Calvin describes the third use of the law as the “principal” and “proper purpose of the law,”⁴⁷ Luther says that “the true function (*officium*) and chief and proper use of the law is to reveal to man his sin, blindness, misery, wickedness, ignorance, hate, and contempt of God...”⁴⁸ “It follows, therefore, that the law with its function does contribute to justification – not because it justifies, but because it impels one to the promise of grace and makes it sweet and desirable... This is its true function and use, namely, that it is a most useful servant impelling us to Christ.”⁴⁹

Nothing is said in his monumental commentary on Galatians about a third use of the law. Moreover, since he stresses so strongly the second use of the law (for Calvin the first), most Lutheran scholars have concluded that Luther does not recognize a continuing positive function of the law for believers. However, when one examines Luther’s exposition of the Decalogue, a different picture emerges. As in most of the Reformation and subsequent catechisms, Luther assigns a special place to an exposition of the dialog. Karl Holl, the eminent German Lutheran historian of a past era, concluded that Luther’s ethic is not based on any doctrine of virtues or goods but is one of obligation (*Pflichtenlehre*) whose point of departure is the Decalogue.⁵⁰ Moreover, Gerhard Heintze, in a study of Luther’s preaching on law and gospel, concludes that Luther, despite the formal structure of his catechisms, actually treats the Decalogue from the standpoint of faith. That is, the evangelical promise, not the law of nature, is the background against which he interprets the commandments.⁵¹

Various statements of Luther’s could be cited in support of these contentions, but it should suffice to quote his glowing testimonials in his Large Catechism. In the Preface he writes:

“Anyone who knows the ten commandments perfectly knows the entire Scriptures... What is the whole Psalter but meditations and exercises based on the first commandment?” He is even more eloquent in the conclusion to his exposition of the ten commandments:

Here, then, we have the ten commandments, a summary of divine teachings on what we are to do to make our whole life pleasing to God. They are the true fountain from which all good works must spring, the true channel through which all good works must flow. Apart from these ten commandments no deed, no conduct can be good or pleasing to God, no matter how great or precious it may be in the eyes of the world.⁵²

These encomiums of the law may not seem to jibe with what Luther says about the law in other contexts. In the Smalbald Articles, for example, Luther sounds the same note as in his Galatians Commentary. Here again, “the chief function or power of the law is to make original sin manifest and show man to what utter depths his nature has fallen and how corrupt it has become,”⁵³ In the next section of these Articles, “Repentance,” Luther makes an important addition: “To this office of the law the New Testament immediately adds the consoling grace of the gospel.” However, “where the law exercises its office alone, without the addition of the gospel, there is only death and hell, and man must despair like Saul and Judas.”⁵⁴

This is what Thomas M. Mc Donough, O.P. in his study of Luther’s confessional writings in regard to law and gospel in Luther calls a “split perspective.” That is, for the unrepentant sinner the law brings nothing but wrath and judgment, but for the Christian it serves an evangelical purpose because joined with the gospel and its promises, it leads to Christ and salvation.⁵⁵ Here we have simply a law-gospel order, and of a nature quite different from Karl Barth.

However, in his treatment of the Decalogue and elsewhere⁵⁶ Luther approaches a third use of the law as taught by Melancthon, the Formula of Concord, and Calvin. Interpretations of Luther vary considerably in this regard – even by Lutherans – but I think Mc Donough (a Roman Catholic) is correct when he writes concerning Luther’s exposition of the ten commandments in the large Catechism.

For the man of faith, the fulfilment of the law, and all that belongs to it in the way of rewards and blessings, follows as a kind of effect of the believer’s inner act of faith and passive justification... In this sense the just man, the one made righteous by the ‘power of God’s Word,’ is bound to observe the law as a living tree is bound to bring forth good fruit; his observance of the commandments, his good deeds, flow from the heart as a matter of course, freely and naturally, not as a result of violence or constraint.⁵⁷

The well-known German Lutheran theologian/ethicist Helmut Thielicke has a chapter in his *Theological Ethics* on “The Continuing Pedagogic Significance of the Law for Believers” in which he posits that for Luther the law is not only “a loving reminder” for the justified believer but also – in Luther’s words – must “be retained in order that the saints may know what works God requires for the exercise of obedience to him.”⁵⁸ Hence he sees in Luther something approaching a third use of the law, although in contrast to Calvin it “plays only a very secondary role in Luther’s thought.”⁵⁹

One other dimension of Luther’s concept of the law needs to be noted, for here too, there is a fundamental difference with Barth and a basic agreement with Calvin, viz., the notion of natural law or the law of nature.⁶⁰ Both reformers believed that even in fallen humanity there was some sense of right and wrong. This is based primarily on Romans 2:14-15, which speaks of the law written on the hearts of the Gentiles.⁶¹ This law is engraved by God on the hearts and consciences of all human beings. Calvin, like Luther, sees the ten commandments as having the same formal content as that of the law of nature implanted in the consciences of those outside the covenant community. But Calvin appeals to this continuity less frequently than Luther. In his

introduction to the discussion of the ten commandments in the *Institutes* Calvin makes a positive reference and then quickly hedges it with limitations. He begins by saying, "Now that inward law which we have above described as written, even engraved upon the hearts of all, in a sense asserts the very same things that are to be learned from the two Tables."⁶² One may ask, "the very same things?" If so, why the law of Moses? However, Calvin quickly allays such concerns.

But man is so shrouded in the darkness of errors that he hardly begins to grasp through this natural law what worship is acceptable to God. Surely he is very far removed from a true estimate of it... Accordingly (because it is necessary both for our dullness and for our arrogance), the Lord has provided us with a written law to give us a clearer witness of what was too obscure in the natural law...⁶³

Hence the need for revealed law, the ten commandments in particular. The conscience and the concomitant sense of justice and equity play an important role in Calvin's thinking,⁶⁴ but they give no grounds for a natural theology or an optimistic view of the human condition. Calvin puts any such notions to rest with the terse statement, "The end of natural law is that man may be rendered inexcusable" (*ut reddatur homo inexcusabilis*).⁶⁵

Luther's view is basically the same but the accent falls on the continuity of natural law and revealed law, particularly the law of nature and the ten commandments. In particular, Luther emphasizes that Christ's law of love is inscribed by nature in the hearts of all people. "For nature, like love, teaches that I should do as I would be done by (Mt 7:12)." In this same treatise Luther again correlates the two as he spells out what this implies. "When you ignore *love and natural law*, you will never succeed in pleasing God..." (emphasis mine).⁶⁶ Thus the essence of the law is contained in the Golden Rule. One does not find similar statements in Calvin.

However, where the two reformers take an identical position is in their interpretation of Romans 2:14-15 and in the contention that what we have here in the ten commandments is both a reaffirmation and clarification of natural law. Luther writes, for example, that

God wishes the law to be taught and he reveals it divinely, nay he inscribes it on the hearts of all men, as Paul proves in Romans 2. And from just this natural knowledge all the books of the sounder philosophers have been born, of Aesop, Aristotle, Plato, Xenophon, Cicero, Cato.⁶⁷

Here, too, however, Luther goes beyond Calvin in asserting that Moses was not the author but only the interpreter of various natural laws. He concedes that because of sin our natural knowledge of the law of God is weak and obscure, but he still makes bold statements unlike anything found in Calvin.

It was not Moses that was the author of the Decalogue, but from the foundation of the world the Decalogue has been inscribed on the hearts of all men... For there has never been any nation under the sun so brutal or barbarous and inhuman as not to be aware (*quinsenserit*) that God is to be worshipped and loved.⁶⁸

Again, with typical hyperbole, he writes, "It is certain that the law might be preached a hundred years in vain, as to some ass, if it were not written on our hearts so that when we are admonished we instantly say: 'Yes, that is so.'"⁶⁹ But sometimes hyperbole turns into extravagant statements that contradict views expressed in another context. Recall, for example, how he praised the ten commandments in his Large Catechism. But in a sermon, "How Christians Should Regard Moses," a very different note is sounded. Luther here is apparently reacting against the Enthusiasts' (*Schwärmer*) who believed that in the law of Moses there could be found a detailed model for society. This may help explain Luther's diatribe, but it is still extreme. The law of Moses, he says, was given to the people of Israel and hence has no binding power on Gentiles or Christians. Moses and his commandments are to be followed only insofar as his teachings agree with the

New Testament and natural law. There is some truth in this but then Luther seems to throw the baby out with the bath water.

Moses is dead. His rule ended when Christ came. He is of no further service... If I accept Moses in one respect (Paul tells the Galatians in chapter 5 [3], then I am obligated to keep the entire law. For not one little period in Moses pertains to us.⁷⁰

“Therefore, tell this to Moses: Leave Moses and his people together; they have had their day and do not pertain to me.”⁷¹ That, on the one hand, but in this same sermon Luther says on the other hand, “I want to keep Moses and not sweep him under the rug, because I find three things in Moses.” They turn out to be: (1) a model for present day rulers; (2) “the promises and pledges of God about Christ”; and (3) “the beautiful example of faith, love, and the cross as shown in the fathers: Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and all the rest.”⁷² (Luther seems to overlook the fact that these are all flawed characters.)

What are we to make of all of this?⁷³ Despite the complexity and seeming contradictions in some of the above statements, one thing is clear. The commandments, whether the ten commandments or other commandments in the Mosaic corpus, are not binding on us except, and only insofar as, they reflect the law of nature and the teaching of Christ. And thus their function is basically negative. Luther may teach a third use of the law but it is definitely a minor motif.

CALVIN

When we come to Calvin, the question of law and gospel is less complicated than with either Luther or Barth. He lays out his position in clear and systematic fashion in the *Institutes*, Book II, chapter 7. In the following chapter he has a detailed exposition of the ten commandments and in chapters 10 and 11 he discusses the similarities and differences between the Old and New Testaments.

Nevertheless, Calvin is often misunderstood and caricatured as a legalist and Lawgiver (*Gesetzgeber*) who knows little of the love and grace of God as found in Luther, not to mention Karl Barth. Reinhold Seeberg, for example, in his *Dogmengeschichte* declares that “a consequence of Calvin’s legalism is that he tends to blur the boundaries between the Old and New Testaments.”⁷⁴ Here we find repeated references to “the legal (*gesetzlich*) tendency which is maintained in Calvin’s doctrine of Scripture.”⁷⁵ Similarly, the German church historian, Hans von Schubert, avers that “the equation of the Old Testament with the New gives to Calvin’s biblicistic moralism the severe characteristic of Old Testament legality (*Gesetzlichkeit*).”⁷⁶ Finally, the Old Testament scholar, Emil Kraeling (also a Lutheran), claims that “Calvin really abandons Paul’s (and Luther’s) antitheses of law and gospel.”⁷⁷

Here I can only try to demonstrate that Calvin recognizes as sharp an antithesis between law and gospel as Luther, despite his emphasis on the fundamental unity of the various covenants.

One of the problems in dealing with this issue is the failure of Calvin’s critics to note Calvin’s careful distinction between the various meanings of law. For it can stand for the Old Testament as a whole, the old covenant in contrast to the new, the whole of the Mosaic legislation as found in the Pentateuch, the ten commandments, or the law as sometimes depicted by Paul in terms of judgment and a curse because of sin.

In any case, for Calvin, as for Luther, there is not only a *difference* between the law and the gospel but even an *antithesis* insofar as the law is opposed to the gospel. Thus, for example, when the Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:19 opposes the law given to Moses to the promise given to Abraham, Calvin observes that the law here is separated from the promises of grace and is being

considered only in view of its “peculiar office, power, and end.”⁷⁸ This law, the law which is the antithesis of the gospel, is the narrow, peculiar sense of the law, the “bare law” (*nuda lex*).⁷⁹ The law, so conceived, is separated from its original context, the covenant; it is a bare letter without the Spirit of Christ. It has nothing but rigorous demands which place all humanity under the curse and wrath of God.⁸⁰ Concerning the law, so understood, Calvin is no less compromising than Luther in opposing the law to the gospel. Everything depends on what is meant by “law.”

The relation between law and gospel, therefore, is not simply a twofold distinction between form and substance, but a threefold distinction:

1. A unity of the substance of the doctrine.
2. A distinction in the form or mode of instruction (*forma docendi*).
3. An antithesis of letter and Spirit.

Unity of substance

It is impossible to discuss the unity of substance without discussing to some extent the difference in the form of law and gospel. For Calvin invariably makes such distinctions in the context of the same passage. Also, when Calvin discusses the common substance of the law and gospel, another topic frequently enters the picture: the experience of the fathers (i.e., the Old Testament believers) with Christ and the gospel.

It was noted above that the covenant made with the Old Testament “fathers” or patriarchs has the same substance and reality as that made with believers in the New Testament era. This key statement in the *Institutes*, (II.10.2) distinguishes Calvin from opponents on two sides: the Roman theologians on the one hand, and the Anabaptists on the other. Calvin, however, was no innovator in this respect, for Zwingli, Bucer, Melancthon, and Bullinger had made similar distinctions prior to this time.⁸¹

For Calvin, the issue at stake is not only the unity of revelation but the unity of God himself. In those places where the law is opposed to the gospel, Calvin readily recognizes the antithesis, but at the same time he is quick to warn his readers that it would be erroneous to conclude that God is “unlike” or “inconsistent”⁸² with himself.⁸³

When we learn that the doctrine of the gospel ‘came forth out of Zion’ (Isa 2:3), we conclude from this that it is not new, or a recent innovation, but that it is the eternal truth of God of which a testimony had been given in all ages before it was brought to light. We also gather that it was necessary that all of the ancient ceremonies should be abolished and that a new form of instruction (*nova docendi forma*) should be introduced, although the substance of the doctrine (*doctrinae substantia*) continued to be the same. For the law formerly proceeded out of Mount Sinai (Ex 19:1), but it now proceeded ‘out of Zion,’ and therefore it took on a new form.

Two things, therefore, must be observed: First, that the doctrine of God is the same and always agrees with itself (*et sui perpetuo similem*); that no one may accuse God of changeableness (*variationis*) as if he were inconsistent. Although the law of the Lord is the same as always, yet it came out of Zion with new garments (*veste*). Second, when the ceremonies and shadows had been abolished, Christ was revealed in whom their reality was perceived.⁸⁴

In this one quotation it becomes apparent what Calvin means by both the unity and diversity of the covenants. For him there is essentially only one covenant, the covenant of grace, which unites both Testaments. Here Calvin stands on firm ground, for the one covenant promise – “I will be your God and you shall be my people” – is repeated throughout Scripture.⁸⁵

However, Jeremiah and Ezekiel speak of a “new covenant,” and in Hebrews 8:6-13 we read that

this new covenant, which is ratified by the blood of Christ, makes the “old covenant” obsolete. Calvin still insists that the so-called “new covenant” is not contrary to the first covenant. To draw such a conclusion would imply that God is not true to himself and is somehow inconsistent. “For he who once made a covenant with his chosen people has not changed his purpose as though he had forgotten his faithfulness.”⁸⁶

What is “new” about the new covenant only refers to its form. The covenants made with Abraham, Moses, and David, and the new covenant promised by Jeremiah and Ezekiel, are all united by the one promise which finds its culmination and fulfilment in Christ. He is the *fundamentum, anima, spiritus, perfectio, scopus, and finis* of the law.⁸⁷

Since Christ is the substance of the law, and thereby also of the two Testaments, they are inseparable and interdependent. The gospel does not supplant or supersede the law but rather confirms it and gives substance to the shadows. Consequently, “where the whole law is concerned, the gospel differs from it only in clarity of manifestation.”⁸⁸

Distinction in form

The distinction between law and gospel – between the old and new covenants, as we saw earlier – consists principally in the mode of dispensation or manner of instruction. Calvin treats this subject in Book II, chapter 11 of the *Institutes*, although he had already dealt with this matter provisionally in chapter 9. The title of this chapter indicates what the principal distinction is: “Christ, although he was known to the Jews under the law, was at length clearly revealed only in the gospel.”

The *tota lex* is still the object of inquiry. In this context, the difference between the covenants is only relative, a matter of more or less; the substance is the same. Only the form or manner of God’s self-revelation and our understanding and experience of it varies.

In view of all this, it might seem that Calvin has so moderated or smoothed out the differences between the Testaments, or the law broadly conceived, and the gospel, that the distinctions are not really significant. Before dealing directly with that objection, we should examine the five differences or distinctions which Calvin lists in chapter eleven.

1. The Jews were given the hope of immortality under the figure of earthly blessings, but now this inferior method has been suspended.
4. Truth was exhibited by types in the Old Testament, but is now openly revealed in the New, as we see in the Epistle to the Hebrews. This was due to the fact that the Jews were in a state of tutelage, except for the patriarchs who were in advance of their time.
5. The old covenant has the character of the letter, the new, of the Spirit; the old lacks the Spirit whereas the new is engrave on the heart (Jer 31:31ff.). The old is deadly because it includes the curse, the new is an instrument of life. The old is a shadow which must pass away; the new will stand forever.
6. The old covenant produces fear and trembling, except for the promises in it which properly belong to the new (so Augustine), whereas the new produces freedom and joy.
7. The revelation of the Old Testament was confined to the Jewish nation. In the New Testament the Gentiles are also invited to share in its blessings.⁸⁹

A careful reading of these five differences shows that the third and fourth differences are not of the same character as one, two, and five. These three are of a less radical, more “evolutionary” type of difference whereas three and four come close to representing an antithesis between law and gospel. That is, the difference between the letter and the spirit, works and faith, bondage and freedom, are far greater than the movement from a more limited and obscure revelation to that which is clearer, fuller, and more universal. As Calvin himself points out, “Where the whole

law (*tota lex*) is concerned, the gospel differs from it only in clarity of manifestation.”⁹⁰

When one speaks of an “antithesis,” as in the next section, a much sharper contrast or break is implied. However, even in this case the break or antithesis is never absolute because even the law (although not the *nuda lex*) is *adventitiously* invested with certain qualities of the gospel. This qualification is crucial for understanding Calvin’s view of law and gospel and will be illustrated later.

Antithesis between letter and Spirit

Now we come to that aspect of the law which most Protestants take for the whole. This law, the law opposed to the gospel, is the law separated from Christ and the Holy Spirit. This is the bare law (*nuda lex*), the accusing law that troubles the conscience, the law in itself (*per se*) and as such which is isolated from the covenant and the promises. This law requires perfection, and where that is lacking, it curses, condemns, and kills. Over against the gospel, when each is taken in its narrower and peculiar sense, this law demands what only the gospel can give.

Does Calvin recognize such a law? Or is this only a minor motif in Calvin’s theology, grudgingly conceded because of the strong Pauline evidence in favour of such a view? Is J. S. Whale correct when he affirms that “the gospel as it appears in Paul and John” is found “in clearer and brighter form in Luther than in Calvin”?⁹¹

The best way to answer such questions is to examine Calvin’s exegesis of a few key Johannine and Pauline texts. The first is John 1:17: “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” On the one hand, Calvin notes that “Moses’ contribution was extremely scanty compared to the grace of Christ.” This sounds like the comparisons we saw in the last section; it is simply a matter of more or less. But Calvin does not stop here. He proceeds to point out,

But we must notice the antithesis in his contrasting of the law to grace and truth; for he means that the law lacked both of these... Here we are dealing with ...the validity of the law in itself (*per se*) and apart from Christ. The evangelist denies that anything substantial is to be found in it until we come to Christ. Moreover, the truth consists in our obtaining through Christ the grace which the law could not give.⁹²

A key Pauline text in this regard is Romans 4:15: “For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.” This is a very negative text, one where Calvin might be tempted to soften its sharpness. But he states unequivocally that

Since the law generates nothing but vengeance, it cannot bring grace. The law would, it is true, point out the way of life to men of virtue and integrity, but since it orders the sinful and corrupt to do their duty without supplying them with the power to do it, it brings them in their guilt to the judgment seat of God.⁹³

In any discussion of Paul’s view of the law two other texts of a similar nature are always brought forward: Romans 5:20 and Galatians 3:19. The former reads, “The law came in to increase the trespass...” Calvin begins his comments by making a characteristic distinction: Paul, here, he maintains, “is not describing the whole office and use of the law, but is dealing only with the one part which served his present purpose.”⁹⁴

This qualification is crucial to an understanding of Calvin’s view of the law: that when Paul speaks in this way of the law, he is not referring to the original meaning of *Torah*, the revelation of God’s will for his people. Rather, he is limiting himself to only one aspect and function of the law. Another example of this qualification is seen in his commentary on Romans 7:2-3. Here, too, Calvin cautions, the apostle “refers only to that part of the law which is peculiar to the ministry of Moses.”⁹⁵

The other text which seems to indicate an exclusively negative and secondary role for the

law is Galatians 3:19: "Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions." Calvin again begins with characteristic cautions and qualifications.

The law has many uses, but Paul confines himself to one which serves his present purpose. He did not intend to inquire how many ways the law is of advantage to men. It is necessary to put readers on their guard on this point; for I have found that many make the mistake of acknowledging no other use of the law than what is expressed here. Paul himself elsewhere speaks of the precepts of the law as profitable for doctrine and exhortation (2 Tim 3:16).

Therefore *this definition of the use of law is not complete and those who acknowledge nothing else in the law are wrong*⁹⁶ [emphasis mine].

The closing warning might be viewed as a criticism of Luther or some of his followers. However, a careful comparison of Luther's and Calvin's exegesis of key law-gospel passages in Galatians shows that the two reformers are in fundamental agreement on this issue.⁹⁷

In Calvin's commentary on Galatians 2:19 one would think that this was Luther, not the Genevan reformer. The text goes: "For I through the law died to the law, that I might live to the law." Calvin comments:

We must not ascribe to Christ what is properly the task of the law. It was not necessary that Christ should annihilate the righteousness of the law, for the law slays its own disciples...

It is the law which forces us to die to itself; for by threatening our destruction it leaves us nothing but despair and thus drives us away from trusting in it.⁹⁸

It is necessary to examine Calvin's exegesis of one more passage, for here, more than anywhere else, the distinctive nuances of Calvin's understanding of the law are clearly delineated. The passage is 2 Corinthians 3:6-7: "For the letter [written code, RSV] kills, but the Spirit gives life." Calvin concludes that "letter" or "written code" (*gramma*) here refers to the old covenant whereas "Spirit" refers to the gospel. "By the word 'letter' Paul means preaching which is external and does not reach the heart; by 'Spirit' he means teaching which is alive, which works mightily in the souls of men by the grace of the Spirit."⁹⁹

Calvin sharpens the antithesis as he takes up the description of the law as a "ministry (or dispensation) of death" in verse 7. After analyzing various aspects of the comparison, he draws up a summary.

Let us now examine briefly the characteristics of the law and the gospel. But let us remember that the point at issue is neither the whole of the teaching we find in the law and the prophets, nor the experience of the fathers under the Old Testament but rather the peculiar function of the ministry of Moses. The law was engraved on stones and thus it was literal teaching. This defect of the law had to be corrected by the gospel, since the law could not but be breakable, having been consigned to tablets of stone. The gospel, therefore, is a holy and inviolable covenant because under God it was promulgated by the Spirit. It follows that the law is a ministration of condemnation and death, for when men are taught of their duty and are told that anyone who does not satisfy God's justice is cursed, they are guilty and found guilty of sin and death. Therefore, they receive nothing from the law but condemnation, for in the law God demands his due (*exigit quod sibi debetur*), but does not confer the power to perform it. The gospel, on the other hand, by which we are regenerated and reconciled to God through the free forgiveness of sins, is the ministration of righteousness and consequently of life itself.¹⁰⁰

The real problem, however, is not that of demonstrating that Calvin takes the accusing, condemning function of the law seriously. Far more difficult is the matter of showing how he integrates this concept of the law with his understanding of the law as a whole. He frequently reconciles the apparent contradiction between the views of David (as in Psalm 119) and Paul concerning the law by suggesting that David is speaking of the whole law whereas Paul is

speaking of the law in a limited sense.

Thus, when David praises the law, he is thinking not only of precepts and commandments but also of the promises of salvation as well. He rejoices in the law of the covenant, God's gift to Israel. Paul, however, is dealing with people who perverted and abused the law. They saw it as a means toward achieving righteousness rather than as a gift to a people already redeemed. They separated it from the grace and Spirit of Christ and hence experienced the law as sheer demand and therefore as deadly.¹⁰¹

However, with this explanation we still have not come to the crux of the matter. It is not just a question of the misunderstanding and perversion of the law by the Judaizers (so Barth). Nor is it only a question of the narrower and broader concepts of the law. There is something intrinsic in the law which distinguishes it from the gospel. The antithesis lies in the peculiar office, function, and ministry of the law. When the law is separated from the promises and the gospel, when it is viewed according to its peculiar properties in contrast to those of the gospel, the antithesis is radical and profound.

The explanation lies in the two "offices" (*munera*) of Moses, as Calvin understands them. One was general (*in universum*), "to teach the people the true role of piety." In this sense he was a minister of the whole law and preached repentance and faith. In fact, he proclaimed the promises of free grace and was thus a preacher of the gospel (*evangelii praeconem*)!¹⁰²

However, Moses also had another "office," which unlike his general office, he did not have in common with Christ.

This office was particularly imposed upon him, to demand perfect righteousness of the people and to promise them a reward, as if by compact, upon no other condition than that they should fulfil whatever was enjoined upon them, but also to threaten and declare judgment against them if they ever fell from the way... Therefore, it is important to distinguish between the general doctrine (*generalem doctrinam*) which was delivered by Moses and the special commission (*mandatum*) which he received.¹⁰³

When this distinction is understood, it is possible to see how Paul can speak on the one hand of the law as holy and good and on the other as the law of sin and death. The apostle, because of the situation in which he found himself, often pointed to that which was peculiar to Moses and distinct from Christ, even though they are in agreement as far as the substance of their doctrine is concerned.¹⁰⁴ However, when Paul thus refers to that office of the law which was peculiar (*propria*) to the ministry of Moses, he is not referring to the ten commandments, "For the will of God must stand the same forever."¹⁰⁵

CONCLUSION

For Calvin, therefore, the order may be put this way: Law of creation (natural law) – revealed law (the law of Moses) – the gospel – the gracious law (third use) as a norm and guide for believers.¹⁰⁶ The same outline would follow for Luther except that the third or positive use of the law plays a minor role in his thinking. On the surface Barth would seem to have more affinity with Calvin because of their more positive evaluation of the law as a whole, but the differences are significant because of Barth's rejection of any notion of the antithesis of law and gospel and his subsuming the law in all its functions under God's grace.

What Luther said long ago in regard to this question still applies: "Whoever knows well how to distinguish the gospel from the law should give thanks to God and know that he is a real theologian."¹⁰⁷

KEY WORDS

Karl Barth
Martin Luther
John Calvin
law and gospel
letter and spirit

(Endnotes)

- 1.1 *Albertus C. Van Raalte, Professor of Systematic Theology, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, Michigan. This lecture was presented in the week of 11-15 July 2011 at Stellenbosch as visiting professor in the Discipline Group of Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology, Faculty of Theology, Stellenbosch University*”.
- 2 Cited in Donald K. McKim, editor, *How Karl Barth Changed My Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), ix.
- 3 An English translation by A. M. Hall is included in the book *Community, State, and Church. Three Essays* by Karl Barth, with an Introduction by Will Herberg (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1960). Another translation by J. S. McNab is found in a British edition entitled *God, Grace and Gospel* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, *Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers*, No. 8, 1959).
- 4 Will Herberg, *ibid.*, 9.
- 5 The sharpest responses have been by the Swedish theologian Gustaf Wingren and German Lutheran theologians such as Werner Elert, Paul Althaus, and Gerhard Ebeling. Some of these writers will be cited later. There have been other German Lutheran theologians, however, who have been more sympathetic to Barth’s approach, viz., Helmut Gollwitzer and Eberhard Jüngel.
- 6 See, for example, Colin Brown, *Karl Barth and the Christian Message* (London: Tyndale Press, 1967); and Herbert Hartwell, *The Theology of Karl Barth* (London: Duckworth, 1964). Another standard—and highly regarded—analysis of Barth’s theology by the Swiss Roman Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, doesn’t deal with the subject. See his *The Theology of Karl Barth* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1992). The same is true of the two outstanding studies of Barth’s theology by the eminent American interpreter, George Hunsinger: *How to Read Karl Barth. The Shape of His Theology* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1991); and *Disruptive Grace. Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). This lacuna is strange in view of the significant role the theme of gospel and law plays in Barth’s theology.
- 7 Hendrikus Berkhof, *Crisis der Midden Orthodoxie* (Nijkerk: G. F. Callenbach, 1953); and G. C. Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956).
- 8 One exception are two lengthy essays by a graduate student at Yale Divinity School, Jesse Couenhoven: “Grace as Pardon and Power: Pictures of the Christian Life in Luther, Calvin and Barth” in *Journal of Religious Ethics* 28.1 (Spring 2000); and “Law and Gospel, or the Law of Gospel? Barth’s Political Theology Compared with Luther and Calvin,” in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 30.2 (Summer 2002). The most thorough discussion of this issue is by an American Lutheran theologian, Gerhard O. Forde, but it is already thirty-five years old: *The Law-Gospel Debate. An Interpretation of Its Historical Development* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969). Forde finds the genesis of the law-gospel debate not in Barth but in the theology of the nineteenth century theologian J. C. K. Hoffmann. In Part Two he takes up the theologies of Harnack and Ritschl under the caption “Wrath Versus Love.” Only in Part Three does he deal with Karl Barth and the response of four Lutheran theologians.
- 9 There are also references to law and gospel in Barth’s *Credo*, a discussion of the Apostles’ Creed (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1936/1964); and *Dogmatics in Outline* (London: SCM Press, 1949/1957).
- 10 *Gospel and Law*, 71.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 71-2. Barth is fond of using this sort of imagery in describing the relationship of the law to the gospel. Cf. page 80 in *Gospel and Law*. In the *Church Dogmatics* he says that “Jesus Christ himself . . . is always clothed in the law, hidden in a manger and the swaddling clothes of the Commandments . . .” (*The Doctrine of God II*, 2. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), 563. Again in the *Doctrine of Reconciliation, Church Dogmatics IV*, 3 Barth writes in a similar fashion. The gospel, he says, “has also the form of the

- true law of God, the promise of the grace of God containing his no less gracious claim, as the ark of the Old Testament covenant contained the tables of the decalogue” (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), 367. In short, “It is the gospel which contains and encloses the law as the ark of the covenant encloses the tables of Sinai,” CD.II, 2, 511.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 72.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 76-7.
- 14 *Gospel and Law*, 80 (page 10 in the British version), CD. II, 2, 511. In the midst of his most important discussion of this issue in the *Church Dogmatics* (IV.3, 369ff.), Barth reverses this formula and says that “the Gospel . . . has also the form of the true law of God. . . .”
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 G. Ebeling, *Word and Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), 267. (It is significant that Eberhard Jüngel, a much more sympathetic interpreter of Barth, also speaks of “the unfortunate logic” of the statement that “the law is the necessary form of the gospel,” *op. cit.*, 116).
- 17 Hartwell, *op. cit.*, 158.
- 18 *Gospel and Law*, 81.
- 19 *Gospel and Law*, 77, 81, 95. CD.II, 244, 639. “Jesus Christ, as true God and true man, is the divine law to which we are subject. . . . He, as true God and true man, is also the fulfillment of the law.” *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938/1960), 141.
- 20 *Gospel and Law*, 72. “*The one Word of God, which is the revelation and work of his grace, is also law,*” CD.II, 2, 511.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 77.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 81. Jesus Christ “has done what he has done, in our place and for our sake. So now we have done—in him—what he has done, and so this divine acknowledgement of his obedience benefits us directly,” Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, 142.
- 23 CD.II, 2, 511. “*That the nature of the command of God is spiritual means that it does not confront us as an ideal, whether that of an obligation or of a permission, or that of a combination of the two, but as the reality fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This person is not only the ground and content but also the form of the divine claim,*” CD.II, 2, 606.
- 24 Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God*, 130. Jesus Christ “is the electing God and elected man in One. But he is also the sanctifying God and the sanctified man in One,” CD.II, 2, 538-9.
- 25 Colin Brown, *Karl Barth and the Christian Message*, 128.
- 26 *Gospel and Law*, 89, 91.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 94.
- 28 Berkhof, *Crisis der Midden-orthodoxie*, 29, as cited in Berkouwer, *The Triumph of Grace in the Theology of Karl Barth*, 319.
- 29 Berkouwer, *op. cit.*, 319.
- 30 Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983 – original German 1962), 379. The biblical theologian Brevard Childs suggests that Barth’s ‘fusion’ of law and gospel can lead to confusion concerning the role of the church in the political realm. “What happens,” he asks, “when law and gospel are simply fused, when the church seems fully confident that it knows what God wants and seeks to implement his will by human intervention? Is it not equally a threat to the gospel when it becomes indistinguishable from the law and vice versa? . . . It is ironical that Barth’s theology which sought to return the church to the proclamation of the gospel in opposition to cultural Christianity should now be largely identified with a form of political activism espoused by the left.” *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 560-1.
- 31 One is Helmut Gollwitzer; Eberhard Jüngel is another. Gerhard Forde in his book *The Law-Gospel Debate* summarizes the positions of the chief protagonists. See note 4 in this regard. Forde is a Lutheran and is not in agreement with Barth’s approach, but at the same time is critical of the “confused and inconsistent” attacks by some Lutheran theologians, e.g., Helmut Thielicke and Gustaf Wingren. See chapter 9, “The Reply to Barth.”

- 32 So George Hunsinger. "Often regarded as supporting Barth from Luther, the law/gospel versus the gospel/law contrast may actually have more to do with what separated Barth from Lutheranism," *Disruptive Grace. Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 304, n. 41.
- 33 So the Oxford University theologian/ethicist, Nigel Biggar is his chapter on "Barth's Trinitarian Ethic" in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, edited by John Webster (Cambridge, England: Cambridge U. Press, 2000), 225-6, no. 4. Elsewhere, however, Biggar points out that "unlike Luther, Barth does not correlate the Old Testament to the law, and the New to the gospel. The dialectic of law and gospel is operative in both Testaments, but in the New the priority of gospel to law is unequivocally established," *The Hastening That Waits* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 121.
- 34 See the Lutheran quarterly, *dialog. A Journal of Theology* 39:3 (Fall 2000), whose theme is "Law-Gospel Preaching."
- 35 Sasse, *Here We Stand* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1938/1946), 163. Werner Elert is equally certain that Barth's position is basically that of Calvin. He maintains that Barth's expression that "the law is only a form of the gospel coincides exactly with the view of Calvin," *Law and Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Facet Books, 1967), 8.
- 36 *Church Dogmatics* III, 1. *The Doctrine of Creation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1958), 604.
- 37 CD.IV, 3, 369. "If we have not heard the gospel, we shall never hear the law. The law that we think we hear without the gospel is certainly not God's law. We shall then certainly not be able to fulfill God's law, not because it is too hard and grievous for us, but because we do not yet know it. If we know it, we should cling to Christ in whom it is fulfilled. . . ." *Credo*, 58. Jesus Christ "is the law or norm of God confronted and measured by which man is shown up as a transgressor, and specifically as a deceiver and liar," CD.IV, 3, 371.
- 38 *Gospel and Law*, 84.
- 39 *Translation found in Ecumenical Creeds and Reformed Confessions* (Grand Rapids: CRC Publications, 1988).
- 40 Jüngel, *Karl Barth*, 120.
- 41 He cites W. Elert, P. Althaus, E. Sommerlath, H. Thielicke, W. Joest, and G. Wingren.
- 42 CD.IV, 3, 370.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 *Luther, Lectures on Galatians 1535*, chapters 1-4, translated by Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), 308.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 309.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 *Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion*, edited by John T. McNeill and translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), II.7.12.
- 48 *Luther, Galatians*, 309. Citing Jeremiah 23:29, Luther uses similar language to describe this use of the law: The proper and absolute use of the law is to terrify with lightning (as on Mt. Sinai), thunder, and the blare of the trumpet, with a thunderbolt to burn and crush that brute which is called the presumption of righteousness," *ibid.*, 310 (emphasis mine). Later he calls it "the true and proper use of the law," 312; "the best and most perfect use of the law," *ibid.*, 316 (emphasis mine).
- Since Calvin uses almost identical language to describe the third use of the law, Werner Elert claims that Calvin here "is waging a polemic against Luther with deliberate sharpness," *Zwischen Gnade und Ungnade* (München: Evangelischer Pressverband, 1948), 166 (translation mine). This is highly unlikely, for there is no evidence that Calvin and Luther had any significant differences about this question. The conflict between Lutheran and Reformed theologians about law and gospel is a later development.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 315.
- 50 *Holl, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte*, Vol. I (Tübingen: Mohr, 1932), 178. Some of the following material is taken from my book, *Calvin's Concept of the Law* (Allison Park, PA.: Pickwick Publications, 1992), 102ff.
- 51 *Heintze, Luthers Predigt von Gesetz und Evangelium* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1958), 110f. Whereas

- Calvin placed great emphasis on the evangelical character of the preface to the Decalogue (“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt . . .”), Luther virtually ignores it and makes much of the first commandment of the decalog. He calls it “the fountainhead of all the commandments” (*fons omnium praeceptorum*), Sermon on Deut. 1 (WA 28, 510), quoted in Heintze, *ibid.*, 111. In his exposition of the ten commandments in his Large Catechism Luther writes: “This word, ‘you shall have no other gods,’ means simply, ‘You shall fear, love, and trust me as your one true God.’ Wherever a man’s heart has such an attitude toward God, he has fulfilled this commandment and all the others,” *The Book of Concord. The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959), 409.
- 52 *The Book of Concord*, 361, 407. At the very end of his conclusion he writes again enthusiastically, “From all this it is obvious once again how highly these ten commandments are to be exalted and extolled above all orders, commands, and works which are taught and practiced apart from them. . . . Therefore we should prize and value them above all other teachings as the greatest treasure God has given us,” *ibid.*, 410-11.
- 53 Article II, “The Law,” in *Book of Concord*, 303.
- 54 *Book of Concord*, 304.
- 55 Mc Donough, *The Law and the Gospel in Luther. A Study of Martin Luther’s Confessional Writings* (London: Oxford U. Press, 1963), 144.
- 56 See, for example, Luther’s “Treatise on Good Works” in *Luther’s Works, Vol. 44*, edited by James Atkinson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 23ff.
- 57 Mc Donough, *op. cit.*, 87.
- 58 Thielicke, *Theological Ethics. Foundations*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 133-4. The Luther quotation is from WA 39, 485.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 55. Paul Althaus, another German Lutheran, would appear to concur with Thielicke’s judgment. Summarizing Luther’s position regarding God’s law and the Christian life he writes: “When the sinner has been justified, the law takes on new meaning for him: Christ has fulfilled the law for us. Thereby we are relieved of the terrible burden that there can be no salvation for us unless we completely fulfill the law. This one barrier to recognizing the law as an expression of God’s eternal goodwill is now set aside. Now man is able to love God’s law with his whole heart just as he loves God himself—for the content of the law is the form and expression of the nature of God,” *The Ethics of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972/86), 11-12.
- 60 There is no significant difference between the two expressions as used by the reformers: *lex naturae* and *lex naturalis*.
- 61 Barth is convinced that the idea of natural law is more stoic than biblical. He gets around the standard interpretation of Romans 2:14-15 by maintaining that the Gentiles in this passage are Christian Gentiles, not pagan Gentiles. The phrase “the law written on their hearts” is then an allusion to Jeremiah 31:33. Barth had not yet come to the conclusion in his commentary on Romans, but it is found in his *Church Dogmatics* and in his *Shorter Commentary on Romans*. One of the few commentators who defends this view is C. E. B. Cranfield in *Romans. A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 50-2.
- 62 *Institutes* II.8.1.
- 63 *Ibid.*
- 64 “We observe that there exist in all men’s minds universal impressions of a certain civic honesty and order,” *Inst.* II.2.13.
- 65 *Institutes* II.2.22. Conscience plays the same role. See *Inst.* I.5.15. For a more thorough discussion of Calvin’s view of natural law see my *Calvin’s Concept of the Law*, chapter II.
- 66 “Treatise on Secular Authority,” in *Martin Luther. Selections from his Writings*, edited by John Dillenberger (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1961), 401. Paul Althaus, drawing on a number of sources, concludes: For Luther, “The natural law is thus nothing else than the commandment of the law of love . . . Christ and the natural law teach one and the same thing . . . Thus Luther considers that all the rules of the Sermon on the Mount . . . are part of natural law,” *The Ethics of Martin Luther*, 29.
- 67 WA XLII, 374, 11ff., cited in Philip S. Watson, *Let God be God. An Interpretation of the Theology of*

- Martin Luther* (London: Epworth Press, 1947/54), 82. Calvin also has a high regard for pagan writers, especially Plato and Cicero. However, he does not ascribe their virtues to a knowledge of the law of nature but rather to the “general grace of God” (*generalem Dei gratiam*) and the work of the Holy Spirit. See *Institutes* II.2.2-3, 15 and 17.
- 68 *W.A. XXXIX, 1, 454, 4, cited in Watson, op. cit., 98, n. 44.*
- 69 *WA XVI, 447, 26ff., cited in Watson, 99, n. 52.*
- 70 “How Christians Should Regard Moses,” in *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, edited by Timothy Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 139-140.
- 71 *Ibid., 145.*
- 72 *Ibid., 140, 2, 7.*
- 73 Timothy Lull, the editor of the large volume of selections, including the sermon on “How Christians Should Regard Moses,” writes in his introduction, “The deepest obstacle to hearing Luther in today’s theological discussions is that his theology is so rich, complex, and dialectical that he seems unreliable both as an opponent and as an ally. There is always with Luther the element of surprise,” *ibid., 2.*
- 74 *Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte IV, 2* (Basel: Benno Schwabe, 1960), 566, translation mine.
- 75 *Ibid., 565, 613, 631.*
- 76 *Von Schubert, Kirchengeschichte, Elfte Auflage* (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1950), 207, translation mine. Further illustrations of such caricatures can be found in my *Calvin’s Concept of the Law* on which I shall be drawing heavily in this section as well as a chapter entitled “Law and Gospel or Gospel and Law? Calvin’s Understanding of the Relationship” in the book *Calviniana. Ideas and Influences of Jean Calvin*, edited by Robert V. Schnucker (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publications, 1988). A far more detailed account of Calvin’s position will be found in these two sources.
- 77 *Kraeling, The Old Testament Since the Reformation* (London: Lutterworth, 1955), 31.
- 78 *Calvin, Commentary Exodus 19:1, Harmony of the Last Four Books of Moses I*, 314. The following paragraphs are taken from my essay, “Law and Gospel or Gospel and Law?”, 17ff.
- 79 *Institutes* II.7.2.
- 80 *See Calvin’s Comm. Deut. 30:11; Psalm 19:7-8; Romans 10:5; and 2 Corinthians 3:6.*
- 81 *See Gottlieb Schrenk, Gottesreich und Bund im alteren Protestantismus* (Damstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1967 [reprint of 1923 ed.]).
- 82 *Comm. Gal. 3:2; Sermons on Gal. 2:15-16; and Gal. 3:11-14.*
- 83 *Comm. Hab. 2:4; Heb. 1:1-2.*
- 84 *Comm. Isaiah 2:3.*
- 85 *See Lev. 26:12; Jer. 31:31; 2Cor. 6:16; Heb. 8:10.*
- 86 *Comm. Jer. 31:31.*
- 87 *Comm. 2 Cor. 3:6-7; Comm. Jer. 31:31-2; Comm. Matt. 17:3; Comm. Rom. 10:45.*
- 88 *Institutes* II.9.4.
- 89 *This is a summary of the main points of the Institutes* II.11.
- 90 *Institutes* II.9.4.
- 91 *J. S. Whale, The Protestant Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1955), 164.
- 92 *Comm. John 1:17. Cf. Inst. II.7.16.*
- 93 *Comm. Rom. 4:15.*
- 94 *Comm. Rom. 5:20.*
- 95 *Comm. Rom. 7:2-3.*
- 96 *Comm. Gal. 3:19.*
- 97 *I demonstrate this in an essay, “Luther and Calvin on Law and Gospel in Their Galatians Commentaries,” in Reformed Review 37/2* (Winter 1984).
- 98 *Comm. Gal. 2:19.*
- 99 *Comm. 2 Cor. 3:6.*

100 *Comm. 2 Cor. 3:7.*

101 *Cf. Comm. Ps. 19:7-8; Comm. Acts 7:38; Comm. 2 Cor. 3:14-17.*

102 *Comm. Rom. 10:5.*

103 *Comm. Ex. 19:1.*

104 *"The End and Use of the Law," in Commentary on the Last Four Books of Moses, 3. Cf. Comm. 2 Cor. 3:6-10.*

105 *Comm. Rom. 7:2. Because of space limitations I must end here but in my essay on "Law and Gospel or Gospel and Law" I go on to point out that: (1) Another difference between law and gospel relates to sin and hence the negative aspect of the law is "accidental." (2) It is not the law, therefore, that is defective but the weakness of our flesh. (3) However, the curse of the law is not only accidental but also inseparable from its nature.*

106 *I question Couenhoven's conclusion that "in the third use of the law, Calvin reverses the order of law and gospel, putting gospel before the law." His rationale for this statement, however, contains some truth. "For those who trust in God's promises the law takes the form of a gift, even so it presents the task of the Christian life. Thus, Calvin begins to find the gospel in the law," "Grace as Pardon and Power," *op. cit.*, 69. Actually this applies more to the way Calvin handles the original giving of the ten commandments on Mt. Sinai. He makes much of the Preface to the decalog, "I am the Lord your God . . ." pointing out that the law is thus a gift to a people already redeemed and was not originally intended as a burden. See *Institutes* II.8.13-15.*

107 *Commentary on Galatians, 115. "Such a proper distinction between the function of the law and the gospel keeps all genuine theology in its correct use," *ibid.*, 331.*

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“Woord van God, Woord van die lewe”? Op weg na 'n verantwoordelike teologiese hermeneutiek²

ABSTRACT

'Word of God, Word of life' Implications for a theological hermeneutics

The paper is an edited version of a public address at the opening of the Theology Faculty of the Stellenbosch University on the 3rd February 2008. It deals with the confessional language used by the church to describe the work and effects of the Holy Scriptures in the church. Arguing that such an approach is not completely unknown in the Reformed tradition, where for example Bavinck and Berkouwer made contributions of this nature, the paper provides a brief overview of some of the popular descriptions (which could be called speech-acts in contemporary language) of the role of Scripture in the life of faith. Reflecting on such descriptions, a brief discussion is focused on the question what the implications could be for so-called responsible hermeneutics in the life of the church.

1. WOORD VAN GOD?

Etlike jare gelede het BC (Bernard) Lategan, destyds professor in Nuwe Testament, vandag afgetree as Direkteur van die Stellenbosse Instituut vir Gevorderde Navorsing (STIAS), in 'n belangrike bydrae gesê dat die eerste vraag by die lees van die Bybel behoort te wees wat die *aard van die teks* is wat gelees word, wat die aard van hierdie (soos trouens van enige) boek is, omdat lesers se siening van die aard van die betrokke teks bepaal hoe hulle lees en behoort te lees.³ Ons siening van wát ons lees bepaal (altyd, bewus of onbewus) die verwagtinge waarmee ons lees en die maniere waarop ons lees – en die vraag of dit met verantwoordelikheid geskied, of nie.⁴

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2 Hierdie bydrae gryp terug na 'n openbare voordrag wat gehou is tydens die Teologiese Dag van die Fakulteit Teologie van die Universiteit van Stellenbosch, op 3 Februarie 2008. Die tema is ontleen aan die oorkoepelende tema van die dag. Al die referate het daarby aangesluit, vanuit verskillende velde en invalshoeke. Die struktuur van die oorspronklike voordrag is grootliks hier behou, terwyl verwysings na literatuur bygewerk is, ter wille van akademiese lesers.

3 Sien byvoorbeeld vir sy eie posisie Lategan 1984; 1992; 1997; asook bydraes tot sy feesbundel, *The New Testament interpreted*, met redakteurs Breytenbach, Thom & Punt, 2006. Robert Morgan verwoord dié verhouding tussen die Bybel en sy lesersgemeenskappe helder: “The character and contents of the Bible have shaped the ways in which it has been interpreted. They have not, however, exercised total control. The different aims and interests of its readers have also been influential ... The Bible has never of itself given birth to theology. Even its most heavily theological parts contribute to the ongoing task of Christian theology only by being interpreted in quite particular ways. Christians seek to understand their faith in part through their thoughtful engagement with the biblical texts. What they are doing needs explanation as much as the texts that they are reading,” Morgan 1998, 114.

4 'n Oortuigende demonstrasie – in 'n uiters indrukwekkende boek – van die wyse waarop die kerk deur

Ek het die tema – Woord van God, Woord van die lewe? – nie self gekies nie, maar dit is inderdaad 'n goeie beskrywing van waarom dit deur die eeue vir die kerk gegaan het by die lees van die Bybel.⁵ Die Christelike geloof, die kerk van die eeue en van die ekumene, bely dat dit vir hulle in die Bybel inderdaad gaan om die *Woord van God*.

Maar wat word bedoel met dié – absoluut merkwaardige – belydenis?⁶ Dit is niks minder nie as die aanspraak dat die geloof op een of ander wyse vir God hoor praai in en deur die Woord. Dit is daarom ten diepste 'n ingrypende *belydenis aangaande die aard van God self*, naamlik dat God práát, kommunikatief is, Godself openbaar, te kenne gee, in verhouding tree met mense, in geskiedenis en tyd, en meer nog, verbind is om dit in en deur hiérdie Woord te doen – 'n belydenis wat skuil agter die Christelike beskrywing van God as Drie-enig, lewend en sosiaal, as Vader, Seun en Gees.⁷ Vir 'n betoog wat hierdie belydenis wysgerig probeer denkbaar en geloofwaardig maak, sien die bekende Yale-filosof Nicholas Wolterstorff se *Divine discourse. Philosophical reflections on the claim that God speaks* (1995).⁸

die eeue op verskillende maniere na die Bybelse geskrifte gekyk het, is te vind by die kenner van Middeleeuse manuskripte Christopher de Hamel se *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (1994), soos in 'n mindere mate ook in sy latere *The Book. A History of the Bible* (2001). Net al die titels van sy hoofstukke in eersgenoemde oorsig suggereer dié verhaal en die verreikende implikasies vir die lees en uitleg van dié wisselende kerklike perspektiewe op die artefakt self, in sy geval die geïllustreerde manuskripte van die Bybel deur die eeue. Hy vertel naamlik agtereenvolgens die verhaal van “books for missionaries”, “books for emperors”, “books for monks”, “books for students”, “books for aristocrats”, “books for everybody”, “books for priests” en “books for collectors”. Die krag van dié verhaal lê onder andere in die herinnering dat wat die Bybel is afhang van die oortuigings waarmee wisselende lesersgemeenskappe die Bybel benader, wat impliseer dat hedendaagse lesers – insluitende akademiese lesers – gedagtig behoort te wees aan die beslissende rol van hulle eie vooroordele, sieninge, waardeoordele en verwagtinge, hetsy kultureel, letterkundig, vakwetenskaplik of religieus, by die uitleg en lees van die Bybel.

5 Die uitdrukkings self kom uit 'n bekende Gesang (Liedboek 255, soos gewysig deur Attie van der Colf; Nuwe Sionsgesange 334, met 'n addisionele vierde vers). Die drie strofes bied saam 'n goeie verwoording van die vertrou op die Woord wat tipies is van vroomheid in Gereformeerde kringe: *Woord van God, Woord van die lewe//Woord vir ewig vas en waar//Woord onfeilbaar en verhewe //waarin God Hom openbaar//Woord betroubaar; vas en waar//deur miskennig, deur gevaar; //wat sou ons dan ooit laat bewe?//In dié Woord het ons die lewe!//Terug tot in die grys verlede//bou Gods woord vir ons 'n brug;// oor die troebel van die hede//open dit 'n toekomsvlug//Spreek die Here, word die tyd//oomblikke van ewigheid//Deur sy Gees laat God, verhewe, //ook in ons sy woorde lewe//Trotse berge sal eens wankel, //elemente sal vergaan.//As die skepping selfs verander, //bly Gods woord onwrikbaar staan!//Bo die ruimte, bo die tyd//heers die Heer in ewigheid.//Ons geloof bly vas geanker//in Gods woord wat nimmer wankel!* Dis opvallend hoe werkwoorde gebruik word om op dokologiese wyse te besing wat die Woord daardewerklik dóen.

6 Die literatuur is uiteraard onoorsigtelik. Vir bekende studies wat redelik spesifiek probeer ingaan op die vraag wat verskillende uitdrukkings wat die kerk gebruik om die Bybel mee te beskryf kan beteken, sien byvoorbeeld Bird 1982, Goldingay 1994, Jodock 1989, *Das Buch Gottes* 1992, Billings 2010, Webster 2003a.

7 Sien byvoorbeeld John Webster, *Holy Scripture. A Dogmatic Sketch*, 2003 vir 'n sterk betoog dat en hóe die leerstuk van die Heilige Skrif binne die leer van God hoort, “(T)he proper location for a Christian theological account of the nature of Holy Scripture is the Christian doctrine of God. In particular, theological assertions about Scripture are a function of Christian convictions about God’s making himself present as saviour and his establishing of covenant fellowship ... Sanctification and inspiration are ... ways of indicating that what we encounter in Scripture is the terrifying mercy of God’s address,” 39-41. Dié oortuiging word alreeds verwoord in die Credo van Nicea-Constantinopolitanum, as dié God bely word “wat gespreek het deur die profete”, sien vir bespreking *Confessing the One Faith* 1991, 73-80 en vir 'n meditasie, Smit 2001, 22-33.

8 Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine discourse. Philosophical reflections on the claim that God speaks*, 1995,

Wanneer die kerk en die geloof sê dat hulle op die een of ander wyse die lewende God hoor praat in en deur hierdie Woord,⁹ bely hulle daarmee dat hulle by die lees en die hoor van hierdie Woord iets ervaar van die krag van die Woord, van die *krachtige werking* van die Woord; dat hulle beleef dat God deur die Woord iets aan hulle doen, iets met hulle doen;¹⁰ dat hulle die kommunikatiewe handeling (die *speech-acts*) van die Woord ondergaan.¹¹ In onlangse jare het

ook sy 2006.

- 9 Hierdie soort benadering, wat probeer om op grond van en vanuit die werking van die Woord te bely dát en hóé die Woord funksioneer as Woord van God is duidelik 'n ánder denkweg as dié bekende benaderings wat begin by die gesag van die Skrifte, of die verskillende gronde waarop die gesag van die Skrif aanvaar behoort te word, waar onder verskillende inspirasie-teorieë. Dit is soms moeilik – alhoewel van groot belang – om te kan onderskei welke van hierdie denkwêë inderdaad gevolg word. So is dit byvoorbeeld omstrede of die belydenis aangaande die sogenaamde *testimonium Spiritus sancti internum*, die inwendige getuienis van die Heilige Gees, 'n belydenis aangaande die aard of 'n belydenis aangaande die werking van die Skrifte is. Word daarmee beskryf wat die Woord is – en welke geval die vrae opgeroep word hoe die kerk dit sou weet en op grond waarvan die kerk dit sou glo en sê – of word daarmee beskryf wat die Woord aan en in die kerk dóén. In sy bekende verduideliking van dié leerstuk volg Bavinck byvoorbeeld laasgenoemde weg (Bavinck 1967: veral 547-570), terwyl 'n mens sou kon aanvoer dat sy leerling Hepp in sy proefskrif juis eersgenoemde weg wou probeer verdedig, met verreikende gevolge vir die teologie en die geloof, óók in gereformeerde kringe in Suid-Afrika en spesifiek in Stellenbosse teologiese geleedere (Hepp 1914). Sien ook Berkouwer se worsteling met hierdie vrae, spesifiek ook met Bavinck, in *De Heilige Schrift I* (1966), veral die eerste twee hoofstukke oor sekerheid en oor die getuienis van die Gees. Bavinck se benadering word in hierdie voordrag dan ook nie bedoel as 'n alternatief wat téénoor die ander weg sou staan, te wete om ook belydenisuitsprake oor die aard of status van die Skrifte te maak nie, maar eerder as 'n tweede weg, 'n alternatiewe weg, wat óók legitiem is binne gereformeerde nadenke oor die Skrif en dalk in vele opsigte verhelderend mag werk. Vir Berkouwer en Bavinck oor die Skrif, sien byvoorbeeld Dirk van Keulen 2003 en H van den Belt 2008, ook Smit 1976. Onder andere in aansluiting by Bavinck en Berkouwer maak Webster die verdere onderskeiding – na sy oordeel van sleutel belang, téénoor veel wat vandag geskryf word oor hermeneutiek – dat juis ás nagedink word oor die werking van die Woord dit behoort te gaan oor die spreke van God en nié primêr oor die hoor van die kerk nie. Na sy oordeel, “the centre of gravity of a theology of Scripture has shifted away from God’s activity towards the uses of the church” (2003:43). Vir hom is dit tipies van moderne hermeneutiese benaderings wat geïnteresseerd is in “the anthropology of reading”, al is dit ook dié van die kerk, soos wat dit vandag gewild geword het in post-moderne en post-liberale teologiese kringe, en nié in die belydenis “of what it means to be a reader in the divine economy of grace” nie (2003:69). Kortom, wat hom betref, “the preoccupations ... which focus on God’s action through the text ... receive only scant treatment; the real interest lies elsewhere, in church practice” (2003:43).
- 10 Bekend is byvoorbeeld die kontras wat deur die *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis* in Artikel 5 gemaak word, “Ons aanvaar al hierdie boeke, en hulle alleen, as heilig en kanoniek om ons geloof daarop te rig, daarop te grond en daarmee te bevestig. Ons glo ook sonder twyfel alles wat daarin vervat is, nie juis omdat die kerk hulle aanvaar en as sodanig beskou nie, maar veral omdat die Heilige Gees in ons hart getuig dat hulle van God is. Hulle het ook die bewys daarvan in hulleself, aangesien selfs die blindes kan tas dat die dinge wat daarin voorspel is, plaasvind.” Dis duidelik hoe versigtig, byna tastend, hier geformuleer word, “nie juis,” “maar veral.” Die sekerheid van dié oortuiging berus nie (juis!) op die gesag van die kerk nie, maar (veral!) op die getuienis van die Gees in die harte van gelowiges én in die bewys wat die Skrifte in hulle self dra, naamlik dat wat hulle belowe wel wáár word. Dit is hierdie spanningsverhouding wat Berkouwer sou ontwikkel in sy bekende siening van 'n korrelasie tussen openbaring en geloof, 'n siening wat ook in Suid-Afrikaanse gereformeerde kringe, soos by Jonker en Durand, 'n groot rol sou speel. Sien byvoorbeeld van hulle rigtinggewende bydraes, WD (Willie) Jonker, 1973; 1975; 1980 en JJJ (Jaap) Durand 1974.
- 11 Uiteraard kan dit ook wees dat die kerk daarmee iets méér en iets ánders wil bely, te wete wat die Skrifte in hulleself is en nie slegs wat hulle aan die gelowiges dóén nie. Daardie problematiek word nie hier aangespreek nie en daardie soort keuse word nie hier gemaak nie. Hierdie weg word hier slegs gevolg as illustrasie dat dit óók 'n moontlik weg was en binne gereformeerde kringe bly, om in belydende taal te

heelwat studies oor hierdie soort *speech-acts* verskyn.¹²

2. WAT DOEN DIÉ WOORD?

Wat doen die Woord dus aan die kerk, aan gelowige hoorders en lesers deur die eeue, volgens hulle eie selfverstaan, volgens hulle eie belydenis? Miskien kan 'n mens 'n indruk hiervan kry deur te dink aan sommige van die *talle werkwoorde* waarmee dié kragtige werkinge beskryf is en beskryf word.¹³ Baie van hulle is reeds in die Bybelse dokumente self gebruik as beskrywings van wat Gods Woord doen, en is daarna deur die kerk van die eeue oorgedra op die versamelings geskryfte wat as die Bybel bekend sou word, soms verder aangevul met verwante beskrywings.¹⁴ Wat, bely die kerk, dóén die Woord?¹⁵

probeer verwoord wat die Skrifte aan die kerk doen, of dalk nóg beter gestel, wat die sprekende God deur die Skrifte aan die kerk doen.

12 Byvoorbeeld dié van Timothy Ward, *Word and supplement. Speech acts, Biblical texts, and the sufficiency of Scripture* (2002), benewens vele ander soortgelyke studies.

13 Só verwys Cees van der Kooi byvoorbeeld in dié verband na die verskeidenheid werkwoorde wat Calvin net in één paragraaf van die *Institusie* (*Inst.* 1/7.5) gebruik om na dié werking te verwys, naamlik *afficere, obsignare, intueri, subicere, sentire, vigere, spirare, trahere en accendere. Als in Een Spiegel*, 2002, 96.

14 Dit mag interessant wees om enkele uitdrukkings in herinnering te roep ten einde te hoor hoe Bavinck al dié benadering volg en verwoord. Hy skryf wel ook uitvoerig oor die “theopneustie der Schrift” (1967:357-420) en oor die eienskappe van die Skrif, waar onder “de duideljkheid” (1967:445-452), maar dis wanneer hy kom by die “beteekenis van het Principium Internum” (1967:466-472) en spesifiek en uitvoerig by “de grond des geloofs” (1967:547-570) dat sy formuleringe meermale merkwaardig klink. “Feiteljk neemt Rome daarmede hetzelfde subjectieve standpunt in als de kerken der Hervorming ... De diepste grond van het geloof ligt ook bij Rome, evengoed als bij het Protestantisme, in het subject. De Reformatie nam welbewust en vrij haar standpunt in het religieuze subject, in het geloof van den Christen, in het getuigenis des Heiligen Geestes ... Calvijn heeft deze leer (Bavinck verwys na die *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*, DJS) breedvoerig ontwikkel ... Evenals het licht van de duisternis, de witte van de zwarte kleur, het zoet van het bitter onderscheiden is, zoo wordt de Schrift door haar eigen waarheid onderkend. Maar zekerheid bij ons krijgt die Schrift als Gods woord alleen door het getuigenis des Heiligen Geestes ... De Heiligen Geest is daarom zegel en bevestiging van het geloof der vromen ... Maar ... Calvijn wist in deze leer van het *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* geen private openbaring, maar de ervaring aller geloovigen te beschrijven ... Langzamerhand begon het *testimonium internum* ook in de Gereformeerde theologie zijne eereplaats te verliezen ... Tussen de Schrift en het geloof worden de kenmerken van de waarheid der Schrift ingeschoven ... Maar evenals de Roomsche, zoo moeten ook de Protestantse theologen erkennen, dat de laatste en diepste grond des geloofs niet buiten ons liggen kan in bewijzen en redeneeringen, in kerk en traditie, maar alleen gevonden kan worden in den mensch zelf, in het religieuze subject ... Zoowel de Roomsche als de Protestantse theologie is bij het onderzoek naar den diepste gronde des geloofs uitgekomen bij het religieuze subject en moet hare positie nemen in het geloof der gemeente” (1967:549-555; sien ook Bavinck 1918 oor sekerheid van die geloof).

15 Om só aan die hand van uitsprake wat in die Woord gemaak word oor die werking ván die Woord na te dink oor die blywende funksie van die Woord volgens die kerk, is nog nie eintlik in Afrikaanse teologiese literatuur doelbewus en breedvoerig gedoen nie. In die vorige eeu het die Switser Karl Barth wel meermale teologiese eksegeese beoefen en óór die Woord nagedink terwyl hy detail-uitleg gedoen het van perikope of selfs van hele Bybelboeke. Gedurende die twintigerjare het hy verskeie semesters klas gegee oor byvoorbeeld Johannes, Filippense, Kolossense, Jakobus en 1 Korintiërs 15 en verskillende van dié lopende teologiese uitlegte is daarna gepubliseer en word deesdae toenemend ook in Engels vertaal en uitgegee, soos natuurlik ook sy uiters invloedryke kommentare op Romeine (oor Barth se teologiese lees van die Bybel, sien byvoorbeeld R Burnett, *Karl Barth's theological exegesis* 2004 asook Neil B MacDonald, *Karl Barth and the strange new world within the Bible* 2000). In sommige van dié boeke, soos in die Romeine-kommentare en dan uitvoerig in die lesings oor die Johannes-Evangelie, lê Barth

Die Woord *belowe*, bely die kerk, is goeie nuus, tróós, open toekoms; bring versekeringe, skenk hoop, uitsig en verwagting; is daarom soos 'n testament wat onveranderlik is; soos 'n verbond, betroubaar en ewig; soos 'n skat, kosbaar, wonderbaar en meer werd as alles;¹⁶ dit bied 'n grondslag, 'n basis, iets om met vertroue op te bou, 'n anker.¹⁷ Dit verseël, staan vas, wankel nie, is ja en amen, 'n betroubare woord en werd om ten volle aangeneem te word. Dikwels word dié beloftes as baie persoonlik beleef, by die náám, aan my gerig. Daarom *verbly* die Woord ook, verheug, gee vrolike harte, laat lag, gee 'n nuwe lied in hart en mond, wek dankbaarheid, lei tot lofsange, tot vreugde en feesviering.¹⁸ Dit bring tegelyk ook tot trane, laat *ween* en kla; laat roep uit donker dieptes, waarom?, en hoe lank nog?; laat sug, in afwagting van verlossing; laat verlang en droom; laat die dinge daarbo bedink; laat uitsien; smee, pleit, intree vir ander in nood. Trouens, die Woord *red* uit angs en nood; dit verlos, bevry; verbreek die strikke en nete van die voëlvangers; plaas die hoorders se voete op 'n rots; laat skuil in veilige skuilplekke; dien as toevlug en beskerming; beskut bedags van die son en die gevare van die nag; bewaar deur doodsvalleie; gee nuwe krag, soos dié van arende.¹⁹

Die krag van die Woord is ook dat dit *skep*, bely die geloof, dit bring iets voort uit niks, lewe uit dood, verander duisternis in lig; bring iets verrassends en nuuts tot stand waar ons niks meer waarneem of vermoed of verwag nie; wek op; gee nuwe lus, nuwe lewe; verkwik; verander die dorsland in oorvloed en ryke seën; ag niks as onmoontlik nie; dit is soos saad wat ontkiem en

wel uitvoerige verantwoording af van hoe die Woord gelees behoort te word in die lig daarvan dat dit getuienis aangáande die Woord is.

Ook in die Nederlandse teologie van die vorige eeu was daar 'n sterk tradisie van teologiese uitleg, oftewel teologie in die vorm van praktiese Skrifuitleg, prediking en meditasie. Teoloë soos Kornelis H Miskotte het ook byvoorbeeld in sy invloedryke *Als de goden zwijgen* (1956; tans beskikbaar as *Verzameld Werk 8* 1983; in Engels vertaal as *When the gods are silent*) 'n hele reeks van agtien meditasies of preke opgeneem om as 't ware sy meer teoretiese dele toe te pas en prakties te toets, in 'n laaste afdeling van die boek met die opskrif "Proeven van toepassing." Twee van die heel bekendste beoefenaars van teologiese hermeneutiek, óók in die genre van Skrifuitleg, meditasies en preke, was daarby die bekende Nederlandse denkers Oepke Noordmans en Arnold A van Ruler, albei in talryke publikasies oor dekades heen. In albei gevalle vind 'n mens by hulle ook meditasies wat ook nadink en rekenskap affê oor die aard en werking van die Woord self.

Dit is presies hierdie tradisie van teologiese uitleg wat vandag weer toenemend bepleit en selfs beoefen word. Nuwe kommentaarreëse word uitgegee wat doelbewus teologies wil wees, soos die *Everyone*-reeks van Wright, *Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible* en Eerdmans se *Two Horizons*-kommentare. In sommige gevalle word historici (soos Pelikan), etici (soos Stanley Hauerwas) en dogmatici (soos Fowl) ge vra om hierdie kommentare te skryf, en doelbewus nié enige aandag te gee aan die gebruikelike historiese en literêre vrae wat nou vir 'n paar eeue lank in Westerse kommentare behandel is nie, maar om die betrokke Bybelboek te lees as direkte boodskap gerig aan die gemeente van vandág. Dis nog te vroeg om oor dié produkte te kan oordeel en oor die vraag of hulle werklik 'n blywende bydrae gaan lewer. Ook baie gewone Bybelwetenskaplikes, geskool in die normale kritiese metodes, skryf egter toenemend kommentare wat meer doelbewus vra na die teologiese inhoud, na die sáák van die betrokke gedeeltes en boeke – iets wat lank nie vanselfsprekend was nie.

16 Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, as voorbeeld van hoe die kerk hierdie oortuiging bely, sien byvoorbeeld D J Smit, *Neem, lees! Hoe ons die Bybel hoor en verstaan* (2006), 248-253.

17 Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, as voorbeeld van hoe die kerk hierdie oortuiging bely, sien Smit, *Neem, lees! Hoe ons die Bybel hoor en verstaan* (2006), 304-312.

18 Vir 'n interessante bespreking van die vreugde wat kom met die lees van die Woord, sien B R Gaventa, *To glorify God and enjoy God forever* (2007).

19 Sien byvoorbeeld die doktorale proefskrif van H-C Yoon, *Hearing the Living Word of God Today* (2011), waarin hy doelbewus 'n dinamiese en kommunikatiewe siening van die (lewende) gesag van die Woord probeer ontwikkel, binne die konteks van Koreaanse debatte oor Skrifgesag en funderingsdenke.

groeï, klein, verborge, onopgemerk, maar seker en kragtig.²⁰ Maar meer nog, daarby *herskep* die Woord; dit herstel en vernuwe; dit bring metamorfose mee, vernuwing van gemoed, denke en lewe; dit neem mee; dit transformeer, verander, wederbaar, tot by die groot kosmiese wedergeboorte wat kom; dit vorm en bou; dit laat groeï en gee vrug.²¹

Die Woord wat herskep *voed* en versorg ook,²² voortdurend; dit skenk lewe en oorvloed; is soos brood,²³ soos daaglikse manna; bou op, gee die nodige krag.²⁴ Daarby *genees* die Woord wat herskep, soos balsem wat salf; dit héél wat gebroke is; bied heling vir wat siek is; dit herstel, maak gesond; dit verbind, laat wonde toegroeï; laat pyn vergeet, vee trane af.²⁵ Deel van die genesing is dat die Woord ook *vry spreek*, vergewe, laat gaan; dit maak die bande los, ook van skuld, verwyt en selfverwyt; die verklaar die verlede so ver weg soos oos van wes; dit neem laste af; dit verklaar regverdig; dit reinig, was, bad, maak skoon, beklee met nuwe kleding; dit open daarmee 'n nuwe toekoms, laat breek 'n nuwe dag; laat die ou dinge verby gaan, sodat alles nuut kan word.

Die Woord *her-beskryf* daarom die bekende werklikheid; dit noem alles met ander name; dit benoem opnuut, gee ook aan ons nuwe name, en daarmee saam nuwe identiteit, en nuwe waardigheid;²⁶ dit laat alles en almal in 'n nuwe lig verskyn; dit bied nuwe perspektief, op onself, op ons naaste, op mekaar, op ander, op die lewe; dit is soos 'n bril wat ons sig radikaal verander en ingrypend verbeter.²⁷ Daarom *skyn* die Woord soos 'n lig op ons pad,²⁸ soos 'n lamp vir ons voet;²⁹ dit laat anders kyk en beter sien; verlig ons verstand, vernuwe ons denke; dit help ons raaksien, ook ander; leer onderskei, ook waarop dit werklik aankom; dit maak sensitief, fyngvoelig, opmerkzaam; dit leer, onderrig, maak wys tot saligheid; gee kennis, insig en verstand. Die Woord laat ons ook onself beter ken, bely die geloof, deurdat dit weerkaatsend werk soos 'n *spieël*; in die dowwe afbeelding sien ons die raaisels en die vrae van die lewe; sien ons kante van onself wat ons nie maklik wou herken of erken nie; sien ons egter ook die heerlikheid van Christus wat op ons afgee, sodat ons tog ook deur die Gees verander word terwyl ons kyk, terwyl ons luister, lees en hoor.³⁰

Op dié manier *heilig* die Woord ons, bely die kerk, word ons aangeraak, soms soos met vuur;

20 Die oortuiging dat die Woord skep is uiteraard ook die basiese gedagte agter die Protestantse ekklesiologie, vandag spesifiek ook wêreldwyd agter die verbrede evangelikale ekklesiologie. Die kerk is volgens dié uitlegetradisies die produk van die Woord, geskape deur die Woord, asook geskape en in stand gehou deur die suiwer verkondiging en viering van die Woord, sien byvoorbeeld Schwöbel 1989. Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, as voorbeeld van hoe die kerk hierdie oortuiging bely, sien Smit, *Neem, lees! Hoe ons die Bybel hoor en verstaan* (2006), 260-264.

21 "Christian theological interpretation of Scripture has always taken seriously both the biblical texts themselves and their transformative impact upon faithful readers," Morgan 1998: 125.

22 Sien verskillende werke van Julie Claassens met dié beskrywing van God, veral volgens Ou Testamentiese gedeeltes en tradisies, maar daarmee ook deur die Bybel, byvoorbeeld reeds *The God who provides* (2004) asook 'n *Groter God* (2009).

23 Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, sien Smit, *Neem, lees!* (2006), 265-269.

24 Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, sien Smit, *Neem, lees!* (2006), 269-275.

25 Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, sien Smit, *Neem, lees!* (2006), 242-247.

26 In John Webster se invloedryke verduidelikings van die etiek in Barth se werk speel soortgelyke beskrywings 'n sleutel rol, byvoorbeeld dat Barth 'n alternatiewe morele ontologie ontwikkel, sien Webster 1995; 1998a.

27 Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, as voorbeeld van hoe die kerk hierdie oortuiging bely, sien Smit, *Neem, lees!* (2006), 276-281

28 Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, sien Smit, *Neem, lees!* (2006), 281-286.

29 Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, sien Smit, *Neem, lees!* (2006), 286-291.

30 Sien uitvoerig vir dié metafoor vir Godskennis en geloof, ook op grond van en deur middel van die Woord, Van der Kooi 2002.

gesuiwer; gelouter; afgesonder; diensbaar gemaak; geroep en uitgeroep, soms weggeroep; vreemd gemaak, soms soos vreemdelinge; getuies gemaak, soms soos profete, soms soos martelare.³¹ In dié proses *waarsku* die Woord, teen onheil, afdraaipaaie, doodloopstrate, weë van die dood; maar veral teen afgodediens; teen die najaag van wat dit nie werd is nie, die nastreef van wat geen heil bring nie, die vergader van skatte wat nie blywend vervul nie; teen die soeke na geluk, insluitende ons eie lewe, op plekke en maniere waar dit nie te vinde is nie; teen die gees van die tyd, die gees in die lug. Met profetiese oortuiging en krag *skei* die Woord, soos 'n tweesnydende swaard, dring dit in tussen murg en been, in die diepste en mees verborgene geheimenisse van ons eie hart; ontbloot dit; lê bloot, ontmasker, ontbloot; beroof algemene oortuigings en aansprake van vanselfsprekendheid en geldigheid, hulle krag en invloed, hulle houvas en verleiding; dit weerspreek, ontken, ondermyn; dit vermorsel soos 'n rots; dit oordeel en veroordeel; brand, smelt, vermorsel, oorwin.³²

Die Woord skep *orde*, bring riglyne, koers, struktuur, lei die lewe op veilige bane – in natuur sowel as kultuur; dit kom as wet, as verwagtinge waarop staat gemaak kan word, as reëlings waarmee gereken kan word,³³ as betroubare verhoudinge, ook in die openbare lewe en die gemeenskap; dit waarborg bestendigheid, veiligheid en versorging; dit bind almal saam in die lewe van die genade- en trouverbond, in die wedersydse onderlinge verpligtinge; as wet skep dit trou, vertrou, en betroubaarheid, waarsonder geen samelewing bestaan nie; dit eis geregtigheid, barmhartigheid en trou, en maak so lewe moontlik.³⁴ So *bou* die Woord vir ons 'n huis, op vaste rots, wat deur die bouers verwerp is, beveilig teen die aanslae en sorges van die lewe; dit word vir ons tot leefruimte, tot bekende tuiste; 'n veilige beskutting;³⁵ 'n rotsvesting, waarin gelowiges met hulle kinders kan vlug en skuil op die dag van onheil, waar hulle kan wegkruip tydens gevaar; dit nooi uit tot 'n alternatiewe werklikheid, tot die verrassende koninkryk van die hemele, tot die “vreemde, nuwe wêreld van die Bybel”.³⁶

Deur dit alles *lei* die Woord *in die waarheid*, lê wat verborge is bloot; bring aan die lig, maak bekend, van die dakke; maak sigbaar, maak publiek, openbaar, wat geheim was en weggesteek, in die duister gedoen en gekoester; dit maak bekend wat geen mens ooit gesien en in die hart van geen mens ooit opgekom het nie, wat ons nie uit onself sou kon dink of droom nie – dit is die waarheid van betroubaarheid en lewe, nie van modernistiese historiese eksaktheid nie; die waarheid van evangelies, van verhale, van liedere, van gedigte, van gebede, van gelykenisse en wondertellings, van getuienis en profesie, die waarheid van die opstanding van die lewende Jesus, wat wel in ons geskiedenis gebeur het maar wat veel méér en ánders is as blote historiese gebeure; die waarheid van die skeppingsvertellings van die Godsvolk, die waarheid dus van geloofsbelydenisse oor die mag en die trou van God, wat die werk van sy hande nie laat vaar nie; oor die goedheid van alle lewe, van alle sigbare en onsigbare dinge, van alles in die hemel en op die aarde; oor diep vertrou op die persoonlike sorg van “die hand wat my

31 Sien Webster 2003b. Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, sien Smit, *Neem, lees!* (2006), 234-237.

32 Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, sien Smit, *Neem, lees! Hoe ons die Bybel hoor en verstaan* (2006), 292-297.

33 Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, sien Smit, *Neem, lees! Hoe ons die Bybel hoor en verstaan* (2006), 253-259.

34 Sien byvoorbeeld die invloedryke besprekings van die betekenis van die Bybelse wet, onder andere as die skep en waarborg van “sekerheid aangaande verwagtinge” en hoe dié funksies (saam met barmhartigheid en waarheid) ook neerslag vind in die evangelie, byvoorbeeld by Welker 1986b; 1986a; 1993; 1994; 2002.

35 Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, sien Smit, *Neem, lees! Hoe ons die Bybel hoor en verstaan* (2006), 298-303.

36 Sien die invloedryke vroeë opstel van Barth met dié bekende verwysing, “Die neue Welt in der Bibel,” 1925, met 'n goeie bespreking van hierdie tema binne Barth se teologie by MacDonald 2000.

vashou"; dit is die waarheid van wetgewing uit verre tye en vreemde kulture; die waarheid van apokaliptiese visioene; die waarheid van antieke wysheid, van insig en spreuke uit vergange wêreldbeskouinge; die waarheid van 'n persoon, van die historiese figuur van Jesus, tegelyk diep ingebed in sy Joodse omgewing en tradisie én met so 'n vreemde eie geheimenis dat hy om die lewe gebring word, en dan opgewek word, en sy dissipels verseker dat hy voortaan aan die regterhand van die Vader sit, en met hulle is, al die dae tot aan die voleinding; die waarheid van teenwoordigheid en afwesigheid tegelyk³⁷

Om saam te vat. Hierdie soort werkwoorde kan maklik oneindig vermenigvuldig word. Die kerk en die geloof van die eeue beskryf hierdie soorte *speech-acts* van die Woord op ryke en komplekse maniere. Trouens, die geskiedenis ken ook allerlei maniere waarop die kerk hierdie veelvoud probeer saambundel en vereenvoudig het, byvoorbeeld deur te praat van die Woord as wet en evangelie, met sowel evangelie as wet weer baie kompleks verstaan, soos ook hulle onderlinge verhouding.³⁸

Die eintlike punt is egter alreeds duidelik. Die kerk beleef en bely dat die lewende God self deur die Woord aan hulle handel – en dáárom bely hulle dat dit vir hulle die Woord van God is.³⁹ Dit is die betroubare Woord waarin hulle “die lewende God en sy Christus” (Calvyn) self

37 Sien byvoorbeeld die verskeidenheid opstelle in Padgett & Keifert, *But is it all true? The Bible and the question of truth*, 2006.

38 Die verhaal van die lees van die Bybel deur die eeue is eintlik nog nie uitvoerig en in besonderhede in Afrikaans vertel nie. Wel beskikbaar is uitstekende detail-studies van verskeie van hierdie afsonderlike periodes – byvoorbeeld die lees van die Bybel in die vroeë kerk, die Middeleeue, die Hervorming en die Verligting. Oor die lees van die Bybel vandág het Suid-Afrikaners wel reusebydraes gelewer, wat allerweë erken en gebruik word. Sowel Nuwe Testamentici – figure soos Bernard Lategan, Andrie du Toit, Willem Vorster, Bernard Combrink, Daan Cloete, Welile Mazamisa, Pieter de Villiers, Bobby Loubser, Cilliers Breytenbach, Elna Mouton, Jeremy Punt, maar ook baie aktiewe lede van 'n volgende, jonger generasie vandag, te veel verteenwoordigers om eens op te noem – as Ou Testamentici – eweneens ouer figure soos Ferdinand Deist en Jimmie Loader, maar weer eens ook 'n hele jonger geslag soos Gerald West, Douglas Lawrie, Louis Jonker en talle meer – was oor jare diepgaande geïnteresseerd in hermeneutiese ontwikkelinge en het hoogs gerespekteerde werk daarvoor gelewer, ook soms in Afrikaans. Gerald West het byvoorbeeld saam met Musa Dube 'n omvattende studie gepubliseer oor die verhaal van die lees van die Bybel in Afrika, *The Bible in Africa* (2001). Ook sistematiese teoloë, soos byvoorbeeld Ernst Conradie, het reeds meermale oor die hermeneutiek geskryf, en trouens ook die neerslag van die Bybel in Afrika-teologie begin dokumenteer. Deist het ook die geskiedenis van hermeneutiek spesifiek in die NG Kerk uitvoerig gedokumenteer in sy *Ervaring, rede en metode in Skrifuitleg* (1994). Adrio König lê 'n soort persoonlike verantwoording af van hoe hy die Bybel sien en ook hoe hy dink die Bybel verantwoordelik en met vrug gelees behoort te word in die lig van al hierdie ontwikkelinge en standpunte in sy *Ek glo in die Bybel* (2003).

Van die bekendste name onder diegene wat wêreldwyd die verhaal van hermeneutiek vertel, van die konflikte in interpretasie en van die implikasies vir die lees van die Bybel bly Anthony Thiselton, oor etlike jare heen in talle boeke, tot by *Thiselton on hermeneutics*, 2006. Daarby kan egter ook name gevoeg word soos dié van Vanhoozer met byvoorbeeld sy 1994; 1998; 2002; 2003a; 2005; ook 2010. In Suid-Afrika is die bekendste inleidende werk waarskynlik steeds die bundel bydraes onder redaksie van Simon Maimela en Adrio König, *Initiation into theology* (1998, met bydraes van onder andere bekende geleerdes soos Denise Ackermann, Christina Landman, John S Mbiti, Mercy Oduyoye en Farid Esack). 'n Interessante studie is die werk van die gevierde historikus Jaroslav Pelikan, *Whose Bible is it? A history of the Scriptures through the ages* (2005), wat die verhaal al by die vorming van die onderskeie kanons gaan haal.

39 Bavinck meen selfs dat Calvyn en die gereformeerde teologie dikwels die klem té eensydig op die gesag alleen wou plaas en nié genoegsaam op die werking nie. “Dit testimonium Spiritus Sancti is door Calvijn en de Gereformeerde theologen al te eenzijdig betrokken op de autoriteit der Heilige Schrift ... Daardoor kwam dit testimonium op zichzelf te staan: het wordt van het geloofsleven losgemaakt en scheen eene buitengewone openbaring aan te duiden ... De Schrift leert echter gansch anders” (1967:563). Vir 'n goeie

hoor praat, kragtig en oorredend, betroubaar en troosryk, leidend en vermanend, lewend en voortdurend, op talle maniere.⁴⁰ Dit is daarom ook die Woord van God in die sin dat die Woord óór God handel, dat God Godself in en deur dié Woord bekend stel, dat hulle die Drie-enige God in hierdie Woord leer ken, dat die Woord uiteindelik self-openbaring is.⁴¹

In sy Bybelstudie-handleiding vir die Ekumeniese Beweging vertel Hans-Ruedi Weber 'n verhaal wat hierdie punt goed illustreer. "The small wood sculpture by an unknown Tanzanian artist which is reproduced on the cover of this book stands on my desk. As one looks at the tattooed face of this African woman, it seems that a big smile is just beginning to break through. Is she going to reveal a great secret which gives her deep joy? The artist has captured the climax of a story told in East Africa. A village woman used to walk around always carrying her Bible. 'Why always the Bible?' her neighbours asked teasingly. 'There seems to be so many other books you could read.' The woman knelt down, held the Bible high above her head and said, 'Yes, of course there are many books which I could read. But there is only one book which reads me'."⁴²

3. WOORD VAN DIE LEWE?

Dit is daarmee ook reeds duidelik dat hierdie Woord van God die Woord van die lewe is in verskillende betekenisse van die woord. Dit is die Woord van *die lewende God* self, die sprekende God, die kommunikatiewe God. Hierdie God is egter ook *die God van die lewe* en die God vir die lewe, die Een wat staan teenoor die afgode en die magte van die dood, die Een wat lewe wil, wat lewe skenk, wat dood en doodsheid oorwin, wat die goeie aan ons wil skenk. In daardie sin is die inhoud van die Woord 'n boodskap van lewe en oorfloedige blydskap. Dit is daarby ook 'n *lewende* woord, 'n werksame, self-werksame, aktiewe, kragtige, gesagvolle, dinamiese Woord, 'n woord wat ook dóén wat die lewende God met dié Woord wil bereik. Die bekende Nuwe Testamentikus NT Wright beklemtoon hierdie aspek deurlopend in sy onlangse studie oor die gesag van die Woord, en sluit af deur die bekende woorde uit Jesaja 55:10-13 volledig aan te haal, as beskrywing van die uiteinde of doel van hierdie lewende en kragtige Woord, 'n kosmiese en eskatologiese doel, niks minder as die nuwe skepping self nie ("So sal die woord wat uit my mond kom, ook wees: dit sal nie onverrigter sake na My terugkeer nie, maar dit sal doen wat Ek gedoen wil hê en tot stand bring waarvoor Ek dit gestuur het"). Dit is boonop ook lewendmakend, dit wek op, verkwik, oorwin die dood en doodsheid, bring nuwe lewe, herstel en genesing.⁴³

Daarby is dit egter ook *lewensoriënterend*. Dit word 'n woord vir ons alledaagse lewe, dit het te make met die lewe van die geloof, met ons opstaan in 'n nuwe lewe, met navolging, met gehoorsaamheid, met diens, met etiek, met moraal, kortom, met 'n lewe uit die Woord. Hoe gebeur dit, hoe doen die Woord dit, hoe gee die Woord hierdie oriëntasie aan die kerk? Neem byvoorbeeld die strewe na geregtigheid. Die Woord laat die lesers droom van 'n nuwe aarde waarop geregtigheid woon; dit roep hulle op tot 'n soort samelewing waarin die reg aanrol soos water en geregtigheid soos 'n standhoudende stroom; dit waarsku dat hulle kultus

uiteensetting van Bavinck in hierdie verband, sien ook Van der Kooi 2008.

40 Vir Calvyn se siening van hermeneutiek sien die oorsig by Smit, *Rhetoric and Ethic? A Reformed Perspective on the Politics of Reading the Bible*, 2007 (met literatuur), asook Balke 2003, De Greef 1998, McKim 2006 en die uitstekende Opitz 1994. Oor die breër reformatoriese siening van die Skrif, byvoorbeeld Lehmann 1946 en oor die bekende *sola scriptura*-beginsel, byvoorbeeld Welker 2003, ook Lane 1994.

41 Vir 'n preekmeditasie hieroor, sien Smit, *Neem, lees!* (2006), 237-242.

42 Hans-Ruedi Weber, *The Book that reads me*, 1995: ix.

43 NT Wright, *The last Word. Beyond the Bible wars to a new understanding of the authority of Scripture*, 2005.

nutteloos en vir die Here God aanstootlik is as hulle aan die een kant lustig lofliedere sing maar aan die ander kant hulle naaste verarm en veronreg. Die Woord vermaan gelowiges om self as persone geregtigheid te betrag; om nie die swakkes te versaak nie, om nie die hulpeloses te vergeet nie; om wese en weduwees in hulle moeilike omstandighede by te staan – alles sodat Calvyn die ganse Christelike lewe sou saamvat as 'n soeke na geregtigheid. Die Woord gee allerlei voorskrifte, eise, konkrete vermaninge, apostoliese raadgevinge en pleidooie, huistafels, saligsprekinge, profetiese oproepe, wysheidspreuke om gelowiges te lei en te help wanneer hulle voor praktiese besluite te staan kom. En tog – die Woord is nie 'n handboek met wettiese voorskrifte wat kasuïsties net nageslaan en toegepas kan word nie.⁴⁴ Met alles wat die Woord in die kerk wakker roep ten opsigte van 'n regverdige bestel, regverdige mense en regverdige optrede, rus die verantwoordelikheid steeds op die gelowiges om saam te soek en saam te onderskei wat God se welgevallige wil is onder elke konkrete omstandigheid. Die oriëntasie met die oog op die alledaagse lewe bestaan dus ook daarin dat die Woord iets aan die lesers dóén, maar nie daarin dat finale antwoorde en voorskrifte verskaf word nie. Wat van geregtigheid geld, geld van die volle lewe.⁴⁵ Die ontvanklike lees van en die gehoorsame luister na die Woord van

44 Oor die Protestantse siening van die rol van die Skrif in die Christelike lewe en in etiese oordeelsvorming is Willie Jonker se twee klein brosjures steeds gesaghebbend, te wete *Die Bybel en Gods wil vir ons lewe* (1975) en *Die Reformatoriese Sola Scriptura en die Skrifberoep in etiese vrae* (1980). Eweneens waardevol is die studie van die Gereformeerde Ekumeniese Raad, gepubliseer as *Hermeneutics and Ethics* (1992).

45 Oor die rol van die Bybel in die etiek is daar al baie geskryf en word daar steeds baie geskryf, sowel in akademiese literatuur as in meer populêre literatuur. Dit is begryplik, want dit raak talle mense baie direk. Dit is dan ook begryplik en te verwelkom dat talle van hierdie gesprekke en debatte tans selfs in die briewekolomme van dagblaie afspeel – alhoewel dit daar uiteraard nie baie diepsinnig of genuanseerd behandel kan word nie. Mense skryf hieroor vanuit verskillende gesigspunte. Bybelwetenskaplikes het die afgelope dekades meermale moeite gedoen om die etos, die moraal, die implisiete morele wêreld, morele oortuigings en morele beslissings in die afsonderlike Bybelboeke te beskryf. Mense soos Cilliers Breytenbach en Bernard Lategan was prominent in hierdie pogings, maar so ook talle ander – soos in Breytenbach & Lategan se *Geloof en opdrag* (1992) en Roberts en andere se *Teologie in konteks* (1991). Terselfdertyd het 'n nuwe geslag van etici begin om met groot insig en gesag oor die etiek na te dink en te skryf. Dit sluit figure soos Nico Koopman en Robert Vosloo in, met hulle *Die ligtheid van die lig* (2002), waarvoor hulle die Andrew Murray-prys vir teologiese literatuur ontvang het, maar ook talle ander skrywers. Besonder belangrik is diegene wat hierdie twee akademiese velde, naamlik Bybelwetenskap en etiek, op verantwoordelike manier metodologies met mekaar probeer verenig, soos byvoorbeeld Elna Mouton, in haar *Reading a new Testament document ethically* (2002). Verskeie groot internasionale uitgewers het onlangs begin om ensiklopedieë oor Skrif en etiek saam te stel, geskryf deur bekende geleerdes en kenners, soos Green et al 2011.

Internasionaal is daar 'n onoorstigtelike vloedgolf van literatuur hieroor beskikbaar. NT Wright se *The last Word. Beyond the Bible Wars to a new understanding of the authority of Scripture* (2005) is 'n kort maar oorwoë poging om orde te bring in die intense debatte hieroor in kerklike geleedere. Effê ouer, maar steeds nuttig, is byvoorbeeld bekende werke soos die Nuwe Testamentikus Richard Bauckham se bundel opgedra aan sy Suid-Afrikaanse vriende *The Bible in politics. How to read the Bible politically* (1989) en JS Siker se oorsigtelike *Scripture and Ethics* (1997). Besonder nuttig is die gereformeerde etikus Allen Verhey se omvattende *Remembering Jesus* (2002) en die teoloog Telford Work se belangrike sistematiese studie, *Living and active. Scripture in the economy of salvation* (2002). Spesifiek oor die vraag hoe die Skrif in etiese oordeelsvorming benut word, is daar werk soos Charles Cosgrove, *Appealing to Scripture in moral debate. Five hermeneutical rules* (2002), oor die vraag hoe die karakter van gelowige lesers gevorm word, is daar byvoorbeeld werk soos William P Brown se bekende versamelbundel *Character and Scripture. Moral formation, community and Biblical interpretation* (2002), oor die vraag na die rol van die Skrif spesifiek in Lutherse sosiale etiek is daar die gerespekteerde teoloog en ekumeniese figuur William Lazareth se *Christians in society. Luther, the Bible, and social ethics* (2001), en oor dieselfde vraag in gereformeerde etiek is daar die eweneens gerespekteerde John P Burgess se *Why*

God as Woord van orientëring ook vir die alledaagse lewe, vra inderdaad om verantwoordelike teologiese hermeneutiek – maar hoe geskied dit?

4. VERANTWOORDELIKE TEOLOGIESE HERMENEUTIEK?

Die eerste stap op weg na 'n verantwoordelike teologiese hermeneutiek,⁴⁶ is waarskynlik hierdie basiese erkenning dat agter die veelvoud van menslike woorde – agter die geweldige rykdom van uiteenlopende menslike geskrifte, wat die Bybel inderdaad is, 'n versameling, beter nog, 'n biblioteek van die mees uiteenlopende dokumente, oor 'n periode van naby aan 'n duisend jaar deur talle verskillende mense met uiteenlopende motiewe en agtergronde geskryf en byeengebring – daar inderdaad 'n *boodskap* skuil, 'n skopus, 'n reliëf, 'n samehang, 'n verhaal.⁴⁷ Vir die kerk is dit die verhaal van die lewende God, 'n verhaal met kontinuïteit én diskontinuïteit, alreeds in die Bybel self ook, 'n verhaal waarin die kerk, die hoorders en lesers oor die eeue, self ook ingetrek word, opgeneem word, waarvan hulle deel gemaak word.⁴⁸

Uit die herinnering aan die rykdom van *speech-acts* van die Woord is dit reeds duidelik dat dit onmoontlik is om hierdie boodskap op enige manier finaal saam te vat, afdoende weer te gee, om dit te reduseer of op te som. Dit kan nie herlei word tot dogmas of tot fundamentele waarhede nie, dit kan nie gesoek word in enkele gunsteling-tekste of selfs skrywers of boeke nie, eksegeese en kommentare kan nooit die betekenis so weergee dat die lees self oorbodig raak nie. Dit is altyd méér as enigiets wat die kerk daarvoor kan sê. *Die kerk sal altyd weer die Bybel self nodig hê* om hierdie Woord van God te hoor en hierdie werkinge te ervaar. Die kerk sal altyd weer moet lees en luister, hoor en gehoorsaam. Trouens, van die ergste debatte in die geskiedenis van die kerk was juis meningsverskille oor die vraag waarin die skopus van die Woord werklik bestaan, hoe onderdele van die Bybel in samehang met ander gelees behoort te word⁴⁹ – soos in die debatte rondom die Bybelse regverdiging van apartheid primêr vanuit enkele Ou Testamentiese motiewe en gedeeltes.

Die primêre lokus waar hierdie lees en luister plaasvind, is die gereelde *erediens* van die

Scripture matters (Louisville, 1998). 'n Interessante variant van hierdie soort literatuur wat tans weer gewild word, is dié wat sogenaamde spirituele lees of geestelike lees of lees met die oog op die vorming van spiritualiteit weer toeganklik wil maak, uiteraard veral as gereelde geestelike dissipline vir gewone gelowiges. Voorbeelde daarvan is byvoorbeeld te vinde in die baie bekende Nuwe Testamentikus Luke Timothy Johnson se *The living gospel* (2004) en in die baie gewilde geestelike skrywer Eugene Peterson se *Eat this Book* (2006).

46 Dis uiteraard onmoontlik om 'n verantwoorde hermeneutiek in die kort tydsbestek van 'n halwe openbare voorlesing te ontwikkel. Vir 'n effe meer breedvoerige argument, sien daarom Smit 2006. Vir insiggewende onlangse uiteensettings, ook Thiselton 2006; 2007, wat aansluit by die epogmakende invloed van onder andere Gadamer 2002 en Ricoeur 1995. Vir verdere studies oor hermeneutiek, benewens ander bronne wat reeds hier genoem word, ook byvoorbeeld Frei 1974 en 1986, Wood 1981 en 1987, Gunton & Hardy 1989, Braaten & Jenson 1995, Davis & Hays 2003, Ford & Stanton 2003, Kort 1996, Loughlin 1996, Lundin et al 1997, Green 2000.

47 Sien byvoorbeeld J. Pelikan, *Whose Bible is it? A history of the Bible through the ages*, 2005; asook die gedetailleerde en pragtig geïllustreerde studie oor die Bybel as boek, C de Hamel, *The Book. A history of the Bible*, 2001.

48 Sien byvoorbeeld die werk van B Childs 1983; 1986; 2004; en van C. R Seitz, soos *Figured out*, 2001; ook byvoorbeeld sy 1998; 2004.

49 Vir drie vroeëre, uiteenlopende pogings vanuit verskillende kontekste om tipologieë te probeer opstel wat op heuristiese wyse 'n oorsig kan gee van verskillende invloedryke maniere om die Skrif se boodskap teologies te bedink en te orden, sien byvoorbeeld David Kelsey, *The Uses of Scripture in Recent Theology*, 1975; later herdruk as *Proving Doctrine. The Uses of Scripture in Modern Theology*, 1999), Henk Vroom, *De Schrift alleen?*, 1979, en Smit 1991.

gemeente, en in besonder alhoewel hoegenaamd nie uitsluitlik nie, die diens van die Woord, die lees en aanhoor, en die uitleg en prediking van die Woord. In die erediens en in besonder tydens en deur die prediking – ten minste vir die gereformeerde opvatting (“die prediking van die Woord van God is die Woord van God”!) – ondermyn die Woord, bevry die Woord, stig die Woord gemeenskap, belig die Woord, roep die Woord, formeer en transformeer die Woord, bemoeidig en bekragtig die Woord – en doen die Woord nog vele meer. Hierdie gebeure en hierdie prosesse behoort tot die hart van die omgang met die Woord.

Vanuit die lees en die luister in die erediens gaan leef die gemeente egter in die wêreld, en word daar die werklike “uitleggers van die Woord.”⁵⁰ Die *gemeente* is 'n “interpreterende gemeenskap” deur al die gewone lewensaktiwiteite van die gelowiges, persoonlik en tesame.⁵¹ Soms geskied dit baie bewus – en dink groepe in die gemeente baie bewus saam oor die praktiese implikasies van die Woord – maar soms gebeur dit heel gewoon, alledaags en onbewus, dat die gemeente “lewende briewe” word, die evangelie geken en gelees deur alle mense. Met reg word deesdae in literatuur oor teologiese hermeneutiek veel klem gelê op die belang van die lewe, van dissipelskap, van daadwerklike uitleef van die Woord.⁵² Dit veronderstel uiteraard gemeentes waar lering ernstig geneem word, bestudering van die Woord en van alle kennis wat nodig is om die Woord self beter te hoor, maar tegelyk ook gemeentes waar gesprek ernstig geneem word, oor die implikasies van die Woord, gesprek tussen gelowiges wat die wêreld self leer lees, leer vertolk en dui, wat uitdagings raaksien, prioriteite afweeg, geleenthede onderskei, wat die samelewing ken, die gemeenskap, die mense en hulle behoeftes en nood.

Indien die gemeente vir die lees en luister van die Woord ook mekaar nodig het, sluit dit uiteraard in dat ook geluister sal word na en geleer sal word by die stemme van die eeue, van die moeders en die vaders, by die *tradisie*.⁵³ In die geloofsbelydenisse van die vroeë kerk en die belydenisskrifte van die Protestantse geloof, maar ook in die kommentare en teologiese dokumente, in die liedere en gebede, die meditasies en herinneringe, die briewe en getuïenisse, in die besluite van vergaderings en die biografieë van besondere figure, soos op talle ander plekke en maniere, vind die hoorders van vandag die neerslag van die lees en die luister van die eeue.⁵⁴ Hierdie stemme kan almal help om die boodskap beter te verstaan, om die skopus en die relif beter raak te sien, en verantwoordelike omgang met die Woord vandag sal gevolglik ook na die wysheid van hierdie skaar van getuies luister, en nie voorgee dat die Woord as ‘t ware vandag direk aan ons geskryf is nie. Vir die verantwoordelike omgang van die individuele Bybellesers in die kerke wat hierdie gebruik aanmoedig, is dit belangrik om rekenskap te gee van die vraag hoe verhinder kan word dat elke leser eenvoudig willekeurig eie betekenis in die teks inlees. Tradisie beteken egter oor-lewering in die dubbele sin van die woord, dit is die oorlewering van een geslag na die ander, waarsonder ons nie die Woord sou gehad het nie, maar dit is tegelyk oor-lewering in die sin van verraad, prysgee en verloën. Deel van hierdie omgang met die tradisie

50 Sien byvoorbeeld “The congregation as hermeneutic of the gospel” in Lesslie Newbigin, *The gospel in a pluralist society*, 1989.

51 Vir 'n gesaghebbende en doelbewus skerp polemiese uiteensetting van hierdie perspektief, sien die omstrede etikus Stanley Hauerwas 1993. Vir ander studies wat die rol van die gemeente en gemeenskap in die leesproses beklemtoon, sien byvoorbeeld Hays 1990 en 2002, Jeanron 1989, asook Lindbeck 1989a, 1989b, 2002.

52 Sien byvoorbeeld net die talle werke van Stephen Fowl (soos 1997; 1998) en Fowl saam met Gregory Jones (1991); ook T Work, *Living and active. Scripture in the economy of salvation*, 2002.

53 Vir 'n verhelderende argument oor hoe so 'n historiese proses van dinamiese tradisie en kontekstuele herinterpretasies reeds in die Bybelse geskrifte self ook afgespeel het, sien die intrede van Louis Jonker 2011.

54 Vir die verband tussen Skrif en tradisie, veral die geloofsbelydenisse en die belydenisskrifte, sien byvoorbeeld die gesaghebbende studie van Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo* 2003, veral 123-157.

moet daarom ook die kritiese kennis en die onderskeidingsvermoë wees om te kan sien hoe die kerk die Woord van God misbruik het en steeds misbruik om onreg te pleeg, kwaad te bevorder en die evangelie te verraai.

Vir die gereformeerde perspektief – maar deesdae toenemend vir baie ander tradisies – is van die mees belangrike kontroles die nodige kennis, veral die nodige taalkundige, literêre, historiese en retoriese kennis aangaande die Bybel wat veral oor die afgelope jare deur wetenskaplike bestudering van hierdie aspekte van die Bybelse teks gegroei het. Lesers wat verantwoordelik wil lees moet eenvoudig – volgens hierdie siening – die nodige respek hê vir die betekenis van die taal wat gebruik word, vir die literêre genre van die teks, vir die historiese omstandighede, vir die redaksie-prosesse, vir die vermoedelik retoriese aanleiding, en eenvoudig vir talle meer. Hierdie soort *wetenskaplike kennis* alleen waarborg nog nie die geestelike lees en hoor van die Woord as Woord van God nie, maar ten minste vir baie mense vandag – alhoewel sekerlik nie vir almal nie – staan dit vas dat die verantwoordlike geestelike lees en hoor van die Woord ook nie sonder hierdie soort kennis kan en behoort te gebeur nie. Vandaar word die vraag belangrik hoe en waar hoorders en lesers hierdie noodsaaklike leesvaardighede kan bekom, en hoe die kerk daarin help.

Saam met die stemme van die vaders en die moeders is ook die stemme van die susters en die broers van groot belang, die luister na die *ekumeniese kerk* en na wat hulle bely aangaande wat die Woord aan hulle doen. Oor die afgelope vyftig jaar is daar indringend hieroor nagedink binne die Ekumeniese Beweging.⁵⁵ Die waarheid is dat dit nie 'n eenvoudige saak is nie. Om te sê – soos wat vandag dikwels gedoen word – dat ons ook na “die ander” moet luister, is binne die daadwerklike praktyke van die ekumene ingewikkelder as wat baie gelowiges mag dink. Alhoewel almal bely dat hulle uit die Woord van God leef, gaan verskillende kerklike tradisies met werklike uiteenlopende leesstrategieë en -gebruike met die Bybel om. In 'n hele reeks van konsultasies is stappie vir stappie aan gesamentlike insigte en oortuigings gewerk, maar die ekumene erken steeds dat hulle nog maar aan die begin van die weg na 'n verantwoordelike ekumenies-teologiese hermeneutiese praktyk is. In die belangrike samevattende studie *A treasure in earthen vessels* (1998) word veral gewys op die ingrypende invloed van uiteenlopende lewenskontekste en uiteenlopende kulturele agtergronde op ons luister na die Woord, nadat die Ekumeniese Beweging oor etlike dekades heen veel meer aandag gegee het aan die invloed van ons uiteenlopende geloofstradisies en spiritualiteitsvorme. Tesame is hierdie die drie groot faktore wat 'n gemeenskaplike lees van die Woord bemoeilik, en oor jare heen het dit reeds duidelik geword dat blote teologiese standpunte en teorieë, soos ook bloot wetenskaplike benaderings en metodologiese keuses nie hierdie diepe konflikte kan oplos nie.⁵⁶

In die luister na mekaar en na die ander behoort 'n heel besondere plek gegee te word aan diegene wat in die verlede gewoonlik daarvan *uitgesluit was* of dalk steeds is om in die kerk te kon sê wat die Woord van God aan hulle doen en wat hulle daarin hoor en sien. Dikwels is

55 Sien byvoorbeeld die oorsig in Smit, *Ecumenical hermeneutics? Historical benchmarks and current challenges of a concept*, 2003.

56 Oor die lees van die Bybel in die ekumene is daar ongelukkig nog relatief min geskryf, sowel in Suid-Afrika as in die wêreldkerk. Bouteneff & Heller (eds.), *Interpreting together* (2001) bied dalk nog steeds die beste inligting. Dis wel opvallend hoe hierdie amptelike kerklike nadenke oor die verstaan van die Bybel in die ekumene ongelukkig volkome geïgnoreer word deur akademici wat oor Bybelse hermeneutiek skryf. Dit is 'n denkvakuum wat hopelik in die toekoms gevul sal word deur verantwoordelike akademiese werk, ook deur Suid-Afrikaanse denkers. Die saamlees van die Bybel tussen gelowiges en kerke is immers van die allergrootste belang, juis in die globaliserende wêreld van vandag. Hierdie opstelle van hulle was gelewer tydens die skryf van *A Treasure in Earthen Vessels* 1998, wat weer 'n vervolg was van die veel vroeëre *The Bible. Its Authority and Interpretation in the Ecumenical Movement* 1980.

hulle ook die beste in staat om ons te help om onself beter te herken. Hulle mag dalk spanning opmerk tussen wat ons bely (dat die Woord van God vir ons is) en wat ons doen en ultiem wat vir onself verborge was en bly.⁵⁷ Vir die gereformeerde tradisie is dit byvoorbeeld van deurslaggewende belang om te erken dat ons eie lees van die Bybel nooit afgehandel is of sal kan wees nie, maar dat nuwe omstandighede en uitdagings ons altyd sal uitdaag om opnuut te luister – presies omdat die Woord veel ryker is en veel meer wonderbaar as wat ons self reeds daarin hoor. Presies in hierdie opsig kan die getuïenisse, die ervarings en die insigte van die uitgeslotenes ons dalk verder help.⁵⁸

In die luister na mekaar in 'n poging om te hoor wat die Woord aan, in en deur die gemeente wil doen, is *nadenke* onontbeerlik. Bybelse etiek, selfs al sou dit bestaan – maar wat inderwaarheid nie bestaan nie, juis omdat die inhoud van die Bybel reeds self so ryk en geskakeerd en kompleks is – sou nog nie self Christelike etiek wees nie. Die kerk word geroep om die Bybelse getuïenisse verder te deurdink, en nie bloot teksgedeeltes willekeurig uit te kies en aan te haal as finale gesag nie. Wat sê die Bybel – byvoorbeeld – oor die kerk? Oor Christus? Oor die Gees? Oor die skepping? Oor mens-wees? Oor die toekoms? Oor seksualiteit? Oor die huwelik? Wat sê die Bybel oor enigiets is altyd 'n gevaarlike vraag en sonder uitsondering onmoontlik om sonder meer te beantwoord, eenvoudig omdat die Bybel nie van so 'n aard is dat dit klinkklare antwoorde op enigiets bied, wat net nageslaan en aangehaal kan word nie. Die vraag is eerder wat die gemeente, die kerk, die gelowiges sáám sê of dink, oor enige saak, in die lig van die veelvuldige en ryke Bybelse getuïenisse. Dit verg van die kerk dat saamgedink en saamgepraat sal word, dat saam verder gedink sal word en gesoek sal word om waarlik die hoogte en breedte en diepte en lengte van die rykdomme van die liefde van Christus te ken. Die behoefte om die Bybel te wil lees en gebruik as 'n opslagplek van tekste wat as direkte antwoord op ons vrae kan dien, is 'n relatief onlangse ontwikkeling binne die kerk, en misleidend.⁵⁹ Die weiering om uit te lê, na te dink, saam te praat, te worstel om die waarheid, omdat beweer word dat die Bybelse waarheid direk gegee is en nie uitleg en *nadenke* benodig is, is 'n versoeking van die moderne tydsges, en vreemd aan die kerk van die eeue en vreemd aan die eie aard van die Woord van God en die *speech-acts* waardeur dié Woord met ons handel.⁶⁰

57 Dit was reeds een van die sleutelmotiewe in die invloedryke werk van Fowl en Jones, *Reading in Communion* (1991).

58 Vanweë die politieke geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika en veral die sentrale rol van die Bybel en die lees van die Bybel in dié geskiedenis was talle Suid-Afrikaners intens geïnteresseerd in vroeë rondom kontekstualiteit. Temas soos kontekstuele hermeneutiek en die rol van die lesers, die resepsie van die Bybel in spesifieke lesersgroepe, en talle verwante teoretiese sake, is uitvoerig en indringend in Suid-Afrikaanse kringe bespreek. 'n Mens sou met reg kon sê dat Suid-Afrikaners hiervoor 'n internasionale reputasie opgebou het. Geleerdes soos Bernard Lategan, Gerald West, Itumeleng Mosala, maar werklik ook baie ander, het hierdie wêreldwyd bekend geraak. 'n Besondere vorm van kontekstuele lees, wat ook in Suid-Afrikaanse akademiese geleerde gewild geraak het, is dié van empiriese analises van werklike lesersgroepe. Ook hierin het Gerald West oor jare 'n leidende rol gespeel, maar ook Louis Jonker is, byvoorbeeld saam met kollegas in Nederland soos Hans de Wit (sien sy 2008), asook saam met doktorsale studente, waar onder Charlene van der Walt, by sulke navorsing betrokke.

59 Vir debatte oor die siening, lees, uitleg en gebruik van die Bybel in evangelikale asook fundamentalistiese kringe, sien byvoorbeeld Boone 1989 se beskrywing, asook die teologiese gesprekke in Bacote et al 2004, waar onder Grenz (2004) se bydrae.

60 Van besondere belang is die nuwere en kreatiewe werk van allerlei Bybelwetenskaplikes, byvoorbeeld van die Ou Testamentikus Christopher Seitz, wat in navolging van sy leermeester Brevard Childs die Nuwe Testament en die leer van die kerk wil bydink by die lees van die Ou Testament as kanon, soos onder andere in sy versamelde opstelle *Word without end* (1998), in *Figured out* (2001) en in sy uitvoerige bydrae oor die kanoniese benadering en teologiese interpretasie in *Canon and Biblical interpretation* (2007). Vir Childs self is sy uitleg van Jesaja 'n goeie voorbeeld van sy gerypte worsteling

Uiteindelik is 'n houding van *gebed* noodsaaklik, die afhanklike en ootmoedige aanroep van die Heilige Gees van hierdie God, om die kerk te lei in die waarheid, ons van dwaling te bewaar, en die Woord met ons te laat praat. In sy onlangse studie *Holy Scripture. A dogmatic sketch* (2003) – wat nie soseer handel oor hoe om die Woord te lees nie, maar meer dogmaties oor die ontologiese aard van die Skrifte self – beskryf die bekende dogmatikus John Webster die houding van ootmoed, afwagting en onderwerping wat pas by die lees van die Woord met verwysing na Calvin en Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In die erediens en veral in die prediking het hierdie houding van afwagting en oorgawe aan die teenwoordigheid van die lewende God 'n belangrike plek, maar ook in ons wetenskaplike arbeid, in ons omgang met die tradisie, in ons luister na mekaar, in ons self-kritiese openheid vir die ander en die gemarginaliseerdes. Die hoor van Gods Woord bly 'n geestelike aangeleentheid.⁶¹

Om terug te skou en saam te vat, hoe gaan ons op weg na 'n verantwoorde teologiese hermeneutiek? 'n Verantwoordelike teologiese hermeneutiek begin met die belydenis van die kerk van die eeue en die ekumene dat daar 'n boodskap, 'n samehang, 'n skopus agter die oneindige veelheid van dokumente en stemme in die Bybel skuil. Dit is 'n samehang wat net bely kan word, en nie ooit afdoende verwoord kan word nie.⁶² Niemand beskik daaroor nie, niemand kan dit saamvat en finaal opsom nie. Dit is 'n samehang wat daarmee te make het dat die lewende God, die Drie-enige Vader, Seun en Gees deur hierdie versameling van geskrifte betuig word, te kenne gegee word. Daarom is daar kontinuïteit sowel as diskontinuïteit in die Bybel te vinde, en daarvoor kan hoorders, lesers en uitleggers met mekaar in gesprek en in debat gaan. Dié gesprek sal nooit finaal afgehandel wees nie, en geen siening van die samehange ooit die laaste woord nie. Daar is wel 'n groeiende erfenis van gemeenskaplike oortuigings binne die ekumeniese en katolieke kerk hieroor, soos byvoorbeeld te vinde in die credo's van die vroeë kerk en in hulle resepsie deur die eeue, en die Ekumeniese Beweging probeer hierdie “hermeneutics of coherence” en hierdie “integral unity” dien, bevorder en verwoord, maar selfs hierdie erfenis bly ondergeskik aan die ryke getuïenisse van die Bybel self. Die kerk sien homself as 'n gemeenskap-van-die-Boek, as 'n gemeenskap wat sy identiteit en sy roeping daaraan ontleen dat hy deur die

met die vraag hoe om Ou Testamentiese boeke teologies te lees, *The struggle to understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture*, 2004; sien ook die bundel met opstelle destyds opgedra aan hom, *Theological exegesis*, 1998). Die gewese Suid-Afrikaner Craig Bartholomew is saam met ander betrokke in 'n langtermyn-projek oor teologiese hermeneutiek wat reeds tot talle omvattende bundels gelei het, waar onder byvoorbeeld *Renewing Biblical interpretation* (2000), *After Pentecost* (2001), *A royal priesthood?* (2002), *Behind the text* (2003), *Out of Egypt* (2004), *Drama of Scripture* (2004), *Reading Luke* (2005), asook juis hierdie *Canon and Biblical Interpretation* saam met Seitz (2007). Hierdie versameling bevat vandag soms uitstekende bydraes van die leidende denkers oor die Bybelse hermeneutiek. Soortgelyke bundels is te vinde in Joel Green & Max Turner se versameling *Between two horizons* (2000), wat Bybelwetenskaplikes en sistematiese teoloë met mekaar in gesprek bring. Die Lutherse sistematiese teoloog Pat Keifert wat ook in Suid-Afrika bekend is vir sy betrokkenheid by gemeentes is saam verantwoordelik vir 'n reeks studies oor die lees van die Bybel deur gewone lidmate en in groepe, onder andere ook as vormende dissipline in plaaslike gemeentes, waar onder *The ending of Mark and the ends of God* (2005) en *But is it true?* (2006). Van die belangrikste dogmatiese besinning oor die Skrif en oor teologiese lees is die werk van die reeds vermelde Barth-kenner John Webster, soos byvoorbeeld sy monografie *Holy Scripture* (2003) en sy bundels opstelle *Word and church* (2001) en *Confessing God* (2005). Vir Suid-Afrikaanse gelowiges en kerke is hierdie ontwikkelende en insigte uiteraard van die allergrootste belang, al word daar tans nog weinig aan gedoen. 'n Mens sou dalk Klaus Nürnberger se *Theology of the Biblical witness* (2002) as 'n poging tot teologiese hermeneutiek kon beskou, maar hy vertrek eintlik steeds van ander uitgangspunte as wat meesal in hierdie literatuur nagestreef word.

61 Sien ook sy opstelle in Webster 2001 en 2005, asook spesifiek oor hierdie tema Webster 1998b en 2004.

62 Sien hiervoor die gesaghebbende studie van H W (Hennie) Rossouw oor die belydenis aangaande die sogenaamde duidelikheid van die Skrif, *Klaarheid en Interpretasie* (1963).

lewende God self geroep word en deel gemaak word van hierdie ryke verhaal van die Woord, maar ook as gemeenskap-van-die-Boek bly die kerk self steeds ondergeskik aan en afhanklik van die kragtige werking van hierdie Woord.

Die kerk en die Christelike geloof – en dit is dalk 'n tweede tree op die weg – leef dus daarvan dat hierdie Woord van God voortdurend en telkens iets aan en in en deur die kerk doen. 'n Ryke veelvoud van werkwoorde beskryf 'n onuitputlike reeks van sulke *speech-acts* van die lewende Woord – breed saamgevat troos, red, bevry, vergewe en verbly die beloftes van die evangelie die kerk en skep, herskep, beveilig, bewaar, heilig, vermaan en lei die geldigheid van die wet die kerk. Maar juis die samehang tussen evangelie en wet is van die allergrootste belang, en dié Woord reik daarby ook tot die ganse kosmos en die toekoms. Die punt is dat die verantwoorde lees van die Woord bestaan in lees en luister. 'n Mens sou dalk kon sê dat dit geestelik van aard is, en nie in enige vreemde vorm van heers oor die Bybel, enige vreemde vorm van aanhaal en gebruik van die Bybel, of enige vorm van vreemde beroep op die Bybel nie. Twee van die gruwelike maar wyd verbreide misbruik van die Bybel wat in die kerk ontstaan het, skryf NT Wright, het plaasgevind toe die kerk vergeet het dat die Woord van God die groot verhaal van die koninkryk vertel en die kerk wil help om sy eie plek binne dié verhaal te ontdek. “The notion of authority ... became gradually flattened out into two things in particular. First, scripture came to be regarded as a ‘court of appeal,’ the source-book or rule-book from which doctrine and ethics might be deduced and against which innovations were to be judged. Second, scripture was used for *lectio divina*, the practice in which individual readers could hear God speaking to them personally, nourishing their own spirituality and devotion.”⁶³ Albei ontwikkelinge is maklik misleidend, want albei het te make met wat ons met die Bybel doen. Ons gebruik die Bybel as bewysplaas vir ons sieninge, en ons gebruik die Bybel as inspirasie vir ons eie geestelike gedagtes. Meer verantwoordelik sou wees dat die Woord óns lees, dat die Woord aan óns doen wat die Woord wil doen.⁶⁴

Ten einde dít toe te laat, hang baie van ons houding en verwagting af. Dit verg egter meer as net 'n gesindheid, naamlik ook die onderlinge gesprek in die gemeente oor wat gelees en gehoor is, en die praktiese implikasies daarvan; die bestudering, op talryke maniere, van die geskiedenis en die tradisie, sowel om daaruit te haal wat goed is as om te leer uit dwaling en verloëning; die deeglike bestudering van alle moontlike aspekte van die dokumente wat gelees word, en die stel en ondersoek van literêre, historiese en retoriese vrae; die bereidheid om te luister na die ekumeniese kerk, met al die vreemdheid van ander tradisies, ander spiritualiteite, ander lewenskontekste en ander kulture; die volhardende nadenke oor en worsteling met die Woord en al hierdie kennis en stemme, van oraloor, ten einde ons eie weg te vind in die lewe, vandag; en uiteindelik die biddende wag op die Heilige Gees om die kerk in die waarheid te lei, nie langs ander weë nie, maar juis langs hierdie weë.

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63 Wright 2005: 64-65.

64 Sien byvoorbeeld Gunton 1990 (asook meer uitvoerig 1995; 2002) en Fiorenza 1990.

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TREFWOORDE

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Nie-egte vrae in 1 Korintiërs 9

ABSTRACT

Non-real questions in 1 Corinthians 9

In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul is defending his apostleship in a forceful way. In this process he uses a number of non-real questions, which commentators usually describe as rhetorical questions. The purpose of this article is to analyse and describe these questions more clearly using a model, based on speech act theory. The model distinguishes between real and non-real questions, the latter being divided into six main and a few sub-categories of non-real questions. Four of these categories are identified in 1 Corinthians 9.

The conclusion reached is that the denominator “rhetorical question” is an oversimplification that does not do justice to the various types of questions used in the chapter. By distinguishing and describing the types of questions within a scientific framework, more light is shed on the way in which Paul uses them to convince his audience of his apostleship. The article also contributes to the translation and exegesis of this important chapter in the letter.

1. INLEIDING

Hoewel vraagvorme in die meeste Griekse grammatikas bespreek word, is hierdie vraagvorme tot onlangs nog nie sistematies ondersoek en beskryf in terme van ’n moderne taalteoretiese raamwerk nie. In aansluiting hierby word alle vrae in die Nuwe Testament deur kommentatore gewoonweg as retoriese vrae beskou, sonder om tussen die soorte vrae te onderskei of die vrae se funksies binne ’n teoretiese raamwerk te probeer verstaan.

Die doel van die artikel is om bogenoemde tekorte aan te spreek deur gebruik te maak van ’n model gebaseer op die taalhandelingsteorie. In wat volg, word begin met ’n illustrasie van die probleem deur ’n kort bespreking van die wyse waarop vrae in tradisionele grammatikas en kommentare hanteer word, waarna die voorgestelde model beskryf en geëvalueer word. Die model word vervolgens toegepas op 1 Korintiërs 9 om aan te toon hoe Paulus verskillende soorte vrae gebruik in die verdediging van sy apostelskap. So word die funksies van die vrae wetenskaplik bepaal en word aangetoon hoe die vrae wat Paulus gebruik bydra om die ontvangers van sy boodskap te oorreed.

2. VRAE IN TRADISIONELE GRAMMATIKAS EN KOMMENTARE

’n Tipiese voorbeeld van die wyse waarop Griekse grammatikas vrae bespreek, is die werke van Moulton en Turner. In sy eerste volume het Moulton (1908:170-194) dit veral oor die onderskeiding tussen *mē/mēti* en *ou* vrae, terwyl Turner (1963:48-50; 282-283 en 330-337) onderskei tussen direkte en indirekte vrae en aandag gee aan formele sake soos die verwarring

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tussen relatiewe en vraende voornaamwoorde, die beraadslagende vraag, partikels wat vraagvorme inlei en die gebruik van direkte vraende voornaamwoorde.

Soortgelyke sake is aan die orde in die meeste ander grammatikas, byvoorbeeld die van Robertsen (1919:1043-1046; 1175-1177), Chamberlain (1957:204-210), Goetchius (1965:228-233), Argyle (1965:20, 105-106) en Nunn (1973:82, 127). Burton (1955:76-78) onderskei tussen "questions of fact and questions of deliberation", en tussen "interrogative or real questions and rhetorical questions", terwyl die grammatika van Blass, Debrunner en Funk (1967:272) vier tipes vrae onderskei: direkte vrae, indirekte vrae, retoriese vrae en dubbele vrae. Veral laasgenoemde twee grammatikas is vir die doel van hierdie artikel belangrik en daar word later na hulle onderskeidinge teruggekom.

In die eerste Afrikaanse grammatika van die Griekse Nuwe Testament (NT), getitel *Grieks met begrip*, word vraagsinne behandel onder die hoofde informatiewe vrae, nie-informatiewe of retoriese vrae, vraagsinne ingelei deur vraende voornaamwoorde en indirekte vrae (Conradie *et. al.* 1995:415-420). Die onderskeiding tussen informatiewe en nie-informatiewe of retoriese vrae bevat 'n interessante bespreking van vrae waarop die antwoord "ja" en dié waarop die antwoord "nee" verwag word, met bruikbare voorstelle vir die vertaling daarvan in Afrikaans.

Standaard kommentare op 1 Korintiërs soos dié van Conzelmann (1975), Fee (1988) en Thiselton (2000) beskou alle vrae as retoriese vrae. Conzelmann bespreek hierdie vrae as deel van Paulus se diatribe/dialogiese styl, Fee gee veral aandag aan die funksies van vrae om 'n argument te begin of af te sluit, terwyl Thiselton die vertaling van *mē/ou* vrae en die gevoelswaarde van retoriese vrae uitlig. Bratcher (1982) fokus op vertaling en is ten gunste van die herskryf van die meeste retoriese vrae in 1 Korintiërs 9 as stellings – iets wat oorweging verdien en ook hieronder bespreek word.

Saamgevat: Tradisionele grammatikas onderskei basies tussen informatiewe en nie-informatiewe vrae (met enkele opmerkings oor die funksies van laasgenoemde), terwyl kommentare hoofsaaklik die retoriese vraag ken en sporadiese opmerkings daarvoor maak.

Hiermee is die verskillende vraagvorme met hulle funksies egter nie uitgeput of aan die hand van 'n teoretiese raamwerk sistematies ondersoek nie. In wat volg word 'n poging aangewend om dit te doen aan die hand van die vrae in 1 Korintiërs 9. In die proses word verwys na die interpretasie en vertaling van vrae deur kommentatore en vertalers en word (waar nodig) aanbevelings gemaak.

3. DIE TAALHANDELINGSTEORIE AS RAAMWERK VIR DIE ONDERSKEIDING VAN VERSKILLENDE SOORTE VRAE

In sy studie van nie-egte vrae in die Romeinebrief het Verster (1999:1) ook gevind dat kommentatore die meeste vrae in die brief as retoriese vrae beskou. Hierdie bevinding het daartoe gelei dat hy begin vra het na 'n teorie wat fyner onderskeiding moontlik maak. Die doel van sy studie was om 'n model uit relevante literatuur oor die taalhandelingssteorie af te lei, nie-egte vrae aan die hand daarvan in te deel, die model in die Romeinebrief te toets, en dit dan – indien nodig – aan te pas (1999:1-2).

Verster se ondersoek begin met die grondslae van die taalhandelingssteorie (1999:3-28). Hierna bied hy 'n deeglike bespreking van nie-egte vrae as taalhandelinge (1999:29-54), waarna hy eers egte en nie-egte vrae van mekaar onderskei en dan 'n aantal kategorieë nie-egte vrae identifiseer. By egte vrae maak die mededeler (M) gebruik van die vraagvorm om inligting te bekom, terwyl nie-egte vrae nie inligting of 'n antwoord van die ontvanger (O) verlang nie. Elke kategorie nie-egte vrae is voorsien van 'n aantal kriteria op grond waarvan dit van die ander onderskei kan word (1999:55).

Die kategorieë nie-egte vrae is die volgende (1999:56-68):

- Vrae wat aksie verlang, waaronder direktiewe, wat die vraagvorm gebruik vir opdragte, versoeke en uitnodigings.
- Vrae wat stellings maak, waar die vraagvorm as 'n gewone stelling herskryf kan word – gewoonlik nie met absolute sekerheid nie; retoriese vrae, wat stellings met besondere intensiteit maak; en meta-kommunikatiewe retoriese interrogetiewe, waar M gevolgtrekkings maak oor 'n aksie wat deur O geneem is.
- Leë vraagstellings, waar M reageer op 'n taalhandeling van O en 'n negatiewe stelling maak, waardeur die gesprek onderbreek word.
- Vrae wat emosie oordra, waaronder jubelvrae en lamentsies. Ook hier word geen inligting verlang nie, maar word die vraagvorm gebruik om 'n bepaalde emosie te versterk of uit te druk. Dit is vraagvorme waar 'n eksterne O afwesig kan wees.
- Monologiese selfgerigte vrae, wat van ander nie-egte vrae daarin onderskei word dat hulle besinnend van aard is en gewoonlik aan M self (“ek” of “ons”) gerig is. Hulle kan primêr emosioneel of primêr rasioneel wees.
- Rasioneel-argumentatiewe vrae, waaronder vraagappêlle, wat nie 'n reaksie van O verwag nie, maar sy/haar aandag wil kry vir 'n nuwe tema of 'n stelling wat M self wil maak; en ironiese retoriese interrogetiewe, waar die betekenis van die nie-egte vraag nie lê in die oppervlak nie, maar in die teenoorgestelde van wat deur die vraag geïmpliseer word. Die vraag moet uit die konteks verstaan word as 'n ironiese toespeeling. Vraagappêlle en ironiese vrae dien albei om 'n argument te ontwikkel – daarom is hulle onder hierdie hoofkategorie ingedeel.

Om bogenoemde soorte vrae te onderskei, is die onmiddellike konteks waarin hulle voorkom, maar veral die konteks van die brief as geheel, van deurslaggewende belang. In die taalhandelingsteorie word na laasgenoemde verwys as Gedeelde Kontekstuele Kennis (GKK), verwysend na kennis van sosiale sisteme, tradisionele gewoontes, spesifieke gespreksituasies en veral die verhouding tussen spreker en hoorder (Verster 1999:70-71). Die vier aspekte word gewoonlik toegelig deur 'n bespreking van die skrywer, lesers, inhoud en doel van 'n brief; dus alles wat nodig is om die soorte vrae in die brief korrek van mekaar te onderskei.

Met bogenoemde voorstel het Verster dit moontlik gemaak om nie-egte vrae in die NT te bestudeer in die lig van onderskeidinge eie aan 'n erkende taalteorie. Die hoof- en subkategorieë wat hy onderskei, kan egter vereenvoudig word. Naas die ses hoofkategorieë hierbo gelys, onderskei hy ook 'n sewende een, te wete temaversterkers. Hierdie kategorie word nie in die artikel verreken nie, omdat temaversterkers (soos vraagappêlle) aandag vra vir 'n nuwe tema of stelling wat M wil maak. Die vrae kan dus as vraagappêlle geklassifiseer word. Verder kan die term “retories” geskrap word in die beskrywing van die twee subkategorieë meta-kommunikatiewe retoriese interrogetiewe en ironiese retoriese interrogetiewe, omdat daar reeds 'n subkategorie retoriese vrae is. Verder kan die hoofkategorie van vrae wat emosie oordra verdeel word in positiewe emosies (soos dankbaarheid, blydskap, ens.) en negatiewe emosies (soos afsku, teleurstelling en verontwaardiging), omdat die terme jubelvrae en lamentsies nie oorkoepelend genoeg is nie. Origens is dit 'n bruikbare model, wat met vrug in die studie van vrae in Paulus se briewe gebruik kan word.

Vervolgens word bogenoemde model gebruik om die verskillende soorte vrae in 1 Korintiërs 9 te identifiseer en hulle funksies binne konteks te bepaal.

4. NIE-EGTE VRAE EN HULLE FUNKSIES IN 1 KORINTIËRS 9

4.1 Inleiding

Die volgende inligting oor die GKK tussen Paulus en die Korintiërs is belangrik vir 'n bespreking van die soorte nie-egte vrae in 1 Korintiërs 9:

Daar was aanvanklik 'n goeie verhouding tussen die twee partye, soos blyk uit die feit dat Paulus die gemeente in Korinte gestig het (Hand 18). Die verhouding is versterk deur berigte wat hy gereeld van die gemeente ontvang het. In die brief reageer hy juis op ván die inligting wat hom bereik het. Die eerste handel oor twiste in die gemeente, waaroor “die mense van Chloë” hom ingelig het (1:11). Hierdie mense was in diens van 'n invloedryke sakevrou in Efese en het Korinte gereeld op hulle reise besoek, waar hulle saam met die Korintiërs aanbid het (Thiselton 2000:32). Die twiste was hoofsaaklik intern van aard en het uitgeloop op partyskappe tussen die gemeentede onderling. Paulus se reaksie op die twiste is die sentrale tema in die eerste ses hoofstukke van die brief.

Die verhouding tussen Paulus en die Korintiërs is verder versterk deur 'n brief wat hulle aan hom geskryf het (7:1). In die brief vra hulle sy leiding oor 'n aantal – hoofsaaklik etiese – kwessies. Sekere Christene in Korinte het ook gevra vir 'n besoek van Apollos, maar hy wou nie op daardie stadium gaan nie (16:12). Paulus het aangebied om self te gaan (4:19, 21), maar aangesien sy planne onseker was, het hy vir Timoteus in sy plek gestuur (4:17; 16:10). Die besoek van Stefanos, Fortunatus en Agaïkus, waarna in 16:17-18 verwys word, dui ook op die noue sosiale verbintenis tussen Paulus en die gelowiges in Korinte.

Toe die brief geskryf is, het die verhouding tussen Paulus en die Korintiërs egter begin versleg. Daar het 'n anti-Paulus gevoel in die gemeente ontstaan, wat aangestig is deur sekere invloedryke leiers en wat die hele gemeente beïnvloed het. Benewens die interne twiste tussen faksies binne die gemeente – waarskynlik op sosiologiese gronde – was daar dus ook die groter probleem van die verdeling van die gemeente as geheel aan die een kant en Paulus as hulle stigter aan die ander kant (Fee 1988:8). Vir Paulus het hierdie groter konflik 'n krisis ingehou: nie alleen vir sy apostoliese gesag nie, maar ook vir die evangelie wat hy verkondig. Die kern van die verskil was wat dit beteken om Geesvervuld of spiritueel (*pneumatikos*) te wees en die belangrikste kriterium hiervan was die spreek in tale. Omdat Paulus (volgens hulle) nie *pneumatikos* was nie, het hulle sy gesag oor hulle begin bevraagteken en hulleself begin verhef – iets wat radikaal ingedruis het teen Paulus se oortuigings en sy evangelie. Gevolglik het hy sy apostoliese gesag verdedig, soos o.a. blyk uit sy bestraffings in hoofstukke 5–6 (Thiselton 2000:33-36; Grosheide 1957:26-31).

Seker die sterkste verdediging van sy gesag is te vind in hoofstuk 9, wat deel vorm van sy antwoord op die brief wat hulle aan hom geskryf het (7:1). In die hoofstuk verdedig hy homself “teen dié wat regter oor my speel” (vers 3). Die tema van die hoofstuk is die regte en vryheid van 'n apostel en in sy verdediging roer hy ook die kwessie van hande-aan-waak: al kan hy van die reg op hulle onderhoud gebruik maak, het hy dit nie gedoen nie, maar met sy hande gewerk om homself te onderhou (9:3-14). Dit was, volgens die Korintiërs se siening, vernederend vir 'n wyse man (*sophos*) om dit te doen. In die hoofstuk verdedig Paulus sy optrede en handhaaf hy sy gesag as apostel.

Wat was die oorsaak van die Korintiërs se valse spiritualiteit? Fee (1988:13-15) bespreek verskillende moontlikhede, en sluit dan aan by Gerd Theissen wat argumenteer dat die spanning binne die gemeente, asook die spanning tussen die gemeente en Paulus, die beste verklaar kan word in terme van sosiologiese verskille. Aangesien die rykes as beskermhere van gemeentes en rondreisende leermeesters opgetree het, het die strydende faksies bestaan uit verskillende beskermhere met hulle huisegemeentes. Hierdie beskermhere was moontlik die leiers van die anti-Paulus gevoel in Korinte, soos blyk uit hulle voorliefde vir sophia, uit die feit dat hy hulle nie as beskermhere wou aanvaar nie (9:1-19) en uit hulle optrede teenoor die armes by die nagmaal (hoofstuk 10).

Die verdediging van sy gesag as apostel baken hoofstuk 9 af as 'n eenheid vir ondersoek. In

hierdie hoofstuk gebruik Paulus verskillende vrae as deel van sy oorredingstrategie. Die hoofdoel van hierdie studie is om die soorte vrae wat Paulus stel te identifiseer en te bespreek binne 'n taalteoretiese raamwerk. Hierop word nou ingegaan.

4.2 Nie-egte vrae in 1 Kor 9

Daar is nie 'n voorbeeld van 'n egte vraag wat inligting verlang, in hoofstuk 9 gevind nie. Van die kategorieë nie-egte vrae hierbo onderskei, is die volgende egter wel gevind:

4.2.1 *Vrae wat as stellings beskou kan word*

Voorbeelde van twee van die drie kategorieë waarin hierdie hoofkategorie uiteenval, kom in hoofstuk 9 voor: vraagvorme wat gewone stellings maak en metakommunikatiewe interrogatiewe. Die ooreenkoms tussen hierdie twee soorte nie-egte vrae is dat albei stellings maak, alhoewel hulle onderling verskil.

4.2.1.1 *Vraagvorme wat gewone stellings maak*

Die kenmerkende van die kategorie is dat die vraagvorm gewoonlik herskryf kan word as 'n stelling. Hierdie is vraagvorme wat in Grieks gemerk is met die partikel *ou* (wat 'n positiewe antwoord verwag), of *mē* (wat 'n negatiewe antwoord impliseer). Volgens Conradie (1995:416) word eersgenoemde goed weergegee deur dit te negativer en woorde soos "dan" of "mos" toe te voeg, terwyl vrae met 'n negatiewe implikasie versterk kan word met "mos nie" of "tog seker nie".

Wat hierdie kategorie nie-egte vrae betref is dit telkens onseker of 'n vraagvorm as 'n vraag of 'n stelling vertaal moet word. Die probleem word veroorsaak deur die feit dat ons slegs 'n geskrewe teks voor ons het. In gesproke taal is die probleem nie so groot nie, omdat die intonasie van die spreektaal ons help om 'n sinsvorm – met die fatiese struktuur van 'n stelling – as 'n vraag te verstaan. Vergelyk byvoorbeeld:

"Jy weet nie?"

met

"Jy weet nie". (Van Jaarsveld 1987:292).

In gesproke taal hoef hier geen onduidelikheid te wees nie. In geskrewe taal kan slegs die konteks en die gang van die argument ons help om tot 'n mate van duidelikheid te kom; slegs tot 'n mate, omdat ons nooit absoluut seker kan wees nie. Dit lê op die weg van die vertaler om die leser hiermee te help. Dit geld veral vir vrae, wat in Grieks deur *ou* of *mē* gemerk is en dus duidelike positiewe of negatiewe antwoorde impliseer.

Met vraagvorme wat gewone stellings maak, wil M nie die gesprek onderbreek nie, maar wil hy inligting op so 'n wyse kommunikeer dat O duidelik moet verstaan wat hy sê. Uit die konteks is dit duidelik dat M nie 'n antwoord verwag nie; hy wil net sy argument versterk en verder voer. En omdat M nie 'n antwoord verwag nie, is die voorbeelde wat volg tipiese nie-egte vrae.

1 Kor 9:4: *Het ons dan nie reg op lewensonderhoud nie?*

9:5: *Het ons nie selfs die reg om elkeen sy vrou wat 'n gelowige is, op reis saam te neem soos ook die ander apostels en die Here se broers en Sefas nie?*

9:6: *Of is dit net ek en Barnabas wat nie die reg het om op te hou met die hande arbeid vir eie onderhoud nie?*

9:7: *Wie dien ooit op eie koste as soldaat?*

Wie plant 'n wingerd en eet nie van sy vrugte nie?

Of wie pas vee op en geniet nie van hulle melk nie?

Hierdie arsenaal vraagvorme is deel van Paulus se "verdediging teen dié wat regter oor my speel" (9:3) en is almal juridies ingeklee (Lenski 1963:352). In die verse word sy vryheid as apostel,

waarna in 9:1 verwys is, nader gedefinieer in terme van sekere regte. Die vroeë handel basies oor sy reg (*eksousia*) om gebruik te maak van die Korintiërs se materiële ondersteuning in die uitvoering van sy taak. Die argument in 9:4-7 is 'n argument *kata anthrōpon* (volgens die mens) en kan in twee verdeel word: 9:4-6 handel oor bogenoemde basiese reg van 'n apostel, terwyl 9:7 dit verder voer aan die hand van sekere voorbeelde. Die voorbeelde vorm 'n integrale deel van die hele rasonale (*kata anthrōpon*) argument en is nie bloot illustratief nie (Conzelmann 1975:154; Thiselton 2000:683).

Wat verse 4-6 betref: Die twee vraagvorme in verse 4 en 5 is in Grieks gemerk met die twee partikels *mē ouk*, wat volgens Blass, Debrunner en Funk (1967: par. 427,2) positiewe antwoorde impliseer: Paulus en die ander apostels hê die reg op lewensonderhoud en hy hê (soos die ander) ook die reg om 'n vrou met hom saam te neem op sy reis. Die antwoord op 9:6 is egter negatief, al is dit nie so gemerk nie: nie net Paulus en Barnabas nie, maar alle apostels het die reg om op te hou met handarbeid in diens van die evangelie. Hierdie verskillende antwoorde is egter nie so duidelik uit die Afrikaanse Vertaling van 1983 soos wat dit hierbo aangehaal word nie. Om dit reg te stel, is daar twee moontlikhede:

1. Die eerste moontlikheid is om iets by te voeg in die vertaling, wat die regte antwoorde sal ontlok. Lenski (1963:355-7) skei die twee partikels en argumenteer dat *mē* 'n negatiewe antwoord vermag, terwyl ou net die werkwoord negatiewer. Om dit te bereik, begin hy elke vers met: "Do you intend to say that...?", met die implikasie: "You Corinthians do not want to say anything like that". En dan volg die positiewe stelling: "We do have the right to...". Fee (1988:402) skei ook die twee partikels om die probleem op te los en toon aan dat *mē* 'n negatiewe antwoord impliseer op 'n sin wat negatief (met *ou*) geformuleer is. Sy letterlike vertaling van 9:4 lees: "Can it be that we do not have the right to food and drink?" Volgens hom moet hierdie omweg, wat "intensely rhetorical" is, dan tot 'n positiewe antwoord lei. In sy vertaling volg hy egter die gewone: "Don't we have the right to food and drink?" (1988:397).
2. Die tweede moontlikheid is om die vraagvorme as stellings te vertaal. Hierdie moontlikheid word gekies deur Bratcher (1982:80-81), wat 'n voorkeur het om sg. "rhetorical questions" as stellings te vertaal. Hy vertaal die drie verse soos volg: "9:4. I have the right to be given (or, to receive) food and drink for my work as an apostle. 9:5. I also have the right to take a Christian wife with me on my travels, just as the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Peter do. 9:6. Barnabas and I are not the only apostles who have to work for our living (or, work to support ourselves)".

Watter moontlikheid is die beste? Na my mening die tweede, en wel om die volgende redes. Eerstens is daar geen versekering dat die lesers die implikasies van die vraagvorme reg sal verstaan as daar frases bygevoeg word nie. Die saak word bemoeilik deur die feit dat die implikasies van verse 4-5 aan die een kant, en vers 6 aan die ander kant, verskil: eersgenoemde twee vraagvorme het positiewe implikasies, terwyl vers 6 'n negatiewe antwoord vermag. Of *mē ou* dus saamgelees word as 'n eenheid wat 'n positiewe antwoord impliseer (Blass, Debrunner & Funk) en of die twee partikels geskei word (Lenski en Fee) maak nie werklik 'n verskil nie; dit blyk die beste te wees om die vraagvorme as stellings te vertaal en so alle onduidelikheid uit te skakel. Tweedens is daar ruimte binne die taalhandelings-teorie om vraagvorme as gewone stellings te herskryf en so hulle betekenis op 'n ondubbelsinnige wyse te kommunikeer.

Word bogenoemde voorstel as oplossing aanvaar, kan 9:4-6 soos volg vertaal word: "9:4. Ons hê mos die reg op lewensonderhoud. 9:5. Ons hê mos die reg om elkeen sy gelowige vrou saam te neem op reis, soos ook die ander apostels en die broers van die Here en Sefas doen. 9:6. Dit is tog nie net ek en Barnabas wat die reg het om op te hou werk (vir ons eie onderhoud) nie".

Wat vers 7 betref: In die vers sit Paulus sy verdediging voort by wyse van 'n aantal voorbeelde,

wat bogenoemde stellings bevestig. Die antwoorde op die vrae is vanselfsprekend negatief, al is die vrae nie in die Grieks gemerk nie. Hierdie vraagvorme hoef nie as stellings vertaal te word nie, maar kan as vrae behou word. Die drie voorbeelde verwys na heel-verskillende beroepe, t.w. soldaat, landbouer en veeboer, en bewys oortuigend dat apostels ten volle geregtig is op die materiële ondersteuning van diegene wat hulle bedien. Dit sou dus indruis teen die argument *kata anthrōpon* as iemand vir Paulus (en die ander apostels) hierdie reg om van sy (hulle) arbeid te lewe, sou ontsê.

Al die belangrikste vertalings en kommentare het laasgenoemde drie vrae as vrae vertaal. Hierdie vrae hoort onder die hoofkategorie vraagstellings, waar die vraagvorm behou word om 'n gewone stelling te maak.

4.2.1.2 Metakommunikatiewe interrogetiewe

Soos in die geval van vraagstellings kan vraagvorme in dié subkategorie ook herskryf word as stellings. As tipiese nie-egte vrae word hulle nie gebruik om inligting te bekom nie, maar om inligting te verskaf. In die geval van die soort nie-egte vrae maak M 'n gevolgtrekking oor 'n argument wat gevoer of 'n aksie wat deur O geneem is. Deur die gevolgtrekking wat gemaak word, word die argument prakties toegepas (Verster 1999:97-100).

Twee voorbeelde van die soort vraagvorm kom in hoofstuk 9 voor:

1 Kor 9:11-12: *As ons vir julle die geestelike saad gesaai het, is dit dan te veel gevra as ons van julle die stoflike lewensonderhoud sou inoos? As julle aan ander hierdie reg toestaan, kom dit ons dan nie nog meer toe nie?*

Met die twee vraagvorme vat Paulus sy argument in 9:4-10 saam. In die gedeelte het hy verskeie redes aangevoer waarom hy, op grond van sy apostelskap, reg het op die Korintiërs se materiële ondersteuning. In verse 11-12 trek hy nou die konklusie by wyse van twee vrae. In die Grieks word geen antwoorde geïmpliseer nie, maar die gevolgtrekking is duidelik en logies: hy het geestelike saad onder hulle gesaai; gevolglik is dit nie te veel gevra om 'n materiële oes te maai nie. Wat meer is: Ander mense het dié soort ondersteuning ontvang wat Paulus hier vir homself opeis. As ander mense dit dan ontvang het, hoeveel te meer het hy nie die reg nie – al het hy nooit daarvan gebruik gemaak nie.

Conzelmann (1975:155) en Fee (1988:409-10) stem saam dat die twee vrae gevolgtrekkings maak op grond van die argumente in 9:4-10. Die implikasies van albei vrae is voor die handliggend. Deur die gevolgtrekkings in die vorm van twee vrae te giet, verhoog Paulus die kommunikatiewe impak daarvan. Die impak word – volgens Lenski (1963:363) – verder verhoog deur 'n argument van die *meerdere* (geestelike saad) na die *mindere* (stoflike lewensonderhoud), asook deur die jukstaposisie van ons/julle in die oorspronklike taal (9:11). Die jukstaposisie is goed weergegee in die Afrikaanse vertaling hierbo aangehaal. Die argument waarop Lenski wys, word natuurlik omgekeer in 9:12: van die *mindere* (die ander) na die *meerdere* (ons). Deur die vrae en soorte argumente word die kern van Paulus se betoog in hoofstuk 9 oortuigend saamgevat.

Die vraagvorme in 9:11-12 behoort as vrae vertaal te word en nie as stellings herskryf te word nie, omdat hulle implikasies volkome duidelik is.

4.2.2 Vrae wat emosie oordra

Anders as by vraagstellings, gaan dit in hierdie hoofkategorie nie in die eerste plek om 'n stelling wat gemaak word nie, maar om 'n emosie wat oorgedra word. Hierdie vrae is ook nie-egte vrae, omdat hulle nie inligting van O verwag nie, maar emosie wil oordra. Kriteria wat gebruik kan word om hierdie soort vraag te identifiseer, sluit in bondige formulering en die konteks waarbinne dit voorkom. Met hierdie vraagvorm verwag M emosionele instemming van O; sy doel is om O by die emosie te betrek (Verster 1999:100-101).

Die hoofkategorie word verdeel in vrae wat positiewe, en dié wat negatiewe emosie oordra. Voorbeelde van eersgenoemde in 1 Kor 9 is die volgende:

1 Kor 9:1: *Is ek nie vry nie?*

Is ek nie 'n apostel nie?

Het ek nie vir Jesus, onse Here, gesien nie?

Is julle wat aan die Here behoort, nie die vrug van my werk nie?

In die voorafgaande hoofstuk (8:4-13) het Paulus dit gehad teen die sogenaamde “sterkes” in Korinte, wat hulle beroem het op hulle kennis en vryheid en so struikelblokke geword het vir hulle wat swak is. Teenoor die sterkes stel hy sy eie posisie oor die eet van vleis wat aan die afgode geoffer is: “Daarom, as ek deur wat ek eet my broer laat struikel, sal ek nooit weer vleis eet nie; ek wil nie my broer se val veroorsaak nie” (8:13). Vir die eerste keer in die hoofstuk gebruik Paulus hier die eerste persoon enkelvoud en volg dit dan op met die vier vrae in 9:1, waarvan die eerste oor sy vryheid die belangrikste is. Die rede waarom hy dit in hierdie konteks vooropstel, is om te beklemtoon dat hy (as apostel) vrywillig afstand gedoen het van sy “regte” – dié regte wat die sterkes in Korinte beskou het as 'n integrale deel van die posisie en status van 'n ware apostel (Conzelmann 1975:152; Thiselton 2000:666).

Vir die doel van hierdie studie is die onverwagte en kragtige styl van die vier vrae, wat deur verskeie Skrifverklaarders (Barrett 1979:200; Thiselton 2000:666; Bratcher 1982:79; Fee 1988:394) uitgewys is, van belang. Laasgenoemde twee navorsers beskou ook die vrae as gelaai met emosie. Met die vrae jubel Paulus oor sy apostelskap. In die laaste vraag rig hy hom regstreeks tot die Korintiërs met 'n *ad hominem* argument: hulle as gemeente in die goddelose wêreldstad Korinte, is die sterkste bewys van sy apostelskap. Hy het die gemeente gestig, en as hulle nie sy apostelskap erken nie, hef hulle hulle eie bestaan op (Conzelmann 1975:152)!

Die vraagvorme (wat vanselfsprekend positiewe antwoorde impliseer), behoort as vrae vertaal te word om die emosionele impak daarvan te verseker.

4.2.3 Rasioneel-argumentatiewe vrae

Dié hoofkategorie nie-egte vrae word verdeel in vraagappélle en ironiese interrogatiewe. Verskeie voorbeelde van eersgenoemde kom in hoofstuk 9 voor:

4.2.3.1 Vraagappélle

Hierdie vraagvorm word gebruik met die betekeniswaarde van 'n appél, met ander woorde die vraag is daarop gerig om die aandag van O te kry. Geen verbale reaksie word van O verwag nie, omdat M self die antwoord verskaf. Die funksie van 'n vraagappél is om 'n nuwe argument in te lei, en word ook soms gebruik om 'n bestaande argument uit te bou aan die hand van 'n logiese vraag wat na aanleiding van die argument ontstaan. In albei gevalle verskaf M dan self die antwoord. Vraagappélle is nuttige instrumente om 'n saak rasioneel en argumentatief op te bou. Die intensiteit van aandag wat M wil trek, bepaal die wyse waarop die vraag geformuleer word (Verster 1999:65-66).

Die volgende vraagvorme is vraagappélle, met die antwoord wat Paulus self verskaf tussen hakies:

1 Kor 9:8: *Is wat ek sê miskien net alledaagse waarhede (kata anthrôpon) of sê die wet dit nie ook nie?*

[9:9a Want in die wet van Moses is geskrywe: Jy mag nie 'n bees waarmee jy graan dors, se bek toebind nie]

9:9b: *Is dit miskien oor die beeste dat God Hom bekommer?*

9:10a: *Of sê Hy dit juis ter wille van ons?*

[9:10b: Ja, ter wille van ons is dit geskrywe. Hy wat ploeg, moet met verwagting ploeg, en

wat hy wat dors, moet dit doen met die verwagting om sy deel te ontvang].

Bogenoemde vrae vorm deel van Paulus se argument oor sy reg op die Korintiërs se materiële ondersteuning, waarmee hy in 9:4 begin het en in 9:12 afsluit. Die geïmpliseerde antwoorde op die vrae is ietwat problematies, maar tog duidelik. Die eerste deel van die vraag in 9:8 begin met *mē* en impliseer dus 'n negatiewe antwoord. Die tweede deel, wat begin met die partikel "of", impliseer egter 'n positiewe antwoord, al vorm dit grammatikaal deel van dieselfde vraag. Hierdie deel word positief beantwoord in 9:9a. Aan die einde van vers 9 het ons weer dieselfde verskynsel: die eerste deel van die vraag is gemerk deur *mē* en ver wag 'n negatiewe antwoord, terwyl die tweede deel aan die begin van 9:10, wat ook deur *mē* regeer word, 'n positiewe antwoord ver wag. Dit word wel so beantwoord in die res van 9:10. Die partikel *mē* regeer dus in albei gevalle slegs die eerste deel van die alternatief, terwyl die tweede deel 'n positiewe antwoord impliseer en ook so beantwoord word.

Met die stel vrae en antwoorde gebruik Paulus 'n argument kata nomon (volgens die wet) om sy reg op die Korintiërs se materiële ondersteuning te beklemtoon. Hy hét die reg – nie net *kata anthrōpon* nie, maar ook *kata nomon*. Die vraagappél in 9:8 word dus gebruik om 'n nuwe argument in te lei en word deur Paulus self beantwoord in 9:9a, terwyl die appélle in 9:9b en 9:10a daaruit voortvloei en in 9:10b beantwoord word. Die vrae is nie bedoel om antwoorde van sy lesers te kry nie, maar om hulle aandag te vra vir stellings wat hy maak in die rasonele opbou van sy argument.

In die lig van hulle funksie word aanbeveel dat die vraagvorme in 9:8-10 as vrae vertaal word, soos hierbo aangedui. Dit is nie nodig om (soos in die 1983 Afrikaanse vertaling) die eerste deel van die vraag in 9:8 as 'n stelling te herskryf nie, omdat die negatiewe antwoord wat geïmpliseer word, duidelik genoeg is, en 'n stelling die impak van die kommunikasie verskraal.

1 Kor 9:13: *Weet julle nie dat dié wat tempeldiens verrig, uit die tempel lewe, en dat dié wat die altaar bedien, uit die offers hulle deel ontvang nie?*

[9:14: So het die Here ook bepaal dat dié wat die evangelie verkondig, hulle lewensonderhoud hieruit moet ontvang].

In 9:13 bied Paulus nog 'n argument waarom hy reg het op die Korintiërs se materiële ondersteuning. Vir die doel gebruik hy die bekende "Weet julle nie dat ...?" vraagvorm, wat ook in 9:24 voorkom. Die vraagvorm word ingelei deur die partikel *ou*, wat 'n positiewe antwoord impliseer: natuurlik weet hulle dat dié wat die tempeldiens verrig, uit die tempel lewe. Dit is nie duidelik of die twee dele van die vraag sinoniem is, dit wil sê of die tempeldiens en die altaardiens identies is, en of die eerste deel in 'n breër sin verstaan moet word nie. Vir die doel van die argument hier is dit egter nie belangrik nie (Conzelmann 1975:157). Die geïmpliseerde antwoord is positief: in sowel die Joodse as die heidense tempels het die priesters wat die offers gebring het, hulle deel as voedsel ontvang (Fee 1988:412).

Net só – bring Paulus sy punt tuis – het die Here self bepaal dat hulle wat die evangelie verkondig, daaruit moet lewe (9:14). Dit is die eintlike stelling wat hy wil maak, in opvolging van sy vraag in 9:13 en in pas met sy hele betoog in 9:1-12. Die vraagvorm in 9:13 lei dus 'n nuwe argument in of voeg nog een by dié wat in 9:7 gebruik is. Dit vra aandag vir die antwoord wat die apostel self verskaf in 9:14 en kan dus as 'n vraagappél beskou word. Om die positiewe antwoord wat geïmpliseer word te versterk, kan die woordjie "dan" in die vertaling ingevoeg word (Conradie *et. al.* 1995:416): "Weet julle dan nie dat dié wat tempeldiens verrig, uit die tempel lewe nie ...?"

1 Kor 9:18a: *Wat is my loon dan?*

[18b: Dit is dat ek as prediker die evangelie kosteloos verkondig en so afstand doen van my reg wat aan die verkondiging van die evangelie verbonde is].

Die konteks waarin die vraag in 9:18a gevra word, is steeds Paulus se reg (*eksousia*) en vryheid as

apostel – dit, waaroor hy dit het vanaf 9:1. Die Korintiërs het sy weiering om van sy apostoliese *eksousia* gebruik te maak beskou as 'n bewys dat hy geen *eksousia* gehad het nie. Die feit is egter dat hy dit wel gehad het – soos in 9:1 beredeneer – maar dat hy nie daarvan gebruik gemaak het nie (9:15). Dit het hy gedoen ter wille van die evangelie wat hy moes verkondig, omdat die dwang hom opgelê is. Omdat dit só is, is daar vir hom geen roem daarin om die evangelie te verkondig nie (9:16).

Naas roem verwys Paulus in vers 17 na die kwessie van loon wat hom toekom. Dit lei tot die logiese vraag in 9:18a: Wat is daardie loon? Dit bestaan daarin dat hy geen loon ontvang het nie – so beantwoord hy self die vraag (9:18b). Sy loon is dat hy geen loon ontvang het nie – 'n paradoks waarop Groenewald (1967:117) en Conzelmann (1975:158) reeds gewys het en wat hulle albei as effektiewe oorreding beskou. Dit dien om Paulus se punt te beklemtoon en sy lesers tot sy standpunt te oorreed.

In die lig hiervan is die vraag in 9:18a 'n tipiese voorbeeld van 'n vraagappél, omdat dit slegs aandag vra vir die antwoord wat Paulus self verskaf. Dit is nie maar net nog 'n retoriese vraag, soos die kommentatore hierdie vraag, en al die ander vrae in 1 Korintiërs, beskryf nie. Dit is ook nie 'n retoriese vraag in terme van die raamwerk wat in hierdie studie gebruik word nie, omdat dit nie 'n stelling met groot intensiteit maak nie. Dit wil slegs die aandag van die lesers kry vir die antwoord wat volg en hulle so by die argument betrek.

Die antwoord in 9:18b word verder verduidelik in 9:19-23, waar Paulus uiteensit hoë volkome hy van sy *eksousia* afstand gedoen het. Dit strek veel verder as net sy reg op hulle materiële ondersteuning. Op die wyse het hy vry geword van alle menslike beperkinge ten einde al meer diensbaar te word aan die evangelie.

1 Kor 9:24a: *Weet julle nie dat atlete wat aan 'n wedloop deelneem, wel almal hardloop, maar dat net een die prys ontvang nie?*

[9:24b: Hardloop dan só dat julle die prys kan wen.

9:25: Almal wat aan 'n wedstryd deelneem, ontsê hulleself allerlei dinge. Hulle doen dit om 'n verganklike oorwinnaarskroon te verkry, maar ons 'n onverganklike].

In die voorafgaande gedeelte (9:19-23) het Paulus homself beskryf as iemand wat vry geword het ten einde die evangelie voluit te kan verkondig. In 9:24 verwissel hy die eerste persoon enkelvoud met die tweede persoon meervoud as hy die Korintiërs direk konfronteer met nog 'n "Weet julle nie ..." vraagvorm, wat 'n positiewe antwoord impliseer. Afgesien van die persoonswisseling, lei Paulus ook 'n nuwe tema in met die beeld van 'n atleet op die atletiekbaan. Die beeld is ontleen aan die Isthmiese spele, wat elke twee jaar gehou is en waarmee die Korintiërs goed bekend was. Die vraag in 9:24a word onmiddellik opgevolg met 'n aansporing om die Christelike wedloop op dieselfde wyse te hardloop as die atlete wat aan die spele deelneem: met volle inspanning ten einde die prys te wen. In 9:25 brei Paulus uit op die soort prys wat behaal word, voordat hy in 9:26-27 weer na homself in die eerste persoon enkelvoud terugkeer.

Dit is duidelik dat die vraag in 9:24a 'n vraagappél is, omdat dit 'n nuwe tema inlei en onmiddellik gevolg word deur 'n antwoord van Paulus self. As vraagappél vra dit die aandag van die lesers vir die éintlike stelling (aansporing) wat hy self wil maak. Die aansporing om so te hardloop dat hulle die prys kan behaal is die kern van alles wat Paulus in die paragraaf (9:24-27) wil kommunikeer (Fee 1988:436). Dit is die *tertium comparationis* tussen die atleet en die Christen gelowige. In vers 25 word die prys nader beskryf in terme van 'n verganklike en 'n onverganklike oorwinnaarskroon. Dit is 'n tipiese argument van die *mindere* (verganklike) na die *meerdere* (onverganklike): as atlete hulleself só inspan om 'n aardse kroon te verwerf, hoeveel meer moet gelowiges opoffer om die hemelse kroon te ontvang (Lenski 1963:383).

Soos by 9:13 hierbo behoort die vraag behou te word en die positiewe implikasie daarvan versterk te word deur “dan” in te voeg: “Weet julle dan nie dat atlete wat aan ’n wedloop deelneem, wel almal hardloop, maar dat net een die prys ontvang nie?”

5. KONKLUSIE

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die nie-egte vrae in 1 Kor 9 sistematies te ondersoek aan die hand van ’n model, wat gebaseer is op die taalhandelingssteorie en reeds met goeie gevolg op die brief aan die Romeine toegepas is. Die model het ook hier bruikbare resultate gelewer. Van die kategorieë nie-egte vrae wat Verster onderskei, is vier in 1 Kor 9 geïdentifiseer. Op die wyse is hulle nie maar gelyk gestel aan retoriese vrae nie, maar is hulle verder verfyn en hulle funksies aan die hand van ’n erkende taalteorie beskryf.

Deur die verskillende soorte nie-egte vrae te onderskei is ook probeer om ’n bydrae tot die eksegeese en vertaling van die betrokke tekste te maak. Die gevolgtrekking is dat Paulus die nie-egte vrae in 1 Korintiërs 9 effektief gebruik om sy apostelskap te verdedig en die Korintiërs tot sy standpunt te oordeel.

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KEY WORDS

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TREFWOORDE

1 Korintiërs 9
Taalhandelingsteorie
Retoriese vrae
Nie-egte vrae

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Die bediening van die nagmaal in vier kerkordes

ABSTRACT

The service of holy communion as in four church orders

In reformed churches the Word of God and the confessions of the church are accepted as *norma normans* and *norma normata* respectively. This means that the Word is the first norm and the confessions which should be in accordance with the Word, the second norm for the church. The church order comes as a third norm and should follow these two.

The way in which holy communion is served, should be directed by the truths about the meaning of it as found in the Word and the confessions. Where these confessional truths do not change very often, the ways in which communion is served, are practical measures which change in changing circumstances. The four churches implied by the four church orders attended to in this article, however, differ in their understanding of the meaning of the confessions for the service of communion as well as the measures used for that.

1. INLEIDING: GEREFORMEERDE KERKE VERSKIL

Gereformeerde kerke wat die befaamde reformatoriese stelreël *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*¹ (Koffeman 2009:35-36) handhaaf, hou eenvoudig ook nie op om te besin oor die praktiese wyse waarop die sakrament van die nagmaal bedien word nie. Hoewel die betekenis van die nagmaal as 'n belydenis- of kernwaarheid van die gereformeerde geloof bely word (NG Kerk-Uitgewers 2002:34-36, 59-62) en daarom nie sommer gewysig word nie, verskil gereformeerde kerke oor die wyse waarop dit bedien word. Hierdie gebruike self is nie kernwaarhede nie, maar die bediening daarvan in bepaalde omstandighede.

Anders gestel, waar gereformeerde kerkordes die ordelike en praktiese kanale moet wees waardeur die Woord van God as hoogste norm of *norma normans* (Strauss 2010:22) sy vrye loop in die kerk neem, spreek dit vanself dat hierdie kanale afgestem sal wees op die praktiese omstandighede waarin die betrokke kerk hom bevind (Strauss 2010:4). Dit is maatreëls in omstandighede wat gedurig wysig en daarom maatreëls wat self ook gedurig wysig. Maatreëls wat in diens van konstantes in die Bybel moet staan, maar nie self as konstantes deurgaans nie².

Teen hierdie agtergrond kyk hierdie artikel na die kerkordes van 4 gereformeerde kerke in die wêreld om vas te stel watter konstantes agter hulle bepalings vir die bediening van die nagmaal lê, of daar by hulle 'n konsensus oor hierdie konstantes is en wat hulle gebruike of kerkordemaatreëls vir die bediening van die nagmaal in hulle omstandighede is. Daar die

1 Vry vertaal uit die Latyn: 'n Gereformeerde kerk reformeer voortdurend.

2 Die Algemene Sinode van die NGK van 2002 verwoord iets hiervan. Hierdie vergadering verklaar dat "wat betref die *hoe* van die *viering van die nagmaal* die gereformeerde tradisie nooit voorskryflik was nie. In gereformeerde kerke is *verskillende praktyke* (telkens my kursivering, PJS) rondom die kommunie van die gemeente gangbaar." Hoewel die Sinode hierin die beginsel van vryheid ten opsigte van die gemeentes handhaaf, versoek hulle laasgenoemde "om hulle in hulle besluite hieroor" te laat lei deur die beginsels van die Skrif en die opbou en stigting van die gemeente (NGK 2002:537).

betekenis van die nagmaal by al vier 'n saak van gereformeerde belydenis is³, is dit die moeite werd om te sien hoe hulle interpretasie hiervan by die gebruike in die bediening van die nagmaal verskil. Met die uitsondering van die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA) is die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), die Protestantse Kerk in Nederland (PKN) en die Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in Noord-Amerika lede van die nutgestigde – in 2010 – Wêreldgemeenskap van Gereformeerde Kerke (NGK 2011:250). Hierdie feit verhoog die aktualiteit van die ondersoek.

Die ondersoek word beperk tot die nuutste beskikbare kommentare op die kerkordes of die kerkordes van die vier kerke⁴. Dit gaan oor hulle kerkordelike bepalings omdat dit die amptelike standpunt van hulle breedste verband verteenwoordig. Die kommentare wat gebruik word, werp lig vanuit die hoek van die kommentator op die motivering vir die betrokke kerkordemaatreëls en stimuleer gesprek, hoewel dit nie amptelike kerklike standpunte is nie.

'n Ondersoek na hierdie vier kerkordes kan naby aan 'n oorsig van die kerkordelike maatreëls in gereformeerde kerke wêreldwyd kom. Die wyse waarop die vier kerke die Drie Formuliere van Eenheid – die Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis (NGB) uit 1561, die Heidelbergse Kategismus (HK) uit 1563 en die Dordtse Leerreëls (DL) uit 1618-1619 (NGK 2007:1) – handhaaf asook hulle geografiese verspreiding, toon variasies wat 'n wye spektrum van gereformeerde kerke verteenwoordig.

2. DIE VIER KERKE EN DIE GEREFORMEERDE BELYDENIS

Op die een punt staan die GKSA by 'n ongekwalifiseerde onderskrywing en -tekening van die Formuliere van Eenheid omdat (Latyn *quia*) dit met die Woord ooreenstem. 'n Ongekwalifiseerde *norma normata* – of afgeleide gesag wat talle gereformeerdes vandag nie eers aan die Bybel toeken nie (Visser 1999:217; Spoelstra 1989:297vv; Van der Linde 1983:180-181). Hierteenoor kwalifiseer die NGK en die CRC hulle afgeleide gesag vir die Formuliere deur dit as gesagvol in die geloof wat hulle formuleer, te bestempel. Die NGK laat sy predikante in hulle legitimasielofte verklaar dat “die leer soos vervat in ... ooreenkom met die Woord van God” (NGK 2007:95). In dieselfde trant beskryf die Algemene Sinode van die NGK die Skrif as ‘n tendensboek (NGK 1986:611; 2002:548) wat in sy bedoeling om ‘n “heldere en magtige” boodskap by die mens te kry, met die gesag van God praat. 'n Boodskap van God se omvattende verlossing en vernuwung in Christus deur die Heilige Gees (NGK 2002:548 vgl Heyns 1973:145-147). Die CRC onderskryf die “doctrines which are confessed” in die Formuliere (Engelhard en Hofman 2001:51). Die NGK en die CRC handhaaf dus 'n gekwalifiseerde *quia*. Die PKN ignoreer die detail oor wat van die gereformeerde belydenisse onderskryf word met die vae, byna niksseggende aanduiding dat hierdie geloof in gemeenskap met die van die voorgeslagte bely word. In die proses ag hulle hulle verbonde aan drie tradisies: die tradisie van die vroeë algemene Christelike kerk, die Lutherse en die gereformeerde tradisies (PKN 2003:9, 25). Die saamvoeging van hierdie tradisies dui

3 Onder die kerke is daar egter verskille oor die basis van aanvaarding van hulle gemeenskaplike, soos dit genoem word, Drie Formuliere van Eenheid naamlik die Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis, Heidelbergse Kategismus en Dordtse Leerreëls. Hulle beskouinge van hierdie formuliere waaruit hulle standpunte oor die nagmaal kom, bepaal ook die gewig wat hulle daaraan in die kerklike bediening toeken. Hierop word daar in 'n volgende paragraaf meer uitvoerig terug gekom.

4 In dieselfde volgorde as hierbo Visser, J 1999. *Die kerkorde in praktyk*. Orkney: EFJS Drukkers. NGK 2007. *Die Kerkorde*. Wellington: Bybelmedia. PKN 2003. *Kerkorde en ordinanties*. Zoetermeer: Boeken-centrum. Engelhard, DH en Hofman LJ 2001. *Manual of Christian Reformed Church Government*. Michigan: CRC Publications. Op die kerkorde van die CRC het Henry de Moor (Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan) so pas 'n kommentaar voltooi wat persklaar is maar nog nie verskyn het nie. Vir agtergrond tot die kerkorde van die NG Kerk kan gekyk word na Strauss PJ 2010. *Kerk en orde vandag – met die klem op die NG Kerk*. Bloemfontein: Sunmedia.

daarop dat hulle hulle verskille nie op die spits dryf nie.

Interessant genoeg is die NGK en die CRC hiermee waarskynlik meer Dordts as die GKSA. Die Dordtse ondertekeningformulier vir predikante raak “alle de articulen ende stuccke der leere begrepen...” in die Drie Formuliere van Eenheid (Kuyper sa:186-187)⁵. Tog is daar in die GKSA ‘n groter uitgesproke oriëntering op Dordt as in die NGK. Die kerkorde van die GKSA is na die letter veel meer Dordts as die kerkorde van die NGK⁶. Laasgenoemde in sy oervorm in 1962 probeer op sy meeste ‘n eietydse weergawe van die Dordtse Kerkorde van 1619 (DKO) wees (Vorster 1960:13).

Soos die NGK en die CRC onderskryf Dordt nie die betrokke gereformeerde belydenisse (Drie Formuliere van Eenheid) ongekwalifiseerd nie, nie in elke frase of lettertjie nie, maar in die geloof (leer) wat dit bely (Strauss 2006:664). Vir hierdie twee kerke en Dordt het die belydenisskrifte gesag in dit wat hulle wil wees naamlik geloofsbelijdenisse. Die Algemene Sinode van die NGK van 1998 praat van die belydenisskrifte se verwoording van die “gereformeerde geloofsdoortuiging”. Hulle is hierin gesagvol omdat (*quia*) hulle hierin met die Woord ooreenstem (NGK 1998:414-415).

Hoewel genoemde vier kerke die gereformeerde Drie Formuliere van Eenheid handhaaf, verskil die gewig wat hulle aan die belydenis in kerksake toeken en die basis waarop hulle dit as belydenisse aanvaar. Die relevante vraag is nou of hierdie verskille ook in hulle kerkordemaatreëls vir die bediening van die nagmaal deurkom?

Die antwoord hierop veronderstel ‘n begrip van wat die Drie Formuliere oor die aard en betekenis van die nagmaal leer. Daarna word die vier kerkordes nagegaan om te sien of hulle in hulle maatreëls ‘n korrekte toepassing van – beide die NGB en die HK praat oor die nagmaal – hulle belydenisse daarstel.

Dit gebeur teen die agtergrond dat ‘n gereformeerde kerk met ‘n rangorde van dokumente werk: die Heilige Skrif geld as *norma normans* of eerste norm, daarna sy belydenisskrifte as *norma normata* of tweede norm, dan sy kerkorde as ordelike kanale waardeur die Woord (en hieruit vloeiend die lewende belydenisse van die kerk) sy vrye loop in die kerk moet neem en dan, binne hierdie raamwerk, die besluite van kerkvergaderings op hulle onderskeie terreine (Strauss 2010:4vv). Konsekwente gereformeerdes handhaaf ook die anti-hiërargiese beginsel ten opsigte van die ampte en kerkvergaderings. Dit impliseer ‘n gelykheid in waardigheid of gesag by albei, maar ook ‘n eie terrein van optrede vir elke amp of vergadering (Strauss 2010:47-55). Geen menslike hiërargie in die kerk nie, sodat die Woord alleen of die *sola scriptura*-beginsel kan seëvier. Christusgesag of die gesag van Christus as Hoof van en in die kerk is Woordgesag of die gesag van sy Woord (Jonker 1965:12). Hovius noem die anti-hiërargiese beginsel by talle gereformeerdes ‘n “*canon aureus*” of ‘n goue reël (1972:17).

3. DIE AARD EN BETEKENIS VAN DIE NAGMAAL: TWEE BELYDENISSE

Die NGB bely en formuleer sy houding oor die nagmaal en die sakramente in artikels 33-35 en die HK in Sondag 25-30. Sonder om dit te beredeneer, word dit hier as gegewe aanvaar dat Skrif en belydenis op hierdie punt in dieselfde lyn loop. Die konsentrasie van hierdie artikel is eerder op die maatreëls of kanale waardeur 4 gereformeerde kerkordes die bediening van die nagmaal stuur en die vraag hoe hierdie maatreëls met die betrokke geloofsbelijdenisse verband hou.

Op spoor van Calvyn (sa IV:314-315) noem die NGB en die HK die sakramente tekens en seëls. Tekens wat ons die Evangelie beter laat verstaan en seëls wat aan ons die boodskap daarvan verseël of waarborg.

5 Strauss 2006:649vv.

6 Vgl Visser 1999 met NGK 2007 met Pont 1981:171vv.

Volgens die NGB wil God deur die sakramente sy heilsbeloftes aan die gelowiges beseël en aan ons tekens gee van sy goedheid en genade. Dit moet “ons geloof voed en in stand hou”. God het dit by die Evangelie gevoeg om sy Woord óók aan ons deur ander sintuie as net ons gehoor oor te dra. Om uitwendig te bekragtig wat Hy inwendig in ons harte doen. Dit is uitwendig of sigbare tekens van ‘n inwendige en onsigbare saak wat deur die Heilige Gees kragtig in die gelowiges versterk word.

Die HK vertel ‘n soortgelyke verhaal. Hiervolgens is die sakramente tekens en seëls om die gelowiges die belofte van die Evangelie van Christus nog beter te laat verstaan. Die verseëling van die belofte dat Christus met sy “enige” (unieke) offer aan die kruis vir ons die vergifnis van sonde en die ewige lewe by God verwerf het.

Twee uiterstes in die tyd van Calvyn word hiermee afgewys. Die een is die Roomse leer van die transsubstansiasie waardeur die tekens die werklike of reële bloed en liggaam van Christus na die wydingsgebed of konsekrasie word. Of, op dieselfde vlak, die Lutherse konsubstansiasie waardeur die liggaam en die bloed van Christus met, in en onder die tekens teenwoordig word. Die ander uiterste is die simbolisme van Zwingli by wie die tekens net tekens bly, ten spyte van die Woord wat dui op die onsigbare of inwendige saak wat die Gees in die gelowiges innerlik verseël of waarborg (Heyns 1992:373-374; Schulze 1978:190-194).

Volgens die NGB en die HK is daar meer as net tekens wat sake aandui in die gebruik van die sakramente aanwesig. Die Gees werk deur die geloof as invalspoort in die harte van mense om hulle geloof te versterk en die waarheid van die Evangelie aan hulle te verseël. Tog bly die tekens water, wyn en brood. Maar dan water, wyn en brood wat in ‘n nuwe konteks funksioneer wat deur die Gees en die boodskap wat hiermee saamgaan, geskep word. ‘n Konteks wat ‘n nuwe doel of boodskap aan die brood en die wyn of die doopwater gee en deur die belydende deelnemers aan die betrokke sakrament geestelik geneem, verstaan en geglo word. Die gaan immers om die eenmalige unieke offer van Christus wat nie herhaal kan of hoef te word nie. Iets wat gebeur as die werklike liggaam en bloed van Christus weer en weer gebreek en gestort word (Schulze 1978:181).

Opgesom het elke sakrament op hierdie standpunt vier aspekte. Die *werk van die Heilige Gees*, die *tekens* van water, brood en wyn, die *Woord of Boodskap* soos opgevang en geglo deur die *geloof* van die nagmaalsganger, ouer of belydende dopeling indien hierdie persoon nie die verbondsdooop as kind ondergaan het nie. Indien enige een van hierdie vier ontbreek, is daar geen sakrament as ‘n teken en seël soos hier aangedui nie. Eerstens moet die tekens daar wees. Hulle moet tweedens egter deur die Woord of die Boodskap wat hulle verklaar en in ‘n nuwe verband laat funksioneer, vergesel word. Derdens moet die Gees werk. Hy werk vierdens deur die geloof van die nagmaalgangers of dopelinge of ouers of plaasvervangerouers van dopelinge wat as verbondskinders gedoopt word. Saam bind die vier “elemente” die gelowige gebruiker aan die betekende saak.

Kerkordemaatreëls of die kerkorde as kanale waardeur Woord en belydenis vloei, moet rondom en vanuit hierdie vier kernaspekte werk. Natuurlik beheer die kerkorde nie die werk van die Gees of die geloof van die sakramentsgebruikers nie. Dit gaan egter om ‘n kerkordelike ruimte of kerkordelike kanale waardeur – in hierdie geval – die bediening van die nagmaal volgens Skrif en belydenis kan vloei. Dit bring ons by die vraag of genoemde 4 kerkordes hierin slaag, waar hulle moontlik hiervan afwyk en of hulle met mekaar verskil. Dit gaan om die gestaltegewing of deurwerking van die vier kernaspekte soos vervat in die NGB en HK of sake wat daarmee in verband gebring word: die tekens, die bediening van die Woord wat die tekens in ‘n nuwe konteks plaas en laat dui op die betekende saak, die geloof van diegene wat die nagmaal gebruik en die Heilige Gees wat die verband tussen die betekende saak en die gelowige lê.

4. DIE BEDIENING VAN DIE NAGMAAL IN VIER KERKORDES

4.1 Die tekens

Ten opsigte van die tekens by die nagmaal kom die bekende sinsnede in die kerkordes van die GKSA (GKSA-KO) en CRC (CRC-KO) voor wat ook in die DKO voorkom naamlik dat die “uitwendige seremonies wat in die Woord van God voorgeskryf is, nie verander mag word nie” (Visser 1999:243; Engelhard en Hofman 2001:331; vgl Pont 1981:183). Die NG Kerkorde (NGK-KO) of sy aangehaalde funksionele sinodebesluite bevat niks hieroor nie (2007:22,114,131-133), terwyl die Kerkorde van die PKN (PKN-KO) volstaan met die bepaling dat die bediening van die nagmaal plaasvind op ‘n wyse wat deur die kerkraad vasgestel word (PKN 2003:107).

Met “uitwendige seremonies” of net “ceremonies” volg die GKSA-KO en CRC-KO respektiewelik die gereformeerde oortuiging dat die nagmaal so na as moontlik aan die instelling daarvan in die Nuwe Testament gebruik word en so eenvoudig as moontlik bly.

Vanuit die GKSA voer Visser en Van der Linde ook aan dat dit ondermeer beteken dat die nagmaal die karakter van ‘n maaltyd aanneem, dat “gewone” brood en wyn gebruik word, dat die instellingswoorde wat by die bediening van die nagmaal “gebesig” word inhoudelik nie afwyk van die woorde in die Sinoptiese Evangelies of I Korintiërs nie, dat die brood voor die oë van die “tafelgenote” gebreek word (Van der Linde 1983:208) en dat ‘n beker of ‘n aantal “groot” bekere as simbool van die een beker, gebruik word (Van der Linde 1983:208-209; Visser 1999:244-245).

Dit is duidelik dat hier ‘n aantal gebruike of seremonies genoem word wat wyd onder gereformeerde kerke voorkom. Waar ons op hierdie punt egter op die tekens konsentreer, val die klem op die “gewone brood en wyn”. Brood wat in die konteks van die nagmaal gebreek (die liggaam van Christus wat gebreek is) en geëet is en wyn wat vloei (die bloed van Christus wat gevloei het) en gedrink word. Daarom die versoek dat die brood voor die oë van die nagmaalgebruikers gebreek word en die wyn sigbaar geskink word of vloei (Van der Linde 1983:208).

Hoewel die NGK-KO en die PKN-KO nie hierdie DKO-KO-bepaling oor die uitwendige seremonies oorneem nie, geld dieselfde gebruike in die bediening van die brood en die wyn in hoofsaak by albei. Die meeste NGK-gemeentes handhaaf egter die gebruik van die uitdeel van vooraf gesnyde stukkie brood en klein bekertjies of kelkies wat deur ‘n sigbare breek van ‘n brood(tjie) of ‘n gesnyde stuk brood en die skink van een beker wyn in die erediens voorafgegaan word. Die simboliek van die een liggaam en een bloed van Christus word sigbaar gehandhaaf, maar nie tot in dit wat elke nagmaalsgebruiker ontvang nie. Daarby is dit nog altyd ‘n maaltyd as nagmaalangers die tekens saam in die kerkbanke gebruik en nie agtereenvolgens in groepe by ‘n tafel nie. Die tafel wat normaalweg voor staan en waarby sommige aansit, het weereens – soos by die gesnyde stukkie brood en wynkelkies – sy simboliese waarde. Die saam gebruik van die tekens in die kerkbanke kan ook van ‘n groter eenheidswaarde wees as ‘n opeenvolgende nie-gelyktydige gebruik aan tafel (vgl Visser 1999:244 se keuse vir ‘n tafel).

Die argument vir groot beker(s) teenoor klein bekertjies of kelkies word in elke geval geneutraliseer deur die gebruik van meer as een groot beker (argument by Visser 1999:244; Van der Linde 1983:209). Die feit dat meer as een brood gebruik of vooraf gesny moet word en nie gebreek word nie, neutraliseer ‘n argument ten gunste van die gebruik van slegs een brood wat tydens die bediening aan tafel gebreek word.

Dit gaan – in die woorde van die Algemene Sinode van 2002 van die NGK – hier om die “hoe” van die bediening of viering van die nagmaal en nie die kernwaarhede wat hierdie “hoe” stuur

nie. Om simbole of tekens wat op meer as een manier oorgedra of tuisgebring kan word⁷.

Dit wil dus voorkom asof die tekens in hierdie vier kerke gehandhaaf word.

4.2 Die Woord of Boodskap van die nagmaal

Drie sake word in gereformeerde kerkordes genoem wat draai om die toegepaste Woord as deel van die bediening van die nagmaal: die bepaling dat die bediening tot die “amptelike” erediens waarin die Woord verkondig word, beperk word; die noodsaak van ‘n nagmaalsformulier as toegespitsde Woord wat die tekens in ‘n nuwe konteks plaas; en dat die nagmaal deur iemand in ‘n amp wat met die verkondiging verband hou, bedien word. Hierdie drie sake kom nie noodwendig in elkeen van die vier kerkordes onder bespreking voor nie.

Die GKSA-KO loop die spoor van die DKO feitelik woordeliks na. So bepaal GKSA-KO artikel 62 dat die bediening van die nagmaal op die preek, die algemene gebede en die lees van die nagmaalsformulier met die gebed “wat daarby hoort”, moet volg. Die preek en die formulier is dus afgestem op die Woord as integrale deel van die nagmaal. Die bediening van die tekens moet op die preek en formulier volg (vgl Visser 199:244).

Van der Linde wonder waarom die bediening van die nagmaal in die GKSA-KO op die preek en die lees van die formulier moet volg (artikel 62), terwyl die doop volgens ‘n sinodale besluit vóór die preek, maar ná die lees van die formulier kan plaasvind (artikel 56)? Die preek en formulier is tog albei Woordbediening! Waarom moet die nagmaal deur ‘n preek plus die formulier voorafgegaan word? Is die formulier nie genoeg nie (1983:210)?

GKSA-KO artikel 64 bepaal uitdruklik dat die “bediening van die nagmaal ... alleen” in ‘n erediens kan plaasvind onder toesig van die ouderlinge. Dit bevestig die aanname dat die verkondiging van die Woord en die voorhou van die nagmaalsformulier by so ‘n geleentheid amptelike Woordbediening is. GKSA-KO sê dit nie uitdruklik nie, maar hier gaan dit om ‘n – deur die GKSA – erkende VDM of Bedienaar van die Woord (Visser 1999:243). Uit kommentaar op die GKSA-KO blyk dit dat uitsonderings op die reël dat die nagmaal in ‘n “gewone” erediens van die gemeente moet plaasvind wel moontlik is. Dit moet egter plaasvind in ‘n diens van buitediens waarby al die elemente van ‘n erediens betrek word (Visser 1999:247). Onder die funksionele besluite in die NGKO besluit die Algemene Sinode van 2002 dat nagmaal ook in “kleingroepe” bedien kan word mits daar aan dieselfde voorwaardes voldoen word as vir die hele gemeente (NGK 2002:131-132).

Op hierdie punt skerm GKSA-KO artikel 62 daarvoor dat alle bygeloof vermy word. In die tyd van die Reformasie was dié frase gemik op die Roomse bygeloof dat die brood en die wyn werklik die liggaam en bloed van Christus by die wydingsgebed word. Dit is ook in die DKO opgeneem. Deesdae kan dit dui op diegene wat die sakramente as iets magies en hoër as die Woord ag. Hoewel hulle nie by ‘n erediens met sy Woordverkondiging kan uitkom nie, wil hulle nie sonder die gebruik van die sakramente voortgaan nie (die nagmaal as laaste versekering van genade vir ‘n sterwende of die doop van ‘n pasgebore baba wat op sterwe lê en so salig heengaan). ‘n Bygeloof verwant aan die Roomse bygeloof dat sakramente outomaties of *ex opere operato*

7 Vgl Spoelstra 1989:347-348 se omvattende bespreking van “uitwendige seremonies” en die “kelkie- en bekergemeenskap” op ‘n pro-GKSA-KO-standpunt. In hierdie kerkegemeenskap – die GKSA – word die oortuiging van meer as een moontlike toepassing van ‘n kernwaarheid soms versmal tot net een moontlike toepassing. Spoelstra haal die besluit van die Sinode van Burgersdorp van 1930 (GKSA) skynbaar met instemming op. Hierdie vergadering beweer dat die gebruik van kelkies die merktekens van die ware kerk (NGB art 29) aantast omdat dit die Woord wat net van die beker praat, verontagsaam. Dit tas dus die suiwer gebruik van die Woord aan! In die lig van ons bespreking tot dusver klink dit byna eensydig-sektaries. Veral as jy jou eie beker – nie die oorspronklike beker waarmee die nagmaal ingestel is nie – na twee, drie of vier vermeerder (of meer vir verskillende gemeentes) en almal nie uit dieselfde beker drink nie!

sonder die Woord die genade van God in 'n mens bewerk (Van der Linde 1983:210).

Die Kerkorde van die NGK is uiters spaarsamig met sy bepalings oor die nagmaal.

NGK-KO artikel 49.2 bepaal net twee dinge: dat die nagmaal minstens vier maal per jaar "in elke gemeente" – hier word nie gepraat van 'n erediens nie – gevier moet word en wie almal tot die nagmaal toegelaat kan word (NGK 2007:22). Hoewel net een sinnetjie, is artikel 49.1 oor die doop meer uitvoerig op die punte wat hier ondersoek word. Hierdie bepaling klink byna soos die DKO oor die bediening van die nagmaal. Dit spreek ook die drie sake waarna in die eerste paragraaf onder hierdie subhografie verwys word, direk aan.

Die doop is – gemeet aan die kerkregtelike konsekwensies van NGKO artikel 49.1 – 'n amptelike kerklike handeling. Volgens hierdie artikel word die doop deur 'n bedienaar van die Woord in die erediens met die gebruikmaking van 'n "goedgekeurde liturgiese formulier" bedien (NGK 2007:21). Met hierdie gebruik van die bedienaar, die erediens en die formulier, is die Woord- en sakramentsbediening as 'n geïntegreerde saak met die bediening van die doop, gehandhaaf.

Die vraag is egter: waarom hierdie verskil by die NGK-KO tussen die doop en die nagmaal? 'n Verskil wat ook later sal blyk uit die NGK se keuse vir 'n oop kommunie.

In sy funksionele sinodebesluite verwys die NGK wel na die viering van die nagmaal en die bediening van die Woord. In terme van ons ondersoek is hierdie bewoording egter nie helder nie. Hier word kortweg gesê dat 'n "volledige erediens" sowel die Woordbediening as die nagmaalviering insluit (NGK 2007:131). Binne die verband waarin dit staan, wil mens aanvaar dat die Woord as 'n integrale deel van die sakramentsbediening beskou word. Dit word egter as twee aparte items verwoord. Die besluit is dus nog glad nie by die lees van 'n goedgekeurde formulier soos by die NGK-KO oor die doop of die DKO en die GKSA-KO oor die nagmaal nie.

Die CRC-KO loop dieselfde rigting as die GKSA-KO, maar is nog duideliker oor die drie dinge wat die integrasie van die Woord met die nagmaal probeer verseker. Volgens die CRC-KO word die nagmaal op gesag van die kerkraad bedien. Dit geskied amptelik in 'n erediens deur 'n bedienaar van die Woord of 'n evangelis⁸ of iemand wat deur die klassis goedgekeur is (Engelhard en Hofman 2001:311). Onder laasgenoemde ressorteer 'n ouderling of diaken wat as sodanig goedgekeur word wanneer die betrokke gemeente dit moeilik vind om 'n predikant of evangelis vir die bediening van die nagmaal te kry (Engelhard en Hofman 2001:313). Die klem val dus op die predikant en die evangelis as bedienaars van die Woord of – in geval van nood – 'n ouderling of diaken wat daarvoor geskik is. Die hoofoogmerk bly die integrasie van Woord en sakrament. Daarom moet die klassis wat ook voornemende bedienaars eksamineer (Engelhard en Hofman 2001:148), hierdie uitsonderings op bedienaars en evangeliste goedkeur.

Die CRC-KO sluit sy artikel 55 met die bepaling dat die bediening van die nagmaal moet plaasvind met die gebruik van sinodaalaanvaarde formuliere waarvan daar variasies kan wees (Engelhard en Hofman 2001:311). Wat die CRC-KO betref, is Woord en sakrament geïntegreer en dit moet so bedien word. Die reëling dat formuliere mekaar kan afwissel kom ook by die NGK voor. Die oogmerk is sekerlik om stagnasie en onbetrokkenheid by lidmate teen te werk (Strauss 2010:99).

Die PKN-KO volg dieselfde lyn as die CRC. Volgens sy ordnansie 7 word die nagmaal deur 'n predikant in die erediens bedien op 'n wyse waarop die kerkraad besluit met die gebruikmaking van "een van de orden" uit die diensboek van die kerk (PKN 2003:107-108). Die drie elemente vir die integrering van die Woord met en in die nagmaal word dus hier gehandhaaf.

4.3 Die geloof van die nagmaalganger

⁸ Die evangelis in die CRC is 'n prediker-dominee-bedienaar wat gebruik word in 'n ontwikkelende of ontluikende nie-gevestigde gemeente. So 'n evangelis word egter, nadat die gemeente gevestig is, mettertyd vervang deur iemand wat voluit dominee is, Engelhard en Hofman 2001:147-149.

Visser stel dit onomwonde dat die GKSA nie 'n "oop" nagmaalstafel het waartoe elkeen wat die "behoefte" het, kan toetree nie. Die nagmaal is 'n heilige sakrament waarvoor die ouderlinge streng toesig moet hou. Daarom moet hulle gereeld huisbesoek doen en in staat wees om oor die lidmate verslag te lewer.

Die GKSA-KO laat alléén diegene tot die nagmaal toe wat volgens die gebruik van die "plaaslike kerk" belydenis van die gereformeerde godsdiens gedoen het en oor 'n goeie getuienis van 'n vrome lewenswandel beskik. Gereformeerde godsdiens impliseer geloof in God Drie-enig en alles wat in die Bybel en in die gereformeerde belydenisskrifte "uitgedruk" word. Dit korrespondeer met die vrae by die af lê van belydenis van geloof. Lidmate uit gemeentes van die GKSA-kerkverband of gereformeerde kerke met wie die GKSA in korrespondensie staan, kan met goeie getuienis dat hulle aan hierdie vereistes voldoen by 'n gereformeerde kerkraad om toelating tot die nagmaal aansoek doen. Lidmate van kerke buite hierdie kringe kan met erkende getuienis ook deur die kerkraad toegelaat word (Visser 1999:237-242; Van der Linde 1983:204-207).

Visser dui aan dat vraag en antwoord 82 van die Heidelbergse Kategismus op hierdie punt dominant is (1999:241). Vraag 82 vra of die mense wat met hulle belydenis en lewe wys dat hulle ongelowig en goddeloos is ook tot die nagmaalstafel toegelaat moet word? Antwoord 82 is "nee" omdat die verbond van God so onheilig en sy toorn teen die hele gemeente opgewek word (NG Kerk-Uitgewers 1982:HK 82, 62). Die punt is dat GKSA-KO die belydenis op hierdie punt óók ernstig neem, al sou iemand wat nie instem met die gereformeerde belydenis nie, nie noodwendig ongelowig en goddeloos wees nie.

Hoe dit ookal sy, GKSA-KO maak erns met die geloof van die ontvanger as die tregter waardeur die nagmaal sy beslag in die mens kry. Met die definiëring van die ware geloof as 'n gewisse kennis van en 'n hartlike vertrouwe in die Christelike boodskap, impliseer GKSA-KO dat die sakrament slegs deur die geloof sy boodskap in die mens kan verseël.

NGK-KO artikel 49.2 bepaal sonder enige verdere verduideliking dat die belydende en dooplidmate van die gemeente wat deur die kerkraad toegelaat is, by die nagmaalstafel mag aansit. Besoekers uit ander NGK-gemeentes en ander kerke is ook welkom (NGK 2007:22). Die NGK handhaaf 'n "oop" kommunie waarin besoekers uitgenooi word wat toegang en vrymoedigheid daartoe in hulle eie gemeentes het (NGK 2007:114). Die verantwoordelikheid om toegang te bepaal, word dus op die individu geplaas. Op hierdie punt ag die NGK toesig deur die kerkraad skynbaar 'n onbegonne taak wat gelaat mag word, terwyl dit nie by toelating tot die doop in die NGK gebeur nie. Die besluit tot 'n oop kommunie spruit beslis nie uit belydenisoorwegings nie – HK vraag en antwoord 82 is beslis nie oorweeg nie – en word selektief net op die nagmaal toegepas.

Die CRC-KO volg tot op groot hoogte dieselfde weg as die GKSA-KO. Daar is egter een uitsondering. Die CRC-KO laat ook dooplidmate tot die nagmaal toe mits hulle hulle geloof in Christus in die openbaar bely het. Hiermee honoreer hulle in elke geval steeds die kerkraad se verantwoordelikheid om toe te sien dat nagmaalgebruikers dit in die geloof doen (Engelhard en Hofman 2001:325).

Die PKN het – soos die NGK – 'n "oop" kommunie. PKN-KO bepaal dat die uitnodiging tot die tafel aan almal gaan wat Jesus Christus bely en "instemmen met de lofprijsing". Die laaste sinsnede is nie duidelik nie, terwyl die "nodiging" die verantwoordelikheid vir toelating ook na die individu verplaas (PKN 2003:107)

Al vier kerkordes hier ter sprake handhaaf die geloof as 'n noodsaaklike ontvangtregter vir die nagmaal as sakrament. Die voorstanders van 'n "oop" kommunie soos die NGK en die PKN laat vaar egter die kerkraad se toesig of verantwoordelikheid in die verband, terwyl dié saak by die GKSA en die CRC steeds 'n kerkerdebepaling is.

4.4 Die werk van die Heilige Gees in die nagmaal

Daar is reeds aangevoer dat 'n kerkorde nie die werk van die Heilige Gees kan beheer of reël nie. 'n Kerkorde bevat bepalinge vir die geloofswerk van die mense van die kerk en is as mensewerk ondergeskik aan die Gees en die werk van die Gees.

Die Woord van God is as Woord van God ook die Woord van die Gees.

Dit beteken dat die Gees eerbiedig word as die Woord eerbiedig word. Woordgetroue of -gebaseerde kerkordebepalinge is daarom ook kanale waardeur die Gees sy Woord in 'n gehoorsame kerk laat vloei. Kanale wat as Woordgetroue kanale ondergeskik en in diens is van die Heilige Gees. Dit gaan by die werk van die Heilige Gees om die tweeling van Woord en Gees wat skerp deur Calvyn raakgesien is (sa III:9,10).

Die ideaal is – soos aangedui – dat dit in die kerk gaan om die Woord as *norma normans*, die belyenisskrifte as hiermee in pas en *norma normata*, dan die kerkorde en besluite van kerkvergaderings. In hierdie volgorde met die laaste drie getrou aan die Woord.

5. SLOT

Dit is duidelik uit die studie van hierdie vier kerkordes oor die bediening van die nagmaal dat die betrokke kerke wisselend gehoor gee aan die gereformeerde belydenis en daarom die konstantes agter die bediening van die nagmaal. Daar is geen konsensus onder hulle oor die impak van die NGB en die HK op bediening van die nagmaal nie. Daarom is daar onderlinge verskille in hulle kerkordebepalinge oor die aanpak van die nagmaal.

Die uitstaande punt van verskil is die relevansie en toepassing van antwoord 82 van die Heidelbergse Kategismus. Verskille oor die toesig van die betrokke kerkraad of gemeente oor die geloof of die leer en lewe (die Kategismus praat van die “belydenis en lewe”) van diegene wat die nagmaal gebruik, lei by die NGK en die PKN tot 'n “oop” kommunie en by die GKSA en CRC tot 'n “geslote” kommunie.

Veral in die NGK is daar 'n duidelike verskil ten opsigte kerklike toesig oor die geloof en lewe van die gebruikers van die sakrament by onderskeidelik die doop en die nagmaal. By gelowige dooplidmate se toelating tot die nagmaal verskil die ander drie kerke van die GKSA.

Daar is ook verskille oor die praktyke in gemeentes om die eenheid van die nagmaal as maaltyd te illustreer. Dit sluit die kwessie van nagmaal “aan tafel” of nie en een of meer bekere of kelkies en brode in.

Die integrering van Woord en sakrament word by al vier kerke gehandhaaf.

Al vier kerke handhaaf die onderskeid tussen belydenismatige konstantes en die praktiese bediening van die nagmaal. Oor hierdie praktiese bediening is daar ruimte vir verskille in gereformeerde kerke. Oor eersgenoemde as kernwaarheid van die geloof is daar egter nie.

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TREFWOORDE

Belydeniswaarhede konstantes vir sakramente

Kerkorde bepaal wyse van bediening

Verskille tussen vier kerke oor verstaan van belydenis

Verskille tussen vier kerke oor wyse van bediening sakramente

KEY WORDS

Confessional truths about sacraments determines way of serving

Church order gives guidance for practical serving

Differences between four churches on confessions and sacraments

Differences between four churches on ways of serving sacraments

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Exchanges in Scotland, the Netherlands, and America: The reception of the *theoretico-practica theologia* and a history of the work of redemption

ABSTRACT

This article explores the theological connections between the Netherlands, Scotland and early America, relevant to academics, translations, publications, correspondence and cross-influences. It provides representative examples of these connections, traces the development and reception of two works that crossed the Atlantic and were known in Scotland, and important for both fields of scholarship, that on Edwards and Post-reformation Reformed studies: The *theoretico-practica theologia* of Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706) and the *Work of the history of redemption* of Jonathan Edwards. The aim is to discover if any undercurrent is present before, during, and after the periods of eighteenth-century intercontinental correspondence and revivals. In particular, the question is raised whether there is a kinship present among these New England, Scottish and Dutch theologians, pastors and religious practitioners - and if so, what kind of kinship?

My friends, if your Ears be open, there are Three Things that you may hear this Day... I. To offer some Remarks concerning the Covenant in general... II. Offer some reasons of the doctrine: the great Mystery of the Covenant of Redemption, ... and III. Draw some Inferences for Application'.²

Thus wrote the eighteenth-century Scottish preacher Ralph Erskine (1685-1752), in a sermon entitled *Christ the people's covenant* - preached (1722), published in Scotland (1725, 1747), translated and published in Holland (1743), received by Jonathan Edwards in a package from Scotland (1749),³ and published at Boston (1770). This example touches on the extent of intercontinental correspondence, publications, translations, and covenant theology. More generally, it relates to two fields of scholarship: Edwards and Post-Reformation studies.

Since about 1980, both the studies on Jonathan Edwards and on the Post-Reformation era have seen a considerable increase and development.⁴ At the same time, however, while scholarship on Edwards seems to suffer from a growing lack of awareness and attention to the fact that eighteenth-century New England is somehow connected to the continental intellectual thought of the seventeenth century - an understanding that was present in the preceding

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2 Erskine, R. (1725) *Christ the people's covenant*, Edinburgh?: n.p., pp. 8, 5; *ibid.* (1770), Boston: William M'Alpine, p. 4.

3 Edwards, J., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*, vol. 32, Letter B78 (Letter from Thomas Foxcroft, June 26, 1749).

4 On Edwards studies see, Minkema, K. P. (2004) 'Jonathan Edwards in the Twentieth Century', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 47 (December), p. 662; On studies of the Post-Reformation era see, Muller, R. A. (2003) *Post-reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, vol. 4, pp. 479-545.

generation⁵ – scholarship on the Post-reformation Reformed period shows a tendency to focus primarily on European developments at the exclusion of early American history and theology, particular that of New England.⁶

In such broad contexts of Edwards and Post-Reformation studies, furthermore, one observes, that, on the one hand, the theologian of Northampton and Stockbridge, while residing at the frontiers of New England, was an active participant of a transatlantic community of evangelical exchanges.⁷ As such, attention has been given to Edwards and the Scottish connection, the possible influence of Edwards upon the Scottish clergy, and the other way around.⁸ The majority of these studies focus on the New England-Scotland epistolary exchanges, and the revivals, though it is recently proposed to include the Netherlands, and in particular the Dutch Great Awakening, in these appraisals.⁹ On the other hand, however, these studies lack the broader historical-theological background, and in particular, of the trajectories and continuities between the Dutch, Scottish and New England proponents of Reformed orthodoxy.

Therefore, this article, first, explores the connections between the Netherlands, Scotland and early America, relevant to academics, translations, publications, correspondence and theological cross-influences. Secondly, to provide representative examples of these connections, it traces the development and reception of two works that crossed the Atlantic and were known in Scotland, and important for both fields of scholarship, that on Edwards and Post-reformation Reformed studies: The *Theoretico-practica theologia* of Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706) and the *Work of the History of Redemption* of Jonathan Edwards. The aim is to discover if any undercurrent is present before, during, and after the periods of eighteenth-century

5 Miller, P. (1938) *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press; Morris, W. S. (1991) *The Young Jonathan Edwards. A Reconstruction*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; rep. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2005; Elwood, D. J. (1960) *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, New York: Columbia University Press; Fiering, N. (1981) *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

6 Early American history and theology would fall within the divisions of the Post-reformation Reformed era proposed by Muller into early orthodoxy (c. 1565-1640), high orthodoxy (c. 1640-1725), and late orthodoxy (ca. 1725-1775). Muller, R. A. (2003), vol. 1, pp. 31-32.

7 Lesser, M. X. (2008) *Reading Jonathan Edwards: An Annotated Bibliography in Three Parts, 1729–2005*, Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Co.

8 On the Edwards-Scotland connection, see Orr, J. (1903) 'Jonathan Edwards; His Influence in Scotland', *Congregationalist and Christian World (1901-1906)*, 88 (October), p. 467; Simonson, H. P. (1987) 'Jonathan Edwards and his Scottish Connections', *Journal of American Studies*, no. 3, vol. 21, pp. 353-376. On Edwards' influence on the Scottish clergy, see Durden, S. (1976) 'A Study of the First Evangelical Magazines, 1740–1748', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 27 (July), pp. 255-275; O'Brien, S. (1986) 'A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755', *The American Historical Review*, 91 (October), no. 4, 811-832. On other networks from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, see Vaudry, R. W. (2003) *Anglicans and the Atlantic World: High Churchmen, Evangelicals, and the Quebec Connection*, Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press. Smith, J. E. (ed.) (1950) *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 2, Religious Affections*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 466, n. 2: 'There are some interesting parallels between the work of the Scottish evangelical ministers of the period and the activities of Jonathan Edwards in New England'.

9 On correspondence, see Mitchell, C. W. (2003) 'Jonathan Edwards's Scottish Connection', in Kling, D. W., and Sweeney, D. A. (eds.) (2003) *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, pp. 222-247. On revivals, see Fawcett, A. (1971) *The Cambuslang Revival. The Scottish Evangelical Revival of the Eighteenth Century*, London: The Banner of Truth Trust. And on the Dutch *Nadere Reformatie*, see van Lieburg, F. (2008) 'Interpreting the Dutch Great Awakening (1749-1755)', *Church History*, 77 (June), no.2, pp. 319-336, which argues that the Dutch revival both is rooted in a Dutch confessional context and connected to events in the Anglo-Saxon world.

intercontinental correspondence and revivals. In particular, is there a kinship present among these New England, Scottish and Dutch theologians, pastors and religious practitioners – and if so, what kind of kinship?

In the first part of this contribution I will thus focus on the context of the completion of the *Theoretico-practica theologia* (henceforth *TPT*), presented within the academic context of Mastricht's stay at Utrecht from 1676 to 1706: the university, colleagues, correspondence and students, particularly as they relate to Scotland and New England, as well as the reception of the *TPT*. In the second part, I place the reception of the *Work of the History of Redemption* (henceforth *HWR*) in the Dutch context of 1776, and review its structure and content in light of the *TPT*, and conclude with some final remarks.

1. THE THEORETICO-PRACTICA THEOLOGIA: CONTEXT AND RECEPTION

The University of Utrecht in the seventeenth century had grown from a humble beginning in 1636 to a prestigious and internationally acclaimed academy by the time of the death of its chancellor and chair of theology, Gisbertus Voetius (1589-1676). For more than forty years Voetius had led the Academy with the motto of his inaugural address of 1636, *Scientia cum pietate conjugenda* ('science [or academics] joined with piety'). The faculty of theology was recognised throughout Europe as the apex of Protestant scholasticism and orthodoxy. Voetius' formative influence, through his *disputationis* on Reformed theology, was widely known and long-remembered, as attested in a letter of 1748 by Thomas Gillespie (1708-74) to Jonathan Edwards.¹⁰ Voetius' colleagues Johannes Hoornbeeck (1617-66) and Andreas Essenius (1618-77) have long been regarded as standing in his shadow as one of the foremost advocates of the *praxis pietatis* of Reformed theology. However, their major works were much admired internationally throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century. New England pastors such as Edwards, and physicians such as Samuel Woodward (1750-1835), read the *Summa controversiarum religionis* of Hoornbeeck, and Essenius' systematic theology, the *Compendium theologiae dogmaticum*, became the standard textbook at the divinity school of the University of Edinburgh in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and formative for a generation of Scottish divinity students, Ralph Erskine (1685-1752) and Thomas Boston (1676-1732) among them.¹¹ Essenius' appointment in 1654 at the Utrecht academy was due to Samuel Rutherford's (1600-61) turning down the chair of the faculty of theology. The senate of the university, the Reformed

10 Printed in Smith, J. E. (ed.) (1959), p. 497: '(what if I remember right *Voetius* terms *obsessio*, and one in that situation *obsessus*)'.

11 For Edwards on Hoornbeeck, see Smith, J. E. (ed.) (1959), pp. 301, 471: 'magistri Menachem Rakanatensis, Sect. Bereschit, ex Midrasch Tehillim, citante Hoornebeckio contra Judæos Lib. 4. Cap. 2. p. 354' (the editor's footnote incorrectly identifies him as Anthony Hornbeck rather than Johannes Hoornbeeck). Woodward owned a copy of the second edition (1658) of Hoornbeeck (1653), *Summa controversiarum religionis: cum infidelibus, haereticis, schismaticis: id est Gentilibus, Iudaeis, Muhammedanis, Papistis, Anabaptistis, Enthusiasticis & Libertinis, Socinianis, Remonstrantibus, Lutheranis, Brownistis, Graecis* (Utrecht: Johannes à Waesberge, owned by G. Williams, 1709, Samuel Woodward 'ex dono Dr. Russell', and A. Holmes, 1817 (private collection); Woodward, a graduate of Yale, is probably the Connecticut doctor from Torrington, who served also as Speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives. On the influence of Essenius' (1669) *Compendium theologiae dogmaticum*, Utrecht: Meinardi à Dreunen, see van Harten, P. H. (1986) *De Predking van Ebenezer en Ralph Erskine. Evangelieverkondiging in het spanningsveld van verkiezing en belofte* ('s-Gravenhage: Boekencentrum, p. 51; and Boston, T. (1776) *Memoirs of the Life, Time, and Writings of the Reverend and Learned Thomas Boston*, Edinburgh: A. Murray, p. 19: 'A few of us, newly entered to the school of divinity, were taught for a time Riissenius's compend, in the professor's [George Campbell] chamber. Publicly in the hall he taught Essenius's compend'.

church, and city council of Utrecht, had tried, during seven months of intense correspondence between Aberdeen and Utrecht, to persuade the Scottish theologian of St. Andrews to come to the Utrecht Academy. Even the Scottish church of Rotterdam consulted with Rutherford's brother, James Rutherford, sergeant of the Scottish garrison based in Holland, in support of the request of the Academy.¹² However, Rutherford stated in a letter to the senate his surprise that the Academy invited him, as there was already an 'eminent theologian' in Utrecht, namely, Essenius. Shortly thereafter, both Voetius and Essenius passed away and Mastricht was called from the University of Duisburg, Germany, to succeed Voetius in the chair of theology.

Mastricht was not unfamiliar with the Utrecht Academy. In 1647, while he came from Cologne to be treated in Utrecht for his crippled foot,¹³ he stayed there for the study of theology under Voetius and Hoornbeeck, the latter his former pastor and catechism teacher at the Reformed and international refugee church at Cologne. Mastricht received a thorough education: didactic-dogmatic theology, which included the *loci communes* as presented in the Leiden *Synopsis purioris theologiae*; an introduction to the *Summa Theologia* of Thomas Aquinas; and an acquaintance with the scholastic *disputationes* of Voetius' Saturday morning teachings. The study programme was a result of Voetius' 1644 publication, *Exercitia et bibliotheca studiosi theologae*, a comprehensive 700-page introduction to theological literature and a five-year programme of theology. In summary, Mastricht received a scholastic methodological schooling, including the knowledge of the medieval scholastic definitions and distinctions, whereby theology must be known and practiced.¹⁴

Before his graduation in 1652 Mastricht, as commonly was done at the time, visited other universities for study, among them Leiden University, where he probably studied under the great covenant theologian Johannes Cocceius (1603-69), and at the universities of Heidelberg and Oxford. Following his graduation he returned to Germany to take up a vicariate at Xanten, Cleve, followed by a five-year pastorate in Glückstadt in the north of Germany on the Denmark border. In Glückstadt, an international transfer point between the Netherlands, Scotland, eastern Germany and the Baltic states, he finished his first major theological treatise, *De Prodromus*.¹⁵ This work shows already the contour of Mastricht's fourfold and integral approach to theology: exegesis, doctrine, elenctic and praxis. Following Glückstadt he served between 1662 and 1677 at the universities of Frankfurt an der Oder and Duisburg, respectively as professor of Hebrew, and Hebrew and philosophy. While at Frankfurt he published a method of preaching,¹⁶ which later became the introductory disputation to his major theological work, the *TPT*, and in Duisburg his major philosophical work *De Gangraena*,¹⁷ a work widely acclaimed, not only by the Reformed church and academy but also by Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians.¹⁸ Furthermore, at

12 Kernkamp, G. W. (ed.) (1938) *Acta et Decreta Senatus Vroedschapsresolutiën en andere bescheiden betreffende de Utrechtsche Academie*, Utrecht: Broekhoff N.V., vol. 1, pp. 262-271.

13 The Dutch word for 'foot' is *voet*. The name Voetius is the Latinised form for Voet.

14 G.W. Kernkamp (1936) *De Utrechtsche Universiteit 1637-1936*, Utrecht: A. Oosterhoek's Uitgevers Maatschappij, vol. 1, p. 233; Muller, R. A. (2003) *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 110-6. Voetius, G. (1736) 'Reedenvoeringe van de Nuttigheit der Akademien en Schoolen, mitsgaders der Wetenschappen en Konsten', in le Long, I. (1736) *Hondert-Jaarige Jubel-Gedachtenisse der Academie van Utrecht*, Utrecht: M. Visch.

15 Van Mastricht, P. (1666) *Theologiae didactico-elenctico-practicæ Prodromus tribus speciminibus*, Amsterdam: Johannes van Someren.

16 Van Mastricht, P. (166?) *Methodus Concionandi*, Frankfurt an der Oder: M. Hübner.

17 Van Mastricht, P. (1677) *Novitatum Cartesianarum Gangraena, Nobiliores plerasque Corporis Theologici Partes arrodens et exedens. Seu Theologia Cartesiana detecta*, Amsterdam: Jansson.

18 See Neele, A. C. (2009) *Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706). Reformed Orthodoxy: Method and Piety*,

Duisburg he commenced in 1676 with *disputationis* on the doctrine of God, which he continued without interruption upon his arrival at the Utrecht Academy in 1677.¹⁹ In Utrecht followed a flow of publications with a wide range of theological topics, such as the nature of theology, Roman Catholic teachings, the work of redemption and the assurance of salvation.²⁰ His work, in the form of disputations, treatises and other publications culminated ultimately in 1699 in his *magnum opus*, the *Theoretico-practica theologia* – a work completed amidst his daily work with his colleagues, correspondence and students.

In 1679, while Maastricht concentrated his teaching on dogmatics, ethics, and church history, the Dutch theologian Herman Witsius (1636-1708) was appointed as professor of theology. Witsius had earned recent fame with his publication, *De œconomia fœderum Dei cum hominibus* (*On the Economy of the Covenant of God with Man*) – an influential work that attempted to reconcile the reigning orthodoxy and covenant theology. Witsius' theological works were greatly appreciated by various Scottish theologians, among them Donald Fraser of Kennoway, translator of Witsius' work *Exercitationes in Symbolum* (*On the Apostles' Creed*), and Thomas Bell of the Relief Church, who, upon advice of Edwards' major correspondent John Erskine D.D. (1720-1803), translated Witsius' *Animadversiones irenicæ* (*Considerations for peace*).²¹ In New England, it was in particular Edwards who also approvingly cited multiple works of Maastricht's colleague, including, *On the Economy of the Covenant*, the *Apostles' Creed*, and *Miscellanea Sacra*, in his writings such as 'Notes on Scriptures', the 'Miscellanies', the 'Blank Bible', and 'Subjects of Inquiry'.²²

In addition, there was for some time an ongoing scholarly correspondence between Harvard

Leiden, Boston: Brill, pp. 42-3.

19 Van Maastricht, P. (1677) *Theologiæ Theoretico-Practicæ disputatio quinta, De Existentiâ Et Cognitione Dei*, Wilhelmus Mercamp, Duisburg: Franc. Sas.; *ibid.* (1677) *De omnisufficientia Dei, pars prior Theologiæ theoretico-practicæ disputatio sexta* Theodorus Groen, Utrecht: Meinardus à Dreunen; *ibid.* (1677) *Theologiæ theoretico-practicæ disputatio septima De essentia, nominibus et attributis Dei in genere, Pars 2*, Balduinus Drywegen, Utrecht: Meinardus à Dreunen.

20 van Maastricht, P. (1678) *Disputationum practicarum prima de certitudine salutis ejusque natura, Johannes Kamerling*, Utrecht: Meinardus à Dreunen; *idem.* (1679) *Disputationum practicarum tertia de certitudine salutis, eique opposita præsumptione seu securitate carnali, pars prima*, David de Volder, Utrecht: Meinardus à Dreunen; *idem.*, (1680) *Ad illust. episcopi Condomensis expositionem doctrinæ, quam vocat, Catholicæ, diatribe prima de consilio auctoris*, Rutgerus van Bommel, Utrecht: Meinardus à Dreunen.

21 Witsius, H. (1681) *Exercitationes sacrae in symbolum quod apostolorum dicitur et in orationem dominicam*, Franeker: n.p., and (1677) *De œconomia fœderum Dei cum hominibus, libri quattuor*, Leeuwarden, Eelcke Symons Nauta Symons for Jacob Hagenaar. Most of these theologians belonged to the Secession churches such as the Burghers, John Brown of Witburn, John Dick, James Peddie as well as anti-Burghers such as Thomas M' Crie, and the Scottish Methodist James Hervey and John Colquhoun of the Church of Scotland. On the influence of Witsius' covenant theology in Scotland see, Van Genderen, J. (1953) *Herman Witsius, bijdrage tot de kennis der Gereformeerde theologie, 's-Gravenhage: Guido de Bres*, pp. 236-40.

22 For references by Edwards to Witsius' works, see, Edwards, J., 'Notes on Scripture' no. 416, in Stein, S. J. (ed.) (1998) *Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 15, 'Notes on Scripture'*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 466; 'Miscellanies' no. 1309, in Sweeney, D. A. (ed.) (2004) *Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 23, The 'Miscellanies'*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 148, 269-72; entries on Acts 16:27-28, I Cor. 14:13, and I Tim. 1:9, in Stein, S. J. (ed.) (2006), *Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 24, The 'Blank Bible'*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 24:981, 1056, 1125; and 'Subjects of Inquiry', in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*, vol. 28.

College of New England and the faculty of theology at University of Utrecht. One topic of exchange concerned the relationship of native American dialects and the Hebrew language, which Maastricht's colleague, the Christian Hebraist Johannes van Leusden (1624-99), rejected. Furthermore, Maastricht was involved in correspondence regarding a gift of Harvard College, John Eliot's 1663 edition of the Algonquin Bible. Moreover, Maastricht wrote approbations, required by Dutch Reformed church order, for the Dutch translation of works by Thomas Shepard of New England, the *Sound Beleever*, and probably *The Sincere Convert*.²³

The international character of the Utrecht academy was constituted in part by the significant presence of Scottish students.²⁴ The harbour city of Rotterdam was a centre of commerce and religious communication, through the Scottish Kirk, between Scotland and Holland since the early 1700s, and served as a safe haven for Scottish exiles preceding the Glorious Revolution of 1688, among them Thomas Halyburton (1674-1712), later divinity professor at St. Andrews.²⁵ Scottish students studied at the Dutch universities at Leiden, primarily for law, and at Utrecht, principally for theology, though transfers between these academies and cooperative studies regularly occurred.

With respect to Leiden, the defence of Maastricht's student, James Hog (c. 1658-1734), a graduate of Edinburgh University, is illustrative.²⁶ He defended on 20 March 1680 a disputation about the assurance of salvation²⁷ in the presence of other Scottish students Thomas Hog, Jacob Kirton, Donald Cargill, and John Dickson, who all studied at Leiden. In addition, this defence was attended by two Reformed ministers. One of them, Jacobus Borstius (1612-80) of Rotterdam, was known for supporting the Scottish nonconformists in that city and advancing the Scottish cause by translating and publishing several Scottish works into Dutch, among them the *History of the Churches of Scotland* as well as works by Rutherford, whose *Examen Arminianismi* was printed

23 On Native American dialects and Hebrew, see Kernkamp, G. W. (ed.) (1938), vol. 2, p. 51; and on the Eliot Bible, see *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 90: "Eodem die," biedt prof. Leusden de Senaat aan "biblia in Americanam linguam translata" en aan de bibliotheek der Utrechtsche Academie ten geschenck aangeboden, met deze inscriptie: "Bibliothecam celeberrimæ apud Ultrajectionos Academiæ hæc sacrorum Bibliorum versione Indica donat Crescentium Matherus, Collegii Harvardini apud Cantabrigienses in Nova Anglia præses pro tempore." Leusden zal namens de Senaat bedanken en Mather "suis conatibus properum rei Christianæ in iis oris successum" toewensen." The Dutch translations of Shepard were published as Shepard, T. (1686) *De Gezonde Geloovige*, Amsterdam: Johannes Boekholt; *ibid.* (1683) *De Ware Bekeering*, Utrecht: Willem Clerck.

24 Kernkamp, G. W. (1936), vol. 1, p. 180. Though we know that the Utrecht senate reprimanded in 1693 seventy to eighty Scottish students – approximately twenty percent of the total number of students – of not attending the Anglican Church services, the *Album Studiosorum* of 1689-1693 shows about a quarter of that number present. See also (1836) *Album studiosorum Academiae rheno-traiectinae MDCXXXVI-MDCCCLXXXVI*, Utrecht: J. Beijers en J. van Boekhoven; du Rieu, W. N. (1875) *Album studiosorum Academiae Lugduno Batavae MDLXXV-MDCCCLXXV*, The Hague: n.p.

25 Young, D. (ed.) (1825) *Memoirs of the Rev. Thomas Halyburton*, Edinburgh: W. Whyte & Co., p. 79.

26 James Hog graduated from Edinburgh University with an M. A. in 1677, and then studied theology in the Netherlands in the 1680s.

27 Van Maastricht, P. (1680) *Disputationum practicarum tertia, de certitudine salutis, eique opposita præsumptione seu securitate carnali*, pars secunda, Jacobus Hoog, Utrecht: Meinardus à Dreunen. James Hog was 'exalted' in the student records of Utrecht from Hog to (Jacobus) Hoog. He was considered as 'one of the holiest ministers in the kingdom [of England and Scotland] having published or recommended the celebrated and edifying tract of the Cromwellian age, called *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*'. Cf.

Fisher, E. (12th ed., 1726) *The Marrow of Modern Divinity*, with notes by Thomas Boston, Edinburgh[?]: n.p.; rep. Seoul, New York: Westminster Publishing House, p. 344; Hog, J. (1947), *Wet en Evangelie*, trans. E. Kuyk, Amsterdam: Kuyk, p. 5.

first at Utrecht for the benefit of the Scottish students of divinity there.²⁸ The other minister was Jacobus Koelman (1632–95), a prolific theologian and translator of multiple works of Scottish theologians into Dutch, such those of the Glasgow professor of philosophy and preacher Hugh Binning (1627–53), David Dickson (1583-1662), professor of divinity of the College of Glasgow and University of Edinburgh William Guthrie (1620-1665), and also Rutherford. In addition, Koelman introduced the translations of the works of Thomas Hooker of New England to the Dutch religious public.²⁹

Another example showing that students alternated between universities is Colonel John Erskine, the grandfather of John Erskine D.D., Edwards' primary correspondent in Scotland. Colonel Erskine studied law at the Utrecht Academy in 1686-7 but also attended lectures of theology by Maastricht and visited him several times with fellow Scottish students.³⁰ He notes, for example, in his diary on 7 June 1686, 'I was a while with Professor van Maastricht: he was very kind and I do take him to have true religion'. However, most of Maastricht's Scottish students did not recall him, an exception being James Hog, who appealed to his teacher during the *Marrow* controversy.³¹

In this academic and international setting at Utrecht, replete with Scottish students and New England correspondence, Maastricht completed his life-long project, a work written over a period of thirty years. Commenced at Glückstadt and finished at Utrecht in 1699, his *magnum opus*, the *Theoretico-practica theologia*, became a major and influential work of Protestant scholastic and Reformed orthodoxy of *theoretico-practica* theology.³² He could not have envisioned the

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- 28 For an extensive discussion on the Scottish churches in the Netherlands, see Sprunger, K. L. (1982) *Dutch Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 388-390, 431-439. And on Borstius, see van der Haar, J. ed.) (1985) 'Jacobus Bortius', in *Het Blijvende Woord*, Dordrecht: Gereformeerde Bijbelstichting, p. 35. Rutherford, S. (1668) *Examen Arminianismi conscriptum et discipulis dictatum a doctissimo clarissimoque viro*, Utrecht: n. p. This work received the imprimatur of Voetius and Essenius. See Ryken, P. G. (1999) 'Scottish Reformed Scholasticism', in Trueman, C. R., and Clark, P. G. (eds) (1999), *Protestant Scholasticism, Essays in Reassessment*, Carlisle: Paternoster Press, p. 202.
- 29 Binning, H. (1678) *Ettelyke gronden van de christelycke religie, klaerlyck geopent, en sonderling tot de practijck gebracht*, trans. Jacobus Koelman, Vlissingen: Abraham van Laren, and Amsterdam: Mercy Brouwning; *ibid.* (1680) *De ware gemeenschap met God en de geloovigen*, Vlissingen: Abraham van Laren; *ibid.* (1695) *Des zondaars heyligdom, of: ontdekking van de heerlijke privilegiën, aangeboden aan de boetvaardige en gelovige, onder 't Evangelium, in veertig predikatiën over Rom. VIII. vers 1-15*, trans. Jacobus Koelman, Utrecht: Wed. van Willem Klerck. On Koelman, see Krull, A. F. (1901) *Jacobus Koelman. Eene Kerkhistorische Studie*, Sneek: J. Campen. On Dickson, see Dickson, D. (1686) *Het Euangelium van Mattheus, kortelyk verklaart*, trans. Jacobus Koelman, Utrecht: W. Clerck. On Guthrie, see Guthrie, W. (1672) *Des Christens Groot Interest*, trans. Jacobus Koelman, Vlissingen: Abraham van Laren. And on Rutherford, see Rutherford, S. (1674) *De brieven van Samuel Rhetorfort*, trans. Jacobus Koelman, Vlissingen: Abraham van Laren; *ibid.* (1687) *De laatste brieven van Samuel Rhetorfort*, trans. Jacobus Koelman, Amsterdam: Johannes Boekholt. Koelma's translations of Hooker included Hooker, T. (1678) *De Waare Ziels-Vernedering, en Heilzame Wanhoop*, trans. Jacobus Koelman, Amsterdam: J. Wasteliërs; *ibid.* (1681) *De arme twijfelende Christen, genadert to Christus*, Amsterdam: J. Wasteliërs.
- 30 Macleod, W. (ed.) (1893) *Journal of the Hon. John Erskine of Carnock*, Edinburgh: University Press for the Scottish Historical Society, pp. 192; 184 (April 6, 1686): 'I was seeing professor Van Maastricht, with Mr. Melvel and Pardiven. He gave a large testimony of the church of Scotland, particular to the church discipline, affirming to be the purest that has been since the apostles days; p. 219, (January 4, 1687): 'I was seeing Professor Van Maastricht who was most civil and kind to me, and useful company'.
- 31 A Scottish ecclesiastical dispute occasioned by Hog's republication, upon the recommendation of Thomas Boston, in 1718 of *The Marrow of Modern Divinity* by Edwards Fisher.
- 32 Van Maastricht, P. (1699) *Theoretico-practica theologia: qua, per singula capita theologica, pars*

favourable reception of his *TPT* throughout Europe, and that the work particularly would be recognised and approvingly cited by eighteenth-century theologians in Scotland and even New England.

Edwards, 'America's theologian', wrote in 1746 to his student and colleague Joseph Bellamy (1719-90): 'But take Mastricht for divinity in general, doctrine, practice and controversy; or as a universal system of divinity; and it is much better than Turretin or any other book in the world, excepting the Bible, in my opinion'.³³ Though this quote may be the most cited but least explained appraisal of Mastricht in Edwards scholarship, one has to realise that Edwards reiterated a common understanding among the New England theologians. Take, for instance, the generous praise of Cotton Mather (1663-1728) in his *Manuductio ad Ministerium*: 'But after all there is nothing that I can with so much Plerophorie Recommend unto you, as a Mastricht, his *Theologia Theoretico-practica*... I know not that the Sun has ever shone upon an Humane Composure that is equal to it'. Mather had written an earlier and grandiose opinion on the *TPT* to a Dutch merchant at Albany, New York: 'The world has never yet seen so valuable a system of divinity... 'Tis orthodox, 'tis concise, 'tis complete. In one word it is everything'.³⁴

Mather's commendation of Mastricht's *TPT* was echoed from Boston into the valleys of New England, throughout the eighteenth century and later, by Benjamin Colman (1673-1747), Joseph Secombe (1706-60), the anonymous editor of the only English translation of a chapter from the *TPT*, entitled *On Regeneration*, and Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803).³⁵ Mastricht's work of theology was probably used by Bellamy,³⁶ and extensively read. Edwards' 'Account Book' records that he lent the work repeatedly, and Edward Amasa Park (1808-1900), at the close of the nineteenth century, notes that Jonathan Edwards Jr. (1745-1801) read the *TPT* seven times.³⁷ Edwards, Sr.,

exegetica, dogmatica, elenchica et practica, perpetua successione conjugantur; accedunt historia ecclesiastica, plena quidem, sed compendiosa, idea theologiae moralis, hypotyposis theologiae asceticae etc proin opus quasi novum. Ed. nova, priori multo emendatior et plus quam tertia parte auctior; Utrecht: Thomas Appels.

33 For this letter, along with two other relevant letters by Edwards to Bellamy on 11 June 1747 and 9 Jan. 1749, see Claghorn, G. S. (ed.) (1998) *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 16, *Letters and Personal Writings*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 216-7, 223, 266.

34 Mather, C. (1726) *Manuductio ad Ministerium. Directions for a candidate of the ministry: Wherein, first, a right foundation is laid for his future improvement; and, then, rules are offered for such a management of his academical & preparatory studies; and thereupon, for such a conduct after his appearance in the world; as may render him a skilful and useful minister of the Gospel*, Boston: Thomas Hancock, p. 85; Silverman, K. (1971) *Selected Letters of Cotton Mather*; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, p. 306.

35 Colman, B. (1736) *A Dissertation on the Image of God wherein Man was created*, Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, pp. 27, 28; Hopkins, S. (1793) *The system of doctrines: contained in divine revelation, explained and defended: showing their consistence and connection with each other: to which is added, A treatise on the millennium*, Boston: Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer T. Andrews, p. 769; Secombe, J. (1742) *Some Occasional Thoughts on the Influence of the Spirit with Seasonable Cautions against Mistakes and Abuses*, Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, the title page of which has the epigram: 'oportet intelligentem, phantasmata speculari. Van Mastricht'; van Mastricht, P. (n.d. [1770?]) *A Treatise on Regeneration. Extracted from his System of Divinity, called Theologia theoretico-practica; and faithfully translated into English; With an APPENDIX containing Extracts from many celebrated Divines of the reformed Church, upon the same Subject*, New Haven: Thomas and Samuel Green, p. v.

36 Bellamy, J. (1853) *The Works of Joseph Bellamy, D.D.* Boston: Doctrinal Tract and Book Society, vol. 1, p. xiv, n. *. Tyron Edwards (1809-1894) notes that Edwards, Sr. lent a copy of Mastricht's work to Bellamy. See Haykin, M. A. G. (ed.) (2007) *A Sweet Flame. Piety in the Letters of Jonathan Edwards*, Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, p. 85, n. 2.

37 Thuesen, P. J. (ed.) (2008), *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 26, *Catalogues of Reading*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 339, 340; Park, E. A. (1852) 'New England Theology', *Bibliotheca*

however, referring in his 'Catalogue' of Reading to the *TPT* as a 'Body of Divinity',³⁸ frequently concurs throughout his corpus with the *TPT*. These connections, as I have argued elsewhere,³⁹ are related to an Edwardsean understanding of the covenant of grace.

In respect to Scotland, the 'Marrowmen', such as Ralph Erskine (1685-1752) and John Brown of Haddington (1722-1787), were favourable towards Mastricht's thought on the doctrine of the covenant, probably influenced by Mastricht's student James Hog – a Scottish interest that continued even into the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ The influence of Mastricht upon Ralph Erskine's intellectual thought is significant. In his theological debate with James Robe on the question, 'Is an imaginary idea of Christ's human body helpful to faith or is it idolatrous?',⁴¹ Erskine wrote an extensive treatise entitled *Faith no Fancy*. In it he relies profoundly on three Dutch philosophers to demonstrate his epistemology, namely, Mastricht's colleague at Utrecht, Gerard de Vries; his Leiden colleague Adriaan Heereboord, whose book on logic was used in Edwards' days at Yale College; and the 'learned' Mastricht, both the *TPT* and *De Gangraena*.⁴² More explicit is Erskine's theological thought, as explicated in his sermons, with a strong emphasis on the covenant, such as *Christ the people's covenant*, a sermon published in Scotland, Holland and New England. In this communion sermon, Erskine, like Mastricht, moves from the biblical text explication to the formulation of doctrine, followed by a practical application. Though such sermon structure is not that unusual in the Reformed theological trajectory, Erskine espouses a view similar to Mastricht's rather unique, in the context of 17th-century Reformed dogmatics, exposition of the work of redemption, the covenant of grace, both throughout history and with an application for

Sacra, 9 (January), pp. 170-220. See also Sweeney, D. A., and Guelzo, A. C. (eds) (2006) *The New England Theology: From Jonathan Edwards to Edwards Amasa Park*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, p. 261.

38 Thuesen (ed.) (2008), p. 152.

39 Neele, A. C. (2009) *Petrus van Mastricht (1630-1706). Reformed Orthodoxy: Method and Piety*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, pp. 316-20.

40 On the Marrowmen, see Macleod, J. (1974) *Scottish Theology: In relation to Church History*, Edinburgh: Knox Press, p. 152. On Erskine, see Erskine, E. (1805) *Faith no fancy, or, A treatise of mental images: discovering the vain philosophy and vile divinity of a late pamphlet entitled [sic] Mr. Robe's fourth letter to Mr. Fisher; and showing that an imaginary idea of Christ as man (when supposed to belong to saving faith, whether in its act or object), imports nothing but ignorance, atheism, idolatry, great falsehood, and gross delusion*, Philadelphia: William M'Culloch, p. 31; Kennedy, J. (1979) *The Days of the Fathers in Ross-shire*, Inverness: Christian Focus Publications, p. 134: 'They [the Ross-shire fathers] had no difficulty in regarding the Sacrament of the Supper, as intended by the Lord, specially to seal something other and higher than that which is specially sealed by baptism. They called it, with Mastricht, 'sacramentum nutritionis'; and van Valen, L. J. (1982) *Gelijk de Dauw van Hermon*, Zwijndrecht: Het Anker, tweede druk, p. 476. On John Brown, see Brown, J. (2002) *The Systematic Theology*, introduced by Joel R. Beeke and Randall J. Pederson, Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, p. [j]. On Hog, see Hog, J. (c. 1710) *Aenmerking over de werking des H. Geests, en het onderscheyd tusschen de wet en 't evangelium, sijnde het korte sommier van sommige huys-oeffeningen over Gal. 3: 2*, trans. Jan Claus, n.p.; Lachman, D. C. (1988) *The Marrow Controversy*, Edinburgh: Rutherford House, pp. 125, 126. On the continuity of the covenant theology in Scotland, see Henderson, G. D. (1955) 'The Idea of the Covenant in Scotland', *The Evangelical Quarterly*, vol. 27, pp. 2-14, the central argument of which is that the term 'covenant' is a keyword for Scottish theological thought, both individually and communally.

41 La Shell, J. (1985) 'Imaginary Ideas of Christ: A Scottish-American Debate', Ph. D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, p. 109.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 149. For Edwards and Heereboord, see Anderson, W. A. (1970) *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 6, Scientific and Philosophical Writings*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 13. For Erskine's use of Mastricht, see Erskine, R. (1805), pp. 240-41.

the believer.⁴³ Erskine exhorts that the God of the covenant is not forgetting Scotland throughout history, in particular the people of Dunfermline, 'with a view to the sealing of the covenant'.⁴⁴ Moreover, Erskine, like Mastricht, understands the sacrament of holy communion as a covenant renewal.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the reception of the TPT in Scotland attests that the Dutch theologians, among them Mastricht, exerted considerable influence on Scottish theology. As one scholar of Scottish religious history has noted, 'Covenant theology which had been imported from Holland, and was destined to occupy a prominent place in the orthodox school in Scotland'.⁴⁶ Thus far, we have seen that the context of the development of Mastricht's TPT shows continuing interaction with Scotland and New England, in correspondence, and among colleagues and students. Its reception was more positive in New England than in Scotland. Though Mastricht's work was acknowledged by three generations of eighteenth-century theologians and pastors in New England, it is in scholarship 'often mentioned but rarely explored'.⁴⁷

Mastricht's *magnum opus* consists of two parts: the first part comprises eight books, which could be described as systematic theology, or as Mastricht states, addressing the nature of faith.⁴⁸ The second major section concerns the character of obedience, presented as an outline of moral theology and *theologia ascetica*. These two parts, that of faith and obedience, reflect Mastricht's defining theology as the 'art of living to God', and in turn consist of two aspects: how one is made spiritually alive and, being alive, how one lives unto God (*Deo vivere*).⁴⁹ In regard to systematic theology, Mastricht appears to follow the division of the six Reformed *loci* of theology, with these significant differences: first, faith is not discussed in the context of soteriology but as a commencement of the discussion of theology proper. Secondly, each *locus* is presented in four parts: exegesis, doctrine, polemic and *praxis*. The formulation of doctrine and practice is a result of and is guarded, for Mastricht, by the exegesis of Scripture. Thirdly, and contrary to what one may expect of a Post-reformation Reformed *systema*, the work lacks a chapter entitled 'eschatology'; instead, the last chapter is called *De dispensatione foederis gratiae* ('On the dispensations of the covenant of grace'). This chapter consists of a grand narrative from the creation account to Mastricht's own time, and attests to a broad international and up-to-date interest in historical, philosophical, and theological publications.

Mastricht moves in four major sections from the dispensation under the patriarchs and

43 On Reformed sermon structure, see See, for example, Kinnach, W. H. (1992) *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 10, Sermons and Discourses, 1723-1729*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 28-36. For Mastricht on the work of redemption, see *TPT*, bk. V.1 (believer), and bk. VIII (history).

44 Erskine, R. (1725, 1770), p. 4: '[God] commends [Christ] for an able Saviour, that will through his work . . . not [be] forgetting Scotland'. See *TPT*, bk. VII.5, pp. 829-845; and Erskine, R. (1725, 1770), p. 4:

[There] is a company of people meeting in *Dunfermline*, about a communion-table'. See also pp. 15, 26.

45 Erskine, R. (1725, 1770), p. 56: 'consider, that you have a good claim and right to this covenant . . . you are welcome to it'.

46 Story, R. H. (ed.) (1890?), *The Church of Scotland, Past and Present*, London: William Mackenzie, p. 216.

47 Minkema, K. P. (ed.) (1997) *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 14, Sermons and Discourses, 1723-1729*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 45: 'The influence of these two authors [Mastricht and Turretin] on JE is often mentioned but rarely explored. Their works included Turretin's *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae* (3 vols., Geneva, 1680-83) and van Mastricht's *Theoretico-Practica Theologia* (Utrecht, 16[99])'.

48 *TPT*, Prologus, 1102: 'Fidei naturam, octo libris hactenus expeditimus'.

49 *Ibid.*, bk. I.1.i, p. 1: 'Theologia . . . est doctrina deo vivendi per Christum'. The definition of theology as bene vivendi is, according to Sprunger, the kernel of theology influenced by Peter Ramus (1515-1572).

Sprunger, K. L. (1966) 'Ames, Ramus, and the Method of Puritan Theology', *Harvard Theological Review*, 59 (April), pp. 148-51. On the trajectory of this definition, see Muller (2003), vol. 1, pp. 154-8.

Moses to Christ and ends with a treatment on the dispensation of eternity. In the first section, he is concerned with the propagation, theology and heresies of the covenant of grace in the era from Adam to Noah to Abraham to Moses.⁵⁰ In the second section, he enlarges the discussion by including sacred and world history as well as the progress and regress of this covenant during the period of Moses to David; David to the Babylonian captivity;⁵¹ and the latter to the coming of Christ. The third section, the dispensation of Christ, is the largest of the chapter, in which Mastricht blends theology, sacred and world history, typology and shadows, confessions and creeds, heresies, persecutions, schisms, the rise and fall of the antichrist, and Roman Catholic and Islamic theology, into one and continuing expanding narrative.⁵² However, in each section he notes explicitly the propagation or progress, renovation or renewal of the covenant of grace throughout the ages,⁵³ whereby his exposition of the dispensation of Christ coincide with an analysis of the Apocalypse chapter six and the dispensation of eternity with an exposition of the Apocalypse chapter seven to eleven. In particular, this section of Mastricht's exposition of the dispensations of the covenant of grace differed with a work of one of his students, Moses Lowman (c. 1680-1752), whose work *Paraphrase and Notes on the Revelation* became one of Edwards' major sources for both his 'Notes on the Apocalypse' and *An Humble Attempt*.⁵⁴

Mastricht's view on theology and history, or the development of the covenant of grace, is based on the work of redemption. He notes that the exposition of the dispensation of the covenant rests upon and extends his discussion of the application of the work of redemption, as expounded in the preceding book five, based on Genesis 3:15.⁵⁵

One should note, however, that the presentation of church history throughout several dispensations was not uncommon in Post-reformation Reformed theology, as seen in Frederick Spanheim (1632-1701), Mastricht's colleague at University, whose *Historica Ecclesiastica* Mastricht praises.⁵⁶ Further, to present the history of the church in relation to the covenant of grace was worked out to a great extent by Johannes Cocceius,⁵⁷ Mastricht's former teacher at Leiden University. In addition, the exposition of the Apocalypse in relation to church history

50 *TPT*, bk. VIII.1.xi, p. 866, 'Primum ergo, epochae patriarchalis curriculum...'; *ibid.*, xx, p. 875:

'Secundò hîc consideranda venit series Patriarcharum, [note] sub quâ Ecclesia fuit per hoc curriculum. In hac primus est Noachus'; *ibid.*, xxii, p. 879: 'Tertium curriculum periodi patriarchalis, [note] profuit ab Abrahamo ad Mosis nativitate'.

51 For example, *ibid.*, bk. VIII.2.xxvi, p. 908: 'Secundum ergo epochae Mosaicae curriculum, à Davide pergit usque ad captivitatem babilonicam'.

52 On theology, for example, see *ibid.*, bk. VIII.2.xxv, p. 906: 'Contemplati sumus statum Theologiae & Religionis'; on history, *ibid.*, bk. VIII.3.xliii, p. 1051: 'Quartum impetum in Theologiam reformatam, faciunt Iesuitae, ut iam de universo papismo seu Antichristianismo'; and on Roman Catholi theology, *ibid.*, bk. VIII.2.xxvii, p. 918: 'De quibus videri potest Greg. Nazianzenus Orat. Cont. Iulianum, & Virgilius Aeneid. XI. item Plinius lib. VII. cap. 2'.

53 On the progress and renewal of the covenant, see, for example, *ibid.*, bk. VIII.3.xxi, p. 962: 'Quantum ad Statum Ecclesiae, sub hac aetate; occurrunt penes eam (1) Propagatio Ecclesiae, talis ac tanta'; and *ibid.*, bk. VIII.2.xvii, p. 896, 'Primum ergo foedus, apud Sinai renovatum'.

54 Stein, S. J. (ed.) (1977), *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 5, Apocalyptic Writings*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 55-59. Lowman studied theology under Mastricht in 1698.

55 *TPT*, bk. V.1.i, p. 389: 'Foedus gratiae pandemus in prima promissione, protoplastis peccatoribus . . . quae prostat Gen. III. 15'.

56 *Ibid.*, praefatio; Spanhemii, F. (1689) *Summa historiae ecclesiasticae. A christo nato ad seculum XVI inchoatum. Praemittitur doctrina temporum, cum oratione de christianismo degenerare*, Leiden: Johannes Verbessel.

57 Cocceius, J (1665) *Summa Theologiae, Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et Testamento Dei*, Geneva: Sumptibus Samuelis Chouët; on the structure of Cocceius' covenant theology, see van Asselt, W. (2001) *The Federal Theology of Johannes Cocceius (1603-1669)*, Leiden: Brill.

was also done by Maastricht's contemporary Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711).⁵⁸ However, Maastricht stood apart in his time, in that he merged the history of the church and the covenant of grace with sacred and world history concurrently and in concert with the exposition on the Apocalypse:⁵⁹ an approach of which he writes, 'I had planned for long... a great work about the adventures of the Church'.⁶⁰

In summary, Maastricht's work contained a fairly strong and rather unique notion of the covenant of grace throughout history. This theological notion was a part of his overall system of *theoretico-practica* theology, whereby history was understood as theology. This Latin tome was translated into Dutch in 1749, prefaced by Cornelis van der Kemp (1702-72), pastor and professor of theology at Rotterdam: 'Here, the major parts of theology are brought together in a manner not seen before; why this book is called a universal system of divinity; 'tis called a treasure, a storehouse... for the perfection of the theologian'.⁶¹

2. THE HISTORY OF THE WORK OF REDEMPTION: CONTEXT AND RECEPTION

The entire translation of Maastricht's work took place between 1749 and 1753, which context is a part of the reception of the Dutch translation and publication in 1776 of Edwards' work, *The History of the Work of Redemption*.

First, the publication of Maastricht's work was accompanied in the period from 1740 to 1760 – corresponding to the New England and Scottish revivals – with translations of various Scottish authors such as Ralph and Ebenezer Erskine, Thomas Halyburton, Josiah Smith, and Edwards' correspondent, James Robe (1688-1753).⁶²

Secondly, in addition to the publishers, three other persons were involved in this translation enterprise: Hugh Kennedy (1698–1764), the pastor of the Scottish church at Rotterdam, whose publications were critically received by Edwards; the translator Mr. Jan Ross, assumed to be a member of the Scottish church at Rotterdam; and the pastor and philosopher-theologian at Woubrugge, Alexander Comrie (1706-74), a Scot by birth, having as his catechism teacher Ralph Erskine and Thomas Boston (1676-1732), whose major works he translated into Dutch.⁶³ One

58 à Brakel, W. (1700) *Logike latreia, dat is, Redelyke godtsdienst, in welken de goddelyke waerheden des Genadeverbonds worden verklaert, tegen partyen beschermt, en tot de practyke aengedrongen. Als mede de bedeeelingen des verbonds in het O.T., ende in het N.T. ende de ontmoetingen der kerke in het N.T., vertoont in eene verklaringe der Openbaringe van Johannes*, Rotterdam: Reynier van Doesburgh.

59 *TPT*, praefatio: 'Adspersa est libro octavo, de dispensatione foederis gratiae per omnia Ecclesiae secula, historia Ecclesiastica, plena quidem'.

60 *Ibid.*: 'Occeperam dudum quasi pro commentario, in brevioris prioris editionis epitomen, opus satis copiosum de *Fatis Ecclesiae*'.

61 Van Maastricht, P. (1749-53) *Beschouwende en praktikale godgeleerdheit: waarin, door alle de godgeleerde hoofdstukken henen, het bybelverklarende, leerstellige, wederleggende, en praktikale deel door eenen onafgebroken schakel, onderscheidenlyk samengevoegt, voorgesteld word; hierby komt een volledig kort-begrip der kerklyke geschiedenis, een vertoog der zedelyke, en een schets der plichtvermenende godgeleerdheit, enz.; in het Latyn beschreven; naar den laatsten druk in het Nederduitsch vertaalt, benevens de lykrede van den vermaarden hoogleeraar Henricus Pontanus, over het afsterven van den hoogwaardigen aetheur; met eene voorrede van den heer Cornelius van der Kemp*, 4 vols., Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt; Utrecht: Jan Jacob van Poolsum, vol. 1, preface, p. 3.

62 The bibliography of translations of just these few authors is extensive, but instructive, and has not hitherto been fully enumerated. See the Appendix to the essay.

63 Kennedy, H. (1752) *A short account of the rise and continuing progress of a remarkable work of grace in the United Netherlands. In several letters from the Reverend Mr Hugh Kennedy ... to some of his correspondents in Scotland and at London. In the epistle to the reader, there are some seasonable observations*, London: printed for John Lewis; *ibid.* (1743) *A discourse concerning the nature, author,*

thing these publications have in common: a particular attention to the covenant of grace. In particular, the communion sermons aimed for a personal, and sometimes national, 'covenant renewal'.⁶⁴

Thirdly, these publications and Maastricht's translated works were widely read during the time of the Dutch Great Awakening, and in the same period approvingly cited by Edwards of Northampton,⁶⁵ whose account of David Brainerd appeared in 1756 in the Dutch language, also translated by Jan Ross but published at Utrecht.⁶⁶ The probable reason for this location of publication was the presence of Gisbertus Bonnet (1723-1803), the second successor of Maastricht at the University of Utrecht and correspondent of John Erskine, D. D., of Scotland.⁶⁷ At the very least, Bonnet was instrumental in another publication of Edwards, the *History of the Work of Redemption* in 1776, the structure and content of which does not deviate that much from Maastricht's discussion of the dispensations of the covenant of grace.

The *HWR* originated in 1739 as a series of sermons—or, more accurately, a single sermon delivered on thirty consecutive 'preaching occasions'. After Edwards' death, the sermon manuscripts remained for a while in the custody of Joseph Bellamy, who eventually passed them on to Jonathan Edwards, Jr. He transcribed them and sent them to John Erskine, D. D., in Scotland, where they were tailored into a 'continuing treatise' and published in Edinburgh for W. Gray in 1774.⁶⁸ John F. Wilson remarks, 'Erskine may never have known how relatively

means and manner of conversion. Prefixed to the Dutch translation of A faithful narrative of the extraordinary work of the spirit of God at Kilsyth, Written by J. Robe, Edinburgh: R. Fleming and A. Alison.

On Ross, see Nemansky, P. (1992) 'Jan Ross. Een achttiende-eeuwse vertaler van Engelse piëtische lectuur', *Documentatieblad Nadere Reformatie*, vol. 16, no. 1 (voorjaar), pp. 43-53; *Geschiedenis van de Schotse Kerk te Rotterdam*, doopboek <http://www.scotsintchurch.com/sicarchives/INDEX>, accessed March 16, 2009; J. van Valen, personal communication, 14 March 2009. For Thomas Boston, see the Appendix to this essay. On Comrie, see Honig, A.G. (1892, 1991) *Alexander Comrie*, Utrecht: H. Honig; rep. Leiden: Groen en Zn.

64 See the Appendix to this article.

65 For references to Boston, see Claghorn, G. S. (ed.) (1998), pp. 235, 20:461; Stein, S. J. (ed.) (2006), p. 460; "Controversies" Notebook, in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online* vol. 27, p. 44. To Ebenezer Erskine, see Smith, J. E. (ed.) (1959), p. 72; Hall, D. D. (ed.) (1994) *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 12, Ecclesiastical Writings*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 330. To Ralph Erskine, Goen, C. C. (ed.) (1972), *Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 4, The Great Awakening*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 538; Hall, D. D. (ed.) (1994), p. 330; Claghorn, G. S. (ed.) (1998), p. 662. To Thomas Halyburton, Chamberlain, A. (ed.) (2000), *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 18, The "Miscellanies", 601-832*, New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 90. And to James Robe, Goen, C. C. (ed.) (1972), p. 535; Claghorn, G. S. (ed.) (1998), p. 105.

66 Edwards, J. (1756) *Historisch verhaal van het godvruchtig leven en den zaligen dood, van den eerwaarden heer David Brainerd, onlangs bedienaar des evangeliums en leeraar eener gemeente van christen indianen, te Nieuw-Jersey, alles getrokken uit zyn eigen dag-register, en andere byzondere schriften, welke tot zyn eigen gebruik waren opgesteld*, trans. Jan Ross, preface by G. v. Schuylenborgh, Utrecht: Jan Jacob van Poolsum.

67 This is another major network, not only between Scotland and the Netherlands, but between Utrecht and the Middle Colonies. G. v. Schuylenborgh was pastor near Utrecht, and was involved in translations of some works of Edwards and, during his study of theology at Utrecht University, provided lodging for Johannes Frelinghuysen, son of Theodorus Frelinghuysen, who was introduced by Schuylenborgh to his wife to be, Dina van den Bergh, who joined him to Newark. On Dina van den Bergh, see House, R. and Coakly, J. (eds) (1999) *Patterns and Portraits: Women in the History of the Reformed Church in America*, Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, pp. 33-51.

68 Wilson, J. F. (ed.) (1989) *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 9, A History of the Work of Redemption*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 21-6.

unfinished and incomplete some sections of the Redemption Discourse actually were' – a remark that may also apply for the Dutch edition. Erskine, after acquiring the Dutch language for his correspondence, had in turn sent a copy to Bonnet at Utrecht,⁶⁹ where it was almost immediately translated by Engelbert Nooteboom into Dutch and published by the university printer Abraham van Paddenburg in 1776, prior to the first American edition of 1786. But more notably, the Dutch interest in New England theology continued in the eighteenth century after Edwards' death.

Edwards's sermons two to twelve, like Mastricht's first two major sections on the dispensation of the covenant of grace, moves from the fall to Noah to Abraham to Moses to David to the Babylonian captivity to the coming of Christ.⁷⁰ Here, not only in structure but also in content Edwards was firmly within his theological tradition by commencing the covenant of grace with Genesis 3:15, the *proto evangelium*. Mastricht not only begins with this text but he used it also as the Scriptural foundation for his entire exposition of the preceding chapter on *De Foedere Gratia*.⁷¹ Mastricht comments, although the 'form or the name is not yet present', this text contains 'all the material and essential parts of the covenant of grace'.⁷² Likewise, according to Edwards, Christ began his mediatorial work as soon as mankind fell, and the 'gospel was first revealed on earth, in these words, Genesis 3:15'.⁷³ Edwards calls this 'the first revelation of the covenant of grace'.⁷⁴ an echo of Mastricht, when he writes, 'immediately after the fall [was] established a covenant of grace'.⁷⁵

The next major section of Edwards' work, sermons fourteen to twenty-four focuses on Christ's incarnation to his own time: Mastricht collectively treats this period in his discussion on the dispensation under Christ. Both *TPT* and *HWR* show similarities in content about the time of Christ till the Protestant Reformation. Illustrative is the discussion on the Reformation, where both Mastricht and Edwards note the Roman Catholic opposition, specifically but not limited to the Council of Trent,⁷⁶ as well as wars⁷⁷ and persecutions.⁷⁸ Furthermore, both identify the rise of the Socinians and Arminians as hostile to Reformed teachings.⁷⁹ On the other hand, the success of the gospel shows for Mastricht and Edwards a reformation in doctrine and worship.⁸⁰

Finally, Mastricht has a separate discussion on the time to come, *de dispensatione sub aeternitate*, an application of the work of redemptive history that addresses the continuation of

69 Wellwood, H. M. (1818) *Account of the Life and Writings of John Erskine D.D.*, Edinburgh: George Ramsay & Co., p. 315: 'He had, for many years, carried on a correspondence with learned men on the Continent, with Professor Bonnet of Utrecht'.

70 Wilson, J. F. (ed.) (1989), pp. 532-3.

71 *TPT*, bk. V.1.i, pp. 389-409.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 389: 'Foedus gratiae pandemus in prima promissione, protoplastis peccatoribus . . . quae prostat Gen. III. 15'.

73 Wilson, J. F. (ed.) (1989), p. 132.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 133.

75 *TPT*, bk. V.1.i, p. 389: 'immediatè post violationem foederis operum'.

76 *Ibid.*, bk. VIII.3. xl, pp. 1048-9: 'Reformanda papalis, eadem fuit, quae aetatis nisi quod capita eius antichristiana . . . per Concilium Tridentinum'; Wilson, J. F. (ed.) (1989), pp. 424-5.

77 *TPT*, bk. VIII.3.xxxix, p. 1046: 'illinc quidem armis & atrocissimis persecutionibus'; Wilson, J. F. (ed.) (1989), p. 426.

78 *TPT*, bk. VIII.3.xliv, p. 1078: 'Agmen ciaudant persecutiones, indeque nata martyria, quae non minus quam schismata obstiterunt propagationi Ecclesiae'; Wilson, J. F. (ed.) (1989), p. 427.

79 *TPT*, bk. VIII.3.xliii, p. 1051: '*Tertium* impetum in Theologiam Reformatam fecerunt *Sociniani*'; *ibid.*, p. 1052, '*Sextum* insultum in Theologiam Reformatam, faciunt *Arminiani*'; Wilson, J. F. (ed.) (1989), p. 431.

80 *TPT*, bk. VIII.3.xl, p. 1045: 'institutaque Reformatione ad verbum Dei, doctrina ab erroribus, cultus ab idololatria & superstitione, regimen ecclesiasticum, à tyrannide Papali, vindicata fuerun'; Wilson, J. F. (ed.) (1989), pp. 432-3.

earth, heaven and hell.⁸¹ Edwards' sermons twenty-seven to thirty address also the eternal state of the church. More precisely, the seven steps pertaining to the last things, as formulated in the last four sermons of Edwards' redemption discourse, are similar to the seven steps Mastricht formulated in his chapter on the eternal dispensation.⁸² Coinciding with Mastricht's discussion of these seven steps, Mastricht provides an exposition of the seven trumpets of Revelation 8-11. On the seventh trumpet, for example, he comments that this woe is to the peace and happiness of the church and to the destruction of its enemies.⁸³ Edwards' understanding of this last trumpet in sermon twenty-four seems closer to Mastricht's understanding than to the exposition on the same by Mastricht's student Lowman.⁸⁴

Thus, Edwards, like Mastricht, divides the history of redemption into major sections, of which each is divided into dispensations, periods and *epochas*, though both understand these differentiations in the history of redemption as belonging to the same covenant of grace, which is the golden thread throughout the *HWR*, as it is in Mastricht's chapter on the dispensations of the covenant of grace. So central is this theological concept to Edwards' work that it is suggested⁸⁵ that one could almost substitute the title of, 'A History of Covenant of Grace' for *HWR*, as, *de historiae foederis gratiae*, an echo of Mastricht's *TPT* preface.

The Dutch readership, then, was not that unfamiliar with the structure and content of Edwards' work. For them, there was a continuity of theological thought, in particular, that of covenant theology. Antecedents were readily found in Mastricht's work, as well as in the immediate context of Edwards' Dutch edition of the Redemption Discourse.

Therefore, I conclude with three observations. First, the reading of Edwards' *HWR* should not be limited to the historical-theological context of England or New England, but should consider Mastricht's *TPT* as its background. As this major work was influential in the formation of eighteenth-century Scottish covenant theology, so the parallels in structure and content between book eight of the *TPT* and *HWR* may point to a marked influence. For Mastricht, the covenant of grace and eschatology are inseparable – a trajectory found in the redemption sermons of Edwards. Actually, for both Mastricht and Edwards, the progressive development of

81 Harry Stout examines the relationship between history and revival in Edwards' theology, and traces Edwards' tripartite discussion of history – the history of redemption on earth and the related history of heaven and hell – in Stein, S. J. (ed.) (2007) *The Cambridge Companion to Jonathan Edwards*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 125-43.

82 *Edwards*:

- (1) Christ's glorious appearance
- (2) The last trumpet & destruction of Antichrist
- (3) The church will be caught up
- (4) The righteousness of the church & judgment
- (5) Judgment of the righteous and wicked

Mastricht:

- Christ's glorious return
- Destruction of the Antichrist
- Resurrection of the dead
- The last judgment
- The acquittal of the church & condemnation of others
- Handing over the Kingdom & the end of ages
- Eternal life

(7) World on fire and eternal life
83 *TPT*, bk. VIII.4.iv-vii, pp. 1094-5.

84 On the last trumpet see, *ibid.*, bk. VIII.4.ii, p. 1092: 'Exsecutionem, sub buccinatione septem Angelorum, Penes quam narratur. . . .'; Wilson, J. F. (ed.) (1989), p. 496,502: 'that the last trumpet shall sound, and the dead raised, and the living changed'; See also Minkema, K. P. (ed.) (1994), p. 523, and Edwards' comments on Lowman, Wilson, J. F. (ed.) (1989), p. 252.

85 Bogue, C. W. (1975) *Jonathan Edwards and the Covenant of Grace*, Cherry Hill, NJ: Mack Publishing, p. 117.

the covenant of grace in history is teleological. The covenant of grace, according to Mastricht, is being directed toward an end or shaped by a purpose: the teleos of creation or the divine glory in the eternal dispensation. It may be, therefore, that the positive reception of the *TPT* in New England was a consistent presence in the development of New England theological thought. On the other hand, the reception of the *HWR* in Holland is not that surprising – which leads me to the next observation. Secondly, the exchanges between New England, Scotland and Holland took place between people of different denominational affiliations. Nevertheless, there was a latently present kinship, a theological kinship: that of covenant theology. Thirdly, as this essay suggests, the interaction between scholarship on Edwards and Post-reformation studies can open new ways of approaching the continuities and trajectories of historical and theological thought.

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APPENDIX

A chronological bibliography of Dutch translations of religious works by Scottish authors, 1740-67

Thomas Boston

- (1741) *Eene beschouwing van het verbondt der genade, uit de heilige gedenkschriften: Waar in de onderhandelende personen, die dat verbondt hebben aangegaan, hoe en Twanneer het gemaakt zy, deszelfs deelen, zoo wel voorwaardelyk als beloovende, en de bestiering van het zelve, ieder afzonderlyk overwoogen worden*, trans. Alexander Comrie, preface by Hugh Kennedy, Leiden: Johannes Hasebroek; Amsterdam: Nicolaas Byl.
- (1742) *Des menschen natuur in deszelfs vier-voudige staat: Van eerste opregtigheit, geheele bederving, begonne herstelling, en voltrokke gelukzaligheid of ellende. Vertoond in verscheyde praktikale redenvoeringen*, trans. Abel van Keulen, en voltrokke Cornelius van Velzen, Leiden: Johannes Hasebroek, Amsterdam: Nicolaas Byl.
- (1752) *De kleine catechismus der kerken Jesu Christi in Engelandt Schotlandt en Yrlandt*, trans. Jan Ros, preface by Alexander Comrie, Groningen: Laurens Groenewolt.

Ebenezer Erskin

- (1754) *Godts naam verheerlykt in Christus, De zuchtingen der geloovigen onder hare beswaringen, De verhooging der geloovigen, en De koning gebonden op de galeryen*, trans. Jan Ross, preface by Theodorus van der Groe, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

Ralph Erskine

- (1740) *De kragt der zonde, en hoe de wet de kragt is van dezelve, geopent en ontfouwt in verscheide predikation, gepredikt te Kinglassy den 31. July; als ook te Orwel den 7 en 8 Augustus 1727*, trans. Jan Ross, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.
- (1740) *De overeenstemminge der goddelyke eigenschappen, doorstralende in het werk der*

verlossinge, en in het zaligen van zondaren door Christus Jezus, zynde eene leerrede, gepredikt te Dunfermline den 29 September 1723, trans. Jan Ross, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

(1740) *Het sterven aan de wet, en het leven naar het euangelium. Of Het sterven aan wettische gerechtigheit, en het leven volgens eene euangelische heiligkeit*, trans. Jan Ross, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

(1742) *De zwangere belofte, en hare vrucht; of De kinderen der belofte voortgebracht en beschreven*, trans. Jan Ross, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

(1743) *De groote vrage van den evangeliecatechismus: zynde de inhoud van verscheide predikationen over Matth. XXII: 42: En de predikatie van de Samaritaansche vrouwe aan de lieden van de stadt*, trans. Jan Ross, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

(1743) *De verzekeringe des geloofs verklaart en toegepast: zynde de inhoud van verscheide predikationen over Hebr. X:19-22*, trans. Jan Ross, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

(1746) *De gelukkige en groote vergaderinge der volkeren tot Schilo: zynde een verhandeling over Gen. XLIX: 10 voorgesteld in verscheide predikationen, op avondmaals-tyden, te Kinglassie, te Airth, en te Carnock*, trans. Jan Ross, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci

(1747) *Blyde boodtschap in zware tyden, over psalm XLVI*, trans. Jan Ross, preface by Theodorus van der Groe, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci; *ibid.* (1750) *Christus het verbondt des volks*, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

(1752) *De trapwyze overwinninge, of de hemel allengkens gewonnen... een belovende en volbrengende Godt, de riviere des levens: voorgesteld, in verscheide predikationen, by gelegenheit van het H. Avondmaal*, trans. Jan Ross, preface by Theodorus van der Groe, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

(1758) *Gevoelige tegenwoordigheit, over Gen. XXXV: 13. Kameren van veiligheid, in tyden van gevaar, over Jez. XXVI: 20, 21*, trans. Jan Ross, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

(1758) *De groote bazuine des Evangeliums, over Jez. XXVII:13*, trans. Jan Ross, preface Theodorus van der Groe, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

(1761) *Pleit-reden des geloofs op Godts woordt en verbond: Alles voorgesteld in verscheide predikationen, by de bediening des H. Avondmaals*, trans. Jan Ross, preface by Georgius Hogendorp, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

(1762) *De wet van Godts huis*, trans. Jan Ross, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

1763) *Den zondaar verheugd in Gods heiligdom, onder het geloovig gebruik maken van Christus, als de ware geestelyke spyzen der zielen: Zynde den inhoud van 10 uitmuntende leer-redenen, meest op Avondmaals tyden gedaan*, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Pieter Holsteyn.

(1767) *De bron van alle zegeningen, of Het grote schathuis geopent : beneffens de gevende liefde van Christus, en de aannemende eigenschap des geloofs. Zynde den inhoud van twee verhandelingen, de eerste over 2 Cor. V. 18. De tweede over Gal. II. 20*, trans. Jan Ross, Utrecht: J. van Schoonhoven, S. de Waal, G. van den Brink, Jzn.

Thomas Halyburton

(1745) *Gedenk-schriften, in zig behelzende het leven, de bekeeringe, en merkwaardige gevallen van... Begrepen in vier deelen. Waar by gevoegt is, een verhaal van zyn laatste woorden*, Rotterdam: by Hendrik van Pelt en Adrianus Douci.

(1747) *Het groot aanbelang der zaligheit: begrepen in drie deelen: in zich behelzende I. Eene ontdekkinge van des menschen staat en toestandt van nature, II. Des menschen herstellinge door het geloove in Christus, III. Des christens plicht*, voorrede Hugh Kennedy, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

James Robe

(1743) *Geloofwaardig en kort verhaal van 't heerlyke werk Godts, geopenbaart in de overtuiging en bekeeringe van een groot getal zielen in de gemeente van Cambuslang, en in andere plaatsen van Schotlandt*, voorrede Hugh Kennedy, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, en Adrianus Douci.

(1743) *Nader en uitvoeriger verhaal van 't heerlyke en uitmuntende werk Godts; gewrogt in de bekeeringe van veele zielen in verscheidene gemeintens van Schotlandt, inzonderheit tot Kilsyth*, preface Hugh Kennedy, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, en Adrianus Douci.

(1743) [*Tweede*] *Nader en uitvoeriger verhaal van 't heerlyke en uitmuntende werk Godts, gewrogt in de bekeeringe van veele zielen in verscheidene gemeintens van Schotlandt, inzonderheit tot Kilsyth*, preface by Hugh Kennedy, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, en Adrianus Douci.

(1744) *Derde stukje of Vervolg wegens het Nader en uitvoeriger verhaal van 't heerlyke en uitmuntende werk Godts, gewrogt in de bekeeringe van veele zielen in verscheide gemeintens van Schotlandt, inzonderheit tot Kilsyth*, preface by Hugh Kennedy, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, en Adrianus Douci.

John Smith

(1751) *De uitmuntende levenswyze en predikdienst van den zeer vermaarden euangelie-prediker en reiziger George Whitefield: onpartydig voorgesteld en naar het leven afgemaakt in eene leerreden over Job XXXII. 17. Mitsgaders eenige geestelyke oeffeningen en bevindelyke aantekeningen van jufvrouw Ross, op den weg naar den hemel*, Rotterdam: Hendrik van Pelt, Adrianus Douci.

KEY WORDS

Jonathan Edwards
Petrus van Mastricht
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18th Century covenant theology
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TREFWOORDE

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The translation of πνεύμα in John 3:8

ABSTRACT

All Afrikaans translations of John 3:8 translates πνεύμα as “wind”. A progression of the meaning of the word πνεύμα is evident considering the background of πνεύμα in Greek and Jewish thought. This progression is helpful in discerning viable translations of John 3:8, especially in Afrikaans translations. A variation of the Afrikaans translation of “wind” to “spirit” in John 3:8 can be helpful to broaden our understanding.

1. INTRODUCTION

The word πνεύμα is difficult to translate as it has various translation possibilities including “wind”, “spirit” and “breath” and it is not always easy to clearly distinguish between these meanings (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:374). It occurs 24 times in the Gospel of John and is thus heralded as one of the gospel’s main characteristic features (Burge 1987:42).² Burge (1987:xvi) argues that the Johannine community was a pneumatic community as each member formed part of this distinctive community life. One of the foremost features of Johannine pneumatology was its Christ centric³ basis (Burge 1987:xvi). Keener (2003:115) mentions that “inspiration is a category with which modern readers are far less equipped to deal with than ancient readers were as the concept of inspiration was widely understood and articulated in antiquity”. The manner in which modern readers interpret the translations of πνεύμα in John 3:8, especially the Afrikaans translation seems to be problematic.

It is important to clarify how we as modern readers understand the (Holy)⁴ Spirit, as it is evident from popular books and information on the Holy Spirit that people tend to misunderstand the Holy Spirit as a magical force. Studies regarding pneumatology have been focussed on intratestamental literature, rather than looking at it from an intercanonical perspective of how the Israelite view of the spirit, obtained from birth to death, was rearranged in early Christian literature (Levison 2011:82). The question is however what is meant by “spirit” and should the

1 Department of New Testament, University of Pretoria.

2 In contrast, Brodie mentions that the concept of Spirit is not fully developed in John (Brodie 1993:196). He argues that the comparison of Spirit and wind is brief and seems to open up some idea of the possibilities offered by the spirit world (Brodie 1993:197). However, John 3 has been regarded as one of the texts that indicate John’s understanding of πνεύμα in a salvific manner (Bennema 2002:195), and accordingly πνεύμα is not underdeveloped in John in the opinion of this study.

3 Tibbs mentions that there are ample reasons to argue that the earliest New Testament pneumatology reflected a spirit world populated with many holy and evil spirits, not just one Holy Spirit as is commonly assumed today (Tibbs 2008:314). There are multiple christologies in John. The link between the Cross and πνεύμα is intertwined in the Gospel of John. It does however seem possible to speak of multiple pneumatologies (Tibbs 2008:320). Everts even implies that the spirit in Ezekiel’s vision is not the spirit that raised Jesus from the dead (Levison 2011:81). In early Judaism the spirit creation was populated with “holy spirits”, “spirits of truth” and “spirits of God” that reflect the Jewish world of the New Testament (Tibbs 2008:320).

4 The general tendency in biblical scholarship is that later Trinitarian theology shaped the way that New Testament texts about the Spirit are read (Tibbs 2008:313).

term be associated with God and consequently with the Holy Spirit especially regarding John 3:8?

Levison (2011:84) posits that early Christian notions and experiences of the Holy Spirit were rooted in their first century framework and this includes both early Judaism as well as the larger Greco Roman world. Horsley (2005:23) mentions that in the ancient world of the texts, religion was not separated from political-economical life and that in the time of Jesus there was no such thing yet as a religion called Judaism, judging from sources such as the Gospels, the Dead Sea Scrolls or historians such as Josephus.⁵ Various movements occurred during the first century C.E. as a result of the tumultuous rule of Roman oppressors (see Callahan 2005:162-164). This has implications for the way in which the (Holy) Spirit is understood and makes it necessary to investigate what was meant by πνευμα and how it was perceived in the ancient world. Subsequently, it is the aim of this study to investigate the functioning of πνευμα in Jewish thought, Greek thought and briefly investigate the Septuagint and the New Testament as a means to better understand the word. This study will then examine translations of John 3:8 and interpret these translations with reference to the historical background of πνευμα.

1.1 Translations

This study will work with Ziegler's LXX Greek text as the baseline Greek text. Various translations will also be used to ascertain how modern translators have translated πνευμα. This study will continually weigh these translations against the historical background of πνευμα to illuminate our modern understanding. Subsequently, various languages will be used to broaden the spectrum of interpretation i.e. English, Afrikaans, Dutch and French.

2. INTERPRETATION OF חוּר IN JEWISH THOUGHT

The ancient experience of spirits and their understanding differs intrinsically from the modern understanding thereof. It is important to mention that English translations of חוּר manage to separate what would have been understood by an ancient Hebrew person as a single, complex meaning in which natural, psychic and supernatural aspects were grasped (Myers 1987:496). The ancient Hebrew would not have distinguished between what is in the mind and what comes from outside (Heron 1983:5). The human self was visualised as more permeable than we as modern people normally assume, more open to external influences which could have been spoken of in more or less personal terms (Heron 1983:5). It was believed that a spirit could be passing from one person to another, for example, Elisha asked for a double share of חוּר from Elijah in 2 Kings 2:9 (Heron 1983:5).

The phrase "Holy Spirit" was first used in the post-exilic period (Balz & Schneider 1993:118). According to Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry (2004:372) a theological meaning was first attached to חוּר during the post-exilic period as well as through the prophets. The phrase "Holy spirit", only appears three times in the Old Testament i.e. Psalm 51:13 (חוּרוֹ דְשֶׁדֶק) and Isaiah 63:10 (חוּרֵי וְשֶׁדֶק), 11 (חוּרֵי וְשֶׁדֶק) (Block 1989:27; cf. Heron 1983:3; Wood 1978:20).

There are three different expressions employed in the Old Testament for spirit i.e. הַמְשֵׁנ, בּוֹא and חוּר. The use of בּוֹא is exceptional and is used to refer to spirits of the dead or even ghosts themselves, as is the case in Isaiah 29:4. The word is also used in the summoning of spirits with reference to the necromancer who makes contact with departed spirits (1 Sam 28:7-8) (Block 1989:28).

⁵ Horsley suggests that the modern view of Christianity did not develop until late antiquity and it is best to rather refer to the "Jesus movement" as opposed to Christianity (Horsley 2005:24).

2.1 The use of המשנ

The noun המשנ occurs 24 times and means “breathe”. It is used in reference to the breath of humans or God and particularly in referring to that which gives life to a body (Block 1989:28). The term is in the Rabbinic literature, together with שפנ and חור, usual terms for the human soul and coinciding – there exists no distinction between spirit and soul (Friedrich 1968:377). שפנ and חור both mean “life” and “breath”, although חור is mostly connected with Yahweh – in contrast to שפנ that in comparison to חור, a connection with Yahweh would be deemed rare (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:375). שפנ and חור are especially applied to the animal and physical functions of the soul whilst המשנ is more commonly used for the soul as coming from heaven and as a vital force (Friedrich 1968:377). Breath is usually connected to the mouth or nostrils, but sometimes it signifies “spirited” behaviour as seen in Job 4:9; 9:18; 15:30; cf. 2 Samuel 22:16 (Myers 1987:496).

This expression was well known in the Ancient Near East. In an Ugaritic text the death of Aqhat is described as “his life shall depart like a breath” (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:368). Accordingly this term describes the power of life and has to do with breathing, but is particularly associated with blood⁶ in the older Old Testament writings (Heron 1983:6). Like in the Old Testament, life is associated with blood in the Ancient Near East and the idea existed that when blood is poured out, life departs through the nostrils like a breath or smoke (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:369).

2.2 The use of חור

The noun חור and its West Semitic synonym “qtr” evokes images that represent the transitoriness of life (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:369). Every living creature, human or animal, has a המשנ (Heron 1983:6). חור is the “breath of life” in Genesis 6:17; 7:15, 22; Ezekiel 37:5-6, 8-10; cf. v. 14 and in the RSV translated as “spirit” (also Ps. 146:4 and Jer. 10:14), which is emanating from God alone and is the equivalent of the animating spirit (Myers 1987:496). שפנ can indicate a whole person, but חור is always understood as “within” someone and represents a person’s “interior”, the spiritual centre from which the entire person is engaged (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:375). In contrast, Hamilton (2003:114) mentions that God does not indwell the individual in the Old Testament, but is in the midst of them via the tabernacle or the temple.

The most used designation for “spirit” in the Old Testament is חור which occurs 378 times in the Hebrew text and an additional 11 times in the Aramaic⁷ parts of Daniel (Block 1989:28, cf. Wood 1978:16; Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:372). The root meaning has to do with the movement of air, but it acquired a myriad of other meanings, i.e. wind, breath, and life and then came to be applied to the human “spirit” or “self” as well as that what we would describe as “mood” or “temper” (Heron 1983:4). This term is used to describe the human spirit, God’s Holy Spirit and several other entities such as wind, breath, odour⁸ and space (Wood 1978:16). Block (1989:28) adds that חור semantic range includes breath, wind, direction, spirit and mind. Heron mentions that these examples can lead us into its meaning in connection with God (1983:4).

2.3 The use of חור as wind

The most basic meaning is “wind” and it is used approximately 101 times (Wood 1978:17). חור

6 The drinking of the blood-soul was prohibited, thus the blood of slaughtered animals was not drunk, but offered to God as for example in Leviticus 17:10-14 (Heron 1983:6).

7 In Old Aramaic, stela III from Sefire speaks of “breath of life” that concerns a fugitive pleading for his life i.e. seeking asylum (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:369).

8 The contexts in the Ugaritic text (KTU, I.3, II, 2) concerns coriander and thus חור should be translated as “aroma” (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:368).

as wind commonly refers to the strong wind of the storm, the raging blast from the desert, like the one that divided the Red Sea at the exodus (Exod. 14:21), but this wind is not identical to the חור of God as it is an elemental power and has accordingly an image of divine strength (Heron 1983:4). The concept of חור is thus largely an impersonal concept and has to do with natural or supernatural strength, power, force and energy (Heron 1983:4). The Old Testament often regards it as a divine phenomenon⁹ sent from God or heaven as seen in Genesis 8:1; Exodus 14:21; Numbers 11:31; Job 26:13; Hosea 13:15, but it also represent elemental chaos (Prov. 25:14) or emptiness (Job 6:26; 7:7; Ps. 78:39; Eccl. 1:14; Isa. 41:29) (Myers 1987:496). Wind can also be utilized as an image of divine judgement drawing from the image of winnowing grain and scattering chaff to the winds (Myers 1987:496).

2.4 חור in personal categories

In Judaism the Spirit is autonomous and is often spoken of in personal categories in Rabbinic writings with references to the Spirit speaking, crying, admonishing, sorrowing, weeping, rejoicing and comforting (Friedrich 1968:387). The result of this notion is the view that the Spirit is a personal angelic being, but the Spirit is never present in heavenly assemblies and the notion should rather be that the Spirit is an objective reality that encounters and claims man (Friedrich 1968:387). חור functions at the level of persons to mould their attitudes and behaviour (Heron 1983:6) and is not understood as a person per se. חור can also have another meaning due to its application to influences and moods of a personal kind or spirits conceived as quasi-personal identities (Heron 1983:4). This type of application is rare and does not have the same interest in good and evil 'spirits' as some strands in later Jewish thought and the New Testament display (Heron 1983:4). It is difficult to make a distinction between 'spirit' as a mood or attitude and a 'spirit' as a more independent agent (Heron 1983:4).

2.5 Good and evil

In Judaism, as a result of the environment, אַטְמֹסְפֵרָה / חור is often used to apply to otherworldly good or evil beings¹⁰ (Balz & Schneider 1993:118). In the older strata of the Old Testament the use of חור in connection with evil or demonic beings features more prominently, for example Judges 9:23 – God sent an evil חור between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; 1 Samuel 16:14 – an evil חור from the Lord tormented Saul and 1 Kings 22:22=2 Chronicles 18:21 – God allowed a “חור ילין” to deceive the prophets advising Ahab (Heron 1983:5; cf. Myers 1987:49). In addition, חור can also refer to angels¹¹ (Myers 1987:496). Heron (1983:5) mentions that חור is utilised in describing the good or evil influence coming from God.¹² In fact, the Old Testament discloses little about the actual nature of God (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:372). Israel thinks of God as a subject that lives outside the world, but in relation to the world and humanity

9 In an Ugaritic text (KTU 1.5,V,7) חור is used to describe Baäl's descent into the netherworld “And you – take your clouds, your wind, your lightning, your rain” that shows that חור is one of the meteorological phenomena associated with Baäl-Hadad, the god of storms and tempests (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:368). Baäl-Hadad is a lot like to Marduk in the Akkadian and Sumerian mythology, but unlike Marduk, he does not appear as the creator of the world (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:370).

10 In Mesopotamia there is an antithesis between the good and the evil wind and reflects gods who may either bless or afflict (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:370).

11 The Babylonians thought of the winds as messengers of the gods (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:370).

12 It is remarkable that the Sumerians, although the word used for חור in the East Semitic languages is *saru*, Enlil, is “the lord of the air” implying that he was the lord of the atmosphere and wind who had a good wind that brought vegetation and life as well as a evil wind that functioned as a destructive force (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:369).

and who reveres them with favour (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:372). There is a direct link in the Old Testament between the favourable presence of God and the well-being of his people, physical as well as spiritual (Hamilton 2003:114).

2.6 חַיִּים and creation

חַיִּים has an implicit reference to God as man's Creator and Sustainer even as applied to man; and thus it becomes a linking term between God and to human life in its dependence upon God (Heron 1983:7).¹³ Israel's understanding of God and the world is anthropomorphic¹⁴ as well as ethnocentric (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:372). In the creation epic of the Akkadian and Sumerian mythology, Marduk uses winds as weapons in his battle against Tiamat, keeping the power over winds and meteorological phenomena for himself after assigning the gods their places and roles (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:369). Marduk divides Tiamat's body into the sky and earth after killing her (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:370). The distinction between Israel's use of חַיִּים and that of its neighbours exist in the fact that Israel used חַיִּים as an extension of personality which means that they understood God to be active in their world in contrast to the Egyptian religion and Mesopotamian mythology where the gods were confined to their own world and humans only functioned to serve them. In early Judaism, the Spirit as inspiring force was in general associated with prophecy, although other associations were also connected to the Spirit in many circles, particularly the Qumran community¹⁵ (Keener 2003:117).

2.7 Summa

In Jewish thought חַיִּים is understood as a life giving force. It is closely associated with breathing and blood. This life force is permeable and subjected to influences of the external world, contrary to modern perceptions.

3. THE INTERPRETATION OF ΠΝΕΥΜΑ IN GREEK THOUGHT

ΠΝΕΥΜΑ is at all times viewed in the Greek world, in contrast to Jewish thought, as a thing and never as a person (Friedrich 1968:359). Paige (2002:426) mentions that ΠΝΕΥΜΑ was recognized as something perishable and not as a conscious being¹⁶. In the early Greek tragedies, ΠΝΕΥΜΑ means "breath, "soul" and "wind", but does not contain the meaning of spirit in the sense of a personal or supernatural meaning (Paige 2002:420). In Greek literature ΠΝΕΥΜΑ as "wind" or "breath" would have been recognized, but not in the application of "spirit" that permeates the LXX as well as Philo's work (Best 1959:225). It would be anachronistic to assume that Greek religion was acquainted with a developed idea or doctrine of "Spirit" or that their concept of inspiration was connected to a theological meaning, as in the Jewish or Christian literature (Paige 2002:419).

13 The idea that God is the creator of all things is central in the doctrine of the Treatise on the two spirits in Qumran (Tukasi 2008:39).

14 Israel's understanding of God and the world is anthropomorphic i.e. Gen. 2 does not even mention the creation of world, but only the origin of humans (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:372).

15 In the Treatise on two Spirits in Qumran, all people are created by the God of Knowledge, but people do not belong to the same category and they are not all regarded as children of God (Tukasi 2008:47). No human can escape the activities of the spirits once he or she has partaken in them and consequently the two spirits determine the character of human beings. The Rule however does not resolve how people acquire these spirits (Tukasi 2008:48).

16 It is remarkable that ΠΝΕΥΜΑ is used in connection with Greek deities. It seems that the Greeks viewed their deities not as everlasting beings and as unpredictable as the wind. There is an overwhelming uncertainty that is not seen in the Christian or Jewish usage of the word.

3.1 πνεύμα as natural force

In the Greek world πνεύμα means the rudimentary natural and crucial force that acts as a stream of air blowing; as the wind and as the inhaling of breath (Friedrich 1968:335; cf. Makambu 2007:34). Greeks also used the wind as an example of unpredictability as to “write in the wind or water” is to make a promise that one can not keep (Catullus 70.4 in Keener 2003:555). πνεύμα may be the “storm” that blows powerfully, the “fair wind” which rises quickly and unexpectedly and which may be favourable or unfavourable, the light “breath of wind” (from heaven) which is divinely soft and pure or the “exhalation”, “the “vapour” that rises from the interior of the earth, containing mantic powers that can be fatal (Friedrich 1968:335). πνεύμα can be the breath that enthuses, stirs, whips up support and fills select psyches of poets, priests and prophets, especially the Pythia at Delphi,¹⁷ in certain corporeal and spiritual operations (Friedrich 1968:338).

3.2 πνεύμα as life giving force

Friedrich (1968:335) perpetuates that the breath of the spirit may in a way be detected both outwardly and inwardly as something that fills with inspiration and grips with enthusiasm (contra Paige 2002:421). There is a myth from the earliest Greek witness to the Egyptian *theologoumenon*, Aeschylus that offers the only Greek story of a god, Zeus, who produces a divine son in a mortal woman solely through his breath (Friedrich 1968:341). In contrast, Paige argues that this interpretation of πνεύμα is incorrect, as the text does not include πνεύμα according to him (Paige 2002:421). The understanding of πνεύμα as life giving breath, is however not far fetched. Makambu (2007:34) mentions that the root of πνεύμα – πνε derives from breathing as well as the inspiration of a divinity, a vapour and sweating. In primitive mythology the generative and life-creating cosmogonic power of wind is widespread (Friedrich 1968:340). It also delineates breathing as a cause to life and was also used to denote the smell from a fire (Makambu 2007:34). Zeus is associated with cosmic πνεύμα that consists of air and fire (Friedrich 1968:356). Cleanthus appears to have been the first to define a deity as πνεύμα, applying this term to Poseidon (Friedrich 1968:356). Wind is offered by nature as a category of being and a form for that which is without beginning before all beginning (Friedrich 1968:340).

3.3 πνεύμα as substance

In Hellenistic spheres πνεύμα is sometimes thought of as substance and often mixed with ideas from Greek philosophy and speculation “wisdom” (Balz & Schneider 1993:118). In secular Greek it was used in the sense of mantic-enthusiastic inspiration and later in Stoicism of a cosmic-universal divine energy or substance that still exists in the world (Balz & Schneider 1993:118; cf. Paige 2002:424). Plato used πνεύμα with reference to the cosmos and in his myth about the creation¹⁸ of earth; he compares the wind to an aspect of breathing (Makambu 2007:35). The Stoics used πνεύμα as a technical term in psychics (Paige 2002:424). In Stoic cosmology the universal πνεύμα is a rational and intentional being that embodies the λόγος of the Whole (Buch-Hansen 2010:1). In Stoic thought however, God is associated with πνεύμα as he is in everything, giving it form and character according to reason (Paige 2002:425).

3.4 Being possessed

17 It is known that the Pythia used hallucinogens to obtain a state of ecstasy in which prophecy was given to others who was not aware of this method (Littleton 1986:87; see Paige 2002:429). This practice seems to have even been hidden from Strabo, Pliny and perhaps even Plutarch (Littleton 1986:87). In contrast to Littleton, Paige argues that Strabo was aware of this tradition and that πνεύμα was merely understood as “holy gas” (Paige 2002:428).

18 Phédon 112 b6-cl. C.J. Rowe, Plato, 97.283.

The idea of being possessed by πνεύμα was widespread in the ancient world as the poet Hesiod, for example, maintained that he has been inspired by the πνεῦμα that was breathed into him by the Muses while he was on Mount Halcyon (Littleton 1986:83). This is challenged by Paige as the word that Hesiod uses is ἐμπνεω that only suggests blowing and not πνεύμα (Paige 2002:421). Liddell & Scott also mentions the use of πνεύμα by poets, although πνοή is more common (Liddell & Scott 1968:1424).

3.5 πνεύμα in ancient rhetoric and literary aesthetics

In ancient rhetoric and literary aesthetics πνεύμα also bears the meaning of elevated speech and θεῖον πνεύμα (divine breath) sometimes denoted a constituent of music (Friedrich 1968:338). Homer uses πνεύμα as the energetic movement of air as well as in a sense of blowing, for example it could also be applied to an instrument (Makambu 2007:34). In Plutarch 2.129c πνεύμα is meant as “of spirit” or “spiritual” (Liddell & Scott 1968:1424). The Greeks did, however, use the winds as an analogy for the gods – they are invisible yet we see their effects (Keener 2003:555). The Muses breathed a divine breath into poets (Friedrich 1968:344). Paige (2002:421) suggests that this should be understood as a metaphor in which the deity is blowing or breathing, but not to see it as an infilling or inspiring of the poet. Language does not function in isolation. In contrast to Paige, it is possible in view of this study that this expression could have gained added meaning as the infilling of spirit, of which there is enough evidence to substantiate this type of metaphor. Subsequently, πνεύμα is associated with a deity. πνεύμα is both material and spiritual, both divine and natural in Greek thought and power flows from it, is mediated by it and disappears with it (Friedrich 1968:335).

Coincidentally, Friedrich (1968:340) mentions that the concept of πνεύμα in the Hellenic world developed on the notion of specific modalities postulated through popular religious belief concerning the direct and comprehensive connection of being and operation between wind, breath, soul and the power of generation, life and spirit. Makambu also states: “d’exprimer de la colère, du courage, mais aussi le sens de la bienveillance (tout ce qui est porté par l’élément de l’air)” (Makambu 2007:34). Thus πνεύμα is associated with specific modalities.

3.6 πνεύμα functioning as mediator

In medicine, philosophy and religion, πνεύμα fulfils a mediatory role as it is understood as the macrocosm that mediates between the inner and outer, warmth and cold, matter and spirit and in magic it functions as the impersonal medium that attains contact between the divine and human, the upper world and the nether world (Friedrich 1968:359). It is, however, interesting that Paige (2002:429) mentions that it was not strange for a mantic to ingest or apply a natural element from the sacred area or shrine, for example, at the Deiradiotes temple of Apollo, near Argos, a woman savours blood from a sacrificial lamb and is inspired, where as the priestess of Earth¹⁹ at Aegira prefers bull’s blood before she descends the oracle. This however links to the connection רוח has with blood.

3.7 The progression of πνεύμα

It is interesting that πνεύμα’s meaning from secular Greek is changed by the Jewish and Christian influence in two instances i.e. 1) πνεύμα is isolated from its relation to nature and spiritualised, hypostatised and personified as an independent, personally living and active cosmological and soteriological Spirit of God *sui generis* whether of supreme or lower rank; 2) another non-

19 There can be a connection drawn between the concept of πνεύμα and its association with the earth, as in this example, and the vapours from the earth as seen in the oracle of Delphi. This connection is an indication that πνεύμα has an earthly aspect or more specifically it is within human grasp.

Greek application is that of magic where πνεύμα is used to indicate supernatural spirits and intermediaries, whether good or evil that inhabit the air and can cause good or bad as a result of the magical power emanating from them (Friedrich 1968:339). Paige (2002:427) argues that there existed in Greek thought a word for “spirit” that specifically refers to the Christian understanding of it i.e. ὁ δαίμων. In Greek literature πνεύμα in terms of ὁ δαίμων impinged in pagan writings in the second century due to Christian influence (Paige 2002:427). The variety of meanings applied to πνεύμα doesn’t originate from the Hellenistic world, but was enriched with Jewish influence (Best 1959:218).

3.8 Summa

πνεύμα is interpreted as a external force like the wind that induces inspiration. This inspiration can be viewed similarly to the idea of being possessed. πνεύμα is never interpreted in Greek thought as a person.

4. ΠΝΕΥΜΑ IN THE LXX

The LXX translates three-fourths of חַיִּים as πνεύμα (Block 1989:28). In the LXX πνεύμα is also used with reference to a living principal or influence with certain moral or religious inclinations i.e. Ezekiel 37:14 – “I shall place my πνεύμα into them, and they shall live” (Muraoka 2009:567). Marcos (2000:311) mentions that the LXX shows a predominance for the interpretation of πνεύμα in the sense of anthropocentrism with an emphasis of the ethical attitude and the value of the individual in contrast to the Hebrew Bible’s emphasis on theocentrism. πνεύμα also denotes a psychological state, a spiritual capacity as well as a decision of will (Makambu 2007:41). God gives man intelligence (Job 32:8) as well as the place to function psychologically (Sg 5,3; Dn 3,39.86; Tb 4:3) (Makambu 2007:41). It is interesting that in the LXX usage of πνεύμα, it is also viewed as a rational or intelligent being with no material existence i.e. in Genesis 1:2 it illustrates the idea of being possessed by God (Muraoka 2009:567). In LXX Qohelet πνεύμα is always reflective of an anthropological idea (Makambu 2007:42). The understanding of πνεύμα in both Jewish and Greek thought as something that is both good and bad is mirrored in the LXX as the wind varies from something that is cool and refreshing (Isa 25:4), a scorching wind (Ez 13:11) or a path of wind (Ec 11:5) (Muraoka 2009:567).

5. ΠΝΕΥΜΑ IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The notion of one unique Holy Spirit did not exist in the first century and consequently the earliest Christians drew from the Jewish world (Tibbs 2008:320). The early church’s experience of the spirit influenced the New Testament use of πνεύμα to a fine nuance that reflects the Old Testament (Balz & Schneider 1993:118). Levison (2011:83) contends that the spirit as lifelong presence was supplanted by the New Testament’s association of spirit with a new creation. In the New Testament πνεύμα is essentially characterized by the Hebrew equivalent חַיִּים and its use in Judaism (Balz & Schneider 1993:118; cf. Wood 1978:20). The manner in which πνεύμα was used in the New Testament times pertain a change in the basic concept of חַיִּים (Wood 1978:20). Paul, Luke-Acts and especially John developed the understanding of πνεῦμα further than the Old Testament promises in various ways (Balz & Schneider 1993:119). The manner in which πνεύμα was used in the Greek sense is also not visible according to Makambu²⁰ (2007:55). πνεύμα is

20 “Le sens grec de pneuma n’est donc plus dans la Bible: éloigné de son étymologie et de son origine, pneuma n’est plus rattaché à l’expérience sémantique de nature du soufflé du vent, voire, à celle du souffle de la respiration” (Makambu 2007:55).

used more frequently in the New Testament and is increasingly used to refer to God and also in combination with ἅγιος “Holy” (Wood 1978:20). It is not the aim of this study to investigate the manner in which πνευμα is interpreted in the whole New Testament, but only to note that there is a change in the concept deriving from the Jewish world that permeates the New Testament.

6. SUMMARY OF THE BACKGROUND OF πνευμα

It is evident that the Jewish and Greek literature πνευμα differ as Jewish thought views the spirit as a person; or entity in contrast to the Greek thought that views it as a mysterious inspiration. The Greek thought is not tied to a deity, but the process of thinking or being creative is connected to πνευμα and accordingly there is an indirect emphasis on the human aspect. The Jewish thought is more concerned with the indwelling of the spirit of God that is existent from birth and could be experienced with prophecies. In both Jewish and Greek thought there is evidence of πνευμα concerning a good and bad element.

7. πνευμα IN JOHN 3:8

7.1 Metaphorical language

It is important to note that part of the translation problem of πνευμα in John 3:8 is due to the metaphorical meaning that is implied. A metaphor concerning the spirit and water is created with reference to this earthly existence and an existence in a transcendent realm i.e. physical wind and divine spirit within the framework of John 3 (Kysar 2005:195). Accordingly, this metaphor has an earthly quality that is transformed into something more (Kysar 2005:195). Beasley-Murray (1987:49) notes that in John 3:8 “Spirit” refers to the power of the God of heaven at work in the world below. The Spirit is Jesus and he is from above and is therefore mysterious to humankind from below (Brown 1966:141). Brown (1966:145), however, questions this notion, as apocalyptic seers such as Daniel, Enoch and Baruch have gone up to heaven in a vision.

Haenchen (1984:201) mentions that the comparison of that what comes from above is reminiscent of the Gnostic movement¹ that believed that a true Gnostic was able to say on his behalf: I know whence I have come (viz., from God) and whither I go (to God).

7.2 Translations of John 3:8

<p>John 3:8: τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ, καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ’ οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει· οὕτως ἐστὶ πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος.</p>	<p><i>English:</i> <u>NRSV:</u> John 3:8: “The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.</p>
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1 The fact that the Gospel of John was popular among Gnostics as seen in the Nag Hammadi texts like the Gospel of Thomas, does not, however, prove the Gospel of John’s affinity with their thought (Keener 2003:164).

	<p><u>GNT:</u> John 3:8: The wind blows wherever it wishes; you hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who is born of the Spirit.</p>
	<p><u>Analitical-literal Translation:</u> John 3:8: “The Spirit breathes where He desires, and you hear His voice, <u>but</u> you do not know from where He comes and where He goes. In this manner [or, Like this] is every [one] having been born from the Spirit.”</p>
	<p><u>Common English Version:</u> John 3:8: God’s Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going. It’s the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”</p>
	<p><u>Young’s Literal Translation:</u> John 3:8: the spirit where he willeth doth blow, and his voice thou dost hear, but thou hast not known whence he cometh, and whither he goeth; thus is every one who hath been born of the Spirit.’</p>
	<p><u>Contemporary English Version:</u> John 3:8: Only God’s Spirit gives new life. The Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to. You can hear the wind, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going.</p>
	<p><u>LB:</u> John 3:8: Just as you can hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it will go next, so it is with the Spirit. We do not know on whom he will next bestow this life from heaven.</p>
	<p><u>Afrikaans:</u> <u>OAV:</u> Joh 3:8: Die wind waai waar hy wil, en jy hoor sy geluid, maar jy weet nie vanwaar hy kom en waarheen hy gaan nie. So is elkeen wat uit die Gees gebore is.</p>

	<p><u>Die Boodskap:</u> Joh 3:8: Leer uit die natuur. Hoewel jy die wind hoor waai, kan jy dit tog nie beheer of stuur nie. Dit waai waar dit wil. Jy weet nie eers presies waar dit vandaan kom of waarheen dit uiteindelik waai nie. Maar nogtans waai dit! Presies dit is waar van die manier waarop die Gees werk. Elke persoon wat uit die Gees gebore word, ervaar dit ook so.</p>
	<p><u>NLV:</u> Joh 3:8: Die wind waai waar hy wil. Jy hoor sy suising, maar jy weet nie waarvandaan hy kom en waarheen hy op pad is nie. Só is dit met elkeen wat uit die Gees gebore is.</p>
	<p><u>Dutch:</u> <u>Willibroedvertaling:</u> Joh 3:8: De wind blast waarheen hij wil; gij hoort we zijn gesuis, maar weet niet waar hij vandaan komt en waar hij heen gaat; zo is het met ieder die geboren is uit de Geest.</p>
	<p><u>French:</u> <u>La Bible traduction œcuménique:</u> Joh 3:8: Le vent souffle où il veut, et tu entends sa voix, mais tu ne sais ni d'où il vient ni où il va. Ainsi en est-il de quiconque est né de l'Esprit.</p>

7.3 A viable translation of πνευμα in John 3:8

It is the opinion of this study that the first appearance of πνευμα in John 3:8 should be translated as “Spirit”. Most translations i.e. the Dutch, French, Afrikaans, NRSV, GNT and LB translate the first appearance of πνευμα in John 3:8 as “wind”. The French translation offers a good solution by inserting a footnote explaining that the word for wind and spirit is both πνευμα and that the ancients often compared the mysterious activity of the wind with the action of God. It would be the ancients’ understanding of a mysterious element, but also of a force out of human control. There aren’t any Afrikaans translations that translate πνευμα with “Spirit” or even try to convey the idea of “breath”. This study suggests an Afrikaans translation of John 3:8a such as: “die Gees waai waar hy wil” depicts the imagery of πνευμα as conveyed in Jewish understanding more accurately. The translation is still comprehensive and the metaphor of the Spirit as wind is better conveyed. The confusion regarding this text is in the opinion of this study a result of a lack of translation options that have not yet been explored in the Afrikaans translations. There is a lengthy translation in *Die Boodskap* focussed on explaining the metaphor of wind and the Spirit, but it is not more understandable than the NLV or even the OAV. The English translations such as Contemporary English Version and the Common English Version use “Spirit” which is the better translation concerning this study. It is interesting that the Analytical-literal Translation translates πνευμα as “Spirit breathes” that also conveys the idea of identity. It is presumed in the context

of John 3 that God's Spirit is received by those who believe in Him. It is evident that πνευμα is associated with God as all the translations use capital letters when referring to the Spirit.

8. CONCLUSION

It is evident that the meaning of πνευμα has progressed in Jewish, Greek, LXX and New Testament thought. Furthermore, πνευμα is associated with the Spirit of God and accordingly each translation of John 3:8 indicated this understanding by using capital letters. The Spirit functions as life-giving breath that indwells a person from birth to death. Jesus' last breath has enabled all believers to obtain the breath of life. Traditional Jewish language is placed in a typically Johannine idiom of faith (John 3:15, 16, 36) (Burge 1987:170). The first occurrence of πνευμα in John 3:8 should be translated as "Spirit" and not as "wind". This is supported by the historical backdrop of the interpretation of πνευμα. This translation option still needs to be explored in the Afrikaans translations.

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KEYWORDS

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TREFWOORDE

Πνευμα
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Redding in die Evangelie van Johannes

ABSTRACT

Salvation in the Gospel of John

Salvation is a dominant theme in John. Jesus was sent by his Father to this world to bring eternal life. It is argued in this article that the idea of salvation in John is developed against the backdrop of the Christological conflict between the Johannine group and the 'Jewish opponents'. The basic question in this conflict may be formulated as follows: 'Where and with whom is God?' Both groups claimed that God is on their side, but based on the claims and actions of Jesus John argues that God is on the side of Jesus. He is the one who has and can mediate true life. Both the full acceptance of the mission and person of Jesus (faith) as well as the divine gift of a new identity (born from above/again) work in tandem to result in what can be called salvation. This leads to the resocialization of the believer into the family of God.

1. INLEIDING

In die gestelde doel vir die skryf van die Evangelie (20:31), "Maar hierdie wondertekens is beskrywe sodat julle kan glo dat Jesus die Christus is, die Seun van God, en sodat julle deur te glo, in sy Naam die lewe kan hê", word Christologie en soteriologie² geïdentifiseer as die twee hoofemas, en word dit selfs deur sommige gelykgestel (Tong 1983:100). 'n Interessante waarneming is die feit dat daar relatief min gepubliseer is oor die soteriologie van Johannes as 'n onafhanklike tema, gesien teen die agtergrond van die magdom publikasies oor hierdie Evangelie. Dit blyk dat die tendense in die navorsing oor hierdie Evangelie die volgende is:

- a. Die tema is so dominant in die teologie van Johannes, dat dit gewoonlik ontwikkel word in verhouding tot ander temas in die Evangelie, en nie as onafhanklike tema nie. Dit vorm deel van die meeste van die beskrywings van teologiese temas in hierdie Evangelie, maar is selde onafhanklik in diepte ontwikkel.³
- b. Waar die fokus op die soteriologie val, word die materiaal gewoonlik op 'n beskrywende manier aangebied (sien byvoorbeeld Beasley-Murray 1987, ad loc.). In diepte besprekings word gewoonlik nie aangepak nie en soms volg die besprekings ompaai, soos die besprekings van Sevenster (1946:235-237) of Coetzee (1990:62-65) wat in die strik val om

1 Die outeur is buitengewone professor aan die Fakulteit Teologie van die Noord-Wes Universiteit, Potchefstroom.

2 Verlossing (Soteriologie) word gedefinieer as die aksie van die herstel van die verhouding met God, of hoe die mens beweeg van geestelike dood tot die lewe. Relevante vrae is: uit watter, hoe en waaraan word 'n mens gered? Fokus sal val op die resultate van verlossing.

3 Tong (1983), skryf byvoorbeeld 'n verhandeling oor aspekte van Johannese Soteriologie, waarin hy net na vyf bronne wat enige verwysing na Soteriologie in hulle titels het, verwys. Dukes (1983) verwys na een. Crehan (1965) skryf 'n teologie van Johannes en ontwikkel 24 temas, sonder om aandag te skenk aan Soteriologie as onafhanklike tema. Nadat hierdie artikel in druk gegaan het, het die boek van Bennema (2002) onder my aandag gekom. Hy behandel die Soteriologie van hierdie Evangelie uit 'n "Pneumadiese Wysheids"-perspektief.

die teologie van die kruis te probeer beskerm (teen Bultmann of Käsemann) eerder as om soteriologie te bespreek.

- c. Alhoewel kommentare die tema waar dit in verskillende verse voorkom duidelik bespreek, word dit meestal nie in diepte as afsonderlike tema bespreek nie. Indien dit wel gedoen word, is die bespreking daarvan gewoonlik kort en beskrywend (Beasley-Murray 1987).

Die argument wat in hierdie artikel gevoer gaan word, is dat die soteriologie ontwikkel is binne die konteks van en bepaal word deur 'n konflik (waarvan die kontoere 'n voortdurende debat in die Johannese literatuur veroorsaak – sien byvoorbeeld, Coloe 2001:1-4; Reinhartz 2001:213-227; Bieringer et al 2001, om maar enkele van die meer onlangse bronne te noem onder die vloed van publikasies oor hierdie onderwerp) tussen die “dissipels van Moses”⁴ en Johannese Christene (wat die dissipels van Jesus genoem word). Die groot vraag was “waar en by wie is God?” Dit is 'n vraag wat verskillend deur die dissipels van Jesus en die dissipels van Moses beantwoord is, gebaseer op hulle onderskeie oortuigings van wie Christus is, waarna elk tot die gevolgtrekking kom dat God aan hulle kant is en dat hulle die outentieke geloof het. Daar sal geïllustreer word dat hierdie konflik formatief in die manier is waarop Johannes sy soteriologie formuleer en aanbied. Daar sal aangetoon word dat Johannes nie 'n omvattende, a-historiese, alles-ingeslote soteriologie, ter wille van die beskrywing van 'n soteriologie aanbied nie, maar 'n soteriologie geskoei op die vrae wat op die spel is in die konflik, naamlik, “by wie is God en waar kan Hy gevind (gesien/gehoor) word?” Daar sal aangevoer word dat die pogings om die soteriologiese uitdrukkings in die Evangelie as 'n a-historiese of as 'n geslote soteriologiese stelsel te behandel, wat uitdrukkings soos “Johannese Soteriologie het nie 'n bloed- of kruisteologie nie” of “Johannese Soteriologie opponeer versoening” of soortgelyke idees sou bekrachtig, rus op 'n wanbegrip van die aard en doel van die Johannese Soteriologie.

Die argument van hierdie artikel is soos volg: Ten eerste sal daar aangetoon word dat albei groepe aanspraak maak op dieselfde God. Dit illustreer dat Jesus nie 'n nuwe geloof voorstel nie, maar 'n voortgang van die aanbidding van die God van Israel. Daarna volg 'n kort ontleding van die probleem wat tussen die dissipels van Moses en die dissipels van Jesus ervaar is, naamlik die onthulling van die werklike probleem (sonde) wat 'n spesifieke soteriologie daargestel het. Eindelik sal die fokus verskuif na die manier waarop Johannes verlossing konseptualiseer binne hierdie konteks van konflik. Daar sal aangetoon word dat hy in terme van resosialisering (sien Petersen 1993, 80ff) argumenteer, wat 'n spesifieke ingang in God se familie vereis.

Voordat ons verder gaan, moet 'n metodologiese opmerking gemaak word: omdat die tema van verlossing verwant is aan byna elke belangrike tema in die Evangelie, kan al die belangrike aspekte nie in detail ontwikkel word in hierdie artikel nie (dit sou lei tot 'n teologie van Johannes). Die beleid is om voorsiening te maak vir die nodige vir die ontvouing van my argument en om verder te verwys na relevante besprekings elders en van hulle resultate gebruik te maak, sonder om die herbewerking van die materiaal te herhaal.

4 Die Identiteit van die Jode word wyd bespreek in onlangse literatuur. “Jode” mag nie met moderne Jode geïdentifiseer word nie en ook nie met alle genealogiese Jode in antieke tye nie. Jesus en sy dissipels was ook Jode (sien De Jonge 2001:121-140; Lieu 2001:110-113). De Boer (2001:141-157) argumenteer dat die “Jode” in die Evangelie as 'n sosio-godsdienstige groep aangedui word wat hulleself identifiseer as “dissipels van Moses” (9:28), sien Ashton (1994:44-49). Geen poging om die “Jode” as sodanig te identifiseer sal in hierdie artikel gemaak word nie. Die Jode sal beskryf word aan die hand van die materiaal in die Evangelie self en daar kan ten minste aangevoer word dat die Jode in hierdie verhaal 'n fiktiewe groep met hierdie eienskappe is. Verder as dit wil ek nie in hierdie artikel gaan nie. Hulle identifiseer hulleself as “dissipels van Moses” en daarom sal hierdie frase gebruik word om na hulle te verwys.

2. WIE IS DIE GOD WAT RED?

In 'n gesprek met die Samaritaanse vrou merk Jesus op: "Julle aanbid sonder om te weet wat julle aanbid; ons weet wat *ons* aanbid, want *die verlossing kom uit die Jode*" (4:22) (Sien Ashton 1994,45 vir die identiteit van hierdie "Jode"). Hierdie gesprek handel oor die ware aanbidding van die ware God (4:19-24). Die probleem is egter dat sowel die dissipels van Jesus as die dissipels van Moses daarop aanspraak maak dat hulle hierdie God aanbid.

Daar kan geen onduidelikheid bestaan oor die identiteit van hierdie God nie – hy is die God wat die Jode aanbid (8:41; 8:54; 11:52), Die Skepper-God wat lewe gee (1:1-5,10; 5:26; 6:57). Hy is die God wat aktief was in en deur die geskiedenis (1:6; 3:2; 6:32; 9:3), wat homself deur die profete openbaar het (3:2, 6:45), waaraan Abraham gehoorsaam was (8:39), deur Moses gewerk het (9:29), wat in die tempel aanbid is (2:14ff), en deur die kultiese aktiwiteite van die Jode vereer is (i.e. reiniging, Sabbat, feeste – 5:18; 7:22; 9:16). Maar, ten spyte van hierdie religieuse teenwoordigheid, het niemand nog ooit hierdie God gesien (of gehoor) nie (1:18; 5:37; sien ook 1 Johannes 4:12 – sien Thompson 2001:57ff, en Tolmie 1995:57-75 vir 'n volledige beskrywing van God in hierdie Evangelie). Dit is dieselfde God waarop Jesus aanspraak maak om Hom te verteenwoordig en die God wat sy opponente beweer om te aanbid (8:54), alhoewel albei opponerende groepe onderskeidelik die teenwoordigheid van God by die opponerende groep ontken (eise teen Jesus – 10:33; 19:7; eise teen die opponente van Jesus – 8:19, 24, 54-55). Dit lyk na 'n vanselfsprekende gevolgtrekking, maar dit is om die volgende redes belangrik vir ons argument:

- a. Verwysing na dieselfde God impliseer dat Jesus nie op 'n nuwe god of 'n nuwe godsdiens aanspraak maak nie, maar dat Hy aanspraak maak daarop dat die ware godsdiens van die God van Abraham, Moses en Jesaja voortgaan. Dit laat sy teenstanders, die selferkende dissipels van Moses, sonder die ware God.
- b. As God nie gesien kan word nie, word die mediasie van God funksioneel. Dat Jesus die Middelaar van God is (1:18) word 'n, indien nie dié hoofargument van hierdie Evangelie nie. Hierdie seining van God laat dit toe en behoort 'n verteenwoordigende figuur vir albei botsende groepe aanvaarbaar te maak.
- c. Die konflik tussen hierdie twee groepe, wat beweer dat hulle dieselfde God aanbid, fokus op die beeld en begrip wat hulle van God het. Die menings wat die twee groepe van dieselfde God het, blyk te verskil.

Johannes beweeg weg van die tipiese beskrywings van God en noem hom hoofsaaklik "Vader" (sien Tolmie 1995:57-75, Thompson 2001:57-100). Die konflik op die vlak van wie God in verhouding tot Jesus is en sy opponente is duidelik uit die debatte in byvoorbeeld 8:14-59 of 10:31-39. Alhoewel hulle dieselfde God in gedagte het, is hulle sienings van hom – veral in sy verhouding tot Jesus en sy optrede teenoor kultiese aspekte soos die Sabbat – verskillend. Die dissipels van Jesus maak daarop aanspraak dat, as iemand nie die beeld en werklikheid van God aanvaar soos dit in Jesus teenwoordig is nie, is hy of sy sonder God – dit definieer die kern van die konflik. Om hierdie rede kan die Christologie en Soteriologie nie in hierdie Evangelie geskei word nie (20:31).

Die besef dat hulle oor dieselfde God praat, aksentueer die verskille in mening van hierdie twee groepe. In die proses van verlossing, moet die teenstanders van Jesus ook hulle siening van God verander – Hy is nou die God wat ontdek, gesien en ontmoet kan word in Jesus, in so 'n mate dat Jesus nie 'n dwiwele of lasteraar genoem word nie, maar "My Here en my God" (20:28). Die siening van God in hierdie Evangelie is verander deur die spesifieke aard, persoon en aktiwiteite van Jesus.

3. DIE OORTUIGINGS EN GODSDIENSTIGE HANDELINGE VAN DIE DISSIPELS VAN MOSES

Tussen mense wat 'n gemeenskaplike erfenis deel (bv. afkoms, Skrif, profete, die tempel, ens.), het 'n konflik gegroei, wat gelei het tot uiterste opposisie en afsku. Alhoewel die dissipels van Jesus en die dissipels van Moses albei beweer dat hulle dieselfde God aanbid en albei verbind is aan die naam "Jode", ontken hulle onderskeidelik dat die ander groep hoegenaamd vir God aanbid. Dat hierdie konfliksituasie 'n belangrike basis vir die narratief van hierdie Evangelie vorm, word wyd erken, soos vroeër opgemerk is. Om die dinamiek van die konflik te verstaan en om gevolglik die rasionaal agter Johannes se formulering van sy soteriologie te verstaan, is dit nodig om 'n tipe van persepsie van die twee groepe te vorm. Ons sal eerstens aan die "dissipels van Moses" aandag skenk.

3.1 'n Positiewe beeld van die "dissipels van Moses"

In 'n poging om 'n vlugtige kategorisasie van die "dissipels van Moses" (9:28-29), wat dikwels die Jode (Ἰουδαίου) in hierdie Evangelie genoem word (cf voetnota 3 hierbo oor die Jode) te verskaf, moet daar op die volgende gelet word:

- a. Vanuit 'n godsdienstige oogpunt, blyk dit dat die identiteit van die opponent stewig is. Hulle voorouers was deur die geskiedenis bekend as die volk van God wat deur die woestyn gereis het, manna ontvang het van God (6:31) en die wet van Moses ontvang het (1:17; 5:45; 9:28-29). Hulle afkoms kan selfs verder teruggevoer word na Abraham (8:33,37,39-40) en selfs na God (8:41).⁵
- b. Hulle *godsdienstige aktiwiteite* dui op *ywerige, toegewyde* mense wat God dien op die maniere wat hulle ken of glo die beste is.
 - i. Die opponente van Jesus word uitgebeeld as aktiewe mense in Jerusalem en ook rondom die tempel, die huis van God (2:14-16), waar hulle geglo het dat God veronderstel is om aanbid te word (2:13; 4:20; 5:1; 10:22; 11:55).⁶ Hulle godsdienstige sake is georganiseer deur hulle leiers by die tempel (1:19; 7:32, 45; 11:46-47, 57; 12:10; 18:3, 35; 19:21). Sinagoges was sentrums vir sosio-godsdienstige aktiwiteite en was blykbaar 'n bepaler van sosiale aanvaarding (9:22,34-35; 12:42; 16:2).
 - ii. Studie van die Skrifte het 'n hoeksteen van hulle godsdienstige ondersoek gevorm, omdat hulle gedink het dat hulle die ewige lewe deur studie ontvang (verlossing – 5:39). Voorspellings in die Skrif (1:45) is ook ernstig opgeneem (1:20-21; 7:26, 40-44).
 - iii. Hulle toewyding was duidelik in hulle wens om God te dien en eer (9:24; 16:2). Hulle was streng in hulle reinigingswette (2:6; 11:55; 18:28; 19:42) en het hulle godsdienstige feeste gehou (2:13; 5:1; 7:2,10; 11:55; 12:1,20 – Ashton 1994:39-42), veral die Sabbat – hulle wou selfs vir Jesus doodmaak omdat Hy die Sabbatswet gebreek het (5:16,18; 7:22-23; 9:16). Hulle word selfs voorgestel as "godsdienstige fanatici" in hulle aksies: dit is hulle voorneme om die Christene dood te maak, met die idee dat hulle God op hierdie manier sal dien (16:2).

Reg of verkeerd, dit blyk of hulle opreg is oor hulle geloof. Daar word 'n voorstelling geskep van 'n goedgeorganiseerde godsdienstige groep, wat ernstig probeer om God te dien deur hulle kultiese aktiwiteite. Tot dusvêr lyk die prentjie positief, *maar* en dit is 'n groot "maar", al

5 Rakende die belang van afkoms in die bepaling van identiteit in antieke tye, sien Aristoteles (*Rhet.* 1.5.5, 1360b), Plato (*Menex.* 237) en Quintilius (*Inst. Orat.* 5.10.24); Malina en Neyrey (1996:23-26, 159).

6 Sien 1:19; 7:32,45; 12:10; ens.; sien ook 1:46; 7:52. Aristoteles (*Rhet.* 1.5.5, 1360b) bespreek die belangrikheid van lokaliteit in die vestiging van identiteit. Neyrey (1996:119); Carson (1991:159-160).

hierdie godsdienstige aktiwiteite was nie genoeg om verlossing te verseker nie. Godsdien en godsdienstige aktiwiteite is nie ekwivalent aan verlossing nie. Wat het die Jode kortgekom?

3.2 Wat was verkeerd met die “dissipels van Moses”?

Die kritiek teen die dissipels van Moses is gefokus: Hulle aanbid nie meer vir God nie – hulle geloof is sonder God. Hulle het God nie gesien of gehoor nie (8:47) en hulle ken Hom nie (8:19,54-55; 15:21; 17:25), omdat hulle geestelik dood is (5:24), ten spyte van hul sosio-godsdienstige ywer. Hulle is geestelik blind en beseft dit nie (9:27-41). Die geestelike blindheid en doofheid is baie duidelik in hulle verwerping en haat van Jesus. Dit is die sonde waarvan hulle gered moet word. Die essensie van hulle sonde is duidelik: dit word nie uitgedruk in terme van individuele dade of skuld nie, maar in terme van die aanvaarding van (geloof in) God soos hy in en deur Jesus geopenbaar is (1:9-11; 5:44-46; 8:24; 10:36-39; 15:23-24). 'n Gedetailleerde ontleding van sonde in hierdie Evangelie demonstreer dit (sien byvoorbeeld Metzner 2000). Dit impliseer dat die opponente van Jesus en hulle geloof sonder God is en gevolglik rus die toorn van God op hulle (3:36; 5:24).

As die vraag gevra sou word, “Waarvan moet 'n persoon gered word volgens Johannes?”, sal die antwoord wees, “Van 'n gebrek aan geestelike kennis en blindheid om in staat te wees om die Vader in die Seun te sien en te ken”. Hierdie eksistensiële situasie, naamlik, om sonder God te wees, het haat en verwerping van die Seun en die Vader tot gevolg by die opponente van Jesus en gevolglik in hulle bose gedrag.

3.3 Hoe het die opponente Jesus en sy dissipels gesien?

Kom ons benader die probleem uit 'n ander hoek: Watter probleme het die Jode met Jesus gehad? Die probleem, soos dit in hierdie Evangelie beskryf word, is gefokus.

Hulle hoofkritiek word weergegee in 5:18: “Hieroor het die Jode nog des te meer probeer om Jesus dood te maak. Hy het nie net die Sabbatsdag onheilig nie, maar God ook sy eie Vader genoem en Hom so met God gelykgestel”. Jesus is beskuldig van godslastering omdat hy beweer het dat hy 'n spesiale verhouding met God, die Vader het. Hierdie beskuldiging van godslastering word elders in die Evangelie (10:33) herhaal en bespreek. Die kritiek is duidelik: Jesus staan *nie* aan *God se kant nie* – Hy is 'n sondaar (9:24) en word daarvan beskuldig dat hy 'n demoon het (7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20-21). Op die vraag: “Waar is God” is die dissipels van Moses se gevolgtrekking: “Nie by Jesus nie”. Dit is waarom Hy in hulle oë skuldig is aan godslastering. Hy kon glad nie die Messias wees nie (Richter 1977:61 beskou dit as die kenmerkendste optrede van die opponente, gebaseer op 12:34). Dit was duidelik deur sy gedrag op die Sabbat. Sowel die genesing van die verlamde as die blinde man het op 'n Sabbat plaasgevind. Die probleem word so weergegee in 9:16: “Party van die Fariseërs sê toe: ‘Hierdie man kom nie van God nie, want hy hou nie die Sabbatdag nie.’” Sy gedrag teenoor die reg het Jesus gediskwalifiseer as komend van God.

4. DIE ANTWOORD WAT TOT VERLOSSING LEI

Geleerdes, soos Bultmann (1984) en later Forestell (1974), het die soteriologie van Johannes alleenlik in terme van die *openbaarmaking* van God beskryf. Alhoewel die eksklusiwiteit van hierdie benadering reggemaak is oor die laaste paar dekades (sien Sevenster 1946:239-240; Coetzee 1990:63-64), kan die belangrikheid van die openbaarmaking as essensiële deel van die soteriologiese proses nie ontken word nie, aangesien dit die antwoord verskaf op die soteriologiese vraag: “Waar is God?” Die antwoord op die vraag is die antwoord op waar en hoe

verlossing gevind sal kan word.⁷

Johannes se antwoord is duidelik: God kan slegs deur geloof in Jesus ontmoet word, en die Gees is getuie hiertoe. Dinge is nie meer dieselfde nie; dit het verander, omdat God se Messias, sy Seun, gekom het (3:16; 4:25-26) om die Vader en sy wil bekend te maak (1:18). Die konflik oor die lokus van God is op die slagveld van die Christologie geveg (10:7-10; 14:6). Daar sal die ware besluite gemaak word en word dit gemaak (14:6).

4.1 Hoekom was verandering ('n nuwe soteriologiese roete) nodig?

Voordat ons voortgaan, moet ons vra hoekom dit skielik nodig was om 'n gevestigde godsdiens, soos die van die Jode, te verander op Jesus se manier deur 'n nuwe openbaarmaking van God? Daar word enkele leidrade gegee waarvan die eerste in die Proloog verskyn.

- a. Die eerste verse van hierdie Evangelie impliseer dat die wêreld, selfs die Jode (1:9-11), lig en lewe nodig gehad het (1:5-13). Daar was 'n *behoefte* aan verlossing.
- b. Dan was daar die *verwagtinge* van 'n agent van God wat moes kom. Hierdie verwagtinge, wat die dissipels van Jesus met die ander Jode gedeel het en op die Skrif gebaseer is, word prominent genoem in die eerste hoofstuk van hierdie Evangelie (1:19-22, 25: 45). Daar word aangeneem dat almal verwag het dat God sy Messias of profeet sal stuur. Dit is die rede waarom die Jode Jesus ondersoek en "meet" aan die Skrif (7:52). Gekoppel aan die ondersoek van die Skrif was hulle besef dat die "nuwe Moses" of profeet in staat moet wees om buitengewone tekens te doen. Om hierdie rede word Jesus gekonfronteer om tekens te verskaf (2:18; 6:30). Die groot aantal verwysings na die Ou Testament in hierdie Evangelie bevestig die idee dat die Christene die Jesus-gebeurtenisse en hulle eie posisie in lyn sien met hierdie Skrifgedeeltes.
- c. God het op hierdie verwagtinge gereageer deur die *liefdevolle* daad, die stuur van sy Seun (3:16). Dit moet gesien word as 'n daad van suiwer *genade*, wat dit moontlik maak om die glorie van God te sien (1:14, 16, 17 – sien Van der Watt 1996,311-332). Daar lê goddelike inisiatief agter hierdie nuwe reddende gebeure. Dit is sy geskenk vir hierdie wêreld (3:16; 4:10) volgens sy *plan* (sien, byvoorbeeld, die verwysings na die *uur* – 2:4; 8:20; 12:23; 16:4, 32; 17:1, ens., of na die beker wat die Vader vir Jesus voorberei het – 18:11). Richter (1977:58-62) plaas baie klem op die wil van die Vader en sy bevel in die verband. In kort lê die rede in die genade en liefde van God self, wat sy beloftes wat Hy in die Skrif gemaak het, vervul. God het gesê Hy gaan dit doen, en nou het Hy dit deur Jesus gedoen.

4.2 Die belangrikste soteriologiese probleem: waar kan God gevind word?

Dit lei tot die vraag: Hoe kon sulke aansprake op verandering en nuwe openbaring plaasgevind het in 'n geloofwaardige manier in 'n gevestigde en goed-georganiseerde godsdiensgemeenskap soos dié van die Jode? Die argument sal soos volg ontwikkel word: Die aansprake wat oor Jesus as *Openbaarder* gemaak is, sal eerste aandag geniet, daarna sal daar verduidelik word hoe die aansprake *gestaaf* kan word. 'n Bespreking van die soteriologiese *gevolge* en *resultate* van hierdie aansprake sal volg.

4.2.1 Die aanspraak: Jesus openbaar God, die Vader

Die aansprake van Jesus is duidelik: "Wie My sien, sien die Vader" (14:9), en "Wie in My glo, glo nie net in My nie maar ook in Hom wat My gestuur het. En wie My sien, sien ook Hom wat My gestuur het" (12:44-45; sien ook 1:18). Met die koms van Jesus het die fokus van God se

⁷ Wanneer mens byvoorbeeld met die Soteriologie bemoenienis maak, val die fokus dikwels op individuele aspekte soos die *ὑπέρ* formules, hergeboorte, lewe, die Lam, die rol van die kruis, of verwante aspekte. Sien byvoorbeeld Nielsen (1999:237ff); Malan (1989:13-15). Die groter prentjie word dikwels vergeet.

teenwoordigheid verander. God, die Vader, sal weet waar Jesus is, en as sy opponente hom nie aanvaar nie, is hulle sonder God! Dit is beslis 'n radikale aanspraak, maar tog 'n sentrale aanspraak waarop die argument van die dissipels van Jesus teen hulle opponente rus (17:8).

Dit gee aanleiding tot die volgende vraag: Hoekom is spesifiek Jesus alleen die Openbaarmaker van God, die Vader. Vir ons doel is slegs 'n kort uiteensetting van hierdie majestueuse tema nodig om die punt te illustreer, aangesien literatuur oor die Evangelie oorlaai is met gedetailleerde beskrywings van hierdie temas (Ashton 1994:71-89).

a) Daar is aansprake op (goddelike) *lokaliteit*. Jesus eis: "Julle (sy opponente) is van hier onder; Ek is van daarbo. Julle behoort tot hierdie wêreld; Ek behoort nie tot hierdie wêreld nie." (8:23). In plaas van 'n geboortenarratief, onderstreep die inkarnasie (1:14) van die reeds-bestaande Woord (1:1; 8:58) die goddelike oorsprong van Jesus, as die Een wat deur sy Vader van bo gestuur is (hemel – 3:13; 3:31-32; 16:28). Dit is waarom Hy spesiale kennis van die Vader het (1:18), of soos hy dit formuleer "Dit verseker Ek jou, ons praat oor wat ons weet, en ons getuig oor wat ons gesien het" (3:11; 6:46).

b) Daar is aansprake op 'n *unieke verhouding* tussen die Vader en die Seun (Schnackenburg 1991:285-286), wat Jesus duidelik in die bevoorregte posisie plaas waarin hy die Vader kan ken en God, die Vader, gevolglik kan openbaar. Hierdie unieke verhouding word op verskillende wyses uitgedruk, byvoorbeeld deur die *Immanenzformeln* (10:38; 14:20; 17:21-23; sien Borig 1967:199-236; Schnackenburg 1982:99; Scholtissek 2000) of uitdrukkings dat Jesus en die Vader een is (10:30), of Jesus se posisie as die unieke Seun (τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ) wat aan die Vader se sy is (1:18), die enigste een wat die Vader gesien het (6:46). Alhoewel daar eenheid is, word die verskille tussen Vader en Seun altyd behou (Theobald 1992:62; Kammler 2000:231-232).

c) Na aanleiding van hierdie unieke verhouding, word aansprake gemaak dat die Vader Jesus *funksioneel toegerus* het om as sy unieke agent, wat die teenwoordigheid van God openbaar, op te tree, Hy het Jesus "opgevoed" om in staat te wees om alles te doen wat die Vader doen (5:19 – sien Schenke 1998:445ff), *inter alia* om lewe te gee en te oordeel (5:19-29; 10:17-18), dinge wat die prerogatief van God alleen is. Die Vader het aan Jesus alles gewys (5:19-20) en het alles in sy hande gegee (3:35; 17:2, 7), en het alles onder sy mag en outoriteit geplaas (13:3; 17:2, 7); hierdie is almal verwysings na die absolute krag van Jesus om verlossing te bring (sien Richter 1977,58). Nou het Jesus, as die lewe, lig, waarheid, ens. (sien Schweizer 1965; Cebulj 2000; Williams 2000:303 oor die Johannese ἐγὼ εἶμι uitsprake), die opdrag van die Vader ontvang om ewige lewe aan hierdie wêreld te gee (3:16; 12:50; 17:2).

d) Jesus, die Seun, het gebaseer op sy voorbereiding, 'n opdrag en 'n *missie* ontvang om lewe na die wêreld te bring as Openbaarmaker van God (3:16; 6:40; 12:49-50), iets wat Schnackenburg (1991:287) sentraal ag tot die Seun-Christologie. Jesus doen wat vir die Vader aanneemlik is (8:29; 4:34; 17:4) – hy doen niks op sy eie nie (4:24; 12:49; 17:4). (Op missiepraktyke in antieke tye en in Johannes se Evangelie, sien Bühner 1977, Schenke 1998:445ff; Borgen 1983:124). "Ek het nie uit my eie gepraat nie, maar juis die Vader wat my gestuur het, het my opgedra wat Ek moet sê en wat Ek moet praat" (12:49). Dit is waarom Hy ook bereid is om die beker te drink wat die Vader vir Hom voorberei het (18:11; Rahner 1998:62-72).

e) Gegronde op bogenoemde, kan daar aanspraak gemaak word daarop dat Jesus die verskaffer is van die *openbaring* en *kennis* van en oor God. (Wysheidsmotiewe in Johannes is baie bekend in die literatuur oor hierdie Evangelie – sien Boismard 1993:133). Benaminge soos Rabbi, Onderwyser (1:38; 3:2) en Profeet (4:19) druk sy funksie uit. As God se Agent openbaar Hy, verklaar Hy en is Hy getuie oor dit wat Hy in die hemel gesien en gehoor het (3:11, 32-34; 4:26-27; 8:26) en gee die Woord van God aan die wêreld (17:14), wat verlossing (4:41-42; 5:24, 28; 8:51) of oordeel (12:47-48) bring.

Hierdie Christologiese *aansprake* staan sentraal in hierdie Evangelie en verduidelik hoe en

waarom die pad van waarheid en lewe, met ander woorde God se teenwoordigheid, nie die weg wat sy opponente volg nie. Die vraag wat dan ontstaan is: Is daar enige bewyse wat hierdie aansprake kan staaf?

4.2.2 *Jesus se aansprake word gesubstansieer*

Vanselfsprekend het sy opponente nie hierdie aansprake aanvaar nie (8:48,52; 9:24; 10:20-21; 19:30). Watter bewyse het Jesus gehad dat Hy werklik die wettige “deur tot verlossing” is, terwyl al die ander “diewe en rowers” is? (10:7-10). Hierdie aansprake word gemotiveer deur *inter alia* forensiese taal (sien Hoofstuk 5 of 8) en gebeurtenisse (sien die kruisgebeure). As gevolg van die beperktheid van die artikel en die wye omvang van die forensiese motiewe in die Evangelie, kan dit nie in detail bespreek word nie, maar sien Lincoln se omvattende monografie (2000) op die regsgeledingmotief in die Vierde Evangelie, of Neyrey (1996), of Van der Watt en Voges-Bonthuys (2000:387-405) vir relevante inligting.

In die aansprek van die probleem van legitimering, veral in hoofstuk 5, word verskeie getuies genoem:

1. Jesus noem die getuie van Johannes die Doper (5:33), die man wat deur God gestuur is (1:6; 3:27-28), maar dui onmiddellik aan dat hy meerdere getuies het (5:36). Nogtans noem Hy die getuie van Johannes (1:23, 26, 29-36; 3:27-30, 31-36?) aan hulle “sodat julle gered kan word” (5:34) – deur Johannes se getuie te aanvaar, sal hul vanselfsprekend ook vir Jesus aanvaar en dus verlossing ontvang. Vir sommige was die getuie van Johannes die doper genoeg (10:40-42).
2. In 5:37 (sien ook 8:18) noem Jesus dat die Vader oor Hom getuig. Sy stem is van die hemel af gehoor (12:28).
3. In 5:38 sê Jesus dat dieselfde Skrifgedeeltes wat sy opponente met soveel ywer bestudeer om lewe te vind, die Skrifgedeeltes is wat oor Hom getuig (5:39). Moses en die ander profete, het oor Jesus geskryf (1:45; 5:46). Jesaja het die glorie van Jesus gesien en oor Hom gepraat (12:41 – sien Menken 1996).
4. Die Gees, wat op Jesus neerdaal, was die teken vir Johannes dat Jesus waarlik die Seun van God is (1:34). Hierdie Jesus sal ook met die Gees doop (1:32-33; 3:8-10), wat as bewys sal dien van sy goddelike Seunskap (1:33; 7:39; 15:26; 20:22).
5. Sy daad wettig die aansprake van Jesus, soos Hy sê in 14:10-11, “Glo in My omdat ek in die Vader is en die Vader in My; of anders, glo op grond van die werke self” (διὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτὰ). In 5:36 formuleer Jesus dit soos volg: “Die werk (τὰ ἔργα) wat die Vader My gegee het om te voltooi en waarmee Ek nou juis besig is, lê oor My getuie af en bevestig dat die Vader My gestuur het.”

Ons moet bietjie meer aandag gee aan die *daad* van Jesus, wat kulmineer in sy verheerliking (die kruisgebeure). Jesus verwys dikwels na sy eie dood.⁸ In 8:28 merk hy op, “Eers wanneer julle die Seun van die Mens verhoog het (ὑψώσητε), sal julle begryp dat Ek is (τότε γνώσεσθε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι)”. Die kruis-gebeure, of (simbolies - Barrett 1978:214, 343) verhoog word, word beskryf as die *lokus* van die *openbaring* van die *identiteit* van Jesus (Carson 1991:345; Neyrey 1996:119-120; Kelber 1996:137). Die vraag is, “Hoekom?”

Die hooftrekke van die argument kan soos volg voorgestel word: in sy verduideliking van sy unieke verhouding met die Vader, maak Jesus aanspraak in 5:19ff dat hy “opgelei” is deur die Vader – en wat die Vader hom geleer (gewys) het, was hoe om lewe te gee en te oordeel (5:21-22) oor dinge wat die prerogatief van die lewende God is, soos die Vader dit ook doen (Gnilka 1989:130; Thompson 2001:55), maar vir sy Seun gegee het (5:21). Soos Thompson (2001:54) vermeld: “If there is any ‘bridge’ between divine and human identity or function, the bridge must

8 sien byvoorbeeld, 2:18-22; 3:14-15; 8:28-29; 10:17-18; 12:23-26, 31-33; 14:30-31; 16:31-33; ens.

be built and authorized by God.” Die implikasie is duidelik: die hoogste bewys vir die goddelike identiteit van Jesus sal die illustrasie van sy krag oor lewe en dood wees. Jesus onderstreep dit in 10:17-18, waar hy aantoon dat Hy sy lewe gaan neerlê en dit weer gaan opneem (10:17-18). Die punt wat Thompson maak is dat Jesus *aktief* betrokke is in sy eie opstanding, wat bewys dat Hy die opstanding en ewige lewe is (11:25-26). Hierdie aktiwiteit van lewe gee, selfs om sy eie lewe terug te neem, bevestig sy aansprake dat Hy van God kom. Waar anders sal Hy die mag kry om dit te doen?

Met sy opstanding bewys Jesus sy goddelike identiteit deur uit die dood op te staan en aan sy dissipels te verskyn. Deur weer sy lewe terug te neem, is die historiese bewyse (vir die skrywer) deur Jesus gegee vir sy aansprake en Thomas erken dit in sy belydenis (Carson 1991:657-658; 20:28). Binne die grense van die narratief, sou hierdie belydenis van Jesus se goddelike identiteit nie moontlik gewees het sonder die realiteit van die kruisgebeure nie (Stibbe 1994:69).

Deur die kruisgebeure is die goddelike identiteit van Jesus geopenbaar en die belangrikste vraag beantwoord. Dus is die soteriologiese raaisel “Waar is God?” opgelos. God is teenwoordig in en deur Jesus dus *geopenbaar*, daarom vorm die kruisgebeure die hoeksteen van die soteriologiese proses. Die reddende krag van die kruis lê in die openbare krag daarvan.⁹

Hierdie opmerking moet vanuit die regte perspektief verstaan word. Die basiese kwessie wat aangespreek word, het nie betrekking op die manier waarop die individu se sondes versoen of skoongewas is deur die bloed van Jesus nie, of verwante kwessies nie. Die kwessie het eerder te doen met waar God gevind kan word, wat tot konflikerende antwoorde gelei het. Die fout moet daarom nie gemaak word om tot die gevolgtrekking te kom uit hierdie spesifieke fokus en die afwesigheid van terminologie of verwysings na bloed, opoffering of versoening van sondes nie, ens.¹⁰, of dat hy onbekend was met die soteriologiese tradisies of hulle verwerp het nie. Hierdie tipe gevolgtrekkings word gemaak wanneer die soteriologie van die Evangelie in abstraksie gelees word.

Verskeie pogings is in die verlede aangewend om te toon (vanselfsprekend teen Bultmann en sy ondersteuners) dat daar tekens is van ander funksies van die kruisgebeure (byvoorbeeld Sevenster 1946,240; Coetzee 1990:62-64). Dit is wel korrek, maar daar moet onmiddellik erken word dat hierdie idees nie sentraal staan tot die hoofargument van die Evangelie nie. Dit beteken nie dat Johannes in ’n unieke of aparte Christelike tradisie staan nie – maar dit illustreer eerder dat sy soteriologie nie geformuleer is in ’n absolute ahistoriese manier nie. Sy soteriologiese boodskap is geformuleer met ’n spesifieke situasie in gedagte, en hierdie situasie het sy keuse van soteriologiese terminologie en temas direk beïnvloed.

In hierdie stadium sal dit in orde wees om ’n kort oorsig te gee van die ander maniere waarop die kruisgebeure in verhouding staan tot soteriologiese motiewe.

a) Johannes verwys dikwels na die kruisgebeure as *verheerliking* (7:39; 12:16,23; 13:31,32; 17:1,5 – Richter 1977:61; Coetzee 1990:63). Die aoristiese imperatiewe vorm van die werkwoord (δόξαζόν) verwys spesifiek na die tyd van die kruisgebeure (byvoorbeeld 12:28; 17:1, 5). Die

9 Ons kan nie hier in detail ingaan nie, maar die ander *dade* van Jesus dra ook dieselfde boodskap. Sien die argument van die blinde man (9:32-33). Nikodemus kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat Jesus van God moet wees, aangesien “niemand kan hierdie wondertekens doen wat u doen, as God nie by hom is nie.” (3:2). Die siekte en dood van Lasarus verheerlik die Seun (11:4, sien ook 15).

10 Terminologie van swaarkry (πάσχω) of versoening (byvoorbeeld, ἵλασμός, λύτρον, καταλλαγή) word vermy en selfs die woordgroep σπαρῶω word selde gebruik in die passievolle narratief. Verwysings na bloedsweet of ’n gebed van doodstryd in Getsemané is afwesig. Judas verraaie nie vir Jesus met ’n soen nie, maar Jesus gee homself oor sodat Hy die beker kan drink wat sy Vader vir Hom voorberei het (18:1-11; 12:27-28). Pauliniese terme soos vernedering (Fil 2:8), swakheid (2 Kor 13:4) of vloek (Gal 3:13) is ook nie teenwoordig nie.

volgende vraag het nou aandag nodig: hoe kan die gebeurtenisse van dood en swaarkry, wat 'n "skandalon" vir baie is, Jesus verheerlik?

Alhoewel die term δόξα (en sy afleidings) gebruik word in verskeie en selfs diverse wyses in byvoorbeeld klassieke Griekse en Joodse literatuur, toon die wyse waarop Johannes die term gebruik 'n definitiewe affiniteit vir die Hebreeuse gebruik van dbk. Von Rad het aangetoon dat dbk *inter alia* gebruik is om te verwys na die aktiewe erkenning of die posisie van eer van iemand, gebaseer op sy belangrikheid soos gesien kan word uit sy persoon/status of aksies (Von Rad 1974:238; Cf also Kittel 1974:248).

In hierdie Evangelie val die klem op die gebruik van δόξα, waar afleidings soms sterker val op die "eerbetoon" aan 'n persoon en op ander tye meer op die "belangrikheid" van 'n persoon. δόξα word nie gebruik om te verwys na iets wat visueel is soos glans nie, maar eerder na 'n posisie van eer gebaseer op wat 'n persoon is of doen in verhouding tot die mense wat aan hom erkenning gee (dit word nie net in verband met God gebruik nie, maar ook vir gewone mense – 5:44; 12:42-43). Wanneer Jesus aan die Vader vra om Hom aan die kruis te verheerlik, vra Hy eintlik dat die Vader sy ware identiteit en status visueel bekendstel, as die goddelike Een wat deur die Vader gestuur is. Sowel die passiewe (ἐδοξάσθη/ δοξασθῆ – cf 7:39, 11:4, 12:16, 12:23, 13:31) as die aktiewe gebruike (δοξάζων/ δοξάσω/ δοξάσει - cf 8:54, 12:28, 13:32) van die werkwoord suggereer dat die Seun verheerlik moet word deur die aktiewe deelname van die Vader. Die verheerliking toon resultate wanneer die identiteit van Jesus duidelik word deur die kruisgebeure. Die eenheid tussen die Vader en die Seun word bevestig, en gevolglik sy status en daarom word sy verheerliking openbaar – die motiewe van verheerliking en openbaring word intiem gekoppel in hierdie Evangelie.

b) Nog 'n vraag fokus op die gebruik van die woord ὑπέρ, omdat dit hoofsaaklik gebruik word in kontekste waar een persoon vir 'n ander sterf.¹¹ Word die dood van Jesus as plaasvervangend gesien? ὑπέρ word slegs in 11:50-52 sonder twyfel plaasvervangend gebruik. Die konteks toon aan dat iemand sterf in die plek van 'n ander persoon wat veronderstel was om te sterf (Brown 1971:440). In 10:11, 15, waar die skaapwagter vir sy skape sterf en 15:13 waar Jesus vir sy vriende sterf mag op 'n plaasvervangende manier geïnterpreteer word, maar nie noodwendig nie (dit hoef nie "in hulle plek" te wees nie, maar kan ook "as gevolg van hulle" wees; sien Becker 1981, ad loc.).

Carson interpreteer die gebruik van ὑπέρ in 6:51 in terme van die plaasvervangende opoffering van Jesus. Hy kom tot die gevolgtrekking, "...since it is for the life of the world, his (Jesus') sacrifice is vicarious" (Carson 1991:295). Hy verbind dan hierdie verse met die Lam van God in 1:29, 36. Maar as die gebruik van ὑπέρ in hierdie verse deeglik ondersoek word, kan die interpretasie van Carson bevraagteken word. ὑπέρ is, byvoorbeeld, nie sintakties verbind met persone nie, maar met lewe. Die uitdrukking wil nie beklemtoon dat Jesus sy lewe vir mense gegee het nie, maar wil fokus op die doel van sy dood, naamlik lewe vir die wêreld. Dit hoef nie na sy opoffering te verwys nie, maar binne die raamwerk van die groter Evangelie, kan dit verwys na die openbarende krag van sy dood (sien 2:22; 12:16).

In die heiligmaking van Jesus in 17:19 ὑπέρ kan sy dissipels ook verwys na die dood van Jesus (Richter 1977:63 argumenteer dat die betekenis van die frase "ist umstritten" is, maar sien Sevenster 1946:237; Barrett 1978:511; Schnackenburg 1982:187). Die voordele vir die dissipels word uitgedruk in die opvolgende ἵνα-frase. Schnackenburg (1982:187-188) en Brown (1972:766-767) verbind hierdie verwysing aan die offerdood van Jesus in die lig van die Ou Testamentiese verwysings na diere en selfs priesters wat geoffer is. Die dood van Jesus kan dan

11 Sien 6:51; 10:11, 15; 11:50-52; 13:37-38; 15:13; 18:14. Dit verwys slegs in drie instansies na die dood van iemand (1:30; 11:4; 17:19?).

gesien word in die lig van 'n priesterlike offer. As hierdie interpretasie geldig is, dan is dit beslis 'n verwysing na die offerdood van Jesus. Maar dit bly 'n verwysing en nie 'n direkte en eksplisiete stelling nie. Dit sal ons argument ondersteun dat Johannes nie ander wyses van reflektoring oor die dood van Jesus reflekteer nie, maar dat hy 'n spesifieke soteriologiese fokus het.

Daarom mag ons tot die gevolgtrekking kom, dat alhoewel Johannes nie die plaasvervanging of opoffering beklemtoon nie, daar insinuasies in daardie rigting is, maar daar word nie op hierdie verwysings gefokus nie. Dit staan sekondêr tot die openbarende funksie van die kruisgebeure.

c) Johannes die Doper noem Jesus die “Lam van God, wat die sonde van hierdie wêreld wegneem” (1:29, 36). Die band tussen sonde en die Lam in hierdie uitdrukking is baie suggererend van die opofferende versoening vir sonde. Maar daar bestaan geen konsensus onder geleerdes rakende die interpretasie van die uitdrukking nie. Tog, binne die konteks van die Ou Testamentiese opofferende tradisies en die ontvangs van hierdie tradisies in die Nuwe Testament, lyk die skakel tussen die Lam en opoffering natuurlik (Bultmann 1984:406). Of Johannes die Paaslam in gedagte het, of moontlik 'n meer generiese siening van lammers wat geoffer word in die algemeen, is nie seker nie. Daar word ook nie in hierdie verse verduidelik hoe sonde weggenem word nie. Eksegeties is die volgende van belang. Hierdie opmerking van Johannes die Doper word op 'n prominente plek in die Evangelie gemaak, maar sonder genoegsame duidelikheid oor die betekenis, verhouding of funksionering van die elemente wat in hierdie opmerking genoem word. Dit hou eksegete aan die raai. Ek dink dat Johannes ten volle bewus was van die offertradisies, maar dit was nie sy fokus in die Evangelie nie. Hy noem dit of verwys daarna, maar ontwikkel dit nie op enige manier nie. As mens aan hom sou kon vra, “Wat gebeur met ons individuele sondes?”, sou hy kon antwoord, “Christus het ons deur sy bloed versoen”. Hierdie insig kan intertekstueel gesubstansieer word, deur te verwys na 1 Johannes 2:1-2 en 4:9-10 waar hierdie sake genoem word en in hierdie terme beantwoord word (Sien Van der Watt 1995:147-151 vir 'n meer gedetailleerde behandeling).

d) Die verwysing na die saad wat doodgaan en baie vrugte voortbring impliseer dat die dood van Jesus baie voordele het. Hierdie gedagtelyn word egter nie in hierdie verse ontwikkel nie, maar eerder die noodsaaklikheid dat die dissipels Jesus volg en dien (12:25-26). Binne die groter raamwerk van die Evangelie moet die voordele van Jesus se dood eerder met die openbaring van sy identiteit geïnterpreteer word as met opoffering of 'n verwante tema. Daar is geen implikasie dat laasgenoemde hier geïmpliseer word nie.

e) Die drie gevalle van ὑψόω (3:14; 8:28; 12:32) waarin die simboliese potensiaal van die woord ὑψόω gebruik word, is ook beduidend. Wanneer Jesus teen die kruis opgelig word, begin sy beweging terug na sy Vader en weg van die *kosmos*. Hy trek byvoorbeeld al die gelowiges na hom toe aan, wat impliseer dat hulle dualisties verwyder is van hierdie wêreld om by die Lig en Lewe te wees (12:31-32; Dodd 1960:379). Hulle verlossing impliseer dat hulle nie meer deel is van hierdie wêreld nie, soos dit blyk uit 15:19 of 17:14, 16. Daarom word die “oplig” simbolies van hulle verlossing van die mag van die heerser van hierdie wêreld en die gevolglike oordeel van die prins van hierdie wêreld (12:31), van “daar bo”. Dit moet onthou word dat die manier waarop hierdie “aantrekking” gebeur, en daarom die modus van verlossing slegs beskryf word as die “oplig”, of die kruisgebeure. Of dit deur openbaring of opoffering gebeur, of iets anders, word nie genoem nie. Die konteks van hierdie Evangelie as geheel moet bydra tot die maak van hierdie tipe gevolgtrekkings.

In 3:15 word God se verlossende teenwoordigheid tussen sy mense kragtig geïllustreer deur die tradisie van die koperslang (Num 21:4-9). Dit is ook 'n goddelike imperatief (δεῖ) dat Jesus

opgelig moet word op die kruis om die liefdevolle en reddende teenwoordigheid van God tussen mense te illustreer (3:14-15; sien Hanson 1991:42vv). Dit is God se plan sodat gelowiges die ewige lewe mag ontvang (3:15).

Die *identiteit* van die gehoorsame agent van die Vader sal op die kruis geopenbaar word deurdat Hy opgelig word (8:28), met ander woorde, deur die kruisgebeure (Beasley-Murray 1987,ad loc.). Dit moet aan sy heerlikheid gekoppel word, soos Beasley-Murray (1987,ad loc.) dit illustreer. Die tema van die openbaring van die identiteit van Jesus is die fokus hier, wat aan hierdie vers en moontlik die ander voorkomste van ὁψώ verbind kan word, met die breë tema van openbaring as verlossing.

In 'n kort ompad, sal daar vlugtig aandag gegee word aan 'n vreemdheid in hierdie Evangelie, naamlik die rol van die *duiwel*. In teenstelling met die sinoptiese evangelies, is daar geen verleiding in die woestyn nie, ook nie enige geestesuitdrywing deur Jesus nie (Twelftree 1998,ad loc.), alhoewel Hy daarvan beskuldig word dat Hy 'n bose gees in hom het (7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20-21). Maar die duiwel word beskryf as die *vader* (8:44) van ongelowiges en 'n *prins* van hierdie wêreld (ὁ ἄρχων τοῦ κόσμου τούτου – 12:31; 14:30; 16:11. Sien Elgvin 2000,ad loc. en Hamilton 1997,ad loc. vir Joodse materiaal oor hierdie term), albei sosiale terme verwys na 'n groeporiëntasie. In al drie kontekste waarin die duiwel die prins van die wêreld genoem word, is die dominante temas oorwinning van Jesus oor hierdie prins deur die kruisgebeure en die gevolglike magtelosheid van hierdie prins, sowel as die teenwoordigheid van oordeel oor hierdie prins en alles wat aan hom behoort. Wat is die soteriologiese implikasies? Deur hierdie vader en prins te oorheers, oorheers Jesus in der waarheid sy hele familiegroep, wat sosiale herbeskrywing impliseer van waar die werklike mag en ware verlossing lê. Dit is 'n ironiese opmerking oor die skynbare posisie van mag wat deur die dominante groep van opponente en selfs deur Pilatus gehou word, wat Jesus gekruisig het en sy volgers verstrooi het (16:32). Maar die werklike mag lê by God en sal duidelik word wanneer Jesus weer lewe (10:17-18; 19:11).

Aan die ander kant, alhoewel die duiwel minder gemaak word in hierdie Evangelie, word hy nietemin geïllustreer as die mag agter die fisiese opposisie teen Jesus en bly hy die bron van bose dade en woorde. Hy probeer Jesus vernietig deur in en deur mense te werk (Twelftree 1998, ad loc.). Hy gaan in Judas in en daag hom uit om Jesus te verraai (13:2, 27). Judas word selfs 'n duiwel genoem (6:70). Die bekendste beskrywing is moontlik die een dat die mense wat Jesus nie volg nie, kinders van die duiwel is (8:44). Hulle leer van hulle vader en doen wat hy doen (8:38). Alhoewel die duiwel nie enige mag oor Jesus het nie en verslaan en verdryf is (12:31), bly hy magtig genoeg in die interim periode, van nou tot die laaste dag (12:48), vir Jesus om te bid dat die Vader die gelowiges van die bose moet bewaar (sien 15:18-25 of 16:2 vir beskrywings van sy invloed).

4.3 Ontvangs van verlossing

Op hierdie tydstip van die argument is daar vasgestel dat Jesus wel die Agent van God is, die Seun wat deur die Vader gestuur is. Dit kan op verskillende maniere gestaaf word, soos so pas geargumenteer. Hy is die Weg (17:6), die deur na groen weivelde (10:9), die Een wat lewe in oorvloed bring (10:10).

Die volgende vraag is: Hoe kom mens by groen weivelde, dit beteken, by verlossing? In 1:12-13 staan: "Maar aan almal wat Hom aangeneem het, dié wat in Hom *glo*, het Hy die reg gegee om kinders van God te word – kinders ... *gebore* uit God." Die twee hoofmotiewe om verlossing te verkry word hier verbind, naamlik, *geloof* en geestelike *geboorte*. In die res van die Evangelie word hierdie motiewe in hulle eie kontekste gebruik. In 3:3 lees ons: "Dit verseker Ek jou: As iemand nie opnuut gebore word nie, kan hy die koninkryk van God nie sien nie" (sien ook 3:5) en in 3:16 (en op baie ander plekke) word gesê, "dié wat in Hom *glo*, nie verlore sal gaan nie maar

die ewige lewe sal hê". (Sien ook 3:36). Sedert die beskrywing van die verkryging van verlossing in terme van geloof en geboorte, moet hierdie twee motiewe nou aandag geniet.

4.3.1 *Geloof as middel tot die bereiking van verlossing*

Geloof (die werkwoord πιστεύω, wat 98 keer voorkom) word nie in 'n enkele vers in die Evangelie gedefinieer nie, maar die volle omvang van die betekenis daarvan word geleidelik ontwikkel. Verskillende kontekste moet in verhouding tot mekaar gesien word ten einde 'n volledige omvang van wat bedoel is te bereik. Hierdie is nie die plek om in 'n gedetailleerde bespreking van die verskillende wyses waarop πιστεύω gebruik word in te gaan nie.¹² (Sien Schnackenburg 1972:558-575, of Kysar 1993:78-96, vir gedetailleerde besprekings. Vir ons doel is dit nie nodig om hulle besprekings hier te herhaal of om weer aan die materiaal te werk nie). Oor die algemeen word πιστεύω gebruik om die geloof/vertroue in of aanvaarding van iets of iemand aan te dui (sien Arndt et al. 1996:660-662; Liddell and Scott 1996:641), met verskillende motiewe en eksistensiële verbintnisse. 'n Analise van die gebruike van πιστεύω toon aan dat verlossende geloof volle aanvaarding van die boodskap van Jesus sowel as sy persoon behels, wat sy identiteit insluit en sy oorsprong uit God as Agent. Met dit in gedagte, is die aard van geloof steeds vaag. Wat is die ware dimensies en gevolge van hierdie aanvaarding? Dit is 'n belangrike vraag, aangesien nie elke voorkoms van πιστεύω in hierdie Evangelie na verlossende geloof verwys nie.

Ek wend my nou na enkele kontekste waar geloof nie na verlossing lei nie, en sal dan afsluit met 'n positiewe beskrywing van geloof.

Die eerste kompleks wat die spesifieke gebruik van die term illustreer waarin πιστεύω gebruik word, word gebruik om die aanvaarding van Jesus te beskryf, maar vir die verkeerde redes en sonder voldoende verandering van houding teenoor jouself asook teenoor Jesus. Hierdie geloof blyk nie verlossend te wees nie, maar druk 'n positiewe houding teenoor Jesus uit. Voorbeelde is:

- In 2:22-25 vind ons mense wat in Jesus se naam geglo het omdat hulle die wondertekens gesien het wat hy gedoen het (alhoewel tekens nie die effek op almal gehad het nie – 12:37). Jesus het egter nie in 'n oorweldigende positiewe manier geantwoord nie: "Maar Hy het nie vertroue in hulle gestel nie, omdat Hy geweet het hoe hulle almal is" (2:24). Soos Beasley-Murray (1987, ad loc.) aantoon, word die ontoereikendheid van geloof, gebaseer op tekens alleen, duidelik in hierdie episode. Hy argumenteer dat hierdie verse nie impliseer dat geloof gebaseer op tekens onwaar is nie, maar dit is die "eerste stap na Jesus". Verlossing is nie verseker nie. Jy kan nie net in Jesus glo net omdat Hy wonderwerke doen nie. Daar is meer as dit. Hierdie mense het nie die volle betekenis van Jesus verstaan nie en daarom ontbreek volledige toewyding, soos die storie van Nikodemus in Hoofstuk 3 ook impliseer.
- Volgens 6:14-15, 25-27 wil sekere mense Jesus volg net vir die geskenke en voordele wat hulle kan ontvang. Hierdie tipe geloof is nog nie verlossende geloof nie, maar dit beweeg in die regte rigting. Waar 'n selfsoekende houding egter aan geloof gekoppel word, is daardie geloof onvoldoende, soos Kysar (1993:81-82) aandui.
- Die gevaar van 'n selfsoekende houding word op 'n ander manier herhaal in 12:42-43. Die mense wat glo word weer gevind, maar hulle wil Jesus nie openlik bely nie, "want hulle het verkies om liever deur mense geëer te word as deur God" (12:43). Hulle was bang dat hulle uit die sinagoge gegooi sal word en dit het hulle verhoed om openlik hulle geloof te bely. Dis waarom hulle geloof nie volwassenheid kon bereik nie (Beasley-Murray 1987, ad

12 Die woord word inderdaad op verskillende wyses gebruik, byvoorbeeld om te aanvaar (3:12), om te glo in 'n persoon of sy te vertrou (2:24) om net te glo nie (as gevolg van iemand se woorde of tekens).

loc.). In 6:60-71 is gelowiges (dissipels genoem) nie gewillig om Jesus onvoorwaardelik te volg nie (6:66), omdat sy onderrig te moeilik vir hulle is (6:60) en hulle het besluit om huis toe te gaan, wat beteken dat hulle teen Jesus besluit het (6:66). 'n Selfsoekende houding wat 'n volwaardige en onvoorwaardelike belydenis, soos die van Petrus wat by Jesus gebly het toe die ander weggegaan het, verhoed (6:68-69), verhinder inderdaad geloof om verlossend te wees.

'n Tweede kompleks waar geloof onvoldoende blyk te wees, word aangetref in 8:30-47. Jesus praat met die Jode oor sy missie en "(T)erwyl Hy hierdie dinge gesê het, het baie mense tot geloof in Hom gekom" (8:30); Jesus gaan voort om met hierdie gelowiges te praat (8:31 – sien Beasley-Murray 1987, ad loc. vir interpretasieprobleme hier). Sy eerste woorde aan hulle is insiggewend: "As julle aan my woorde getrou bly (μείνῃτε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ), is julle waarlik my dissipels, en julle sal die waarheid ken en dit sal julle vrymaak" (8:31-32). Die implikasie van hierdie woorde is duidelik: geloof kan nie net intellektueel wees nie, maar moet ook eksistensiel wees en jou dade beïnvloed. "Bly in" die "woorde van Jesus" is 'n uitdrukking wat volledige aanvaarding van die boodskap veronderstel – in so 'n mate dat dit jou eie idees word wat jou lewe en aksies bepaal. Dit is waarom Jesus "vryheid" met hierdie aanvaarding van sy woorde kan verbind – dit is lewensveranderend. In terme van die metafoor van vryheid, verwys dit na 'n sosiale heroriëntasie met eksistensiële effekte. Jy kan nie glo sonder om te doen soos die kinders van die Vader doen nie (8:39-42), en dit impliseer dat jy 'n kind van God word en dit in jou gedrag toon. Die argument in hoofstuk 8 is egter dat alhoewel hulle glo, lewe hulle nie soos kinders van God nie en moet daarom aan die familie van die Satan behoort. naam (Jesus – gewoonlik met εἰς of ἐν; ook God – 5:24), om te glo in voorwerpe soos woorde of die Skrif, om jouself nie

Die derde en waarskynlik die mees insiggewende en illustratiewe kompleks word in hoofstuk 9 aangetref, in die storie van die fisieke en geestelike heling van die blinde man. Dit is die enigste narratief waarin Jesus afwesig is en iemand anders Hom verdedig. Die aard van verdediging is belangrik. Die man wat genees is, verstaan nie net die "teologiese" implikasies van sy geneesing nie, naamlik dat Jesus van God moet wees (sien sy argument in 9:27-33), maar hy verdedig ook hierdie insig in so 'n mate dat hy sy sosiale aanvaarding kan verloor.¹³ Maar daar is 'n kinkel in hierdie storie. Alhoewel die man Jesus verdedig tot op 'n punt waarop hy basies alles kan verloor, is hy nie gered nie, nie voordat hy die ware identiteit van Jesus aanvaar nie (9:38). Dit illustreer dat aanvaarding sonder werke nie genoegsaam is nie, so ook is werk sonder die aanvaarding van die identiteit van Jesus. Aktiewe, self-opofferende verdediging van Jesus, van sy goddelike identiteit omdat geloof verlossing impliseer. Intellektuele aanvaarding en konkrete, eksistensiële gedrag gaan hand aan hand.

In 'n neutedop: Verlossende geloof is 'n self-opofferende, intellektuele en eksistensiële aanvaarding van die boodskap en persoon van Jesus – in so 'n mate dat dit die persoon se denke en dade heeltemal transformeer in ooreenstemming met hierdie boodskap en lei tot 'n gehoorsame lewe van doen wat 'n kind van God behoort te doen. Dit is waarom Blank (1964:129) korrek is in sy beskrywing van verlossende geloof as "eine totale, das gesamte menschliche Sein ergreifende und bestimmende Grundhaltung".

'n Belangrike opmerking moet nog gemaak word: Daar moet ook daarop gelet word dat geloof nie verlossing is nie. Dit is 'n middel om verlossing te verkry. Dit maak 'n persoon vir Jesus, die bron van verlossing, die Gewer van die ewige lewe, oop.

4.3.2 Verlossing: word gebore in die familie van God

13 In 'n groepteorieënteerde samelewing was sosiale aanvaarding noodsaaklik, omdat dit basies 'n persoon se hele lewe bepaal het – jou status, ekonomiese stelsel en ondersteuning, die terme waarmee jy jouself definieer, ens.

4.3.2.1 *Gebore van God*

Die verhouding tussen geloof en geboorte word gegee in 1:12-13: “Maar aan almal wat Hom (Jesus) aangeneem het, dié wat in Hom *glo*, het Hy die reg gegee om kinders van God te word – kinders ... *gebore* van God.” Dié wat *glo*, of ontvang, word gebore uit God om die ewige lewe te ontvang (verlossing). Die gevolgtrekking van die voorafgaande gedeelte is op hierdie oomblik insiggewend: Geloof is nie verlossing nie, maar lei beslis tot verlossing. Aan die ander kant word verlossing uitgedruk in terme van die geboorte van God in 1:12-13 (Sien ook 3:3, 5). As ons derhalwe op ’n ander plek lees “dié wat in Hom (Jesus) *glo*, nie verlore sal gaan nie maar die ewige lewe sal hê” (3:16 – sien 3:36; 5:24), moet daar begryp word dat geloof getransformeer word na lewe deur *geboorte*. Daarom: as jy *glo* dat jy van God *gebore* is, en die wat van God *gebore* is, het ewige lewe. Deur as kind van God gebore te word (1:12-13), is die persoon in staat om deel te neem aan die geestelike wêreld van God (3:1-8), wat ewige lewe het (3:15-16 *et al.*), wat hom of haar in staat stel om hierdie lewe met God te ervaar in al sy dimensies.

Ek het elders (Van der Watt 2000) breedvoerig geargumenteer dat dit noodsaaklik is om die metaforiese aard van terminologie soos “gebore van God”, “ewige lewe”, “kinders van God”, “God wat ons Vader word”, ensovoorts te erken, en dat hierdie konsepte direk verband hou met *gesinsbeelde*. Hierdie terme word in samewerking gebruik om deel te vorm van ’n groter netwerk van metafore wat verwant is aan gesinsbeelde. Daarom word verlossing metafories uitgedruk in terme van die sentrale sosiale realiteit van ’n antieke gesin soos Johannes dit in sy Evangelie gerekonstrueer het (sien Van der Watt 2000; Osiek en Balch 1997).

Johannes gebruik die beeld van ’n normale, aardse gesin om na analogie daarvan te illustreer wat met die gelowige gebeur wanneer hy of sy tot geloof kom en weer gebore word. Omdat *geboorte* die basiese konstitutiewe element is om deel te word van ’n gesin, dien dit as ’n effektiewe metafoor om gesinsbeelde in die Evangelie te gebruik (Van der Watt 2000; Turner 1976:276; Corell 1958:196-197). Net soos elke persoon in die aardse wêreld gebore word, word elke Christen in die “wêreld van God” gebore. God is die bron van geboorte deur die Gees. Die resultaat is om ’n kind van God te wees, wat impliseer dat die persoon die vermoë het om aan geestelike dinge deel te neem, om te behoort aan die gesin van God. As lid van die gesin van God, sal die kind volgens die wil van God optree, wat sy of haar Vader is. Dit is waarom “hergeboorte” so ’n belangrike rol in die Evangelie speel (1:13; 3:3-8). Deur hierdie geestelike geboorte word die persoon se oë geopen vir die geestelike teenwoordigheid en realiteit van God. (Sien Van der Watt 2000 vir gedetailleerde bespreking). God is gees (4:24) en om uit die Gees gebore te wees, word ’n persoon geestelik sensitief (3:6) en in staat om te bestaan in die *gesin* in die koninkryk van God, of die *gesin* van die Koning.

’n Antieke Mediterreense persoon het nie in isolasie gefunksioneer nie, maar as deel van ’n οἶκος (Roberts 1984:62). *Geboorte*, as sentrale gebeurtenis in families, impliseer om deel te word van iets met alles wat daarby ingesluit is, veral op ’n sosiale vlak. Na aanleiding van antieke dokumente, is die verantwoordelikhede van ’n kind teenoor sy/haar ouers gekoppel met die voorreg van geboorte (sien Golden 1990:102; Philo *Decal.* 118), terwyl die ouers ook die verantwoordelikhede gehad het om kinders lief te hê en vir hulle te sorg. Geboorte was ’n belangrike middel om ’n mens se identiteit te bepaal. Geboorte het dus sosiale posisie bepaal (Malina en Neyrey 1991:28). Die bloedlyn waarin iemand gebore word en die gesin waarin hy of sy grootgemaak is, het ’n deurslaggewende rol gespeel in die uiteindelijke verwagte gedrag van daardie persoon (Neyrey 1995:143).

Die handeling of oomblik van verlossing word in metaforiese terme uitgedruk as om gebore te word in *die gesin van God*, of eenvoudig *van God*. Deur deel te word van die (fiktiewe) gesin van God, word die persoon daarom geresosialiseer in terme van daardie gesin. Hierdie nuwe gemeenskap (God se gesin) word die basiese en bepalende gemeenskap waarheen ’n persoon

hom- of haarself oriënteer. Hierdie resosialisasie word gesien in die lig van lewend word tot God, in staat te wees om geestelike realiteit te waardeer, in staat te wees om binne 'n nuwe sosiale en eksistensiële raamwerk te funksioneer, soos verteenwoordig deur Jesus. Verlossing lei inderdaad tot 'n anti-gemeenskap (sien Petersen 1993,80ff).

4.3.2.2 Lewe as bestaan in die gesin van God as gevolg van geboorte

Binne hierdie metaforiese net wat op gesinslewe gebaseer is, is dit voor die hand liggend dat geboorte lewe sal gee en dit is die manier waarop Johannes die metafoor verder ontwikkel (sien Van der Watt 2000 vir 'n gedetailleerde bespreking). ζωή is nie in hierdie Evangelie 'n biologiese term nie (dit is ψυχή), maar 'n religieuse term. Om lewe te hê impliseer om in staat te word en bewustelik en eksistensiel deel te hê aan die realiteit van die gesin van God. Om in die gewone wêreld te leef beteken om te kan eet, drink, in verhouding met ander te tree, op te tree, gehoorsaamheid, ens. Dieselfde is van toepassing op die ewige lewe. Om hierdie lewe deur geboorte te verkry beteken dat die persoon in staat is om deel te kan neem aan die hemelse realiteit van God. Hy of sy word 'n kind van God binne die gesin van God – deur geboorte – wat deelname impliseer met al die regte wat daarmee geassosieer word. In hierdie hemelse realiteit kan gelowiges optree, in verhouding tree, die wêreldse realiteit ervaar in die vorm van vrede en liefde, ens. Om die ewige lewe te hê, beteken daarom dat ons ten volle kan deelneem aan die familiële realiteit van God. Om in die gesin gebore te word en dus die ewige lewe binne daardie gesin te hê, trek nuwe sosiale grense vir 'n persoon. Alhoewel gelowiges nie uit hulle fisiese gemeenskappe verwyder kan word nie, bepaal 'n ander gesin, naamlik die figuratiewe gesin van God, hulle lewens binne daardie gemeenskappe.

Kom ons herinner ons kortliks aan ons tesis wat aan die begin genoem is, dat die konsep van verlossing verbind word daaraan om die konflik tussen die dissipels van Moses en die dissipels van Jesus aan te spoor. Wat verlossing genoem word, soos hierbo verduidelik, impliseer 'n beweging van die groep van Moses na die groepe van Jesus. Die mense wat beweeg mag hulle fisiese gesin of ondersteuningsisteme soos die blinde man verloor, maar hulle verkry die gesin van God.

Die *oomblik van verlossing* kan daarom in terme van *gebore word binne 'n geestelike gesin* beskryf word, wat die ontvangs van die ewige lewe tot gevolg het. Dit bring ons by 'n belangrike punt. Die ewige lewe word dikwels beskryf as die term wat verlossing uitdruk in hierdie Evangelie. Die *geboorteresultate* is egter die ewige lewe. Daar kan daarom geargumenteer word, afhangend van 'n mens se definisie van verlossing, dat geboorte die oomblik wat verlossing plaasvind beskryf en daardie ewige lewe is die soteriologiese resultaat.

Waar pas geloof in die prentjie in? Geloof beskryf 'n benadering van totale onvoorwaardelike aanvaarding van Jesus, wat die mens se gedrag ten volle bepaal. Dit plaas 'n persoon in volle aanvaarding en gehoorsaamheid van Jesus, die bemiddelaar van lewe. Die "alleenplasing" maak 'n persoon nie 'n lid van die gesin van God nie, maar is 'n belangrike vereiste om geboorte van bo te ontvang. Om van bo gebore te word, maak die weg na die koninkryk oop (3:3, 5). Christus is die bemiddelaar in hierdie proses, omdat Hy lewe aan sy dissipels gee, soos die Vader aan Hom lewe gee (6:57). Jy ontvang slegs die reg om 'n kind van God te wees, wanneer jy van God gebore word (1:12-13). Geloof en geboorte gaan hand aan hand, maar is nie dieselfde nie. Geloof beskryf die persoon se houding en reaksie, terwyl geboorte die oomblik van verandering of verlossing beskryf, wat uit die geloof van daardie persoon vloei. God, en slegs God, gee geboorte.

'n Opmerking moet gemaak word oor die alternatief van verlossing, naamlik oordeel en dood. In 5:24 word 'n leidraad tot die verstaan van die metaforiese aard van lewe en dood gegee. Jesus wil die mense in die wêreld hiervan red. Die gelowige beweeg van *dood* na lewe (μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν – sien Jer. 17:13; Ps. 36:10. Barrett 1978,260; Newman & Nida 1980:155; Brown 1971:218). Die voorwaarde vir beweging van geestelike dood na lewe is om

te hoor en glo. Dit impliseer dat die persoon wat “geestelik dood” is, inderdaad hoor en glo (Pribnow 1934,56). Dood is “’n onvermoë om op te tree en verband te hou met ’n lewende een” en geestelike dood word verbind met ’n toestand van vervreemding van God. Dit verduidelik die gebruik van “oordeel” in 5:24 (εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται). God beskerm sy eie (bv. 10:29), terwyl die wat nie aan Hom behoort nie (wat nie ’n verhouding met Hom het nie) geoordeel word (12:47-48). Dié wat nie glo nie sal die gevolge van die toorn van God dra (3:36), behalwe vir die feit dat hulle ook nie die ewige lewe sal kry nie, soos Schnackenburg (1972:427) opmerk: “Das ‘Gericht’ ist mit dem Unglauben *ipso facto* eingetreten” (Mussner 1952:98; Blank 1964:88). Mense sal sterf in hulle sonde sonder God.

4.3.3 *Verlossing as resosialisasie*

Om binne ’n gesin gebore te word en dus lid van daardie gesin te word, impliseer ’n nuwe identiteit, nuwe sosiale verhoudings, ’n nuwe status. Dit is die essensie van die beskrywing van verlossing in dié Evangelie. Die nuwe gesin van God staan in kontras tot enige aardse sosiale verenigings of groepe. Om in daardie gesin gebore te word en dus ewige lewe in daardie gesin te hê, skep nuwe sosiale grense vir ’n persoon. Verlossing impliseer inderdaad ’n totale resosialisasie binne die gesin van God. Ek het elders geargumenteer dat behalwe vir verwysings na die ma van Jesus, al die verwysings na fisiese gesinne of soortgelyke ordes negatief is (Van der Watt 2001). Die werklike en sosiale orde om aan te behoort is die figuratiewe gesin van God. Die gelowige moet die Vader gehoorsaam, volgens daardie reëls optree, hulle broers en susters liefhê, ens. Alhoewel die gelowiges nie uit hulle fisiese gemeenskappe verwyder word nie, bepaal ’n ander gesin, naamlik die figuratiewe gesin van God hulle lewens binne daardie gemeenskap. Op hierdie manier vorm hulle ’n anti-gemeenskap wat in filiale terme beskryf kan word.

Laat ons onself herinner aan die tesis wat ons aan die begin daargestel het, naamlik dat die konsep van verlossing die konflik tussen die dissipels van Moses en die dissipels van Jesus aanspreek. In hierdie Evangelie lyk dit of die Jode ’n deeglik en ongeskonde groepporganisasie gehad het, wat uit ’n menslike oogpunt sosiaal dominant geblyk het – dit is hulle wat beveel, doodmaak of organiseer. Hierdie aksies van die opponente het gewys dat hulle God nie ken of het nie, en Jesus maak hulle bewus van hulle sonde van die verwerping van die openbaring van God en daarom God self (9:41; 15:22, 24). Aan die ander kant bewys die dade van Jesus, veral sy dood en opstanding, dat die Vader by hom is en dat Hy van die Vader af kom. Verlossing uit die ideologiese perspektief van hierdie Evangelie, impliseer daarom ’n beweging van die klaarblyklike sterker sosiale groep van Moses na die gesin van Jesus. Dit behels ’n volledige en eksistensiële resosialisasie. Mense wat hulle fisiese families of hulle sosiale ondersteuningstelsels verloor, soos die blinde man, verkry die gesin van God. Hierdie filiale konsep is egter baie kragtig, omdat dit die basiese sosiale orde in die gemeenskap verteenwoordig. Die rede waarom dit belangrik is om hierop te let, is die feit dat dit die anti-gemeenskap van die Christene teen die dissipels van Moses motiveer en beskryf. Hierdie figuratiewe “anti-gemeenskap”, verteenwoordig die gesin van God, is net so goed georganiseer, maar kwalitatief op ’n hoër vlak, omdat dit die gesin (groep) van God is.

Die basiese houe in die konflik en resulterende argumente word op die sosiale vlak gegooi. Die opponente van Jesus het hulle uitgesluit van hulle sosiale ondersteuningstelsel, die sinagoge, soos die paradigmatische narratief van die blinde man illustreer, terwyl die Christene argumenteer dat hulle opponente uitgesluit word van die ware ondersteuningstelsel, naamlik die gesin van God. Verlossing is ’n saak van sosiale identiteit.

4.4 *’n Gesin is goed en wel, maar wat van godsdienstige strukture?*

In ons analise van die Jode, het dit duidelik geword dat die strukture waarbinne hulle hulle godsdienste beoefen het, belangrik was as deel van hulle godsdienstige ervaring. Jesus word nie

voorgestel as negatief teenoor die tempel of Skrif nie – hy probeer eerder om die eer van sy Vader by “sy Vaderhuis” (2:16) te beskerm en sê dat die Skrif oor Hom getuig. Hy erken ook die noodsaaklikheid van suiwering (13:10). Jesus bring egter verandering. Hy interpreteer hierdie kultiese en godsdienstige aspekte en verkry dus ’n soteriologiese klem. Volgens Corell (1958,52) “it was not Jesus’ purpose to establish a new non-liturgical religion as a substitute for the old cult. Rather St John saw the old cult as attaining its fulfilment and perfection in and through Christ”. Jesus word die sentrum van die kultus. Dieselfde taal word gebruik om Jesus se funksie aan te dui, naamlik Hy is die tempel (2:21), Hy reinig mense (2:7; 13:10; 15:2), Hy is die Lam (1:29,36 en waarskynlik hoofstukke 18-19), die Skrif getuig oor Hom (5:39-40) en word vervul in Hom, sedert die profete oor Hom gepraat het, het sy gemeenskap die nood vir die sinagoge verplaas (9:34-38; 12:42), ens. Dit beklemtoon die kontinuïteit, maar ook diskontinuïteit.

Niemand kan dus daarop aanspraak maak dat hulle verlossing in godsdienstige strukture sal vind nie of dat godsdienstige strukture vir hulle enige voordeel gaan bring nie. Die strukture is nie belangrik nie, maar Jesus is. Sonder Jesus is hierdie strukture waardeloos. Hierdie strukture verkry slegs hulle betekenis in verhouding tot Jesus. Om in die tempel langs die suiweringsflesse te sit met die Wet op jou skoot beteken niks as dit sonder God gedoen word nie; en God word in Jesus gevind.

Op hierdie manier word die saak rakende die kultiese en ander godsdienstige aspekte opgelos. Die Christene het nie die kultiese aspekte of selfs die tempel en offers (vanselfsprekend voordat die tempel vernietig is) van die Jode weggeneem nie. Hulle vergeestelik dit in Jesus en gee daaraan ’n nuwe en herinterpreteerde betekenis. Hierdie kultiese fenomene gaan voort; nie soos die opponente dit beoefen nie, maar soos Jesus dit verteenwoordig. Hy is nou hulle tempel en Lam, reiniger, ensovoorts. Op hierdie manier kon die opponente nie die dissipels van Jesus kritiseer deur te wys dat hulle nie die “meganismes” van die mense van God het nie.

5. GEVOLGTREKKING

Die soteriologie van hierdie Evangelie word nie op ’n abstrakte, ahistoriese manier geformuleer nie. Dit word geformuleer om die spesifieke konflik wat die Johannese gemeenskap met die dissipels van Moses ervaar het, aan te spreek. Die basiese vraag was waar God gevind kan word. Die Joodse opponente maak aanspraak daarop dat God by hulle was as gevolg van hulle verhouding met die Wet, tempel en ander kultiese aktiwiteite, hulle verhouding met Moses, of hulle afkoms deur Abraham. Die dissipels van Jesus maak aanspraak daarop dat God by hulle is gebaseer op die openbaarmaking van Jesus. Dit word ondersteun deur sy woorde en daede en getuig deur die Skrif. Aanvaarding of verwerping van hierdie openbaring beteken verlossing of nie.

Dit beteken nie dat Johannes die saak van verlossing op hierdie manier in elke situasie sal aanspreek nie. Soos blyk uit 1 Johannes, twyfel hy nie om te verwys na die bloed van Jesus wat van elke sonde reinig nie (1 Joh 1:7), of om te verwys na die liefdevolle God wat sy Seun as ’n soenoffer gestuur het (ἰλασμός – 1 Joh 2:1) vir ons sondes nie (1 Joh 4:10). Hierdie uitdrukkings in 1 Johannes verwys na ’n ander situasie wat Christene hanteer (’n binne-gemeenskap-situasie) waar die vraag rakende persoonlike sonde (verkeerde daede en ’n gebroke verhouding tussen die individu en God) aangespreek word. ’n Ander situasie benodig ’n ander benadering.

Maar as die vraag “Waar kan ek God en dus verlossing vind?” is, sal die antwoord altyd by die hek van die skaapkraal wees, volger van die goeie herder wat luister na die Woord. Vir Johannes is dit moontlik om verdere vrae te vra en om antwoorde te verfyn in ooreenstemming met die veranderde vrae en situasies, maar eindelik is die essensie van verlossing die aanvaarding van Jesus as die Openbaring van God en deur Hom te aanvaar (in Hom te glo), deel te word van die gesin van God.

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TREFWOORDE

Redding
Geloof
Wedergeboorte
Soteriologie van Johannes
Opponente in Johannes

KEY WORDS

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Presence, then the Covenants An essay on narrative and theological precedence Part One

ABSTRACT

Against the background of post-Reformation covenant theologies, this essay argues that the covenants depicted in Genesis through Kings (GK) appear in the context of the prior and more fundamental depiction of divine presence, and that the covenants appear where they do to depict how God secured his own presence on earth without which the renewal of an already, but now defiled, existing relationship is impossible. In order to demonstrate this thesis I describe a contemporary discussion of covenant theology rooted in post-Reformation discussions, then give reasons for limiting this study to GK, following which I examine the narrative shape of GK and its consistent primary interest in the divine presence.

1. INTRODUCTION

The priority of the covenant in biblical theology is rooted in Reformation and Post-Reformation theologies, notably that of Cocceius.¹ Recent Old Testament² and theology exemplify twentieth century covenant-centered theologies. A recent article by Stek argues against the “overload” of covenant in Reformed theology,³ as, for example, in Spykman’s dogmatics. Bartholomew’s defense of Spykman’s covenant-centered theology argues that 20th century covenant studies can be combined with the inherited federal theology,⁴ that the covenant of works is found in Genesis 1-2, and thus determinative for the subsequent reading of the pentateuchal narrative.⁵

But neither Genesis nor the rest of the OT explicitly depicts a covenant with Adam; only Hosea 6:7 links Adam to a covenant, but not without interpretative problems.⁶ Not so the other,

1 For a discussion of Cocceius’ views of the covenants see Van Asselt (2001:248-270) and Diemer (n.d).

2 Eichrodt (1961:36-44) and Spykman (1992:11-12, 92-95, 259-265)

3 Stek (1994:12-41).

4 Bartholomew (1995:11-33)

5 Bartholomew (1995:14-16, 31-32) and Bolt (2007:171-189).

6 “It is remarkable that Cocceius never appealed, either in his systematic work or in his commentaries, to Hosea 6:7 as a locus classicus for the doctrine of the prelapsarian covenant (*‘Et illi, ut Adam, transgressi sunt foedus’*). He does quote it, but refrains from deciding whether *ut Adam* should be translated as a proper name, or as a general reference (*ut homo*). In his view both translations are possible”. Van Asselt (2001:250n3). Aalders (1939: 147-152) argues that Hosea 6:7 refers to Adam’s transgressing of a bilateral covenant, but concedes that “in the light of Hosea 6:7 we still have to return to the first chapters of Genesis to understand the form of the *very first* covenant” (1939:149). Ridderbos acknowledges that Reformed dogmatics has not only located the covenant of grace immediately after the fall into sin, but also in eternity itself, with the result that Reformed dogmatics “of the covenant of grace, which commenced after the fall, reached back to the original relationship between God and humanity, rooted in the image of God, and called it, in analogy to the covenant of grace, the covenant of works. And, linking itself to Paul’s profound thought about the first human Adam, and the last human, Christ in Romans 5:2-12 and I Corinthians 15:20-22; 45-49, Reformed dogmatics developed the doctrine of the covenant

clearly depicted covenants. The covenant with Noah is crucial to understanding Genesis, and the covenants with Abraham are crucial to the Pentateuch in its development of the patriarchal promises sealed with Abraham and subsequently promised to Isaac and Jacob. The Sinai covenant initiates a unique administration of the relationship between God and Abraham's⁷ descendants in response to Egypt's threaten to annihilate Israel. The covenants with Abraham receive less attention in Joshua-Kings. There the Sinai covenant comes to the fore in terms of the "law of Moses" which, according to Deuteronomy, summarizes Sinai's instructions for life in the land. Israel's syncretistic administration of the covenant leads the Lord to exile them from his presence. At the end of Joshua-Kings Israel shares the lot of the nations (Hos 8:8-10): chafing in exile from God's presence as descendants of Adam and Eve.

Similarly with Adam's sin. Although he is clearly the father of humanity and is thus a figure with universal implications, nowhere does the OT give his sin the attention it receives from Paul. It is rather, Israel's construction of the golden calf at Sinai, the location of calves for worship at Dan and Bethel, and Israel's fascination with other gods that defines the sin that corrupts the relationship between God and his people. It is Israel's, not Adam's, transgression of the Sinai covenant and its restoration in Exodus 34 that resonates throughout GK and the Twelve.⁸ From the point of view of the narrative's development, covenants become crucial only when it begins to treat the divine commitment to secure a safe haven from the consequences of the disorder of human failure to heed divine instruction. Covenant is one mode of representing the relationship between God and humanity-Israel.⁹ But is it primary among other such representations?

Terrien argues that covenant consciousness only appears sporadically in pre-exilic literature as a minor theme in the major prophets. Furthermore, although the prophets spoke with the conviction that the Sinai covenant had been violated, and though many of their speeches reflect the structural patterns of covenant formulation, the thrust of their religious passions and the source of their interpretation of history lay elsewhere. They were grasped by the presence of Yahweh and they were animated by the dynamics of his word.¹⁰ Terrien depends on a historical reconstruction of the emergence of biblical themes which locates covenant as emerging late in Israel's history and presence much earlier. This essay argues for the primacy of presence over the covenants on the basis of the narrative organization and presentation of these themes.

in order to bring to light the difference and similarities between creation and recreation, the covenant of works and the covenant of grace" (1949:291). This and subsequent translations are mine.

7 This essay ignores the differences between the names in Gen 15 and 17, and therefore uses "Abraham" and "Sarah" throughout.

8 The golden calf episode recalled by Jeroboam's building of the calves at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings 12:25-33) and the echoes of Ex 34:6-7 in Hos 11:8, 14:3; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2 and Nah 1:3. Even then Paul reads the Adam Christ typology against the background of a theology of divine presence in his ecclesiology. But when he develops the covenants, Paul works with the universal implications of the Abraham covenant, not with Noah or Adam. Disobedience to divine instruction defiles the presence of God and therefore humanity is expelled. Without the specifics of covenant law as developed in the OT narrative, the covenant cannot explain exile as the result.

9 Ridderbos (1949:292-293) writes: "We must observe, however, that this overall relationship between God and humanity as defined by the doctrine of the covenant, is not exclusive. That is, covenant thought is not the only image that depicts this life-relationship. . . . *Covenant thought does not drive other images into the shadows. Rather, one should say that covenant thought represents a particular aspect of that relationship.*" Emphasis added.

10 Terrien (1978:25).

2. GENESIS – KINGS AS THE FUNDAMENTAL NARRATIVE

There are several reasons for limiting this essay's study to GK. First, for some time scholarship has treated GK as a distinct unit, labeling it the Primary History (PH) or the Enneateuch.¹¹ Previously scholars discussed a Tetrateuch and a Deuteronomistic History, excluding Ruth; a Hexateuch and Judges-Kings, also excluding Ruth; or as a Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic History (DH), with Deuteronomy doing double duty as the conclusion of one unit and the beginning of another, some even including Ruth among the prophets.¹² Although the MT tradition delivered a unified prophetic corpus following upon torah, critical proposals concerning the DH distinguished the narrative from the poetic prophetic literature, in effect moving this material closer to the Pentateuch. After the Pentateuch depicts Abraham's descendants in the pre-land mode of waiting,¹³ the Former Prophets depict Israel in the Promised Land from its entry to its exile. The juxtaposed sequence of individual books of the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets provide a narrative in general chronological order that covers the time from the creation and Adam and Eve's exile in Genesis, to Judah's exile from God's presence in 2 Kings.

Second, this Pentateuch-Former Prophets complex¹⁴ now forms the received canonical history of Israel in which the Former Prophets, with themes enunciated by Deuteronomy, evaluates Israel's life in the land in terms of torah. Framed by an exile from the Garden presence and expulsion from the divine presence as experienced in the Promised Land, this history provides a normative *raison d'être* for Israel's exilic and post-exilic self-understanding by which the subsequent generations of God's people are urged to repent and to call upon the name of the Lord wherever they may be (1 Kings 8:22-53, esp. vv 46-50).

Finally, GK provides a limited but unified narrative in whose weave the threads of divine presence and the covenants may be examined to provide a sufficient argument for the primacy of presence. It also has the merit of moving beyond Terrien's beginning with the patriarchal narratives to include those chapters crucial to the debates about the role of covenant in federal theology.¹⁵

My reading of GK understands that its themes, however they may have developed historically, now enjoy a systematic relationship embedded in the received text and that these are capable of examination on the basis of a close reading of the received narrative.¹⁶ Arguments for the pervasiveness of the covenants depend on the reading of Genesis 1-3, for it is here according to federal theology, that the covenant structure of reality is disclosed. Such arguments should be tested against these texts but also in the context of how these opening chapters initiate, define, and plot the GK narrative as a whole. That is, tested against the narrative problem¹⁷ GK

11 Schmid (2006:1-14), Freedman & Kelly (2004:39-47), Mandell & Freedman (1993:81-142). Zenger (2006:177-178) argues for a deuteronomistically inspired exilic history, Gen 2:4b-2 Kings 25. See also Römer & Schmidt (2007).

12 Zenger (2006:222-229).

13 Leder (2010a).

14 Ruth's canonical location, among the Former Prophets in some Bibles, does not affect the thesis of this essay. For its canonical effect in the Former Prophets, see Leder (2002:20-22).

15 As Israel's canonical historical account GK also defines basic theological themes, first of all in the Pentateuch, and then drawn through the Former Prophets. Rendtorff (2001) defines ten fundamental theological themes: creation, covenant and election, the patriarchs, the Promised Land, the first and second exodus, torah, cult, Moses, the Davidic kingdom, and Zion. Eight of these arise from the Pentateuch, the last two from the Former Prophets. Each theme is examined as it develops through the canon.

16 Rendtorff (2005:2-3, 415-417), Knierim (1995:190), Fokkelman (1999), and Alter (1981).

17 "The full-grown story begins by establishing a problem or deficit; next it can present an exposition before the action gets urgent; obstacles and conflicts may occur that attempt to frustrate the *dénouement*, and

formulates in its opening chapters, and to what resolution it takes the reader at its conclusion.

3. LITERARY STRUCTURES AND THE DEPICTION OF DIVINE PRESENCE

This section examines those texts and their features that suggest GK's leading interest in the presence of God: the overture to GK in Genesis 1:1-2:3; the literary frame of GK as set forth in its opening and closing chapters; consecrated spaces such as Noah's ark, the tabernacle, and the temple, constructed in compliance with divine instruction; the Sinai pericope; and, Kings' treatment of the temple.

3.1 Compliance in the presence of heaven: Genesis 1:1-2:3 as overture

The ten-fold *toledoth* structure which begins in Genesis 2:4 (5:1; 6:9, 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2) sets Genesis 1:1-2:3 apart from and makes it the basis for the subsequent narrative development. In two groupings of five, these *toledoth* provide an interlinked narrative describing how Adam and Eve and their descendants respond to the opening divine speech (2:4-11:26); and then how Abraham and Sarah and their descendants (11:27-50:26) respond to the Lord's speech in 12:1-3. Both pentads include heaven's response to action on the earth: the flood and the covenant to secure the earth from further divine water judgment and Babel; the covenants to secure the promises to Abraham. As the overture to Genesis, chapters 1:1-2:3 also become the overture to the rest of the Pentateuch and, subsequently, the Former Prophets; in sum, the entire GK.

The Genesis overture is narrated from the perspective of one who overhears the divine commands, uttered in the heavenly council,¹⁸ the word is spoken and created reality comes into being. Distinct from its creator, created reality is sacred: its structure by fiat and its function by sabbatical sanctification and blessing. A series of command-compliance sequences, in the mode of "Let there be . . . and it was so", (1:3, 6-7, 9, 11, 14-15, 20-21, 24, 26-27, 29-30), characterizes the divine speech which brings this reality into being. That is, the overture depicts heaven's structuring of the earthly reality which obtains for all creatures, including humanity, and the subsequent account narrates humanity's earthly response in variations of the overture's instruction-compliance theme. Humanity comes into being as do all other creatures, by divine fiat, but only humanity receives the unique capacity for a compliant life in God's presence: the blessing of Genesis 1:28. And, only humanity receives specific instructions for its earthly task (Gen 2:15-17).

Genesis 2:4 through 2 Kings 25 mirrors the instruction-compliance sequence of the overture in several ways. By virtue of its position outside the *toledoth* structure, the instruction-compliance overture itself functions as an instruction account, compliance to which is developed by the *toledoth* structure¹⁹ that depict the earthly response to heaven's instructions in two groupings, one in terms of Adam's (2:4-11:26) and the other in terms of Abraham's (11:27-50:26) progeny. In addition to the instruction of the overture, Abraham's progeny is depicted in the light of the divine instruction of Genesis 12:1-3. The rest of GK continues the account of the response begun in the sixth *toledoth*. Human response to the divine structure of reality in Genesis 3, flawed and non-compliant, has its Israelite homologue in Exodus 32-34, a failure to heed divine instruction which, unlike the immediate compliance in the Genesis overture, interrupts the instruction (25-31) and compliance (35-39) sequence. It also evokes other aspects of the overture.

finally there is a winding up, which brings the solution of the problem or the cancellation of the debt"
Fokkelman (1999:77).

¹⁸Stek (1990:235-236).

¹⁹Woudstra (1970:184-189) and Carr (1998:159-172, 327-347).

Heavenly Instruction	Earthly Compliance (divine-human interaction)	
Gen 1:1-2:3 (instruction-compliance)	Gen 2:4-2 Kings 25	
	<i>key instruction</i> (on the earth)	<i>compliance</i> (divine-human interaction)
	Gen 2:16-17	<i>Gen 2:4-11:26</i> (Adam & Eve) - 5 <i>toledoth</i> with defiling failure to heed instruction
	Gen 12:1-3	<i>Gen 11:27-50:26</i> (Abraham & Sarah) -5 <i>toledoth</i> , various failure to heed instruction
	Ex 19-Num 10 (Sinai pericope)	<i>Ex 1:1-2 Kings 25</i> with defiling moments: failure to heed Sinai instruction, baalization of north and south.*

As the instruction-compliance sequence in Genesis culminates in the seventh day of rest which God sanctifies and blesses (1:31; 2:1-3), so the instruction-compliance sequence in Exodus 25-39 includes the sanctification of Israel and the sabbath (Ex 31:12-17; and see 35:1-3 on sabbath), and Moses' blessing of Israel (39:43), thus evoking the seventh day of the Genesis creation account.²⁰ Exodus concludes with an uninterrupted instruction-compliance sequence in chapter 40 which depicts Moses's assembly of the tabernacle, thereby recalling Genesis 1:1-2:3. The tabernacle's purpose is to allow God to dwell in the midst of his people (Ex 25:8). The evocations of Genesis 1:31 and 2:1-3 at the end of Exodus remind the reader of the creation brought into being by divine instruction-compliance. These echoes also suggest that Israel should understand its identity and relationship to the designer of the tabernacle as analogical to that of humanity in Genesis 1:26-28.²¹

Stek has cogently argued that Genesis 1:1-2:3 functions as a theological overture to Genesis and that it depicts the royal acts of a great king who subsequently administers his earthly kingdom by means of the covenants with Noah and the Abraham.²² Given the royal metaphor,

* Note the pervasive character of instruction-compliance throughout narrative. For example, the seven speeches of tabernacle building instruction in Ex 25-31 and the subsequent compliance in 35-39, mirrored in 40:1-16 and 17-33; the phrase "and 'so and so' did as the Lord/Moses commanded" in Lev 8-9 and throughout Num 1-10; the repetition of instructions and compliance such as in Josh 3-4 and 6. Noth argues (1981:89-99) that the DH vindicates God's judgment on a people who failed to comply with divine instruction.

20 Parallels between Ex 39, 40 and Gen 1:31-2:3 are well-known. See Weinfeld (1981:501-512), Janowski (1990:45-47), and Zenger (1987:170-172).

21 This discussion is important vis-à-vis the legal understanding of the putative covenant relationship between the Creator and the creature. See the discussion below.

22 Stek (1990:232-240). Rendtorff (1998:79) suggests that the lack of a plural for "covenant" makes it difficult to talk about different "covenants". While this is true in the sense that one could argue that the Abrahamic covenant is a subset of the Noachic covenant in that the former is made with a subset of the latter's descendants, the covenant with Abraham in Gen 15 responds to the promises of Gen 12:1-3. Furthermore, although the covenants subsequent to Gen 15 may be understood to be various expressions of the one covenant God made with Abraham, it is important to recognize the different kinds (royal grant

defining humanity as “appointed to a royal station in the creation”, as “vice-regents”, or as “regal servants”²³ rings true. Others,²⁴ however, consider Genesis 1:1-2:3 to depict creation not in royal throne-room but in sanctuary terms. Where the royal metaphor is conducive to federal theology’s focus on the covenant because it is congenial to suzerain-vassal thought, the change in metaphor invites a rethinking of the identity of the relationship between the Creator and the creature. Is the royal metaphor exclusive or sufficient for an understanding of human identity? What happens when we factor in the theme of divine presence?

The ancient world understood human kingship to be intimately related to the gods. In Mesopotamia the king had sacred duties; in Egypt the king was divine.²⁵ Both, however, extended divine authority to earth, a geography subordinate to heaven alone. The divine kingship of the Creator of Genesis 1:1-2:3, however, is not subordinate to any created reality, nor is it an expression of an eternal principle of order to which even the ancient gods were subordinate. The very act of creating underscores the incomparability of the Creator. Where human kingship participated in the construction of an earthly sacred space by following heaven’s design, the biblical Creator merely instructs and reality comes into being. Thus Gudea and other old world rulers received designs for sacred construction; failure to comply with the design opened the door to chaos. In the biblical narrative subsequent to Genesis 1:1-2:3, human beings (Noah, Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus [John]) also comply with divine instruction to construct redemptive spaces within the created order. Failure to comply with the divine instruction ultimately brought chaos, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and exile.

Although depicted as a Great King (Ps. 48:2) of the earth, the Creator of Genesis 1:1-2:3 is not like other Great Kings who are “divine” in their own right, as those Pharaohs discovered who challenged that divinity with their own. The Creator is the ruler whose commands originate with him; he receives them from no other as did the occupants of ancient divine kingship. He has no dynastic antecedents, neither in heaven nor on earth. This depiction God’s divine kingship coincides with that of the creation as a sanctuary. Within this metaphor, earth and all that is in it is sanctified unto exclusive service of the one and only Deity, with humanity cast as the Deity’s image.

All this being the case, the question arises: Is the royal aspect of the depiction of the Deity sufficient for understanding human identity and function? And, is it necessarily a covenant relationship?²⁶ If the metaphor for understanding creation is sanctuary space, is it not true that humanity would relate to the Creator primarily, not as a vassal to a suzerain, but as a priest to

or suzerain-vassal) and different narrative roles of these covenants. Last, it is not unimportant that Paul uses the plural: “They are the Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants ...”

(Rom 9:4).

23 Stek (1990:231), and see Waltke (2007:220, 232), Spykman (1992:265-266), and the oft cited Gerhard von Rad (1972:57-60).

24 Hurowitz (1985:25-27), Wenham (1987:29-32), Walton (2009:78-86) and Smith (2010). Hurowitz (1992:241-242, esp. footnote 2) indirectly suggests that the genre of Gen 1:1-2:3 is temple building account. Waltke (1991:2-10) reviews the following suggestions: hymn, cult liturgy, myth, history, science, and theology. He concludes that it is best to describe Genesis 1 as a “literary-artistic representation of the creation, ... to ground the covenant people’s worship and life in the creator”. Koole (1963:116) suggests that Genesis 1 has “neither literal nor illustrative meaning. It is very likely borrowed from Israel’s wisdom traditions, or, expressed theologically: Genesis 1 describes (betekent) the lawfulness of Israel’s nature wisdom”. (translation mine) Young (1976:15-16) describes Genesis 1 as a creation account in terms of fiat and fulfillment. He acknowledges Sumerian documents speak similarly, but dismisses the relationship on the grounds of Scripture’s uniqueness.

25 Frankfort (1948:3-12, 51, 231).

26 Stek (1994:25) lists at least seven relationship types “that included mutual obligations in ancient Near Eastern society that were not considered ‘naturally’ to be ‘covenants.’”

a deity, a deity who expects the subordinates in his presence, wherever they may be on the earth, to comply with instructions to maintain the cleanliness of the divinely prepared space? Is it not possible to understand the Creator-creature relationship in deity-priest terms? Is it not possible that the metaphor depicting the deity contains elements transparent to the ancient world, elements traditionally not associated with human identity in Christian, especially federal, theology?

These questions are pertinent because the people in whose midst God dwells at Sinai—like humanity on the seventh day, and Adam and Eve in the Garden—is identified as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex 19:6; cf. 1 Peter 2:5 [“a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood”]). The priestly character of God’s people receives extended attention in Leviticus: compliance with sacrificial, cleanliness, and holiness instruction keep them in God’s presence. Israel’s time at Sinai underscores primarily her priestly, not her royal, character. Post-lapsarian life in exile from God’s presence is possible only in the sanctuary space designed by God; and only priests may enter it.

Smith argues in favor of a combined priestly and royal identity for humanity on the basis of the two verbs implicated in the discussion about human identity, “to rule”(rdh) and “to subdue”(kbš).²⁷ In his iconographic study of the nouns “image” and “likeness,” Herring argues that humanity, as an extension of the deity, could be understood to be priestly:

The function or purpose of making humanity as the extension of the deity is found in the blessing to create a humanity which produces progeny in keeping with that image and likeness and, further, is to kbš (“subdue”) and rdh (“rule”) over the cosmic temple. It is the caretaker over the cosmos/temple-precinct, a role sometimes assumed by lower deities in ancient temple consecration myths and by the priesthood in ancient Israel.²⁸

This priestly identity of humanity illuminates the reason for and nature of redemption by means of divinely constructed redemptive spaces. When the narrative switches to what became of the cosmic sanctuary in the first *toledoth* (Gen 2:4-4:26) it does so from an earthly viewpoint to depict the caretakers’ response to the instructions for life in the cosmos/temple-precinct (Gen 2:8-13; cf. Ezek 45; 47:1-12). In the deity’s close presence (Gen 3:8, *pnny*) priestly humanity may safely dwell by complying with divine instruction and thus keeping disorder at bay. Such is humanity’s liturgical and doxological duty.

Adam and Eve’s non-compliant response defiled the divine presence for which God drives them, and their descendants, into deadly exile from his presence (3:23). Cherubim with fiery sword prevent re-entrance to the garden presence; now all receive the wages of transgression for all are born east of Eden. This forced distance from the divine presence continues with the tabernacle and the temple where guardian cherubim embroidered into the tabernacle curtains (Ex 26:31; 36:8) and carved on the walls of the Jerusalem temple (1 Kings 6:29) prevent entry except for Israel’s priests. Exile of priestly humanity from the presence of God for failure to heed divine instruction is the narrative problem which Genesis defines and which the rest of GK develops. The solution to the problem is nothing less than God’s returning Adam and Eve’s priestly descendants from exile into his presence, first at Sinai and later Zion. On the journey from Sinai to Zion God indwells his people by means of the tabernacle-temple. But GK ends where it began: God allows Zion to be destroyed and removes Judah from his presence (*lpny*, 2 Kings 17:18, 23; 23:27; 24:3, 20), not the land, into exile.

²⁷Smith (2010:71, 98-101).

²⁸Herring (2008:491), where he identifies Gen 2:15 as describing such a caretaker role, and the verbs *cbd* (“serve”) and *šmr* (“guard”) as often describing the duties of temple personnel. See also Gupta (2009:67, 70-72) where Gupta develops the theme that 1 Peter urges the church to take seriously its priestly identity (as recalled by, among other texts, Ex 19:6), in order to fulfill the task to which it has been called.

3.2 Failure to comply: earthly exile from divinely instructed presence

The GK narrative following the overture is framed by two expulsions from God's presence: one from the Garden presence, and the other from the divine presence in Jerusalem.

The narrative of the first expulsion depicts Adam, Eve and their descendants as wandering east of Eden. Humanity was created to live in God's intimate garden presence; reality is that no one lives in that presence anymore, nor can anyone return to it for entrance to that presence is guarded by cherubim with fiery swords. Death stalks everyone. Adam and Eve's firstborn Cain is condemned to even deeper exile (4:14, 16 [*pny*]) for killing his brother; Lamech threatens death to anyone wounding him. From within the burdens of exile people begin calling upon the Lord in the days of Enosh (4:26; cf. Ps 137) and divinely blessed humanity produces many children, but all die (Gen 5). Only wickedness and violence successfully fill the earth (6:7 [*pny-h'dmh*]; cf. Gen 1:28) in God's presence (6:11, 13, [*lpony*]) with the result that God intensifies humanity's exile from his presence with almost universal death in the days of Noah. A subsequent attempt to enter the divine presence at Babel ends in God's scattering Adam's descendants over the face of the earth (11:8-9 [*cl-kl-pny-h'rs*]), the use of *pny* perhaps evoking distance from divine presence common to Adam's descendants.

It is God himself who begins to address humanity's exile when he instructs Abraham to abandon the post-Babel exile to go to "the land I will show you". Recognized by all hearers as the Promised Land where Israel dwells in God's presence, this place (like the Garden of Eden, Gen 13:10), not Babel, promises to bring together in God's presence those descendants of Adam and Eve who are blessed in Abraham. But they would not stay in the land forever.

After Moses' instructions on the plains of Moab, Joshua continues the GK by depicting the divine presence as crossing the Jordan before Israel (Josh 3:11, 13). Sanctified by this presence Israel's life in the land would be shaped by the Sinai instruction (Josh 1:7, 8; 23:6-8), a commitment renewed at Ebal and Gerizim (Josh 8:30-35) would shape life in the Promised Land. Having been given rest from their enemies (Josh 21:43-45) and received a king, God permits Solomon to build him a temple (1 Kings 6-9), from which earthly temple the Lord would rule from heaven (1 Kings 8). As the tabernacle sanctified the camp in the desert so the temple made the land holy. Thus both kings and people lived in God's presence, the kings being responsible to insure torah cult and conduct for good life in God's presence. After the northern kingship's failure to abide by torah instructions God expels Israel from his presence (*lpony*, 2 Kings 17:20, 23). Josiah's subsequent reformation of the cult in Jerusalem could not undo Manasseh's corruption with the result that the Lord also expels Judah from his presence (*lpony*, 2 Kings 23:27; 24:3, 20). Chaldean soldiers (2 Kings 25:4-50) drag Judah into the land of exile from which the Lord had rescued Abraham, the son of Nahor, son of Shem, son of Noah, and son of Adam.

The exile-frame of the GK underscores the narrative problem it addresses: humanity's exile from God's presence for refusal to comply with divine instruction. Earthly humanity should comply with heaven's divine instruction in the same way other earthly creatures "naturally" comply with divine command. God's solution meets with stubborn resistance at Sinai and after the dedication of the temple, both with the erection of golden calves; all designed to undermine God's presence and instruction. The exile-frame suggests that the descendants of Abraham not only reflect Adam and Eve's non-compliance, but also that they are doubly guilty, having been brought into the divine presence again. Sinai's covenant instruction and commitment was also repeatedly renewed either because of Israel's non-compliance (Ex 32-34; Deut vis-à-vis Num), in response to specific instruction (Josh 8:30-35), or as the result prophetic calls to repentance (2 Kings 17:7-15). In between the beginning and ending of this narrative frame, we note a development of the theme of divine presence in terms of places of divine presence and instruction. These places address the rupture between heaven and earth depicted by failure to heed divine instruction.

3.3 Redemptive instruction for priestly life in exile and in the divine presence

In the chaos of humanity's stewardship of creation outside God's Garden presence, a more unencumbered life on the earth can only be experienced where God irrupts into this earthly disorder to create room for compliance to divine instruction. GK depicts four such spaces: Noah's ark, the presence shaped journey of the patriarchs (affirmed at altars, anticipate the cult as central), Mt. Sinai, and the tabernacle-ark-temple journey. A brief comment about each follows.

3.3.1 Noah's ark

In God's presence (*Ipny*, Gen 6:11, 13 [cf. 6:8 and Noah]; 7:1) humanity fills the earth with violence (Gen 6:11, cf. 6:5)—the legacy consequent upon disobedience in the Garden—rather than compliance with the instruction that obtains for the earth (Gen 1:28).²⁹ Human wickedness occasions the second set of divine instructions: God tells Noah to build an ark in the midst of this non-compliant world. Unlike Adam and Eve, Noah complies (Gen 6:14, 22; 7:5, 9, 16). By designing a vehicle of rescue for "all that breathes" (Gen. 9:10) and shutting them in to prevent the intrusion of chaos (Gen 6:16; 7:15 cf. 3:24),³⁰ God provides the only means of rescue from divine judgment on a post-lapsarian world. It also links the pre- and post-diluvian human stewardship of the earth, for life east of Eden continues, but with deadly and fearsome differences (Gen 9:1-7).³¹

True to its inheritance, post-diluvian humanity fails to comply with divine instruction. The prohibition against bloodshed, by humans and animals, suggests that violence has not abated; Ham's seeing his father's nakedness anticipates the transgression of boundaries practiced by the nations and which the Lord detests (Lev 18, esp. vv. 23-30). Humanity's subsequent attempt to build its own access to divine presence³² does not escape heaven's notice (Gen 11:5); exile from the Garden does not mean freedom from divine presence.³³ Heaven foils human ecumenicity by the confusion of languages and scattering Adam's descendants from what they considered the center of the world.

The ark provides continuity for life on the earth in heaven's presence; but it changes little. The ark, even though divinely designed, did not qualitatively affect humanity's enforced flight from God's presence; nor was it God's dwelling place on earth, as was the Garden, the tabernacle, and the temple would be. Rather, because of humanity's abiding wickedness (Gen 6:5-7) the ark narrative argues that humanity's wandering will end in death. But then God promises righteous Noah a covenant.³⁴

3.3.2 A presence shaped journey

From among the exiled and scattered nations God selects Shem's descendant Abraham. With him and Sarah the narrative turns the depiction of a forced wandering away from God's Garden presence into an instructed journey towards God's presence. God's third word of instruction since Adam, and first since Noah—"Leave (Ik-lkh) your country . . . and go to the land I will show

29 See Knierim (1995:186-191) and his discussion of the distinction between the heaven and earth, and that creation orderliness obtains for human history.

30 See Keel (1997:120-127) on the role of gates.

31 Gen 6-9 recalls the covenant in early chapters of Genesis, Bartholomew (1995:23, 26).

32 The Babel-ziggurat evokes temple-mountains Keel (1978:113-120) which in Gen 11 reflects human attempts to reach heaven and thus transgress a fundamental boundary. On the crucial distinction and separation of heaven and earth see Knierim (1985:190-191).

33 Nor enforced compliance with the instruction to "fill the earth" (Gen 1:28). Humanity's "natural" response to that instruction fills the earth with violence (Gen 6:11, 13).

34 The covenant with Noah will be treated in the second part of this essay

you”—receives immediate compliance: “So Abraham left”.³⁵ This compliance signals a complete separation from the enforced flight from God’s presence because the divine instruction aims Abraham and his descendants at “the land”, a geography emblematic of God’s presence. Once in the land, the Lord appears (*r’h*) to Abraham (12:7; 15:1; 17:1; 18:1) to affirm the promise of land and progeny. Divine visitations to Isaac and Jacob recall and confirm the promises to Abraham (26:23 [*r’h*]; 28:13; 35:1, 9 [*r’h*]; 46:1), and encourage their imitation of Abraham’s submission to leave the confused culture of Babel and go to “the land”. In Genesis Abraham and his descendants move towards “the land”, only to end up in Egypt. Generations will pass before they possess “the land”.

The initial instruction to Abraham in Genesis 12, the instruction to walk in God’s presence (17:1, *hthlk l’pny*), and the subsequent divine appearances to Isaac and Jacob, suggest that not the dogged endurance and patience of the patriarchs, but the divine presence alone, shapes the journey. The narrative suggests this by the initial promise and the often repeated instructions, and by protecting the patriarchal community from contempt (Gen 12:2, *qll*), from without (Gen 12:10-20; 20; 26:7-11; Ex 1:8-14; Num 22-24) and from within (Gen 27:35; 34:30; 37:19; Ex 32:1-14; Num 13-14; 25), through the entire journey, from Abraham’s first entry to Egypt to the borders of the Promised Land. Although not a space like Noah’s ark, Abraham and his descendants’ journey is a “way” (*drk*: Gen 18:19; 28:20; Ex 23:20; Num 22:32-34; Deut 1:33; Josh 3:4; 24:17; 1 Sam 12:23; Neh 9:12, 19) which God secures by his presence, as vouchsafed to Abraham: “I am your shield”, and Abraham’s commitment to walk in God’s presence blamelessly (Gen 15:1; 17:2). This “way” is qualitatively different from that of the wicked (Ps 1:6; Prov 2:8; 4:18-19; 10:29; 16:2, 7, 9). Along this way the patriarchs build altars (Gen 12:8; 26:25; 28:18; 35:7) to memorialize their infrequent experience of God’s presence. These altars, and later the Sinai and Zion cult, connect the subsequent generations to the patriarchal memory of God’s presence as they continue on the “way” with Abraham.³⁶ Terrien, interprets the new direction as follows:

Man’s attempt to obtain territorial security has failed. The figure of Abraham is introduced as the embodiment of a new form of society which deliberately severs its bonds with a static past in order to experiment in time ... [The] “blessing” of Abraham and the “blessing” which Abraham is called upon to become are the blossoming of a moment of divine proximity, and the response to the epiphanic speech constitutes the Hebraic stance of faith. All the other stories of epiphanic visitation to the patriarchs introduce the theme of the testing of that faith. Because the fulfilment of the blessing is delayed and the self-disclosure of Yahweh remains limited to short instants of visitation, the Hebraic theology of presence at once acquires the elements of absence or at least hiddenness. From the start of the tradition regarding the history of salvation, cultus and faith are inextricably bound.³⁷

From Abraham’s departure to Jacob’s descent into Egypt, “the land” has been central in the narrative development and definition of the “way”, but none of the patriarchs achieves possession; inheritance remains in the background. With the descent into Egypt the land is forced into an even deeper background, with the result that a new geography begins to move into the center: the desert and, within it, Sinai. These two will significantly redefine the “way” of Abraham’s descendants in God’s presence.

35 The syntax of the intervening clauses (simple *waw*, cohortative plus imperatives in Gen 12:2-3) points to the intended result of the instruction: progeny, reputation as blessed of the Lord, security against curses, medium of blessing for all the families of the earth.

36 “It is not that significant persons from salvation history become altar builders (through the process of redaction), but that altar builders become decisive persons of salvation history” Riecker (2006:530).

37 Terrien (1978:73-76).

Heaven's blessing of Jacob's descent into Egypt (Gen 46:2-4) is the last divine self-disclosure in Genesis, and the only one that occurs in the Joseph story. God does not address Joseph or his brothers; they depend upon their own wits for survival. That God is involved and that his presence still embraces the way is undeniable (Gen 39:3, 5, 21, 23; 46:4), but it is a muted, veiled presence which protects the "way." In Egypt, the promise of growth is partially fulfilled, enough to evoke opposition, so that the people on the "way" are persecuted. But, as Joseph's suffering brought life to the patriarchal family, to Egypt, and the whole world (Gen 41:56, 57), so Israel's depicted suffering in Egypt describes the initial forging of a new identity in God's presence on the way to, at, and after Sinai. Within this new identity, ultimately, the nations will receive the promised blessing (Gen 12:3; John 1:14; Gal 3:29). In Egypt God begins a series of self-disclosures that climax in Israel's own terrible desert encounter with the consuming-fire God of their salvation.

3.3.3 *The desert-Sinai presence*

By narrative location and impact the Sinai event theophany is singular. Set off by two desert journey narratives (Ex 15:22-18:27; Num 11:1-22:1), Israel's time at Sinai depicts the instruction needed to survive in God's presence. The Sinai instruction consists of four distinct parts: Israel's arrival in the deadly presence and subsequent oath-bound expression of loyalty to the Lord (Ex 19-24); the instruction for building the Lord's dwelling among Israel, compliance with instructions after an Eden-like failure to submit, and the glory cloud's indwelling of the tabernacle (Ex 25-40); sacrificial, cleanliness, and holiness instructions for survival in the presence of God (Lev 1-27); and, the organization of the camp and departure from Sinai in the presence of God (Num 1-10).

By bringing Israel into the desert God removes Israel from the nations' influence, neither Egypt nor Canaan may contribute to Israel's identity (Lev 18:1-5). Religiously equidistant from Egypt and Canaan, the exile of these descendants of Adam and Eve has come to an end, for in the desert they are brought into the presence of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God who rescued them from Egypt, the God who spoke all things into being who first instructed Adam for life in his presence (Ex 19:4). This geo-religious separation from Egypt makes Israel completely dependent in God's desert presence.³⁸ It is also in that desert presence at Mt. Sinai that heaven speaks without interference from the nations; but Israel herself does (Ex 32). From the meeting place of heaven and earth on Sinai's summit, God invites Abraham's descendants to bind themselves to him, and not to Pharaoh or any other gods; to build him a place so he can dwell in their midst. At the mountain in the desert, the problem of exile from God's presence is partially solved for these descendants of Adam and Eve.

Sinai redefines the patriarchal journey in unexpected ways. Oath-bound loyalty to the Lord replaces subservience to Pharaoh; the relatively uncomplicated cult associated with patriarchal epiphanies is refocused on divine appearances at the tabernacle (Ex 29:42-46); Israel's golden calf construction reveals its own Pharaoh-like stubbornness (Ex 33:3, 5) and threatens the journey (32:9-10; 33:15-16); the Lord's dwelling in her midst creates redemptively consecrated space for Israel's safe existence in which life is shaped by sacrifice, cleanliness, and holiness. Israel's experience of God's Sinai good but dangerous presence changes her environment profoundly: the people who leave Sinai now have this good but dangerous God in their midst and everything they do in their lives is shaped by his holiness. For that reason Israel remains at a certain distance from God. The cherubim still prevent entry to his immediate presence (Ex 26:1, 31; Gen 3:24); priests will perform liturgical rituals in God's closer and closest presence, and Levites will surround the tabernacle to prevent God's anger from breaking out against Israel (Num 1:53).

38 Leder (2010b:306-307).

Just like “the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking (*hthlk*) in the garden in the cool of the day” (Gen 3:8), so the Lord walks about in Israel’s desert camp:

“I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk (*hthlk*) among you and be your God, and you will be my people” (Lev 26:11; cf. Deut 23:14).

At Sinai the patriarchal community has received instruction for a clean cult and holy conduct in God’s presence in the camp and the land of promise (Num 5:3; 35:34). Israel leaves Sinai fully instructed only when the ark of the Lord, symbol par excellence of the Lord’s presence, begins the journey that will take them to the land (Num 10:33-36).

3.3.4 From Sinai to Zion: the ark

The journey from Sinai comes to a completion only when the priests carry the ark into the Holy of Holies of the temple Solomon built on Mt. Zion. The ark links Sinai and Zion; it connects one meeting place of heaven and earth with another: to Sinai God graciously draws the descendants of Adam and Eve through Abraham and Sarah; to Zion the law attracts other descendants of Adam and Eve (Is 2:3; Ps 102:18-22). The ark’s journey from Sinai has three parts: into the desert towards the land but ending in the plains of Moab; entry into the land; and its sojourn in the land until it rests in the temple.

The journey is in fact a royal victory march,³⁹ begun with God’s triumph over Egypt, which continues in battle mode (Num 10:35) and includes victories over Arad, Sihon, Og, and Balak (Num 21:1-3; 21-30; Num 22-24) before entry into the land, and later over Jericho and the Canaanites (Josh 6, 9-11), Israel herself and the Philistines (1 Sam 4:1b-7:1; cf. Num 14:41-45; 2 Sam 8:1-14) before it rests in the building that memorializes his victories over the nations (1 Kings 8:6-11, 56). During this journey the Lord’s special guard (Num 3:21-37) escorts the earthly manifestation of the divine presence, itself at the center of the camp surrounded by the battle divisions according to the various tribes (Num 2:1-34, esp. v. 17), from its desert manifestation to the center of the earth at Jerusalem (Ps 48:2). And, even as the Sinai presence was the partial solution to the problem of exile for the descendants of Abraham, so Zion promises a greater reality of rest for the descendants of Adam and Eve, for from it emissaries will make the Lord’s claims upon all the nations of the earth, and to it all the nations will come to acknowledge the Lord (Is 66:20; Ps 72:8-11) who reigns over all the earth from heaven (1 Kings 8:30, 33-34, 38-39, 42-43, 44-45, 48-49).

Even as the Lord’s powerful presence in Israel’s midst consecrated Israel to him in the desert camp, so the entry into Canaan of the true king of heaven (Josh 2:11) consecrates the land and its inhabitants (Num 5:3; 35:33-34), with the result that the unclean descendants of Adam and Eve in Canaan are devoted to destruction (Josh 6:17-19; 11:12-23; Lev 18:24-28; 20:20-23; Deut 7:2). The ark’s crossing the Jordan into the land discloses the nations’ future with the God of Israel: the inescapable judgment for failure to comply with divine instruction in the divine presence brings death (Gen 2:15-17), unless they have the integrity to commit treason to their Adamic inheritance, as did Rahab, Ruth and Naaman (Josh 2:8-14; 6:17; Ruth 1:8, 16; 2:11; 2 Kings 5; cf. Gen 12:1). Deceit, like that of the Gibeonites, has its own consequences (Josh 9:22-23). The Lord consecrates Israel with the little death of circumcision before it wields the sword of the Lord against the Canaanites, and afterwards it renews its covenant loyalties (Josh 5:2-9; 8:30-35). After concluding the wars of Canaan, the Lord gives Israel rest from its enemies (Josh 21:44).

But when Israel herself defiles the land by failing to live by divine instruction, the Lord gives the nations rest from Israel’s conquest (Judg 2:23; 3:1 [*nw*]) and allows them to disturb Israel’s rest. Failed leadership produces total chaos, until God brings Samuel into his intimate presence (1 Sam 3:3) to begin the restoration. But this restoration does not begin before the Lord allows

39 Leder (2010b:297-299)

the ark to go into exile in Philistia (1 Sam 4:1-11), the consequence of Israel's corrupt priesthood. Returned to Jerusalem by a jubilant David, the ark remains in a tent, its journey not yet complete (2 Sam 7:6-7, 12-13), until Solomon builds the temple on Mt. Zion, the ark is brought into the temple and the glory cloud indwells the Holy of Holies (1 Kings 8:10-11, 56).

Only at this point is the ark's journey from Sinai complete and the people at rest (1 Kings 8:56). God rules from heaven, but will hear petitions directed to his earthly throne in Zion. But temple service deteriorates under the monarchy: Jeroboam builds anti-temples in the north, Ahab intensifies the drift from Zion with the Baal cult; the prophetic ministry of Elijah, Elisha, and others is dismissed with the result that the Lord removes the north from his presence (2 Kings 17:20, 23).⁴⁰ The southern kings Ahaz and Manasseh introduce pagan elements into the Jerusalem temple; Manasseh leads the people in corruption worse than the nations before them (2 Kings 21:9). When not even Josiah's reformation postpones divine judgment, God also removes Judah from his presence (2 Kings 23:27; 24:3, 20) by giving his royal city and its temple over to the destruction Canaanite Jericho suffered centuries before.

4. AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING

The end of the GK story evokes the beginning: God exiles his own people from his presence as he exiled Adam and Eve and their descendants. What both most need and receive by divine instruction—an ark to survive the waters of destruction and a redemptively created consecrated space—they consistently corrupt and reject. There is no one righteous or clean enough to survive God's presence. What then is the point of the GK? How can this narrative of rejection and exile from the divine presence be theologically useful? The key lies in the divine response to humanity's threat to and corruption of the space created for consecrated living: God binds himself to the nations at the time of Noah, similarly with Israel, with the covenants that secure the unending gift of his presence and mercy to all the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve who come into his presence through Abraham and, ultimately, through Jesus Christ (Gal 3:29).

4.1 Presence, then the covenants

Part two of this essay will consider a certain set of covenants as they appear in their narrative sequence in GK, and focus especially on their contribution to the narrative depiction of God's response to the problem of humanity's exile from divine presence, as well as the depicted response of Adam and Eve's and, subsequently, Abraham and Sarah's descendants.

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⁴⁰There is no true temple in the north; it is exiled because it failed to acknowledge Jerusalem as the place of the Lord's presence.

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KEY WORDS

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The risk of overestimating and underestimating “religious cults” in South Africa

ABSTRACT

In South Africa on a number of occasions the media and other groups have referred to some religious groups as “cults”. The word “cult” is a loaded term which has positive, negative and neutral connotations. Unfortunately, the term has often been used not to describe a phenomenon but to classify groups that are not in line with the standards of society. This has led to tension between such groups and churches, and members of society. This article reveals that the study of cults is a complex one and one to be pursued with caution. Measures are proposed for the studying of cults in order to provide a balanced overview. In order to provide balanced information on new religions and cults an Information centre associated with an academic institution needs to be established.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent times a number of media reports on certain religious groups have indicated the perception among some members of society that South Africa is the home of “harmful cults”. The existence of a number of popular definitions that clearly illuminate the characteristics of cults leads to the practice of loose and fast classifications of new or alternative religious groups as cults. Although this unfair and hasty labelling of groups (based on whether a group meets a number of the characteristics of a cult) can lead to unnecessary tension in society this is no reason not to conduct research on these groups in order to ascertain their impact on society. Despite not being listed as such in the 2001 census, terms such as “sects” and “cults” are not terms entirely unfamiliar to the traditional Christian church, as well as society and the media in general. It is important, however, to understand that the word “cult” is not merely a classification tool based on certain characteristics. Barker (2001:1) reminds that cults do not exist in a vacuum and they are surrounded by (almost enveloped in) what can be called a “cult scene” that includes members of the wider society, cult-watching groups, churches and the media that contribute to the complex relationships between cults and the rest of society. Much has been published about cults and different viewpoints are raised about cults that vary from the belief that cults are generally not harmful (see Introvinge 2001; Richardson & Bromley 1983; and Baker 1995) to the belief that they are harmful, exploitative and destructive (see Singer & Lalich 1995; Hassan 1988; Enroth 1984).

This article addresses the complexity and different uses of the word “cult”. It also indicates that although classification of cults remains a challenge it is needed since cults can impact negatively on society and must therefore not be underestimated. Further, proposals will be made not only on how to deal with cults but also on how to address the needs for a balanced study of and provision of information on cults and new religions in South Africa.

2. SCRUTINISING THE TERM "CULT"

The term "cult" undoubtedly has many facets that have been subject to intense debate. The term is not only linked to religion but is also used to describe groups in other realms of life and business. Unfortunately, the term has also conveniently been employed indiscriminately by lay critics to disparage faiths whose doctrines were believed to be unusual and heretical. In everyday life, religions or religious groups regarded by the majority culture as spurious or unorthodox are generally referred to as "cults". Many scholars believe that the general use of the word "cult" to refer to all non mainstream religious groups is an unfair classification seeing that harmless groups are categorised under the same term with harmful groups. In order to address this generalisation as well as the negative connotation associated with the word "cult" it is mostly replaced with "new religious movements" (NRMs) or "new religions" (Woody 2009:218). This viewpoint is not shared by all studying "cults" and the term is readily used by certain cult watching groups when referring to groups believed to be manipulative, destructive and exploitative (Introvigne 2001:1).

For the purpose of this article, the word "cult" will be used seeing that the focus will be on groups believed to be harmful. Replacing the word "cult" with "new religious movements" or "new religions" will jeopardise attempts to specifically address issues related to the word "cult".

2.1 Different types of cults

The word "cult" can be used in many ways, and distinctions are drawn between different types of cults. Two broad categories are used, namely *religious cults*, which include Christian cults, Eastern cults and satanic cults and *nonreligious cults*, which include business, educational, personality, political and even UFO cults (Jones 2008:18-20). This article will focus on the category *religious cult*, which includes *Christian cult* or *pseudo-Christian cult*. This in broad terms refers to a religious group that claims to be Bible-based but deviates in practice and belief from the traditional Christian belief system.

Cults are further described in terms of the threat they pose or the harm they can inflict on society. Cults considered as relatively harmless even though their teachings and practices may be out of step with societal and/or theological norms are referred to as *benign cults*. *Harmful or abusive cults* are "those groups whose teachings and practices are not only different from societal and/or theological norms but are also believed to exert strong social and psychological pressure — which can make individuals do things that they would not have considered doing prior to joining the group" (INFORM(b) n.d.:1). Groups that have committed violence or which seriously harm their members, advocate violence that leads to suicide, and in some cases have even killed their own members are considered to be *destructive cults*, *suicide cults* or *Doomsday cults* (Wikipedia/cult n.d.:8).

2.2 Definition of cult

"A definition per se is a man-made decision and whatever characteristics are put together under the "label" can be interpreted differently from place to place, person to person and time to time. A term can also be used to denote a positive or negative evaluation instead of telling us about the specific characteristics of a phenomenon" (INFORM(c) n.d.:1). Defining a cult is even more challenging in the light of the varied applications of the word depending on the evaluator and user. This is further complicated by the inability of the existing definitions to accurately describe and encompass all aspects of cults without also including aspects present in other religions not considered as cults. There exists an overarching body of characteristics between so-called cults and religions in general. For this reason a number of aspects believed to be of higher intensity in

some religious groups functioning in a more controlled and sometimes isolated environment are usually used as distinguishing pointers in the study of cults.

It is believed that the term cult originates from the French word *culte* that referred to “worship” in the sixteenth century. The French word *culte* is derived from the Latin word *cultus* that referred to “care, cultivation, or cultivated and worship”. The term was used rarely after the seventeenth century but revived again in the mid nineteenth century as reference to ancient primitive rituals (Dictionary.com n.d.:3). From around 1920 onward the word “cult” was also used to refer to religious groups as a cohesive social group whose devotional beliefs and practices are considered outside of the mainstream culture by the surrounding population (Wikipedia/cult n.d.:1). In 1932 an American sociologist, Howard P Becker, started using the word “cult” as a sociological classification. The word was the result of his expansion of German theologian Ernst Troeltsch’s church-sect typology.

Becker used two of Troeltsch’s three categories of religious behaviour, namely churchly and sectarian and developed them further. He used *churchly* and split that into “ecclesia” and “denomination”, and split *sectarian* into “sect” and “cult” (Swatos 1998:90–93). Becker initially described cults as small unorganised religious groups that had the distinctive characteristic of being private in their personal beliefs (Campbell 1998:123) and later the concept “cult” took on the characteristics of deviant religious groups that derived their inspiration from outside the mainstream religion (Richardson 1993:349).

The words “cult” and “sect” are sometimes used interchangeably, especially in European countries and the USA. Different viewpoints exist on the difference between a sect and a cult. For the purpose of this article “sect” is understood to mean that it refers to a new religious group in Christendom that consists of members that have left the parent denomination because they believe that the denomination has neglected important doctrines. They often decry the liberal trends in the denomination and advocate that the aim of the new religious group is to return to “true” religion which entails the restoration of important neglected doctrines (Wilson 1982:89). Cults are like sects also a new religious group. Unlike sects cults may form without breaking away from a denomination and form as a new group. Cults although they claim to practice “true” religion are more readily distinguished by some “new revelation”, “prophecy” or “vision” that can be seen as an addendum to the Bible message. Cults are lead by a charismatic leader(ship) that claims to be the “godly” instrument in bringing forth the new or lost element of truth. A further distinctive characteristic is the belief that psychological manipulation, danger or harmfulness and authoritarianism are associated with cults (Robbins 1988).

Definitions for cult abound and dozens if not hundreds of proposals have been made, each claiming to have the correct definition. A cult can be defined from a sociological, psychological, legal, religious and secular opposition point of view (Wikipedia/cult n.d.:3-5). For the purpose of this article the definition of the International Cultic Studies Association, a well-respected, balanced international organisation will be used. This definition encompasses the issues generally debated about cults that include aspects of the sociological and psychological approaches as well as secular opposition approaches. According to Langone (n.d.:1) and West and Langone (1986:119–120), a cult can be defined as a group or movement that to a significant degree

- (a) exhibits great or excessive devotion or dedication to leadership, or a group or movement
- (b) unethical manipulative techniques are employed to persuade, control and socialise members
- (c) members are progressively and systematically induced to states of psychological dependency and isolated from former friends and family
- (d) special methods are used to heighten suggestibility, enforce powerful group pressures, increase information management, to suspend individuality or critical judgment, and to promote

a total dependency on the group and fear of leaving it

(e) causes psychological harm to members, their families and the community

It is also important to indicate that the word "cult" in a theological context is understood to be closely related to the word "sect" *hairesis* (*gr*). This term has the meaning of "a body of men following their own tenets", "a group with distinctive theories with an acknowledged founder" or "a strong, distinctive opinion of individual "parties" (sects) that operated within Judaism. In the second century *hairesis* became a term that was used to refer to a body of false beliefs (Dictionary of spiritual terms n.d.:1). In this context the word cult is used to distinguish between "true beliefs" and "false beliefs".

The above characteristics pointed out in the definitions undoubtedly form an important basis not only for debate among those opposing or defending cults but also among those who assist "victims" of cults. It is important to note that the definition does not serve as a checklist in order to determine if a group is a cult. It provides guidelines in order to investigate study and deal with the complex phenomenon of cults.

2.3 Different views of cults

From a legal point of view according to Gunn (2003:196), religions are implicitly or explicitly classified. Depending on the approach of the evaluator, religions may be described in terms such as "good religion" or "bad religion", or even "religion" or "non-religion". A further evaluation can be that "monotheistic religions" may be described as "traditional religions" while "polytheistic religions" or "non-theistic religions" may be described as "primitive" or "superstitious". Some religions are classified as "not really religions" or "sects" or "cults". "They are viewed as not deserving of the label "religion" either for purposes of receiving benefits or being protected against discrimination" (Gunn 2003:197).

Cults have been studied by scholars of different disciplines including sociology, psychology, anthropology, law and theology. These different viewpoints are represented in different cult watching groups. Barker (2001:1) identifies five types of cult-watching groups that can be used as constructs and that can be useful in understanding the complicated process of social interaction. There are also individual cult-watchers who move between the different types. Cults as a result of outside influence change significantly in terms of their functioning as a group as well as how they act towards their members and society. The first type of cult-watching group is known as *cult-awareness groups* (CAGs) that consist of ex-members of cults, relatives of these ex-members, private detectives, counsellors, health practitioners and clinical psychologists and their focus is the harmfulness of cults. Their goal is to help victims, alert potential victims, and control or ban dangerous cults. Their sources vary from information from anxious parents, ex-members, the media, scholars and their own counsellors. Some CAGs have been initiated by government as in France, or are predominantly supported by the national church as in Russia. Another group called *counter-cult groups* (CCGs) made up of clergy, theologians, apologists and believers of the faith community focus not so much on what cults do as on what they believe. They expose the heretical beliefs of cults and their goal is to explain where and how cults deviate from the Truth¹. They obtain their information from testimonies from ex-members and cult literature (Barker 2001:2-3). *Research-orientated groups* (ROGs) made up of academics and other scholars and

1 The term "truth" is a term that is not so easily definable however in this context it refers to the doctrine known as the orthodox Christian belief. For the Christian the ultimate expression of truth is founded in the Bible, when Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the Life (Joh 14:6) Based on this announcement of Jesus we as Christians believe He is right and we should listen to Him and what he teaches is therefore the truth. Cults deviate from the "truth" mostly in that they add additional revelations to the truth as is evident in other sources or prophecies or special revelations of a leader thus rendering the "Christian truth" as incomplete an insufficient (Martin 1980:16).

professionals aim at obtaining objective information about and understanding of cults based on objective information obtained from ex-members, family and society, and through the study of group dynamics. ROGs endeavour to contextualise information through comparison with other religions and/or those who share socioeconomic and various demographic characteristics. Another type of cult-watching is done by *human rights groups* (HRGs), consisting of human rights activists and professionals such as lawyers who focus on the protection of the human rights of religious minorities. These groups are more concerned with how society treats cults than with what cults do. Another aspect that can also be included in this type of cult-watching is those activists who do not focus so much on the protection of the rights of minority groups as on the individual rights of members of these groups. Their aim is to protect individuals in these groups based on the belief that the dynamics of some groups may harm members and infringe on their rights. Finally, groups known as *cult defender groups* (CDGs), consisting of members of cults and sympathisers of cults, defend cults and expose CAGs. CDGs ask questions about how cults have been misinterpreted and/or mistreated. They focus on the positive things in cults ignoring or explaining away any dubious actions. They oppose any form of deprogramming² and exit counselling³. According to CDGs the actions of CAGs sometimes lead to violent situations surrounding cults (Barker 2001:4).

In conclusion three broad approaches to the study and observation of cults can be detected. Firstly, those that believe that all cults are harmful based either on their *belief* — thus theology — or the *dynamics* they utilise to proselytise and maintain members (Bowker 1997:247). Cults according to this approach are all evaluated negatively in general. Secondly, others obtain objective balanced information about cults through comparison with other religions in order to ensure that these groups are not mistreated and also enjoy the right to freedom of religion. This balanced approach does not consider all cults as harmful but remain mindful that some religious groups may pose a threat to its members and society. The third group is committed to protect, defend and promote cults even if it means ignoring their doubtful actions. The danger of this approach is that although it claims to be impartial it is bias and defends cults without considering the possible threats that some groups may present to society.

2.4 Important international organisations studying cults

In the United Kingdom an organisation known as INFORM (Information Network Focus on Religious Movements) founded in 1988 functions as an independent charity with the support of the British Home Office and the mainstream churches. The aim of Inform is to obtain and provide objective and up-to-date information about new religious movements or “cults” (INFORM(a) n.d.:1). In the United States of America, the International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) “is a global network of people concerned about psychological manipulation and abuse in cultic groups, alternative movements, and other environments” (ICSA n.d.). Info-Cult founded a non-profit, charitable organisation founded in 1980 based in Montreal, Canada that offers help and

2 Singer & Lalich (1995) defined “cult deprogramming” as providing members with information about the cult and showing them how their own decision making power had been taken away from them in order for them to make their own decisions. “Deprogramming is an attempt to force a person to abandon allegiance to a religious, political, economic or social group. Methods and practices may involve kidnapping and coercion. The person in question is taken against his/her will, which has led to controversies over freedom of religion, kidnapping and civil rights, as well as the violence which is sometimes involved” (Wiki/Deprogramming n.d.:1).

3 “Exit counselling”, also termed “strategic intervention therapy”, “cult intervention” or “thought reform consultation”, is an intervention designed to persuade an individual to leave a group perceived to be a cult (Wiki/Exit Counseling n.d.:1).

information about cults, new religious movements and related groups and subjects (Info-Cult n.d.). CESNUR – Centre for Studies on New Religions – situated in Torino, Italy, was established in 1988 by a group of religious scholars from leading universities in Europe and the Americas. CESNUR not only promotes scholarly research in the field of new religious consciousness but also exposes the problems associated with some movements, while defending the principles of religious liberty” (CESNUR n.d.). The Cult Awareness and Information Centre (CAIC) in Australia established in 1995 focuses on people who are ensnared in totalitarian groups. The main aim is to warn the public about cults and their deceitful recruiting techniques (CAIC n.d.). The Federation of European Centres for Research and Information on Sects (FECRIS) is an umbrella organisation in Europe with offices in most European countries including France, Austria, Sweden, Germany and Spain. FECRIS protects human rights in the field of eradicating religious discrimination (FECRIS n.d.).

Although the aims of the aforementioned organisations differ, each of these organisations attempt to study and gather information on cults and new religions with the aim of providing balanced information to the public.

Apart from small organisations consisting of a few interested people, scholars and ex-members such as CIEC (Cult Information and Evangelization Centre) (Kies n.d.) that focuses on doctrinal differences and RIGHT (Rights of Individuals Grant Honor To) (no longer functioning) that focused on the rights of individuals belonging to these groups, and CARE-SA (Aserac) that deals with trauma of victims of drugs, occult, alcohol and sexual abuse (Aserac n.d.:1), no formal organisation exists in South Africa.

2.5 Criteria generally used to classify cults

- Based on the definition of a cult, different criteria are formulated in more detail in order to guide the study of religious groups and cults. The following list of social-structural, social-psychological and interpersonal behaviour patterns commonly found in cultic environments may be helpful in assessing a group (Lalich & Tobias 2006):
- Members display excessively zealous and unquestioning commitment to its leader. The leader’s belief system, ideology and practices are viewed as the Truth, as law.
- No questioning of doctrine or doubt is tolerated and dissent is discouraged or even punished.
- Any doubts about the groups and its leader(s) must be suppressed and mind-altering practices (including meditation and chanting, denunciation sessions and debilitating work routines) are used.
- Members are dictated to in terms of how they should think, act and feel (members must get permission to date, change jobs, leave the premises or marry. Leaders also prescribe to their members what types of clothes to wear, where to live, whether or not to have children and how to discipline children).
- The group displays an elite mentality. This means that it claims a special, exalted status for itself, its leader(s) and members. The leader is viewed as the Messiah, a special being on a special mission to save humanity.
- A polarised us-versus-them mentality is displayed by the group, which in turn may cause conflict with the wider society.
- The leader is exempted from accountability to any authorities (unlike the accountability expected from teachers, priests, ministers, rabbis and monks of mainstream religious denominations).
- A core teaching of the group is that the supposedly exalted end justifies whatever means are necessary. As a result members participate in activities or behave in ways they

would have considered reprehensible or unethical before joining the group. Examples of this behaviour include collecting money for bogus charities or lying to family and friends. Emotions of shame, fear and guilt are induced through applying peer pressure or subtle persuasion methods in order to influence and control members.

- Total commitment to the leader or group requires members to cut ties with family and friends, and radically alter or abandon personal goals and activities they had before joining the group.
- The group focuses on adding new members to the group.
- The group is preoccupied with making money.
- Members are expected to spend inordinate amounts of time with the group and to engage in group-related activities.
- Socialising of members is only to take place with other group members.
- The possibility of life outside the context of the group is not an option for the most loyal members (the “true believers”). As a result the group is the only way to be saved. It often fears reprisals to itself, its loved ones or others if it even considers leaving the group.

2.6 Challenge in applying the behaviour patterns appropriately

It is evident from the list of guidelines above that the classification of a particular group is not that simple. Some of the guidelines listed can be “visible” or more easily detectable: for example the zealous commitment of members is easily detectable by the ones who know them — so also the elitism they display with regard to other religions. Their commitments to the leader and the inordinate amounts of time spent engaged in the activities of the group could also easily be detected. But other guidelines are “subliminal” in the sense that they refer to an individual’s internalised reaction and adoption to the environment, culture, teachings (formal and informal) and belief system that becomes visible in the individual’s detectable behaviour.

The challenge, however, remains how the subliminal abstract aspects of the dynamics of these groups can be detected. How are the teachings and culture of the group internalised? How do the unwritten rules subtly dictated to members through acceptable group behaviour affect members? How are certain dynamics utilised to ensure a particular behaviour, for example how are the emotions of fear, guilt and “love” employed to obtain a desired behaviour? What role does the polarised mentality we-versus-them, strengthened by group isolation from the outside world, play in behaviour? What impact does the belief that salvation is only obtainable through membership and the “godly sanctioning” of the leader have on the level of obedience and commitment? Also to what extent does it differ in terms of the impact it has on individuals? How can these effects be measured? These are a few challenges indicating the difficulty in utilising guidelines to classify a group.

3. EVALUATION OF CULTS

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the postmodern world is accessibility to information on any topic. The same applies to the study of or information available on cults. Unfortunately, the information available in this way can consist of skewed perceptions and one-sided or unscientific conclusions that in turn can lead to incorrect evaluations of groups. The lack of knowledge or unbalanced information can contribute to the overestimation or underestimation of cults.

General knowledge about cults amongst the public varies from those who are totally unaware of their existence or those who have some experience of so-called cults as a result of a loved one who got involved to those who sell themselves as “cult experts”. Two equally important traps must be avoided with regard to cults, namely overestimation and underestimation of the

impact they may have on members and on society. Overestimation and underestimation can be equally dangerous. In overestimation some portion of society may “cry wolf” when there is no wolf. With underestimation on the other side some may view a “real wolf” as a “sheep”: the proverbial wolf in sheep’s clothing. For that reason this issue must be approached with caution in order to get a balanced picture.

3.1 Overestimation or underestimation of cults

Overestimation of groups may occur in the following instances. Firstly, it may occur through utilisation of “generic criteria” as discussed above in order to determine if a particular group is a cult. Some believe that if only a number of the criteria fit a particular group, the group can be labelled as a cult. This is an irresponsible generalisation seeing that the term “cult” refers to a continuum in which a large gray area separates “cult” from “non-cult” or adds qualifiers to the term “cult” such as “benign”, “harmful” or “destructive”. The criteria listed are a compilation of characteristics observed in these groups and are not necessarily meant to be used as a yardstick to determine if a group is a cult. The criteria are a benchmark not an organised structure that can be used to select those observations that confirm a stereotype (Langone & Rosendale n.d.:3-4). Each case must be evaluated individually with regard to the group’s dynamics, teaching and changing environment and how persons interact with the culture and what impact that culture has on them.

Secondly, another generalisation that must be avoided is that a group is a cult because the interpersonal influence of the leader is harmful. This generalisation simply holds no water because cults are not the only groups that harm people. Langone and Rosendale (n.d.:5) point out that “a “new age” group that is neither manipulative nor authoritarian might also harm some people through its promotion of a medically dangerous diet or psychologically harmful practices”. Parishioners may even be harmed in a church because the pastor is domineering and abusive in the manner he deals with the members. Many examples can be given of harm inflicted by interpersonal influence, and therefore harm cannot be used as a criterion to classify a group as a cult.

Thirdly, there is the danger of overestimating the experience of one or two members of a group that claims that a particular group is harmful seeing that the interaction of personality and group environment can produce very different results. An unassertive person, for example, may view a mildly controlling environment as abusive, whereas a very assertive, confident person may view the same environment as “not harmful”. One must guard against only seeing the casualties that can skew our perception of a group, casualties can be found in any religion. (Langone 2012:1).

Fourthly, sources of information can also lead to an emotional reaction to hastily classify a religious group as a cult. The aim of the media is to compile a good story that would ensure the loyalty of the readers, listeners and viewers. They do not take into account the “ordinary life” in religious groups and rather want to expose them as fraudulent and sensational. Given the tight schedule they work with in order to meet tight deadlines the gathering of their information is limited compared to the time spent by scholars. The time or space to present its story is also limited. Therefore it focuses on selected sources that can provide good quotes without obtaining versions of the reality from members (Barker 1995:299). Even people directly affected by cults base their information overwhelmingly on the mass media. Very few attempt to contact cults directly (Beckford 1994:104). Think of all the emotionally loaded reporting and coverage about the mass suicide of Jim Jones’ Peoples Temple where more than 900 followers died including children, the Solar Temple, the terrifying siege of the Branch Davidians of David Koresh at Waco which ended with the fire that killed the children trapped in the compound. There is no doubt

that such information not only has the tendency to invoke emotions but also establishes a general negative association with the word “cult”. Jenkins (1998:158) describes this as “moral panic” which he defines as socially constructed social problems characterised by a reaction, in the media and political forums, which is out of proportion to the actual threat.

It is understandable that relatives or friends affected by a loved one’s involvement in a particular group are at times desperate to protect the loved one against harmful activities. The question that needs to be asked is whether the person is in a life-threatening situation. If not, a cautious and informed approach is advisable, gathering reliable information and consulting with knowledgeable people on the subject.

Underestimation on the other hand can also lead to a skew picture of the influence of cults on its members and society. Underestimation occurs when a judgement is made based on insufficient or no information. That is when reports about possible harm done by religious groups are simply brushed off as sensation without investigation. Or when religious freedom is viewed as a freedom that even justifies harmful activities as long as these are performed as part of religion (Pretorius 2011:237).

The first an important aspect in the sphere of religion that must never be underestimated is the sanctioning that is afforded to some religious leaders. The position of authority and power taken up by a religious leader is in many cases believed not merely to be a man-made institution but a godly appointment supported by scripture. The leader also enjoys special direct communication with God (Singer & Lalich 1995:7). According to Henke (2006:2), this belief of the special selection of the leader can be used to teach followers to suppress criticism against the group or leader.

The danger lurking in such a position of authority or “godly sanctioning” is that it can be abused. The authoritativeness of the position justified by scripture can easily be used not only to exploit the submission of followers but also to demand unquestionable execution of the leader’s commands. Individuals are more susceptible in a religious environment and their judgement more easily tainted. This has been demonstrated by some cases indicated previously where followers will obey the leader to the extreme of mass suicide. A person of authority can therefore gain an unhealthy influence over his/her followers.

Secondly; the belief that members of some cults are the only chosen and elected people of God and that the “truth”⁴ and salvation are only found inside the group creates an almost unbearable responsibility for the followers. They not only must maintain God’s special election and calling but act in such a way that they do not disappoint God. This almost “God-given” responsibility is an important dynamic in motivating followers to aspire to almost limitless ends in an endeavour to please God and do “His will”. The desire to please God at whatever cost leaves followers wide open to spiritual abuse (Pretorius 2007:263). Actions can include lying, cheating and deceiving outsiders for money or getting members to perform actions a person would normally not perform. These wrongful actions are justified by “the eventual goal justifies the means”.

Thirdly; the claim of cults that the leader and the groups are specially selected by God with the aim of restoring the true people of God must also not be underestimated. The emphasis that some groups place on a “right standing with God” manifested in a committed lifestyle appeals to individuals who feel that this aspect was neglected in their own congregation. The need for this change is normally realised when these groups refer to the individual’s past religious experiences as being unsuccessful and at the same time offer restoration of the person’s relationship with God (Johnson & Van Vonderen 1991:184).

4 This “truth” is based on the “new revelation” or “prophecy” received by the leader that adds new teachings and beliefs to the scriptures.

Fourthly, the impact of the group dynamics on a person must not be underestimated. People respond differently to group or peer pressure. In most cases, however, peer pressure, and what is perceived as the acceptable behaviour, does influence the actions of a person. The group identity displayed by members is imbedded in a camaraderie strongly motivated by the belief of being the chosen people of God destined to persevere persecuting for a higher cause (Pretorius 2008:275).

Lastly, the effect that criticism of cults by the media has on strengthening the belief of persecution for a higher cause must not be underestimated. For some it is proof that they are indeed the true church of God being persecuted by "satan" (Zukeran 2006:3) and motivates them to commit even more strongly. The outside world is viewed as being on the side of the "media" and therefore also as an enemy used by "satan" to pull followers away from the truth within the group.

It can therefore be concluded that a cautious but responsible approach is needed when religious groups believed to be cultic are studied in order to detect harmful activities or practices in order to address them. It thus stands to reason that a religious group cannot merely be classified as a cult based on certain criteria but an understanding of deeper dynamics as pointed out above is also needed to provide a bigger picture, and also how the surrounding society activates these dynamics by virtue of their actions.

3.2 Current situation regarding cults in South Africa

Over the last two decades or more, different reports on what were referred to as "sects" or "cults" featured in the media. In the 1980s a group known as *The Mission Church of Christ* enjoyed media attention. The leader of the group Lester Bloomberg was described as a prophet. Family, ex-members and the media reported that the group alienated the children from their family and was responsible for radical change in the behaviour of the children⁵. In the mid-1990s the "prophet" Eugene Houy hit the media. The media reported on this religious group that lived in isolation and that believed they were the selected people of God. The leader attracted special attention with his women followers that succeeded one another as his wives. In 2000 reports saw the light about another religious group in Umtata, approximately 100 members, known as *The Ark*. Reports had it that children were in the grip of the group. It was feared that these followers could follow the route of the then recent cult suicide of the group *The Restoration of the Ten Commandments* in Uganda where more than 300 people died. *The Ark* leader Nokulunga Fiphaza indoctrinated her followers and predicted the end of the world on 31 July 2000. Eight corpses of followers of the group were allegedly found in shallow graves close to the premises of the group⁶. In 2004 the South African Broadcasting Corporation featured a documentary on the group known as the *Emmanuel Fellowship* on the programme Special Assignment. This group

5 Louw, L. 1994. Sektelede in greep van vrees en totale onderdanigheid. *Beeld*, 15 Maart, bl. 11. Gouws,

A. 1994. Kommer oor SA mense in Bloomberg-sekte. *Beeld*, 7 Oktober, bl. 2.

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Botha, P.R. & Botha, M. n.d. The Bloomberg Cult. Available at: <http://www.gkbellville.org/bybelstudies/bloomberg.htm>. Viewed: 3 October 2004.

6 Jackson, N. 2000. Sekte wag weer op Jesus. *Beeld*, 21 Julie, bl. 16.

Stiemie, M. 2000. Gemeenskap wil met sekte praat. *Die Burger*, 3 Mei, bl. 5.

Preller, C. 2000. Polisie vat kinders weg van sekte wat verwaarloos, indoktrineer. *Beeld*, 8 Oktober, bl. 5.

Preller, C. 2003. Grusame vonds: agt lyke reeds uitgeken. Ark-sektelede draai in hof. *Die Burger*, 27 Junie, bl. 5.

was also suspected of influencing people and exploiting members under the banner of religion⁷. A report in the *You* magazine in 2009 about a group called *Alon International* described the life of pain of some ex-members belonging to this group, describing their experience as “years spent in the grip of a fanatic cult”⁸. Recently in 2010, Carte Blanche hosted a programme about a religious group – *Grace Gospel Church* – that allegedly controlled followers and alienated them from their families⁹.

The media coverage of some religious groups referred to as “sects” or “cults” indicates a level of awareness about cults in South Africa. Furthermore it indicates that some non-mainstream religious groups have been or are still active in South Africa. Unfortunately, this kind of awareness is not based on sound research and study of these groups and society can be presented with a skewed picture either overrating or underrating the issue.

3.3 Guidelines in evaluating and dealing with new religions in South Africa

It has become evident that the evaluation of religious groups in order to determine if they are cults is no simple matter. The media, some experts, affected families and other interested people always run the risk of a hastened classification of a group based on simplistic criteria.

The following must be taken into account when dealing with cults:

- Definitions of cult cannot be used as a kind of medical diagnostic category. The term “cult” must rather be used as a pointer that will assist when working with and studying religious groups. It is important to also take into account that groups and individuals differ. The dynamics and functioning of groups also change over time as a way for them to adapt to their respective environments.
- The starting point for the classification of groups as cults in most cases is as a result of either a person who claims he/she has been harmed by a group or loved ones who feel that a family member or friend has been hurt by a group. It is risky to base a conclusion on the experience of a person or a few individuals. The experience of one or more individuals should never merely be taken as representative of all the members in the group as experience may differ. Therefore it is important to ensure that sufficient information is gathered including personal testimonies and that the information is updated. Consult and discuss the issue with members of the group with the assistance of knowledgeable people in this field. Obtain information on the particular group’s belief system, teachings and their practices. Also gather information from other sources such as family, the community and other role players in the community. Systematically collected data is a lot more compelling than one or two outspoken people
- Care must always be taken to guard against the tendency to allow casualties to prematurely dictate a conclusion. Instead, a calm balanced approach is advisable.
- Because of the difficulty of demonstrating the abusiveness of environments behaviourally according to scientific methodologies, an outright classification of a group as a cult should be avoided (Langone 2012 n.d.1).

3.4 Recommendations

The aforementioned cases of cult activity in South Africa calls for the establishment of an Information centre. An information/study centre focusing on the study of new religions can add value to the challenge with regards to new religions and cults in South Africa. The information

7 South African Broadcasting Corporation. 2004. “Special Assignment: Emmanuel Fellowship”. SABC3, 11 May.

8 Moses, A. 2009. Painful years in Paradise. *You* magazine, 12 March, pp 16-17.

9 Grace Gospel Church, M-Net, 2010. Carte Blanche. Broadcast on 7 February.

centre must be made up of scholars in this field, be they from different disciplines, ex-members, jurists and other role players of the society who can add value to the study of cults and provide balanced information to the community. This centre can obtain valuable information and guidelines from similar organisations in other parts of the world. With this information adapted to fit the demographics and unique culture of South Africa, a respectable centre can add value to the need in this field.

4. CONCLUSION

It is clear that the word “cult” can be used in different ways. It can be used in an attempt to point out that a certain religious groups are harmful and a threat to its members and society. In this sense attributes such as violence, abuse, control and exploitation, been attached and has made it a term with mixed meanings of which the negative ones are the most likely to prevail. It is understandable that scholars studying cults therefore reverted to using less loaded terms such as *new religious movements*, *new religions* or *alternative religions*.

The word cult can however also be used in another less offensive sense to point out how different a religious group is from another religious group in terms of its doctrine and practices - thus as a measure of dissociation. In this sense the theological definition of “cult” is used as was indicated before to differentiate itself (orthodox Christianity) from other beliefs. Within the ambit of the dynamics of religious belief systems and religious freedom this distinction is justified seeing that each religious system must be able to declare the beliefs they believe is the “right beliefs”. They further enjoy the freedom to defend those beliefs for the sake of the coherent functioning and existence of their belief system. The word cult thus plays an important role within the framework of theology and must not be abandoned. Careful use of the word cult is advised in order to minimize the possibility of unfairly labelling other religious groups or to indicate religious superiority.

It is also important to take note that harm can be caused by some religious groups and that their teachings and beliefs can escalate into violence or even breaking of the law. This article attempted to point out that the term “cult” must be understood and used responsibly against its background.

More importantly, evaluating or classifying a religious group as a “harmful” cult is not simplistic yet necessary and entails thorough research and a balanced approach. What is important, however, is that no “ostrich mentality” can be afforded regarding this topic in South Africa. New religions in South Africa are a reality and thorough research and the dissemination of information is needed to establish on what level these groups are functioning and if they are a threat in any way to members of society.

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TREFWOORDE

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A systematic understanding of the evolution of Hindu deities in the development of the concept of *avatara*

ABSTRACT

Within the primary and secondary Hindu scriptures, especially the Vedas, Epics and *Puranas*, many gods are mentioned. At times a hierarchy of deities is distinguishable, and at other times these deities assume each others' names and functions. Then there are some deities that manifest themselves in other forms such as a bird, an animal, a human, or both animal and human. These manifestations are at times clearly construed as *avatars*. To determine the transformation (metamorphosis), progression and/or regression of Hindu deities from the Vedas through to the *Puranas*, the researcher applied the systematic literature review methodology. He argued that this evolution of Hindu deities is the result of changes in the specific needs of the community in their quest for immortality. Accompanying this metamorphosis of Hindu deities is the notion of *avatara* which gained significant prominence in the Bhagavad Gita and the *Puranas*, although there are indications that the notion of *avatara* can be read into the Vedas. Considering these complexities, the researcher defined the term *avatara* and traced the origins and evolution of these Hindu deities through the various Hindu scriptures. This study consolidated this process systematically, resulting in sufficient proof that there was a decline in certain Vedic deities, a rise to prominence of other 'unimportant' deities and the appearance of other deities not mentioned in the Vedas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Religion seems to offer humankind a way to get closer to God so as to form a bond between God and humankind. It is the desire of humankind, who, knowing that they are mere mortals, strive for immortality, whether in this lifetime or within another sphere of life. In Hinduism this desire plays itself out on many fronts. This complexity of many fronts has led scholars to disagree on whether Hinduism is polytheistic, monotheistic, kathenotheistic or monistic.

Bassuk (1987:3) claims that in India, "ancient religious man connected God with animals which he revered and feared, so he attributed God-like qualities to these animals, creating theriomorphic deities". In support of this claim he cites just two examples from the Vedas amongst many other examples. The first example he cites was when the God Indra was manifested in the form of a bull or ram, and the second example was when the God Varuna comes out of the point of an arrow and becomes manifested as a bull. These manifestations, of which there are many in the primary as well as secondary scriptures of Hinduism, are at times construed as *avatars*.

Much has been written about *avatars* and their purpose for manifestations in different forms through the different epochs of the Hindu religion; yet a consolidation of these manifestations as recorded through the history of Hindu scriptures, the understanding of the concept of *avatars* and the reasons for the gods of the different Hindu scriptures seemingly undergoing metamorphosis, has yet to be systematically and comprehensively documented.

This article does not attempt to provide any new information which is not readily available. It

is rather an attempt to construct a *systematic review of literature*, of both primary and secondary sources as well as references. This systematic review of literature provides the basis for a synopsis of the above-mentioned consolidation. Nonetheless, the focus is on why this metamorphosis of the Vedic gods took place, as well as the conception of Hindu deities in post-Vedic literature.

It is in the light of the above that a definition of the concept of *avatara* is considered in this article. Furthermore, an attempt is made to explain why there was a decline in the importance of the Vedic gods during the period between the Vedas and the *Puranas*. Finally, the rise to importance of the lesser gods from the Vedas, as documented in the secondary scriptures of Hinduism, especially in the epics and *Puranas*, is explained. The information contained herein provides the missionary with a clearer understanding on how the concept of *avatara* developed as against the Christian understanding of the incarnation. It should also settle the discussion that Jesus could not be the reincarnated Krishna.

2. SCOPE OF LITERARY RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

The literature available on the theme which this article focuses on is voluminous. The correct approach would be to address as many of these sources as possible. It stands to reason though that it is not possible to cover and/or engage many of these sources in an article. Such a task is best suited to a book for publication.

The researcher therefore had to confine the article to literature which defines the term *avatara*, addresses the reasons for the decline of the Vedic gods and explores the significance of the main gods in popular Hinduism arising from the epics and *Puranas*. The approach is twofold: firstly it is a systematic review of literature as explained above, and secondly it attempts to define the term *avatara* at the beginning of the article so as to place this term in perspective for the duration of the article. The reason for this approach is to impress upon the reader the importance of the concept of *avataras* throughout the article.

An attempt has also been made to avoid the use of terms in Sanskrit other than those words that are deemed necessary for the purpose of clarification in the context of the article. One of the main reasons for avoiding Sanskrit terms is the inability of the English language to render a justified explanation for these terms.

3. TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF THE TERM AVATARA

Miranda (1990:50) claims that the doctrine of *avatara* is indeed a characteristic feature of a theistic system of thought distinctive in Hinduism. It is a Sanskrit word which can be expressed in English as 'descent'. Pandey (1979:1) and Parrinder (1997:14) imply that the word *avatara* means 'to come down', 'to go down' or 'to descend'. Parrinder adds that *avatara* is the manifestation of the divine in human form. Burnett (1992:129) suggests that the etymology of the word *avatara* is from two root words, *ava* meaning 'down' and *tr* meaning 'to cross over'.

An investigation into the development of the term *avatara* is well postulated by Bassuk (1987:3). He suggests that Sanskrit terms used to describe the manifestation of the descent of God into the realm of this world evolved from *rupa* (form, figure), *vapus* (having a beautiful form) and *tanu* (a living entity who accepted a material body) to *pradurbhava* (appearance). He claims that the Sanskrit word *avatara* gradually evolved from these terms and that this word is composed of two parts: the root verb *tr* meaning to pass or cross and '*ava*' signifying down. The finite verb *avatarati* means 'he descends'. Miranda (1990:50) refers to this descent as "the godhead's crossing over from the celestial regions down to the earth. It is the manifestation of the power of the deity. As a specifically religious term, it signifies both the 'descent' of the

godhead from heaven and his 'appearance' in the form of animals (boar, fish, and tortoise), monster (man-lion), or men with superhuman and divine attributes."

In Sanskrit the variant of the verb *avatara* is the word *avataraṇa*, which is used to describe an actor making his appearance on the stage from behind the curtain just as the God-man manifests himself from heaven on the world stage. The word *avatar* became the Anglicised word of *avatara*. In Hindu philosophy an *avatara* is the ability of God to descend into the human world to address a specific problem. A clear indication of this is to be found in the *Bhagavad Gita* 4:7 where it states: "Whenever there is a decay of religion, O Bharata, and an ascendency of irreligion, then I manifest Myself." However, even in this instance the word *avatara* is not used as such.

One can therefore conclude that an *avatara* in Hinduism is the manifestation of God in the form of man or animal in this world so as to address a specific problem. These manifestations have taken many forms which are discussed more comprehensively in this article.

4. ORIGIN AND EVOLUTION OF DEITIES IN HINDU MYTHOLOGY

Although Miranda (1990:50) correctly claims that the term *avatara* is not used in the early works to signify the deity's descent on earth, there are a few references of the notion of *avatars* to be found in the minor Upanishads.

When one considers most of the works on Hindu scriptures, the earliest seminal concept of *avatara* is found within the Epics, especially the *Mahabharata* in that section known as the Bhagavad Gita. Even here in the Bhagavad Gita, according to Miranda (1990:50), other words are used to express *avatars*, such as 'birth', 'coming into being', 'creation', 'appearance', 'dwelling' and 'consorting with'.

The intention in investigating the origin and evolution of the Hindu deities and the eventual manifestations of these deities as *avatars*, is so that a fine thread can be weaved through the different periods of Hinduism indicating that, from the Vedic period through to the modern period, there is a link to *avatars*. In order to consider the evolution of the deities leading up to the manifestation of *avatars*, an attempt will be made to consider this investigation on three levels as indicated by Bhatt (2008:97): the decline and fall of the Vedic gods; the rise of certain Hindu deities in the epics; and the prominence of other deities in the *Puranas*.

5. THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE VEDIC GODS

Flood (2005:44) maintains that the Vedic universe is populated with supernatural beings of various kinds. There is a divine being associated with every tree and river and some deities were afforded greater importance than others. According to Mitchell (2001:v) with regard to the Vedic deities, there are no convincing arguments to conclude that these deities were worshipped in the form of images because they were only visualised as having human or animal forms. He claims that "there remains the possibility that some of the lower strata of the population worshipped images in human or animal form and that this practice gradually spread upwards to the other sections of society. At a much later period, Vedic deities were retrospectively given human form and reproduced as images."

Mitchell (2001:vi) suggests that as the Aryans, the bearers of the Vedic religion, proceeded deeper into India, thus making contact with the local inhabitants, the old Vedic religion underwent several changes. Some deities changed their function while others gained or lost prestige.

Bhatt (2008:98) attributes the first reason for the decline in the Vedic gods to the fact that

the important Vedic gods arose in order to meet specific conditions in the life of the Vedic people. When these conditions no longer existed, these gods faded into the background and new gods arose to meet new situations. Therefore one can conclude that no Vedic god could claim permanent supremacy. Wilkins (2008:13-14) cites the example where Dyaus and Prithivi are regarded as the parents of other gods, who made all creatures, conferred immortality on their offspring and were preservers of all creatures, yet they were superseded by Indra in the worship of the Hindus after their settlement in India.

Wilkins (2008:99) suggests that a second reason that could have contributed indirectly to the decline of the Vedic gods is evident in the *Rig Veda Samhita*. This is the rise of kathenotheism or henotheism. Within the Vedic pantheon there are as many as thirty gods among which Indra and Agni occupy the most prominent position. For the Vedic seer, the god from whom he seeks favour for the moment is the highest god. This attitude could have created an atmosphere of scepticism regarding the Vedic gods and could have adumbrated later Hindu sectarianism.

A third contribution to the decline of the Vedic gods is the rise of ritualism during the Brahmana period. Here the Vedic gods became subordinated to the institution of sacrifice. Ritualism could be said to have become a science in itself and grew more complicated. Bhatt (2008:101) remarks that "there was a gradual transfer of the potentiality from the gods to the more mechanical process by which they (the gods) were to be propitiated". In some instances the brahmic priests were more highly regarded than the Vedic gods themselves.

The fourth reason was the prominence of the Upanishads. Flood (2005:83) sees the Upanishads as the continuation of the *Brahmanas* in the interpretation of the rituals. However, he makes the distinction in this sense that there is an increasing importance of knowledge of esoteric correspondence in comparison to the rituals. This is to say that the sections on knowledge take precedence over rituals.

Here the search for the highest philosophical truth became the point of focus. Parrinder (1975:95-96) says that "[i]n the Upanishads there is a deeper search for the heart of reality". He quotes Dasgupta as saying that "this quest is not the quest of the God of the theists" but "the ultimate essence of our self". In this regard Bhatt (2008:101) states that the Upanishadic thinkers "sought to understand the reality that underlies Vedic gods and Vedic ritual, which after all were mere external and temporary manifestations of that reality". Maxwell and Naidoo (1991:51) consider the Upanishads as a "movement towards unity (there is one divine reality); a movement towards subjectivity or inwardness (the divine reality is within you); and a movement towards spirituality (the emphasis on *inner realisation* rather than external rituals)". Patton (2004:48) claims that some scholars call this process "the internalization of the sacrifice" and that it was not a rejection of the sacrifice mentioned earlier.

This idea of the movement towards unity and 'internalization' is evident in the Brahadaranyaka Upanishad III.ix. 1-9 where Sakalya pressured Yajnavalkya to state how many gods there are. Through the process of reduction from 3 306 gods, Yajnavalkya concluded that there is only one. This reduction obviously further suggested the decline of the prominence of the Vedic gods. In this regard Patton (2004:48) asks what has become of the Vedic deities and answers this by saying:

"Many of the deities are still quite active and involved-such as Indra, who is engaged in much questioning and dialogue throughout most of both the earlier and later Upanishadic texts. However, while the activity of sacrifice is still presumed, the Upanishads use the deities themselves as aids to a certain kind of knowledge ... The object of that knowledge is no longer the gods per se but the new force called *Brahman*."

This idea of *Brahman* began to gain momentum in the Upanishads and it seemed that it was only well understood by those of great intellect (knowledge) and therefore could not be regarded

as 'popular religion'. Here the movement from a plethora of gods to a single 'force' known as *Brahman* began to evolve more fully.

In the later Upanishads theistic ideas began to recur. Bhatt (2008:102) suggests that this is an indication of sectarianism but essentially only with reference to Hindu gods like Shiva and Vishnu, rather than with regard to the Vedic gods like Indra and Varuna. This, he says, is the result of the "Hinduisation of the Upanishadic thought" (2008:102). It is in the Svetasvatara Upanishad where this thought of "Hinduisation of the Upanishads" is conceived. There, ideas of monism and monotheism are blended and Rudra is identified with Brahman. This transfer of the attributes of the Upanishadic Brahman to a personal god substantially helped in enhancing the popularity of Rudra and Vishnu, who were minor deities in the Vedas (Bhatt, 2008:102). With the development and philosophy of the Upanishads and in the course of its evolution, it could be presumed that the Vedas became mythological and ritualistically hieratic as in the Samhitas and Brahmanas, or, in the case of the Upanishads, intellectually abstract.

Flood (2005:103) contends that from about 500 before the Common Era there was a growth of sectarian worship of particular deities. Even though Vedic sacrifice still existed, there was a movement towards the devotional worship of a deity. This practice of devotional worship (*bhakti*) became the religious practice of Hinduism. This movement and its growth are reflected in the epics, and in the mythological and ritual treatises known as the *Puranas*.

The following section traces the development of the Epics and the *Puranas*, with special attention to the rise of the gods Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma culminating in their manifestations as *avatars*. These three gods collectively came to be known as the *tri-murti* (three gods or 'trinity'). It will also be possible to trace the genealogy of these gods up to the Vedic period. It is important to mention that of these three gods, Vishnu and Shiva were prominent and gained a large following among Hindu devotees. Brahman seems to have been confined to the shadow of Vishnu and Shiva.

6. CONCEPTION OF HINDU DEITIES IN POST-VEDIC PERIODS

Chennakesavan (1980:43) claims that the "process of clothing the abstract Brahman of the Upanishads with flesh and blood and making it into a personality ... gains momentum in the Epic Age and becomes almost a solid theory of Personalism". It seems obvious that in making this claim Chennakesavan is referring to the *Mahabharata* epic, especially that portion referred to as the *Bhagavad Gita*. This will be discussed more fully later in this article.

Mitchell (2001:vi) asserts that in the further development of Hindu deities, it is in the *Puranas* that a compendium "of all that was known about the gods contained in the Vedas and Epics, linking the gods by elaborate genealogies, providing religious instructions, and inserting many interpolations" are contained. He claims that as a consequence of this, subsequent deities emerged as a result of the formalisation as found in the *Puranas*. In the following quotation from Bhatt (2008:104), which best sums up the position thus far with regard to the decline of the Vedic deities, he lends support to the theory that the change in the specific needs of the community in their quest for immortality necessitated a change in the way the common Vedic gods were venerated:

"Therefore, in an atmosphere which was still imbued, to a greater or lesser degree, with Vedism, Hinduism did not stand out as something alien. At the same time, Hinduism, which arose essentially as a popular religion, could not acquiesce in the ritual of Vedic religion as such. It, no doubt, accepted Vedic gods, but assigned to them a subordinate position. Vedic gods, like Indra and Varuna, gave place to the popular gods like Vishnu and Shiva; Vedic ritual was generally superseded by *bhakti*, *tapas*, *yoga* and *samnyasa*. This is the religious

background of the Epics and the *Puranas*.”

The contribution of the Epics and the *Puranas*, which were regarded as popular religion and more vastly read and understood by the common believer in Hinduism, has been considered in the conceptualisation of Hindu deities. This period sees the composition of the *Ramayana and the Mahabharata*, known as the Epics as well as the bulk of the *Puranas*. This period is also regarded as the transitional period in Hinduism (Rodriguez: 2006:136).

7. THE EPICS

The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are two important epics in Hinduism. Both these epics focus on the deity Vishnu, especially in his manifestation as Rama (of the *Ramayana* epic) and Krishna (of the *Mahabharata* epic). Although emphasis is placed on these two deities, other deities of lesser significance, and which are largely those of the Vedic pantheon, are also alluded to in the epics (Brockington, 2003:116). Since the nature of the epics is conceived of as a specific literary genre, and for the purpose of discussing the evolution of the deities in this context, a deliberate focus is placed on an allegorical interpretation. It is correct to state that embedded in these epic texts there is much philosophy and religion which also serve as guidelines for an ethical lifestyle. This is once again an indication of a change in attitude towards the gods of the Vedas in the Hindus' quest for immortality in this life or the next. Attention is given to the *Ramayana* first as it is understood to be the older of the two known epics.

8. THE RAMAYANA EPIC

Although Chennakesavan (1980:44) says that the *Ramayana* is not philosophically important and that it can be regarded as an 'ethical treatise', there does emerge an allegorical theistic interpretation to which Prime (1997:7) alludes:

“Rama is God incarnate, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu. [...] He suffered physical hardships, and [...] a broken heart. [...] Rama's journey is an allegory for the journey every soul must make. In becoming human Rama shared in our human suffering and enacted the drama of our lives. [...] Thus to hear or to witness Rama's struggles is to relive our own lives, but in a divine context. Each episode in the story is multi-layered, working through individual karma, or destiny, and the divine lila, or play, of Rama.”

Even Rosen (2006:68), although admitting to different regional variants in local dialects of the *Ramayana*, summarises the essence of this epic with an exegetical slant by stating that:

“... the Supreme Lord appeared on earth as a human prince named Ramachandra. [...] a group of demigods approaches Lord Brahma, their leader, with concerns about a demon king, Ravana [...] Because of the demon's austerities, Brahma had given him a boon [...] saying that he “could never be defeated in battle, not by god or by any heavenly creature”. [...] However, Brahma's blessings did not mention humans, leaving open the possibility that a highly qualified human, someone more powerful than any other heavenly being or demigod [...] could perchance conquer him [...] At that moment, Lord Vishnu descended, and He assured them that He Himself would incarnate as a human being named Ramachandra [...] By incarnating as a human, Rama not only enabled himself to defeat the demon-king but also set an ideal example for human behaviour.”

In both of the above interpretations, the god Vishnu is significant as the incarnated Rama. Brahma is also significant as he appears to be the leader of the demigods. At the end of the main *Ramayana* narrative it is Brahma who leads the assembly of the gods in order to reveal his divinity to Rama. Bassuk (1987:31) also mentions the god Shiva together with Brahma, whom

Ravana wanted to propitiate. Rosen (2006:69) refers to Vishnu as the Supreme Lord. These three gods, Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma, are also mentioned in the Vedas, but hold a minor position in the pantheon, yet gained prominence in the epics and *Puranas*, as will be discussed later. From this rendering, glimpses of the concept of *avatara* begin to emerge. Other Vedic gods are also mentioned in this epic. Brockington (2003:118) claims that Rama is often compared to Indra and, with his duel with Ravana, receives the help of Indra's charioteer, Matali. The deity Agni also plays an appreciative role in returning Sita to Rama after Sita passed through the fire in order to prove her purity.

9. THE MAHABHARATA EPIC

The *Mahabharata* was chiefly concerned with the control of the Kuru kingdom between two sets of cousins. This situation eventually led to open warfare. Many modern scholars regard the *Mahabharata* as an exploration of the problems involved in establishing the nature of *dharma*. This is vividly expressed when the Pandavas returned from exile to a hostile Kauravas who refused to settle an agreement made before the Pandavas were sent into exile. Rosen (2006:86) says that the ensuing war did not only include the armies, but also involved gods, even Krishna, the manifestation of the Supreme Being.

In light of the *Mahabharata* and its continued war, Chennakesavan (1980:45) could state that "what was initially a heroic poem becomes a Brahmanical work, and is transformed into a theistic treatise in which Vishnu and Shiva is elevated to the rank of the Supreme" and "in the course of time, a theistic authority". The clearest revelation of the nature of God is to be found in the Bhagavad Gita, a small book which emerges from the voluminous *Mahabharata*. In it an intense conversation ensues when Krishna appears as a charioteer to the warrior Arjuna of the Pandavas family. Rodrigues (2006:148) points out that prior to this event Krishna was a family friend to both the Pandavas and the Kauravas. When his help was sought in the battle, Krishna offered his army to the Kauravas and himself as a non-combatant adviser to the Pandavas. The Bhagavad Gita centres on the deep conversation between Arjuna and Krishna while still in the battlefield. Arjuna had serious doubts about going to war with his cousins. It is here that Krishna answers Arjuna's many questions and resolves his doubts about going to war with his cousins. It is in the Bhagavad Gita 4:7-8 that Krishna reveals his true nature when he says, "Whenever there is a decay of religion, O Bharata, and an ascendancy of irreligion, then I manifest myself [...] Age after age I come into being." Parrinder (1997:37) suggests that this is the clearest statement of the *avatara* doctrine in the Bhagavad Gita. There are other references to this effect in the Bhagavad Gita in 7:24 and 9:11. He does concede that although the word *avatara* does not occur per se, yet the doctrine of *avatara* is evident. However, Parrinder (1975:39) notes that Krishna was possibly an ancient Indian non-Aryan divinity and as a result was popular with the people. In the Bhagavad Gita Krishna now appears as an *avatara* (descent, 'incarnation') of the Vedic god Vishnu.

Throughout this epic, in a similar vein as the *Ramayana*, the deities alluded to find their origin in the Vedic literature. One example is the god Indra, who serves as both leader of the gods and as a performer of heroic deeds. The five Pandavas were fathered by the gods, an example being Indra, father of Arjuna, and Yudhishtira, the eldest son, who was born of the God of Right (*Dharma*) (Parrinder: 1997:21); Yama is prominent among the boastings of the warriors; Agni plays an appreciable role in the narrative of the *Mahabharata* and in the allusions made to Shiva and Vishnu which find their source in the Vedic literature. Once again the fine thread of the evolution of the deities is visible as it weaves through the Vedic literature to the epics. What is observed, though, is an erosion of the importance of the Vedic deities during this

process of evolution.

The *Mahabharata* is followed immediately by another genre of literature known as the *Puranas*. Here the gods and goddesses which were encountered in the Epics become the focus of attention. The result of this is a more significant fading away of the importance of the Vedic deities. Nonetheless, the thread continues to weave through to the *Puranas*.

10. THE PURANAS

The *Puranas*, of which there are many, constituted an oral tradition that was written down. They were influenced by the Epics, Upanishads, Dharma literature and ritual codes. Rodrigues (2006:188) states that the “foremost concern of the *Puranas* is to align the world-view of Vedic Hinduism with rapidly expanding *bhakti* theism”. Together with *bhakti* theism, these *Puranas* were also concerned with the creation of the world, destruction and recreation, the world periods and the deeds of heroes and genealogies of individual gods and kings. This gave prominence to a particular deity as the Supreme Being and the use of an abundance of religious and philosophical concepts (Shattuck, 1999:43). Rosen (2006:139) suggests that the “Puranic texts unabashedly present the Hindu deities in full, with elaborate detail and theology”.

There are 18 great *Puranas* (Mahapuranas), which are considered scripture by most Hindus, and many lesser *Puranas* (Upapuranas), which wielded regional authority.

Flood (2005: 110) says that the Mahapuranas are classified according to three *gunas* (qualities): *sattva* (purity or quality of light), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (inertia or darkness). There are six *Puranas* to be found in each category: the *sattva* category contains the Vaishnava Puranas with Vishnu as the central deity; the *rajas* category contains the Brahma Puranas with Brahma as the central deity; the *tamas* category contains the Shaiva Puranas with Shiva as the central deity. These classifications form three sets of six books each. According to Rosen (2006:141), each of these sets is associated with one of the main gods of India – Brahma, Vishnu or Shiva – as alluded to earlier.

For the purposes of this article, and for the conclusion in substantiation of the origin and evolution of Hindu deities in their manifestations as *avatars*, due consideration is given to the Mahapuranas because in them is found the essence of contemporary Hinduism.

Flood (2005:110) contends that the *Puranas* contain essential material for understanding the religions of Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma, Devi, Agni (god of fire), Skanda (god of war and son of Shiva) and Ganesha (Shiva's elephant-headed son). These *Puranas* establish the rise and popularity especially of Vishnu and Shiva, two of the gods that were encountered in the earlier writings of Hinduism. According to Rao (2009:9), Brahman received worship until the ninth century together with the other two gods. Later however, the votaries of Brahman diminished in number and importance and there were few independent shrines to Brahman. Rosen (2006:142) acknowledges that all *Puranas* extol the virtues of Vishnu and Shiva, but very few refer to Brahma as deity. Of these three gods Vishnu alone has *avatars*. Shiva has offspring such as Ganesh, but no *avatars*, and Brahma ceased to have any importance, as mentioned earlier. Against this background, the two more prominent gods in the *Puranas*, Shiva and Vishnu, are subsequently discussed.

11. SHIVA

With the discovery of the ‘Proto-Siva Seal’, at Mohenjodaro in the Indus Valley, and with the renderings in the *Puranas*, one can see the resemblance and close connections with this seal and the characteristics of Shiva depicted in the *Puranas*, especially with regard to the yogic positions

in both these renderings. The name 'Shiva' is not mentioned in the Vedas and this could be because it was not a god venerated by the Aryans. Wilkins (2008:263) suggests that in order for Shiva to gain prominence and to receive greater reverence, he was declared to be Rudra of the Vedas. The earliest reference to Rudra is found in the Rig Veda, although a very minor position is assigned to him. There are only three full hymns addressed to him. Nonetheless, a clear picture emerges of him where he is mentioned seventy times in total.

Wilkins (2008:265) further suggests that Rudra did not remain a subordinated deity as in the Vedic age, but threw "Agni, Vayu, Surya, Mitra and Varuna completely into the shade" and that together with Vishnu "engrosses the almost exclusive worship of the Brahmanical world". Lipner (1994: 283-4) suggests that on the basis of the *Svetasvatara* Upanishad which exalts Shiva, it could be conjectured that he was a monotheistic cult deity and in time became the "assimilative centre of a vast and many-faceted mythic tradition".

With regard to earlier references to Shiva, Patanjali's 'Great Commentary' on Panini's Sanskrit grammar, a devotee of Shiva is described as clad in animal skin and carrying an iron lance as a symbol of his god, a possible precursor of Shiva's trident. Even Bhandarkar (1983:165) claims that there are Shaiva Ascetics in the Mahabharata. Yet it is only in the *Puranas* that Shiva is really exalted and developed as a major god in Hinduism. He assumes many forms but never as an *avatara*.

12. VISHNU

In the Rig Veda Vishnu is the benevolent, solar deity associated with Indra, often in fighting the demon Vrita. In one hymn Vishnu takes three giant strides across the universe, the three realms of earth, air and heaven. In this way he seems to be declared 'the preserver' in the Vedas. This forms the basis of a myth in the *Puranas* where Vishnu is incarnated as a dwarf, covers the earth in three strides and destroys the power of the demon Bali.

In the Vedas and the Upanishads Vishnu is not significantly prominent, but only in the Epics does he become pre-eminent. Rosen (2006:152) comments that although Vedic references to Vishnu are few, yet they are overflowing with meaning.

In the Rig Veda Vishnu is a "good friend of the good folk" (1, 154, 4) and a "compassionate protector" (3, 55, 10). Satapatha-brahmana (3, 7, 1, 17) explores an intimate association of Vishnu with Sun and in the Rig Veda (2, 1, 3) with Agni. According to Rao (2009:14), it has also been suggested, that during the Vedic times there were iconic representations of Vishnu. Mishra (2000:21), in examining the origin of incarnation in Indian mythology, says that the theory of incarnation is connected with Vishnu. Bassuk (1987:23) suggests that the unnamed descents of Vishnu developed into various accounts of *avatars* as found in the epics, the *Puranas* and the Brahmanas. He further claims that in the *Mahabharata* there are three lists of Vishnu's incarnations but that they are inconsistent. First, four *avatars* are mentioned, then, two more are added and finally a list of ten *avatars* is mentioned. Parrinder (1997:16) proposes that, "with his avatars, perhaps incorporating Indus Valley or forest divinities, Vishnu emerges as the deity who is to this day the greatest or sole god to millions of Hindus".

The main lore about the *avatars* of Vishnu is to be found in the Bhagavata Purana, which is sometimes referred to as the 'Fifth Veda'. Other *Puranas* also list a number of *avatars*, though of course the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are critical sources for the two heroic *avatars* of Vishnu, namely Rama and Krishna. Yesurathnum (1987:46) claims that from the Bhagavata Purana it is understood that the number of *avatars* may be endless. In the Bhagavata Purana (1.3.26-27) it is stated that, "[j]ust as from an inexhaustible lake thousands of streams flow on all sides, so also from the Remover-of-Sorrows (Hari), sum of all reality, come forth countless

incarnations". In the following section the number of *avatars* of Vishnu is examined more closely.

13. AVATARAS OF VISHNU

Although the Bhagavata Purana claims that there are innumerable *avatars*, there seems to be an inconsistency regarding the number of *avatars* within it. A closer examination of the number *avatars* in the Bhagavata Purana reveals that at one place twenty-two *avatars* are enumerated, while at another twenty-three and yet at another only sixteen are listed. The Varaha Purana records ten *avatars* and the Sattvata Samhita and Ahirbudhnya Samhita thirty-nine *avatars*. The Matsya Purana explains that Vishnu had to appear seven times among human beings, in order to expiate the sins of the wicked rulers. The Vayu Purana speaks of ten *avatars* of which three are regarded as celestial and other terrestrial. Although the Garuda Purana alludes to innumerable *avatars*, it lists only nineteen. According to Bassuk (1987:23) and verified by Rao (2009: 20), although there is a variance in the number of *avatars* there are only ten major or principle *avatars* that have been widely accepted. These ten *avatars* are:

- Matsya (The Fish)
- Kurma (The Tortoise)
- Varaha (The Boar)
- Narasimha (The Man-Lion)
- Vamana (The Dwarf)
- Parasurama (Rama with the Axe)
- Rama (Son of Dasaratha)
- Krishna (Yadava Prince)
- Buddha (Prince of Sakyas)
- Kalki (The Apocalyptic Avatar)

Each of these *avatars* played a significant role in addressing one or other problem on earth. It is not possible in this article to discuss what these problems were and how they were resolved, but it would suffice to state that there was certainly a greater involvement of god as an *avatar* in the affairs of humankind.

14. CONCLUSION

In the opening statement of this article, it is stated that religion was the tool humankind could use to form a bond between God and humankind. The systematic literature review methodology was used to trace the evolution of Hindu deities through the rich collection of Hindu writings and scriptures. It was not possible to include every Hindu writing or scripture because of the vast volume that is available, but a gleaning of these texts has allowed for sufficient information to postulate the firm belief and faith in the Hindu idea of *avatars*. The decline of many Hindu deities has been studied through this research while the rise to prominence of some deities to pre-eminence was explained; culminating in the concept of *avatars*, which now forms the belief system of popular Hinduism. In tracing the transformation (metamorphosis), progression and/or regression of Hindu deities from the Vedas through to the *Puranas*, the conclusion is that this evolution of Hindu deities not only conformed to the changes in the specific needs of the community in their quest for immortality, but also allowed for the deep philosophical thought espoused by the many scriptures and god(s) in Hinduism to be more accessible and personal to the common people of simple beliefs.

This research also proved that gods that were prominent in the Vedas either vanished

altogether or, in the case of the less important gods, gained recognition even to the extent of becoming the main focus of worship for the Hindu. It was furthermore proven that the secondary scriptures contributed to either the demise of Vedic gods, or to the elevation of other gods such as Siva and Vishnu. Finally, for the Hindu believer, religion can indeed offer humankind the possibility of striving for immortality either in this life or the next. For the Christian believer immortal life is only through the incarnated Christ, who is the only begotten Son of God.

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Practical theological research into education and evolution in South African High Schools – teaching learners to think!

ABSTRACT

The author examines the problems and opportunities provided by the recent introduction of the teaching of the neo-Darwinian theory of evolution into the South African secondary education curriculum from a practical theological perspective. The Darwinian theory is described and the pros and cons of the evidence that supports it discussed. The various Christian attitudes towards neo-Darwinian evolution are used as a springboard to provide suggestions to aid educators teach what the curriculum demands whilst remaining within the parameters of their interpretation of the Genesis account and at the same time enabling learners to think intelligently about the faith and science in modern society.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2006, the South African Ministry of Education introduced the teaching of Darwinian evolution it into the Life Sciences Curriculum for grades 10 to 12 (Holtman 2010:102,103).

The author has examined Life Science textbooks (grade 10, 11 and 12 textbooks authored by Buckley et al. (2005), Clitheroe et al. (2006), and Grogan & Suter 2010 respectively) and a grade 10 worksheet (Sterrenberg & Fouche nd.). The grade 12 textbook is the prime focus of attention for this article since its 97 pages cover evolution in excellent, very comprehensive and, usually, up-to-date detail (4.1.1 to 6.6.2.).

I examine the challenges and opportunities this presents, since practical theology is concerned with every activity covered by the kingdom of God and every idea and action that will extend the visible influence of the kingdom of God into the public sphere (Osmer 2008:x). The Kingdom, not the church, is the starting point for a practical theological study (Meeks 1979:67). Practical theological is therefore, of necessity, multi-disciplinary and interacts with other disciplines such as the social sciences, the arts, science, mathematics and/or philosophy. The object of this inter-action is not that the practitioner achieves expert status in the relevant disciplines, but the practical wisdom to act faithfully and effectively in the real world by accessing what experts know.

In this study I interact with, or touch upon, trinitarian natural theology, Old Testament hermeneutics, education, the philosophy of science, ethics, geology, paleontology, and molecular biology with the humble hope that I, as someone with a life-science background but not a specialist in most of these areas, am interpreting their discoveries and theories acceptably and making reasonable suggestions for a theological-scientific intervention in the classroom. The purpose of this intervention is to teach Christian learners to think from a Christian perspective about they are being taught that will help them engage productively with the modern world.

2. THE CHALLENGES PRESENTED BY THE TEACHING OF DARWINIAN EVOLUTION

With the increasing loss of confidence in the previously predominant Christian meta-narrative in South Africa, the teaching of Darwinian evolution presents the church and society with new

dangers and opportunities. The dangers involve a potential loss of faith in the Judeo-Christian revelation, the resultant moral consequences for society of this, and offending the consciences of educators and learners who reject the theory of evolution for religious reasons.

Research carried by the Church of Scotland in 1995 seems to confirm Dawkins' (1986:6) statement that "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist". It discovered that one of the main reasons why people no longer believe in Christianity was because evolutionary theory offered a satisfactory alternative explanation of how we came to be here to that of Christianity (Bruce 2006:646). This move to a "practical" or "professing" atheism is dangerous since as Dostoevsky (1880, 1990:589) pointed out, "If God does not exist then everything is permissible".

This means that the teaching of Darwinian evolution may have long-term moral consequences since as a scientific theory it offers no basis for standards of moral conduct. It therefore can be used to support any ethical preference (Behe 2000:28). For instance Spencer misapplied the "survival of the fittest" concept to develop "Social Darwinism" (Lever 2002:21,22, Lennox 2009:103). Statements such as "At some future period... the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races throughout the world" (Darwin (1874:178) may have influenced him. Thus Darwinism indirectly underpinned the theory of eugenics, with its "repugnant racial theories" (Pandor 2002:63) as well as fostering creeds of international competitiveness and national survivalism (Bobbitt 2003:201).

The third danger is that many educators are being compelled to teach Darwinism who are ignorant of it and/or do not believe in it. Not only do the majority of Life Science teachers lack the most fundamental knowledge concerning evolutionary theory but they also regard it as a personal attack on their religious beliefs (Holtman 2010:105,106). They are in effect being forced to do something that offends their conscience. One teacher sums up her rejection of evolution as follows:

Large-scale evolution is fictitious for me; there really is no proof, there are gaps in the fossil record. There is no solid evidence for me that things come from other things. The bible is the justification for origins as it goes step by step. I understand their (evolutionists') argument, but I do not believe it (Holtman 2010:106).

These dangers cannot be avoided by the banning of the teaching of evolution since there are compelling reasons for teaching the theory. The theory is so pervasive in modern science and medicine that it cannot be ignored (Wilmot & Wilson 2002:3). It is a unifying framework within which many diverse biological facts are integrated and explained. Scientific literacy cannot be achieved without understanding it (Holtman 2010:102) for as Dobzhansky (1973:449), a committed Christian, declared, "Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution". Lastly, "Its introduction into the school curriculum provides children with access to ways of thinking that can make them more enlightened citizens" (Dempster & Hugo 2006:106).

3. WHAT IS THE THEORY OF DARWINIAN EVOLUTION?

Evolution may be used with various meanings. It may be primarily understood as any change, development or variation. "When people speak of the evolution of life in this sense, all they mean is that life arose and has developed (by whatever means). Used in this way, the term "evolution" is neutral, innocuous and uncontroversial" (Lennox 2009:101ff).

This article is concerned with the Darwinian theory of evolution. Darwin published his theory, in the first edition of his book, "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection" (Davidson 2008:6) in 1858. The book offered a wealth of evidence in support of the idea of his theory of biological evolution. It is clearly written using plain English. It is arguably the most

brilliant and persuasive scientific textbook ever written. Thus it is not surprising that it has been very influential. Not only that, but as Nürnberg (2010:14) comments that, as a scientific theory, “The evolutionary paradigm offers the best set of explanations we have at present.” Although written 150 years ago it is still the basis for the neo-Darwinian synthesis that has added further evidence to support the original ideas created by Darwin.

The Oxford Dictionary of English (Soanes and Stevenson 2009) defines the evolutionary theory first set out by Darwin as, “The process by which different kinds of living organism are believed to have developed from earlier forms during the history of the earth.” This development is portrayed as a gradual process of descent with modification, over a long period of time so that organisms slightly better adapted to the environment and hence more likely to produce descendants survive. This is called the concept of the survival of the fittest by natural selection (Darwin 1872, 2008:51,52,55) and is based on the Malthusian¹ doctrine of the natural limitation of population growth.

In the last 100 years the Darwinian theory has been the subject of major revisions producing what is called as the “Neo Darwinian synthesis”. This synthesis integrates genetic studies with Darwin’s theory of evolution (Johnson 2009:35). It was concluded by the discovery of the structure of the double helix DNA by Watson and Crick (1953:737,738). This enabled the small incremental variations with positive survival value that natural selection operated on to be explained (McGrath 2009:175). The neo-Darwinian synthesis has added polyploidy², gene drift³ and genetic flow⁴ to the process (Grogan and Suter 2010:4.2.5, 4.2.7).

Darwin’s original theory had four main logical facets, which are still accepted. The first is that individuals, including siblings, in a population vary (Darwin, 1872, 2008:40-51). These variations are passed to offspring by the laws of inheritance (Darwin, 1872, 2008:22). This is now known to operate by characteristics carried in genes⁵ (McGrath (2009:171ff). More offspring are produced than the environment can support, so in accordance with Malthusian ideas there is competition for limited resources (Darwin, 1872, 2008:64-97). Those individuals whose characteristics make them best suited to the environment live and reproduce and have more offspring (Darwin, 1872, 2008:64-97).

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- 1 Malthus, 1776 – 1834, a minister of religion and an economist, developed the theory that population size increased exponentially until it reached a size that could no longer be supported from the environment when it would stabilize or decrease under conditions of famine and disease (Harman 2009:139).
 - 2 Polyploidy represents a special class of mutation and can occur via several routes: genomic doubling, gametic nonreduction, and polyspermy. Genomic doubling occurs in both animals and plants and involves a failure of cell division following mitotic doubling. Similarly, gametic nonreduction involves a failure of cell division during meiosis. Unreduced eggs are a common route to polyploidy in both animals and plants, as is unreduced pollen in plants. Unreduced sperm, however, appear to play a minor role in polyploidization in animals. The evolutionary significance of polyploidy remains a mystery (Otto, S. and Whitton, J. 402,403,401-437).
 - 3 Genetic drift is the variation (or change) in the relative frequency of different genotypes (genetic constitution of an individual organism) in a small population owing to the chance disappearance of particular genes as individuals die or do not reproduce (Modified definition in The Oxford Dictionary of English, Soanes and Stevenson 2009)
 - 4 Gene flow is the movement of genes between populations so that genetic material may be transferred from one completely unrelated organism to another (see under “DNA and molecular biology” below).
 - 5 The ODE defines a gene as, “a unit of heredity which is transferred from a parent to offspring which may determine some characteristic in that offspring”. It is technically defined as, “a distinct sequence of nucleotides forming part of a chromosome.” Nucleotides form the basic structural unit of DNA. Each chromosome consists of a DNA double helix bearing a linear sequence of genes.

4. CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO DARWINIAN EVOLUTION

Holtman's (2010:106) research indicates that the opposition of many educators towards evolutionary theory seems to be largely determined by their religious beliefs. For Christians the prime factor would be their interpretation of the first three chapters of Genesis. Most of those who interpret these Genesis chapters literally would accept either, "Young Earth Creationism" - earth 5700 to 10,000 years old (Numbers 2006:11) or "Old Earth Creationism" - earth 4.5 billion years old (McGrath 2007:387). Most creationists believe that species or classes of life are separately and individually created. Many "Young Earth" creationists reject evolution altogether (Lever 2002:30). On the other hand "Old Earth" creationists accept that many extinct creatures existed in previous Geological periods and that there is a divinely directed "evolutionary" path from simple to complex.

Many of those who regard Genesis as metaphorical/ allegorical would probably adhere to "Evolutionary Theism". This accepts descent by modification either initiated or guided by the Creator. The bible is perceived not as a textbook of science but of "salvation-history", the writers speaking with the language and pictures of the time (Young 1979:53). This is a historic interpretation and has precedent in the works of Augustine (McGrath 2009:95ff.). Young (1979:43) quotes Augustine,

We do not read in the gospel that the Lord said 'I send you the Paraclete who will teach you about the course of the sun and the moon; for he wanted to make us Christians not mathematicians.'

Some educators may adhere to the intelligent design theory. This view accepts biological evolution, but it believes that there is evidence that a designer ordained its teleological goal. Intelligent design arguments are formulated in secular terms and intentionally avoid identifying the intelligent agent (or agents) they posit. Although the identity of the designer it is not stated it is often implicitly hypothesized that this designer intervened in a way that was only possible for a Creator God (McGrath 2007:387).

5. JUSTIFICATION FOR A THEOLOGICAL INTERVENTION

There are three compelling arguments for a theological intervention in the introduction of the teaching of Darwinian evolution in High Schools. The first is that the opposition to it has religious roots. Thus a theological intervention is necessary. Research into the antagonistic attitudes towards evolution of first year university students at the University of Cape Town stressed, "the importance of engaging with students prior conceptions" if these adverse perceptions were to be modified (Chinsamy and Plaganyi 2007:248).

The second is that is epistemologically justifiable. This is important since some would deny this as they see science and religion as non-overlapping "magisteria" (see Gould 2002:4, Berger 2006:90, Coyne 2009:10). Methodologically the life sciences and Christian theology do indeed represent two distinct areas of intellectual inquiry, yet philosophically they offer each other possibilities for cross-fertilization since the fields of knowledge they study epistemologically overlap (McGrath 2009:xiv). This is reinforced by the recent new emphasis on Trinitarian theology that has brought a new appreciation of the "centrality and importance of the traditional doctrine of the Trinity" (Venter 2011:3) that impacts upon natural theology.

McGrath (2009:27,28,72) has used this to redefine natural theology. A trinitarian perspective holds that the God who created the world, as revealed through Jesus the Son of God, continues to direct it through divine providence and guides those who wish to interpret it through the books of both nature and the Scriptures by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Despite the

advocacy of post-modernism with its many truths a Christian faith that accepts the triune God as creator, sees only one all-encompassing absolute truth (Lennox 2009:13, 14). Thus the purpose of natural theology is to emphasize, “the resonance between the intellectual framework offered by the Christian faith and observation” (McGrath 2009:27,28).

The third reason is that science is now invading areas of knowledge that depend upon interpretation and not just an objective empirical observation of reality. Ruse’s (1982:322) definition of science as dealing only with, “the natural, the repeatable, that which is governed by law” is becoming less and less accurate. For a start, if Ruse’s definition is accepted, then the theory of Darwinian evolution is not a scientific theory (Aurbach 2009:698) and neither are the theories of cosmology, consciousness, and morality, since although they may be modelled mathematically, they cannot be confirmed by natural repeatable observations. So the magisterium of science is increasingly overlapping with the magisterium of metaphysics (Lineweaver 2009:157).

In fact both McGrath (2009:xiv), a PhD in molecular biophysics and a Professor of Theology, and Lennox (2009:13,14) an Professor of Mathematics and a Fellow in the Philosophy of Science, contend that history reveals that scientific theory, on which all scientific methodology is predicated, has never been just an objective issue. Whether it is admitted or not prior philosophical and theological assumptions have, of necessity, always influenced scientific interpretations. Although a scientist’s metaphysical commitments would not often decide his interpretation of how things work, they may well influence the interpretation of how things came to exist in the first place (Lennox 2009: 37). Kuhn’s (1972) influential theory of scientific revolutions adds support to this. Kuhn (1972:113ff) comments:

Surveying the rich experimental literature... makes one suspect that... what a man sees depends both upon what he looks at and also upon what his previous visual-conceptual experience has taught him to see.

In conclusion theologians, and Christians in general, do not just have to accept scientific interpretative theories, as opposed to those theories that can be verified through repeatable tests and observations. They have a mandate to criticize interpretive theories, from a perspective informed by science and theology, and to examine whether or not they can be integrated into the Christian vision of reality. This is the case with the interpretative theory of Darwinian evolution.

6. DEBATABLE ISSUES WITH THE EVIDENCE FOR DARWINIAN EVOLUTION

This is illustrated by the fact that the neo-Darwinian theory of evolution is developing all the time (Switek 2011:loc 319) and has some unresolved, debatable issues that need to be talked in the classroom if learners are to be taught to think. These are now discussed referring to issues raised Grogan and Suter’s (2010) textbook.

6.1 The fossil record

Geisler (1999:224) comments, “It is seldom fully appreciated that the only real evidence for or against evolution is in the fossil record.” Thus an important debate centres around whether or not the fossil record provides conclusive evidence for the theory. Many believe that it does such as Gould (2002), Dawkins (2009), Switek (2011), and Behe (2003). Yet it is admitted by many who are committed to Darwinian evolution that the fossil record is still sketchy (Wilmot & Wilson 2002:10, Marshall 2009:1; Switek 2011:loc 261).

The major area of debate is that of transitional fossils. Darwinian evolutionary theory, which advocates the main instrument of descent by modification as natural selection, suggests that there should therefore be many, many more transitional forms than those in stasis (that is

remaining the same over long periods of time) (Aurbach 2009:697; Jarvis 2010:DVD 2). Transition should be the normal state because of the theory of constant incremental modification. In fact some believe that the fossil evidence demonstrates the exact opposite. Gould's (1977:226) comment is still relevant,

The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record (which) persists as the trade secret of palaeontology... The evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and the node of their branches; the rest is inference, however reasonable, not the evidence of fossils.

While a greater number of transitional forms have been discovered in recent years, such as in the horse, whale, bird, mammalian and amphibian lineages (Prothero 2009:489, Switek 2011:loc 350), the evidence is, in my opinion, less than overwhelming. This may be indicated by fact that a frenzied search still seems to be going on for transitional fossils. Recently forty-seven million year old *Darwinus maxillae* was heralded as a missing link⁶ in human evolution (Franzen et al 2009:e5723). Whereas it was later shown by cladistic⁶ analysis to be only very distantly related to the primates (Switek 2011:loc 183).

This debate is not helped by learners being given outdated or problematic examples that as evidence of evolution. This is unfortunately the case with Grogan & Suter's (2010:4.1.7,4.1.10) presentation of *Archaeopteryx*⁷ as an example of a transitional fossil and horse evolution as an example of direct descent by modification. Recent research has cast doubt upon the transitional nature of *Archaeopteryx* (see ODE:2009; Dzik et al. 2010:394-402; Xing Xu, et al 2011:465). In fact Switek (2011:loc 2285) admits, "that it is extremely unlikely that a direct line of descent from birdlike dinosaur to first dinosaur like bird will be found." As Ruben (2009 np) comments,

In some museum displays the birds-descended-from-dinosaurs evolutionary theory has been portrayed as a largely accepted fact, with an asterisk pointing out in small type that "some scientists disagree". But now there are more asterisks all the time.

Concerning horse evolution which is wrongly depicted as a simple straight-line process of descent by modification from many toes to one toe. Gould's (1997:57) comment is still applicable, "... the fossil record shows that the evolution of the horse looks more like an elaborate bush with many trends and even reversals!" (See also Switek 2011:loc 4099).

Therefore surely these are two bad examples to present to learners if they are to learn to trust and think about the scientific evidence for evolution? It only confirms the accusations of creationist literature that most school textbooks show the same, outdated, incorrect iconic examples of evolution as evidence (see Wells 2000:249ff, Strobel 2004:39,40).

6.2 Gene sequencing

The tree of life was central to Darwin's thinking. This tree is a record of how every species that ever lived is related to each other (Lawton 2009:34). The relationships on this tree appeared to be confirmed by initial research resulting from the gene sequencing of RNA and DNA. Collins (2007:128,129), head of the Human Genome Project, and also a professing evangelical Christian, believes that the close correspondence of relationships between animals inferred solely from their DNA sequences and those inferred from the comparative anatomy of living forms and fossils is extremely strong evidence for Darwin's theory.

6 Cladistics is a bio life science's technique whereby certain morphological traits in fossils or living creatures are selected and then compared with those traits in other creatures to determine whether they are absent, present or modified. Once all the information is compiled it is placed into a computer program that sifts through the data to discover which organisms are most closely related to each other on the basis of these traits postulated as shared characteristics inherited from a common ancestor (Switek 2011: loc 183).

7 *Archaeopteryx* is the name given to an apparently feathered creature with skeletal similarities to both birds and dinosaurs discovered in the Jurassic Solenhofen Limestone in Germany in 1861.

This interpretation has two major flaws, one philosophical and logical the other coming from recent scientific research. The logical difficulty as Lennox (2009:118), a mathematician, notes that arises from seeing DNA sequencing as proof of evolution is that it logically goes far beyond all evidence because the fact that species can be classified hierarchically into genera, families and phyla is not proof of Darwinian evolution. It is possible to classify any set of objects into a hierarchy, whether their variation is evolutionary or not.

The second problem is that DNA sequences sometimes do not conform to RNA sequences. The only theory that can explain this is that heritable descent is not always vertical but is sometimes horizontal in nature. Swapping of genetic material often seems to have crossed huge taxonomic distances. It happened in the microbial world of the Precambrian and still seems to be happening today, probably caused by viral agents. In fact it seems to be the rule in eukaryotes rather than the exception (McGrath 2007:40,41, Lawton 2009:36,37). This raises the possibility that Darwin's' Tree of Life might turn out to be an extremely complex bush criss-crossed with long interconnecting lines of horizontal rather than vertical heredity.

6.3 Irreducible complexity

Darwin himself raised the problem of how to account for the evolution of organs that could only operate if they were perfectly formed, such as the eye. Thus he wrote,

If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed, which could not possibly have been formed by numerous successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down (Darwin 1872:2008:136).

He immediately adds, "But I can find no such case", and then (1872:2008:133-138) attempts to demonstrate how the eye may have developed. Dawkin's (1986:77ff, 86ff) has since made a more recent attempt to explain the evolution of the eye.

This is an example what has become know as the problem of "irreducible complexity". An irreducibly complex system is a single system composed of several well-matched, interacting parts where the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning. Thus it cannot be produced by slight, successive steps therefore would not be selected for by the process of natural selection. If such an irreducibly complex system can be proven to exist then it would be a powerful challenge to the theory of evolution by natural selection (Behe 1996:39).

Recent research has accentuated this problem by revealing the incredible complexity of many organs and physiological processes at the molecular level. Behe (1996:22), who accepts modification by descent revisited the eye, arguing that, "Each of the anatomical steps and structures that Darwin thought were so simple actually involves staggeringly complicated biochemical processes that cannot be papered over by rhetoric." In fact the possibility of even getting near to producing a workable eye, as a random process by natural selection, is mathematically an enormous figure (Behe 1996:36-39). Schroeder (2009:733,750) calculates that this figure is something like 10 to the power 260. This means that it is impossible for such a random process to produce complex life within the time it is calculated that the universe has existed.

The debate continues, however. Schroeder (2009:731) believes that this "intelligent design" argument has two weaknesses. It has been discovered that one formerly supposed irreducibly complex system could function with a component missing. This is the Dolphin blood clotting system which functions perfectly well without the Hagemann factor, which is necessary for humans (see Robinson et al 1969). Secondly Conway (2008:46,49,50, 64) suggests there may be a natural evolutionary teleological design mechanism that is yet to be discovered, although he does concede that even this could have metaphysical implications.

6.4 Ontogeny and phylogeny

In the last edition of the "Origin of Species", Darwin (1872:2008:323-339) uses Haeckel's concept that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny"⁸ as evidence for evolution. Grogan and Suter (2010:4.1.18) reproduce Haeckel's (1874, np.) diagrams of embryos that seem to show that they are all strikingly similar in their early stages. This is interpreted as illustrating that all life came from the same ancient ancestor, and is therefore evidence of evolution (Strobel 2004, 35ff,57).

It is an area of great controversy, some embryologists discrediting Haeckel's diagrams and the conclusions he drew from them soon after they were produced (Wells 2003:179; Hopwood 2006). At certain stages in early development, vertebrate embryos do look alike, at least in the gross anatomical features, but Haeckel seems to have altered the drawings to prove his theory. Despite this the debate is not over because Richardson's (1997:91-106, 2003:495) work seems to indicate that the Haeckel's theory cannot be completely dismissed and may indeed provide some support for Darwinian evolution.

The debate is surely not helped by learner's begin exposed to Haeckel's original sketches, in view of his (Hopwood 2006:295) admission of inaccuracies in the drawings. As Gould (2000:3) comments, "Textbook writers should be ashamed of the way that Haeckel's drawings have been mindlessly recycled for over a century as evidence for evolution." If we are to teach learners how to think and convince doubting educators that Darwinian evolution is a credible theory then they must be presented with the most recent and accurate scientific truth.

6.5 Macroevolution

Many unreservedly accept the evidence for what may be called "microevolution", but have reservations about macro-evolutionary mechanisms (Aurbach 2009:692). Microevolution is "variation within prescribed limits of complexity" (Lennox 2009:101). Two examples of microevolution are Darwin's Galapagos finches (Darwin 1872:2008:304,305; Davidson 2008:5) and the way that bacteria develop resistance to antibiotics (Lennox 2009:101).

Macro-evolution refers to large-scale innovation, the coming into existence of qualitatively new genetic material producing new organs, structures, and body plans (Lennox 2009:101). It is problematic for some. Hoyle (1987:7), mathematician and astronomer wrote,

As common sense would suggest, the Darwinian theory is correct in the small, but not in the large. Rabbits come from slightly different rabbits, not from either soup or potatoes.

Where they come from in the first place is a problem to be solved, like much else on a cosmic scale.

Wesson (1991:206), a palaeontologist, adds that he does not know of any good fossil record of macro-evolution nor can Müller's (2003. 51) observation be lightly dismissed,

The canonical neo-Darwinian theory ... is intended to explain neither the origin of parts, nor morphological organization, nor innovation... Selection has no innovative capacity: it eliminates or maintains what exists.

Natural selection can account for micro-evolution but there are questions about whether or not it can be extrapolated to a macroevolutionary level since it can only select from the genetic material that exists already. It cannot produce the new genetic material required for major structural change (Jarvis 2010:DVD2). This remains the problem with Gould & Eldridge's (1977) theory of "punctuated equilibria" whereby the evolutionary process at the macroevolutionary level proceeds by major, random, chance processes such as mass extinctions, producing major organic changes.

Two ideas have been developed which may explain the increase of complexity discovered

⁸ "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny" is the theory that the development of the embryo of every species (ontogeny) fully repeats the evolutionary development of that species (phylogeny),

in the fossil record in conjunction with natural selection, these are known as the theories of “emergence” (see Gould 2002:656-666) and the concept of “evolutionary development” (see Gould 2002:1095-1101). These can only be dealt with briefly in this article and the reader is referred to the references for further detail.

“Emergence” is the view that creation entails the origination of levels of multileveled complexity whose properties emerge under certain conditions that did not exist at the origin of the Universe (McGrath 2009:206). The theory utilizes the concept that the properties of the whole are often unpredictably greater than the properties of the sum of the constituent parts (Nürnberg 2010:71). Kauffman (2000:127-128) argues, concerning emergence, that biological evolution is inherently a self-organizing process in which complexity evolves in accordance with a “fourth law of thermodynamics”. This is that life has an innate tendency to explore opportunities for building greater complexity. This theory must at the moment be regarded with caution since it is simply an interpretation, however reasonable, of reality. Neither does it explain the causality of the new genetic material needed for macroevolution, only what may happen with the rearrangement of existing material as in microevolution.

Evolutionary development (or Evo-Devo for short) is the scientific concept that increase in complexity may result from the rearrangement of existing genetic material (Gould 2002:1099). It is a complex and rapidly expanding field of research. It is based upon experimental research that discovered that genes, such as regulatory Hox genes, can modify the body plans of organisms during embryonic development, by switching on or off cascades of gene sequences within DNA (Switek 2011:loc 1509). This alters developmental processes to create new and novel structures from the old gene networks (such as bone structures of the jaw developing to become the ossicles of the middle ear) or turn on junk⁹ DNA gene sequences preserved in a host of very different organisms to create similar structures, such as the eye in molluscs, insects, and vertebrates (Tomarev et al. 1997:2421-2426; Pichaud & Desplan 2002:430-434). However general hypotheses remain hard to test because organisms differ so much in shape and form (Palmer 2004:828-833). Moreover, whilst this may explain the mechanism behind microevolution, it still has to face the problem of how descent by modification can produce the complexity we see today during the limited time span available since life has existed on the earth.

All of this confirms the results of recent research that, “Biology is vastly more complicated than we thought” (Lawton 2009:39), with profound implications for evolutionary theory.

7. SUGGESTIONS FOR A SCIENTIFICALLY-INFORMED THEOLOGICAL INTERVENTION

There is no doubt that Darwinian evolution must be taught in High Schools in South Africa in order to equip the learners to face the modern world. Yet this article argues that both educators and learners be allowed to and encouraged to think about every aspect of the Darwinian theory. Despite the large amount of evidence that can be interpreted as supporting the theory, its unassailable status cannot be assumed. There is no place for Grogan & Suter (2010:4.6.1) to dismiss alternative theories with the comment,

The intelligent design view arose from a creationists’ standpoint and was developed to discredit evolution. Someone caustically called it ‘creationism dressed up in a tuxedo. This undermines the curriculum’s stated emphasis on the need to consider alternative faith-based and indigenous knowledge systems (Holtman 2010:104).

An authoritarian approach demanding that educators teach a scientific theory they do not believe in will only exacerbate an already unhealthy situation. The introduction of its teaching

⁹ Collins (2007: 111) defines junk DNA, as long sequences of DNA that does not seem to be involved in any way in producing proteins.

needs to be done gradually in dialogue with educators since the teaching of Darwinian evolution is, for many educators, a radical innovation. Roger's (2003:168) theory of the diffusion of innovations suggests that, "an individual's decision about an innovation is not an instantaneous act. Rather it is a process that occurs over time."

The process therefore requires taking into account their religious views towards evolutionary theory. They need to be exposed to the various acceptable theological interpretations of the first three chapters of Genesis as well as the most accurate and recent scientific evidence, with an honest explanation of the problems. It thus needs to be facilitated by ministers, pastors, and theologians with an understanding of evolution informed by biology, zoology and geology.

It must be demonstrated that belief in Darwinian evolution need not lead to atheism or agnosticism. Indeed Darwin (1872:2008:357) shared that he saw no "good reasons why this volume should shock the religious feelings of anyone." Indeed the teaching of evolutionary theory not only has problems but also is an opportunity. It is an opportunity to help Christian educators think through the challenges presented by Darwinism as a spur to developing a more mature Christian faith that boldly and intellectually interacts with the secular society that South Africa is, for better or worse, becoming. It is an opportunity to discuss the interface between religion and science and to think about the "fine-tuning" of the Universe that has recently been discovered by cosmologists, physicists, mathematicians and biologists and its implications for faith (for further information see McGrath's, "A Fine-Tuned Universe, the Quest for God in Science and Theology", details in the bibliography).

Scientists and educationalists need to realize that from a practical, philosophical and theological perspective science and religion cannot be separated. If we refuse to take seriously contending interpretations of nature we teach that science is just a matter of authority. Grogan & Suter (2010:4.1.19) state that the theory of Darwinian evolution challenges learners to think for themselves. If that is a good argument for learning about evolution, it is also a good argument for looking at alternative views because if learners are to think for themselves, it will mean that they must be free to disagree with accepted wisdom where it is knowledgeably disputed. Not so?

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KEY WORDS

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Geloofsonderskeiding – moontlikhede van 'n interdissiplinêre reis

ABSTRACT

Discernment – possibilities of an interdisciplinary journey

The article challenges the missional church movement to enter into dialogue with the business community on leadership issues. It illustrates how the work of Otto Scharmer helps faith communities to understand discernment. It assumes a new theological epistemology and accepts the movement away from foundationalism. It illustrates how discernment should take place in a new reality with new interdisciplinary dialogue partners.

1. INLEIDING

Die kerk en die sakewêreld kan saamgesels. Die artikel wil aantoon dat die teologiese dissipline van geloofsonderskeiding aanvulling en taal in gesprek met ongewone medereisigers vind. Otto Scharmer² se werk maak hierdie deur wyd oop. Die doel van hierdie artikel is om verbande tussen sy werk en missionale teologie aan te toon. Naas dit wil die artikel die nuwe taal van geloofsonderskeiding in Afrikaans laat praat omdat dit die taal is waarin baie mense dink en geloofsonderskeidend luister.

David Bosch (1991) en Leslie Newbigin (1989) het 'n teologiese beweging help ontluik. Van die bekendste gestaltes van die beweging is die Partnership for Missional Church (PMC) – en talle organisasies wat weer daaruit voortgespruit het³ In Suid-Afrika is die beweging sterk op gang in die Suid-Afrikaanse Vennootskap vir Gestuurde Gemeentes (SAVGG)⁴. Missionale teologie is teologie in 'n nuwe paradigma (Niemandt 2007:146e.v.). Dit is teologie wat sigself oriënteer aan die *missio Dei*.⁵ Die fokus is primêr op die drie-enige God se agenda vir sy skepping (Bosch 1991:389). 'n Geloofsonderskeidende wandel in die Woord is die sleutel aktiwiteit as dit by tipiese rituele van die beweging kom. Dit is 'n opregte soeke om na God te luister asook om los te kom uit die Christendom se paradigma (Walls 2002:34-47) met sy klem op die institusionele,

1 Die artikel spruit voort uit Leon Venter se MTh tesis (Venter 2010). Jurgens Hendriks was die promotor.

2 Vir beriggewing oor Scharmer en sy werk, kyk na sy blog en die webwerf waar sy publikasies bespreek word. Veral die *executives summaries* van sy werk gee kernagtig die essensie van konstruksie deur (afgelaai 22 Sept 2011): <http://www.blog.ottoscharmer.com/> <http://www.ottoscharmer.com/publications/summaries.php>

3 Vergelyk die talle verwysings as die sleutelwoorde by 'n soekenjin soos Google ingesleutel word. Enkele voorbeelde: http://www.churchinnovations.org/01_services/pmc.html , <http://css-elca.org/ministries/partnership-for-missional-church/> , <http://presbyphl.org/embodiment/missional-church/partnership-missional-church/> (11 April 2012).

4 Kyk na <http://communitas.co.za/vennootskap-savgg/?lang> (afgelaai 22 Sept 2011). Die volgende referate by die Suid-Afrikaanse Missiologie Vereniging se jaar 2010 vergadering beskryf die beweging in Suid-Afrika (Hendriks 2009; Marais 2010; Mouton 2010; Nel 2010; Niemandt 2010).

5 *Missio Dei* is 'n Latynse begrip wat beteken, "sending van God". Dit is 'n beskrywing van 'n nuwe teologiese paradigma om oor God en die kerk te dink.

geografiese en rasonale.

’n Paradigmaskuif (Kuhn 2007) verander die totale speelveld van denke. ’n Nuwe epistemologie kom in die spel. Dit is aan die gebeur in die teologie. In die proses kom teologie en wetenskap met minder wedersydse veroordeling in gesprek met mekaar (McGrath 1999). Van Gelder (1996:114) se beskrywing van die huidige stand van sake skets ons konteks goed:

Describing the postmodern condition and attempting to theorize about it are producing a new vocabulary that can sound strange at first. Concepts such as indeterminacy, deconstruction, diversity, decentering, and the aestheticization of all of life challenge the vocabulary of modernity, which emphasized prediction, certainty, absolutes, centers, and the privileging of a particular style as a preferred culture.

Wentzel van Huyssteen (1997) se baanbrekerswerk help in die verband baie. Hy stel dit so (1997:2):

Postmodernism is, as I see it, first of all a very pointed rejection of all forms of epistemological foundationalism, as well as of its ubiquitous, accompanying metanarratives that so readily claim to legitimize all our knowledge, judgements, decisions and actions. Foundationalism, as is generally defined today, is the thesis that all our beliefs can be justified by appealing to some item of knowledge that is self-evident or indubitable. Foundationalism in this epistemological sense therefore always implies the holding of a position of inflexibility and infallibility, because in the process of justifying our knowledge claims, we are able to invoke ultimate foundations on which we construct the evidential support systems of our various convictional beliefs.

2. NUWE GESPREKSGENOTE

Die gesprek tussen geloof en wetenskap en meer spesifiek vir die doel van hierdie artikel tussen die sakewêreld en teologie oor leierskap, is nie ’n nutjie nie. Mens kan begin verwys na die bekende konsep van *servant leadership* en die naam Robert K Greenleaf en sy bekende Center for Servant Leadership. Die volgende inleidende paragraaf van Wikipedia⁶ oor die beweging is insiggewend:

Servant leadership is a philosophy and practice of [leadership](#), coined and defined by [Robert K. Greenleaf](#) (Born 1904 in Terre Haute, Indiana; died in 1990) and supported by many leadership and management writers such as James Autry, [Ken Blanchard](#), [Stephen Covey](#), [Peter Block](#), [Peter Senge](#), [Max DePree](#), Scott Greenberg, Larry Spears, [Margaret Wheatley](#), James C. Hunter, Kent Keith, Ken Jennings, Don Frick and others. Servant-leaders achieve results for their organizations by giving priority attention to the needs of their colleagues and those they serve. Servant-leaders are often seen as humble stewards of their organization’s resources: human, financial and physical.

As mens die epistemologiese skuiwe vanuit die gesigshoek van die sakewêreld oopgedek wil hê en sien hoe dit nuwe wêreld oopmaak wat, soos Greenleaf se werk, onbeskaamd Christelike waardes voorstaan, is Margareth J Wheatley se veelbekroonde werk (1999) iets om te lees: *Leadership and the new science: discovering order in a chaotic world*.

Dit is teen hierdie agtergrond en in lyn met bogenoemde epistemologiese skuiwe in die wetenskapswêreld dat ons Otto Scharmer se werk wil bekendstel. Hy is ’n senior lektor by die Massachusetts Instituut van Tegnologie. As konsultant vir leiers oor ’n baie wye spektrum, is sy benadering tot leierskap saamgevat in sy epogmakende werk: *Theory U: Leading from the*

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Servant_leadership afgelaai op 22 Sept 2011. Kyk ook na die beweging se eie webwerf by: <http://www.greenleaf.org/whatiss/> (22 Sept 2011). Vir Suid-Afrikaanse gespreksgenote wat in dieselfde kategorieë dink, lees Illbury & Sunter (2001).

Future as it Emerges (2009). “Teorie U” is ’n omvattende fenomenologiese beskrywing van wat Scharmer noem “leer vanuit die opdagende toekoms.” Hierdie artikel gee ’n kort beskrywing van Otto Scharmer se beskrywing van die ontluikende vaardigheid *presencing* en trek verbande met die ontluikende leervaardigheid vir geestelike leiers, naamlik *geloofsonderskeiding*.⁷

3. KONTEKS: ’N NUUT AANBREKENDE WÊRELD

Die geglobaliseerde nuwe wêreld van die informasie-era bied aan alle leiers (in die kerk en in die besigheid) groot uitdagings. Ons luister na twee teoloë en dan na sakemense oor die nuwe realiteit. Ons leef immers in ’n nuut aanbrekende wêreld.

Walter Brueggemann (1986:24) stel dit soos volg:

I believe we are in a season of transition, when we are watching the collapse of the world as we have known it... the value systems and the shapes of knowledge through which we have controlled life are now in great jeopardy. We can paint the picture in very large scope, but the issues do not present themselves to pastors as global issues. They appear as local, even personal issues, but they are nonetheless pieces of a very large picture. When the fear and anger are immediate and acute, we do not stop to notice how much of our own crisis is a part of the larger one, but it is.

Mary Jo Leddy beskryf die tyd van verandering soos volg in haar boek *Reweaving the Religious Life* (1990:24):

One could be tempted to flee from the dilemmas of this moment to some more secure past, to the surface of the present, or to some arbitrary resolution of the future. These are real temptations and they can be met only with the faith that is our hour, our *kairos* (Greek for “season” or “time”). This is the only time and place we are called to become followers of Jesus Christ; there is no better time or place for us to live out the mysteries of creation, incarnation, and redemption. These are our times and, in the end, God’s time.

Robert E Quinn⁸ skryf in *Deep change: discovering the leader within* (1996) in sy eerste hoofstuk wat hy noem “Walking naked into the land of uncertainty” die volgende (:1):

When most of us talk about change, we typically mean incremental change. Incremental change is usually the result of a rational analysis and planning process. There is a desired goal with a specific set of steps for reaching it... Deep change differs from incremental change in that it requires new ways of thinking and behaving. It is change that is major in scope, discontinuous with the past and generally irreversible. ... Deep change means surrendering control.

Leiers moet erken dat ’n nuwe wêreld aangebreek het en begrip ontwikkel dat ons sedert 1990 in besondere uitdagende tye leef. Otto Scharmer (2009:1) beskryf ons konteks so:

We live in an era of intense conflict and massive institutional failures, a time of painful endings and of hopeful beginnings. It is a time that feels as if something profound is shifting and dying while something else, as the playwright and Czech president, Václav Havel put it: “I think there are good reasons for suggesting that the modern age has ended. Today, many things indicate that we are going through a transitional period, when it seems that something is on the way out and something else is painfully born. It is as if something were

⁷ Ons noem geloofsonderskeiding ’n “nuut ontluikende vaardigheid” omdat die NG Kerk nie ’n publieke tradisie van geloofsonderskeiding het nie. Dit is wel ’n integrale deel van die Christelike geloofsewewat nou herontdek word. Die meeste predikante en ander geestelike leiers het die woord “geloofsonderskeiding” nog nie gehoor nie, en het nie ’n duidelike begrip wat dit behels nie.

⁸ Quinn is ’n professor in Organizational behavior and human resource management by die Besigheidskool van die Universiteit van Michigan, Ann Arbor in die VSA.

crumbling, decaying, and exhausting itself – while something else, still indistinct, were rising from the rubble.”

Leiers moet dit erken, daarmee vrede maak en leer om dit te hanteer. Vaardighede en kennis wat in die verlede gewerk het gaan nie meer in die nuwe wêreld werk nie. In hierdie oorgangsituasie is leierskap van uiterste belang, en terselfdertyd stel dit baie hoë persoonlike eise. Daarom skryf Scharmer dat die nuwe geslag leiers mense sal wees wat ontevrede is met hullelele huidige vaardighede, kennis en gewoontes, mense wat hullelele eie voorveronderstellings en kennis uitdaag en oop is om diep te luister.

4. 'N NUWE WYSE VAN BESLUITNEMING: *PRESENCING*

Een van die vaardighede van leiers wat moet ontwikkel en aanpas is die vaardigheid van besluitneming. In die modernisme⁹ het 'n bepaalde manier van besluitneming gegeld wat geskoei was op rasonale, wetenskaplike kennis en objektiewe prosesse. Die vaardigheid van besluitneming word beslissend beïnvloed deur die oorgang na 'n nuut aanbreekende wêreld. Volgens Scharmer beleef politieke en sakeleiers ernstige en dramatiese verandering wat telkens met die metafoor van 'n storm beskryf word. Geestelike leiers gebruik ook die metafoor. Stephan Joubert skryf in sy boek *Die perfekte storm* soos volg (2007:8):

Die storm is reeds agter ons, rondom ons, bo-op ons – 'n perfekte kategorie 5 storm. Hierdie perfekte storm tref ook die kerk, juis die kerk. Dit is 'n storm wat so gevaarlik is dat niemand wat hulleleleself Christene noem dit ongeskonde sal oorleef nie. Kerke gaan wegwaai, mense gaan verdrink terwyl kerkleiers met hullelele gewone sake voortgaan, irrelevantie gaan selfs nog langer skadu's oor sterwende gemeentes gooi... Kerklike noodplanne wat in vorige krisisse gebruik is, sal die keer nie werk nie. Daar is regtig geen wegkomkans nie.

Leonard Sweet beskryf dit soos volg in Joubert se boek (2007:17, 19):

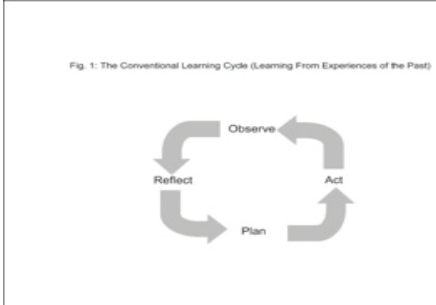
Christene trotseer vandag een van die grootste kultuurstorms ooit: die eerste “perfekte storm” in die Christendom se geskiedenis. ... Hierdie tyd is een van die mees opwindende, uitsonderlike en *kairos*-belaaide tye wat die kerk nog ooit beleef het. Kairos-tyd bring leiers in beweging, leiers wat bereid is om hullelele gemaksones en konvensionele gebruike te verlaat en agter te laat.

Leiers kan volgens Scharmer nie meer bepaalde vaardighede, metodes en die epistemologiese denkskema van die vorige era gebruik as basis om te beplan vir die toekoms nie. Hullelele moet leiding gee in 'n *nuwe onbekende, diskontinue aanbreekende wêreld* met geen sekerhede. Scharmer (2000:2) bevestig wat Joubert en Sweet hierbo gesê het ten opsigte van die sakewêreld: “... most leadership teams are now facing a new set of business challenges that can rarely be successfully addressed with the traditional methods and concepts of organizational learning.”

Scharmer (2000:2) is oortuig dat die nuwe wêreld wat aanbreek, so nuut is dat leiers nie meer die status quo moet probeer verbeter nie, maar innoveerders en radikale revolusionêre moet wees. Hy verduidelik dat leiers in die verlede 'n model gebruik het vir besluitneming wat deur Kolb beskryf is as 'n leersiklus wat veronderstel dat alle leer/kennis gebaseer is op refleksie op ervarings uit die verlede waaruit wysheid vir die toekoms gehaal word (2000:5). Om vir die toekoms te beplan, moet jy reflekteer oor die verlede en daaruit bepaal wat jou volgende planne en strategieë moet wees. Kolb se leersiklus bestaan uit waarneming, reflekteer, beplan en aksie (Kyk Fig. 1). Volgens Scharmer (2000:2) is die probleem met Kolb se leermodel dat dit nie help in tye van diskontinue verandering soos ons nou beleef nie. Daar is nie in die verlede 'n parallel

9 Modernisme verwys hier veral na die Westerse onkritiese geloof in die rasonale, wetenskaplike kennis en die geloof in die vermoë om alle probleme op te los met beplanning, strategie en struktuur.

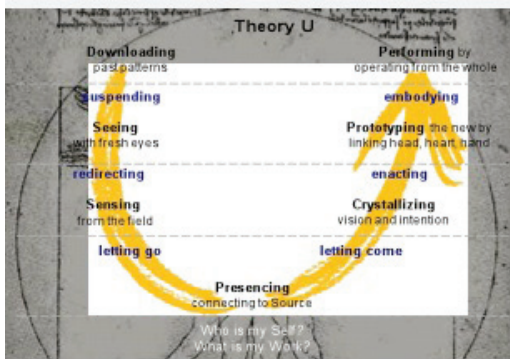
met wat nou gebeur nie. Selfs die denkkonstruksies (epistemologie) van die verlede kan nie die huidige realiteit hanteer nie (vergelyk Wheatley 1999).



Scharmer (2000:2) noem die ontluikende nuwe kognitiewe vaardigheid wat leiers moet aanleer om in 'n nuwe leersiklus te gebruik *presencing*:

Organizations and their leaders can develop this capability by engaging in a different kind of learning cycle, one that allows them to learn from the future as it emerges, rather than from reflecting on past experiences. I suggest calling this evolving new learning capacity *presencing*. The term refers to the capacity for sensing, embodying, and enacting emerging futures.

Hy gebruik nie die woord *geloofsonderskeiding* nie, maar sy beskrywing van *presencing* is die beste fenomenologiese beskrywing beskikbaar van die nuut ontluikende vaardigheid van geloofsonderskeiding.



Die tweede bron van leer wat waaruit leiers kan leer is die toekoms, of liever, die “aankom van die toekoms in die hede” (Scharmer 2000:4). Die siklus van leer uit hierdie tweede bron, die toekoms, is gebaseer op *suspending* (nie opheffing nie) van vaste kennis, sekerhede en patrone uit die verlede, die gewilligheid om met vars oë te kyk (*seeing*), aanvoeling of intuïsie (*sensing*), opdaag in lewensveranderende, kreatiewe proses (*connecting to source: presencing*), die nuwe toe te laat (*letting come*), nuwe visie en drome te ontwikkel (*vision and intention*), beliggaming of aksie (*enacting*), die skep van nuwe prototipes en die bou van nuwe sosiale werklikhede.

Wat Scharmer sê is dat leiers moet voortdurend deur die “U” gaan van links bo tot regs bo. Staak aflaaï (*downloading*) van jou oudverworwe insigte en kennis, suspendeer jou kennis en insigte. Begin nuut en met vars ore en oë luister en kyk. Begin kyk wat rondom jou gebeur

(*sensing from the field*). Laat gaan (*letting go*) jou vaste idees en voorveronderstellings en die idees en planne waarop jy “verlief” is en waaraan jy dogmaties vasklou. Dit sal iets nuuts na vore laat kom (*presencing*). Laat dit toe, kyk na die nuwe wat kristalliseer, beliggaam dit persoonlik met denke, hart en wil, word die prototipe en kyk wat gebeur.

Presencing is a birth-giving activity. The experience of presencing is twofold: co-creating and giving birth to a new reality and, at the same time, being transformed and born into a new world by the very same process. (Scharmer, 2000, p. 26)

Die uitdaging vir leiers is om hierdie ontluikende nuwe leiersvaardigheid, naamlik *presencing* te ontwikkel (Scharmer, 2000:4): “the capacity to sense, enact, and embody the future as it emerges... The term presencing means to use your highest Self as a vehicle for sensing, embodying, and enacting emerging futures.”

Vir transformerende leierskap in die snelveranderende, aanbreekende nuwe wêreld is die begrip van *presencing* as metode vir persoonlike en organisasie-leer, verandering en besluitneming ’n paradigmaskuif. Dit het ook besondere praktiese waarde vir geestelike leiers in hullele bediening en rol as geloofsonderskeidende, transformerende leiers.

Presencing is ’n fenomenologiese beskrywing van hoe intuïtiewe leer as ’n luisterproses plaasvind by leiers in die snel veranderde omgewing waarin ons onself bevind in die 21ste eeu. Scharmer het alle leiers, maar veral sakeleiers en leiers in openbare organisasies in die oog. Hierdie artikel wil aantoon dat sy fenomenologiese beskrywing van die ontluikende leierskapvaardigheid *presencing* ook van waarde en toepassing is op geestelike leiers en hullelele taak van geloofsonderskeiding in die 21ste eeu.

Is dit relevant en is daar waarde in om die insigte van ’n bestuurskonsultant van MIT van toepassing te probeer maak op een van die grootste uitdagings vir geestelike leiers in die 21ste eeu? ’n Missionale teologie vertrek van die *missio Dei* en daag gelowiges uit om met ander oë na die wêreld te kyk. Waar is God aan die werk? Die voorveronderstelling wat hier aanvaar word, is dat God ook aan die werk is in ander mense soos skrywers, letterkundiges, filmmakers, ekonome, medici, wetenskaplikes en bestuurskonsultante soos Otto Scharmer. Die belang van Otto Scharmer se fenomenologiese beskrywing van *presencing* as ontluikende leierskapsvaardigheid vir geestelike leiers sal uit wat volg, blyk.

5. PRESENCING AS LUISTER, AS GELOOFSONDERSKEIDING

’n Goeie voorbeeld van hoe missionale teologie in Afrika teologies geloofsonderskeiding verstaan, is die *Network for African Congregational Theology* se boek *Studying congregations in Africa*. Daarin word die missionale prakties-teologiese benadering tot teologie, wat ten diepste vra na die wil van God, na die *missio Dei*, na geloofsonderskeiding, uitgespel (Hendriks 2004:19-34).

Geloofsonderskeiding is ’n ou Christelike geloofsdissipline, maar moet nou nuut aangeleer word deur geestelike leiers en vergaderings wat in die modernisme gewoon geraak het om besluite te neem in die lig van rasonale argumente, navorsing, feite en verslae en dit as komende van God aan te bied. Die dramatiese inploffing van veral hoofstroomkerke en die aan die kaak stel van ooglopende foute wat voortdurend in kerklike besluitnemingsprosesse gemaak word (vergeelyk die koloniale periode, die Bybelse verdediging van apartheid, die nuwe imperialisme, Walls 2002:84-115), daag geestelike leiers en vergaderings uit om nuut te besin en luisterend die teenwoordigheid van die drie-enige God op te soek. Die werklikheid is dat gelowiges en gelowige akademië so deur modernisme beïnvloed is, dat ons nie oor die vaardigheid van geloofsonderskeiding beskik nie. Dat die NG Kerk die afgelope tien jaar deeglik van hierdie konteksveranderinge en die behoefte aan *deep change* kennis geneem het, is te sien in sy

doelbewuste poging om ’n “Seisoen van Luister” en ’n luisterkultuur te vestig.10

Scharmer help ons baie om die vaardigheid om “diep” te luister, in taal te beskryf. Hy sê (2009:xviii): *For it is only through this listening that we will unlock our collective capacity to create the world anew.* Scharmer onderskei vier vlakke van luister wat saamhang met die vier vlakke van kennis wat hy beskryf:

Field: Structure of Attention	Micro: ATTENDING (individual)	Meso: CONVERSING (group)	Macro: STRUCTURING (institutions)	Mundo: (global systems)
 I-in-me	Listening 1: Downloading habits of thought	Downloading: Talking nice, politeness, rule-reinforcing	Centralized: Machine bureaucracy	Hierarchy: Central plan, regulation
 I-in-it	Listening 2: Factual, object-focused	Debate: Talking tough, rule-revealing	Decentralized: Divisionalized	Market: Competition
 I-in-you	Listening 3: Empathic listening	Dialogue: Inquiry, rule-reflecting	Networked: Relational	Negotiation: (Mutual adjustment)
 I-in-how	Listening 4: Generative listening	Collective Creativity: Presencing, flow rule-generating	Ecosystem: Context, field based	Collective Awareness Based Action: Acting from the w(W)hole

Om die kennis voortvloeiend uit *presencing* te beskryf, onderskei Scharmer tussen vier vlakke van kennis. Elke vlak van kennis gaan dieper en is moeiliker om te bereik. Dit is ’n moeisame proses, en ’n persoon of groep moet deur al vier hierdie vlakke van kennis gaan om by die diepste kennis, wat die resultaat van *presencing* is, te kom. Dit is hierdie kennis wat hy beskryf as opdagend vanuit die toekoms.

Die eerste vlak van kennis is:

5.1 Aflaai van ou verstaanmodelle (Vlak 1 kennis)

Vlak een kennis gebeur wanneer leiers oppervlakkig aandag gee aan ’n situasie/saak en sonder veel kritiese gesprek oplossings voorstel vanuit hullelele kennis van die verlede. Hullelele pas eenvoudig hullelele ou verstaanmodelle en kennis toe op die situasie. Hullelele projekteer hullelele eie oordeel/verstaan op die situasie (Scharmer, 2000:12). Die oplossings wat kom vanuit die ou verstaansraamwerke en gewoonte-denke werk eger dikwels nie meer in die nuwe werklikheid nie (Scharmer 2000:11).

5.2 Refleksie en Herinterpretasie (Vlak 2 kennis)

Vlak twee kennis gebeur wanneer leiers besef die situasie/saak is ingewikkelder as wat besef is. Die probleem word nie opgelos met die aanvanklike voorstelle nie. Verdere gesprekke ontwikkel. Daar is meer nadenke en refleksie oor die saak. In die refleksie word nuwe begrip ontwikkel vir die probleem. Nuwe insig ontwikkel omdat daar opgehou word om die ou verstaansraamwerke te gebruik. Daar word doelbewus gesoek na nuwe of verdere kennis, herinterpretasie en die aanpas van verstaansraamwerke (Scharmer, 2000:12).

10 Google “Seisoen van Luister” op die Afrikaanse Google soekenjin en kyk hoe verrassend baie verwysings word getref. Die NG Kerk het ’n spesiale webwerf hiervoor: <http://www.seisoenvanluister.co.za/> (22-09-2011).

5.3 Verbeelding¹¹ (Vlak 3 kennis)

Die eerste twee vlakke van kennis oor die situasie/saak/probleem is steeds baie oppervlakkig. Vlak drie kennis is gebaseer op 'n nog dieper vlak van aandag gee aan die problemsituasie of fenomeen. Hier word die skuif gemaak van "sien" (*seeing*) na "aanvoel" (*sensing*). Scharmer (2000:12) beskryf dit as 'n skuif vanaf die fenomeen (situasie/probleem), na die *bron* wat die fenomeen voortgebring het. Vlak 3 begrip fokus dus nie op die fenomeen nie "but on the coming-into-being of these objects." Op hierdie vlak begin mense droom en begin 'n nuwe visie gestalte kry dat iets nuuts gebore moet word. Mense gebruik hullele verbeelding en probeer nie die situasie oplos nie, maar begin droom oor alternatiewe moontlikhede (Scharmer, 2000:12).

5.4 Primêre weet (*Presencing*) (Vlak 4 kennis)

Scharmer (2000:13) beskryf vlak vier kennis soos volg:

At level 4 *cognition*, the quality of attention is at its highest and most subtle level, which allows it to become one with the intention of the emerging whole. This level of cognition is what Rosch refers to as primary knowing of wisdom awareness. The discipline here is to become aware that mind and world are not separate but arise together as aspects of the same informational field.

Vlak vier kennis is 'n diep religieuse ervaring. Scharmer (2000:13-14) beskryf dit as 'n mistieke en religieuse ervaring aangesien die antwoorde op jou soeke eenvoudig van êrens by jou opdaag. Hy noem dit "inskakel by" (*tuning into it* – "When acting on this level of knowing, action appears without conscious control – even without the sense of 'me' doing it.").

Knowing on such a level differs from our standard way of cognition, by knowing through "interconnected wholes" (rather than isolated contingent parts) and by means of timeless, direct, presentation (rather than through stored re-presentations). Such knowing is "open", rather than determinate; and a sense of unconditional value, rather than conditional usefulness, is an inherent part of the act of knowing itself. Action from awareness is claimed to be spontaneous, rather than the result of decision making; it is compassionate, since it is based on wholes larger than the self; and it can be shockingly effective (Scharmer, 2000:4).

Samevattend beskryf Scharmer beskryf die vaardigheid van *presencing* as volg¹²:

The key leadership challenge of our time is to shift the inner place from which we operate. As individuals, as teams, as institutions, and as societies we all face the same issue: that doing 'more of the same' won't fix flawed and failed systems. We have to leave behind our old tools and behaviors, and immerse ourselves in the places of most potential. We have to listen with our minds and hearts wide open, and then connect with our deep sources of knowing and self. It's only when we pass through this eye of the needle—letting go of the old and letting come the emerging self – that we can begin to step into our real power: the power to collectively sense and create the world anew. Theory U describes a social grammar and practical methods for such a transformative leadership journey.

Scharmer sê die uitdaging vir leiers is om 'n nuwe vaardigheid, *presencing* te ontwikkel, naamlik "the capacity to sense, enact, and embody the future as it emerges. The term *presencing* means to use your highest Self as a vehicle for sensing, embodying, and enacting emerging futures" (Scharmer, 2000:4).

Die punt is: vir 'n nuwe toekoms om op te daag moet geestelike leiers dit self beleef. Die leier self moet deur 'n dramatiese en baie persoonlike paradigmaskuif gaan. Wat behels die paradigmaskuif?

11 Walter Brueggemann se *Finally comes the poet* (1989) is een van die baie teologiese werke wat aantoon hoe belangrik verbeelding in die geloofsonderskeidingsproses is. Greene en Robinson se beskrywing van hierdie proses in die kerk in Brittanje, werp ook hierop lig (2008: 153-235).

12 <http://www.blog.ottoscharmer.com/?m=201001> "through the eye of the needle" (20 January 2010).

Going through the transformative U-shaped process allows individuals and groups to operate from a different place, where their Self becomes an open gate through which new social substance flows into being. The emergence of the new social substance is a truly collective phenomenon. But it can only occur when individuals, at the eye of the needle, succeed in turning themselves into instruments of the emerging new (Scharmer, 2000:26).

Verstaan vanuit die Bybelse verstaan van *Coram Deo*, *Missio Dei* en *Triniteit*, is wat Scharmer beskryf, niks anders as 'n diep religieuse ervaring nie. Dit is op hierdie vlak van kennis dat die ontmoeting met God plaasvind en die transformasie van individue en mense gebeur. God is Gees en mens is gees. God is die grond van ons bestaan, uit Hom leef ons beweeg ons en is ons. Die Gees van Christus is in ons. Hy is nader aan ons as ons eie asem. Ons is sy mense en Hy is onderweg met ons. Daar is kommunikasie tussen God en ons. Die uitdaging vir geestelike leiers en kerklike vergaderinge is om ons oormatige klem op sogenaamde rasionaliteit en wetenskaplike kennis en ons behoefte aan beheer en kontrole (wat ons almal baie moeilik erken) te laat vaar. Dit is vir ons swaar om beheer prys te gee. Ons kom gevolglik min op vlak vier kennis, want ons is bang vir intuïsie en emosie.

Op vlak vier kennis is die aandag gekonsentreerd, want daar is 'n diep bewussyn van die teenwoordigheid van die Gees van Christus in hierdie momente. God praat diep binne ons. Daar is 'n gevoel van sekerheid en dringendheid, 'n bewussyn van weet en wysheid. Dit is 'n diep emosionele ervaring wat rasioneel verstaan en beskryf kan word en omgesit kan word in intensionele wil en aksie. Dit is lewenstransformerend.

6. PRESENCING: DIE PROSES

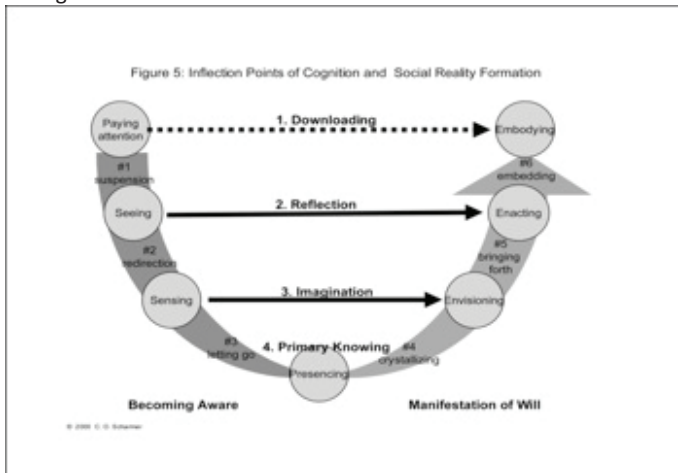
Die metafoor van 'n "U" word gebruik om die teorie te verduidelik hoe mens tot die verstaansvlak van *presencing* kom. Scharmer se 2009 publikasie se voorblad verduidelik sy teorie in sy eenvoudigste vorm. As mens met 'n oop gemoed, 'n oop hart en 'n ontvanklike wil diep luister, kom daar antwoorde. Bogenoemde fenomenologiese beskrywing van Scharmer oor die vlakke van kennis waardeur ons moet beweeg om aan die onderpunt van die "U" te kom waar ons bewus word van God se liefdevolle en transformerende teenwoordigheid, onderstreep net dat dit geen maklike leierskapsvaardigheid is om aan te leer nie, nie vir mense wat onnadenkend en onkrities vanuit Westerse modernisme met geloof in rasionele kennis, beplanning, bestuur en tegniek leef nie.

Wat is die praktiese stappe wat leiers kan volg? Scharmer sê: Help mense om hullele aandag en fokus te skuif. Hoe kom jy by die onderpunt van die "U" waar in teologiese taal, ons bewus raak van God se teenwoordigheid wat ons transformeer? Let wel, mens moet dit nie 'n metode ('n meganiese aktiwiteit) noem nie, dis meer sosiale bewussynsvaardighede wat ontwikkel moet word.

Scharmer (2000:16) gebruik die volgende terme vir in die proses: aandag gee (*paying attention*), sien (*seeing*), aanvoel (*sensing*), opdaag (*presencing*), visionering (*envisioning*), aksie (*enacting*) en beliggaming (*embodying*). Dit is een ding om die terme te verstaan maar glad en geheel nie so eenvoudig soos dit klink nie. Dit vertel ons wat gebeur, maar nie hoe dit gebeur nie. Die probleem is dat mense se aandag op die probleem en hulle refleksiewe antwoorde daarop toegespits is. Mense sien hulleself as los van die probleem en nie deel daarvan nie. Om by die diepste vlak 4 kennis te kom waar jy besef jy is deel van die geheel en dat die opdagende kennis transformierend is, moet jy deur die vier vlakke van kennis beweeg om by die onderpunt van die "U" te kom. Hierdie insig is van wesenlike belang. Hiermee spreek Scharmer die probleem aan dat leiers oplossings voorstel vir sosiale probleme en nie bewus is dat hulle eie voorveronderstellings en benadering dikwels die oorsaak van die probleem is nie.

Hoe beweeg jy na dieper vlakke van selfbewussyn en kennis? Hoe kom jy by die onderpunt van die U-kurwe waar die primêre kennis is, waar *presencing* gebeur? Hoe kom jy by die onderpunt van die “U” waar in teologiese taal, ons bewus raak van God se teenwoordigheid wat die bewussyn-transformasie teweegbring? Die enigste manier om dit te doen is volgens Scharmer wanneer mense bereid is om hulle aandag te laat buig.

In Figuur 5 hieronder stel Scharmer (2000:16) die aandag buigpunte skematies voor as suspensie (*suspension*), rigtingverandering (*redirect*), laat vaar (*letting go*), kristalliseer (*crystallizing*), voortbring (*bringing forth*), en vasmaak (*embedding*). In die proses van nuwe sosiale werklikheids-formasie moet die leiers bewus wees van die werking van aandag buigpunte en daarop fokus. Die aandag buigpunte (*inflection points*) verskuif die fokus van aandag en help mense om kognitiewe skuiwe te maak waardeur nuwe sosiale werklikhede verbeel kan word, en ook kan gebeur.



Alan Roxburgh (bekende in die Partnership for Missional Church-beweging en een van die leiers oor missionale transformasie) sê dat die werklike uitdaging van geestelike leiers die vermoë is om self hierdie kognitiewe, innerlike skuiwe te maak en om hulle mense te help om dit ook te doen (Roxburgh 2005:95). Die geestelike leier moet sigself en ander mense help om hierdie subtiele skuiwe in aandag te maak. Die aandagskuiwe is “hekke” wat ’n individu toelaat om die grens oor te steek van een kognitiewe spasie na die volgende. Die skuiwe is nodig ten einde aan die onderpunt van die “U” te kom waar die toekoms kan opdaag en nuwe kennis oor nuwe sosiale moontlikhede openbaar (Scharmer, 2000, p. 16).

Hierdie beskrywing van Scharmer is van uiterste belang vir geestelike leiers wat sosiale transformasie wil bewerk en hulleself heeltyd vasloop teen onversetlikheid. Scharmer beskryf nie ’n voorskriftelike metode nie. Dis iets soos ’n spel of soos Eugene Petersen (2005) na die kommunikasie in die Triniteit verwys het, ’n dans. Wie dit begryp en bewustelik begin leer hoe om sy eie en ander se aandaghekke oop te maak, sal ervaar dat insig in en geleenthede vir sosiale transformasie sigself voordoen.

Scharmer beskryf die volgende ses aandag-buigpunte:

6.1 Aandag-buigpunt 1: suspensie van oordeel

Die eerste aandag-buigpunt wat help om na dieper vlakke van kennis te beweeg is die suspensie van oordeel.

Suspension of judgment is the sine qua non of observing and seeing. Instead of projecting

mental models and judgments onto the world, one opens up to what is actually happening in the world. By taking off one's self-created filters, one can see differently (Scharmer, 2000:17).

Om jou eie opinie, kennis en vooroordele te suspendeer en nie onmiddellik daaruit te opereer wanneer jy gekonfronteer word met 'n situasie nie, is baie moeilik en 'n vaardigheid wat slegs leiers met 'n goed ontwikkelde emosionele en geestelike volwassenheid kan doen. Dit is 'n vaardigheid wat bewustelik aangeleer kan word. Dit is die eerste hek wat opgemaak moet word om na dieper vlakke van waarneming te gaan en nader aan die opdaag van nuwe transformerende kennis aan die onderpunt van die "U" te kom.

6.2 Aandag-buigpunt 2: laat nuwe moontlikhede toe

Die tweede aandag-buigpunt is om toe te laat dat nuwe moontlikhede opdaag. Dis om oop te wees dat iets nuuts kan gebeur.

By redirection we mean that suspension will lead to very early emerging events, contents, patterns, gestures, whatever. Then you can actually redirect your attention to them. That's where the new is (Scharmer, 2000:17).

Suspensie van vooroordele en kennis skep 'n spasie, vir die opdaag van die nuwe waarin aandag in 'n nuwe rigting geskuif kan word.

6.3 Aandag-buigpunt 3: laat vaar (*letting go*)

Die derde aandag-buigpunt is om te laat vaar. Om oor te gee. Dit is weereens religieuse taal wat Scharmer gebruik om dit te verwoord (2000:18):

Other descriptions of this particular threshold are "surrendering", "surrendering into commitment", or "emptiness."

Die interessante in die aanhaling hierbo is dat dit religieuse taal gebruik om die buigpunte te beskryf: *surrender, higher, deeper will, emptiness*. Hy haal teoloog Martin Buber hier aan (Scharmer 2000:18):

I think that in some strange sense the absolute key to living a very active life is *surrender*. As Martin Buber says, "You are not *surrendering* to your own will but to a *higher, deeper will*."

6.4 Aandag-buigpunt 4: kristalising (*letting come*)

Die vierde aandag-buigpunt in die onderpunt van die "U" is "kristalising". Dit is na die hek van "laat vaar" opgemaak is. Dit is waar vanuit die "leegheid" en "laat gaan" en "oorgee aan" iets nuuts aankom, iets nuuts ontluik, opdaag. Hier is die aanbreek van 'n visie wat gebore word (Scharmer, 2000:18). In die Christelike lewe is dit die plek waar lewenstransformerende bewuswording van die teenwoordigheid van Triniteit plaasvind.

6.5 Aandag-buigpunt 5: bring voort / beliggaming (*turning outward*)

Die vyfde aandag-buigpunt is die proses waardeur mense na die skep van 'n gedeelde visie, dit begin aktiewe en begin beliggaam. Hoe bring jy voort wat jy wil hê moet ontluik, opdaag? Hoe lewer jy jou visie af? Sonder 'n uitwaarts keer (*turning outward*) is daar geen aksie of beliggaming nie (Scharmer, 2000:19).

6.6 Aandag-buigpunt 6: vasmaak / institusionalisering (*institutional embodiment*)

Die sesde en laaste aandag-buigpunt gaan oor nuwe organisatoriese roetines en strukture wat die resultaat is van 'n nuwe identiteit en op sigself weer identiteitskeppend is.

7. DIE BETEKENIS HIERVAN VIR GELOOFSONDERSKEIDING

Wat is die betekenis van die aandag-buigpunte vir die proses van geloofsonderskeiding? Die proses kan esoteries, baie spiritueel klink. Scharmer gebruik voortdurend religieuse taal om die prosesse te beskryf. Die vraag is nou: Hoe hou dit verband met geloofsonderskeiding as leierskapsvaardigheid om Christene te help om in pas te kom met die *missio Dei* en die ontwikkeling van 'n nuwe sosiale identiteit vanuit ontmoetings met God? Die ses buigpunte kan in die verband weer besoek word.

7.1 Suspender: (*Suspend*)

In die kerk sal dit beteken dat die kennis van “hoe ons dinge nog altyd gedoen het” en ons kennis van “wie ons is” gesuspender moet word sodat gemeentes oop kan wees dat die Gees van Christus kan opdaag en ons kan transformeer sodat ons aksie kan neem om 'n nuwe sosiale identiteit te ontwikkel en te beliggaam. In dié verband getuig die SAVGG-reis hoe belangrik dit is om oor grense te beweeg (Mouton 2010). Dit is by “die ander” dat jy makliker oopmaak en die vasklou “om lewe en dood” laat los omdat jy ander haalbare alternatiewe sien en die openheid ontwikkel om jou eie uniek kontekstuele nuwe identiteit te ontvang.

7.2 Nuwe rigting: (*Redirection*)

Dit gaan hier oor oop wees in die geloof omdat God nuwe moontlikhede vir ons het wat moet opdaag. In die suspensie van ons kennis en idees en metodes rig ons onself net op God. Nuwe rigting gebeur in die geloofspraktyke van omgee groepe, nuwe manier van vergaderings hou, die vra van Godsvrae, die beoefening van “Wandel in die Woord” en “Wandel in die wêreld”, die beoefening van persoonlike en korporatiewe geestelike dissiplines, en nuwe erns met die Bybel en gebed (Nel 2010). Dit is alles deel van 'n proses om in 'n nuwe rigting te begin kyk, weg van geykte en starre tradisie, gebruikte en gewoontes na God self, wagtend op transformerende bewuswording van Hom.

7.3 Laat vaar: (*Letting go*)

Geestelike leiers het baie rasonele kennis hieroor. Ons bid dikwels ook: “Kom Here Jesus, kom vernuwe ons. Ons gee onself aan U oor.” Maar ons maak nie ons hekke oop sodat dit kan gebeur nie. Ons suspendeer nie ons vooropgestelde idees nie. Ons beweeg nie in spasies waar ons bewus kan word van die teenwoordigheid van Jesus Christus nie. Ons bely Sy teenwoordigheid rasoneel, maar ons ken en ervaar dit nie bewustelik, eksistensiële nie. Want ons weet nie hoe nie. Ons twyfel aan ons ervaring en heg hoër waarde aan ons rasionaliteit, ons kennis en ons planne as in ons geloof dat ons bewuswording van Hom ons kan transformeer. Ons Westerse rasonele denke en teologiese opvoeding verhinder ons. Die missionale literatuur¹³ wys telkens daarop dat die laat vaar net gebeur as ons toelaat dat Jesus ons rondneem na “die ander.” Hulle toon aan hoe Jesus sy dissipels konstant uit die tempel of sinagoges en bekende ruimtes weggenem het na plekke en mense en situasies waar hulle nie die voordeel van gevestigde ruimtes gehad het nie.

7.4 Kristallisering: (*Letting come*)

Kristallisering is wat gebeur wanneer in die proses van geloofsonderskeiding iets begin gebeur met 'n groep gelowiges wat die tiende of twintigste keer dieselfde teks lees en vra: Wat sê God

13 Kyk hoe die volgende skrywers die Bybelse konteks in veral Jesus se bediening 'n rol laat speel om aan te toon hoe dit gebruik kan word om mense van hullelele geykte denkpatrone te bevry (Bell 2005; Claiborne 2005; Hirsch 2006).

vir ons? As mense werklik glo dat God die nuwe laat opdaag uit sy Woord, dan begin hullelele die ervaring van kristallisering ervaar. Dit gebeur verrassend baie.¹⁴ Weens ons Westerse klem op rasonale denke en emosionele beheer het baie min eksistensiële ervaring hiervan. Ons praat makliker hieroor. Die beskamende werklikheid is dat ons diep vasgevang is in 'n Christendom-paradigma wat die Bybel met rasonale denke verklaar en verkondig. Ons moet nie onderskat hoe diep ons vasgevang is in Westerse sisteemdenke nie waar ons dieper geloof in rasionaliteit en wetenskaplike kennis het as in die misterie van die Triniteit se teenwoordigheid.

7.5 Voortbring (*turning outward*)

Geloofsonderskeiding gaan oor tot aksie. Aan die begin is wat voortgebring word tentatief en voorlopig en gaan dit gepaard met risiko. Eers is geloof na binne gerig (*turning inwards*) om te kan luister. Nou, aan die ander kant van die "U" draai dit na buite, beweeg geloof oor grense, geëksperimenteer, waag. Dit is vol nuwe energie en vreugde, vol waagmoed by oud en jonk wat in die Allerheiligste se teenwoordigheid was.

7.6 Vasmaak (*institutional embodiment*)

Nuwe gemeente-gebruike, die antwoorde wat by ons aangekom het, word op 'n punt die nuwe kultuur en praktyk; "the way we do things here" (Scharmer 2000:19). Dit is gewoonlik die punt waar gemeentes op 'n nuwe wyse begin groei.

8 GEVOLGTREKKINGS

Die artikel het vanuit die literatuur, veral Otto Scharmer se werk, taal en konstruksie voorsien wat aan die oeroue dissipline van geloofsonderskeiding nuwe handvatsels gee. Die uitdaging van geloofsonderskeiding is nie onbekend in missionale teologie nie, intendeel, dit is na aan die hart van die proses (Marais 2007; Morris & Olsen 1997; Petersen 2005; Barry 2004).

Die artikel wil nuwe vrae op die tafel sit. Dit is ooglopend duidelik dat Scharmer in die sakewêreld met diep religieuse konsepte opeere en nuwe vaardighede aan leiers leer. Hierdie luister kan nie sonder geestelike of religieuse metafore plaasvind nie. Wat is die implikasies daarvan? Is dit die drie-enige God wat ook in die sakewêreld tot mense spreek, mense waarvan baie a-religieus is? Hoewel dit in 'n ander debat op die spel is, is hier godsbegrip voorveronderstellings op die spel wat Rob Bell se *Love Wins* (2011) aanspreek.

Scharmer (en Friedman hier onder) help ons egter om een vlak van konflik wat al hoe meer in gemeentes opduik, te verstaan. In (veral groter) gemeentes waar 'n (leier-) leraar oorhoofs leiding neem en sy styl en aanslag gemoduleer is op dié van 'n tipiese Hoof Uitvoerende Amptenaar (CEO) van groot maatskappye, ontstaan toenemend ongelukkigheid. Ons verwys na wat Armour en Browning (2000) in hulle *System Sensitive Leadership* beskryf as sisteem-vyf leierskap. In al hoe meer gemeentes raak hierdie styl en benadering onaanvaarbaar en word sterk beheer, kontrole en 'n *top-down*-styl bestuur en leiding verwerp, selfs al word dit ingeklee in missionale teologiese taal. Egtheid, openheid-deursigtigheid en die erkenning van menswaardigheid van almal betrokke in onderskeidingsprosesse kan nie meganies gedoen word nie. Strategiese beplanningsprosesse wat klinies werk en waar die tipe *U-theory presencing* prosesse nie gevolg word nie, raak eenvoudig onaanvaarbaar vir gelowiges wat missionaal-teologiese dink en werk. Waar gesamentlike geloofsonderskeiding wel gebeur, vind ons dat gemeentes oor grense

14 'n Pragtige voorbeeld hiervan is die verhaal van die 60 lidmaat gemeente Marken in die Limpopo provinsie waar vir jare lank alles gedraai het om hullelele gemeente se institusionele oorlewing siende dat hullelele omring is deur amper 'n miljoen Pedi's. Toe begin hullelele die missionale reis en dinge verander (Peens 2011).

beweg en nuwe energie loskom. Teologies gesproke kan mens sê dat die kragtige werking van die Heilige Gees daar manifesteer.

Thomas Friedman se *The world is flat* (2007) verduidelik hierdie skuif van 'n ander hoek. Hy som die verskuiwing wat in die wêreld plaasvind as tien gelykmakers op. Die vierde gelykmaker onderstreep die skuif wat in leierskap nodig is en wat baie uiters bekwame predikante en ander leiers nog mee sukkel. Friedman (2007:95):

The newfound power of individuals and communities to send up, out, and around their own products and ideas, often for free, rather than passively downloading them from commercial enterprises or traditional hierarchies, is fundamentally reshaping the flow of creativity, innovation, political mobilization and information gathering and dissemination. It is making each of these things a bottom-up and globally side-to-side phenomenon, not exclusively a top-down one. ... Uploading is, without doubt, becoming one of the most revolutionary forms of collaboration in the flat world. More than ever, we can all now be producers, not just consumers.

Hy sê voorts (2007:96):

Our communication infrastructure has taken only the first steps in this great shift from audience to participants, but that is where it will go in the next decade... the top-down approach is replaced by a *bottom-up* and especially *side-to-side* movement. It is a *revolution* of collaboration: users become *producers*, not just *consumers*. It is a massively emancipating move.

Die skrywers wil gespreksgenote uitnooi om saam op reis te gaan. Ons voorsien 'n geloofsonderskeidende reis: luisterend en vraend na hoe en waar God besig is om in te breek in die kollektiewe bewussyn van mense in die sekulêre wêreld van die 21^{ste} eeu. Dit blyk dat die koninkryk van God nuwe gestaltes vind in mense wat vervreemd van die institusionele kerk leef. Dit kan blyk dat ons God se stem nuut moet leer hoor deur op nuwe maniere na mekaar en ander te luister.

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Angelic appearances in Matthew's infancy narratives

ABSTRACT

Angelic appearances function prominently in the birth narratives of Matthew. An angel of the Lord appears to Joseph (Mt. 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19 and 22). Besides these explicit references to the angel, the first Gospel also refers to the guidance by an "unusual" star (Mt. 2:1-2 and 9-10). The appearance of the angel of the Lord to Joseph is investigated within the context of such appearances in New Testament times. Furthermore, the appearance of the star is investigated in the light of the views of stars in that period of time. The goal is to establish the nature of these appearances and the relation between them.

1. INTRODUCTION

"Just as angels are the border guards for Jacob as he crosses the Jordan, so angels appear at the moments that the Word moves from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven" (Noll 1998:72). Angels appear prominently in the birth (the movement of the Word from heaven to earth) and passion, resurrection and ascension (the movement of the Word from earth to heaven) narratives of the Gospels. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke include birth narratives. Though the accounts by Matthew and Luke of Jesus' birth differ remarkably, both include angelic activities that demonstrate some resemblance. Luke has parallel annunciations by Gabriel to Zechariah (Luk. 1:11-13, 18-20) and to Mary (Luk. 1:26-30, 34-35). Furthermore, the third Gospel describes the appearance of the angels to the shepherds (Luk. 2:14). In Matthew's infancy narrative an angel of the Lord appears to Joseph (Mt. 1:20; 2:12, 13, 19 and 22) in dream oracles to guide and warn him of danger. Besides these explicit references to the guidance of the angel, the first Gospel also refers to the guidance of the magi by an "unusual" star (Mt. 2:1-2 and 9-10). It seems as if there might be some similarity between the functions of the angel and of this star.

Focussing on the angelic appearances in Matthew's Gospel, several questions arise. Is there any resemblance between the guiding angel and the guiding star? Could this strange star be linked to angelic activity? Read in the context of ancient writings, how should these appearances and activities be interpreted?

In this article the appearance of the angel of the Lord to Joseph will first be investigated within the context of such appearances in New Testament times. Secondly, the appearance of the star will be investigated in light of the views of stars in that period of time. The goal is to establish the nature of these appearances and the relation between these two forms of guidance and whether the star could implicitly refer to angelic activity.

2. ANGELIC APPEARANCE IN DREAMS

Other than the direct angelic appearances described in Luke's Gospel, in Matthew the angel of the Lord appears in dream oracles. Of all the New Testament writers, Matthew especially deals with revelation through dreams¹.

¹ The rest of the New Testament has few dreams or visions: Paul has a vision of a man of Macedon (Acts

2.1 Theophanies in dream oracles

Matthew contains five references to dream oracles in the infancy narrative². Four of these encounters refer to Joseph's experience, and one to that of the magi's. Scholars delineate dream oracles according to form-critical elements: The situation provided by the narrative, an introduction to the dream report, a theophany, a dream reference, a recipient, mentioning of the place, the auditory address formula, the message, termination of the dream and the fulfilment of the command (Gnuse 1990:107). In three of the Matthean dream reports the theophany is explicitly described as the appearance of an angel of the Lord (*ἄγγελος κυρίου*). Though theophany is not explicitly mentioned in the other two dream reports, similar activities are implied:

- "But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared (*ἄγγελος κυρίου φαίνεται*) to him in a dream (*κατ' ὄναρ*)³ and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit ... When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord (*ὁ ἄγγελος κυρίου*) had commanded him ..." (Mt. 1:20-24).
- "And having been warned⁴ in a dream (*κατ' ὄναρ*) not to go back to Herod, they (the magi) returned to their country by another route" (Mt. 2:12).
- "When they had gone, an angel of the Lord (*ἄγγελος κυρίου*) appeared to Joseph in a dream (*κατ' ὄναρ*). 'Get up,' he said, 'take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him'" (Mt. 2:13).
- "After Herod died, an angel of the Lord (*ἄγγελος κυρίου*) appeared in a dream (*κατ' ὄναρ*) to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead ...'" (Mt. 2:19-21).⁵
- "But when he (Joseph) heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream (*κατ' ὄναρ*),⁶ he withdrew to the district of Galilee" (Mt. 2:22).

The language of these five dream reports is quite stereotypical (cf. Conrad 1985:656; Dodson 2002:50; Knox 1957:122; Malina 1967:122; Soares Prabhu 1967:185): An angel of the Lord (in three of the five cases explicitly mentioned) appears in a dream to deliver an oral message; each message carries both a warning and a command to travel somewhere; the end of the dream is mentioned and the fulfilment of the command by the dream recipient is described in the following narrative.

Even deeper structural similarities in the component parts of the dream reports can be recognized (Gnuse 1990:107):

(1) Situation (1:18-19; 2:9-11; 2:13; 2:19; 2:22).

(2) Introduction to the dream report:

16:9), Cornelius sees the angel of the Lord (Acts 10:1-8), Peter hears a voice with a vision (Acts 10:9-20) and Paul receives encouragement from the angel of the Lord (Acts 18:9, 23:11 and 27:23). However, these visions can hardly be considered as real dream reports. This list of visions is nevertheless short when compared with the distinct references to dreams in Matthew.

2 His sixth reference to a dream oracle describes the dream of Pilate's wife: "While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: 'Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him'" (Mt. 27:19).

3 *ὄναρ* and *ὄνειρος* are the most common dream-vision terminologies (Dodson 2002, 40).

4 The angel as source of the dream is assumed, but not specifically mentioned (France, 2007:76; Nolland, 2005:117).

5 The words of God to Moses in Midian are echoed in this message: "Go back to Egypt, for all those who were seeking your life have died" (Ex. 4:19) (France, 2007:90).

6 This time Matthew only briefly alludes to a dream without providing details about the messenger or the message.

(2.1) Participle and post-positive participle *de* (genitive absolute with full dream reports or aorist participle with dream references) (1:20; 2:12; 2:13; 2:19; 2:22).

(2.2) "Behold" (*ἴδου*) with full dream reports (1:20; 2:13; 2:19).

(3) Theophany (*ἄγγελος κυρίου*) (1:20; 2:13; 2:19).

(4) Dream reference (*κατ' ὄναρ*) (1:20; 2:12; 2:13; 2:19; 2:22).

(5) Recipient (1:20; 2:13; 2:19).

(6) Place (optional as the narrative often provides this) (2:19).

(7) Auditory address formula (*λέγων*) (1:20; 2:13; 2:19).

(8) Message (1:20b-21; 2:12; 2:13b; 2:20; 2:22).

(9) Termination of the dream (1:24; 2:14; 2:21).

(10) Fulfilment of the command (1:24b; 2:12; 2:14-15; 2:21; 2:22).

2.2 Directives and guidance by the angel

According to the five oracle dream reports in the infancy narrative, Joseph and the magi are directed to do something in order to protect the infant Jesus. An angel of the Lord is explicitly mentioned in three of the four dream oracles of Joseph, and implied in the fourth. The magi also experienced some sort of theophany in a dream oracle, though no explicit mentioning is made of the nature of this appearance. Otherwise these dream oracles of Joseph and the magi demonstrate a strong resemblance.

This kind of divine intervention in the course of human affairs reminds one of parallels with the patriarchs in Genesis, e.g. Abraham's and Jacob's night visions (Gen. 15 and 28) (Gnuse 1981:170; Hagner 1993:25). Scholars often analyze Matthew's dream narratives in terms of biblical and *midrashic* traditions, which Matthew appropriated for his purposes (e.g. Brown 1993:45; Soares Prabhu 1976:223-225). Contemporary Jewish *midrash* used dreams as a mode of divine revelation out of respect for God in his majesty. Matthew might have followed this trend for the sake of the sentiment it would bring forth from his audience. Based on form-critical comparison, it seems that Matthew mainly used the Elohists's⁷ dream reports of Genesis as model. In Genesis the dream theophanies are connected to the angel of the Lord in Elohistic texts – exemplifying the transcendence of God (Gnuse 1990:116). The Elohistic source tends to underscore the superiority and remoteness of God to creation and is inclined to employ intermediaries like angels and dreams (Green 2000:402). The appropriate human response to Elohistic reports is a fear of God and reverence. The Elohistic multiplies episodes where sons were endangered (as with the infant Jesus). The Elohistic is also critical of power excesses (as that of Herod). Noteworthy is also the use of the introductory participle "behold" in the Matthean dream reports. This corresponds with *hinneh* that introduces the dream messages of the Elohistic. The very clear statements in terms of the fulfilment of the commands also correlate with the Genesis reports.

Remarkable resemblances can be recognized between the theophanies in Matthew's birth narratives and narratives in the Old Testament (France, 2007:52; Nolland, 2005:97). The annunciation to Joseph (Mt. 1:20-24) follows the pattern of the typical annunciations of birth in the Old Testament, e.g. the birth of Isaac (Gen. 17:15-21) and of Samson (Jgs. 13). Matthew's portrayal of Joseph who receives revelation in dreams (Mt. 1:20; 2:13, 19) and who goes to Egypt (Mt. 2:14) also reminds the reader of Joseph in the Old Testament, the dreamer (Gen. 37:19), who goes to Egypt, escaping an attempt on his life (Gen. 37:28)⁸. Jesus' escape from Herod is

7 The Elohistic as one of the four sources or strata underlying the Pentateuch is far from assured, nor do those who acknowledge these sources agree on their features. Nevertheless, some coherent portrait of the Elohistic emerges from scholarship.

8 It should be recognized that Matthew does not explicitly connect the two Josephs (France. 2007:52).

reminiscent of Moses' escape from the Pharaoh⁹. Later in his life Moses flees to Sinai and returns only when he hears from the Lord: "All those who were seeking your life are dead" (compare Ex. 4:19 with Mt. 2:20).

According to Jewish traditions God revealed Himself in dreams to biblical heroes, e.g. Jacob's dream at Bethel with reference to angels ascending and descending a stairway (Gen. 28:12), Josephus's dreams (Gen. 37:5-9) and Daniel's dream (Dan. 2:19). According to Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* (2.216-19), God promised Moses' father in a dream that He would keep the infant Moses safe (similar to the dream Joseph had of Jesus).

Matthew's dream narratives formally correspond with those in the Greco-Roman world: They usually contain (1) a scene-setting, (2) dream-vision terminology, (3) a proper dream-vision, and (4) reaction and response (Dodson 2002:46; Gnuse 1990:114). The difference between the modern conception of dreams and that of the ancient world is significant. The modern notion is that dreams originate from within oneself as a product of one's subconscious. The ancients believed that dreams were objective means through which the spirit world could communicate with human beings. Ancients therefore paid considerable attention to the interpretation and categorization of revelatory dreams¹⁰ (Dodson 2002:40). Apparitions from the spirit world were regarded as the characteristic of dreams. While dreams of the pagans (e.g. *Iliad* of Homer 23.65, 83-85) and Jews (e.g. 'Abot de Rabbi Nathan 40A) also included apparitions¹¹ of deceased persons, Matthew only describes apparitions from angels¹².

Revelations in dreams were often regarded as grounds for faith. In Greece and Macedonia (e.g. *Iliad* of Homer 1.63; 5.150), Rome (Tacitus' *Annales* 2.14), the East (e.g. Herodotus' *History* 1.34, 107, 127), Carthage (e.g. Dio Cassius' *Roman History* bk. 13), Palestine (e.g. Josephus' *Jewish War* 1.328; 2.116), among later rabbis (e.g. 'Abot de Rabbi Nathan 40 A) and in magical papyri (Papyri Graecae Magica 4.2076-80) people believed that divine messages were conveyed through dreams (Keener 1999:95).

The simplicity of the appearances in Matthew's dream reports contrasts with the bizarre Hellenistic reports that required further interpretation. The appearances in Matthew's report prompted direct action in the plot as God directed human affairs through agents:

- Joseph planned to divorce Mary quietly, but because of an angel of the Lord's appearance in a dream he took Mary as his wife (1:19-24).
- Because of some kind of theophany in a dream, the wise men did not return to Herod who intended to harm the child (2:12).
- Joseph took Mary and the child and escaped to Egypt because he was informed by an angel of the Lord in a dream that Herod was about to kill the child (2:13-14).
- When Herod died, Joseph once again was informed by an angel of the Lord in a dream that it was safe to return, and so he took Mary and the child and returned (2:19-21).

9 The biblical narrative of Moses' birth had undergone substantial expansion by the first century A.D. as can be seen in the writings of Josephus (*Ant.* 2.205, 206). In the expanded narrative Pharaoh was warned by his scribes that a child was about to be born who would threaten his crown. He and his advisers therefore decided to kill all the Hebrew male children. At the same time Moses' father had a divine revelation in a dream that his pregnant wife would bear a child who would save Israel – the child who escaped Pharaoh's massacre (cf. Brown 1975, 577).

10 Artemidorus divided dreams into five categories; enigmatic dreams, prophetic vision, oracular dreams, nightmares, and apparitions (Dodson 2002, 40).

11 Miller (1990, 401-4) thinks that early Judaism blurred the older distinction between dreams and night visions.

12 In Matthew's narrative angels only appear in dreams until the appearance of the angel at the empty grave after Jesus' resurrection (Mt. 28:2).

- Joseph is somehow warned in a dream that Archelaus was ruling, and therefore he went and lived in Galilee (2:22-23).

The immediate command-execution sequence indicates that human obedience to the divine will is blessed. Matthew teaches that “obedience brings deliverance” (Gnuse 1990:119). Through these revelations God protects the child Jesus. Three of the five revelations prompted action that will ultimately fulfil prophecy (1:23; 2:15, 23). God leads his people to their ultimate destiny.

Having observed that the Matthean dream reports, including angelic appearances, are probably form-critically dependent on the Elohistic dreams in Genesis, the function of these narratives becomes even more remarkable. Dreams occur almost exclusively in the Elohistic source in Genesis. They serve as a form of revelation which assumes a distant deity. Dreams are indirect forms of divine theophany signifying the distance between God and the human reality. Matthew utilizes this connotation of dreams to deliberately contrast the distant revelation of God in dreams with the immediate incarnation. Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God because of his immanent presence as Immanuel.

Conclusion

Matthew describes five cases where the angel of the Lord appears in dreams. During each of these appearances the angel delivers a message. Each of these messages carries a warning and directive. At the end of the dream the fulfilment of these commands is mentioned. In line with the ancient understanding of dreams, these dreams are depicted as the means through which the angel of the Lord communicates with Joseph and the magi, and thus constructively intervenes in the course of human affairs. God protected the child Jesus and led his people to deliverance. Yet the incarnated Jesus, Immanuel, is portrayed as the ultimate revelation of God.

3. THE GUIDING STAR OF THE MAGI

The second type of divine theophany in Matthew’s infancy narrative comes in the form of a significant star. Magi from the East arrive in Jerusalem and ask “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him” (Mt. 2:1-2). What exactly they meant by “his star” remains unsaid. Matthew simply tells that “the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them (προῆγεν) until it stopped over the place where the child was (ἔως ἔλθων ἐστάθη ἐπάνω οὗ ἦν τὸ παιδίον)” (Mt. 2:9). The identification of this star needs to satisfy the following conditions (Nolland, 2005:110):

- It must be something the magi would consider a star;
- It must somehow be something the magi would regard as the star of the messiah of the Jews;
- It must be able to guide the magi to a specific location; and
- It must be able to come to rest over a particular dwelling.

3.1 An “unusual” star

The star of Bethlehem was strange, even surreal. The great astronomer Johannes Kepler speculated in the early seventeenth century that the star was in fact a thrice repeated conjunction (nova or supernova) of Jupiter and Saturn in the sign of Pisces (representing the last days) that occurred in 7 BC (France, 2007:68; Rosenberg 1972:105). Some scholars suggested a conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn and Mars followed by a temporary bright star in 7-6 BC (cf. France 1985:82). Three explanations of the star are commonly proposed (cf. Davies & Allison 2004:235): (1) A supernova (stellar explosion), which, however, is not documented for that time. (2) A comet, but the often mentioned Halley’s Comet of the year 12/11 BC came too early. (3) The conjunction of

Jupiter and Saturn, which appeared three times in 7/6 BC fits the situation quite well, as Jupiter was considered the royal star and Saturn the star of the Sabbath and the star of the Jews.

There are, however, quite a few difficulties with these proposals with regard to the star. Philologically *ἀστήρ* means an individual star, not a group of stars (*ἄστρον*), though with the conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn in 7/6 BC the planets did come so close to each other that it probably could be considered one star (Luz 1990:132). But Matthew speaks of the star appearing, disappearing, and reappearing. Furthermore, the idea that a star high up in the sky could guide people below on earth to a specific place (where it stopped over the place where the child was) does not make sense to the modern reader. Machen (1930:56), while arguing for the historicity of Jesus' virgin birth, proposed that Matthew's story of the star should be regarded as a "poetical, oriental way of describing events that we should describe in very different terms". Many scholars nowadays do not regard the story of the star as historical, as such events conflict with scientific knowledge (e.g. Brown 1975 574; Paffenroth 1994:79). The question therefore arises whether the star in the narrative should be interpreted merely in astronomical terms.

3.2 Problems with traditional exegesis

John Chrysostom from Antioch in the fourth century proposed a solution to the problem of how a star high above the earth could guide people to a specific location. He suggested that the star came down (*κάτω κατέβη*) and stood over the head of the child (*ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς ἔστη τῆς κεφαλῆς τοῦ παιδίου*) (Hom. Mt. 6.2(3)) (PG 57.64-65). Several centuries later Theophylact (eighth century) had a similar explanation; the star descended (*κατέβη*) from the heights and came closer to the earth (*προσγειώτερος*) to show the spot where Christ was. The star descended and stood over the head of the child (*ἐπάνω τῆς κεφαλῆς τοῦ παιδίου ἔστη*) (Comm. Mt. Ad 2:9) (PG 123.165B-C). The *Protoevangelium* of James (second century) also mentions that the star came down and stood over the head of the child (*ἔστη ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ παιδίου*) (21:3). The interpretation according to which the star came down from heaven to the earth was common among the church fathers, as can be seen in their writings (Irenaeus, Dem. 58 (SC 406); Origen, Hom. Num. 18.2[4]; Ephraem, Comm. Diat. 20-21).

Calvin (1979[1563]:132) elaborated on this explanation. He commented that the star of Bethlehem was not a natural star. It was a real phenomenon, but unique and miraculous. Thus the star was a grand and impressive herald of Christ's birth.

Current astronomical knowledge teaches us that if a natural star would indeed approach our planet, we all would perish in a blaze. Stars can neither go before people to guide them on their way, nor can they rest over a city or a house. It seems obvious that we should distinguish between ancient and modern conceptions of stars to get a better understanding of the star that led the magi.

3.3 Stars regarded as living spirits

To get a better understanding of the meaning of the star of Bethlehem, it is important to recognize the significance of stars and astrology in antiquity. According to widespread Mediterranean, Egyptian and Middle Eastern folklore, stars were regarded as living spirits (Allison 2005:22). Even in Jewish tradition it was taken for granted that stars were living beings. The Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, Philo from Alexandria (20 BCE – 50 CE) wrote: "Those who have philosophy their study tell us that stars too are living creatures" (Plant. 12), "The stars are souls divine" (Gig. 8), "The heavenly bodies are said to be not only living creatures, but living creatures endowed with mind, or rather each of them a mind in itself" (Opif. 73). The fourteenth chapter of Joseph and Aseneth (an ancient apocryphal expansion of the Book of Genesis' account of Joseph's marriage to Aseneth, the daughter of Potiphera) refers to a star in heaven that came to earth and changed

into an angel. When Aseneth saw the morning star rose out of heaven in the east she rejoiced and said: "So the Lord God listened to my prayer, because this star rose as a messenger (*ἀγγελοῦ*) and herald of the light of the great day". Aseneth kept looking and close to the morning star the heaven tore apart and a bright shining light appeared. From this light a voice called Aseneth and said: "I am the chief of the house of the Lord and commander of the whole host of the Most High" (Jos. Asen. 14:1-7).

Even in the canonical text stars are identified as celestial forces. The book of Judges describes the involvement of stars – being forces in heaven – in the victory of Israel: "From the heaven fought the stars, from their courses they fought against Sisera" (Judg. 5:20). In Job 38:7 we read of a time "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted together". These two lines form a synonymous parallelism identifying the sons of God with the morning stars. Furthermore, the Satan and his angels are represented as falling stars from heaven: "How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star (= Latin *Lucifer*), son of Dawn!" (Isa. 14:12) and "The devil swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth" (Rev. 12:4). In the opening vision in Revelations, Jesus tells John: "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches" (Rev. 1:20).

From the literary environment of Matthew it is clear that stars were frequently conceptualized as angels.

On the other hand, angels often were depicted as brilliant lights. The angel at Jesus' tomb had the appearance of lightning (Mt. 28:3). The Satan disguised himself as an angel of the light (2 Cor. 11:14). According to the pseudo-epigraphical writing the "Life of Adam and Eve" 29:15 Satan, in order to deceive Eve, appeared as a bright angel. The Dead Sea Scrolls refer to the archangel Michael as "the Prince of Lights" (1QS 3:20; 1QM 13:9-10). Stephen's face shone like the face of an angel (Acts 6:15).

In Judeo-Christian tradition angels frequently descend from heaven to earth (like falling stars). According to 3 Macc. 6:16-29 God opened heaven's gates to send forth two angels of glorious appearance to bewilder the prosecutors of the righteous Jews. Gen. 28 reports the story of Jacob's ladder with angels ascending and descending between heaven and earth. A similar event is envisioned in John 1:51: "You shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man". The author of Revelations twice declares that he saw an angel coming down from heaven (Rev. 18:1 and 20:1).

3.4 Guiding angels

Angels who act as guides is a common theme in ancient literature. "The angel of God who was going before the Israelite army moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud moved in front of them and took its place behind them" (Ex. 14:19) and Ex. 23:20 explains: "I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared". Reference to the guiding angels reappears in Ex. 23:23; 32:34 and 33:2. The third century Christian writing, the Apocalypse of Elijah, depicted the latter days: "Then Gabriel and Uriel will become a pillar of light leading them (upon whose forehead the name of Christ is written and upon whose hand is the seal) into the holy land" (5:5).

3.5 The magi's angel

Within this context it seems highly probable that the magi's star should be considered an angel. A star allegedly also guided Aeneas to the place where Rome was to be found (Virgil's Aeneid 2.694) (Keener 1999:99). The apocryphal Gospel of the Saviour (probably fifth century Syrian) in chapter 7 explicitly depicts the guiding star of the magi as an angel: "When the Lord Jesus was born at Bethlehem of Judea ... magi came from the east ... And they adored Jesus and presented

to Him their gifts ... In the same hour there appeared to them an angel in the form of that star which had before guided them on their journey; and they went away, following the guidance of its light, until they arrived in their own country". The fifth century Theodotus of Ancyra writes about the Bethlehem star: "An angelic power ... appearing in the form of a star" (Ps. Hom 1). The eighth century Byzantine monk, Theodore the Studite writes: "An angel as a light of heaven, having transformed itself into the form of a star, led the magi on the way" (Orat. 6). Theophylact also considered the star to be angelic: "When you hear 'star', do not think it was a star such as we see, but a divine angelic power that appeared in the form of a star. The magi were astrologers, and so the Lord used what was familiar to them to draw them to himself. ... That the star was an angelic power is apparent from the fact that it shone even by day, and that it moved as they moved, and stood still as they rested; also that it moved from Persia in the north to Jerusalem in the south" (Comm. Mt. Ad loc.). Remigius remarks: "Others say it was an angel, the same who appeared to the shepherds" (Catena Aurea). Isho'dad of Merv argues: "It is evident from many things that it was not a real star, nor an imagination, nor a fantasy, nor an automaton, but an angel who shone like a star from Persia to Bethlehem" (Comm. Mt. Ad loc.).

These writings explicitly state what Matthew implies in his narrative. It is plausible to identify the magi's star with an angel.

3.6 Personal stars

Angels and stars were intimately associated with each other. Matthew probably considered the guiding star of the magi as angelic. Most scholars identify the magi with a priestly class of eastern astrologers coming from Persia or Babylon (Davies & Allison 2004:227). Astrologers studied the relative movement of celestial bodies and regarded them as having influence on human affairs and the natural world. Such magi were highly regarded in the Graeco-Roman world as foretelling events of world importance, including the rise and fall of kings. Theophylact remarked that the magi were astrologers, and so the Lord used what was familiar to them to draw them to himself (Comm. Mt. Ad loc.). The Chaldeans or Persians were known for astrology, prediction of the future, dream interpretation and special wisdom (cf. Philo's *Dreams* 1.53; Herodotus' *History* 1.107, 127; 7.12-19; Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* 10.195-203). Astrology was also known in Greco-Roman paganism (cf. Horace *Ode* 2.17.17-25). Reference to comets or other phenomena of light related to the birth of great men were widespread in antiquity (France, 2007:68). Romans respected astrological confirmation of its rulers and emperors feared astrological predictions of their downfall (Oster 1982:220). Magi reportedly predicted the fall of rulers and the rise of new rulers (Pliny *Natural History* 1.47; 30.6). Contemporary ancient writers often linked heavenly signs to the foreshadowing of major events (e.g. Tacitus' *Annales* 14.22). Because of these widespread beliefs, Rabbis commonly described Gentiles as "worshippers of the stars" (Babylonian Talmud, *Sanh* 59a; 'Abod Zar 3a; Sipra on *Lev*. 20:7). "For one special event in history, the God who rules the heavens chose to reveal himself where pagans were looking" (Keener 1999:100).

The formulation *αὐτοῦ τὸν ἀστέρα* (Mt. 2:2) probably refers to the widespread idea that each person has a star; important and rich people have bright stars, the stars of the others are insignificant. According to then popular astrology a personal star appeared at the birth and was extinguished at the death of such a person (France, 2007:68; Luz 1990:135; Nolland, 2005:110). "Seeing his star" the astrologers in Matthew's gospel recognized something auspicious that revealed the newborn king of Judea (Molnar 1999:42). Regal horoscopes were developed that would reveal a royal birth in Judea. According to Matthew the magi were led by this guide of astrology to meet the Messiah.

3.7 Stars in Jewish literature

Although the Hebrew Bible forbade astrology (Deut. 4:19; Is. 47:13), astrology had nevertheless infiltrated some of Jewish thought and practice of that time. Observant Jews affirmed God's sovereign rule over the stars (cf. Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews* 1.156; Philo's *De Opificio Mundi* 46). Yet in folk belief some Jews accepted stars' relative authority over nations (cf. Philo's *Creation* 58-59). Astrological speculation persisted from the earliest days of Israel's history. Jewish sources attributed significance to periodic conjunctions of Jupiter and Saturn. Such conjunctions heralded earthly events such as impending wars, and the births of kings, great prophets, miracle workers, revealers of secrets and even of the Messiah (Rosenberg 1972:105).

The star in Matthew is reminiscent of the star referred to in Num. 24:17: "A star will come out of Jacob; a sceptre will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab ...". The Matthean narrative echoes the LXX version of Numbers 22-24 more closely than the Hebrew one. According to Num. 22-24 Moses was leading Israel through the Trans-Jordanian region on his way to the Promised Land when he came across another wicked king, Balak. Like the Pharaoh of Egypt, Balak the king of Moab also tried to destroy him. He summoned the seer named Balaam from the East (Num 23:7) to use his skills against Moses and Israel. Balaam was an occult visionary that would have been called in Matthew's time a *magus*¹³. But instead of cursing Moses and Israel, he had a positive vision: "There shall come a man out of Israel's seed, and he shall rule many nations ... I see him, but not now; I behold him but not close: a star shall rise from Jacob, and a man shall come forth from Israel" (Num. 23:17 (LXX)). The passage refers to the emergence of the Davidic monarchy. David was the star that Balaam had foreseen. In later Judaism this passage was interpreted as referring to the Messiah, the king of Davidic descent (Brown 1975:578). As Balaam saw the Star of David rise, the New Testament magi saw the star of the King of the Jews rising (Davies & Allison 1988:235).

Herod thus had much reason to be upset by the magi's report (Mt. 2:3). An astrological signal of another ruler obviously indicated his own downfall. In those days celestial signs were commonly interpreted as signalling the death of one ruler and the consequent rise of another (Malina & Rohrbach 1992:32). News of a star signalling a new ruler would undoubtedly have upset a ruler as paranoid as Herod¹⁴. Other rulers were reportedly also paranoid about astrologers, and some were even prepared to kill their own descendants to keep the throne (Herodotus' *History* 1.107-110) (Keener 1999:102). A star also occurs in the story of Abraham's child who is chased by Nimrod (Luz 1990:131). Similarly the opposition between the king of the Jews, Herod, and the royal child, Jesus, is emphasized by the star.

The magi left for Bethlehem and Matthew reports that "the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star they were overjoyed" (Mt. 2:9-10). The specific movement of the star and its ability to locate the specific place where the king was born sounds implausible to the modern reader. Some modern artistic portrayals of the event suggest that the star had a tail pointing to the specific location. Such a suggestion obviously is highly speculative. This described movement of the star should rather be seen as alluding to the pillar of cloud (and angel) guiding Israel in the wilderness (Soares Prabhu 1976:280). While the magi followed the star, God used it in a manner

13 In New Testament times the word *magoi* covered a wide range of people who practiced occult cults: astrologers, fortunetellers, magicians of varying degrees of plausibility (Brown 1975, 577). Matthew refers to astrologers.

14 The Moses *haggadah* is very close to the Matthean story. Magi (TgJ pn Ex. 1:15; ExR 1:18 on Ex. 1:22) or scribes (Josephus, *Ant.* 2.205) predict for Pharaoh the birth of Moses that would become its conqueror. Pharaoh is very upset (Josephus, *Ant.* 2.206) and orders the infanticide (cf. Luz 1990, 131). The same cast of characters is present in Matthew: the wicked ruler, the chief priests and scribes that aligned against the newborn King.

reminiscent of the salvation of Israel from Egypt. Such an interpretation correlates with that of the early Christian document, the Syrian Chronicle of Zuqnin, which identified the star with “a pillar of light” (Keener 1999:104).

Readers through the ages should realize God’s guidance by means of the star during the entire event of Jesus’ birth.

3.8 Conclusion

With current astronomical knowledge the star of Bethlehem is strange. One needs an understanding of the ancient concept of stars to interpret Matthew’s description of the star. According to widespread Mediterranean, Egyptian, and even Jewish traditions stars were regarded as living beings and celestial forces. While stars frequently were conceptualized as angels, angels were often depicted as brilliant lights. Angels could descend from heaven to earth and provide divine guidance to people. As angels and stars were associated with one another, the magi’s star should probably be regarded as an angel. The magi thus identified this bright star as an astrological confirmation of the birth of a new ruler and as guide to honour Him. This obviously also indicated the downfall of the current ruler, which undoubtedly upset the paranoid Herod.

4. RESUME

From this investigation the resemblance between the guiding angel and the guiding star becomes evident. Angels and stars were associated with one another. Both kinds of appearances were the result of divine intervention in the course of human affairs.

The author of Hebrews wrote: “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways” (Heb. 1:1). The modes of revelation in the Old Testament varied in external phenomena, which included angelic appearances, voices, dreams and stars. Matthew links up with such Old Testament forms of revelation to then transcend to the ultimate incarnate revelation, Immanuel, in Jesus the new born King.

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KEY WORDS

- Angel
Star
Dream
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Oracle

TREFWOORDE

- Engel
Ster
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Theofanie
Matteus-evangelie
Orakel

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