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**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEOLOGY AT STELLENBOSCH**

**FROM 1859-1919**

**THESIS**

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## ABSTRACT

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEOLOGY AT STELLENBOSCH FROM 1859-1919.

This study seeks to give an exposition of the development of theology at the Stellenbosch Kweekskool from 1859 until 1919, a period that coincided with the formative years of Afrikaner nationalism.

John Murray (1826-1882) was nurtured in evangelical Calvinism but received his theological training in 'moderate' Utrecht. As Calvinist he emphasized salvation by grace and Christian obedience, as evangelical, union with Christ, and as kenoticist he emphasized the relevance of the humanity of Christ.

N J Hofmeyr (1827-1909) was converted under an evangelical Lutheran and received his training in Utrecht, in the heyday of Dutch ethical and German mediating theology. He was fascinated by the historical Jesus. In his view, the 'religion of Jesus' was not the moralistic one imagined by the modernists, but an experience of sonship, continually challenged by severe temptations. The central theme of his theology was the huiiothesia, the sonship of Jesus being the prototype of our sonship. As he was the spiritual father of many generations of Stellenbosch students, his Christocentric emphasis and his doctrine of huiiothesia played an important role in the development of NGK spirituality.

Other themes in Hofmeyr's theology bore the marks of mediating theology: The idea that the conscience is the voice of God, the 'natural' compatibility between the human and the divine, the importance of experience in the theological enterprise and the idea that grace must accommodate itself to nature.

J I Marais (1848-1919) and P J G de Vos (1842-1931), who received part of their

training in Scotland, were more conservative in theology than Hofmeyr. By the turn of the century De Vos has fully accepted scholastic Calvinism and premillennialism; Marais accepted premillennialism around 1914. The experiences of the Anglo-Boer War precipitated the close relationship between the Afrikaner and the NGK, and the lack of a strong doctrine of the church in Stellenbosch theology added to the blurring of distinctions between church and people. The national church of the Scots and Dutch traditions became the volkskerk of the Afrikaner.

Important biblical dimensions of Murray and Hofmeyr's theology were neglected after Hofmeyr's death. The conviction that God revealed himself completely in the human Christ was weakened by fundamentalism and the tendency to see God's will in the history of the volk. Their eschatology - which expected great success for the gospel - was replaced by premillennialism, which expected only limited success for missions before the parousia. Hofmeyr's social gospel, which was applied to the problem of the 'poor whites', was gradually replaced by a negative view of the social relevance of the gospel, especially in racial matters.

This gradual change of theological direction involved a growing sympathy with fundamentalism and Kuyperianism, but did not consist in a full revival of reformation theology.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AMVW	: Collected writings of Andrew Murray <sup>1</sup>
CENV	: <u>Christelijke Encyclopaedie voor het Nederlandsche Volk</u>
CI	: John Calvin: <u>Institutes of the Christian Religion</u> <sup>2</sup>
CSV	: Christen Studentevereniging (publishers)
DK	: <u>Die Kerkbode; De Gereformeerde Kerkbode in Zuid Afrika</u>
GKSA	: Die Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika
GM	: <u>Gereformeerd Maandblad</u>
HZ	: <u>Het Zoeklicht</u>
HAUM	: Hollands-Afrikaanse Uitgewersmaatskappy (publishers)
ISBE	: <u>International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia</u>
JTSA	: <u>Journal of Theology for Southern Africa</u>
LMS	: The London Missionary Society
NGK	: Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk
NGKA-CT	: The Archives of the NGK, Cape Town
NGSK	: Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk
NGTT	: <u>Die Ned. Geref. Teologiese Tydskrif</u>
NHK	: Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika
OFS	: The Orange Free State
OP	: <u>Die Ou Paaie</u>
OT/NT	: Old Testament; New Testament
TVW	: Collected writings of Totius

References in brackets in the text give the author, the date of publication as it appears in the bibliography, and the relevant page number: (Du Plessis 1920a:60). Numbers in brackets (78) refer to the immediately preceding publication mentioned in the text, either in the same or in the previous paragraph.

References to undated publications give only the author and the relevant page number: (Macpherson 67).

References to multi-volume works give only the abbreviation, volume number and page: (AMVW VI:264).

Translations from the original Dutch were made by the present writer, except where otherwise indicated in the Bibliography.

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<sup>1</sup> Please consult bibliography for more information on multi-volume publications.

<sup>2</sup> References to the Institutes (CI) do not give page numbers, but number of book, chapter and paragraph, in the following way: III:12:5.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

In 1850 Dr A N E Changuion, professor of classics at the SA Athenaeum and elder of the NGK at Cape Town, opposed the establishment of a Theological Seminary or Kweekskool<sup>1</sup> because of the lack of academic facilities in South Africa. He said that the Seminary would only produce 'half-learned theologues'.<sup>2</sup> As Hanekom has shown, Changuion was not only motivated by a sincere love of learning, but also by a very critical attitude towards a confessional Christianity (1951:206). Changuion's 'prophecy' was not fulfilled. On the contrary, the quality of the teaching of the first three professors, J Murray, N J Hofmeyr and J I Marais was admitted even by the 'very critical' James Mackinnon.<sup>3</sup> And in 1893 the Universities of Edinburgh and St Andrew's formally acknowledged the standard of the teaching at Stellenbosch.<sup>4</sup>

However, towards the middle of this century graduates of the Kweekskool, some of them anything but 'half-learned theologues', joined forces with those who advocated a

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<sup>1</sup> Literally a 'nursery', a place where students are grafted and nurtured in the faith and in the ministry (cf Prestwich 1986:69).

<sup>2</sup> Half-geleerde theologanten (Hanekom 1959:16).

<sup>3</sup> Cf Mackinnon 1887:28. Mackinnon, who was for a time a student at the Kweekskool and later professor in Edinburgh, held very critical views on Scripture (cf Dreyer 1934a:121).

<sup>4</sup> In that year these Universities allowed graduates of the Kweekskool, who also had a BA, to sit for their BD examination, and the University of St Andrew's conferred a honorary doctorate on Marais in recognition of his work (cf GM Sep 1893).

policy of racial separation with 'proof-texts' from the Bible.<sup>5</sup> It would seem that the prophecy of Changuion was fulfilled when this happened. But how did this come about in a seminary known for its solid training, evangelical fervour and missionary spirit?

The relationship between the theology of the NGK and the development of South African racial policies has been a major problem in South African historiography. Early in the 19th century the idea was broached that the racial attitudes of the Dutch colonists were the result of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. As this interpretation depended partially on a misunderstanding of the doctrine of predestination, it has now largely been abandoned.<sup>6</sup> Since the publication of the studies of T D Moodie (1975) and W A de Klerk (1976), the argument on the relationship between the theology and the racial policies of the Afrikaners has been raised to a high level of sophistication. This debate has not been concluded, but is still based on the assumption that the contribution of Afrikaans theology to the modern problems of South Africa has been a decisive one.<sup>7</sup>

It seems obvious that the outcome of this debate depends largely on the exact character and contents of NGK theology, especially during the last quarter of the 19th and the first quarter of the 20th century. However, NGK theology has not yet been subjected to systematic research. In his seminal study on 'Afrikaner civil religion', referred to above,

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<sup>5</sup> Cf Botha 1986:188-203. J D du Toit (Totius) of the Gereformeerde Kerk (GKSA), denied that he used isolated 'proof-texts' to support apartheid, he claimed the authority of 'the whole Bible' (TVW VII:330).

<sup>6</sup> But cf Van Jaarsveld 1975:37 and De Kiewiet 1956:22.

<sup>7</sup> Cf Botha 1986, A Torrance 1986, Loubser 1987 and J B Torrance 1988. There are those, on the other hand, who see the problem in a wider economic context (cf Wright 1977:61ff). Although this view adds important dimensions to the debate and lessens the contribution of Afrikaner theology to the problems of modern South Africa, it does not deny the influence of theology on Afrikaner racial views.

Moodie has described the traditional theology of the NGK as a 'Murray or Scottish type of Calvinism'.<sup>8</sup> With the exception of dissenting voices from the GKSA,<sup>9</sup> most scholars assumed that the theology of the NGK was always well within the parameters of orthodox Calvinism. The latest study, that of A J Botha (1986), still agrees basically with the view of Moodie.

For the historian of ideas this characterization of NGK theology poses a number of problems. To begin with, it seems impossible to equate the theology of Andrew Murray Jnr, one of the most important figures in the history of the NGK, with typical Scottish Calvinism, that is, adherence to the theology of the Westminster Confession.<sup>10</sup> A decade ago B J K Anderssen, who was openly sympathetic towards Murray, admitted that the latter was influenced by German mediating theology (1979:228), and C F C Coetzee has recently argued that Murray's theology could in no way be described as Calvinistic.<sup>11</sup>

The 'received opinion' furthermore assumes that Murray's theology was similar to that of his brother and the other professors of theology at Stellenbosch. But Andrew Murray

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<sup>8</sup> Cf Moodie 1975:57ff. He quotes a senior minister of the NGK who described the traditional theology of the NGK (in 1935) as 'the Calvinism taught by professors Murray, Hofmeyr, Marais and De Vos, and preached by men as Ds J H Neethling and Dr Andrew Murray'. (63).

<sup>9</sup> The GKSA has repeatedly accused the NGK of 'Methodism' (cf TVW VI:3f and Coetzee 1986:248).

<sup>10</sup> The theology of the first generation Scottish ministers has not been established beyond doubt. Robert Shand of Tulbagh was one of the few of whom it is certain that he adhered to Westminster theology (cf J Murray: Wat is Gereformeerd? in GM July 1913). According to Du Plessis (1920a:33) Andrew Murray Snr prayed regularly for a sovereign divine visitation of the kind that has occurred at the Kirk of Shotts, Kilsyth and Cambuslang.

<sup>11</sup> Coetzee believes that Murray was indifferent towards the reformed confessions and was influenced by 'well-known mystics' as well as by Arminian representatives of the holiness movement like D L Moody and C G Finney (1986:230).

himself recognized differences between him and his brother John.<sup>12</sup> There is also evidence of a significant change in theological emphasis between John Murray and his successor in the chair of Systematic Theology, P J G de Vos.<sup>13</sup>

Related to the above is the question whether Afrikaans theology was influenced by contemporary theology in Europe and America, or whether it developed in relative isolation. A glance at the available literature gives the impression that 19th century Afrikaans theology was indeed closely related to contemporary protestant theology. Since the publication of the Leben Jesu of D F Strauss (1835), protestant Christianity developed an extraordinary interest in 'the historical Jesus', a unique phenomenon in the world's religious history.<sup>14</sup> Although far removed from the great intellectual and political movements of Europe, this interest was also noticeable in South Africa. The first publication of the young Andrew Murray, not quite 30 years of age in 1858, was a life of Jesus (Murray 1907). However, the most conspicuous example of an interest in the historical Jesus was N J Hofmeyr, the 'second professor' at the Kweekskool.

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<sup>12</sup> He said: 'Whereas my brother considers most Christians are merely feeble and weak, and need to be strengthened by wholesome food, I, on the other hand, regard the Church generally as sickly and spiritually diseased, which is the real cause of their feebleness.' (Douglas 265). J M du Toit also suggested that John Murray was not impressed by certain aspects of revivalist preaching (1955:213).

<sup>13</sup> John Murray used the work of the anti-predestinarian kenoticist J H A Ebrard of Erlangen as prescribed text-book (Kestell 1932:35), while his successor P J G de Vos in later years used the work of the anti-kenoticist predestinarian Charles Hodge (cf Van Wijk 1897; Thom 1988).

<sup>14</sup> For the vast number of 'Lives of Christ' published in the 19th century, cf Pals 1982. Schweizer's study brought a temporary abandonment of the 'quest of the historical Jesus', but books on the 'Life of Christ' continued to be published on a grand scale during this century, in spite of the scholarly opinion that the main burden of the gospels was kerygmatic rather than historical.

Hofmeyr's major work on the historical Jesus was De Christus der Evangelien (1887). This book was not, as one would think today, a reasoned defence of the divinity of Christ in the face of 'modernism'. It was rather a description of Jesus as the 'most human person' in history, who lived a 'thoroughly human' life. Hofmeyr indeed maintained the uniqueness of Jesus as the incarnate Son over against the theories of the rationalists, but at the same time he taught with the kenoticists that Jesus was so 'thoroughly human' that it was only at his baptism that he came to realize that he was the promised Messiah. Another continuity between Hofmeyr and contemporary protestant theology was his interest in the social implications of the gospel. In 1861, in the early years of the revival, he said that Christian ministers should not only be concerned with the salvation of individuals, but with that of the whole of society. In short, the evidence seems to suggest that Hofmeyr was strongly influenced by contemporary European theology, particularly by Dutch ethical and German mediating theology.

For almost half a century, from 1859 to 1907, Hofmeyr taught New Testament and Church History. At the same time he was also the unofficial students' chaplain at the Stellenbosch College. As young people from all over South Africa studied at Stellenbosch at that time, Hofmeyr eventually had a tremendous influence on the NGK. It is significant that neither of his two biographers described him as a Calvinist.<sup>15</sup> The description of NGK theology of this period as a 'Murray or Scottish type of Calvinism' is therefore a very vague if not misleading description.

The character of NGK theology in the first decades of this century is equally difficult to pin down. One of the most important questions is: What happened to Murray and

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<sup>15</sup> Cf Kestell 1911:125; S du Toit 1984:288ff.

Hofmeyr's emphasis on the humanity and example of Christ when the NGK had to face the multiple crises of the 20th century? We do know that Professor Du Plessis, a major representative of the Murrayite direction, was accused of kenoticism in 1928. But the question is: How was that possible within two decades of the death of Hofmeyr?

Another unresolved problem is: Why was the Dutch ethical tradition in the NGK, mainly derived from the University of Utrecht, so easily replaced by the Kuyperian tradition associated with the Free University of Amsterdam? Moodie has suggested that the traditional South African partial and pragmatic racial separation was incorporated into 'an Afrikaner civil religion' with the aid of Kuyperianism. With the exception of Irving Hexham, who put even more emphasis on the role of Kuyperianism, subsequent research has tended to agree with this view.<sup>16</sup>

There is, however, also another side of the picture. There is evidence that, even in the second decade of this century, the Kweekskool was strongly anti-Kuyperian.<sup>17</sup> Some of its best graduates continued to go to Utrecht for many years before Amsterdam gained the upper hand.<sup>18</sup> As late as 1925 Johannes du Plessis expressed the 'mainline' anti-Kuyperian tradition in a polemical work about the origin of the GKSA.<sup>19</sup> Until 1946, when F J M

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<sup>16</sup> For a discussion of the various views, cf Botha 1986. He noted that it was 'the less Calvinistic elements' in Kuyper's thinking, especially the romantic concept of an organic nation, which played the decisive role in this process (1986:185)

<sup>17</sup> In 1893 Professor J I Marais expressed himself strongly against Kuyper (Kroniek GM July 1893). Many years later he expressed appreciation for 'the balanced Bavinck' in contrast to the fanaticism (drijven) of Kuyper (cf Kroniek GM Dec 1911 and Jan 1912).

<sup>18</sup> T B Muller proceeded to Utrecht in 1910 and A J van der Merwe, for many years moderator of the Cape Church, in 1920 (cf Dreyer 1934b).

<sup>19</sup> Cf his De Gereformeerde Kerk in Wording en Werking 1925.

Potgieter was appointed to the chair of Church History,<sup>20</sup> E E van Rooyen was the only Stellenbosch theologian who could be described as a Kuyperian.<sup>21</sup> And when D G Malan, an opponent of Du Plessis, died in 1937 G B A Gerdener, a sympathizer of Du Plessis, was appointed in Malan's place.<sup>22</sup>

Our understanding of NGK theology is further complicated by the fact that the ideas of Du Plessis, largely derived from contemporary German missiology, formed the theoretical basis of the missionary policy of the NGK.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, although Du Plessis was progressive for his own time, he was, in a certain sense, the 'father of ecclesiastical apartheid'.<sup>24</sup> It is also important to note that D F Malan, who became Prime Minister in 1948, had no sympathy with Kuyperian theology.<sup>25</sup> We are therefore confronted with the situation that both 'the father of ecclesiastical apartheid' and 'the father of political apartheid' were strongly anti-Kuyperian. To add to the confusion, although Malan was theologically sym-

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<sup>20</sup> For the strong influence of Kuyper's theology on him, cf Potgieter 1953.

<sup>21</sup> In 1920 Van Rooyen was appointed professor of Old Testament and B B Keet professor of Systematic Theology. Although both studied under Herman Bavinck, Keet was sympathetic towards Du Plessis, while Van Rooyen opposed him (cf Ferreira 180).

<sup>22</sup> Ferreira 200. Gerdener was also Du Plessis's first biographer (cf Gerdener 1943).

<sup>23</sup> Officially accepted in 1935, cf Gerdener 1958:269ff. This regularized the existence of separate ecclesiastical structures for various population groups. The 'Bantu Presbyterian Church' was of course founded on the same missiological principles in 1923 (Gerdener 1958:158).

<sup>24</sup> Cf Adonis 1982; Gerdener 1943 and 1958.

<sup>25</sup> Malan studied under the ethical theologians of Utrecht, J Valetton and H Visscher. Valetton said: 'As soon as the living faith of the Church is formulated (in a confession), it will either immediately be killed by this formulation, or, because of its necessary incompleteness, must call forth an inevitable and justifiable reaction (*Kroniek* GM Jun 1912). Malan's lack of sympathy with Kuyper's theology was confirmed by his son Rev D F Malan, in a personal communication (2 Feb 1978). He also had reservations about the theology of the reformation (cf GM May 1912).

pathetic towards Du Plessis, he was politically supported by the Kuypersians, who denounced Du Plessis.<sup>26</sup>

Given the small influence of Kuypersianism in the contemporary Cape Church, it is very difficult to explain the fact that Du Plessis, a leader within the 'mainline' Stellenbosch tradition, was accused of heresy a decade after the death of Andrew Murray. In view of the anti-Kuypersian stance of the majority, it was only possible because some of the ministers and elders who belonged to the 'Murrayite tradition' made common cause with the small group of Kuypersians against Du Plessis.<sup>27</sup>

The evidence seems to suggest that a vociferous group of premillennialist fundamentalists, many of whom were trained in the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, acted as a bridge between Kuypersianism and the 'mainline' tradition of the NGK.<sup>28</sup> The role of this influential group has yet to be recognized in NGK historiography.<sup>29</sup> The most prominent of them was Dwight R Snyman, who was the minister at Stellenbosch for two decades. In addition he was the secretary of the Seminary board from 1927 and a very

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<sup>26</sup> Cf Davenport 1984:216,237. Malan, who was minister of education at that time, openly supported Du Plessis (cf the editorial comment OP April 1930:384f). It is ironical that Du Plessis was politically closer to Smuts than to Malan (cf Gerdener 1934:228,240).

<sup>27</sup> D Lategan and D G Malan, successors of Moorrees and Du Plessis, were associated with the Kuypersians in contributing to Die Gereformeerde Vaandel (cf Botha 1986:173,-177). However, Malan studied in Princeton and in Utrecht and was by no means a Kuypersian. (He was a younger brother of the famous Afrikaner liberal and supporter of Du Plessis, F S Malan.)

<sup>28</sup> D R Snyman, his brother Lionel, S F Weich and a number of others received doctorates from this Seminary (cf Hopkins 1977:313, 315).

<sup>29</sup> Snyman's role was recognized, but not his specific theological orientation (Hopkins 1980:247; Van der Watt 1987:165).

outspoken critic of Du Plessis.<sup>30</sup> The question is then: How did this group reach the position of influence in the NGK, in spite of its 'ethical' and inclusive tradition up to this time? Was this group the legitimate heirs of the Murray-Hofmeyr tradition, or must we look for other influences, perhaps political ones?<sup>31</sup>

It seems clear that our present knowledge of the traditional NGK or 'Stellenbosch theology' of the late 19th century, and its development in the first decades of this century, is extremely fragmentary. Anderssen denied that Andrew Murray had a major theological influence on the NGK (1979:9), but this position seems difficult to maintain. The real question is how the non-scholastic Murray-Hofmeyr tradition could co-exist with dogmatic Kuyperianism?

#### Existing Studies

I L Ferreira made a comprehensive study of the history of the Seminary up to 1963. His work is full of valuable information on the men and the movements around the Kweek-skool but, with the exception of a brief discussion of the views of Du Plessis (Ferreira 169ff), he did not attempt a description of 'Stellenbosch theology'. In his exhaustive study of 'liberalism' T N Hanekom described some of the views of N J Hofmeyr and Andrew

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<sup>30</sup> Snyman was editor of Die Ou Paaie, established to oppose Du Plessis's journal Het Zoeklicht. In 1929 he also led the attack on Du Plessis in the Presbytery of Stellenbosch (Ferreira 176). The influential premillennialist minister of Beaufort West, C Rabie, was also a member of the Seminary board or curatorium (Dreyer 1934a:116).

<sup>31</sup> Gerdener suggested that some of the opponents of Du Plessis were politically motivated (1943:228). The role of C R Kotze, representative of the OFS on the curatorium and later chairman of the Ossewa Brandwag, seems to confirm this suggestion (Moodie 1975:191,216; cf Kotze 1955). Snyman himself had 'conservative' racial views (cf OP Oct 1930). It is also a well-known fact that J D du Toit, who was called as witness in the case against Du Plessis, contributed to the ideology of apartheid (cf TVW VII:330ff).

Murray Jnr but his study did not proceed beyond 1863.<sup>32</sup>

The significance of the publications of Moodie, De Klerk, Hexham and others for our subject is limited by the fact that they worked mainly from sources relating to the racial problem. Others have studied aspects of the history and the missionary activities of the church, but their ecclesiological focus has likewise limited their contribution to a fuller understanding of the theology of the NGK.<sup>33</sup>

There are also a number of biographical studies of influential figures such as John and Andrew Murray, N J Hofmeyr, J I Marais and J du Plessis, but only a few of these have seriously attempted a theological evaluation.<sup>34</sup> Andrew Murray, who was never directly associated with Stellenbosch, is one of the very few NGK theologians whose thinking has been studied in some depth.<sup>35</sup> Coetzee confined himself to Murray's teaching on the Holy Spirit and Anderssen paid specific attention to his soteriology. Although these two studies do not agree in their evaluation of Murray's theology, they are important for our topic, because they can assist us in tracing differences and similarities between his theology and that of John Murray and Klaas Hofmeyr.

### The Aim of this Study

The aim of this study is to give a systematic exposition of the theology taught at Stellen-

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<sup>32</sup> Cf Hanekom 1951:458-475.

<sup>33</sup> Cf the works of G D Scholtz, P B van der Watt, I J van der Walt, and others.

<sup>34</sup> Kestell (1911) on Hofmeyr, Du Plessis (1920a) on Andrew Murray and Gerdener (1943) on Du Plessis seemed to have grappled more with theology than some of the more recent ones.

<sup>35</sup> Even so Coetzee commented on the paucity of serious studies of Murray's theology (1986:5).

bosch from 1859-1919; to ascertain what developments occurred in this theology; and to evaluate the various theological emphases in the light of their claim to be guided by Scripture alone. As the period under consideration coincided with the formative years of Afrikaner nationalism, attention will also be paid to 'theological' views on race, culture and nationalism.

### The Scope

Because the Christian faith is centered in the person and work of Jesus the Christ, Christology is a major factor in every theological system. Equally important is the close relationship between Christological beliefs and Christian practice.<sup>36</sup> We have further noted in early Stellenbosch theology a special interest in the humanity of Christ. Special attention will therefore be given to Christology. In the South African context, where black people have often been despised and neglected, it is necessary to pay attention to doctrines of man and the relationship between nature and grace. Because of the close relationship between church and people in the history of the NGK, ecclesiology was obviously another major theme. And finally, as each ideology has its own eschatology,<sup>37</sup> this topic demanded special attention.

In the nature of the case this study was mainly limited to the theology of the successive professors at Stellenbosch. It may be objected that Andrew Murray's contribution to NGK theology warrants much more attention than has been given here. However, as we have seen, his theology has been discussed recently by others. It should also be kept in

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<sup>36</sup> Cf the works of Niebuhr (1956) and Rushdoony (1972).

<sup>37</sup> Cf J A van Wyk 1978:7f; Moodie 1975:13ff.

mind that he agreed on many points with N J Hofmeyr.

The year 1919 was chosen as the terminus, because that year saw the end of an era in Stellenbosch theology. J I Marais, who had been a colleague of both John Murray and Hofmeyr, died in 1919 and P J G de Vos, who taught at the Kweekskool from 1883, retired at the end of that year. They were succeeded by two graduates of the Free University of Amsterdam, B B Keet and E E van Rooyen. Although very different in almost every way - personally, theologically and politically - their relationship with 'Kuyper's University' represented a new era in the NGK in general and in Stellenbosch theology in particular. Furthermore, as far as theology in general is concerned, we have it on the authority of Latourette that the general spirit of the 19th century lasted until the first World War (1970 V:1).

This period also saw momentous changes within South Africa. In 1910, in spite of the destructive and divisive Anglo-Boer War, the four South African territories were joined in the Union under an Afrikaans Prime Minister, Louis Botha. Afrikaner, English-speaking and black South Africans fought and died in the first World War. Modern Afrikaner nationalism formally entered politics during the same War when General J B M Hertzog resigned from the cabinet and organized the National Party. The same period also witnessed the birth of African nationalism, particularly because blacks were permanently excluded from the political process at the Union of 1910. In the social field problems associated with industrialization, especially in the mining industry, grew rapidly. After the first World War South Africa clearly faced a new era in its history and Stellenbosch theology did not escape the changes, the challenges and the temptations of this period.

### Sources and Method

The published sermons and prayer book of John Murray provided a good insight into his theology. In addition to these, notes taken down in class by J D Kestell proved to be a valuable source of his thinking.<sup>38</sup> Hofmeyr published a good number of books and articles, but, unlike the works of Andrew Murray, they were not all translated into Afrikaans. Original Dutch editions are difficult to obtain, but still available in archives and libraries. For J I Marais the Gereformeerde Maandblad and a number of smaller books provided ample information. P J G de Vos had a limited number of publications and therefore notes taken down by A J van Wijk Snr proved invaluable for an understanding of his theology.<sup>39</sup>

Theologians are treated in chronological order, so as to be able to show the development in their own, and where possible, within Stellenbosch theology. Attention is given to the sources of this theology in either European or Anglo-Saxon authors. A short biographical study of each major theologian was deemed essential to understand him within his historical context. On the other hand, the present writer acknowledges the danger of oversimplification, keeping in mind that historical 'development' is a complex reality which may easily be distorted when explained as the result of a simple case of cause and effect.

### Presuppositions of this Study

Harrison M Wright has observed that the weakness of South African historiography is that the past has been used too directly 'to fight the battles of the present' (1977:102). He

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<sup>38</sup> In deposit with the Institute for Contemporary History, University of the Orange Free State, Bloemfontein.

<sup>39</sup> In deposit with the NGK Archives in Cape Town.

advised that

historians will serve their purpose best not by directly using their historical work to promote their particular social purposes, but by fighting against their natural tendency to do so. (108).

This warning is especially relevant for the Christian historian who does not want to do his work in a spirit of self-justification, but in repentance and faith.<sup>40</sup>

How should one go about this in practice? It seems as if the first thing to be done is to recognize one's presuppositions or mind set for oneself. Second, to practise an 'enlightened self-criticism', that is, to develop a critical attitude toward's one's own context and presuppositions or, in theological terms, to allow them to come under the judgement of God. Third, 'to put them on the table' so as to enable others to judge whether one's research has succumbed to one's presuppositions. The following presuppositions are therefore submitted:

1. The possibility and validity of biblical theology is a major presupposition of this study. This may lead to several objections: It is often said that the reformation principle of sola scriptura has led to a hopeless diversity of interpretations of Scripture. It should be remembered, however, that the 16th century reformers did not interpret Scripture in isolation from history. Scripture was the final touchstone of their theology, but they were fully informed on the history of interpretation and worked in a conscious communion with

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<sup>40</sup> At the end of his magisterial study of the history of the church in the 19th and 20th centuries, K S Latourette wrote: 'As every historian who is honest and informed knows, even in the selection of facts the judgement of which are important cannot be avoided and depends largely on the observer's convictions. For the Christian this means that his faith is involved. It is his faith which enters into his appraisal of what is pertinent. Yet if that appraisal is to approximate the truth the Christian must be aware of observable facts and dodge none of them, including those which challenge his conclusions. He must be willing to modify or even to reject his appraisal if it is not in accord with the facts.' (1970 V:515).

the ancient church. They were not without their mistakes,<sup>41</sup> but the continued interest in their theology, from practically all denominations, is certainly an indication that they belong today to the universal church.<sup>42</sup> It is true that they were succeeded by the protestant scholastics, who tended to use the Bible in a mechanical way, but there can be little doubt that the reformers - employing the tools of the renaissance - laid the foundations of modern biblical theology. On the other hand, although reformation theology is therefore regarded as a crucial stage in the history of biblical theology, it did not have a perfect understanding of the biblical message.

It may also be objected that modern biblical theology is still in a state of flux, and can therefore not be an objective yardstick for the evaluation of other theologies. However, the present controversies in the field of biblical theology cannot destroy the work of previous centuries and recent decades that has brought a clearer understanding of the meaning of the biblical text. Christian theology has never been a simple matter - heresies were usually oversimplifications of the truth - but the major aspects of the biblical message are not obscure.

2. The authority of the Bible in matters of faith and conduct is another presupposition of this study. This authority does not depend on that of the reformers, modern biblical scholars or ancient ecclesiastical councils. The authority of the Bible is a spiritual one, created by the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of individuals - scholars as well as others - within the Christian community.

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<sup>41</sup> Their mistakes, at least, are known to all!

<sup>42</sup> For the scope of modern studies on the major reformers, cf Lotz 1985 and Schnucker 1988.

3. The third presupposition is the paradoxical nature of the church. Ecclesiastical history is a study of the shame and the glory of the church, which is both weak and strong at the same time. The true church of God is not a Platonic ideal, but a community of believers who trust in the name of Jesus Christ and reach out to one another and to the world, but do so imperfectly. Thus this community is itself also an object of faith; as its final character is not visible either to the critical or to the superstitious gaze of unbelief. The 'judgement of history' reveals that the church is often suffering, lamenting, fearful and always sinful. Her repentance, her confession of sins, her weakness and her suffering is an offence to unbelief. But faith also sees other dimensions of the church. Faith says that the church is also forgiven, rejoicing, holy and awe-inspiring. Therefore, when criticizing her sins, one may not forget the good things which God has done to her and through her. But when admiring the good things the church has done, it should be remembered that she was not called because she is a perfect society, but that God has chosen the weak and the despised to glorify him (1 Cor 1:27). The holy community which professes the catholic and apostolic faith is not yet a perfect one.

History teaches us that the true and the false church are often uncomfortably close to each other. The true 'church' of Jerusalem later became the 'false church of Babylon' which crucified the Lord. The church pre-eminent in love in the second century, became 'the anti-Christ' which persecuted the saints in the 16th century. Faith believes that the bride of Christ is not the mistress of the powers of the world, and yet in daily life they may exist in the same local Christian community.

4. A major assumption of this study has already been alluded to, namely that Christological views are of the utmost importance for practical Christianity. Tendencies towards

Arianism, Apollinarianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism and so forth had and still have distinct effects on the life of the church, in particular on the relationship between church and society.<sup>43</sup>

5. Another presupposition is that of justification by grace alone, through faith. Theologians, including the present writer, are to be judged by the Lord of the church. If we accuse the church, as our mother, we must do it in penitent solidarity with her. The student of church history must confess his sins with those of the fathers (Nehemiah 1:6), trusting in God's free forgiveness in Jesus Christ - not only for himself, but for the whole church of God which looks to Christ in repentance and faith.<sup>44</sup> To criticize the church without such identification with her, is to join forces with the accuser of the brethren.

6. The present writer must also acknowledge that his own cultural background and religious faith played a role in the selection of the theme of study, as well as in the evaluation of the significance of its various components. As a member of the NGK he would naturally like to put this church in a good light. As an Afrikaner he would naturally like to make a distinction between a true Afrikaner tradition and the less attractive aspects of Afrikaner-nationalism. As a Calvinist he would naturally prefer to hold other creeds at least as responsible as his own for South Africa's social and political maladies. As a Christian he hopes that Christian theology will in future contribute unambiguously to the well-being of all its peoples.

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<sup>43</sup> Cf note 36 above.

<sup>44</sup> As Karl Barth has said: 'To point out the sins, faults, and weaknesses of the scholastics and the mystics, Reformers and Romanists, Lutherans and Reformed, rationalists and pietists, orthodox and liberal ... cannot become a more urgent task than seeing and understanding them all in the light of the forgiveness of sins that is necessary and promised to us all'. (Quoted by Frank 1986:vi).

The exposure of these presuppositions does not mean that the ideal of objectivity has been abandoned, or should be a mere token, an ideal only to be contemplated. Presuppositions are spelt out, not to excuse an easy subjectivity, but as an attempt 'to fight against the natural tendency to do so'. Reliable knowledge and insights must still be sought, not by denying the very real human limitations of one's context, but by developing a critical attitude towards one's subjectivity, 'an ethos, an attitude of mind that seeks to do justice to people and to phenomena in their historical situation'.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> T J G Locher, quoted by Rasker 1974:18.

## Chapter 2

### JOHN MURRAY (1826-1882)

John Murray was the eldest son of Andrew Murray of Graaff-Reinet. His father was born and educated in Scotland but his mother, Maria Stegmann, was from a Cape family of German and Huguenot descent (Du Plessis 1920a:29). His ancestry thus contained a first generation immigrant and settler stock of much longer standing. In 1838 he and his younger brother Andrew went to Scotland where they stayed with their uncle Dr John Murray of the North Church in Aberdeen. They studied at the Aberdeen Grammar School and subsequently at the Marischal College where John graduated AM with distinction in 1845 (Van der Watt 1979:40).

While they were there the Disruption of the Scottish church took place and their uncle and a large section of his congregation founded the 'Free North' Church. The evangelist W C Burns visited Aberdeen often during the forties and he was instrumental in helping John to come to an assurance of his salvation (30f). After considerable doubt he decided to dedicate his life to the ministry, but his introspective nature caused him many doubts also later in his life.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf Snyman 1934:88; Van der Watt 1979:55. Gustave Maeder, son of a French missionary, who stayed for fifteen years in Murray's home, related that Murray encouraged him when he became despondent in the ministry with the following words: 'Keep on preaching, even if preaching is a terrible burden: woe unto you if you do not preach the gospel: are you better than Isaiah or Paul? Even if it is difficult for you, talk to the people about their eternal salvation: you know yourself how difficult it was for me, my son, to talk to you about your soul'. (Cf GM Feb 1916).

In July 1845 he and Andrew crossed to the Continent to pursue their theological studies at Utrecht. After experiencing the evangelical fervour in the Scottish church, John was shocked by the widespread influence of rationalism in the Netherlands. The open contempt of ministers and students for what they termed 'Dordtse ortodoksie' appalled him. Neither did he find the apologetic and somewhat lethargic orthodoxy of his teachers at Utrecht very congenial (Du Plessis 1920a:74). In spite of the lack of inspiration from his teachers John progressed well in exegetical, historical and dogmatic studies and was especially impressed by the thoroughness and depth of research exemplified by certain German theologians (74).

He and other South African students made contact with the Reveil in the Netherlands, a renewal movement interested in personal salvation and holiness, missions and works of charity.<sup>2</sup> Some of the leaders of this movement were associated with the Amsterdam Seminary supported by the Free Church of Scotland.<sup>3</sup> It was among the members of this group that the Murrays and their other South African friends felt most at home when in the Netherlands. It may be noted that there was a strong lay element in its leadership, that they were from the upper classes, warmly patriotic and with a special interest in the conversion of Israel (Rasker 1974:75). Towards the end of their time in the Netherlands the Murrays paid a visit to Pastor Blumhardt of the Rhineland who was known for his fruitful ministry (Van der Watt 1979:55).

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<sup>2</sup> Van der Watt 1979:55; Rasker 1974:71,96ff.

<sup>3</sup> This Seminary was founded in 1852 by the Mission Board of the Free Church of Scotland. The famous Dutch poet and Jewish Christian, I da Costa, lectured here (Viviers 1978:47ff; Rasker 1974:85f). Both J C Pauw, a member of the Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk who became a leading figure in the NGSK and Frans Lion-Cachet received their training at this Seminary (Viviers 1978:50; Gerdener 1934:111).

There is no evidence that either of the brothers had any direct contact with the Christelike Gereformeerde Kerk that was formed after the Afscheiding or Secession of 1834. This seems strange if one considers the sympathy of the Murrays with the Disruption in Scotland as well as the strong witness of the afscheidenes to the soteriology of Dort, specifically its doctrine of regeneration. However, the people of the Reveil were never able to identify themselves totally with the Afscheiding because they considered it schismatic.<sup>4</sup> In their subsequent attitude towards the secession from the NGK that resulted in the formation of the Gereformeerde Kerk in SA in 1859, it is clear that the Murrays saw no parallel between this secession and the Scottish Disruption of 1843.

In November 1848 John Murray was back in South Africa and in May 1849 he was ordained at Burgersdorp in the North-Eastern Cape, where he laboured with dedication and success until 1858 (Van der Watt 1979:175). After several fruitless attempts to obtain Dutch theologians for the Seminary established at Stellenbosch, Murray and G W A van der Lingen of Paarl were called for this task. Van der Lingen declined and thus Murray became the first professor of the Seminary. N J Hofmeyr, also a graduate from Utrecht, subsequently accepted a call as the 'second professor' (Keet 1934:92). Murray was responsible for Old Testament and Systematic Theology while Hofmeyr mainly taught New Testament and Church History.

Together with the genial Hofmeyr the introvert Murray laid the foundations of the theology of the NGK (Keet 1934:91). Because of his sustained interest in and support of

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<sup>4</sup> It is possible that social distance between the groups played a role in this, as the supporters of the Afscheiding were mainly from the poorer classes, while the leader of the Reveil for example, G Groen van Prinsterer, was secretary of the cabinet of William I. However, Van Prinsterer claimed that he had considerable support from de lagere standen der maatschappij. (1954:169; cf Rasker 1974:70-73,106).

education, his reputation as an educator somewhat overshadowed his reputation as a theologian. He was one of the founders of the 'Victoria College' that became the University of Stellenbosch and also wrote a variety of books suited to the religious and educational needs of the Cape population. His grandson observed that he realized that the Dutch population needed the ability to read, and books to read, and not a treatise on philosophy (Du Toit 1955:209). Keet said: 'He was a gift of God to the church and Seminary in a time when pioneering work had to be done' (91).

Murray declined an honorary doctorate from Marischal College, Aberdeen, on the grounds that he did not produce a literary work of lasting value.<sup>5</sup> This is an indication both of his humility and his appreciation of academic quality. Although Hofmeyr was an able theologian, Murray was described as the 'mind' and Hofmeyr as the 'heart' of the Kweekskool (Snyman 1934:82). He was greatly respected by his students, because of his intellectual abilities, while Hofmeyr was greatly loved. One of their students contrasted the two professors thus:

The reserved, serious and reticent Murray, whom we honoured as a father, feared as prophet, and admired as a man of learning; and the buoyant, idealistic and yet practical Hofmeyr, who gave himself with heart and soul to us, who attracted us, with heart and soul to him, and to whom we confided the deepest secrets of our hearts.<sup>6</sup>

His ability and influence as theologian and preacher may easily be underestimated. This is

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<sup>5</sup> Cf Keet 1934:91. Mackinnon, who studied at the Kweekskool during the 1880's, said that he was also offered a doctorate from Utrecht (1887:28), but no other reference to this could be found.

<sup>6</sup> De afgetrokkene, ernstige en stemmige Murray, die wij als vader eerden, als profeet vreesden, en als geleerde bewonderen; en de opgeruimde idealistische en toch praktische Hofmeyr, die zich met hart en ziel aan ons gaf, en ons met hart en ziel tot zich trok, en aan wien wij de diepste geheimen van ons zieleleven openbaarden. (Quoted by Kestell 1911:150).

possible because of his comparatively early death, on 27 December 1882 at the age of 56. In his own time he was in great demand as speaker and preacher (Van der Watt 1979:175). As a theological teacher he was highly rated by his contemporaries. Professor J I Marais, a brilliant scholar, was impressed by his wide knowledge and clear insight into exegetical and other theological problems (178). Moorrees said that he was 'a man of deep and versatile learning, a calm and rational thinker, thorough in his work, calm in his actions and a most careful speaker'. He considered a sincere love for the Lord a necessity in the lives of young ministers, but he also insisted that 'a learned exposition of the Bible and a thorough study of history must undergird our theology' (1937:878ff).

It is unfortunate that Murray never published his mature theological views. His Kinderbijbel and Catechisatie-boek were his most famous publications.<sup>7</sup> The Kinderbijbel or Children's Bible went through numerous editions and was translated into Afrikaans, Xhosa, Sotho, Shona and Chewa. He also published various volumes of sermons and books with prayers, some of them especially for children. His Catechisatie-boek also was often reprinted and was used for catechetical instruction in the NGK until it was gradually replaced during the 1940s by the Katkisasieboek of G B A Gerdener. His Gebedenboek contains a large variety of prayers for private prayer and family worship and is unique in the history of the NGK. It was reprinted ten times and also translated into Afrikaans (Murray 1875 and 1937). The beneficial influence of these publications on generations of South Africans is difficult to imagine. His Volksleesboek was a practical example of his concern to give the Dutch-speaking population something to read to broaden their knowled-

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<sup>7</sup> His Catechisatie-boek was an instruction manual for young people, based on the so-called Kort Begrip, which was an abridged version of the Heidelberg Catechism.

ge of the world at large.<sup>8</sup>

Murray's early years at Graaff-Reinet and his ministry at Burgersdorp brought him into contact with the people of the Eastern districts, their virtues and their vices, as well as their peculiar needs (cf Murray 1877). And his life was spent in fulfilling what he perceived as the basic needs of the Cape population. These were first and foremost a solid knowledge and experience of the Christian faith, secondly educated and enlightened minds and thirdly disciplined and well directed lives.

Without suggesting that he approved of all attitudes and customs of the Afrikaner, it would seem that Murray identified himself fully with the population of the Cape.<sup>9</sup> While fears were expressed in the Cape Synod that a 'Scottish' professor might neglect the Dutch language and ecclesiastical tradition,<sup>10</sup> Murray did more than anybody else in his time to provide the Dutch-speaking population with literature suited to their needs.<sup>11</sup> His loyalty to the Dutch ecclesiastical tradition can be seen in his decision to use the Kort Begrip, rather

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<sup>8</sup> He discussed topics of general interest - history, farming, geography, nature - from William Wilberforce to Mohammed, and from the planting of rice to information on eclipses of the sun and moon (cf Murray 1868a; Du Toit 1955:210).

<sup>9</sup> He married a Miss Ziervogel whose father was M.L.A for Graaff-Reinet. His eldest daughter married one of his students, J J T Marquard who was moderator of the N G Kerk in the OFS during the Anglo-Boer War. His son Andrew became a minister in the NHK in Transvaal (Dreyer 1934b:247).

<sup>10</sup> G W A van der Lingen of the Paarl, son of a LMS missionary, proposed that the professors should use the Dutch language also in their homes. Synod rejected it with 40 against 36 votes (Snyman 1934:37).

<sup>11</sup> Snyman 1934:37; Van der Watt 1979:179. According to Gustave Maeder Murray's daughters spoke and wrote perfect Dutch, taught by Murray himself, but English was the language of the home (GM March 1916). It should be noted that the 'coloured' members of the Cape Church formed a part of the Dutch speaking population. (For Murray's support for a translation of the Bible in Afrikaans, cf Du Toit 1955:213,158; Keet and Tomlinson 1925:137).

than the Shorter Catechism, as basis for his exposition of the Creed.<sup>12</sup> Murray even found it easier to consider himself 'a Dutchman' than his uncle Wilhelm Stegmann.<sup>13</sup>

### The influence of Scotland

The correspondence between the two Murray brothers and their father in Graaff-Reinet reveals a sustained interest in ecclesiastical and educational matters, in spite of their youth (Du Plessis 1920a:39ff). Many of the characteristics of their uncle's ministry in Aberdeen appeared subsequently in the lives of the two eldest Murray boys. Like their uncle they were interested in evangelism, in missions, in education and in providing suitable books for the religious and general education of the church folk (Van der Watt 1979:25ff). And both John and Andrew learnt the great lesson of the Disruption - they felt very strongly about state interference in ecclesiastical matters, as indeed their father also did. There is no question that these aspects of the Scottish ecclesiastical tradition appeared in John Murray.

The 'received tradition' seems to have been that Murray represented the typical theology of the Free Church of Scotland. Van der Watt noted Hofmeyr's statement that Murray's theology was 'not confessional' without comment (1979:173ff). It is true that he was not favourably impressed by the spirituality and the academic quality of his professors at Utrecht, but the fact that he studied an unnamed 'German system' independently from his teachers suggests that the continental influence on him was significant (Du Plessis

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<sup>12</sup> He used it because it was reeds van ouds met kerklijke gesag onder de leden onzen Gereformeerde Kerk bekleed. (1903: viii). And this in spite of the fact that he used the Shorter Catechism in his own home (cf G A Maeder in GM March 1916).

<sup>13</sup> Du Plessis 1920a:73. Stegmann kept his diary in English instead of Dutch (cf Stegmann 1852). Du Plessis reports that he stayed for a number of years with his sister and family in Graaff-Reinet (29f).

1920a:74). On the other hand his special study of Calvin and Witsius while in Holland, should be ascribed, strange as it may seem, to the influence of Scotland. Professor du Plessis reminded us that Calvin was ignored if not despised by contemporary 'Calvinist' Holland (63).

The Dutch theologian Herman Witsius was highly rated by all evangelicals in the Scottish church (Macleod 1974:219). Apart from his Economy of the Covenants, he was well-known for his Animadversiones Irenicae that was an attempt to reconcile the neonomians and the antinomians in the English churches.<sup>14</sup> The Scots evangelicals insisted both on the free offer of the gospel to all sinners - the emphasis of the 'Marrow-men' - as well as the necessity of a holy life as a sign of obedience in those who have been saved by free grace (Macleod 1974:140ff). This is the typical approach of the covenantal theology of Witsius and must be part of the reason why Witsius was popular in Scotland. This double emphasis - on the freeness of the offer and on the necessity of a holy life - is clearly found in Murray's theology. Professor B B Keet said that he was 'mightily under the impression of the holiness of God and the sinfulness of sin and reminded one of Alexander Whyte' (1934:91). In his discussion of election Murray emphasizes the duty of the church to bring the gospel to all races and peoples as well as the duty of the sinner not to worry about his election but to believe in the Gospel. He advised the repentant sinner to trust in the promise of the assistance of the Holy Spirit - assurance of salvation will be given in God's time (Murray 1903:129f). In this sense we can say that Murray stood in the Scots evangelical tradition.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This occurred when Witsius was chaplain to the Netherlands Embassy in London (Macleod 1974:140).

<sup>15</sup> It may be noted that the covenant theologians were the biblical theologians of their

Murray's study of Calvin should not be taken as an indication that his theology would be similar to that of a Charles Hodge or an Abraham Kuyper, who both represent a revival of the reformed scholasticism of the seventeenth century. The debate on Calvin's relation to 'Calvinism' is still not concluded, but it is generally accepted that scholastic Calvinism was strongly influenced by Beza.<sup>16</sup> The rise of Arminianism in Holland and of the school of Saumur in France were both reactions to the 'consistent Calvinism' of Beza. Murray's biblical theology suggests that he did not see Calvin through the eyes of the reformed scholastics. However, in his early period he thought within the paradigm of covenant theology.<sup>17</sup>

#### Murray and Ebrard of Erlangen

J D Kestell reports that Murray used the Christliche Dogmatik of J H A Ebrard of Erlangen as textbook for Systematic Theology at Stellenbosch during his time (1932:34).

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time, influenced by the German Reformed scholar Johan Koch (Coccejus) of Bremen and later Leyden. They were in fact opposed by the strict Dortian party because the latter believed that they weakened the concept of unconditional election by stressing the historical character of redemption (cf J W Hofmeyr 1975:25ff, Davis 1982:123ff).

<sup>16</sup> The literature on this topic is extensive and the debate not yet concluded, cf for example Bangs 1975; Kendall 1979; Prestwich 1986 and McGiffert 1988.

<sup>17</sup> In his Catechisatie-boek, first published in 1857, he explained the 'covenant of works' in the following way: 'Reformed authors of previous times liked to explain the relationship between God and Adam as that of a covenant (Hosea 6:7). This covenant into which Adam was put in relation to God, is called the covenant of works, because Adam was able to earn eternal life by his good works of obedience'. (1903:53). He further explained that Adam was 'sufficiently endowed' to be able to fulfill his part of 'the covenant or contract', this means that 'he was able to love and obey God perfectly ... the angels of God rejoiced because of man ... the masterpiece of God on earth' (1903:54). As Murray later used Ebrard's Dogmatik, he possibly changed his mind about the 'covenant of works'.

The notes taken down by Kestell in the systematic theology classes of 1880 confirm that Murray used Ebrard's two volume work as his major textbook.<sup>18</sup> A few words on Ebrard will therefore be appropriate here. J H August Ebrard (1818-1888) was professor of theology, first in Zurich and afterwards in Erlangen, where he held the special chair in Reformed Theology.<sup>19</sup> A descendent of Huguenot pastors, Ebrard stood partially in the tradition of the French Reformed Church,<sup>20</sup> combined with the biblical and exegetical tradition of the German Reformed Church. A convinced Calvinist in his sacramental theology, he nevertheless often criticized the reformed scholastics of the 17th Century whom he called 'die a"ltere Dogmatiker'.<sup>21</sup>

According to his biographer, Ebrard's Wissenschaftliche Kritik der Evangelische Geschichte (1843) put him 'in die erste Reihe der Ka"mpfer gegen D F Strauss'.<sup>22</sup> It may not be fair to call him a confessional theologian, as he did not approve of the extreme confessionalism of a theologian like E W Hengstenberg. He was well-informed, open to biblical and historical studies and criticism, yet loyal to the major doctrines of the historic Christian

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<sup>18</sup> References to the paragraphs of the Christliche Dogmatik are very distinct, and it is possible to distinguish between Murray's exposition of Ebrard and his own comments, e.g. where and why he disagreed with Ebrard. The available notes cover the first semester of 1880 and deals only with Christology (cf Kestell 1880).

<sup>19</sup> In later years he was a Konsistorialrat in Speyer but because of differences with the authorities on their favouring the Lutheran Church he returned as Konsistorialrat to Erlangen and as pastor of the French speaking Reformed Church in that city (cf Haas 1961). In his early years he had high hopes for the unification of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Germany (Bruce 1889:411).

<sup>20</sup> Cf his appreciation of the theology of Amyraut (1863:724ff).

<sup>21</sup> Murray translates: de oude dogmatici (Kestell 1880:18).

<sup>22</sup> Haas 1961:28. Strauss, on the other hand, had a dim view of this work and described it as 'orthodoxy restored on the basis of impudence' (quoted by Albert Schweitzer 1981:117).

faith. His theology may perhaps be described as a biblical and 'enlightened' confessionalism.<sup>23</sup>

Although it is impossible to deny the influence of Schleiermacher on him - as on most theologians of the 19th century - it would probably be wrong to classify Ebrard simply with the 'mediating' theologians. The kenoticists, almost by definition, wanted to be more biblical and confessional than the mediating theologians. The former denied what the latter assumed, both in Christology and in soteriology, namely that man is capable of becoming divine.<sup>24</sup> The kenoticists, less under the influence of pantheistic mysticism, upheld the distinction between man and God. Ebrard explicitly denied the charge of pantheism, arguing that his theology is rather an antidote against pantheism.<sup>25</sup>

It is significant that Ebrard discussed the doctrine of election towards the end of his Christliche Dogmatik - just before the section on eschatology (1863:694ff). He denied that the doctrine of unconditional election - Jenes Theorem Beza's - was of the essence of the historical Reformed faith and he rejected both the supra- and infralapsarian views.<sup>26</sup> The mystery of election, the decretum arcanum refer to the fact that God so ordained that man

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<sup>23</sup> Hodge, who severely criticizes his kenoticism, says that Ebrard was 'addicted' to the reformed faith and that his theology 'has a far more Scriptural character than most modern German systems'. (1883 III:23). This judgement was probably based on Ebrard's defence of the reformed view of the Lord's Supper. J J Muller did not admit that he was reformed and described him a 'Melanchtoniaan' (1931:70).

<sup>24</sup> K Barth did not discuss the kenoticists in his famous study on the theologians of the 19th century. His comment on the 'mediating theologians' is significant: 'Spinoza was the secret patron saint of all enlightened opponents of the Enlightenment' (1973:394).

<sup>25</sup> 1863:159. Ebrard believed that there is an absolute contradiction between God's 'self-limitation' (kenoticism) and pantheism which ascribes everything (including human sin) ultimately to God. In his view God's self-limitation did not start at the Incarnation, but at creation, specifically when God created man with a free will (1862:222).

<sup>26</sup> Ebrard 1862:57f; 1863:717,726.

should himself be responsible for his own damnation. The infralapsarian position is called a 'public fraud'.<sup>27</sup> He also criticized the Arminians for superficiality and incipient rationalism, and argues that their God is, like the God of the supralapsarians, a God of chance.<sup>28</sup> The election of the church was like Israel's corporate rather than individual (1863: 701). It does not determine a change in the subjective state of the individual, but his relationship with the church, that should lead to a true relationship to Christ.<sup>29</sup> Beza and his followers confused the assurance of faith with the certainty of a dry logical deduction (1863:717). Election gives certainty to 'the historical relationship of an individual to the church' (1863: 702). Unconditional election is 'a Genevan doctrine' that was never accepted by the German Reformed churches, and by the Dutch churches only in 1619 (1862:58). His argument is strongly based on the 'non-predestinarian' and 'anthropological' character of the Heidelberg Catechism and the two Swiss Confessions.<sup>30</sup>

The fact that Murray used Ebrard's Dogmatik is significant for our understanding of Murray. In a small colonial seminary, founded to counteract 'modernism', one would expect to find the books of de oude dogmatici of reformed orthodoxy rather than one who criticized them.<sup>31</sup> But the point is that Murray understood his calling positively: he had to train theologians well-grounded in exegetical and historical knowledge. In spite of his

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<sup>27</sup> Ein offener Trugschluss (1863:698f).

<sup>28</sup> He used the words Willkur and Zufall (1862:72).

<sup>29</sup> Cf 2 Peter 1:10.

<sup>30</sup> The Heidelberg Catechism only refers to election in the context of the Church (Question 54). It is 'anthropological' because it emphasizes man's need for, and his joy in salvation (cf Question 1).

<sup>31</sup> Kestell's reference to Ebrard (1932:34) did not receive any attention from either Van der Watt (1979) or J M du Toit (1955).

conservative temperament, he was not satisfied simply to conserve a tradition, but 'to find the truth and to build on it'.<sup>32</sup> We may assume that it was Ebrard's exegetical style and thorough grasp of historical theology, that appealed to Murray.<sup>33</sup>

Equally important for our understanding of Murray is the fact that he did not follow Ebrard uncritically. While he agreed with Ebrard in some of his criticisms of reformed orthodoxy, he was independent enough to differ from him where he believed that Ebrard deviated from Scripture. Discussing reconciliation, for example, Murray said:

Ebrard perverts the Scriptures when he teaches that (Jesus) reconciled the sinner to God, and not God to the sinner. Sin brought a mutual estrangement, therefore *hilasmos* implies a mutual reconciliation. One should guard against a one-sided overemphasis on this truth as if the Son, and not the Father, loved the sinner. (Kestell 1880:26).

Where Ebrard rejected the traditional view that there were different stages or grades in Christ's humiliation and exaltation (1862:217), Murray upheld the view of the Calvinist fathers, pointing out that both in his humiliation and in his exaltation, there was 'a development, a history' (Kestell 1880:33). Of more importance is the fact that he opposed Ebrard where he, like the reformer Osiander, tended to see justification as being subjective.

Here righteousness does not refer to what happens now within us, but to that which was once and for all perfected on behalf of us. Faith is the subjective appropriation of this ... Faith unites us with the heavenly high priest. (Kestell 1880:21).

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<sup>32</sup> Keet 1943:90; cf Moorrees 1937:878. His use of the progressive Ebrard stands in contrast to his 'Scottish reserve and Dutch unexcitableness'. (*Schotsche terughoudendheid en Hollandsche bedaardheid*. Van der Watt 1979:174).

<sup>33</sup> Ebrard's emphasis on exegesis has been noted above. Murray followed a similar method (cf Kestell 1880:21).

Murray and contemporary Dutch Theology

As far as contemporary Holland is concerned Murray's theology bears the closest resemblance to the early representatives of the so-called 'ethical-eirenical' school, D Chantepie de la Saussaye (1818-1874) and J H Gunning (1829-1904).

Murray and his friends were, as we know, in sympathy with the revival movement. The Reveil stimulated a variety of ecclesiastical and theological movements but had itself no representative theologian.<sup>34</sup> As we noted above, the people of the Reveil considered the Afscheiding schismatic. Neither were they satisfied with H F Kohlbrugge, because of his emphasis on justification by faith alone and, in their opinion, a corresponding neglect of sanctification.<sup>35</sup> Murray believed in justification by faith (1903:144), but he did not specially emphasize it. On the other hand, although he was theologically close to the 'historical-apologetical' school of Utrecht,<sup>36</sup> Murray found some of them at least, too cold, with too little fervour for the gospel. They compared unfavourably with the people of the Reveil 'who understood the cry: "Give me Jesus or I die!"'<sup>37</sup>

De la Saussaye Snr was initially influenced by Schleiermacher and Alexandre Vinet,<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Haitjema 1964:202; Rasker 1974:75. Leaders like Van Prinsterer and Da Costa were mostly 'lay' theologians. Andrew Murray and N J Hofmeyr were possibly the most typical theologians of the Reveil.

<sup>35</sup> Kohlbrugge's theology is discussed by Barth (1973:634ff), the only Dutch theologian to receive this honour. (For his life, cf Rasker 1974:100-112).

<sup>36</sup> N Beets, J I Doedes and J J van Oosterzee were the major representatives (Rasker 1974:134).

<sup>37</sup> Haitjema 1964:202 (cf 214); Du Plessis 1920a:68.

<sup>38</sup> Rasker 1974:127. According to Latourette Vinet 'was variously called the French Chalmers, the Pascal of Protestantism and the Schleiermacher of French theology'. (1970:213, cf 240). Although Vinet criticized aspects of the Reveil in Geneva, Van Prinsterer recognized him as a fellow-evangelical (1954:192ff).

but around 1858 he and J H Gunning commenced a study of Calvin (Rasker 1974:142). The Reveil leader Isaac da Costa opened De la Saussaye's eyes to the importance of the 'Jewish and historical' character of revelation (128). His theology was, in the words of Rasker

Christocentric against the rationalistic humanism of the Groningen school; diametrically opposed to the modernists; personalistic against the institutionalization of the church by the confessionalists; ecclesiastic against the individualists and separatists; and Jewish-eschatological against the prevailing evolutionary spirit of the 19th century. (138).

We find some of these characteristics also in the theology of Murray, for example, his lack of enthusiasm for both modernism and mere confessionalism and his emphasis on the historical character of revelation. De la Saussaye and Gunning were also kenoticists (Rasker 1974:129,144).

Murray's views on the doctrine of reconciliation likewise show influences of the Dutch 'ethical school'. He criticized, for example, Anselm's concept of 'equivalent suffering' and then added: 'Many after him did not properly understand the ethical character of (God's) punishment of sin, and therefore neither the ethical character of salvation'.<sup>39</sup>

#### Was Murray a Calvinist?

There are only a few references to the doctrine of election in Murray's works, but wherever he referred to election, it was usually quite significant. In his trial sermon or proefpreek he expressed the conviction that 'the church is from God. He has elected her and called her in Christ and renewed her by his Spirit ... She was given to him by the Father,

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<sup>39</sup> Kestell 1880:23 (cf Ebrard 1863:173).

as a result of his struggle through the labour of his soul' (1848:7). In spite of the few explicit references to election, this close relationship between election, the church, the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit always remained the background and basis of Murray's teaching and preaching.

In his Catechisatie-boek Murray followed the Heidelberg Catechism and discussed election in the context of the doctrine of the church. He explained election in infralapsarian terms and quoted Article 16 of the Confessio Belgica, but did not refer to the canons of Dort (1903:129f). It is especially significant that, in the eventful year of 1857, Murray pointed out that the doctrine of election does not limit salvation to certain races.<sup>40</sup> He emphasized the fact that all nations and races must be brought into the one true church of Christ. 'Terribly contrary to God's Word', said Murray, is the teaching of those who think 'that certain less privileged races or nations should not be brought into the one true church of Christ!'<sup>41</sup>

In his address at the opening of the Kweekskool, in 1859, Murray warned against one-sided human systems that distort the riches of God's truth and he identified God's sovereignty in salvation as part of these riches. The confession of the Reformed church contains 'the most correct and trustworthy expression of divine truth in the doctrine of

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<sup>40</sup> The Catechisatie-boek was first published in 1857, the year when the Cape Synod allowed racial separation in the Church.

<sup>41</sup> dat eenige minder-bevoorrechte geslachten of volken niet behoren toegebracht te worden tot die eene ware Kerk van Christus! (1903:129).

God's sovereign grace in Christ, with the system based on it'.<sup>42</sup> But he added that the confession itself always directs us to the Scriptures as the only standard and perfect source of the truth: 'Therefore while we honour the doctrinal system of the church ... we put Scripture infinitely higher' (Moorrees 1937:878).

He warned that election is one of the mysteries of Scripture that cannot be fathomed by the human mind, but must be believed 'with humility' (1903:130). A similar view was expressed in a lecture many years later when he asked the student Abraham Kriel if he understood the doctrine of election. Murray was satisfied when Kriel replied in the negative and went on to say: 'We must not forget that the fall corrupted not only man's heart but also his mind, so that we cannot fathom the mind of God' (Kestell 1932:35).

On the question of the primacy of grace, Murray came out firmly on the side of Dort, but the concept of the decrees of God, specifically the 'decree of reprobation' is never mentioned. In an article, obviously intended for the theologian and 'intelligent layman', he made some important observations on the Synod of Dort.<sup>43</sup> The Arminians denied 'the doctrine of Augustine, Calvin and the apostle Paul' on election, explaining it as referring to God's foreknowledge. Because of this foreseen faith God gives believers the gifts of regeneration and salvation. The 'anti-Remonstrants' believed that this view implied that salvation depended 'on man in the first place' (GM July 1913). In order to uphold the freeness of God's grace, the fathers denied that election is based on man's foreseen faith.

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<sup>42</sup> De meest juiste en getrouwe uitdrukking der goddelijke waarheid bezit in de leer van Gods souvereine genade in Christus, met het daarop gegronde stelsel (Moorrees 1937:878).

<sup>43</sup> First published in the journal Elpis, and reprinted under the title Wat is Gereformeerd? in GM June and July 1913.

Murray freely acknowledged that the original Arminians 'did not move so far from the truth as the ancient Pelagians', because they upheld the necessity of grace for salvation. The 'unquestionable piety and enthusiasm of many followers of Wesley' is also specifically noted, as well as the fact that 'many Arminians are orthodox in other respects'. But he went on to warn against being 'careless about the doctrines of grace' (GM July 1913). The detrimental results of a carelessness about free grace are already becoming manifest among 'certain American Wesleyans'.<sup>44</sup>

With dry humour Murray explained that the reformed theologians foresaw that the Arminian teaching on foreseen faith would eventually develop into gross Pelagianism. That was also the reason why Luther and Calvin emphasized God's free grace against the 'works-righteousness' of Rome. The Synod of Dort was quite rightly not satisfied only to condemn the most obvious excesses of Pelagianism, but 'went down to the root of things' and pointed to the various consequences of Arminianism (GM July 1913). Murray was able to penetrate into the thinking of the Synod of Dort, without becoming bogged down, either by a literalistic confessionalism or by an emotional Arminianism. His position is in fact remarkable for its acuteness, its wisdom and its moderation.

From his famous lecture, Some Characteristics of our Fellow Colonists, one may get the impression that Murray changed his mind on the doctrine of election in later years. Generally speaking he gave a sympathetic view of the so-called Doppers, and it is obvious that he was impressed by the simplicity and integrity of these conservative people. Describ-

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<sup>44</sup> Voorts merke men op, dat er, vooral onder de Amerikaansche Wesleyanen, soms duidelijk genoeg gezien wordt, hoe de natuurlijke strekking van eene verkeerde leerwijze om zich verder en verder van de waarheid te verwijderen niet geheel achter blijven kan (GM July 1913).

ing their peculiarities he referred, among other things, to 'their ambition to preserve the most rigid type of Calvinistic orthodoxy' and he compared them with 'the hyper-Calvinistic Highlanders of Scotland'.<sup>45</sup> We should, however, not read too much into this comparison. As 'hyper-Calvinists' did not believe that Christ should be offered 'indiscriminately to unawakened sinners', it is unlikely that Murray intended to criticize the doctrine of election with this comparison. We may assume that he believed that many Afrikaners did not have a correct understanding of the doctrine of election, as he explained it, for example, in his Catechisatie-boek.

That Murray did not depart from the primacy of grace in later years, is confirmed by what we find in his prayer book. An important dimension in his theology, already found in his Catechisatie-boek, is the unworthiness of 'the children of Adam' to receive salvation, and their inability to believe without the gracious work of the Holy Spirit (1903:129).

In a prayer 'for an awakened sinner for a deeper insight into his own inability and the sovereignty of God', Murray wrote:

Lord, I feel something of the greatness of my sins, and also something of my inability to save myself ... Your holy Word assures me that I am by nature as unable to do that what is spiritual and truly good, as a dead person (is) to make himself alive. I can contribute as little to the regeneration of my soul as I contributed to my physical birth. (1937:225f).

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<sup>45</sup> Murray 1877:376. As former minister at Burgersdorp, Murray knew many of these people personally. One gets the impression from his lecture that he loved the characters he described, but it is also clear that he considered them as not properly belonging to the enlightened nineteenth century. The 'distinguishing characteristic of this class of colonial farmers' is an 'extreme conservatism, a resolution strictly to walk in old paths' and to avoid everything new-fashioned (1877:373). 'His old-world notions are uninfluenced by the nineteenth century. The sermon-book he reads was written at a time when the Copernican system was not yet generally received by educated men'. (377).

He asked that the Spirit should convince him that 'I am unable to convert myself from one single sin, unable to pray one true prayer, unable to exercise the true saving faith in Jesus Christ' (1937:226). Of special significance is the following prayer:

Great God, You are sovereign, free in all what You do. You are not obliged to show me even the least bit of grace. You would be just if You would reject me because of my sins and would damn me eternally. Even if you would make me an eternal example of your just judgement, I would not be able to accuse You of unfairness or injustice or unrighteousness.

Therefore I commit myself as clay in the hands of the potter. You have the right to make with me as You see fit. But because of the precious gospel, I dare to call on You: Have mercy on the work of your hands; I am your creature o Lord, do not cast me out forever. Make me, in your almighty and sovereign grace, a vessel to your honour and glory. (1937:226f).

As an evangelical Calvinist Murray saw the sovereignty of God as mainly related to man's salvation, and as being, at its deepest level, not a message of despair but of hope:

Merciful Saviour, speak to me now as you did of old: 'Lazarus, come forth' and I, who am dead, will live and go forth from the grave. Speak to me as once You did to the wretched man in the synagogue ... and I will stretch out the withered hand of faith to appropriate your grace ... Speak to me as to the sick man at Bethesda ... and I will arise to a new life. (1937: 227).

From the paucity of references to election in his sermons it is clear that Murray did not have the same emphasis on election as the reformed theologians of the 17th century, but it is equally clear that he accepted it as an important Biblical doctrine.<sup>46</sup> It is significant that, as we have seen, he utilized its teaching to counteract the belief that some 'nations or races' should be excluded from the church.

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<sup>46</sup> There is, in other words, no evidence that he accepted Ebrard's pra"destinationsfreie Calvinism.

### Creation and Sin

Generally speaking Murray adhered to traditional pre-Darwinian views on creation. In his Catechisatie-boek he said that God 'the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ' is the 'Creator and Sustainer of all things'. Before anything was created 'the Father loved the Son' and his love also moved him to create man (1903:85).

From his sermons and prayers it is evident that Murray held traditional views on man's sinfulness. He confessed that the 'heart is proud and satisfied with itself' and he prayed: 'Teach us to know the depravity within us, so that we should not be rejected with all those who are proud and self-righteous' (1875:34). In a morning prayer he said:

I acknowledge that I am a sinner, totally unworthy of your grace, and deserving of your righteous judgement. I judge myself the chief of sinners. I loathe myself. I repent of my transgressions. I am ashamed before your divine majesty and holiness. (200).

In an evening prayer he pleaded that the Holy Spirit would purify him 'even be it with fire, from all dross and remaining defilement' and that 'the double-edged sword' of the Word should remove 'the cancer of sin' (1875:210). In another context he prayed 'that souls be made alive from the dead sleep of sin' (42), and in a prayer for forgiveness he said that 'we abhor ourselves because of our sinful nature that caused You so much suffering' (55). His published prayers often allude to the searching words of Psalms 51, 130 and 139.<sup>47</sup>

In his lectures Murray promoted an 'un-Calvinist' view on the relationship between creation, sin and the incarnation. The incarnation was not only the result of human sin, but

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<sup>47</sup> Murray said that the book of Psalms is the best prayer book we have. His prayer book contains a scheme for reading through the NT and the Psalms once a year, and through the rest of the OT once every two years (cf 1875:30-32).

the possibility of an incarnation was already given by the fact of creation (Kestell 1880: 6a). The old reformed theologians 'made too great a separation between creation and redemption'. We should understand that 'redemption is the fulfillment of creation' (6b). Ebrard argued that if satisfaction was the only point of the incarnation, then the Holy Spirit could have become man. He went so far as to state that the incarnation was notwendig even if the fall had not taken place (1863:98). His argument was that the Son of God is both the full expression of the Father and the one who has a relationship of dependence upon the Father. He alone could therefore bring God and his creation, especially man, into full 'organic' union. Murray does not use the word notwendig, but, from the notes taken down by Kestell, it is clear that he agreed with Ebrard.

We said more than once that creation was already an indication that the incarnation of the Son would take place. At the creation the relationship between the Logos and the creation was established so that creation could not reach her destination without the Logos becoming man ... The old systematic theologians did not realize that the Logos would have become man, even if there were no sin. In this way they gave too limited a meaning to the incarnation of the Logos and to his human history.<sup>48</sup>

He used the argument of the German reformer Osiander, without mentioning his name, that such a great wonder and blessing as the incarnation could not conceivably depend on an irrational act such as the disobedience of Adam. 'Why must sin receive the honour for the most joyful fact of all history?' (Kestell 1880:18). It is strange that neither Ebrard nor

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<sup>48</sup> Kestell 1880:16. Murray further made the point that, had God not revealed himself as man, his revelation would have remained incomplete forever. He argued that without an incarnation man cannot really worship God, and seems to have meant that all religions worship in an anthropomorphic way. 'Man demands for his worship an incarnate God', and 'man can only find peace in the worship of an incarnate God' (Kestell 1880:10f). These ideas remind strongly of the statement of F C Oetinger, often quoted by N J Hofmeyr, namely that 'bodily existence (lichamelijkheid) is the ultimate aim of God's creation'. (Du Toit 1984:288). It is remarkable that these words of Oetinger also influenced the young Bonhoeffer (cf Bethge 1977:101).

Murray referred to the fact that Calvin strongly rejected Osiander's speculations.<sup>49</sup>

Seen against the background of a gnostic or dualistic separation between creation and redemption, there certainly is merit in this attempt to bridge the gap between creation and incarnation. However, Murray believed that man was created to become the image of God 'in the normal course of his development'.<sup>50</sup> This is in line with the evolutionary view of man's development, eloquently espoused by T de Chardin in modern times. It would not be strange if Murray was influenced by the popular ideas of evolution that permeated European thinking in his time.<sup>51</sup> The evidence suggests, on the other hand, that his evolutionary views were not Darwinistic, for he believed in the radical sinfulness of man, associated with the biblical teaching of a fall.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Calvin rejected the idea that the Incarnation was unrelated to human sin (CI II:12:4-7). And one has to acknowledge that the explicit evidence of the Bible is on Calvin's side. On the other hand, in modern theology it is a commonly held view and even J J Muller did not reject this possibility altogether (1931: 217).

<sup>50</sup> In zijne normale ontwikkeling (Kestell 1880:15b). On the other hand, in his Catechisatie-boek, first published in 1857, he said that man was created 'honest and good' and in the image of God. The imago Dei consisted in the fact that man ruled over the earth 'as God's representative'. Adam had true knowledge of God and of divine things, the will and the ability to be obedient to God (1903:53). But in the same publication he also said that Adam 'reflected the image of God' (52).

<sup>51</sup> Which existed well before the publication of Darwin's famous work (cf Chadwick 1977).

<sup>52</sup> The origin of the Pentateuch was another burning issue in his time. As in the case of evolution, the evidence for Murray's views just seem to elude us. On 31 Aug 1882, shortly after his return from an overseas tour to improve his failing health, Murray gave his last public lecture. His topic was: The criticism of the history of the books of the Old Testament, especially those of Moses, by the Scottish divine, Dr Robertson Smith (cf De Christen 8 September 1882). As professor of Old Testament he was obviously very interested in this matter. Unfortunately this lecture could not be traced and it is futile to speculate on the position he might have taken.

The problem with the evolutionary doctrines, and even with Murray's view here, is its threat to the biblical doctrine of man. He argued that the Logos is in the fullest sense the image of God and therefore 'when the Son revealed the ideal man in the Christ he revealed himself at the same time'.<sup>53</sup> This seems to suggest that the pre-existent Logos, rather than the incarnate Son, is really the imago Dei. In other words, there was an unknown distance between man and the image of God. Man, even unfallen man, was, as it were, one step removed from being the image of God, he only 'reflected' the image of God (cf 1903:53). Does this teaching totally disqualify sinful man, especially unregenerate man, from being the image of God? Murray's general influence as theologian and educationalist certainly worked against a negative view of man, but the context of South Africa cried out for an emphasis on man - even non-Christian man, and especially black and brown man - as the image of God.<sup>54</sup>

#### Murray's kenotic Christology

Charles Hodge calls Ebrard a kenoticist (1883 II:434), but Ebrard's views are very different from that of the Lutheran kenoticists of the 19th century. In order to understand Ebrard's Christology one must note his contention that Lutheran theology, as well as much of

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<sup>53</sup> Toen nu de Zoon in den Christus den idee"elen mensch vertoonde, vertoonde hy te gelyk zichzelven (Kestell 1880:15b).

<sup>54</sup> It should be added, however, that this teaching was not the focus of his theology, for it is not found in his sermons and prayer book. In addition, we have recently been reminded by Barth and others, that man should not be defined independently, but in relation to Jesus Christ (cf Rasker 1974:251). Perhaps Murray understood that the humanity of man was enhanced by the fact that he stood in a primordial relationship to Christ. Later theologians defined man in terms of the universality of sin and the divisions of Babel. It is therefore not strange that politicians found it possible to classify human beings on the basis of race.

Western medieval theology, was Nestorian in its Christology. Nestorianism in Ebrard's view saw the divine nature and the human nature of Christ as 'zwei Stu"cke' and therefore it could never satisfactorily confess the unity of Christ's person. Eutychianism and Monophysitism saw the problem basically in the same way - as 'two pieces' - but in contrast to Nestorianism they emphasized the unity of those two 'concrete natures'. Lutheran theology also ended up with a similar doctrine to Eutyches - the communicatio idiomatum - whereby the two natures of Christ 'interpenetrate' each other (Ebrard 1863:87,132).

According to this view Jesus was omniscient when he lay in the manger (Ebrard 1863:139) and as Murray remarked it makes the ascension and glorification of Christ nonsensical: 'What is the point of the incarnation if the real humanity (of Christ) stopped being real humanity as a result of the incarnation?' (Kestell 1880:14b). Ebrard believed that Calvin and Zwingli went back to patristic thought and overcame the scholasticism that was still a part of Luther's thinking. The reformed theologians subsequently went back, perhaps unwittingly, to the 'Nestorian' point of view.<sup>55</sup>

In trying to do justice to the biblical evidence Murray, following Ebrard, explains that the incarnation implies a change in the mode of existence of the Son.<sup>56</sup> The prevalent 'orthodox' view that a divine person, the Logos, united himself to a real human nature im concreten Sinn Ebrard calls ein Nonsense (1863: 81). He talks of the human nature as ein reines Abstraktum and Murray also calls the two natures twee abstracta (Kestell 1880: 2b). The function of the abstracta in this theology seems to be to overcome the concept of the

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<sup>55</sup> T F Torrance has made the point that the Western Church became practically Apollinarian (1975:141).

<sup>56</sup> De bestaanswyse van de persoonlykheid veranderde (Kestell 1880:2a); ein zeitliche Existenzform (Ebrard 1863:81).

two natures as 'two pieces' or zwei Stu"cke.

Ebrard frequently uses the analogy of a prince who willingly decided to live as a slave in order to identify himself with the people. The person of the Son became man, not by adding a human nature to the Logos but by 'entering into' a new form of existence. Therefore we must not think that the Logos is the 'one nature' and the man Jesus the 'other nature'. The Logos decided to give up his eternal morphe and assumed a human form of existence, although he did not lose his essential relationship with the Father (1863:89f). The incarnate Son of God is in possession of both natures, but he does not possess the divine nature 'in its eternal form'.<sup>57</sup>

Murray sometimes shied away from Ebrard's consistent kenoticism. He criticized Ebrard's contention that the human attributes of Jesus are to be understood as the limited revelation of the unlimited God. Murray asserted that in addition or next to his human attributes Jesus also had unlimited divine attributes. The notes of Kestell are quite clear at this point, and yet Murray also criticized the reformed scholastics because 'they did not overcome entirely the idea of two natures existing together in Christ'.<sup>58</sup>

Both Ebrard and Murray rejected the analogy of the union between body and soul for the union between the divine and human natures in Christ, as a 'Lutheran analogy'.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> In der Ewigkeitsform (1863:147). Although Murray did not follow him fully on this point it may be illuminating to note how Ebrard explains duotheletism. It is not to be understood to mean that Jesus had two wills, but that the original decision of the Logos to become man, the decision of the 'divine will', is at the basis of the human or incarnate will (71). One is not convinced that the fathers understood the Monothelite controversy in this way, because the question at that time was whether Jesus had a human will at all, but Ebrard's exposition seems to be more in accordance with the Biblical picture of Jesus.

<sup>58</sup> 'Together' translates naast elkander (Kestell 1880:10a, cf 15a and Ebrard 1863: - 121f).

<sup>59</sup> Kestell 1880:12b; Ebrard 1862:130f. According to Murray it was rejected by the

Perhaps the Lutheran and reformed kenoticists may be distinguished thus: According to the Lutherans the incarnate Logos possessed all the divine attributes, but he limited himself in the use of them. In their thinking therefore the kenosis referred to the voluntary limitation of the incarnate Son. The reformed conceived of the kenosis as referring to the incarnation itself, the free decision of the Logos to become man (Hodge 1883 II:624). At the time this insight was not developed, and it was only revived by Ebrard, F Godet, De la Saussaye, F W Farrar and others in the 19th century.<sup>60</sup>

A corollary of modern orthodox Christology has been the theory of a double consciousness in Jesus (cf Hanson 1984). Murray puts the question in this way: 'How can there be a personal identity between the Son in his Trinitarian and his human existence?'<sup>61</sup> After acknowledging our human limitations, he argues that consciousness and person do not cover each other necessarily.

As the eternal consciousness of Jesus entered into the temporal form of human consciousness, he could not from the beginning be conscious of his eternal relationship with the Father. (Kestell 1880:15).

He then adds that, when he became conscious of his relationship with the Father

this consciousness was not something next to and distinct from his human consciousness, but his human consciousness was the form in which his Trinitarian consciousness expressed itself. Even though it was thoroughly human this consciousness ... was that of the incarnate Son of God. (Kestell 1880:16a).

To buttress his argument Murray states that the problem is aggravated by a superficial view

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reformed theologians, but it was used by Calvin (II:14:1) and in later years by C Hodge (1883 II:390f).

<sup>60</sup> The Lutheran theologian G Thomasius of Erlangen was probably the first to revive kenoticism in the 19th century (cf Muller 1931).

<sup>61</sup> 'Existence' translates bestaansvorm (Kestell 1880:15).

of the relationship between time and eternity. People have the idea that the two realities are mutually exclusive, so that what is temporary cannot be eternal. The incarnation of the Logos, however, shows that the two are not mutually exclusive. Time does not exist separately from eternity, but 'in and through eternity'. The world does not exist separately from God but 'in and through God' (Kestell 1880:17). Likewise we should not look for a human nature in Christ separately from his divine nature, neither should we seek a human consciousness separately from or 'next to' his Trinitarian consciousness. This is a mystery indeed, but the incarnation is a mystery that enlightens reality and yet remains a mystery.<sup>62</sup>

#### Jesus the Pleromatic Man

Murray often describes Jesus as ideal, pleromatic or normal man.<sup>63</sup> This teaching is probably related to his view that the incarnation would have taken place even without Adam's fall. In any case, it plays an important role in his Christology. With these three terms he apparently meant man as he should be, or as he was supposed to be had it not been for sin. Murray is therefore not 'docetic' in his Christology, as we will see below. He relates his concept of pleromatic man to Calvin's teaching of the three offices of Christ - prophet, priest and king. Man was meant to be the image of God, to be prophet, priest and king, but he has failed in this high calling. Jesus is ideal or normal man, i.e. he is truly prophet, priest and king (Kestell 1880:19). He was therefore prophet, priest and king, not only by virtue of his office as Messiah, anointed to fulfil his three offices, but he fulfilled

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<sup>62</sup> Kestell 1880:17. This seminal idea namely that the Incarnation is a mystery which explains all reality and yet remains a mystery was apparently derived from De la Saussaye (Rasker 1974:128).

<sup>63</sup> Een normale mensch (Kestell 1880:27).

these offices as a normal and private human being.

Murray here follows Ebrard in his concept of the status privatus of Christ, which means that Jesus was first a private individual and only afterwards called to be saviour. In other words, his threefold messianic office was rooted in his status as a private person, a true human being. This ensured the priority of his person over his work.<sup>64</sup> Following Ebrard, Murray emphasized that the significance of the work of Christ depended entirely on the integrity of his person, on his being a real and fully human being (Kestell 1880:28). Ebrard's concept of the status privatus of Jesus seems therefore an important contribution to Christology (cf 1863:187-195).

The concept of Christ as the pleromatic man enhances the Calvinist emphasis on the active obedience of Christ. Murray was not guilty of the later fundamentalist neglect of the active obedience of Christ. The pleromatic man became the representative man (Kestell 1880:21f). His obedience as man was real, based on a real choice. This strengthened the representative character of his obedience. Jesus gave himself to God on our behalf.

### The Real Humanity of Christ

It should thus be clear that Murray asserted in no uncertain terms the real humanity of Christ.<sup>65</sup> This was after all the aim of kenoticism - to come to terms with the NT picture

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<sup>64</sup> T F Torrance has pointed out that, because of the Christological problem, the general drift of Protestant theology was to neglect Christ's person and to emphasize his work, with the result that his work has also vanished and all that remained is man's 'existential' decision (1971:78).

<sup>65</sup> This is borne out by Murray's frequent use of the synoptic gospels. There are also various of his published sermons that deal with the human life of Christ as set forth in the letter to the Hebrews (cf his sermons on Hebrews 2:9,10 in 1868a,1873 and 1880). For a discussion of Calvin's views on this topic, cf Foxgrover 1988:99ff.

of a real human person without denying the other side of the NT evidence i.e. that Jesus is also God-with-us. In discussing the life of Christ, Murray made the following points:

1. Jesus developed as a normal Jewish child would, but without any conscious or unconscious sin. His religious and intellectual development was influenced by his knowledge of the OT, the teaching and example of Mary and Joseph, his experiences and observations, his communion with God and the work of the Holy Spirit (Kestell 1880:28a).

2. The realization of his relationship with his Father developed as that of 'a pious Israelite child ... (but he was) unconscious of any separation between himself and his God' (Kestell 1880: 28a). This natural relationship of perfect trust is clearly implied in the story of his first visit to the temple.

3. His consciousness of being the Messiah arose only later in his life and was confirmed at his baptism. In submitting to John's baptism he fully and publically identified himself with his people (Kestell 1880:28b). He was then endowed and filled with the Spirit for his work as representative and saviour of his people (29a).

4. During the temptation in the wilderness he was confirmed in the possession of the Holy Spirit and the charismata for his office as Messiah (28a).

5. He was 'probably not conscious' of his eternal Sonship at that time, but only of his Messiahship. Murray also believed that his mother told him the story of his birth at this stage. 'If she did this earlier, it would have been an unholy running before God' (Kestell 1880:28b).

6. At his baptism and during the forty days in the wilderness he 'probably realized', through the work of the Spirit and his knowledge of the prophetic writings, that he had to choose between self-glorification and an obedience involving suffering. At that stage it was

probably not yet clear to him what kind of suffering he could expect (29b).

7. As he preached the gospel of the Kingdom he gradually came to realize that he would be killed 'by his own people'.<sup>66</sup>

8. From that time onwards his free obedience implied a choice between a life of earthly glory or obedient suffering and death. The temptation to be made king was a real one for him - hence his severe rebuke to Peter (Kestell 1880:34a). On the mountain of transfiguration he could, as a perfect pleromatic individual, receive glorification - but obedience to the Father implied the way of humiliation and suffering.<sup>67</sup>

9. Many of Murray's sermons deal with Christ's temptation in Gethsemane'. As we have seen above, he did not accept Anselm's theory of substitution, but the fact of substitution is strongly emphasized (Kestell 1880:23). And here again the value of his sacrifice was enhanced by his real humanity. In a sermon on Matthew 26:36-46 Murray explicitly denied the opinion, expressed in the Kort Begrip that 'his divinity assisted his humanity' in this final struggle.

Let us consider that our Lord had a real struggle as man. It is not as if he was armed with divine omnipotence that he fought and conquered. No, revealed as servant, he did away with his divine glory (Phil 2:8). Although without sin, he was a weak human being (een zwak mensch) ... If he battled with the help of his divine power (met goddelijke magt strijdende zou) he would not have need of the aid of an angel. No ... he was made less than the angels ... so that he could through the gracious will of God, taste death on behalf of all (Heb 2:9).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Kestell 1880:29. Ebrard puts this realization at the time of the death of John the Baptist (1862:200).

<sup>67</sup> Hence, presumably, his repeated prophesying of his death and suffering from that very time? (Cf Luke 9:22,31,44).

<sup>68</sup> Murray 1868a:101 (contrast the Kort Begrip Question 34). This is in agreement with what he said in his lectures namely that, if the traditional or scholastic view is followed consistently, it would lead to Nestorianism: De oudere Theologie formuleerde deze

This does not mean that the Father was not with Jesus in all his temptations, but it does mean that his obedience was a real human obedience in the fullest possible sense, and that his victory over sin was a real human victory. He conquered not only 'in our stead' but 'on our behalf' as our true representative. In a sermon on Hebrews 2:10 Murray said: 'Without temptation, struggle and suffering Jesus our Lord might have shown the holiness of an angel to us, but not the holiness of a human being' (1873:55).

10. Therefore Murray could emphasize the fact that Jesus as real man had a free choice to become our saviour. Because of God's plan and purpose the work of salvation was not somehow forced on him. At the various stages of his career he freely and willingly accepted the path he had to follow to become the saviour of the world (Kestell 1880:27). It is probable that Ebrard's interpretation of duotheletism provided the framework of Murray's thinking on this point. There was nothing 'super human' in the will of Jesus, but in and behind the human life of Jesus stood the divine decision to become poor so that we might become rich (cf Murray 1868a:103).

#### The importance of Christ's example

Christology and soteriology were remarkably integrated in Murray's theology. His emphasis on Christ as real man and as representative man was directly integrated into his teaching of Christ as model or example for us. He neither glossed over, in the manner of the later fundamentalism, the example of Christ in favour of his vicarious suffering, nor is there the Nestorian 'credibility gap' between faith and obedience that has so often troubled Protestant

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waarheid: De Verlosser moest mensch zijn om te kunnen lyden en ook God om den dood te kunnen overwinnen. Consequent doorgedacht moet dit tot Nestorianisme voeren. Het goddelijke is niet naast maar in het menselijke in Jesus Christus. (Kestell 1880:15a).

theology.

His emphasis on the humanity and example of Jesus is the more remarkable if we keep in mind that he lived in the heyday of 'modern theology'. Even in South Africa of one hundred years ago there was great interest in this theology. In 1868 D P Faure published twelve lectures on this topic that created great excitement.<sup>69</sup> He taught a consistently human Jesus, denying his preexistence, the virgin birth, his resurrection and even that he believed himself to be the Messiah. Faure denied that Jesus was in any sense God or God-with-us (1869:110ff). He coupled this with a strong emphasis on the example of Christ. 'He loved all men, we must do the same' (109). The trouble is, of course, that Unitarians and Socinians, denying the reality of the incarnation and the personality of the Holy Spirit had a beautiful example but cut loose from the powerful dynamic of the kenosis, as described in Philippians 2.

In Murray's Christology there was an unbroken line from kenosis to real, normal or ideal man, and from Jesus as normal man to Jesus as representative man. The concept of representation means that his people, the whole church of God, participates in his salvation. But it also implies that his people participate in his human life: in his self-dedication, in his worship of the Father, in his obedience to the Father, in his love for mankind, in his suffering, in his rejoicing, in his victory, in his resurrection and his glory.<sup>70</sup>

His first official sermon pointed to this integration in Murray's Christology. The text was 2 Timothy 2:19: 'God's foundation stands firm with this seal: the Lord knows his

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<sup>69</sup> The English edition appeared in 1869.

<sup>70</sup> Cf the important article of J B Torrance on 'the vicarious humanity' of Christ in Calvin's theology. Torrance pointed out that 'we worship the Father in Christ as well as through Christ, dia Christou as well as dia Christon' (1978:76; cf CI II: 15:6).

own, and, everyone who confesses the name of Christ must forsake wickedness'. Obedience was not an 'optional extra' for the believer. In the very year of the publication of the Communist Manifesto, Murray warned strongly against selfishness and the drive for personal gain to the detriment of others (1848:15). It is remarkable that he motivated his warning with reference to the example of Christ 'who destroyed himself for our sake, took the form of a servant and became obedient unto death' (15).

In his sermon on the obedience and suffering of Christ (Hebrews 2:10) he stressed the importance of Christ's example, as an integral part of the gospel. If Christ would have gone from Nazareth straight to be crucified then

we would have missed the precious (onschatbare) example of patient endurance, of courage, of a forgiving spirit, of obedience to God and love towards man that we now have (in the gospels). Then we would not have a pure unblemished human example that entices and encourages us to imitate his divine perfection. This would have been the case if Jesus were just a docetic person, who did not have to contend with sin, and suffer as we have to suffer and struggle. It would have been equally bad if Jesus only possessed an angel's perfection ... God be praised! this Jesus, our Jesus was sanctified by human suffering. (1873:56).

In his prayers there is also abundant evidence that the example of Christ was an integral part of Murray's theology. Salvation was by grace, but this salvation implied a real participation in the life of Christ, and this again implied a real participation in the obedience of Christ. The following quotation shows clearly that the example of Christ was no afterthought in his theology.

Make us by your Holy Spirit true disciples and followers of the Lord Jesus. He left us an example, so that we might follow in his footsteps. He received the Holy Spirit in order to give us power to follow his holy example. Fill us with the grace of this Spirit which was already promised to us in Holy Baptism, so that we, believing in your Son, obtain forgiveness of sin and a new heart. Enable us to walk as Jesus walked. As He abounded in prayer day and night, may we also lift up our hearts, in the midst of our worldly business, to You in silent prayer.

May we be holy as Jesus was a holy example. As He ever went round doing good to all, teach us to be sympathetic, always ready to help, full of love. Save us from selfishness, unmercifulness and carelessness for the problems of our neighbours. Fill us with love towards the unfortunate, the ill, the destitute, the widow and the orphan.

May the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ live and rule in all who confess His name ... May the holy example of Jesus be imprinted on our memories and especially in our hearts. May we walk as He walked.<sup>71</sup>

### The Work of the Holy Spirit

The person and work of Christ was of crucial importance for Murray's theology, but this does not mean that he neglected the work of the Spirit. His theology was thoroughly Trinitarian. Both in his emphasis on Christ and on the work of the Spirit, he stood squarely within the best Calvinist tradition.<sup>72</sup> In his Gebedenboek there are numerous supplications for the enlightening influence of the Spirit in order to understand the Word. The following prayer is addressed to the Holy Spirit and expresses an earnest desire for sanctification.

Holy Spirit! You are Lord and Giver of life. Descend today and live in my heart. Enlighten my understanding so that I should know what the good and perfect will of God is. Cleanse my heart from all unclean desires. Subdue my will so that I shall be in everything united to the will of God. This is the will of God for me, namely my sanctification (1 Thess 4:3). Holy Spirit, whom the Father promised to the true prayer, also promised to me at my Baptism and given to the church to live in her - Good Spirit, work this day in me the true sanctification. (201).

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<sup>71</sup> 1875:95f. Such instances, where the necessity of following the example of Jesus is emphasized, can be multiplied almost indefinitely from his Gebedenboek (cf 98ff).

<sup>72</sup> B B Warfield said that the Institutes 'constitute Calvin preeminently as the theologian of the Holy Spirit' (1956:484; his emphasis).

Murray used the idea of participation, where that which happened to Christ is desired for the present believer, by the work of the Spirit. It seems akin to Paul's teaching of our being 'in Christ' as well as to the Irenaean idea of recapitulation. Sometimes it is a desire 'to participate in' or to experience again what happened to the people of God. It should be noted that the Holy Spirit played a crucial role in this participation. In the following Sunday morning prayer he expressed the desire to participate in what happened on the first Pentecost Sunday:

On this day of the week the Holy Spirit was poured out over the first Christians. And You Father! are willing to give your Spirit to those who pray in truth, more than an earthly father is willing to give bread to his child. Therefore we pray, give us the light and power of the Holy Spirit on this day. Enlighten our minds, sanctify our hearts. (1875:36)

The same principle is applied in a morning prayer, where he prayed that

as we rise this morning from sleep, may we rise truly with the Lord Jesus Christ to a new life. As we put on our clothes, may we also be clothed with his righteousness, putting on the new man. (1875:52).

On a Friday evening he remembers the great events of Good Friday:

Bind our hearts in true love to one another, as the hearts of your blessed mother Mary and your beloved disciple John were bound to each other at your cross. And as You, O Saviour! on the evening of your dying day, were laid down in a grave, this evening we desire, as it were, to lie down and rest in your grave. There we want to leave the old man of sin and self-righteousness. To-morrow and every morning we would rise from the grave unto a new life. (1875:69).

### Murray's Soteriology

Particularly as a result of the influence of Charles G Finney and Dwight L Moody, salvation was simplified in evangelical circles into an instant decision of the will, rather

than a gift of grace, received by faith through the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>73</sup> That Murray did not stand under the influence of this over-simplification of the gospel becomes apparent when we consider his views on salvation. He recognized the fact that faith is a gift of grace, a necessity for true prayer and yet not a product of man's power. 'Give us grace to pray in the true faith in our Saviour Jesus Christ. By nature we are unbelieving, we do not trust the love of God. Work faith in us' (1875:34). In an evening thanksgiving he described himself as a 'lost sheep', something that would be impossible for a later 'instant evangelical'.

Also in this day He, the Good Shepherd, sought after me, a lost sheep. Also in this day, in long-suffering and self-emptying love, He stood knocking at the door of my heart, offering me his blessed communion ... Also in this day the Holy Spirit, whom I so often grieved, continued his work in me.<sup>74</sup>

If Hofmeyr saw the relationship of the believer with God as that of a trusting child, as we shall see later, Murray's prayers are usually more the supplication of a humble servant.<sup>75</sup> Where some Christians find it difficult to understand why Jesus taught us to pray daily for forgiveness of sins, this was for Murray not a matter of course, but a precious gift,

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<sup>73</sup> George Smeaton traced this tendency in American theology ultimately to Jonathan Edwards who distinguished between a natural and a moral inability to accept salvation (1958:342).

<sup>74</sup> Ook deze dag heeft Hij, de Goede Herder, mij, verloren schaap, willen opzoeken. Ook deze dag heeft Hij in langmoedige, nederbuigende liefde willen staan om te kloppen aan de deur van mijn hart, mij aanbiedende zijne zalige gemeenschap en inwoning ... Ook dezen dag heeft de Heilige Geest, dien ik zoo menigmaal bedroefd heb, zijn arbeid aan mij willen voortzetten. (1875:207).

<sup>75</sup> Murray was no stranger to the childlike spirit, but expressions of childlike trust are always balanced by the need for forgiveness: 'Let the blood of the cross speak peace to the hearts of your children who lived their lives in subjection under the fear of death'. (1875:211). This balance was well expressed in a hymn quoted by Murray: O zalig wie vergeving in Christus zoenbloed vindt - en dan, met liefd en beving, Hem aanhangt als een kind! (204).

received by the humble believer.

Father! before we go to sleep we want to know and feel that You forgive us. Therefore we plead with You, speak to our souls: 'Your sins are forgiven'. We do not want to let You go without your blessing. Our souls cling to You. (1875:60).

He was deeply conscious of the sinfulness of man, even of the believer: 'Great and holy God! bless us, your poor, shortsighted, stumbling children. Give us what You have promised ... the Spirit which Jesus obtained for His church on earth' (1875:97). Salvation is all of grace, but, from a certain point of view, it is a process. We are not 'cut and dried and ready for heaven' as it were. In his grace God daily 'continues to work on our salvation' (44). Prayer is therefore a means of grace, both for the regenerate, and for the unregenerate. In a Sunday evening prayer Murray, referring to the word preached on that day, said: 'May we be truly regenerated by the incorruptible seed' (44).

Murray's thoroughness, the complete absence of superficiality in his approach, as well as the biblical realism of his doctrine of salvation, comes out clearly in the following prayer:

Merciful God! do not take away the Holy Spirit from us. Do not remove the word of truth from our midst. Do not deliver us to our own devices. Castigate us, correct us, where necessary with painful means. Convert us, and we will be converted. If it is necessary, let us feel your rod, as long as we may belong to your covenant. Continue to work with your Spirit in our hearts.<sup>76</sup>

Salvation is by grace, it is a work of the Spirit, through faith, but this does not mean that the Christian must be passive. He must exercise faith, specifically in the sacrifice and intercession of Christ, at the same time consciously depending on the Holy Spirit. Murray's soteriology thus had a comprehensive biblical and reformed character, as can be seen in the

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<sup>76</sup> 1875:99. It is of course possible that some of these family prayers were designed as a means of grace for the unconverted, but in the second part of his prayer book Murray clearly indicated special prayers for the unconverted.

following prayer:

Save me Lord! by the power of your Holy Spirit, from all unrighteousness and all superficial presumption of my own uprightness ... Shine on me with the searching light of your Holy Spirit. Trusting in the guidance of the Spirit, I dare to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the propitiation for my sin ... Father! forgive me, accept me as your reconciled child, speak peace to my heart.

Lamb of God! who taketh away the sin of the world! I lay my sin on your head, I transfer it to your account. Have mercy on me! And transfer on me the merits and righteousness procured by your blood. (1875:209f).

His conscious dependence on the high-priestly work of Christ also comes out clearly in another prayer: 'I pray in the name and the merits of the great Intercessor and High Priest in heaven. Have mercy on me, hear my prayer' (203). In the following prayer, reminiscent of the Kyrie eleison, we find the same desire for reconciliation and a trust in Christ's intercession as in the previously quoted prayers.

Lord Jesus Christ! we need ... your reconciliation. Have mercy on us, as we kneel before your crucified love. May each one of us in an unfeigned faith, with true repentance, accept You as Surety and Mediator. Son of God! have mercy on us. Reconciler of sin! cover our sin with your precious blood. High Priest! pray for us with the Father. (1875:47f).

### Sanctification and Good Works

From all this it is clear that the call to sanctification played a dominant role in Murray's theology. He often said that a Christian has no reason to be in doubt about the will of God, for 'this is God's will for us, our sanctification' (1875:35,201). Sanctification is not something simply to be 'claimed in faith', it is rather a process of putting to death and raising to life. Murray sought new life in Christ but it was accompanied by the prayer: 'Subdue my will that I will be in all things united to the will of God' (201). The holy example of Jesus is the standard of sanctification:

We want to cooperate with You. We would be led, corrected and sanctified. We would submit to your work in and with us. Then our uncleanness would

be purified. The image of Jesus will then appear in our inner and in our outer life. We would be as Jesus, humble, gentle, pure, holy, heavenly-minded, and full of love towards God and our neighbour. (99).

As has been suggested above, Murray left no room for the neo-protestant view that good works are an 'optional extra' for believers who claim to be saved by faith alone. He was especially outspoken on the Christian's duty towards the poor. In a sermon on Acts 10:3-4 he made the following remarks that have lost nothing of their relevance:

There are people who confess belief in Christ, who pray long prayers, but who give very little to the poor. They pray for the higher light, and the comfort and power of the Holy Spirit ... but they stick to their money; they give as little as possible when a collection is made. When something is collected for the poor, they are quick to enlarge on the ungratefulness of the poor and how they waste that which they received.

In the secret of his heart the person, who neglects his duty to share, excuses himself with the notion that God's grace is after all not given as reward for our good works or our gifts to the poor. They therefore flatter themselves with the hope that they will receive God's grace after all, even though they neglect the duty of charity, namely to share with the poor. This is one way of corrupting the doctrine of free grace.

... if a man gives with good and overflowing measure to the poor, and with the right attitude of heart, he proves that he is not inordinately attached to earthly things.

By his care for the poor the Christian shows that he is able to receive the blessings of the Spirit; by his love of money, by his refusal to give to the poor, he may prove that he is unwilling and unable to receive what he asked.<sup>77</sup>

This approach was clearly within the Calvinist tradition that says man is not saved by good works, nor without them. In many of Murray's prayers there are specific supplications for the poor or confessions of forgetfulness of their needs.<sup>78</sup> From all that we have seen it is

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<sup>77</sup> 1868:242f; my emphasis (GT).

<sup>78</sup> Cf Murray 1875:51,58,202.

obvious that Murray was by no means a moralist; he closed one of these prayers with the following words:.

By ourselves, heavenly Father, we are unable to do good. But our eyes are on You. We wait on the protecting and sanctifying grace of your Holy Spirit ... Merciful Father ... forgive us by free grace and may we be comforted this day by that peaceful and sure hope in your grace. (1875:58).

### Murray's views on the Church

Murray spent the most formative years of his youth in the Scotland of the Disruption, and this is probably the reason why he had a higher view of the church than many of his fellow ministers who had their training only in the Netherlands. It would seem that some of the first generation Scottish ministers, including his father, also held high views on the church. Murray's view of the church was certainly not as individualistic as that of many of his contemporaries and of later evangelicalism. It included the following aspects.

1. The church was founded at Pentecost, therefore in the 'primitive confession of faith' the article on the church follows that of the Holy Spirit.<sup>79</sup> The church belongs to Christ who bought her by his blood. He sustains and extends the church. He is the King, Head and Shepherd of His people (1903:128). Election by grace is the foundation of the church (129f).

2. The church is gathered by the Word and Spirit. Murray emphasized the necessity of preaching, the indispensable work of the Spirit and obedience to the Word. Duties of the

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<sup>79</sup> 1903:128. In his exposition of the Apostle's Creed he expressed the modern view, namely that it 'probably developed as a confession in relation to baptism' (1903:79). It is a curious fact that the Danish theologian Peter Kierkegaard, brother of the famous So"ren, believed as late as 1887 that Christ delivered the creed to the apostles during the period of forty days after his resurrection (Cf Latourette 1970:139).

ministers and members figure strongly in his teaching. The major marks of the church are preaching, the appropriation of the message and its extension to others. As in modern evangelical theology, mission was seen as a mark of the true church. There was no separation in his thinking between the 'gathering' of the church and the extension of the church. 'Christians who do not want to do their duty to spread the Word of God ... are hiding their talent in the earth and are in terrible danger, because their talent may be taken from them'.<sup>80</sup> The individual Christian and the local community must not live for themselves, 'but to bring blessings to others'. Each congregation must be a sending community and each Christian must be a missionary. The 'missionary nature' of the church was firmly grounded in Christology: Jesus was 'the great missionary' (1919:95).

3. The church is universal, gathered from among all nations, and therefore one in spite of differences of confession and culture (1903:129). Love of the brethren was emphasized even though they might differ because of 'descent, or class in society, or colour, or because they belonged to a different denomination'.<sup>81</sup> The concept of the church as the body of Christ was mentioned only once by Murray (1919:14). The unity of the church was seen pre-eminently as one of faith and love, a spiritual unity.

It is remarkable that Murray emphasized the fact that this unity not only extended to all living Christians, but also to the invisible world. 'You are united with all the holy ones ... with the angels above, with the saved ones before the throne and with the faithful still

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<sup>80</sup> Groot is dus de zonde van de Christenen, wanneer zij niet hunne verplichting vervullen omtrent de verspreiding van God's Woord... dan begraven zij hun talent in de aarde en zij zijn in het uiterste gevaar, dat hun talent hun ontnomen worde (1903:131).

<sup>81</sup> Afkomst of stand in de maatschapij, of kleur, of door te behoren tot een ander kerkgenootschap (1903:132).

here below who pray for you'. He reminded young Christians that the 'highest and noblest spirits', both in the visible and in the invisible world, 'are in the closest contact with you, they are united with you with the bonds of love'.<sup>82</sup>

4. Murray appreciated a continuity with the faith and prayers of previous generations of Christians. In his prayer book he gave the texts of the Kyrie Eleison and the Te Deum, identified as 'from the Ancient Church' and two litanies of 'the Moravian Brethren' (1875:111ff). In a 'Sunday morning prayer' he rejoiced in the reality of Christian unity:

Heavenly Father! we rejoice over the fact that we do not pray alone. We believe in one holy catholic Christian church; we practise the communion of saints. Our prayers are only single drops amongst the million on earth and in heaven flowing towards You. Hear our weak prayers for ourselves and for others. Hear the many prayers of your believing people everywhere for us. And, above all, o Father! hear the ever-effective prayers of our great High Priest at your right hand, our Lord Jesus Christ. (1875:43).

The Christian is a member of the catholic church, but through his membership of the local church (1919:23). One should take an interest in the work of other churches and rejoice in their progress, knowing that each church has a special gift of the Lord but 'be true to your church, as to no other'. It is the church of your fathers and its confessions and presbyterian church-order are the closest to Scripture (24). 'This church is worthy of your love' (28). Subjection to the spiritual authority of the church is important. The leaders of the church, ministers and elders, are the 'spiritual fathers' of the believer and he should submit to their teaching and correction (62).

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<sup>82</sup> Murray 1919:15. The importance of this dimension of the church's proclamation, especially for Africa, has only been recognized fairly recently (cf Mbiti 1972:183). It would be interesting to know whether this emphasis of Murray was at all continued by the missionaries that were trained at Stellenbosch.

5. There is no evidence that Murray was in favour of the separate Synod for congregations of 'people of colour' that was formed by the NGK shortly before his death (Botha 1986:63f). According to views expressed in his lecture Some characteristics of our Fellow Colonists the opposite seems to be true. After describing many instances of practical concern for the spiritual and material well-being of their slaves and other blacks by individual Boers, he said:

The prejudices of the narrow-minded among the Doppers were so strong that they professed to quote Scripture against the operations of the missionary. The curse of Ham was the stock argument. The better disposed professed to have no objections against teaching the blacks, but the idea of meeting in the same house of prayer, and thus gradually obliterating a distinction which Heaven had established, was an abomination. Colonial prejudice against colour showed itself here in the most intense forms, but clothed with the sanctions of religion. The deliverances of the philosopher of Chelsea and the appeals to Scripture, till recently common among preachers in the Southern States of the American Union, would find their parallel among the farmers of the Colesberg and Albert divisions.<sup>83</sup>

On the other hand, in spite of the beautiful biblical dimensions of his teaching, there was also a strong functional element in his view of the church. The holiness of the church consisted for him mainly in the sanctification of the individual members and their preparation for witness. The church was primarily an institution for salvation and sanctification through the ministry of preaching, prayers and the sacraments. This need for individual salvation and sanctification was obviously aggravated by the fact that many people lived far away from a regular ministry.<sup>84</sup> Looking back it would seem that this functional emphasis was compatible with the creation of separate facilities for blacks for the sake of a

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<sup>83</sup> Murray 1877:376: my emphasis (GT).

<sup>84</sup> Practically all his books were written with this situation in mind. In his prayer book (1875), for example, he suggested alternative prayers on Sundays when the household was not in a position to attend public worship.

more effective ministry.

### The Sacraments

Murray had a relatively high view of the sacraments. Where his colleague Hofmeyr did not endorse the use of the term 'means of grace', Murray insisted that one must attend the Lord's table regularly, because it is a very special means of grace (1919: 31ff). 'You have now' he said to the young Christians, 'access to the Lord's table where the King himself is present and ... where you will receive the most glorious blessings' (16). The sacraments are 'signs and assurances', or 'means (middelen) by which our faith is strengthened' (1903: 155). The Word of God was compared with a letter written by a king, while the sacraments are the official seals by which the king certifies the authenticity of his letter (158). Murray taught with Calvin that we are assured by the Spirit

that we are being united, more and more, with the holy body of Christ, so that - although Christ is in heaven and we on earth - we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. (1903:169).

A high view of the sacraments does not mean that one believes that they work 'automatically'. Murray made it clear that it is the Holy Spirit who works faith in man and that he uses the sacraments to assure the awakened sinner that 'God gives, also to me, the forgiveness of sin and eternal life, by grace, because of the only sacrifice of Jesus' (1903:158f). He insisted that we are worthy 'to receive these high blessings' only by the sacrifice of Christ. Therefore one must always test oneself to see whether one has faith, obedience and love. Human beings naturally tend towards formalism instead of giving God 'the true and loving worship of their hearts'.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> de liefdeaanbidding des hartes (1919:19).

In our baptism the Father assures us that He accepts us as his beloved children, 'God the Son promises that He wants to wash us in his blood from all our sin' and the Holy Spirit promises to give us that which was given to us in Christ, 'the forgiveness of sin, or justification by the blood of Christ; and regeneration and renewal, or sanctification' (1903:-162). Baptism is not itself regeneration 'as some would tell you', but 'in your Baptism God promised to give you the Holy Spirit' (165). In his prayer book Murray explained that 'the Holy Spirit was promised in the Word and given (to us) in the Sacrament of Baptism' (1875:98). His basic teaching regarding baptism was that we can pray in the assurance that God will give us his Spirit, because of the threefold promise. The Spirit 'was promised by the Father to the true pray-er, promised to me in my Baptism, and was given to the church to live in her' (201).

### Church and People

We have seen that Murray was influenced by his training in both Scotland and Holland. Although different in many respects, the relationship between church and people in Scotland and in Holland was seen in much the same way. From its beginnings the Church of Scotland wanted to be a national church. In spite of numerous obstacles and setbacks, the Genevan ideal of the 'godly commonwealth', where church and state formed an alliance under God, was kept alive.<sup>86</sup> Even the Free Church of Scotland, where Murray's uncle John

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<sup>86</sup> Cf Douglas 1982, Prestwich 1986:234ff.

was a respected leader, firmly believed in the principle of establishment.<sup>87</sup>

Abraham Kuyper was one of the very few leaders in the Dutch Church who did not accept the principle of a volkskerk or national church (cf Langman 1950). Even J A Wormser, for a time associated with the Afscheiding, believed that the sacrament of baptism constituted a special relationship between God and the nation, bringing them within the sanctifying influence of the promises of God. This does not mean that Wormser was a latitudinarian. He upheld the confessions of the church, but believed that the church had to teach the volk the meaning of their baptism.<sup>88</sup> While in Holland the Murrays felt most at home with the people of the Reveil. The Groningers, the 'ethicals' and the confessionals all had a positive appreciation of the volkskerk, but the Reveil emphasized the relationship between the church and people in the strongest terms. They believed that the origins of the Dutch nation were closely bound up with a profession of the Christian faith.<sup>89</sup> They were therefore strong supporters of the house of Orange and hoped that the monarchy would act as a bulwark against the infidelity of the age (Rasker 1974:153ff).

There are indications in Murray's writings that he saw the relationship between church and people in this traditional way. In his prayer book intercession for government was usually combined quite naturally with prayers for the church and for schools (1875:53). He dedicated much of his energy to provide opportunities for a Christian education for the

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<sup>87</sup> Apparently establishment was not an end in itself, but a means to the Christianization of the Scottish nation, in which education had to play a major role. Douglas 1982:226,233; Prestwich 1986:253. The smaller United Presbyterian Church, on the other hand, has always believed in the voluntary principle.

<sup>88</sup> Langman 1950:26f; cf Rasker 1974:254.

<sup>89</sup> While the Reveil saw the reformed faith as basic to this relationship, the Groningers thought in terms of a more latitudinarian Christian humanism (cf Rasker 1974:76ff).

youth, and, as we have noted above, all his books were written with the needs of the Dutch-speaking population in mind.

Evidence from his lecture Some Characteristics of our fellow Colonists would suggest that he generally appreciated loyalty to government.<sup>90</sup> But the idea of a Christian society and a volkskerk did not imply perfection, either in the Scottish or in the Dutch tradition. The perfect society, the city of God, lay in the future, and would only come in God's good time through the preaching of the gospel and continuous outpourings of the Holy Spirit. In one of his prayers Murray said:

Bless, o Lord! our country, our nation, our church. May righteousness and the fear of the Lord increase under us. May the church of the Lord Jesus Christ grow, in this and in other parts of the world, by the rich presence of the Holy Spirit. Let the night of unbelief and superstition be driven away all over by the clear light of the Gospel. Prepare me, and all mine, and all your children to live in the city of God where there will be no night. (1875:211).

The tradition of the volkskerk implied that God instituted the Christian ministry in order to train the nation to obedience 'in the school of Christ'. Prayer for the government and 'all conditions of men' was therefore an important duty (1875:54). Those who accepted the principle of an established church believed that the destruction of the relationship between church and people would be disastrous for both. On the one hand it would deliver the

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<sup>90</sup> Referring to the loyal farmers of the North-Eastern Cape, many of whom were Doppers, he said: 'When men of this class crossed the Orange River at the time of the great trek, they did not exhibit the violent disaffection which characterized Retief, Maritz, Pretorius, and other leaders of the emigration. They moved northwards, simply as their fathers had done, in quest of larger grazing grounds for their flocks and herds'. (1877:374). This does not mean that he believed in loyalty against conscience. In the same lecture he quoted a minister as saying to his conservative parishioners: "'It is all very well to speak of submission to the Queen and the Governor at the Cape; but sometimes the Governor passes a law which you resist - for instance, Sir Harry Smith's Militia Act, which you say would make soldiers of us all"' (375). It seems obvious that Murray was speaking from his own experience.

people to their own worst corruptions, and, on the other hand, it would isolate the church from the people.<sup>91</sup> There is every reason to believe that this was also the deepest conviction of John Murray.<sup>92</sup> In view of his background and general teaching, it is unthinkable that he would have approved of the fact that a volksideologie should exercise control over the teaching and practice of the church.

### Murray's Eschatology

There was a close link in Murray's thinking between the outpouring of the Spirit, the extension of the kingdom through the preaching of the gospel, and eschatology (cf 1875: 45ff). This extension was not expected to happen by itself. The coming of the kingdom is the work of God, but his children will be deeply involved in it. The extension of the kingdom implied communion with Christ, especially in cross-bearing:

May the word of the cross freely conquer all nations of the earth. May all true bearers of the cross be comforted by the nearness of the Great Cross-bearer, Jesus, who supports all his followers with his Spirit. May the enemies of the cross be brought to repentance. May all confessors of the gospel take up the cross to crucify and mortify the desires of the flesh. (1875: 63).

Murray seems not to have had the kind of interest in eschatology associated with premillennialism. In view of subsequent controversies in the NGK, it may be useful to note Murray's postmillennial interpretation of Romans 11. In one of his sermons he urged Christians to pray for the conversion of Israel, because, in his thinking, this momentous

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<sup>91</sup> Cf Langman 1950:27,219ff; Rasker 1974:253ff.

<sup>92</sup> His brother Andrew, by no means an Afrikaner-nationalist, said in 1881: 'The development of a stronger national sentiment in our half-slumbering Dutch population would prove to be a stronger stem for the grafting of a strong a Christian life among them'. (Du Plessis 1920a:431). Apparently 'half-slumbering' in their national consciousness.

event would provide a major stimulus for the coming of the kingdom.

Concerning the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ by his brothers in the flesh, we learn that their fall will benefit the Gentile world, because ... the apostles turned always to the Gentiles when the Jews did not want to believe. If this was the case, much more, said the apostle, will their acceptance be as life from the dead for the Gentiles (Rom 11:12-15). It is true that they stumbled as a people, but they are not rejected eternally, because they are still the beloved for the sake of the fathers. That will be seen when the fullness of the Gentiles has entered and the whole of Israel will be saved (Rom 11:25-28).

From this we deduce that, when the Jewish nation has accepted the true Messiah, it will be as life from death for the Gentile world. The believing Jews will be the best missionaries, preachers of the gospel, amongst all nations. (1866:80).

As we will see below, Hofmeyr agreed with Murray in this interpretation of Romans 11. Gradually, however this eschatology was replaced by American premillennialism, and eventually eclipsed by Dutch amillennialism.

### Conclusion

It is surprising that Murray, who was conservative by nature, should adopt kenoticism. The reason was presumably because the kenoticists fully recognized the real humanity of Christ, without rejecting his divinity. Whether they were successful is not the point here, it would seem that kenoticism enabled Murray to emphasize the obedience of the human Christ and to integrate the example of Christ into his theology. He thus combined the reformation emphasis on salvation by grace with the doctrine of our participation in Christ by the Spirit, which implies our participation in his 'vicarious humanity'.<sup>93</sup> The example of Christ

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<sup>93</sup> His emphasis seems similar to the 'vicarious repentance' of John Macleod Campbell, but there is no evidence that Murray was influenced by him (cf Torrance 1981b:143). On the other hand, he commented negatively on the Christological views of the other 'Scottish heretic', Edward Irving (Kestell 1880:7).

received its rightful place in his theology, without denying the primacy of grace, as has happened in Socinianism and modernist theology.

Murray's affinity with the major emphases of Calvinism - as distinct from the neo-Calvinism of Kuyper - must in no small measure be ascribed to his Scottish heritage. But the question is: Can Murray's kenoticism be reconciled with Calvin's insistence on the divinity of Christ? In recent years various scholars have pointed out that Calvin's emphasis on the obedience of Christ in the work of salvation has firmly established the importance of the true humanity of Christ in his theology.<sup>94</sup> In the light of this evidence Murray's views on the humanity of Christ seem to be a legitimate development of Calvin's theology.

As far as the relationship between church and people is concerned, Murray believed it was the calling of the NGK to Christianize all the people of South Africa. In the light of what we know of him, it is unlikely that he would have allowed a volksteologie to exercise control over the practice of the church. However, his doctrine of the church was not strong enough to resist the formation of a separate Synod for the 'people of colour' shortly before his death.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Cf Van Buren (1957), J B Torrance (1978) and Foxgrover (1988).

<sup>95</sup> It should be added that, from 1862, professors of theology did not have a vote in the Cape Synod (Van der Watt 1973: 128).

## Chapter 3

N J HOFMEYR (1827-1909)

Nicolaas Jacobus Hofmeyr and his twin brother were born on the 8th March 1827. Being extremely weak, he was put aside as dead, but someone noticed faint signs of life in him.<sup>1</sup> Afterwards his health was never robust. At the age of ten his life was saved for the second time when he fell into the sea while playing on an abandoned hulk. Unnoticed by his friends and unable to swim, he was saved when a huge wave cast him on the shore. In later years he referred to this experience as an indication that God had a special purpose for his life (Kestell 1911:6).

His parents, Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr and Hester Sophia Joubert, were respected citizens of Cape Town.<sup>2</sup> Nicolaas was educated at the Tot Nut van 't Algemeen school where he usually finished at the top of his class.<sup>3</sup> In addition to home, church and school, a maternal uncle of John Murray, the reverend Georg Wilhelm Stegmann, had a decisive influence on his life. Stegmann was at that time the 'second pastor' of the Lutheran Church in Cape

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<sup>1</sup> Kestell 1911:4. His twin brother Johannes Jacob was a business man in Cape Town in later years (Gerdener 1951:65), but pre-deceased him with more than twenty years (Du Toit 1984:354).

<sup>2</sup> The famous J H Hofmeyr ('Onze Jan') was Hofmeyr's nephew, the eldest son of his eldest brother, also Jan Hendrik.

<sup>3</sup> Kestell 1911:10. This school was founded by the society of the same name (pro bono publico), which was established to encourage agriculture, the arts and the sciences. It was well known for its thorough teaching and its Christian character (J H Hofmeyr 1913:22).

Town. Andrew Murray Snr is reported to have said that Stegmann preached 'like a tiger' (Kestell 1911:11). He emphasized the necessity of a conscious conversion and a full dedication of one's life to Christ. At the age of sixteen Hofmeyr received assurance of his salvation under Stegmann's ministry,<sup>4</sup> and soon after this he offered himself to be trained as a missionary by him. This was prevented by Dr A Faure,<sup>5</sup> who persuaded Nicolaas's parents to send him to Holland for theological education.<sup>6</sup> Before leaving for Utrecht in 1847, he studied the classics under the famous Dr Changuion of Cape Town (Kestell 1911:13).

Unlike John Murray, who did his preparatory studies in Aberdeen, Hofmeyr had to attend lectures in the faculty of arts before he could proceed to the faculty of theology. The brilliant philosopher C W Opzoomer was at that time at the height of his influence and popularity.<sup>7</sup> Under the fascination of Opzoomer Hofmeyr went through an acute

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<sup>4</sup> Kestell 1911:10. Stegmann was the 'uncle William' mentioned in Du Plessis (1919:68,74). In addition to his duties in the Lutheran Church, he also pastored the independent St Stephen's congregation which was founded as a place of worship for freed slaves. Stegmann developed problems with the Lutheran baptismal service and the strict confessionalism of his colleague and he broke with the Lutheran Church in 1847 (cf Kort Verslag 1847). At the Synod of 1857 Stegmann was accepted as a minister of the NGK and St Stephen's was accepted as a NG congregation within the presbytery of Cape Town. Stegmann was also instrumental in the conversion of Nicolaas's brother, Servaas, in later years minister at Montagu (cf Korte Levensschets 1891:14), and in that of J H Neethling, for many years minister at Stellenbosch (Kestell 1911:217).

<sup>5</sup> Cf Kestell 1911:12,13. According to the biographer of 'Onze Jan' Faure was a friend of the Hofmeyr family (Hofmeyr 1913:11). He was also one of the founders of the Tot nut school (Kestell 1911:8).

<sup>6</sup> According to Kestell Faure was the most evangelical of the three NGK ministers at Cape Town at that time (1911:10). Before he proceeded to Utrecht, Faure studied at the famous non-conformist academy of Dr Bogue of Gosport. Rutgers University conferred an honorary doctorate on him in 1862 (Gerdener 1951:39,45).

<sup>7</sup> Opzoomer was appointed professor at the age of 25. He was at first a pan-entheist, but in later years he became a more consistent but less attractive rationalist (Rasker 1974:114; Du Toit 1984:30,31). The orthodox students called his lecture hall 'the Dardanel-

spiritual crisis, but was afterwards more assured of 'the divine origin of the Christian faith'.<sup>8</sup> He passed the qualifying examination in theology within only two years. He proceeded with doctoral studies but his health deteriorated seriously and he had to abandon these (Kestell 1911:25,30).

As was the case with the Murrays, Hofmeyr found a spiritual home among the people of the Dutch Reveil. He played a leading role in the Secor Dabar and Eltheto student societies. Five days after his arrival in Utrecht he also joined the Elpis society for 'Cape students of Theology at this university united in the love and service of the Lord Jesus Christ, who desire to be useful to each other in their preparation for the holy ministry' (Du Toit 1984:35). The other members were the two Murrays, J H Neethling and H E Faure. Soon afterwards they were joined by his brother Servaas, William, a younger brother of the Murrays, and Hofmeyr's future brother-in-law Andries Louw. This society had a more pronounced academic purpose than the other two mentioned above and the friends actively helped each other in their studies.<sup>9</sup>

During University holidays Hofmeyr travelled through the Dutch towns in order to obtain first hand knowledge of conditions in church and society. He even preached on a few occasions before being officially licensed to do so (Kestell 1911:26ff). On one of these trips he made contact with the people of the Afscheiding of 1834. Although sympathetic

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les' where one had to pass, but at a severe risk (Du Plessis 1919:63).

<sup>8</sup> Kestell 1911:18. In later years he used to say: 'The strongest faith is born when one experiences the strongest temptation to unbelief' (125).

<sup>9</sup> It may be argued that this group of students and their immediate friends, building on the foundation laid by a few Dutch evangelicals and the Scottish ministers, determined the missionary and evangelical character of the NGK for almost a century.

towards them he was not impressed. While they 'tried to remain true' to the reformed faith, they were 'too mystical in their exposition of Scripture; due to the fact that they did not have adequate training for their candidates for the ministry'.<sup>10</sup>

Hofmeyr was licensed to preach on 22 May 1850 and he returned to the Cape towards the end of that year (Du Toit 1984:39). Appointed to the Hantam congregation by the governor, he was inducted as first resident minister in September 1851.<sup>11</sup> This vast parish was neglected and in a low spiritual condition.<sup>12</sup> Initially he met with a lot of opposition, not least when he invited the coloured people of the town to church.<sup>13</sup> In the mean time he persisted with his well-prepared sermons, the instruction of the youth in the Catechism, and in house-visitation (Kestell 1911:36ff). Because of his poor health he believed that he would live only for a short time and he tried to make the most of his opportunities. When he left after seven years, much had been accomplished and there existed a bond of affection between him and this congregation. In 1852 he married Maria Louw of the Paarl.

He soon took part in discussions on matters of general concern for the Cape Church. The three most controversial issues at the time - and most important in his eyes - were the missionary calling of the church, modernist or liberal theology and the need for a theo-

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<sup>10</sup> Kestell 1911:27. The Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk which was formed after the Secession of 1834 only started with systematic training of their ministers at Kampen in 1854 (Rasker 1974:69).

<sup>11</sup> It was Hofmeyr who named the village and congregation Calvinia, in honour of Calvin (Kestell 1911:35).

<sup>12</sup> In one of his early letters he said that he was sure of only one person's personal piety (Kestell 1911:45).

<sup>13</sup> Kestell says that Hofmeyr was used to a different situation in Cape Town and was surprised by the opposition to what was for him quite normal. Eventually he compromised by conducting services for the 'people of colour' in the large vestry (1911:39). It is tragic to note that Kestell assumed that separation was the normal thing.

logical seminary. Like most other ministers trained in the venerable academies of the Netherlands he initially doubted the wisdom of having a seminary without all the benefits of a University. After some time he came to the conclusion that, if the Cape Church wanted to be true to its own calling and tradition, it should have control over the training of its own ministers. He then, characteristically, promptly started to collect money for the library of the future seminary! He made ample use of the press to put his views forward appealing among other things to the success of the theological seminaries in the United States.<sup>14</sup>

From any point of view the Cape Synod of 1857 was a memorable one. Contemporaries felt that the most significant factor at the Synod was the presence of a strong group of young South African-born ministers. Of them the two elder Murrays, Nicolaas Hofmeyr and Johannes Henoch Neethling were the most outstanding. These young men were all trained at Utrecht and ex-members of the Secor Dabar and the Elpis student societies. In spite of their youth their influence was strongly felt in connection with their bold approach to the missionary obligation of the church. The other members of this group also agreed with Hofmeyr in his support for a local theological seminary and in his opposition to both the moderatism of some of the older members of Synod and the

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<sup>14</sup> He mentioned Andover Seminary specifically. His reasons were both theological and economic. The expense involved in going overseas was one reason for the chronic lack of ministers in the Cape Church (Kestell 1911: 67-71).

modernism of some of the younger ones.<sup>15</sup>

Although the 'Great Century of Missions' was already well on its way, the Cape Church was reluctant to accept all the challenges of the missionary vision. Hofmeyr, Neethling and Andrew Murray jnr were appointed to the missions' committee of the Synod and this newly formed committee distinguished itself by founding the first 'foreign mission' of the Cape Church. That the NGK became involved to a remarkable degree in missions outside the borders of South Africa during the subsequent half-a-century must be ascribed in no small measure to the dedication of these men. Hofmeyr's contribution to the sustaining of the missionary vision for almost fifty years, cannot be overrated.

At the same Synod Hofmeyr was appointed as 'second professor' and he moved to Stellenbosch in 1858. Towards the end of the year he and John Murray commenced with the teaching of philosophy, Latin, Hebrew and Greek to students who intended to enter the Kweekskool. The theology courses started towards the end of the year 1859.<sup>16</sup> Here Hofmeyr laboured until his retirement in 1907, two years before his death.

As it is impossible to do justice to Hofmeyr's long career in this chapter, we can only mention some features of his life. He was first and foremost a teacher of theology who

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<sup>15</sup> For the modernist group, cf Hanekom 1951:415ff. The moderate ministers at the Cape, who were latitudinarian in doctrine and Erastian in polity, were generally sympathetic towards the modernists. Some of the more influential ones were J Spijker, M Borchers, J C Berranje, J H von Manger, T Herold, T Ballot, Dr S P Heyns, Dr Roux and the brothers H and J C le Febre Moorrees (L M Kriel: Het Modernisme in de Kaapse Kerken GM Dec 1918; Hanekom 1951:420, 435).

<sup>16</sup> To be in line with the academic year in Europe.

was able to impart to his students a love for the subjects he taught.<sup>17</sup> Mackinnon, a student at the Kweekskool during the eighties who later became a professor of church history in Edinburgh, was impressed by his lectures on the New Testament and by his handling of church history.<sup>18</sup> For his students his lectures in church history 'were always too short' (Kestell 1911:149).

While John Murray was 'respected as a father and feared as a prophet', Hofmeyr was to the students both teacher and friend (149). The subtitle of Du Toit's biography captures an important dimension of his ministry.<sup>19</sup> He was a man with a large pastoral heart, not only for the theological students but for all the students at Stellenbosch, including those at high school. Somewhat in the fashion of Charles Simeon of Cambridge, he gathered the students around him for regular Bible studies. Eventually a hall was built to accommodate the hundreds of students who attended these discussions on Sunday mornings, one hour before the commencement of the morning service.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Du Toit mentions the fact that the students of the year 1883 requested, after the death of Murray, that Hofmeyr be appointed as professor of Systematic Theology (1984:-347).

<sup>18</sup> 'We never had true interest in the history of the 19th century - ecclesiastic and political - until we had the pleasure of hearing him discuss Professor Nippold's handbook on that subject. In his hands Kurtz's handbook - that giant skeleton which has haunted many a theological student's dreams - is furnished with rich flesh and vigorous-beating heart. Church history (becomes) ... a piece of your personal history, about which you may have an enthusiastic interest'. (Mackinnon 1887:29).

<sup>19</sup> 'Pastor in the Lecture Hall' (S du Toit 1984).

<sup>20</sup> This hall, built with money collected by Hofmeyr and the students, could seat 700 and is situated in Church Street. It was later known as the 'Hofmeyr Hall'. It can safely be assumed that political leaders such as J B M Hertzog, J C Smuts, F S Malan and D F Malan attended these meetings as undergraduates.

Hofmeyr was an ardent controversialist.<sup>21</sup> Even so, his commitment to the principles of the total abstinence movement was unexpected. He studied the subject and became convinced that 'the law of love' demands that Christians should abstain from the use of wine for the sake of the 'weak ones who are not able to resist the overwhelming power of alcohol'. Although he did not judge those who could not in good conscience agree with him, among whom was John Murray, they were clearly wrong in his eyes. If one considers that the major financial support for the Kweekskool came from the wine-producing Western Cape, and that Stellenbosch was in the heart of this area, his sustained and open espousal of this point of view, in spite of opposition from almost every side, is some indication of his mettle.<sup>22</sup> Eventually things went so far that, because of dissatisfaction in the Stellenbosch congregation, Hofmeyr voluntarily withdrew from his professorale preek-beurte.<sup>23</sup> It was heartrending for Hofmeyr whose life-long friend J H Neethling was the local minister. In order 'not to give offence' to the congregation he even refrained from attendance at the Lord's Supper for some time (Kestell 1911:171).

But Hofmeyr did not believe in defensive reaction. He had great faith in the positive presentation of what he believed to be the truth and he published and preached whenever

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<sup>21</sup> Kestell said that Hofmeyr was van nature strijder, but he also quotes Hofmeyr as saying: 'Be not too hard on others ... our God is very long-suffering (verdraagzaam)!' (1911:159,176).

<sup>22</sup> There was even a rumour that Hofmeyr would be deposed from his chair (Kestell 1911:173). Mackinnon remarked that Hofmeyr 'was rather rash in adopting such an extreme course' and adds with a touch of humour that he gave lectures to prove that 'the wines of Palestine were unfermented, which only fermented the strife more ...' (1887:30). Although he could not convince John Murray he was able to 'convert' Dr Dalzell, Free Church Missionary in Natal, for the cause (Kestell 1911:165).

<sup>23</sup> The Kweekskool professors regularly took turns to lead the worship-services in the Stellenbosch Moederkerk.

he had the opportunity. He once said that his sermons were born in the study and 're-born' in the pulpit (Kestell 1911:197). While his written works were somewhat difficult to read, to listen to him was a special experience (149). During holidays he visited numerous congregations, as far afield as Natal, Transvaal and Zimbabwe. His aim was to encourage his former students in the ministry, to obtain first hand knowledge of the situation in the country districts, to collect money for some worthy cause, but especially to preach the gospel.

During his visits to the Netherlands in 1880 and 1884 he preached to large congregations. He did the unheard of thing in Amsterdam when, preaching to an overflowing congregation in the Nieuwe Kerk, he made 'a gospel invitation' to sinners to come to Jesus. Kestell reports that the stolid Dutch were so moved that they, contrary to their custom, took off their hats at that point in the service (1911:184). When he visited the Transvaal in 1896 he also emphasized the love of God and the message of personal salvation.<sup>24</sup>

Hofmeyr was a prolific author but, although he was a very popular preacher and lecturer, his books were somewhat difficult to read (Kestell 1911:149). Nevertheless, at least seven of his books were translated into German and a few were translated into English (248).

His 'mediating' position and enterprising spirit made Hofmeyr an ecumenical figure in his own time. He had a keen interest in the Vatican Council and although he could hardly

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<sup>24</sup> 'I explained, as clearly as I could, God's love to the sinner, the sinners return to God, his reconciliation with God, his commitment and dedication to Christ. I endeavoured to lead the concerned but ignorant sinner to Christ, but I experienced again that this so elementary preaching also served, in no small measure, to build up and encourage the faithful'. (Hofmeyr 1897:22).

hope that the Catholic Church would change, he recognized all as Christians who loved the Lord Jesus Christ. He represented the Cape Church at the Presbyterian Alliance meeting in America in 1880.<sup>25</sup> In England he listened to Spurgeon and J Parker and attended a service in the Westminster Abbey (Kestell 1911:145f). In Paris he listened to Adolphe Monod and in Italy he spent six days visiting the Waldensians (140f). At home he cooperated wholeheartedly with all Christians, inside and outside the Evangelical Alliance.<sup>26</sup> Nothing reveals his open-mindedness better than his contact with the 'World's Parliament of Religions' held in Chicago in 1893 (203). His wide-ranging correspondence with people from all over the world, including Russia, also deserves special mention (187-194).

In his later years Hofmeyr used to say that a Christian must live, work and suffer 'in the sunshine of God's love' (Kestell 1911:233). Hofmeyr came to this position through his study of Scripture and the constant application of the truth to his own life. He was often ill and he knew what personal suffering meant.<sup>27</sup> He also suffered in sympathy with his own children and, especially during the Anglo-Boer War, in sympathy with his former students and numerous others.<sup>28</sup> But he was never bitter because he experienced it all as from the hands of a loving Father. It is therefore not strange that, at his death, his

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<sup>25</sup> He deplored the influence of both the 'ultra-conservatives and the ultra-progressives' at this meeting (Kestell 1911:142).

<sup>26</sup> For example, during a visit to Pretoria in 1896, he brought together the ministers of the three Afrikaans Churches, as well as 'Episcopalians', Presbyterians, 'Wesleyans' and Baptists (Kestell 1911:202).

<sup>27</sup> He lost the use of his one eye and for a long time the remaining one was strongly affected.

<sup>28</sup> His beloved daughter Lucy died in August 1896 and shortly afterwards her husband and another son-in-law also passed away. His eldest grandson, Nico Kestell, died in a POW camp in Natal in 1900. Many a manse in Transvaal and OFS was destroyed by fire during the War.

colleague P J G de Vos honoured him with the title given to the apostle John in the ancient church, namely ho theologos (Kestell 1911:243). What he said about the theology of John Murray, was equally true of his own: it was 'the result of thorough study, his own thinking, and its application to his own life' (Kestell 1911:150).

#### General Remarks on Hofmeyr's Theological Orientation

Except for Murray's years in Scotland, Hofmeyr had the same theological and spiritual background as John Murray, but their personalities differed quite markedly. In addition to this he had a much more dramatic conversion experience than Murray. Hofmeyr's distinct experience and the accompanying assurance of salvation may account to some extent for the differences in their theological emphases.<sup>29</sup>

It is remarkable how widely scholars have disagreed about the quality of Hofmeyr's theology. Later writers were more impressed by the quality of his life than by his theological ability.<sup>30</sup> His recent biographer recognized his many gifts but came to the conclusion that he was not an 'original scientific' theologian but a person who 'created a lifestyle and activated a religious pattern in the church'. His greatest contribution to the church was 'his sincere piety' (Du Toit 1984:419). His contemporaries, however, had a high

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<sup>29</sup> Murray was an introvert and somewhat pessimistic while Hofmeyr was the opposite, and these characteristics seem to apply to their theologies as well. Unlike Hofmeyr Murray did not emphasize the popular evangelical concept of assurance of salvation. It is very likely that his being removed from home at the age of ten contributed to Murray's 'Scottish reserve', but I want to suggest that their different conversion experiences also influenced their views. It seems evident that the differing conversion experiences of theologians such as Augustine, Luther, Calvin and Wesley played an important role in their respective theological systems, as God came in a unique way to each unique personality.

<sup>30</sup> The later popular view was that Murray was the 'mind' and Hofmeyr the 'heart' of the Kweekskool (cf Snyman 1934:82).

regard for his intellectual and theological acumen. For example James Mackinnon said that Hofmeyr's exegesis was 'original, practical and at the same time scholarly' (1887:29). Taking Mackinnon's general point of view into account, it is unlikely that he would have been unduly biased in favour of Hofmeyr.<sup>31</sup>

Equally favourable was the opinion of his first biographer.<sup>32</sup> He said that Hofmeyr was 'a pioneer in theology who clothed his orthodoxy in a unique mould, as no one else did'. He read very widely 'but never followed any theologian too closely'. He could reach down to 'the roots of things', but he could also move to the 'dizzy heights where few would dare to follow him' (1911:124f). Kestell surely had no desire to expose his father-in-law, a leader in the battle against rationalism, as a heretic. He nevertheless mentions the remarkable fact that Hofmeyr participated in the 'World's Parliament of Religions'. This was too much even for his son-in-law.<sup>33</sup> But in spite of Kestell's veiled criticism, he was convinced of Hofmeyr's exceptional insight and ability.

This positive estimate of Hofmeyr's theology is confirmed by the response during his visits to the Netherlands. His lectures at Utrecht, for example, impressed both students and

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<sup>31</sup> Mackinnon left Scotland for his health and studied at the Kweekskool from 1881-1884. He subsequently studied in Germany and married a German girl. As he tended to look down on local attainments with an indulgent smile, his estimate of the three Stellenbosch professors is not without significance (1887:28ff). His major work was Luther and the Reformation, published in four volumes between 1925-1930. He also published a 'very critical' work on The Historic Jesus (Dreyer 1934a:121).

<sup>32</sup> As Kestell was Hofmeyr's son-in-law one has to allow for the possibility that he would be too sympathetic towards him.

<sup>33</sup> In connection with his association with the 'World's Parliament of Religions' Kestell says: 'Hofmeyr attempted quite something! Few would follow him in this'. The official report of this meeting published a letter of Hofmeyr with his photograph (Kestell 1911:203).

professors and resulted in the publication of his little book Tegenstellingen in 's Christens leven en leer. Theologians like J H Gunning, J J van Oosterzee, Isaac Doedes and the poet-theologian Nicolaas Beets had a high regard for him.<sup>34</sup> The brilliant young theologian, Tobie Muller, was of the opinion that Hofmeyr's theology had unique characteristics that could be developed to make a special contribution to theology in general.<sup>35</sup>

Opinions on the main characteristics of Hofmeyr's theology are equally divided. Du Toit has shown the bewildering variety of authors read by Hofmeyr and did not find it easy to characterize his theology (1984:4,288). He believes Hofmeyr was influenced by subjectivism but was nevertheless 'able to remain within the framework of the reformed faith and tradition'.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, Mackinnon stated::

Professor Hofmeyr has considerable sympathy with the newer theology of Schleiermacher. To him must be ascribed the merit of pointing out to his students what are in his view the defects of the older school and the truth in the modern. In this he seems to agree with Van Oostersee (sic) and ... this healthy spirit of freedom ... has produced a little grumbling in some quarters. (1887:30).

Du Toit recognized the subjective, 'experiential' or 'pietistic' tendency in Hofmeyr's

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<sup>34</sup> Kestell 1911:189. After Hofmeyr's death Dr A W Bronsveld said: 'We will never forget the impression he made on us with his visit to Utrecht in 1884 ... Seldom if ever have I seen professor Doedes, whose lecture he took, so moved. It was a holy, an inspiring experience'. (Kroniek GM April 1912). Hofmeyr received honorary doctorates from Utrecht and New Brunswick and, according to Kestell, he was the first to receive an honorary doctorate from the University of Cape Town (1911:239; Du Toit 1984:397).

<sup>35</sup> Keet and Tomlinson 1925:141. T B Muller received high praise for his doctoral studies at Utrecht and Edinburgh. He was offered a professorship in philosophy at Stellenbosch, but accepted a call to Philippolis, OFS, where his promising life was cut short by influenza in October 1918.

<sup>36</sup> Du Toit 1984:291,422. Kestell never called Hofmeyr a Calvinist. It seems as if Kestell was more conscious of Calvinism in later years (cf his introduction to Stoker and Potgieter 1935:vi).

theology but suggests that it should be ascribed to the influence of the theologians of the 'second reformation' (1984:291). He produces no evidence that Hofmeyr was interested in the writings of the 'second reformation'.<sup>37</sup> On the contrary, according to contemporaries, it was Hofmeyr who helped many young people, reared in the melancholy theology of the 'second reformation', to come to a joyful assurance of faith and acceptance.<sup>38</sup> More-over, the subjective tendency that is for Du Toit the major characteristic of pietism, was not confined to the 'second reformation'. Subjectivity may with equal justification be considered as the hall-mark of the theology of the nineteenth century, both in its revivalism and in its mediating theology.<sup>39</sup>

There seems to be no valid reason to question the fact that Hofmeyr belonged theologically to the Dutch 'ethical-eirenical' school.<sup>40</sup> For the ethicalists both the church and theology had to be renewed on an ethical and not, as Kuyper held, on a juridical basis.<sup>41</sup> The truth of God's revelation was for them not an intellectual system with ethical consequences, but ethical 'by its very nature'.<sup>42</sup> Hofmeyr often pointed to the ethical nature of

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<sup>37</sup> Hofmeyr seems to have read more in Lutheran than in Calvinistic Pietism (Du Toit 1984:287f). One of the few works of this kind he read was from Scottish and not Dutch Calvinism, namely the Letters of Samuel Rutherford, but, as Richard Baxter has observed, Rutherford's letters are in a class by themselves.

<sup>38</sup> Cf the witness of various people at Hofmeyr's funeral, especially that of Professor C F J Muller Snr (GM Sep 1909:137).

<sup>39</sup> This is after all the thesis of the great work of Barth on the theology of the 19th century (1973). Otto Ritschl has described William Ames, the father of 'experimental predestinarianism', as 'a forerunner of Schleiermacher' (Weber 1983 I:545; cf Kendall 1979).

<sup>40</sup> Du Toit states that Hofmeyr often read J H Gunning and also mentions De la Saussaye as one of his sources (1984:288).

<sup>41</sup> 'Juridical' implied ecclesiastical rather than civil legislation.

<sup>42</sup> Rasker 1974:144. In a sermon on the death of Christ Hofmeyr said that Jesus had a

the faith and the importance of the human conscience. He sometimes even identified the law of God with the voice of the individual conscience.<sup>43</sup> He also had great appreciation for what Ebrard has termed the 'anthropological approach' to theology. In a letter to John Murray he said that Christology 'was renewed' and that dogmatics became 'deep and versatile' because theologians have now learned to see 'the human side of divine truths' (Kestell 1911:58).

The theological paradigm of the earlier ethicalists remained basically orthodox, but they were the very opposite of 'dogmatic'. They differed from contemporary confessionalists exactly because they were alive to the attractions, if not the temptations, of both rationalism and pantheism. De la Saussaye struggled with the monism of Scholten, J H Gunning was fascinated by Spinoza and Hofmeyr was fascinated by the young Opzoomer.<sup>44</sup> But they were saved from being neutralized by either pantheism or rationalism because they were profoundly influenced by the historical character of revelation. Hence their interest in the historical Jesus and the historical church.<sup>45</sup> Although they listened carefully

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'natural identity' with us because of the incarnation, but by his identification with sinners unto death, he gained an 'ethical unity' with us (1890:6). In another context he said that the power of Jesus over nature was 'a thoroughly ethical one' (1886:137), and in the same publication he emphasized that our relation to Jesus has 'a thoroughly ethical character' (179f).

<sup>43</sup> 'It is through your conscience that you know the law of God. Your conscience explains the law of God and ... the law of God explains your conscience. Both are one ...' (1896:132f). Hofmeyr should be contrasted here with the Heidelberg Catechism (Question 3) that identifies the 'law of God' as the source of a true knowledge of sin.

<sup>44</sup> According to Rasker the young Gunning 'loved and adored Spinoza, but also realized that he had to choose between Christ and Spinoza'. After close and sympathetic contact with the rationalists in the church Gunning said that 'modern theology does not control our times, it is rather controlled by our times'. (Rasker 1974:147f).

<sup>45</sup> De la Saussaye said that 'The appearance of Jesus is the one and only original fact of history. All other matters can be explained from history, but Jesus alone explains history'. If Jesus is not the key to the understanding of history then 'the whole history

to the spirit of their own times, their historical and exegetical approach kept them in contact with the living faith of the historical church. Therefore, in spite of their respect for the persons and the good intentions of the rationalists, both De la Saussaye and Gunning strongly opposed their principles (Rasker 1974:128,149).

It may be objected that the action of Hofmeyr and Andrew Murray against the rationalists in the Synod of 1862 was more 'juridical' than 'ethical', but for Hofmeyr 'juridical' was not in contradiction to 'ethical', the latter was only on a higher plane than the former (1896:215ff). Their writings in opposition to rationalism were also in agreement with the tradition of the early ethicalists.<sup>46</sup>

The acknowledgement that Hofmeyr stood within the ethical movement accounts for Mackinnon's statement that Hofmeyr 'had considerable sympathy with the newer theology of Schleiermacher'. There is no evidence that Hofmeyr read Schleiermacher, but he read many theologians influenced by him, among others, I A Dorner, Julius Müller, Ebrard and the opponent of So"ren Kierkegaard, H L Martensen (Kestell 1911:57,123). But even if Hofmeyr was not a direct follower of Schleiermacher, the religious consciousness of 'the new man' played an important role in his theological method, as we will see below.<sup>47</sup>

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remains an inscrutable mystery' (Rasker 1974:128). Gunning wrote a 'Life of Christ', and both he and De la Saussaye said that theology must have communion with the faith of the Church (141,150). Hofmeyr said that the incarnation was 'the miracle of all miracles, and the key to understand all other miracles' (1946:93).

<sup>46</sup> He wrote in defence of juridical action: 'If liberalism ... comes out openly, we command it in the name of the Lord to leave the Church. It may exist as a treacherous enemy in our midst, but not as an honest opponent. This (dishonesty) destroys its power' (1865:153). He recognized, however that, in contrast to civil power the authority of the Church is 'fatherly' because the authority of Christ is rooted in love and service (Du Toit 1984:224). Hofmeyr's younger brother Servaas also felt the need to defend their 'juridical' approach at the Synod of 1862 (Kestell 1911:98).

<sup>47</sup> Weber pointed out that the revival movement influenced mediating theology which

The dominant theme in his theology was the sonship of Jesus and the hiothesia of the believer. Kestell related that he had a significant spiritual experience at the age of forty, based on Paul's words in Romans 8: 'You have not received a spirit of slavery leading you back into a life of fear, but a Spirit that makes us sons, enabling us to cry "Abba! Father!"'<sup>48</sup> Hofmeyr discovered that the believer was not 'a servant' or 'a slave' but a child of God, and these insights found expression in his best known book Niet Knecht maar Kind (1896). It is possible that the change was not as radical as was popularly believed, but this new insight gave singular direction and coherence to Hofmeyr's eclectic theology.

#### Hofmeyr's Anthropology: Man as sinner.

Although it cannot be said that Hofmeyr emphasized the doctrine of total depravity, in contrast to contemporary 'modern' theology, he clearly believed in the sinfulness of man. The strongest affirmation of man's sinfulness is found in his last major publication, Aan de voeten van Paulus, written just after the Anglo-Boer War. His comment on Ephesians 2:1-3 seems to suggest that, as he grew in experience and insight, he was more and more

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in turn contributed to the rise of confessionalism. What he says about the Erlangen school as a mediator between romanticism and the revival on the one hand and confessionalism on the other hand, may be helpful in understanding Hofmeyr's theological development. He describes the Erlangen school as saying that 'the personal faith of the expositor of the Bible (as the document of salvation-history) provides the basis for understanding; in his faith, salvationhistory is being continued' (1981 II:144). In the case of Stellenbosch the movement to confessionalism and fundamentalism was concluded after Hofmeyr's death.

<sup>48</sup> Kestell 1911: 121f. This text indicates a knowledge of the historical Jesus in Paul and also implies a close relationship between Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the believer. It is also indicative of Hofmeyr's life and teaching; a childlike relationship with the Father, based on the Son's relationship to the Father and the witness of the Spirit.

convinced of the doctrine of total depravity:

What a description of unsaved humanity! If we were more sensitive to the truth than we usually are, we would be deeply moved by these words. What a description of man's character! And as our eyes are being opened more and more for the nature of sin, as well as the misery that it brings with it, we agree wholeheartedly with Paul. He excludes no man, considered as sinner, from this description ... Apparently no one had a higher sense of the heights to which we are uplifted by God's grace; but his clear views of the misery from which we were lifted are parallel to those. (1905:57f).

Hofmeyr was always very careful to distinguish between man as he was before the fall, and as he is today. He could not accept Opzoomer's pan-entheism with its suggestion that sin is a necessary stage in human development (cf Haitjema 1953:40). In his view man was indeed not perfect at his creation - for that he needed the incarnation - but God's creation was basically good. Paul 'describes man here as he became since the fall' (1905:58).

The 'popular' understanding of total depravity, as if it means that all human beings are monsters, was, on the other hand, contradicted. Sin is present but does not show its worst manifestations in each and every person. On the contrary

It was God's gracious providence that, in many cases - perhaps in most - the destructive power of sin has been mitigated to a greater or lesser extent. But this does not change the fact that it exists in all from birth ... (sin) makes every person into a miserable creature - into a being on whom God looks indeed with mercy, but also with disgust (afgrijze). (58).

It is as if Hofmeyr implied that man may be considered in two ways - and is indeed seen by God in two ways - as the highest of God's creatures, destined to be a son, but, from another perspective, as sinner. 'You are, considered as sinner ... born with the tendency towards disobedience' (1905:58). The phrase 'considered as sinner' is not explained, but as Hofmeyr used it twice here, it cannot be taken as coincidental. Hofmeyr did not accept the 'total depravity' as the full picture of man; he deliberately left room for a higher view of

man, as we shall presently see. The phrase 'tendency towards disobedience' should not be understood in a Pelagian sense. Hofmeyr explained the power of sin in no uncertain terms:

How easily are you swept away to look down upon, to despise, to hate your neighbour and to subject him to your selfish plans. And how easily do you allow yourself to be pulled down by lust. Neither the demonic nor the brutish are foreign to you ... Sin is pure rebellion and enmity towards God. Alas, none of us can say that this horrible thing, sin, is something foreign to him ... The sinner lives in enmity with God, with himself and with his fellow-creatures. (1905:58f).

In addition to this, and again in contrast to liberal theology, Hofmeyr made no apology for his belief in the existence of evil spirits who have 'a mysterious influence over sinful man' (60). Yet, to admit this influence does not imply that man is for that reason less responsible for his sin. Hofmeyr considered it as axiomatic that man can never

shift his guilt on to the devil. He will himself bear the guilt of his sin. His relationship with the devil, even be it an unconscious one, makes him even more guilty before God.<sup>49</sup>

In his discussion of Ephesians 3 Hofmeyr returned to the universal fact of sin. Scripture teaches that Jew and Gentile 'have sunk deep into the same depths (of sin) ... the whole world is worthy of the judgement of God' (1905:82). In spite of the privileges of the covenant, the Jew crucified his own Saviour. The Greeks and Romans, who laid the foundations of the glories of science, art and civilization, had sunk very deeply into sin and immorality. Eventually even 'the best among the pagans' were conquered by despair. Neither Jew nor pagan had been able to overcome sin (83).

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<sup>49</sup> 1905:60. He added: 'Even really pious people may run the risk of being blinded by Satan. As long as we live, the flesh is jealous of the Spirit, and Satan finds great support in our flesh' (62). On the other hand, he said: 'The connection between the angelic world and that of men is much closer than we suppose. They think about us, feel for us and rejoice because of the good they see in our lives. They count themselves lucky when they may help us in some way or another, in obedience to God. They serve us for God's sake'. (61).

Although sin destroyed much in man, it could not destroy his 'capacity for salvation'. Hofmeyr's indebtedness to Dutch 'ethical theology' is confirmed by the fact that he relates this 'capacity' to the conscience. Man's conscience is the springboard against which 'the echo of God's voice can be heard' (1905:83). Without a conscience the divine law would be powerless to influence Israel, let alone the Gentiles. Without a conscience there was no possibility of being convicted of sin, and without such a conviction no human being could be saved (83). Just as the Samaritan woman was seeking after God, even in the midst of sin, there is something in man that urges him to seek after the living God. Israel as well as the pagan nations longed, consciously or unconsciously, century after century, for divine salvation (84).

#### Higher than the angels.

An important difference between Hofmeyr and contemporary evangelical theology was the high value he placed on man. A high view of man was popular in contemporary liberal theology although not always based on the full biblical picture of man. If one considers them against the background of his time, Hofmeyr's insights are indeed remarkable.

In a Christological context he said that man, who was created in the image of God, 'is above all creatures, also higher than the angels. He who rules over man, rules the entire creation'.<sup>50</sup> This was not meant to refer only to Adam before the fall, because he explained that all God's children are higher than the creatures 'even higher than the angels' (1887: 210). He expanded his views a little more when he said:

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<sup>50</sup> 1887:203. Hofmeyr referred here to Heb 1:14 and 1 Cor 6:2,3.

To have power over man is therefore the highest imaginable power. He who can bring man under his control is worthy of being the Head of humanity, yes, the Head of creation. (60).

This power over man was not one of force, it was an 'ethical' power. Jesus exercised his incomparable power over man 'by the naked, unadorned and holy truth' (1887:65). His power can be seen in the change he worked and still works in the lives of sinful men and women. An example of this was Zacchaeus, the hard-hearted lover of money, who was changed into 'a sympathetic friend of the poor', within the space of one day (64).

In His book Jezus' Heerlijkheid weerspiegeld in zijn aardsche leven, Hofmeyr expressed a very 'modern' concept, namely that Jesus also reveals to us what true humanity really is.

Jesus was not only thoroughly human, He was also perfect man. He is the true test for all that is human. If we want to know whether something fits mankind, the answer must be sought in the character of Jesus Christ. He is the MAN - the revelation of true humanity and the example for all who strive after a true or perfect humanity. (1886:168).

Even those aspects of the character and personality of Jesus that made him unique and an object of the worship of mankind, were thoroughly human. If his love had not been 'a human love, it would have been impossible for humans to comprehend it ... eternal truth is human by nature'.<sup>51</sup> He added: 'Who is not affected by the divine answer, revealed to him in this way, on the question: what does it mean to be man?'

Human beings live so far from God and his will that they have become a mystery to themselves and to others. Jesus Christ lifted the veil from this mystery of all mysteries, and gave the answer to the question: What is man? He, true man in the fullest sense, was in an unlimited way, the truth incarnate, and so every man must be, because

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<sup>51</sup> 1886:169; Hofmeyr's emphasis. He added: 'Man can only understand and admire, yes, worship that which is human'.

he is man and according to his measure, in a limited sense, the revelation of truth in the flesh - an incarnation of the truth. My fellow human beings must see in me ... an incarnation of God's love, according to the image of Christ. (1886:170).

Because Jesus also revealed man to us, Hofmeyr saw no contradiction between Christianization and humanization. It is strange to think that the following words were written more than a century ago in South Africa.

This poor world stands in great need of human beings who have learnt, in Jesus Christ, what it means to be human, and to become themselves more and more human, in whom the divine original, in accordance with its nature, expresses itself in human form (II Cor 3:11). Let us therefore, according to the divine sense of the term, become human, and people will learn from us what it means to be Christians.<sup>52</sup>

#### Body and Soul.

Hofmeyr was no gnostic or super-spiritualist who did not value the body, he saw 'bodiliness as the ultimate aim of the works of God'. Yet in spite of his biblical realism, it sometimes seems as if he understood the sarks-pneuma dualism of Paul in terms of a body-soul dualism. The renewed spirit of man is described as the 'centre' of the new life, while the body is on the 'fringes', or 'the outer wall, that will be demolished' (1946:34). This implies that the spirit of man is not subject to death, but immortal in a very real

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<sup>52</sup> 1886:170. Related to the above is Hofmeyr's emphasis on the fact that there stands a man at the centre of the Kingdom of God: 'What a moment in the history of the coming of the Kingdom of God! A human being declares to his fellow human beings that the Kingdom of God was an impossibility without Him'. (1887:224). Unfortunately Hofmeyr did not develop his thoughts on this theme, but from what he has written on the subject it seems as if he considered this fact to be 'the subtle answer' to the vexed question of the historical Jesus. If a deeply religious man - the obedient Man - is at the same time also the centre of the Kingdom of God, there can be no contradiction between the religion of Jesus and the faith of the church.

sense.

At death I will lay down those members that cannot here on earth be separated from sin; but I cannot lay down my spirit, the inward man. I am one with my spirit, I am not one with my body. My spirit is the centre, my body belongs to the circumference of my life. (32).

Although he distinguished between 'the law of his spirit' and 'the law of God', the general tendency of his teaching on this point implies that the human body is 'lower' and 'more sinful' than the human spirit.

As death works in his body, so does sin. His body is a body of sin and of death. The connection between body and soul is so close that it is necessary that the believer should suffer because of death and of sin that is in him as a result of this connection in him. (1946:30f).

In the same context he said that 'the soul was freed from sin'. Paul says that sin is at home in his body, while the law of God is at home in his mind, in his inner man' (1946:32). It is a pity that Hofmeyr did not more consistently follow up his own biblical insights on Leiblichkeit. This made his position ambiguous, and this ambiguity was transferred to the next generation of theologians. The result was that, a false and superficial body-soul dichotomy encouraged some to neglect the physical well-being of the black man because 'the salvation of the soul was more important than the well-being of the body'. Of course, Hofmeyr's 'neo-platonic' views were in line with the received opinion in contemporary European theology but, as he claimed to be a biblical theologian, his theology must be judged against this standard.

### Hofmeyr and Scholastic Orthodoxy

Hofmeyr seldom referred to the authority of 'the fathers'.<sup>53</sup> He was an eclectic theologian who read widely and integrated ideas from a variety of sources into his theology.<sup>54</sup> Whether he remained within the framework of the reformed faith, as suggested by Du Toit, is another matter (1984:291). For Abraham Kuyper the ethical school was not quite within the limits of true orthodoxy.<sup>55</sup> In the light of the role theology has played in the formation of South African racial policies, it is important to establish Hofmeyr's views on reformed orthodoxy. He was, after all, as professor of theology for half-a-century and spiritual leader of generations of Stellenbosch students, the most influential theologian in South Africa during the latter part of the nineteenth and the early years of this century.<sup>56</sup>

Although he was an ardent opponent of 'modern theology', in both its rationalistic and its pantheistic forms, Hofmeyr was decidedly not in favour of scholastic orthodoxy.<sup>57</sup> As early as 1856 he wrote to John Murray that 'dogmatics should never become a finished

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<sup>53</sup> He usually based his arguments on Scripture and experience, without appealing to the authority of others. He observed that 'one cannot identify with everything taught by Reformed theology ... the Bible is neither Lutheran nor Reformed' (Kestell 1911:58). He referred to the reformers as examples rather than as authorities (cf 1898:162).

<sup>54</sup> Cf Kestell 1911:123; Du Toit 1984:287f.

<sup>55</sup> Kuyper talked about the 'wholes and the 'halves', the ethicals being the 'halves' (Rasker 1974:150). He had a real appreciation for J H Gunning and De la Saussaye, but found them wanting on the doctrine of the church (Bakhuizen van den Brink 1962:301). For Barth very few in the 19th century, except Kohlbrugge, conquered the romanticism and the subjectivism which were the products of the spirit of the age (1973:634ff). Du Toit dismissed the complaint about Hofmeyr's orthodoxy as patently unfounded (1984:363).

<sup>56</sup> The influence of Andrew Murray, especially through his books, peaked somewhat later than that of Hofmeyr and lasted longer. But they should of course not be seen as competitors, either on a personal or on a theological level.

<sup>57</sup> He criticized both catholic and protestant scholasticism (1946:114).

system', because then it would be 'dead and stereotyped'. He welcomed the revival of biblical studies in contemporary theology, because many theologians were rediscovering 'the truths confessed by the reformers'. But he added, significantly, that the contemporary renewal was more than a rediscovery of reformation theology, 'it is a process of enrichment and correction' (Kestell 1911:57).

Hofmeyr realized that conservatives were worried because 'the present generation does not appreciate the forms in which our fathers clothed their insights'. The scholastics see only 'the husk but lose the kernel' (27), but we are not called to preserve or reanimate out-dated forms, 'we must forget the forms delivered to us' and exert ourselves 'until we have found better forms to express what we have found'. If we do not discard the older forms in God's good time, the 'water will stop flowing and it (our faith) will become a stagnant and dead pool' (131). The view that protestant orthodoxy prepared the way for rationalism was evidently not a discovery of this century:

History teaches us that the theology of the 17th century, while it occupied itself exclusively with describing and defining the various biblical doctrines, became all along poorer in life and in life-giving ideas. This prepared the way for the superficial ... theology of the rationalists. And do we not still find people who comprehend, correctly and orthodoxly, the definitions and the contents of the truth, but who see so little of the truth itself that they are not awed by it, neither are they moved to excitement by it? Excitement and awe, these things do not belong to the mind but to the heart, and these are awakened, not by limiting definitions, but by the unlimited depths of the truth.<sup>58</sup>

In spite of his opposition to rationalism, Hofmeyr did not mean that the reformed confessions could not be improved. 'We are constrained by the truth to acknowledge that the

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<sup>58</sup> 1946:27. In another context he said 'When the omnipresence of God is understood as an attribute of God it implies a separation between God and His presence. Of this (view) we find no trace in Jesus Christ' (1887:167).

confessions are imperfect human productions ... that should not be used to limit the truth into which the Holy Spirit wants to lead the church' (1865:153). Typically, Hofmeyr based his arguments against scholasticism ultimately on the example of Jesus. 'He was the living contradiction of all scholasticism'. This was, he says, one of the secrets of his attractiveness and his influence over the people. In him people saw and heard 'the truth in her natural and majestic simplicity' (1886:9f).

### Hofmeyr and Covenant Theology

Covenant theology, originally developed to mitigate supralapsarianism, became embedded in the Westminster Confession, but there is no evidence that this symbol was ever influential in the NGK. Although a theologian such as J J Kotze had problems with the Heidelberg Catechism, most Scots ministers in the NGK seem to have been satisfied with it. This catechism, admittedly, had in itself the seeds of covenant theology, but it was not nearly as developed as in the Westminster Confession.<sup>59</sup>

In his book Niet Knecht maar Kind Hofmeyr made a rare reference to the concept of a 'covenant of works'. It is clear that he only used the concept to highlight the difference in the attitude of one who relates to God as a slave and one whose relationship with God is that of a child (1896:123). Accordingly he denied what the Westminster Confession clearly affirms, namely that 'the first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam ... upon condition of perfect and personal obedience'.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ursinus, its main author, was a student and friend of Melancthon, the father of covenant theology. For the development of covenant theology, cf Weber I 1981:125f; Kendall 1979:38ff and Visser 1983.

<sup>60</sup> Westminster Confession, article 7, paragraph 2.

Hofmeyr said that Adam lived before the fall under the covenant of grace.

He lived only from God's grace by faith. He was what he was and he had what he had only by free grace ... He was a child of God and could not become more than a child. (1896:123).

He re-interpreted the 'covenant of works' and 'turned it on its head' by suggesting that when man sinned 'he fell from the covenant of grace to the covenant of works' (1896:126). For Hofmeyr the 'covenant of works' was in no sense part of God's arrangement with man, but, if people insisted on the use of the term, it should be understood as a result of sin. God 'accommodated himself' to this situation by instituting, after the fall, the 'covenant of works', but in actual fact, the 'covenant of works was contrary to man's nature or being' (127). He made no attempt to explain the traditional understanding of this teaching, nor did he give any indication that he was contradicting a venerable tradition in reformed theology. He simply affirmed with amazing tenacity, in the words of J B Torrance, that 'grace is prior to law' (1982:49).

Hofmeyr accordingly denied that Jesus fulfilled the 'covenant of works' as many reformed theologians have taught (Hodge 1958:125). 'Jesus did not live as a servant under the covenant of works but as a child by faith under God's covenant of love. His life was a life of faith and his righteousness was a justification by faith' (1896:130). In a subsequent chapter on reconciliation he took great pains to show that Christ's work of atonement must not be understood in legal terms. 'The servant, understanding only legal concepts, thinks that reconciliation is a simple legal matter between the Father and the Son ... (he) does not understand that it was born of unfathomable love' (1896:213). He called the 'legal' view a medieval one that 'sees Jesus not as a child but as a servant who merited a righteousness according to the law and in the spirit of bondage' (214). He had some hard words for

those who would explain the atonement in a simplistic substitutionary way. It is proof of a 'slave-mentality'. 'Nothing is more incongruous and more impossible than to explain the death of Jesus and man's reconciliation with God according to a legal framework'.<sup>61</sup>

### Election

Hofmeyr discussed the problem of the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in lectures delivered in Utrecht in 1884, and subsequently published in his Tegenstellingen. At this stage his approach to the problem was philosophical-speculative rather than exegetical, or, in the words of Weber, he discussed it under the doctrine of God rather than under the doctrine of salvation.<sup>62</sup> His mature views on election are found in his Niet Knecht maar Kind (1896) and in his lectures on Ephesians (1905).

The debate about whether the NGK was a reformed church reached its climax around 1890 and the major polemicist was S J du Toit, who criticized his church for its neglect of the doctrine of election.<sup>63</sup> Hofmeyr, as we have seen, was not in the habit of naming either

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<sup>61</sup> 1896:215. In the light of the views of Hofmeyr and Andrew Murray, the statement of A Torrance (1986:50), that the nature-grace dichotomy in the theology of the NGK 'is grounded in Federal Calvinism' is open to question. The nature-grace, soul-body, phenomena-noumena, time-eternity and faith-reason dichotomies were virtually ubiquitous in the 19th century.

<sup>62</sup> Cf Weber's discussion (1981 II:417-428).

<sup>63</sup> S J du Toit wrote in 1883: 'As often as we find Predestination in the Bible, even on every page, as seldom do we hear of it from our pulpits. There are many pulpits from where this doctrine is never heard. There are many old church-members who have never heard or read a sermon on this theme ... all denominations are guilty of this neglect but it is especially our NGK whose guilt is great. She is thus hiding the talent given to her, in stead of proclaiming it to the glory of the Lord who gave it to her'. (1893:211f). The first edition of his 300-page exposition of predestination appeared in 1895 (cf S J du Toit 1912).

his sources or his opponents and there is no reference to the publications of Du Toit in his books.<sup>64</sup>

Hofmeyr made no reference to the extensive discussions on election by Calvinist theologians during the previous centuries. His major point in the Tegenstellingen was that the givenness of creation established God's sovereignty over man (1885:62). God created everything with its own 'nature' or 'being' as it pleased him. Further God established the relationships of all created beings to each other and to himself, and no-one can change these. Especially man's own being and the purpose of his existence were determined by God and not by man himself (63).

He also saw the sovereignty of God in man's dependence on a multitude of factors that influenced his past history and present environment. 'God has all the threads that control these various factors in his hands. There is nothing and nothing happens apart from his sovereignty'.<sup>65</sup> But this must not be seen as fatalism, argued Hofmeyr, because every good thing that man has, physical, cultural or spiritual, is a gift of God's grace. All the historical factors that led to one person's salvation, are determined by God and all a gift of grace (1885:65). Even if there was no sin, each good thing would have been a free gift of God's grace. The holy angels themselves live by sovereign grace, that Hofmeyr beautifully

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<sup>64</sup> Du Toit claimed that he studied 'in harmony with' Hofmeyr' and that he was indebted to him for his 'knowledge of the reformed faith and especially of prophecy', adding that: 'He thoroughly trained us in Romans 9-11'. In the same passage he said that he could not agree with 'the dominant group' in the NGK, because of his opposition to the revival (Du Toit 1917:9f). However, Hofmeyr was an exponent of the revival. The key to this riddle seems to be in the words 'especially of prophecy'. As Du Toit was an ardent student of prophecy, his reference to Romans 9-11 is probably an indication that Hofmeyr stimulated his thinking on the future of Israel. Apparently it was G W A van der Lingen, minister at Paarl, who influenced Du Toit's views on election (cf Du Toit 1917:337).

<sup>65</sup> 1885:65; Hofmeyr's emphasis.

defines as 'the continuous self-giving of God' (66).

The way in which he stated the problem here was clearly from the point of view of the doctrine of God.<sup>66</sup> Therefore he struggled with the philosophical problem of the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility. He said that there was a 'fundamental contradiction' between the concept of the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Hofmeyr resolved the paradox by explaining that the responsibility of man was also ordained by God as an essential part of man's nature. 'Man is and will be in all eternity responsible to God' (1885:66).

Hofmeyr was especially sensitive to the possibility that God's sovereignty might be understood as being arbitrary or immoral.<sup>67</sup> 'God's sovereignty does not release man from his responsibility, (it) is one with his holy being and his holy ordinances' (1885:68). Man's responsibility relates to his will. 'He who has no will cannot be responsible' (66). Therefore, in the work of salvation, God attends to the will of man. The will must be conquered.<sup>68</sup> 'God can save no-one against his will ... (and) no-one can love God against his will'. When God saves man he does not force him, but 'lures and attracts him. He wins his will' (1885:67). He who goes wrong, chooses it because he willed it, and he who

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<sup>66</sup> For an exposition of the various perspectives from which election has been discussed through the centuries, cf Weber 1983 II:414ff. According to Weber Calvin did not always treat this doctrine in the same dogmatic *locus*, but 'he always discusses it in the sphere of Christology or soteriology, in constant contrast with the Scholastic tradition' that assigned it to the doctrine of God (425).

<sup>67</sup> 'You cannot say that something is morally good or bad, if man's will is not in it ... because God works on man's will he is not excluded by any fate or arbitrariness from salvation' (Hofmeyr 1885:67).

<sup>68</sup> Here Hofmeyr agrees with the Canons of Dort, articles 3 and 4, paragraph 11, but he makes no reference to them at all.

chooses the right way, chooses it because he willed it. 'He does it in God's power, but not without himself willing it'. For biblical support Hofmeyr referred to Acts 13:46 and to the words of Jesus to Jerusalem: 'I willed, but you were not willing' (67).

In his Niet Knecht maar Kind Hofmeyr approached election from the point of view of salvation. His discussion was a strong polemic against those who understood or taught election with 'the mentality of a servant' instead of that of a child (1896:220). His major point was that election was an act of God's love and grace, not one of law or justice. As soon as the servant or slave 'starts to theologize about election it stops being what it really is'. In order to bring election within his field of vision the slave 'has to bring it down to his own level'. Accordingly he does not see election as the fruit of God's love, but as related to God's will 'as he understands the will of God' (220).

For the servant or slave election is dark, arbitrary and totally incomprehensible. He accepts it as his Master's decision 'as one who does not care to give any reason ... to his servants'.<sup>69</sup> It is seen as something that originated in God's 'cold will', and therefore leaves the servant cold when he contemplates it. If he thinks that he is not one of the elect, he

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<sup>69</sup> 1896:220. Hofmeyr's views are in contrast with the those of the poet-theologian Totius, son of S J du Toit, as expressed in his poem Die Godsbesluit (The Divine Decree), the last stanza of which may be translated as follows:

Higher than all your dark trees, o Lord  
grows a single large tree  
which is the wag-'n-bietjie-bos  
of your decree -  
from afar so lush and green  
but how contradictory  
when I think deeper  
than a sinner should  
and when I stretch out my hands  
to your decree  
I become enmeshed in sharp thorns (TVW X:236).

either revolts against God's partiality and injustice, or pities himself because he was excluded either by chance or fate (1896:221).

Similarly, if one with the 'slave-mentality' thinks that he is one of the elect, he exalts himself and ascribes God's election to his own worthiness, as did the Israelites 'who thought that they were chosen because of the worthiness of their ancestors' (1896:221). But Paul reminded the Israelites that if God was like that, 'Isaac and Jacob would have been excluded from election'. The slave can only see his election as the way in which God wants to glorify him 'in preference to others' (222). Because Paul preached clearly that God included the Gentiles in his election, the Jews hated him. The slave 'believes that his election is based on the exclusion of others' (222).

For the child, says Hofmeyr, election proceeds not from God's inscrutable will, but from his love. In Christ God gave himself to man as love. 'The total initiative is with God'. If He did not give himself to man, man would never turn to Him. Man's whole being needs the love of God. 'The child understands that when God has given himself in love to him, he has entered into God's purpose with his life' (1896:222). This undeserved love agrees with God's purpose with man, as expressed at the creation. 'Without the electing love the creation of man is a dark mystery' and remains without purpose (223). Election explains creation, because it brings God's purpose in creating man towards fulfillment.

Hofmeyr was convinced that 'the child' cannot use the fact of election as a reason for pride or self-righteousness. It is 'impossible for him' to seek for a reason for his election in his own worthiness. 'For the child nothing is clearer than the fact that human merit has absolute no place in the context of God's love' (223). 'The child knows that God does not

love man because he was elected, but that he elected man because he loved him' (1896:225).

He also agonized over the 'ultimate problem' of election. 'Why does God not include all people to whom he sends the gospel, in his electing love? Why is it that all who hear the gospel do not hear the inner call that leads to justification?'

He answers: The child acknowledges honestly that we have here an awesome mystery, that God did not explain to us. For the slave this is no mystery, because he does not understand God's love. He sees both election and rejection as deeds unrelated to God's love. (226).

The child weeps when people reject the gospel, as Paul wept over the Jews. The love of God moved Paul to pray even for the enemies of the gospel. This love shines most clearly in Jesus, the 'Elect One, the Image of the Father' (1896:226). He wept for Judas and for Israel because he loved them.

This weeping and agonizing love makes the hardening and the rejection of sinners the mystery of mysteries for the child ... an almighty Saviour whose love weeps for the rejected ones and yet who does not stop the rejection. What a mystery! (226).

He warned that we should not draw the 'logical conclusion' that, because God rejects the unrepentant sinner, he somehow stops being the God of love, or that he does not love the rejected sinner.

The child knows that God's wrath does not cancel his tender mercies. He knows that God's just judgement over the sinner does not change his character, that he does not stop being the same God he has been before the judgement. (1896:227).

The child knows that even though God allowed man to sin and to reject the gospel, God's love does not change.

And therefore he looks forward to the time when God will reveal to all his creatures that neither the fall nor man's rejection of the gospel can throw a single shadow on his perfect character. (227).

An important dimension in Hofmeyr's doctrine of election is that believers were fore-ordained to be holy. In a chapter entitled Election in his book on Ephesians he emphasized this aspect (1905:9). This is, of course, an eminently biblical perspective and especially true of the Ephesian letter. He started, typically, in a very 'experiential' way. 'In your regenerate heart there is this desire for holiness, your desire is, since your conversion, to be holy'. He did not say that good works are our assurance that we belong to the elect, as in covenant theology, but, our growing desire for holiness 'makes it more and more impossible for us to ascribe that desire to ourselves' (1905:9).

Another important emphasis was on election to service. Taking his cue from Abraham, Jesus and Paul, Hofmeyr pointed out that election has the purpose of bringing blessings to others. 'Election to communion with God's love is election to communion with God's works of love to save the world'. He added emphatically: 'There is no other election' (1896:224). 'Who understood election better than Paul?' he asked, 'and who gave himself more unreservedly to work for the salvation of the lost than Paul?' (225). As Jesus was 'the Beloved, the Elect One par excellence', it is incontrovertible that election is by 'its nature' outward looking:

He laboured to save all. He wept for the unrepentant of his people. He prayed for his enemies on the cross. He was moved with pity over the treachery of Judas ... The Father did not exclude others from his love for the Son. He concentrated his love in him in order that it should pass through him to all mankind. This is God's explanation of election. It does not serve to limit but to extend God's love. God's love seeks in each one of the elect, according to his abilities, a new starting point to attract those not yet included in God's electing love. (1896:224).

It seems clear that Hofmeyr, who had a tremendous influence in the NGK over a long period of time, taught election with a distinctly different emphasis from that of scholastic Calvinism. If we may make a provisional conclusion at this stage, we may observe that S J

du Toit was correct when he accused the NGK of neglecting the doctrine of election, at least as it was taught in the 18th century.

### Justification by Faith

Hofmeyr was not pre-occupied with the doctrine of justification by faith,<sup>70</sup> but his writings are permeated with references to the grace of God.<sup>71</sup> He did not follow the emphasis of Luther, namely that God justifies the sinner, his contention was rather that sinners are justified by union with Christ through regeneration. Although he often referred with approval to the example of Luther, it is significant that, in his Tegenstellingen, we do not find the Lutheran paradox, namely that the Christian is both sinner and justified.<sup>72</sup>

He defined justification as the acquittal of punishment, a declaration that the sinner is not guilty (1896:205). He explained that 'it is something not understood by the slave', but the Spirit leads the child to understand that, as soon as he gives himself to Christ in faith, 'he is immediately released from his guilt ... As slave you were incapable of having this experience' (206). You came to realize that you were unable to save yourself from your guilt, then God's Spirit brought you to the cross and you understood its mystery.

This is the foundation upon which alone your justification could rest. There

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<sup>70</sup> In his Niet Knecht maar Kind (1896) he devoted only 5 out of 300 pages to justification. It is noteworthy that the Swiss kenoticist Godet said that election and justification were the main problems during the reformation, but 'we must oppose the heresy of our time by emphasizing the person and the divinity of Christ' (Cf DK 29 Sep 1877).

<sup>71</sup> He said, for example: 'Only when we understand that God's grace must enable us to receive God's grace, can we see with Paul how great God's grace is'. (1905:70).

<sup>72</sup> Some of the topics are: 'Nature and Grace', 'Bound and Free', 'God above us and in us', 'A God who hides and reveals himself', 'Law and Gospel', 'Spirit and Letter', etc. (cf his Tegenstellingen 1885 and 1946).

you understood that Christ became one with you, the guilty one, in such a way that he was overwhelmed by the power of death. (208).

And here the Christological orientation of Hofmeyr's theology comes to the fore. Justification was not understood as merely a question of arithmetic, but as a relationship with Christ in his passion, death and resurrection. It is more than a mere declaration of the forgiveness of sins, it is an experience of one-ness with Christ in his death and resurrection. A justifying faith involves us in the greatest moment in history, the moment of Christ's separation from the Father:

What a moment in the history of the Son of God! His suffering overshadows all suffering as though it were nothing ... You marvel when you contemplate his suffering, when the dark curtain of death hid God's face from him. There is an eternal distance between what he was in his unity with the Father, and the unnatural death he experienced in his unity with the sinner. (1905:208).

Christ's resurrection was his 'justification' and we share in his justification:

As soon as you despair of yourself and give yourself to your saviour, your conscience is freed from guilt and your punishment is destroyed. God pronounces you free, and the same light that came into the soul of Jesus after three dark hours on Calvary came into your life and conquered the darkness. It was the light of the Father's face that reached you when he forgave you and pressed you against his Fatherheart as his dear child. (1896:-209).

The general trend of his teaching on justification was more that of Romans 8:1 than that of Romans 5:1, it was rather Ephesians 5 than Ephesians 2. Justification involved being united to Christ<sup>73</sup> and implied sanctification: 'Without union with Christ which is our sanctification, our justification would be a hollow sound' (1890:8). In discussing Romans 8:1 Hofmeyr explained the benefits we receive from our unity with Christ. The first benefit is

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<sup>73</sup> Hofmeyr 1896:130; cf 1946:73-79. After the experience of having been justified freely, by grace and by faith in Christ, one understands Scripture where it says that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ (1896:209).

justification. This was received

when Christ descended into your believing heart, which means the destruction of your guilt ... When He united himself with you by his descent in you, he took you up into his own justification, in his own being-justified by the Father. That this really happened is proved to you by the peace before God that suddenly filled your heart; and this was for you the real exposition of the word of the apostle: There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (1898:244f).

Faith is for Hofmeyr 'to give myself over to Jesus Christ and to trust that he is creating a new life in me' and makes me a partaker of God's righteousness. 'Your faith is from God, it is the fruit of his revelation to you and of his presence in you' (1896:257). The testimony of the Holy Spirit was not primarily - as with Luther - that my sins are forgiven, but that I have gone over from being a servant to being a child of God.

This was not the emphasis of Luther in his polemic with Rome, neither that of Kohlbrugge in his polemic with the religious spirit of his age.<sup>74</sup> In Calvin, on the other hand, we find both emphases: 'Christ for us' as well as 'Christ in us'.<sup>75</sup> Barth said that the theology of T J Beck was 'insufficiently alien' to the religious spirit of the 19th century. It was 'all too contemporary', and 'it is unmistakable that with Beck we are nearer to Andreas Osiander than to Calvin'.<sup>76</sup> The question is whether this was also true of Hofmeyr.

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<sup>74</sup> Kohlbrugge moved away from the Reveil because of the subjectivism of its theology (cf Bakhuizen van den Brink 1962:176ff, Barth 1973:636ff and Rasker 1974:-100ff).

<sup>75</sup> Calvin discussed justification in CI III chapters 11-16; for justification and union with Christ cf III:11:10. Barth said that for Calvin 'more clearly than for Kohlbrugge ... obedience does not vanish in faith, the grace of sanctification in the grace of justification' (1973: 641). Weber said: 'Together with Osiander, Calvin maintained the "doctrine" of "union with Christ"'. (1981 II:304).

<sup>76</sup> Barth 1973:623. According to Kestell T J Beck was another favourite author of Hofmeyr (1911:123).

Did he sufficiently emphasize the objective, 'Christ for us', in a time of religious subjectivism?

As we have seen above, there certainly were subjectivist tendencies in Hofmeyr's theology. On the other hand there seems to be a healthy 'saving element' of objectivity in his emphasis on the love of God as supremely manifested in the human life of Christ. He said, for example, when one is troubled by his sins before God, he should not ask: 'Who am I?' but rather: 'What is my God for me?' (Kestell 1911:122). The child of God lives on the high level of being conscious of the love of the Father (1896: 217), and his greatest temptation is to return to the servile life of fearing God as Master, instead of trusting in his love as Father (94).

Hofmeyr's important Christological perspective, namely that we participate 'in the justification of Christ', also contains a strong dimension of objectivity. This 'we in Christ' doctrine was a valid and very necessary development of reformation theology. Weber observed that the misunderstandings of the reformation doctrine of justification were 'ultimately all based on the fact that neither the "God in Christ" nor the "we in Christ" was asserted to the necessary degree' (1981 II:308).

Du Toit (1984:266) concluded that Hofmeyr was able to reconcile 'his Christological emphasis with the reformed view'. Yet he never tried to reconcile his views with those of the reformers, he assumed rather that he stood in the legitimate extension of the principles of the reformation.<sup>77</sup> It was a loss for the church that Hofmeyr did not develop his 'we in

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<sup>77</sup> When accused of heretical ideas (from a person from Steynsburg, NE Cape), Hofmeyr defended himself by claiming the authority of Calvin (Du Toit 1984:363), but this seems to have been an isolated case. And even then he made no attempt to justify his immediate divergence from Calvin on the reason for the incarnation (cf CI II:12:1,5-7).

Christ' doctrine of justification. On the contrary, under the influence of his friend Andrew Murray, it was the 'Christ in us' teaching that eventually received the most emphasis in the NGK.

### Sanctification.

Hofmeyr's views on sanctification presupposed the baptism with the Spirit of sonship. Without the conscious appropriation and experience of the huiuotesia, any progress in holiness, obedience and love would be an impossibility.

In his Tegenstellingen he explained the believer's experience of sanctification with a paradox: as the believer strives after holiness, he becomes increasingly conscious of his sinfulness. The Christian is deeply troubled by sin in and around him and he realizes that he will never conquer it fully in this life. 'There is on earth no end to the sorrow for sin in the believer' (1946:30). This sorrow for sin increases as he is gradually enlightened and renewed:

As the believer increasingly realizes that he is called to be perfect ... the presence of something that contradicts this perfection, however small, only serves to increase his sorrow. It is only in communion with the Perfect ... that the imperfect ... troubles us and becomes a chain that binds us ... It is only when a work of art nears perfection that the artist becomes increasingly conscious of that in his work which contradicts the rules of art. It is only they who have been renewed who rightly feel the incongruity of sin. As the believer progresses in sanctification, he understands the meaning of the cry: who will deliver me from this body of death? (31).

In spite of his strong emphasis on 'the life of the child', Hofmeyr was not a perfectionist. We will always be troubled by sin, but there is a big difference between sin in the believer and in the unbeliever. In the latter sin is still in full control.

But how different do I view the sin that is in my members, from a person who does not know the salvation that is in Jesus Christ. I know that sin has receded to the outskirts while in my spirit, in the capital, in the heart of the

city, the Spirit of God rules permanently. I see and cry for sin that is still in me; but I also rejoice in the fact that it does not rule in me, but only shoots at me from the 'border-districts', as it were. (1946:32).

The believer must constantly guard against the subtleties of sin, but the assurance of the new life in him, and the victory of Christ for him, make the struggle possible.

Insofar as sin was able to let me think, say or do something wrong, it did this as an intruder who ruled earlier in me, but not any more, whose progress is now checked in me by the Spirit of God who lives in me. Everything is changed when I realize that not sin, but the Spirit of God is the strongest power within me, and when I am able to rejoice in the fact that the movements of sin in me are only the last death-throes of the body of sin that is being destroyed! There is a big difference between fighting against an unscathed ferocious leopard, knowing that I cannot overcome him, and fighting against him, knowing that it will not take long because he has already received a mortal wound! (1946:32f).

Sorrow for sin increases as one progresses in holiness, but the believer's joy is also increased, because he is conscious that he has been saved from the power of sin.

He knows in the midst of his struggle that he is not busy with an uncertain experiment. He does not try to remove sin from the centre of his life. He will never succeed in any case. He knows that Jesus Christ has done it and that the Holy Spirit has taken up his abode in his inner man. Not he, but Jesus Christ rules in him over sin. (1946:33).

As a good pastor Hofmeyr reminded his readers that it is harmful to concentrate exclusively on either the joy of salvation or the sorrow for sin.

It is a pathological and dangerous situation when believers only consider one of these aspects of the inner life - when sorrow for sin smothers the joy of salvation, or when the joy of salvation obliterates the sorrow for sin; when the believer is either only interested in sorrowing for sin or only in the joy of salvation. (1946:34).

The believer trusts in the grace of God, not under 'the dark shadow of sin' but in spite of it. Sin is 'the ugliest opposite of what he already is, by God's grace, and of what he is destined to be eternally, namely a child that reveals the image of the Father' (1946:34).

In the end it becomes clear that, in Hofmeyr's view, sanctification is absolutely related

to Christ. In his urge and desire for holiness the believer calls out: 'Who will deliver me from the body of this death?' But 'he answers immediately, and even louder: 'I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord' (34). In Jesus, the second Adam, true and representative man, sin was successfully and decisively overcome. 'And in all who bear his image the last traces of sin will presently disappear' (35). Believers may rejoice in the knowledge and experience of this, in the midst of all the sorrow occasioned by the presence of sin in the world.

### Conclusion

While John Murray was, to some extent, a confessional theologian, Hofmeyr wanted to be nothing but a biblical theologian.<sup>78</sup> He carefully guarded his freedom from the authority of confessions which might 'limit the truth into which the Holy Spirit wants to lead the Church'. His theology shows no signs of the scholastic Calvinism of the 17th century. His treatment of the covenant of works and the doctrine of election was rather within the framework of contemporary enlightened evangelical theology. The ideas of revival, missions, total abstinence, holiness, progress and the Christianization of society were the great themes of protestantism during the second half of the nineteenth century, and with varying emphases these were also the themes of his own teaching and writing.

Although Hofmeyr did not overcome all the weaknesses of contemporary theology, he had some rare insights, related to those of Murray. Hofmeyr's 'we-in-Christ' doctrine of justification - the insight that believers participate in the justification of Christ, true and

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<sup>78</sup> Davenport has assumed - wrongly in our opinion - that he was 'a very strict Calvinist' (1966:29).

representative man - is a good example. The 'discovery' of the huiiothesia was decisive for his theological development and became the central theme of his theology. This doctrine was especially relevant in the middle of the 19th century when many who were brought up in the reformed tradition believed that one could never be sure of his acceptance by God. On the other hand, for this reason, the NGK has been accused of 'Methodism' by S J du Toit and his followers.<sup>79</sup>

It is also important that he related the huiiothesia and the assurance of faith very closely to the example and obedience of the human Christ. As his 'we-in-Christ' doctrine of justification was not developed by his successors, the subsequent emphasis on assurance - still very popular in the NGK today - was not regulated by a corresponding emphasis on the example of Christ. Such an emphasis - unrelated to the obedience of Christ - encouraged and still encourages an ethic of very limited dimensions of personal piety.

Unfortunately Hofmeyr's non-confessional stance also had a negative side. As neither he nor Andrew Murray consciously developed their thinking in relation to the reformation, their unquestionable authority weakened the link between the NGK and the theology of the reformation.

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<sup>79</sup> S J du Toit was trained at Stellenbosch, but his theological orientation was that of scholastic orthodoxy (cf n62 and n63 above). Although he remained in the NGK, many of his followers, as well as his son J D du Toit, became members of the GKSA (cf Badenhorst; TVW VI:279ff). The strict Calvinist Du Toit, father of the Afrikaans language movement and co-founder of the Afrikanerbond, was initially a friend and supporter of president Paul Kruger. Because of the giving of monopolies and the treatment of the Uitlanders Du Toit later turned against Kruger. He was probably the only Afrikaans leader who did not support Transvaal during the War and was therefore very much 'a prophet without honour' (cf Du Toit 1917: 239ff, 328ff; Davenport 1966:135ff).

## Chapter 4

## HOFMEYR AND MEDIATING THEOLOGY

Hofmeyr was influenced by Dutch ethical theology and, according to the astute critic Mackinnon, he 'had considerable sympathy with the newer theology of Schleiermacher' (1887:30). There are indeed indications that he emphasized the religious consciousness of man in his methodology. The question is now whether and how far he was influenced by contemporary 'mediating' theology. In order to clarify the issues at stake, we must first define what is meant by 'mediating' theology.<sup>1</sup>

Schleiermacher rejected the view that Christian theology is a system of fixed doctrines, and looked for a basis for theology in the living reality of the religious self-consciousness of man.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, because of his Moravian upbringing, he was especially attracted to the person of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> Schleiermacher 'did not found a school, but rather a new era' in theology,<sup>4</sup> but the Vermittlungstheologie derived from him in a special way.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Guder translated it as 'mediatory' theology (Weber 1983 I:141).

<sup>2</sup> Weber 1983 I:137f; Barth 1973:437f.

<sup>3</sup> Barth 1973:431f; Hodge 1883 II:440n.

<sup>4</sup> Barth 1973:425. Weber said: 'Like Augustine ... (he) had passed through the intellectual realms of the world out of which he came. But there is a difference: whereas Augustine experienced a conversion, Schleiermacher went through a development'. (1983 I:137).

<sup>5</sup> Walker 1968:490; Weber 1983 I:141.

The Vermittlungs theologians wanted to mediate between the confessionalists on the one hand, and the rationalists and radical Hegelians on the other (Weber 1983 I:142). Like Schleiermacher, they were strongly devoted to the person of Jesus. Some of the more prominent representatives of this direction were Carl I Nitzsch, J A Neander, F Tholuck and I A Dorner.<sup>6</sup> We have noted in the previous chapter that Hofmeyr read widely in German 'mediating' theology. It is also a well-documented fact that Andrew Murray was influenced by Dorner and T J Beck.<sup>7</sup> Dorner belonged to the moderate wing of the mediating theologians.<sup>8</sup> Like Schleiermacher, they moved away from the view that the Bible is a direct revelation of God, to the opinion that the religious consciousness of man 'reflects' divine truth in various ways.<sup>9</sup>

#### Hofmeyr's Theological Method.

Du Toit pointed out that Hofmeyr studied Scripture from the premise of his own religious experience.<sup>10</sup> It is remarkable how seldom he used the expression 'the Word of God', so popular in reformed theology in general and specifically in modern NG theology. He rather referred to the revelatory or enlightening work of the Spirit in an individual. This does not

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<sup>6</sup> Walker 1968:491; Weber 1983 I:141. According to Weber, J H A Ebrard 'returned completely' to the approach of Schleiermacher (142).

<sup>7</sup> AMVW III:293-300; Coetzee 1986:226.

<sup>8</sup> Barth 1973:577. Dorner said: 'The central doctrine of Christianity is the incarnation ... the revelation of what God is, and of what man may be'. (Walker 1968:491).

<sup>9</sup> The proper object of theology is 'not God in his revelation, but man himself believing in the divine'. (Henry 1983 II:120).

<sup>10</sup> He said that it seemed time and again as if Hofmeyr lost 'the reformed way', but 'his honest study of Scripture corrected these (subjectivist) tendencies' (Du Toit 1984:293f).

mean that he conceived of the work of the Spirit as separate from the Word, but 'it is the Holy Spirit who makes something', including the Bible, 'into a means of grace' (1898:-159). 'Christ and his apostles' honoured the Scriptures and we should do the same (163), but 'the Spirit is above the Word' as the artisan is greater than his work, the Word being 'the workmanship and the instrument of the Spirit' (164). Hofmeyr saw the Bible as the record of the insights and truths the Holy Spirit taught Jesus and the apostles (160f).

The witness of great Christians of the past, such as the reformers, was appreciated 'in so far as it was truly the work of the Holy Spirit' (1898: 162). In addition to these the religious experiences of individual Christians played a 'correlating' or 'verifying' role in Hofmeyr's theology. He warned, on the one hand, that one should not imagine that the voice of his own heart is the voice of God. 'It is dangerous to ask my own heart: what is God for me?' (1946:35). But on the other hand he emphasized that 'our God would be a strange God to us if He did not speak to us and did not also reveal himself to us through our own heart'. (37). When God wants to reveal himself to me

He impresses these divine truths on me. They must echo within me. From this impression (afdruk) and echo (weerklank) in me I learn what God teaches me and what He reveals to me. I cannot come to him if I by-pass that what I hear and see in myself. I cannot come to him if I do not return to myself.<sup>11</sup>

Hofmeyr affirmed that our religious experiences tell us not only something about ourselves, but also something about God:

The heart that seeks after God, is the 'amen' on God's seeking me. The movement of my heart to Him is born of his movement towards me. And if

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<sup>11</sup> 1946:37. In 1884 Hofmeyr used the same arguments from physics which are used today by modern theologians who emphasize the subjectivity of the theologian in his scientific enterprise. Using the example of sight he said that we do not see directly, but the impression of a view is made 'in my eye, and I see the original view by means of its impression on my eye' (1946:37; cf Moulder 1981).

I come to the point of embracing Him as a child embraces his father, this happens because He presses me to his father-heart as his child. What happens in the heart of God is made known to me by what happens within me. I do not come to him without coming to myself. I understand Him by understanding myself.<sup>12</sup>

Hofmeyr's method was therefore formally, if not materially, an investigation into the religious consciousness of the new man, or, 'theanthropic humanity' as Ebrard would say. However, it was not the religious consciousness of the community as with Schleiermacher, it was rather related to the religious consciousness of the individual as in Vinet.<sup>13</sup> The most important individual here is of course Jesus Christ, followed by the apostles and lastly, but not without its own importance, the religious consciousness of those reborn by the Holy Spirit, the true Christians.<sup>14</sup>

Although we will return to his Christology in another chapter, we may note in passing that Hofmeyr said that 'there was an inner development (in Jesus), also in his knowledge of divine things ... the certainty that He was the Christ was not revealed to him in all its clarity, suddenly and without preparation' (1887:17). His experience and perception of the

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<sup>12</sup> 1946:38; my emphasis (GT).

<sup>13</sup> According to Rasker, De la Saussaye was more insistent 'on the objective character of revelation' than Schleiermacher and, on the other hand, more appreciative of the 'moral and educative character of the historical Church' than Vinet (1974:127).

<sup>14</sup> There is a similarity between Hofmeyr's approach and that of James Denney, who said that 'all sound and legitimate doctrinal construction must be based on experience', but who 'derived his theological ideas from the revelation contained in the Bible' (Marshall 1969:206f). By his appeal to experience Denney 'was seeking to avoid the danger of theologizing on the basis of speculative a priori principles ... he was opposed to such a system of thought as Hegelianism which attempted to interpret the Christian faith by its own philosophical categories in defiance of the realities of Christian experience.' Marshall added that Denney regarded Scripture 'as authenticating itself to the Christian consciousness; its authority depends on the fact that it is recognized by the Christian consciousness as true and therefore authoritative'. (207f).

sins and needs of Israel brought the understanding to his mind that he was the Messiah. 'In the high priest (of the Old Covenant) He recognized his prototype' (22). He had compassion with Israel, 'as no-one ever had ... His compassion (with sinners) was the mirror in which He recognized God's compassion with Israel'.<sup>15</sup>

Another example of Hofmeyr's indirect or 'experiential' method is found in his description of 'the pentecostal life'.

Earlier you did not care for him (your neighbour) ... If he was not of your colour, belonged to a lower social class or was brought up in poverty, you looked down upon your neighbour with disgust ... (now) you love all men, whoever they may be, to whichever nation they may belong ... The further someone is estranged from God, the deeper he has sunk, the more intense is your sympathy with him ... Your love for others is one of the proofs that you became one with the Son of God. You love your enemies, as He did; where it is possible you show kindness to them, as He did. You are amazed if you compare your attitude to your neighbour in the past with your present attitude to him. He is indeed now your brother.<sup>16</sup>

Examples from this 'experiential' approach could be multiplied almost endlessly from Hofmeyr's works. Because it is descriptive and not prescriptive, this method has an attraction of its own, but it is of course an almost continuous appeal to the authority of religious experience.

It is certainly the biblical view, in the words of the Catholic scholar Galot, that 'the locus of revelation is the human mind of Jesus', but, if this 'Christological principle' is

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<sup>15</sup> 1887:21; my emphasis (GT).

<sup>16</sup> 1898:97f. Hofmeyr believed that the true Christian would have a different view of the poor and of those of a despised race than the nominal believer. What was urgently necessary was the preaching of the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit, so that Christians should be brought to appropriate what they professed to have in Christ. Then 'white' Christians would 'love all men, whoever they may be, to whichever nation they may belong, whichever religion they may profess, yes, even if they have no religion'.

extended to the believer, it opens a wide door for the authority of human religious experiences. Hofmeyr's Christological focus, on the other hand, did not encourage autonomous religious experiences, but traditions have the tendency to generate their own authority. Hofmeyr had certainly no intention to give credence to doubtful religious experiences, but it would seem that he did not sufficiently realize the contradictory nature of religious experiences.<sup>17</sup>

#### Hofmeyr and Natural Theology

In his famous book on the theology of the 19th century, Karl Barth made the point that the majority of theologians of this period, those who inclined towards liberalism and those who inclined towards pietism, were influenced by various shades of natural theology.<sup>18</sup> Douglas Bax has argued that natural theology was already present in the idea of a general revelation, found in post-reformation theology. Bax held that the NGK developed a 'bi-focal' view of revelation because the Dutch Confession of Faith taught the doctrines of 'general and special revelation'.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Weber reminded us that 'experience does not possess its own independence' and that 'Christian experience is in itself contradictory' (1983 I:547f).

<sup>18</sup> Cf Barth 1973:341ff. S L Jaki, on the other hand, said that 'the ranks of natural theology' were already badly deserted in 1885 when Lord Gifford founded his famous lectureship in natural theology (1978:3), but he referred to the pursuit of natural theology as an independent discipline, and not to its intrusion into dogmatic theology, against which Barth protested.

<sup>19</sup> Bax 1979:38; cf art 2 of the Confessio Belgica. This confession was written in 1561 by the martyr Guido (Guy) de Bres (1522-1567) and modelled on the French Confession of 1559.

It is remarkable that Hofmeyr never expounded or appealed to the reformed confessions, not even to the very 'anthropological' Heidelberg Catechism.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, although he never used the term 'natural theology' in his writings, there are indications that his theology contained large 'anthropological elements'. Du Toit denied that Hofmeyr was influenced by natural theology, but partly gave away his case by adding that his theology was related to the 'apologetic theology' of Van Oosterzee.<sup>21</sup> In the late 1870's natural theology was in fact still taught as a subject at Stellenbosch.<sup>22</sup> The present writer would argue that the source of Hofmeyr's natural theology was not the Dutch Confession of Faith but quite simply contemporary protestant theology.<sup>23</sup>

Barth strongly criticized the influence of natural theology because of his concern that the witness of the Church should not have two sources, namely revelation and reason, the Word of God and history, God's commandments and his 'creation ordinances'.<sup>24</sup> It is again widely admitted today that there are valid reasons for the recognition of some kind of

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<sup>20</sup> Andrew Murray, the other most influential NGK theologian of this period, delivered a series of sermons on the Catechism, but these were only published in 1945. As far as I could ascertain, Murray referred only once to the Confessio Belgica in his writings (cf AMVW II:105).

<sup>21</sup> Du Toit 1984:292. For Van Oosterzee's theology, cf Haitjema (1964:211ff). As we have seen, Mackinnon placed Schleiermacher and Van Oosterzee in the same category (1887:30).

<sup>22</sup> According to Kestell, John Murray used the Institutio theologiae naturalis of Hofstede de Groot as textbook (1932:34).

<sup>23</sup> The positive evaluation of man's religious consciousness was not restricted to modernists. An evangelical like James Orr of Glasgow said, for example, that 'the moral consciousness is one of the most powerful direct sources of man's knowledge of God' (Quoted by Henry 1983 II:116).

<sup>24</sup> Weber I 1981:204; cf T F Torrance 1984, chapter 9.

'natural knowledge of God'.<sup>25</sup> From the point of view of biblical theology this may be accepted only if it is clearly understood that such 'knowledge' must be appropriated and validated by the gospel. In other words, natural theology must be interpreted from the point of view of revelation. The reason for this 'imperialistic' attitude is because historically natural theology was used to legitimize revelation.<sup>26</sup> This meant that the authority of revelation was seen as being dependent on natural theology, and, when philosophers questioned the assumptions of natural theology, revelation itself was thought to be discredited.

Biblical theology maintains that there is no natural continuity or neutral 'point of contact' between human religiosity and biblical revelation, but it cannot be denied that there are 'areas of analogy' between these.<sup>27</sup> Religion is indeed a universal phenomenon, but man's 'experience of God' in himself, in nature and in history does not have an independent validity, and may never become a second source of the witness of the Church.<sup>28</sup>

For the purpose of this discussion the major features of natural theology may be summarized in three categories, namely those that refer to 'God in man', 'God in nature' and 'God in history'. In other words 'natural theology' does not only imply the 'natural knowledge of God attainable by reason', but it includes all 'knowledge of God' and of his

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<sup>25</sup> Macquarrie revived the old term 'philosophical theology' (cf 1966: 39ff). Stanley L. Jaki (1978) is one of the few who pursues a 'pure' natural theology in the Thomistic tradition.

<sup>26</sup> For an impressive example of such an attempt by one of Hofmeyr's students, cf Malan 1905.

<sup>27</sup> Bavinck has made the point that these 'areas of analogy' may become 'places of arrest' or, 'places of gracious confrontation' (1981:129-137; cf Weber 1981 I:214ff).

<sup>28</sup> 'What Barth objects to in natural theology is not its rational structure as such but its independent character' (Torrance 1984:293).

will not derived from revelation. However, these categories should not be seen as being mutually exclusive. For example, the category 'God in man' may be understood to include both man's sense of right and wrong and his experience of 'cosmic relatedness', and the category 'God in nature' may include both man's experience of 'cosmic estrangement' and his 'sense of God'.

#### 'God in man': The Conscience

As Hofmeyr stood within the Dutch ethical tradition, the most obvious evidence that he believed in natural theology is to be found in his strong emphasis on the power and 'independence' of the human conscience. Although he conceded that the Word and Spirit teach 'more clearly' what the conscience teaches 'less clearly' (1946:82), he identified the conscience with the voice of God within man:

It witnesses in the name of God against all unrighteousness, and is unyieldingly strict in its condemnation of all who do not listen to its witness. It destroys the inner peace and thus brings over the unrighteous the worst of all miseries ... the conscience witnesses in the name of God against all unrighteousness, or rather: God himself witnesses through the conscience. (1946:87).

In a similar context Hofmeyr said that 'God has established a seat of judgement within us' to which he has subjected us, 'which is the echo of the divine judgement'. The conscience 'conveys' divine judgement to us and 'execute it in us'. A little later the conscience is called 'the policeman of God' (1946:38). Morality has an 'unchangeable, an eternal foundation' because the voice of the conscience is 'the commandment of God and not my own'. 'Therefore,' warns Hofmeyr, 'if a person would deny that his moral sense is the law and witness of God, he will soon also deny that it is the law and witness of his own spirit' (75).

Ten years later, when he published his Niet Knecht maar Kind, his position was substantially the same. In a chapter entitled 'Law and Spirit' he still identified the conscience with the law of God:

When God judges you because of the transgression of his immutable law, you are also being judged by your mind, your inward man, your conscience, yourself. You would not have known what God's unchangeable law is saying to you, if it was not also the law of your conscience. It is through the law of your conscience that you know the law of God ... Just as the Spirit of God witnesses to the child that he is God's child, by means of the witness of his own spirit, in the same way the Spirit of God witnesses to the servant that he is bound to the law, by means of his own spirit.<sup>29</sup>

In a sermon entitled 'The conscience and the gospel of God's grace' Hofmeyr said that it is the 'calling' of the conscience to 'test' the gospel.<sup>30</sup> He even argued that the conscience forbids us to accept a gospel which denies that God punishes sin. It is also the conscience that teaches us that we need reconciliation.

If the conscience does not find in the gospel the dimensions of God's justice which it sees in Him and his law, it rejects this gospel as something which is not of God but of the tempter ... it rejects, with uncompromising severity, all that does not reflect God's holiness and justice. The conscience can approve of no other reconciliation with God than that which was brought about on Calvary.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> 1896:132f. Hofmeyr here contradicted the Heidelberg Catechism where it says that the 'law of God' reveals our sin to us (Question 3).

<sup>30</sup> This sermon was published posthumously, but was presumably written in the 1860's, during the struggle against modernism.

<sup>31</sup> GM Sep 1911 - Hofmeyr's emphasis. It is remarkable that Hofmeyr did not allow for the influence of the religious and cultural environment on the conscience, while he acknowledged that Jesus and the apostles were influenced by their environment: 'Paul was different from Peter and John partly because he ... was born in a civilized pagan city and subsequently educated at the feet of Gamaliel.' He added that the environment does not explain all the differences between them, because 'man's individuality is a deep mystery' (1946:2). For the influence of the cultural environment on Jesus, cf especially Hofmeyr 1886.

This emphasis on man's moral sense would prove, perhaps more than anything else, that Hofmeyr was influenced by the 'enlightened protestantism' of his time. Another indication of the strong influence of the 'ethical paradigm' in Hofmeyr's theology is the fact that he believed that the conscience may be obliterated by the habitual rejection of its witness in man and would place him 'beyond redemption'.<sup>32</sup>

There is evidence, on the other hand, that 'ethical' in Hofmeyr implied more than 'pure' Kantian moralism. Haitjema remarked that when De la Saussaye was 'overwhelmed' by Kant, he was saved from moralism by studying Calvin's writings.<sup>33</sup> Hofmeyr was also 'saved from moralism', but in his case there is no indication that he made a special study of the Institutes. It was apparently the result of his study of Scripture and his spiritual experience of sonship in the years following the revival.

#### Man - an infinite spirit?

Although Hofmeyr deliberately rejected pantheism, he taught that 'the human spirit shares in the infinite nature of God'.<sup>34</sup> It is clear that he taught this idea, but it is not equally clear what he meant by it. In a chapter entitled 'God the Highest and the Nearest' he said

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<sup>32</sup> Hofmeyr 1946:78. He said that 'where nature and sin became one, there can be no point of contact or relation between nature and grace ... then nature has become unnatural.' In the same context he said, contrary to evangelical Calvinism, that 'grace does not create a sense of need (for salvation) but only finds it (in nature). And (grace) would be unable to work on that need, if it were impossible for the word of grace to find an echo from within nature'. (1946:43).

<sup>33</sup> De la Saussaye 'understood the full meaning of the term "ethical" when he realized that it implied and involved the work of the Holy Spirit' (Haitjema 1964:206).

<sup>34</sup> Hofmeyr 1946:86. He discussed the pantheistic theology of J H Scholten in 1860:20-95.

that the ability to recognize God as creator is a natural one.

It presents no problem to the human spirit, as soon as the thought of God as Almighty Creator is awakened in him ... to understand and to worship him as the Infinite, the Allhighest. It is very easy for us ... we understand his infinite greatness immediately. It comes naturally to us; we think automatically of him in this way. (1946:86).

The reason for this innate knowledge of God is the fact that man has been created in the image of God. This implies that 'the element in which the spirit of man naturally moves, is not the finite or the visible, but the invisible' (1946:86). And that is the reason why 'the human spirit cannot rest until it discovers the infinite God and finds rest in communion with him'. We should not be surprised by the fact that 'in the human spirit the finite and the infinite are not to be separated, that an infinite capacity was imparted to the finite' because 'if the human spirit was only finite, he would only be able to know finite things' and then there would exist 'an infinite gulf between him and the infinite God'.<sup>35</sup>

Hofmeyr was quite convinced of this protestant neo-platonism, for he asked the very pertinent question whether 'worship does not cease when the infinite distance between man and God falls away?' (1946:86). He answered that 'talent best appreciates talent' and that likewise 'he who knows God the best, whose spirit is in this way the nearest to God, will have the greatest reverence for God in worship' (87).

In 1896, when he published his Niet Knecht maar Kind, he still taught that man is 'ontologically' related to God. 'You have a double origin, one from the earth, from the creature, and another from heaven, from God'. Man's unity with God resulted from his origin from God and this unity 'removes you infinitely beyond the created world'.<sup>36</sup> It is

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<sup>35</sup> 1946:86; my emphasis (GT).

<sup>36</sup> 1896:159; my emphasis (GT).

obvious from the context that Hofmeyr was addressing 'man in Christ', and one may assume that he did not imply that man without God's grace would be able 'to rule, in the realization of (his) unity with God, over all that are lower' (1896:160). He also said that man's unity with the heavenly Father 'is not a natural necessity'.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, he clearly taught that the spirit of man is a 'higher capacity' in man, which enabled him 'to have communion with the Spirit of God, to understand His thoughts' (160).

Hofmeyr had a tripartite view of man, believing that man 'consists of' body, soul and spirit. The relevant point is that 'spirit' was understood as a 'natural capacity' of man that enables him to have communion with God, because of a basic continuity between man and God. This obviously enhanced the authority of human religious consciousness.

#### God in Nature

As we have seen above, Hofmeyr was convinced that man has a 'natural' capacity to comprehend God as creator (cf 1946:86). There are numerous references to the religious importance of nature in Hofmeyr's writings.<sup>38</sup> He believed that nature's beauty and awe-inspiring greatness overwhelm and 'compel' man to forget himself and to adore and worship God. He emphasized the 'pervasive presence' of the Father in creation and added that, through the work of the Holy Spirit, the whole creation becomes 'one means of grace - one sacrament' (1898:159).

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<sup>37</sup> Niet als een natuurnoodwendigheid (Hofmeyr 1896:160).

<sup>38</sup> Cf 1946:36,84,90. He said: 'Remember the rising and the setting of the sun, the sight of the stars, a striking landscape, a beautiful little flower by means of which the Spirit of God revealed to you something of the glory of your Creator and moved you to worship Him'. (1898:158).

Du Toit perceived Hofmeyr's 'excessive interest' in nature as pathological (1984:294), but Kestell saw it as an expression of his artistic nature (1911:23). His love of nature and his ability to see God in every detail of creation reminds one of Francis of Assisi.<sup>39</sup> Hofmeyr saw mainly the beauty of nature. Although he could describe with deep feeling the results of sin in man, de onrust, den onvrede, de onvoldaanheid, het heimwee, den angst, de wroeging, het bange voorgevoel (1898:391), he never spoke of nature as being capable of driving man to despair. He admitted, however, that 'nature was a veil that concealed God for the pagan nations' because 'they wanted to find God only through the knowledge of nature'. He referred in the same vein to 'some of the best scientists of our day' who declared that 'their study of nature did not bring them on the road to a supernatural God', because they 'try to explain reality from nature itself' (1946: 80).

#### God in History: Hofmeyr and Hegel?

A third characteristic of natural theology is the way in which the work of God in history is perceived. As is suggested by the title of his Tegenstellingen, there are indications of Hegelian 'tendencies' in Hofmeyr's theology. In his introduction he said that 'a religious truth is always the higher union of two opposing truths'. (1885). There are also various references to the historical process in the church and in the world that show affinity to Hegelian ideas.

Hofmeyr said, for example, that Judaism took up into itself 'that which was true in

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<sup>39</sup> Various scholars have pointed to the influence of the Franciscan tradition on the Dutch and the Flemish (cf De Craemer 1977). The Groninger School in the Dutch Church consciously sought to revive this 'Evangelical Catholicism' (cf Bakhuizen van den Brink 1962:194ff). It is good to be reminded that Calvin wrote: 'The little birds sing of God ... (and) the grass and flowers laugh before him'. (Schnucker 1988:198f).

paganism' and likewise 'that which was true in Judaism has been preserved in Christianity'. He added that this is how human societies develop:

History is not less in the hands of God than the Church. Also there social forms become outdated and the human spirit stands in need of new forms that must express new insights and new ideas ... It preserves precisely in its higher forms what was good in the lower forms, and ran the risk of being lost with the passing of the previous order. Change is in this case not pure destruction, but also renewal. Who is there who does not understand that the Revolution, since the end of the 18th century, destroyed much that was out-dated and that hampered the spirit, while many new forms were created that fit in better with the higher developed spirit. The bad that was mixed with the good should not blind us for good that was in it.<sup>40</sup>

In August 1863, when the first four students graduated from the Kweekskool,<sup>41</sup> he explained the development of theology in similar Hegelian terms. In the New Testament itself we find three emphases, namely 'the Petrine where the Gospel was experienced as law, the Pauline where it was experienced as doctrine, and the Johannine where it was experienced as life' (Du Toit 1984:220). In church history we find these three emphases represented in the legal Romans, the rational Greeks and the mystical Orientals. Under the influence of the Romans the church was law-oriented up till the fourth century, under Greek influence it was doctrinally orientated until the sixth century, but 'before the third stage could develop properly, a new cycle started with the conversion of the Germanic tribes'. Since the reformation there had been similar periods of legalism and dogmatism (220). With the 19th century the stage has been set for a synthesis between the legalism and dogmatism of the

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<sup>40</sup> 1946:112f; my emphasis (GT). Cf also his discussion in the chapter entitled 'The Old and the New' (1885). This is quite different from the view of Groen van Prinsterer, who also firmly believed in God's control of history, but said that 'the Christian faith and the Revolution oppose each other directly. The Christian principle is therefore anti-revolutionary' (1954:107).

<sup>41</sup> They were E Z de Beer, W Robertson Jnr, C S Morgan and W P Rousseau (Dreyer 1934a:109).

post-reformation period, to form the stage of life. Doctrinal differences were now being superseded and it was possible to hope that all Christians would presently experience much more unity, based on a vital faith-relationship with Christ (1984:221).

In another context Hofmeyr said: 'The creative Spirit of God lives and works in the spirit of man ... expressing himself in new words and new forms' (1946:109). He used examples from biblical history to explain the development of the history of ideas in general. Moses, Jesus, the apostles and the reformers, each one 'brought forth a new word, born from the new spirit that was in them' (111). And so it continued through the centuries:

Where the spirit is still on its way from the less perfect to the more complete, he is not satisfied with the word as it was previously expressed. He sees today further than he saw yesterday and is in need of new words to express new thoughts. The lower was the education and the preparation, the guarantee and the prophecy of the greater; and when the greater has arrived, then old words must make way for the new that is in harmony with the greater that has arrived. (1946:111).

He explained this further by saying that 'God takes no step backwards ... and (therefore) when the new has arrived, the human spirit can not be satisfied by the old' (1946:112). This does not mean that the new will be totally new, because 'the truth in the old' will be retained in the new. But the old forms were discarded because 'they fettered the spirit' and 'the Spirit of God drives and draws the human spirit forward', because 'all new forms that are really good are from Him, however imperfect they may still be' (114).

Hofmeyr referred in the first place to religious developments, but as he used a number of examples from secular history, there is no reason to suppose that he intended to limit his ideas about historical development to theology. He was clearly no conservative, for he added that 'we must judge everything by Him (Jesus Christ), and not by the imperfect that

we had up till now, that was also from Him' (1946:115). The practical consequences of this theological interpretation of history is very significant; it would imply that God is always on the side of the new.

On a more practical level Hofmeyr explained that the Christian can understand the purposes of God when he looks back. 'Afterwards he sees that God is a God who only apparently conceals himself behind nature and history, (but) who loudly witnesses in nature and history'. A proper insight into God's purpose depends on a right relationship with God. As soon as God 'reveals himself to (man's) heart and conscience, the soul sees him everywhere' (1946:83). In other words, the Christian can identify, to some extent at least, the hand of God in his personal history.

An instructive example of how Hofmeyr himself discerned the 'hand of God in history' is found in a brochure published in 1897. It describes, with a variety of comments, his visit to Transvaal. Its purpose was to encourage the Christian public in the Cape to take a special interest in the spiritual needs of the Transvaal population, and to encourage his former students who laboured there 'to identify themselves with the people of Transvaal' (1897:70). Apart from references to religious, social and educational matters, there are also incidental comments on the political situation.<sup>42</sup> On his way to Rustenburg a mine-dump was pointed out to him where a skirmish during the Jameson Raid took place. He commented:

If one considers the efficient speed, the faithful cooperation, the careful strategy and the courage of the Boers, one feels constrained to say: 'This is the finger of God that frustrated the evil plans of the mischief-maker'.

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<sup>42</sup> He expressed the wish, for example, that the members of the Volksraad would always be of 'unbribeable integrity' (onomkoopbare rechtschapenheid) and that 'the few who now have the vote' would realize that they have a 'holy responsibility' towards those who did not have the vote (1897:12).

(1897:8).

Hofmeyr did not draw the conclusion, that lesser spirits certainly did, that 'God is on the side of Transvaal' and that she could therefore go to war with Britain. Kestell carefully pointed out that Hofmeyr did not believe that the republics would win the war (1911:213). He thought that Transvaal had 'infinitely less reason to fear her external enemies than internal divisions and strife'.<sup>43</sup> He was therefore no civil religionist, as Moodie (1975) defined the term. But if one sees 'the finger of God' in certain historical incidents, the next step, namely to 'read off' God's will for the future from these incidents, may not be so far away.

In the light of Hofmeyr's teaching as a whole, it would be wrong to say that he was a Hegelian. In a sense he appropriated the truth in Hegelianism for his own theological thinking. His Christological emphasis, especially his conviction that God's love was absolutely revealed in the historical Jesus, worked powerfully against Hegelianism.<sup>44</sup> He therefore sometimes gives us glimpses of a very different view, of what may be termed an Orthodox vision of reality.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> 1897:11. His position was similar to that of his nephew 'Onze Jan', who believed that Transvaal should be internally independent but within the British Empire (cf Hofmeyr 1913:524ff).

<sup>44</sup> According to Barth I A Dornier 'was able to combine Hegel and Schleiermacher', but he also 'again wants to reckon seriously with God as the ground of revelation and faith' (1973:577).

<sup>45</sup> By 'Orthodox vision' I mean a sense of unity between God and creation, based on the incarnation and resurrection. T F Torrance has argued in various publications that the Greek fathers, especially Athanasius, overcame Greek dualism by their faithfulness to these biblical themes (cf 1981b:xix; 'Theology in the Scientific World' in Torrance 1971 and 'Creation and Science' in Torrance 1980; cf also J B Torrance 1988:267). The source of this tendency in Hofmeyr was probably J T Beck or De la Saussaye, who was indebted to Beck (Haitjema 1964:207).

Unfortunately Hofmeyr did not develop this theological vision, and it was lost on the next generation. Instead they incorporated the 'Hegelian' attitude in a limited, nationalistic way.<sup>46</sup> In addition, as we will see below, certain eschatological insights contributed towards more pessimistic views of history than Hofmeyr's. Hence three decades after his death some appealed to the authority of the historical experience of the Afrikaner people, as on the same level as Scripture.<sup>47</sup>

Two final points should be made about Hofmeyr's view of 'God in history'. He reminded us that 'many learned men' have not derived a knowledge of God from their knowledge of history. 'In the grand theatre of human history they found no-one but man' (1946:80). Man is ultimately dependent on God's 'immediate' self-revelation for true knowledge of him. History does not reveal God to unbelief, but conceals him (81).

In an impressive chapter on 'The Mercy and the Wrath of God', Hofmeyr made the point that sin brought a new experience to God. Because 'love is the ground of God's being' (1946:107), the Almighty Creator of man and of history was himself affected by the history of man:

If creation was perfect, the love of God towards his creatures would have been comparable to the calm and steady love of a mother for her healthy and normally developing child. But when a great calamity befell the creatures of God, there was a new experience, not only in the creature, but also in God. This new experience we call the mercy of God ... The wrath of God is the opposite of his mercy. If He had no mercy on the unfortunate, He would not be angry with the unholy. If love was not the source of the close

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<sup>46</sup> One thinks here of his son, Nico Hofmeyr, N J van der Merwe, D F Malan and others. Of those who attended Hofmeyr's Bible studies in earlier years, only F S Malan, a non-theologian and elder of the NGK, thought in non-nationalistic liberal terms (E Walker 1962:645; cf Malan 1933).

<sup>47</sup> Cf especially the sermons of C R Kotze (1955), where the struggle of the Afrikaner with British imperialism became the norm for political action against the government of General J C Smuts.

relationship between God and man, there would have been not only no sin in man, but also no wrath in God. (1946:106f).

### Nature and Grace.

Hofmeyr seems to have had two different views on grace. On the one hand he emphasized that the relationship between man and God must be that of child and Father. The great fact of the Christian life was the hiothesia, the assurance of the Spirit that man is no longer a slave but a child of God through Jesus Christ. He consistently maintained that the relationship between man and God is not based on law but on love, and beautifully defined grace as 'the unlimited selfgiving of God to man' (1946:43). According to Weber the biblical and reformation concept of 'grace' refers primarily to the gracious relationship of God towards man as revealed and assured to us in Jesus Christ (1983 I:424). This fundamental aspect of Hofmeyr's theology seems to be in line with the biblical and reformation teaching on grace.

Hofmeyr was well aware of the danger of separating grace from God. He taught the closest possible relationship between God and grace, in fact even denying the validity of the idea of the 'means of grace' (1898:57). On the other hand, he sometimes paid more attention to the subjective effects of grace - what happens in man - than to grace as God's attitude towards man. He said that grace is 'God's coming down to man in order to form him Himself in His child ... (grace) is saving, regenerating, sanctifying, glorifying' (1898:56). In another context he said: 'Grace takes the form of the vessel into which it is poured and then the vessel becomes permeated and glorified by the grace poured into it' (1946:46). 'When grace works in nature, it works according to nature. It honours each law of nature. It does not despise it, it does not pass it by'. (42). Grace clearly refers here to

God's work in man, rather than to his relationship with man. In fact, he seemed to have thought of grace as similar to nature, just more powerful.

In order to understand Hofmeyr's theology it is important to ascertain the significance of his idea that 'grace takes the shape of the vessel into which it is poured', expressed in various ways in his writings. As he consistently rejected pantheism, we must look elsewhere for the source of his thinking. It seems as if his teaching tended towards the medieval position of 'infused grace', that grace is 'something' in the believer.<sup>48</sup> It is impossible to locate Hofmeyr's sources precisely, but this is remarkably similar to the well-known dictum of Thomas Aquinas, namely that 'grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it'.<sup>49</sup> It is unlikely that Hofmeyr would have taken this view directly from Thomas or from Roman Catholic theology. It rather seems as if the catholic, the pietist and the neo-protestant views coincided in the nineteenth century, with certain variations in detail (cf Torrance 1984:314ff).

This statement of Aquinas is obviously true when understood as referring to God's mercy in not destroying creation but, on the contrary, identifying with the misery of the creature in order to restore him to obedience. It is also necessary to emphasize against

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<sup>48</sup> Hofmeyr, typically, also referred to the example of Jesus in respect of the relation between nature and grace. He explained that 'the divine-human personality of Jesus is the model on which nature was planned and by which grace works in nature.' (1946:46). In Jesus 'the human and the divine, the natural and the supernatural ... exist ... not next to each other, but in each other.' (47). The importance of the incarnation for theology is readily conceded, but when the incarnation is used as analogy for the relation nature-grace in man, the pantheistic idea that grace is in some sense a participation in the divine seems to be in the background.

<sup>49</sup> Gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit et complet (cf Torrance 1984:290; Weber 1983 I:426, II:527).

gnosticism in all its forms, that the God who saves is the God who created.<sup>50</sup> But, according to Weber, Aquinas understood grace primarily as a power, superior to but still analogous to nature. Like nature it was seen as something distinct, even separate from God (1983 I:426f). But in the biblical view grace is not a power that surpasses nature, but rather God's decision for man, and therefore 'we must contest that there is any continuity between nature and grace' (II:529).

These bifocal or 'schizophrenic' views on grace eventually caused various problems Hofmeyr did not intend. His view that 'grace takes the form of the vessel into which it is poured', and that 'grace works according to nature (and) honours each law of nature', implied that nature can, to a dangerous degree, 'prescribe to grace'. Hofmeyr said this almost in so many words:

If grace works in nature, it works according to nature. It honours each law of nature; it is not rejected, neither is it circumvented. God created each person with his own nature and therefore grace adapts itself to each one's nature. It respects everything that is from God ... grace works in nature, through nature. Grace ... seeks a point of contact, a place of attack, a sure foundation in nature. Without a handle in nature, it cannot get a grip on nature ... grace would not be able to convert a person without a conscience. If grace does not find a conscience in man it would not create it in him; it is not its office. It can revive and restore the conscience, but only if there is still an echo of the voice of grace in the conscience. (1885:42f).

In a time of an excessive 'spiritualism', it was good and necessary that Hofmeyr should uphold the dignity of creation, but the door was left open for a position where 'sanctified nature' and specifically 'sanctified race' could prescribe to grace. The tragedy of South African apartheid was not only its racism, which is after all a very common phenomenon, but the fact that it was theologically motivated.

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<sup>50</sup> Torrance 1984:299; cf Weber 1983 I:426.

Related to the above was Hofmeyr's view that the gospel finds a point of contact 'in all the deep-seated and permanent needs and convictions of mankind' (1946:78). The problem is not so much the point of contact as such, but the notion that the point of contact was a neutral one. Its 'neutrality' implied that vital aspects of a specific culture could be incorporated into Christian theology without their prior conversion or 'baptism'. This idea of a neutral 'point of contact' between Christ and culture was a basic assumption of the neo-protestant nature-grace model, which Barth so eloquently described and so strongly controverted.

One may argue that 'the Barthian backlash' was an overreaction to cultural protestantism, but it can hardly be denied that the belief in a continuity between the gospel and culture, specifically the best in contemporary European culture, was part and parcel of protestant theology of the 19th century.<sup>51</sup> For this reason it is not surprising to find that the idea of a continuity between Christ and culture formed the background of much of the missiological thinking of the 19th century. As Hoekendijk (1948) has shown, this assumed continuity gave rise to the principle of Volkseigentumlichkeit or 'national identity' in German missiology. Gustav Warneck developed some of these ideas in his magisterial Evangelische Missionslehre,<sup>52</sup> and Du Plessis introduced Warneck's missiology in the Cape Church in the early years of this century.<sup>53</sup> It soon found universal acceptance in the NGK

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<sup>51</sup> 'The kingdom of God, according to Schleiermacher, is utterly and unequivocally identical with the advance of civilization ... the theology of the nineteenth century which took over from him is ... most definitely (characterized) by its unqualified and direct affirmation of modern cultural consciousness'. (Barth 1973:435,437).

<sup>52</sup> This three-volume work was published in 1897. During the 19th century the NGK was rather under the influence of Anglo-Saxon missiology, specifically the 'three selves' theory of Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson.

<sup>53</sup> Cf Du Plessis 1911b and 1932. Du Plessis was appointed secretary of the missions

and provided an additional stimulus for its missionary outreach (cf Cronje 1982).

The question is whether the variety of cultural forms were subjected to Christ or whether they were allowed to dominate the church, in other words, whether nature 'prescribed' to grace. When the NGK formed separate churches for blacks within the borders of South Africa - which were virtually separate denominations - the existing context of racial separation was allowed to influence the shape of the church (cf Adonis 1982). It would seem that Hofmeyr's nature-grace model prepared the soil for the acceptance of the missiological principles which led to the formation of these separate 'denominations'. It is clear that this apartheid was not derived from Calvinism, but from the principles of contemporary protestant theology.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, there are indications that Hofmeyr tried to overcome some of the principles of neo-protestantism. He insisted that 'there is no contradiction between faith and knowledge, between a man of faith and a man of science'.<sup>55</sup> When he discussed the problem of the 'natural' and the 'supernatural' he pointed out that any possible dualism between these has been overcome: 'This has happened fully and decisively in the birth,

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committee of the Cape Synod in 1903, and assumed a chair in NT and Missions in 1916.

<sup>54</sup> It was only during the late fifties of this century that the ideas of the reformed missiologists Hendrik Kraemer and J H Bavinck started to influence Stellenbosch Theology (cf Gerdener 1958:11f; Du Toit 1959).

<sup>55</sup> Du Toit 1984:219. At the Presbyterian Alliance Assembly, held in Philadelphia (Pa), Hofmeyr said that we must believe 'with the apostle Paul that the invisible is not on a higher level parallel to the visible, but that it also exists in the visible, is revealed through the visible and is understood through the visible' (Kestell 1911:143). Elsewhere he wrote: 'Plato did not understand the higher possibilities and destiny of nature, therefore he deemed nature and idea contradictory, the former holding the latter in tragic captivity. But God will conquer sin in the new creation, soul, body and nature will be a harmonious unity. Then the glorious invisible and insensible things, the ideas, will be revealed in the body, in the visible and sensuous; as now the fullness of God exists bodily in Christ'. (1885:147).

baptism and resurrection of Jesus Christ' (1946:94). It was not pantheism that led him to question the dualisms of his time, but the incarnation. Unfortunately, possibly because of the eclectic nature of his theology, he did not develop these valuable biblical insights. The result was that their significance was lost on the next generation and that some of his other ideas contributed to the ideology of apartheid.<sup>56</sup>

#### Hofmeyr and the World's Parliament of Religions

Hofmeyr's support for the 'World's Parliament of Religions', where discussions were held between Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims, seems a clear indication that he was influenced by natural theology. He obviously participated in this venture in the conviction that there was common ground for inter-faith dialogue on the basis of a 'natural' knowledge of God. It is abundantly clear from his Tegenstellingen that he had the necessary 'theological tools' for such discussions.

Hofmeyr based his arguments on creation and redemption. Because man was created in the image of God 'I make bold to say that each human thought that is true, is a divine thought that is the result of the communion of the Spirit of God with the spirit of man'.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> The influence of Richard Rothe, another favourite author of Hofmeyr, is instructive if we keep in mind that he was in favour of the revival, the 'social gospel' and German 'cultural protestantism'. Barth said that Rothe may be classed with the followers of Schleiermacher 'but one can immediately go wrong in a classification of this kind if one thinks of the quite unmodern supranaturalism which marked out Rothe from his teachers and his contemporaries. Unlike any of them Rothe was a fiery adept of the Revival movement, and unlike any of them he was a lifelong Pietist'. Barth added the rumour that Rothe appeared to one of his students 'in a transformed state, something that would never have happened to a student of Alexander Schweitzer!' (1973:597).

<sup>57</sup> 1946:77. Principal James Denney was also 'fully prepared to say that there is revelation outside of Christ' (Marshall 1969:207 n10).

The preaching of the gospel finds a point of contact 'in all the deep-seated and permanent needs and convictions of man (which are) the witness of the Spirit of God with his spirit already present in him' (1946:78). Paul and the other apostles made it plain 'that the Spirit of God witnessed in the deepest depths of the hearts of men' (79).

Although many criticized him for his participation in the Parliament of Religions (Kestell 1911:203), Hofmeyr did not intend to weaken the uniqueness of Christ. He emphasized that we become children of God only by faith in Jesus, but is it not true, he asked, that the Spirit of God, long before one's conversion, 'witnesses within each man that it is his nature and destiny to be a child of God?' (1946:78). After we have experienced salvation and received the spirit of adoption, we realize 'that the new blessing we now received is gloriously similar to the best that man ever desired and felt, even before he has known Jesus Christ' (78).

His openness towards those of other religions was therefore not based on the relativism of liberal theology or a philosophical paradigm derived from natural theology. The inter-faith dialogue was possible and necessary because of the 'awe-inspiring mystery' of 'a bond between God and man created in his image' (1946:79). It was also rooted in two dimensions of his Christology: the universal relevance of the true humanity of Christ, and the unique authority of the religious experience of the historical Jesus.<sup>58</sup>

Hofmeyr was not a 'dogmatic' theologian in a negative sense, but he firmly upheld the unique and exciting insights of the Christian faith. His openness stands in contrast to the exclusivism of some of his successors, and may partly explain the remarkable interest in Africa that was generated in the NGK around the turn of the century, especially

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<sup>58</sup> We will turn to Hofmeyr's Christology in the following chapter.

embodied in people like William H Murray of Malawi and the missiologist Johannes du Plessis. In respect of his views on the World's Parliament of Religions, however, Hofmeyr was out of step with contemporary conservatives.<sup>59</sup>

### Conclusion

That an emphasis on man's religious consciousness was basic to Hofmeyr's theology seems incontrovertible. Though scarcely intended, this emphasis was to have important consequences for Stellenbosch theology.

Hofmeyr's view that 'grace takes the form of the vessel into which it is poured', and that 'grace honours each law of nature' implied that 'sanctified' race might in certain circumstances prescribe to grace. His nature-grace model also prepared the soil for the acceptance of the missiological principles of Gustav Warneck that provided the theological paradigm for the formation of separate 'denominations' for black converts of the NGK. The recognition of a cultural diversity in the church does not necessarily imply a subservience - to racism, but when separate churches for blacks were formed, the existing cultural patterns of racial separation clearly prescribed the shape of the church.

Hofmeyr's emphasis on the religious consciousness of man also implied that religious man could have something to rely on in himself. Instead of trusting in the undeserved grace of God and obeying his will unconditionally, 'religious man' could rely on his own experience of reality, and devise norms for himself and for society on the basis of his

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<sup>59</sup> The Lovedale Christian Express of 1 March 1895 published a strong criticism of the World's Parliament of Religions, giving eight reasons why the Parliament 'was a mistake'. The report said that it was 'and still is the foe of Christian missions, and has already done a measureless harm'. (1895:42).

'religious' experience of reality. Whenever there is a marriage between 'Christianity' and civilization this happens and, as Botha has argued, it specifically happened as apartheid evolved as a volksteologie or popular theology (1986:105ff).

On the other hand, natural theology did not have an independent existence in Hofmeyr's thinking. His theological method was, formally, the investigation of the religious consciousness of the new man, but its content was largely based on Scripture. He was not always consistent, but he allowed important biblical themes, especially the incarnation, to inform his theology.

## Chapter 5

## HOFMEYR'S CHRISTOLOGY

There is a marked continuity between the Christologies of Hofmeyr and John Murray, but as Hofmeyr published much more than Murray on this theme, we have more information on his Christology.<sup>1</sup> There are important Christological passages in most of his writings, but his major work was De Christus der Evangelien (1887). The somewhat shorter Jezus' Heerlijkheid, weerspiegeld in zijn aardsche leven (1886) covers roughly the same ground. In his introductory note to the former work, he explained that he steered clear of all philosophical, theological and historical problems 'not referred to by the evangelists'.<sup>2</sup>

Although Hofmeyr recognized the fact that the background and personalities of the authors affected the different canonical writings, he made no special distinction between the synoptics and the gospel of John. He was in this respect in line with the best - if not with the most radical - scholarship in Europe.<sup>3</sup> We will discuss Hofmeyr's Christology with

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<sup>1</sup> Du Toit says that the challenge of modernism stimulated Hofmeyr's interest in the 'person and significance of Jesus Christ' (1984:218), but his information on Hofmeyr's views consists of little more than the following cryptic statement: 'It is remarkable how he reconciled the Christological emphasis with the reformed view'. (266).

<sup>2</sup> Hofmeyr also taught Church History, but in this work he avoided a discussion of the historical Christological problems. The philosophical problems of his day, on the other hand, especially those raised by pantheism and rationalism, are sometimes referred to. He limited himself to the data of the gospels, while he also made use of a few favourite texts from Paul and from the letter to the Hebrews.

<sup>3</sup> By 1884 even Renan accepted 'the historical character of the Fourth Gospel' and Von Hase of Jena said: 'In spite of the Logos doctrine' one hears 'the beating of a true human heart which is moved by joy and grief, and in this description we recognize the

major reference to his De Christus der Evangelie"n.

### Incarnation and Creation

Hofmeyr agreed with Murray in saying that the incarnation was a 'natural' result of God's free decision to create the world. 'The whole creation has no other purpose than to reveal God through his creation to his creation. This is the ultimate reason for the incarnation'.<sup>4</sup> As man can not be separated from the rest of creation, the Son had to become man, in order to bring the whole of creation to its destiny (109). Creation could not develop by itself to a higher stage of existence. God's Son had to become a creature, with 'a body taken from and supported by the earth, in order to bring creation to perfection' (110).

We have to distinguish carefully therefore, says Hofmeyr, between the human condition before the fall and human limitations and needs that resulted from sin (1887:186). Sin is necessarily related to certain human limitations, although sin itself was not necessary, but belongs to the 'irrational and unseemly things in creation'.<sup>5</sup> However, we have certain 'higher and deeper' needs that are not the result of sin, but part of the 'order of things' as God created them (186). Although we will only fully comprehend God's purpose with his creation at the consummation, the man Jesus reveals God's original purpose with

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apostle in all the fulness of his memory' (Godet 1887 I:vii-viii). But Von Hase confessed: 'The time has come in German theology when the man who dares even to acknowledge the fourth Gospel as a source possessing historical value, compromises his scientific honour ... the spirit of the times exercises a power even in science' (Godet 1887 I:23).

<sup>4</sup> 1887:119. Hofmeyr quotes Calvin where he said that, even if the fall did not take place, man would have been too low to rise to God without a mediator (194), but he ignores the fact that Calvin saw the fall as the only reason for the incarnation (CI II:12:5).

<sup>5</sup> De onredelijke en onbetamelijke dingen in de schepping Gods (1887:186).

man to us, namely that man was destined to become a son of God (124,187).

The purpose of the incarnation was not only to save us, as we find it in the Anselmian and evangelical tradition, but to reveal God to man. Hofmeyr often quoted John 1:14,18 and 17:4,6 in support of this position (1887:119,199). Because of the fall, the incarnation was in fact closely related to sin, but Christ's work of revelation would have been necessary even without the fall.<sup>6</sup> The Son of God did not come to us as 'a stranger, as by chance', just because of our sin. He was mediator before the fall, and by his incarnation he perfected the bond that already existed between himself and us (201).

Accordingly Hofmeyr also agreed with the reformer Osiander who said that Adam was created in the image of the future Jesus.<sup>7</sup> 'He pointed forwards to him, as the lesser to the greater' (1887:92). In support of this position, Hofmeyr quoted Romans 5:14 where Paul said that Adam was 'an example of him, who was to come', as well as I Corinthians 15:45-49. These texts implied that the first man 'could not become what he should have been' without the 'second man'.<sup>8</sup> He asked Murray's question, namely, why it was the Son, and not the Father, who became man (1886:141). The answer is that man was created in the image of the Son, just as the Son is the image of the Father.

What was the aim of creation? To bring forth the human race in whom, in the first place, not the Father, but the Son should behold his image; because the Father already beheld his image in the Son. Man was destined to reflect,

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<sup>6</sup> Afgezien van de zonde (1887:125; cf 198).

<sup>7</sup> There is no indication that Hofmeyr had access to the writings of Osiander. It is noteworthy that Wessel Gansfort (1419-1489) also espoused this view (cf Bakhuizen van den Brink 1960:3).

<sup>8</sup> 1887:92. Hofmeyr added that this was also proved by the fact that Adam 'could not even resist the first temptation'.

initially, the image of the Son, and, subsequently, to reflect the image of the Father.<sup>9</sup>

He insisted that the incarnation was not God's infralapsarian 'second thought', but God's decision to become man was as original as creation. 'The Father never thought of creation, especially the creation of man, without reference to the INCARNATE SON' (1886:143).

There is no evidence that Hofmeyr emphasized the Dortian interpretation of election, but he used election to show the relationship between Christ and creation:

Our God never thought of man, of creation and of his eternal purposes with them, independent from Jesus Christ, his incarnate Son. Believers were elected in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph 1:4). According to God's original purpose everything in man and in creation was designed in view of the coming Christ, the incarnate Son of God. (1887:195).

Man was created 'with the capacity to become a son of God', but, according to God's ordinances,<sup>10</sup> man could become a son only in communion with the Son of God. And in order to unite man to himself, the Son of God became man (1887:109). In this context Hofmeyr pushed the term 'son of God' so far that he seemed to approach pantheism. He asked the question whether Jesus' homoousion with God is not of another kind as our homoousion with the Father as sons of God. May we not say with 2 Peter 1:4 that we have the same divine nature as God? It is astonishing to read that Hofmeyr answered in the affirmative, arguing that our sonship is of the same nature as the sonship of Jesus, because our sonship was derived from his (106). He either used the term nature or essence (wezen) in a pantheistic sense, or he confused the spiritual unity with a real unity of nature.

It is not by chance or in an arbitrary fashion that Jesus as Son of God is

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<sup>9</sup> 1886:142. Hofmeyr refers to Col 1:15 and Rom 8:29.

<sup>10</sup> De orde der dingen, zooals God die schiep. He added in the same context: 'God's Son, says Calvin, had to become man, so that we may become by grace what He is by nature'. (1887:109).

also the Head of all the sons of God. Head and body are one - of one nature, of one essence. We therefore have the fullest right to think from our sonship to his, and from our sense of sonship to his, and to say that his double consciousness of being Son of God and son of man, even as our double consciousness (as sinners and as sons of God) are the two sides of one mutual consciousness so that the one cannot exist without the other, and both make out one whole. If this was not so then He would not have been truly man. No-one can be fully man without being a son of God.<sup>11</sup>

As this was obviously a strange thing to say in a reformed seminary, Hofmeyr raised the question whether the fact that we became sons of God in time, while Jesus was the Son from all eternity, does not imply an essential difference between his Sonship and our sonship.<sup>12</sup> But Hofmeyr denies this, explaining that it is not a question of the time, but of the way in which our sonship came about (106). Our regeneration by the Holy Spirit was, just as his eternal generation, directly or immediately from God, 'without the mediation of any creature' (107).

This close relationship and analogy between man and God, rooted in nature and in grace, makes religion and theology possible and explains the riddle of human existence. Because 'Jesus is the Theanthropos and we are theanthropic' we can understand something of God and of ourselves. With a heavy emphasis Hofmeyr argued that 'WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND ANYTHING WITHOUT PARTICIPATING IN IT'. To understand a truth is to possess it, 'to have absorbed its essence into our essence and to become one with it' (1887:93). If we were not theanthropic then Jesus would have been 'a disappearing phenomenon, an inexplicable riddle, an incomprehensible sound, a word without meaning in

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<sup>11</sup> 1887:106. He refers to Acts 17:29 and to the fact that Adam is called a son of God in Luke 3:38.

<sup>12</sup> Maakt dit niet een wezenlik onderscheid tusschen Zijn en ons zoonschap? (1887: - 106).

human history'. The incarnation is the 'explanation of the mystery of our existence'. Because we were created and regenerated in his image 'we see ourselves in him' (93).

Hofmeyr believed that the whole creation will 'share in the glory of God' because of the incarnation (1887:109). The Son had to become a creature, in order that the earth should overcome its corruptibility, just as his own body conquered its corruptibility at the resurrection (110).

### The Humanity of Christ in Hofmeyr's Theology

Hofmeyr read a great if not bewildering variety of authors (Du Toit 1984: 287ff). It is therefore not easy to distinguish between the influence of the Lutheran kenoticist Martensen,<sup>13</sup> and the reformed kenoticists like Ebrard, De la Saussaye, Godet, Gunning and Van Oosterzee on Hofmeyr's Christology. We will return later to the question whether Hofmeyr was a kenoticist. For the moment we look at his emphasis on the humanity of Christ.

Hofmeyr rejected the Leonine distinction between 'human' and 'divine' acts in the life of Jesus (1887:51), but it is possible to distinguish between Jesus as object of religious trust and the religious life of Jesus. This distinction set the problem of the relationship between the 'Jesus of history', and the 'Christ of faith' and the related 'quest of the historical Jesus'. The prominence Hofmeyr gave to the religious life as well as the human characteristics and limitations of Jesus indicates his emphasis on the humanity of Christ. But we must immediately add that Hofmeyr believed that Jesus' whole life 'was the most human life ever described' (81) because he was the Incarnate One. In other words, although we are entitled to distinguish between Jesus as object of faith and as one who

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<sup>13</sup> According to Kestell he was impressed by Martensen's Dogmatik (1911:123).

himself lived by faith, Hofmeyr would have warned us not to make a 'Nestorian' separation between the two.

Hofmeyr ascribed great significance to the first recorded words of Jesus in Luke 2:49. 'His parents' did not understand him, because his life, 'however simple', was a completely new fact of history (1887:2). Furthermore, 'no pious Israelite' ever called God his Father, not even in the Psalms (2). The 'fatherly character' of God was not yet revealed to Israel (3). As Jesus knew no sin, there was no separation between him and God. 'He grew up in the presence of God as a child in the presence of his father' (3). His visit to the temple was an important event in the development of his conscious relationship with the Father, 'the consciousness of God's fatherly love for him, and his filial love for God', became 'clearer than ever before'.<sup>14</sup>

It was the first time that Jesus used the term 'Father' for God, but 'his heart' realized that he stood in a special relation to him. 'His heart knew it before his reason reasoned about it'.<sup>15</sup> Because 'obedience was the main characteristic of his life, he was surprised that his mother reproached him'; because her question denied his relationship with his Father 'almost violently', it brought forth his memorable reply (1887:8).

Jesus knew no sin, he needed no regeneration. He was from birth, 'gradually filled with the Spirit'.<sup>16</sup> He was without sin, yet there was real development in his life.<sup>17</sup> The

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<sup>14</sup> 1887:4. The French theologian Jean Galot also found the story of Christ in the Temple particularly significant because 'in it we see Jesus becoming conscious of his own status in becoming conscious of his unique relation to the Father in heaven'. (Mascall 1977:168).

<sup>15</sup> 1887:5. Pascal was another favourite author of Hofmeyr (Kestell 1911:123).

<sup>16</sup> Van mate tot mate en van trap tot trap, gansch en al vervuld met den Geest (1887:13).

voice of the Father became gradually clearer to him, because he never grieved the Spirit. He always knew instinctively what the will of the Father (1887:8). His whole life was one of obedience to the Father, his obedience to his parents expressed his obedience to the Father. Wherever his obedience to God led him, was a holy place. 'The temple is not more holy than the carpenter's shop if the call of the Father led him there'.<sup>18</sup>

We can to some extent comprehend his development as child for it is the perfect example of all human development. He gradually realized that he 'lived in possession of the promised blessings of the New Covenant', and he longed that all Israel would enjoy these blessings (1887:16). His people, 'even his blessed mother', could not understand him. Therefore He could do nothing else but pray that God would bless his people and wait patiently while he pursued his daily calling (16).

### His Baptism

When the Baptist started to preach the people of Israel expected 'in a mysterious way' that the Messiah was near. Even their leaders thought that John might be the Messiah. It was especially Jesus who had 'a holy premonition' that the Baptist would announce the Messiah. 'No one experienced this movement of the Spirit more deeply than Jesus and that no one felt this holy expectation that the Christ would presently appear, more intensely than He did' (1887:16).

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<sup>17</sup> In the words of Galot: 'In God there is no progressive development, but in man perfection, far from excluding development, necessarily involves it. For Christ's human consciousness, it is in the development that the perfection is found'. (Quoted by Mascall 1977:168).

<sup>18</sup> 1887:9. He added: 'There was no dichotomy in his life between the holy and the profane'.

When Jesus heard the Baptist saying that the Christ was already present the question would naturally arise in his heart: "Am I not the prophet about whom John is speaking ... am I not the Christ?" (17). This ignorance of his Messianic office was natural because of his true humanity and truly human development. The Holy Spirit used the preaching of the Baptist to create the Messianic consciousness in him:

We talk with the deepest respect about ... the inner development of Jesus. He increased in every aspect of his life. There was an inner development, also in his knowledge of divine things. The certainty that He was the Christ, was similarly not revealed to him in all its clarity, suddenly and without preparation. The knowledge of this truth also belonged to that wisdom in which He increased.<sup>19</sup>

As the true Israelite and therefore wholly obedient to the law of God or, in this case, the prophetic command, Jesus willingly submitted to the baptism of John (1887:18). His life expressed the reality of the ideal which God had for many centuries kept alive in the hearts of Israel through the law (19).

By submitting to the baptism of repentance, Jesus identified himself with sinners, just as Daniel and Nehemiah confessed the sin of their people as if it were their own (1887:19). John thought it below the dignity of the Messiah to be baptized, but Jesus showed him 'what a true Israelite should be' (20). If Jesus were a sinner, he would have been offended to be identified with gross sinners. But, being without sin, he realized as no one else could realize what it meant to be one with sinners (19). He gradually came to realize that he was sent to give light and life to Israel and through them, to the whole world. But he also came to realize that, before he would accomplish this, he would have to identify

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<sup>19</sup> 1887:17. He added that Mary probably told her Son the story of his birth at this time. Hofmeyr did not change his basic Christological ideas, but in his later years he put more emphasis on the work of the Spirit than on the human instruments in the life of Jesus (cf 1898:160).

himself 'as a priest' with the misery of the people. His baptism was 'a priestly deed' (20). He sympathized with Israel as no-one else could. He could sense the sin of his people as no-one else could understand it (21). He realized that

He had to accept the sins of the people as his own, that He had to hate their sin as no-one hates it and that He had to confess the sin of the people as no-one confessed it. What the weak and dying sinners of the world realized but faintly, He had to experience fully, and He had to make a perfect repentance before God as a true priest .... and thus He bore the sins of Israel as his own. The baptism of Jesus was therefore the first step on the way that ended with his vicarious death on the cross. (1887:21f).

This priestly concern was not an external law, but it was the expression of his own inner self. In the high priest of the Old Covenant he recognized himself. In his compassion with sinners he recognized God's compassion with Israel and 'it became clear to him that God's eternal love had sent him into the world to bring back to God those who were lost'.<sup>20</sup>

Hofmeyr did not use the term 'vicarious repentance' of his contemporary John Mcleod Campbell, but he obviously had the same idea in mind.<sup>21</sup> In view of the emphasis on the humanity of Christ in his theology, it also seems as if he thought in terms of the 'vicarious humanity' of Christ, as J B Torrance has aptly described it (1978:69).

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<sup>20</sup> 1887:21. Hofmeyr made a few telling applications in these lectures, originally delivered in the Kweekskool. From the baptism of Jesus we learn the necessity of obedience and identification. It is only in the way of obedience, he said, that we will become prophets, priests and kings for our God. 'And we will be able to labour for the salvation of others only in so far as we identify ourselves as priests with their guilt and sin'. (22).

<sup>21</sup> Cf T F Torrance 1981b:143.

### Baptized with the Spirit

One of the main characteristics of Hofmeyr's theology was the drawing of parallels between the life of Jesus and the experience of Christians. He believed, for example, that the baptism of the Spirit could be a distinct experience in a Christian's life (1898:69). The reason for this seem to have been a combination of the results of his own experience, his study of the Bible and what he believed about Jesus.

Unlike both Schleiermacher and the orthodox, Hofmeyr taught that something special happened to Jesus at his baptism.<sup>22</sup> The words 'You are my beloved Son' were not mere sounds, he was baptized by the Holy Spirit. This was a new experience for Jesus, but this does not mean that it was a strange experience (1887:24). The relationship between him and his Father was, according to its very nature, perfect, but there was also growth in it. He never needed an external revelation of God, because he understood the will of God instinctively (24). Yet the coming of the Spirit was a new experience for him, being the culmination of the relationship between him and his Father. God's Spirit came into a house prepared and waiting for him, very different from the prophets of the Old Covenant (25). The baptism by the Spirit was 'a mutual recognition between Father and Son' (25). His whole life of thirty years was a preparation for this moment and his relationship with the Father 'entered now on its highest stage'.<sup>23</sup>

Jesus' life up till that time 'was not the highest form' of spiritual life. Although he knew intuitively that God was his Father, he lived under the law as a true Israelite; in a

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<sup>22</sup> Referring to Luke 3:21,22, John 1:32 and Acts 15:38, he said that Jesus was filled with the Spirit 'in full measure' at his baptism (1887: 23).

<sup>23</sup> bereikt nu de hoogste duidelijkheid (1887:25).

sense the law existed between him and the Father.<sup>24</sup> But now this 'Israelite form of spiritual life' made room for the highest form of spiritual life. He could now live not only as the obedient Servant but as the Son 'come of age'.<sup>25</sup> When the Spirit came on Jesus he experienced the most intimate relationship with God of which human nature is capable (1887:26).

The first Adam did not receive the fulness of the Spirit, because he did not continue in obedience (1887:26). Now at last there was an obedient man, in whom God could be present in the world (27). Who will tell us what his thoughts were when he realized that he was not only the obedient Servant but the Son? (28). At last there was now a Prophet fully able to receive the Word of God 'from moment to moment' (27).

Hofmeyr was right in emphasizing the reality of the coming of the Spirit on Jesus, but his point that Jesus only then became the image of the Father is not very convincing. He said: 'Those who see and hear him from now on, see and hear the Father' (1887: 27). More convincing is his view that the coming of the Spirit was the final preparation for his work of salvation (28). He was now anointed as Mediator who would impart God's saving grace to mankind.<sup>26</sup>

He distinguished between the 'ordinary' guidance of the Holy Spirit and the extraordinary inspiration in view of the importance of the temptation in the wilderness. Jesus

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<sup>24</sup> Tusschen hem en zijn Vader dacht Hij zich de wet (1887:26).

<sup>25</sup> Zijn mondigen Zoon (1887:26). With reference to Acts 4:27 Hofmeyr acknowledged that Jesus accepted the terms 'Servant' and 'Son' as of equal honour (1896:1), but this insight was not reflected in the contents of his Niet Knecht maar Kind (1896).

<sup>26</sup> 1887:28. He often repeated the idea that Jesus was anointed Messiah because he identified himself with sinners, especially at his baptism. He referred especially to Acts 10:37,38 as proof of this.

stood here 'at the commencement of a totally new period in history'. He was always led by the Spirit, but in this case he was 'driven' by the Spirit.<sup>27</sup> He was always and everywhere 'sanctified by the Spirit', but since this temptation was decisive in his life and ministry, he experienced the presence and the power of the Spirit in a special way.<sup>28</sup>

### The Faith and Prayer-Life of Jesus

While Christians generally accept the prayer-life of Jesus as a reality, its theological significance has been diminished by what may be described as a 'Monophysite' emphasis in orthodox theology. On the basis of his interpretation of Chalcedon Hodge denies, for example, that Christ is 'a human person'. It is therefore hardly surprising that he offers no discussion of the personal faith and prayer-life of Jesus.<sup>29</sup> Hofmeyr, on the other hand, said that his 'human heart needed that refreshment and power that flows from God through prayer' (1887:83). His 'baptism with the Spirit ... was certainly an answer to his prayers'. (170). Jesus spent whole nights in prayer, but also lifted up his heart to God when doing

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<sup>27</sup> 1887:35f. Hofmeyr referred to John 1:32 and Luke 4:18,21.

<sup>28</sup> 1887:36. Hofmeyr compared this period in Jesus' life with the miracles during the exodus, when God prepared Israel for his service. Likewise at Pentecost God worked special miracles in order to establish his church, 'as the body of Christ for the sake of the world'. His idea of Christ as our prototype, also in receiving the Spirit, is present here. He said that this experience of Jesus was similar to the fulness experienced by his disciples at Pentecost, in the sense that for them it was a special preparation for the great work of the planting of the Church. He refers to Acts 2:4, 4:8,31 to indicate that the Spirit filled the disciples in a special way for special tasks. Therefore the Spirit remained with them afterwards, but not the special signs. 'The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to the disciples of the Lord, had its parallel in the coming of the Holy Spirit on Jesus at his baptism'. (29). Hofmeyr denied the continuation of the special charismata in this context (36), apparently believing that the renewing and healing work of the Spirit were ordinary and not special charismata.

<sup>29</sup> Cf C Hodge 1883 II:610-615.

other work. 'He called on God with prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears ... He was thoroughly human' (84). Jesus increasingly realized the majesty of the Father. 'Nobody humbled himself more before God than Jesus, because nobody knew God better than He did' (166).

If the prayer-life of Jesus is generally accepted, at least formally, as a fact in orthodox theology, the same cannot be said about his faith. The fact of his divinity, increasingly emphasized in opposition to modernism, as well as the importance of the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ, seem logically to contradict an acknowledgement that he also needed to live by faith.<sup>30</sup> But Hofmeyr understood that prayer and faith were closely linked in the life of Jesus as they are in the life of the Christian. 'He walked always with his hand in the Father's hand' (1887:164). Even at the most desperate times of his life he trusted in the Father, quoting from 'Moses and the Psalms' (72). He trusted in the Father as the smallest child, but he also had communion with the Father as his Son 'come of age' (164).

The greatest test for his faith was when he was crucified and experienced 'nothing but the curse of sin ... and, in pitchblack darkness, descended deeper and deeper, but even then He continued, more than ever before, to hold on to the living God' (1887:170). That this 'holding on to God' was not meant in a 'metaphysical' sense, is made clear by the following statement: 'He overcame this separation when He did not see or feel or enjoy his God and Father any more, by holding more intensely than ever to him BY FAITH'.<sup>31</sup> His

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<sup>30</sup> Berkouwer is one of the few orthodox theologians who acknowledged it in a dogmatic work (1975:222); even Galot had problems with the faith of Jesus (1981:380f).

<sup>31</sup> 1886:88, cf 95,115; the double emphasis is Hofmeyr's.

cry of dereliction on the cross was 'the mightiest act of faith that ever was or could be imagined'.<sup>32</sup> Twenty years later Hofmeyr still emphasized Jesus' faith:

An indescribable sense of being forsaken by God came over Jesus. It seemed as if mighty death was on the point of gaining its highest victory, and if ... the soul of Jesus was to be banned forever from the heavenly light. But death had to leave its prey ... The Spirit of God did not leave the spirit of Jesus ... The darker it became in the soul of Jesus, the faster his spirit clung to God. Never did He cling to God so closely as when He called out: 'My God, why did You forsake Me?' It was as if the relationship between him and God was reborn in that dark hour ... Jesus died in the knowledge that He was not in the power of death, but in the hands of his Father. (1905:48).

Because of this emphasis, Hofmeyr was able to use the faith of Jesus as an example for the Christian. By his faith he 'became the Leader and Perfecter of our faith' (GM Jan 1911). In a similar context he said:

And so we finally learn this glorious lesson that we may conquer everything by faith. Even if we go through hell, our childlike trust in God will deliver us from it ... Jesus overcame death for himself and for all who give themselves to him, by trusting in his Father. By descending into death He brought back as his prize all souls who believe in him. (1886:89).

### The Temptations of Jesus

The temptation in the wilderness seems to have been the locus classicus for those who emphasized the real humanity of Jesus. Hofmeyr devoted two chapters in his book to this theme. He said that if we should remove the two major temptation narratives<sup>33</sup> from the life of Jesus, we 'would rob his life of its inner power ... it would become colourless and meaningless' (1887:175). While this statement may seem unguarded in the light of the

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<sup>32</sup> 1886:88. He added: 'It is as if he said: 'Father I trusted in You, why did You not stay with Me?' (cf GM Jan 1911).

<sup>33</sup> The one in the wilderness and in the one in Gethsemane'.

orthodox view that Christ was not able to sin, it is clear that this was Hofmeyr's considered opinion. It also indicates that Hofmeyr himself resisted the temptation to allow creedal statements to control his interpretation of Scripture.<sup>34</sup>

Although sin does not belong to man's essential nature, temptation to sin indeed belongs to his 'natural condition'. Man was destined to become what he should be 'by his victory over temptations'.<sup>35</sup> Therefore Jesus had to become what he should have been, 'not without the most terrible temptations'. Hofmeyr insisted that Jesus' holiness of life 'was not a natural necessity'. His holiness had to be 'a moral victory, the fruit of his own resistance to the tempter. Although He was the Son, He had to learn obedience as each other man' (1887:174).

The earthly life of Jesus is 'of eternal importance' because of the fact that it was a series of significant triumphs over temptation (1887:175). The temptation to depart from God's way at various stages of his life was a grim reality, and he could only overcome them and remain the sinless one 'by holding fast to God till the bitter end' (174). He had to persevere in obedience until 'the last fearful struggle in Gethsemane' in order to earn

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<sup>34</sup> Berkouwer pointed out that orthodox theologians in the 19th century, both Catholic and Protestant, argued against the able not to sin from the point of view of the hypostatic union (1975:258f). He did not argue directly from the hypostatic union, but rather from the 'revealed intention' of God to save us in and through Christ. He therefore said that 'Scripture discloses nothing of the dilemma between the sinlessness and the freedom of Christ ... we see that his free will manifests itself precisely in His sinlessness ... His freedom is to do the will of the Father and not to stand neutrally at the cross-roads of two diverging possibilities'.(262f).

<sup>35</sup> 1887:174. Hofmeyr explained: 'Our life cannot become what it should be, if we are not tempted by the devil. Even without sin, there would have been temptations. Adam was tempted before the fall, and Jesus, the sinless one, was tempted'. (40). We are tempted in order that we should become established in what is good, right and true. In this way the higher gifts become 'our unquestionable possession' (41).

the moral right to be called the Holy One' (175). It was for him 'morally impossible to sin' only because, as the temptations grew in severity, 'He clung utterly and with his whole being to his Father'. Because he continually overcame temptations, sin was eventually impossible for him.

For the first Adam the possibility to sin became, alas, a reality, because he let go the hand of God under temptation. For the second Adam sin became, increasingly, a moral impossibility. (1887:175).

In other words Hofmeyr reconciled the able not to and the not able to sin by giving close attention to the historical development in real obedience in the life of Jesus. If people object that it is dishonouring to Jesus to suggest that he had to struggle seriously and with his whole being against temptations, 'I make bold to say that such a life would stand far below the life of believers who follow the way, continually struggling and conquering' (175). The fact that he was really tempted and yet overcame by utterly trusting in God, brings 'infinitely' more honour to Jesus.<sup>36</sup>

As was the case with Adam, Jesus had to be tested before he could fulfil his calling. As his calling was 'more glorious' than that of Adam, the temptation had to be correspondingly severe (1887:30). The point of this temptation was that Jesus had to decide how he would use the gifts bestowed on him at his baptism, where the Father declared that he was the Son of God (30). The tempter therefore focussed his attack on his Sonship.<sup>37</sup> If Jesus yielded to the tempter, it would have been impossible for him 'to remain the Son of

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<sup>36</sup> 1887:174. Hofmeyr did not refer to the ancient saying: 'What was not assumed, was not saved'. There is also no indication whether he was influenced by the views of Edward Irving, who was deposed by the Church of Scotland for holding that Christ assumed our sinful nature (cf Dallimore 1983).

<sup>37</sup> 1887:41. Berkouwer emphasized the fact that all three temptations were related to his Messianic task (1975:261).

God' (41).

Jesus' forty days in the wilderness paralleled Israel's forty years (Hofmeyr 1887:37). Just as Israel was prepared in the wilderness to become God's nation of prophets and priests, Jesus had to be prepared for his prophetic and priestly task (37). His use of Deuteronomy also indicates that he saw a parallel between Israel 'the son of God' in the wilderness, and himself (32). Jesus profited from their mistakes recorded in the Old Testament. He therefore rejected the 'suggestion that He could save himself in his own way' (32). It is by no means because of the 'similarity of sounds' that Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy.<sup>38</sup> In answering the temptation he 'expressed his own convictions in the language of Holy Scripture'.<sup>39</sup>

In the second temptation, following the sequence of Matthew, Satan deliberately wanted to exploit his trust in the Father's protection and provision exemplified in his answer to the first temptation. But Jesus 'became what He was in the way of obedience' and he dedicated every gift that he had to the Father (1887:38). The third temptation was in turn prompted by his concern to be obedient to the Father. Hofmeyr suggested that Jesus did not realize who his tempter was, and that he initially thought that the safest way might well be to accept the help of this 'powerful angel'. 'Only now' it became clear who 'the persuasive stranger was'.<sup>40</sup> The loyalty of the Son was a powerful testimony against 'the

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<sup>38</sup> Niet maar op de klank af (1887:37).

<sup>39</sup> 1887:37. He said that it is obvious that Jesus lived in a 'spiritual and vital relationship with the Scripture'. Therefore some of his most telling parables were made spontaneously, 'without reference to the Old Testament' (38).

<sup>40</sup> 1887:34. Hofmeyr suggested that Satan appeared 'as an angel of light', creating the impression that he and 'all the heavenly host were intensely interested whether Jesus was in fact the Son of God' (31).

false words of the unfaithful angel', but his faithfulness resulted in continuous suffering until his death.<sup>41</sup>

Hofmeyr explained that a temptation, 'if thoroughly overcome', will not soon return in the same way. Jesus overcame this temptation and 'he did not have much trouble' with this kind of temptation afterwards.<sup>42</sup>

### His Knowledge

Jesus had both 'a lack and an abundance' of knowledge, he 'experienced the limitations of human knowledge in his own life. In his day to day life he was as ignorant about many things, as ordinary people'.<sup>43</sup> But Jesus also had a knowledge 'that was without any ignorance'.<sup>44</sup> In answer to the question whether his knowledge of God was a 'divine knowledge', Hofmeyr answered: 'No! If it was not a human knowledge, how would it be possible to impart it to human beings?' (1887:97). The wisdom in which he increased surely included the knowledge of God, but he was dependent on the Father for this knowledge 'from moment to moment'.<sup>45</sup> Jesus did not receive this knowledge of God 'as God' but 'as man', although this knowledge was unique and he alone could impart it. 'As the questions arose continually in his heart, they were answered by the Father; until

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<sup>41</sup> 1887:35. He added: 'Calvin was deeply impressed by the fact that the angels are also witnesses to our deeds' (40; cf CI I:14:5).

<sup>42</sup> 1887:42. He added: 'I do not suggest that we will be tempted only once because our whole life consists in a sense of continuous temptations, but there is a kind of temptation that, if overcome, imparts a permanent blessing' (43).

<sup>43</sup> 1887:96. He referred to Luke 2:52; 7:9 and Mark 11:12,13.

<sup>44</sup> 1887:97. He referred to John 1:18; 17:25,26 and Mat 11:27.

<sup>45</sup> 1887:98. He referred to John 3:11; 5:19,20,30; 6:45; 7:16 ; 8:28,47.

eventually God's relationship to man and God's plan with mankind became crystal-clear to him' (1887:180).

When he understood the questions, he did not keep the answers for himself, for he had compassion on the ignorant. He taught with a confident authority 'as a person who was in full possession of the truth, as the Teacher of the whole humanity for all times' (1887:181). In one place Hofmeyr said that during the early part of his ministry the Holy Spirit 'had not yet brought (certain matters) to his attention' (158). The fact that he referred to the Sermon on the mount as an instance where the preaching of Jesus was still in an imperfect stage, makes this statement problematic. It is nevertheless a significant indication of Hofmeyr's view of the true humanity of Christ that he could say: 'his last talks to his disciples were so much more profound than the first ones, because the Holy Spirit guided him gradually deeper into the truth' (158). But, as we will see below, he did not hold consistently to this position.

Hofmeyr also explained Jesus' gradual growth in knowledge from the perspective of him being our example. As he was fully dependent on the Father, he was able to overcome temptations and delusions. 'He allowed himself to be totally guided by the Father, from moment to moment, that is why He was the Infallible One' (164). This statement seems to suggest the theoretical possibility of error, combined with a practical infallibility, which would contradict Hofmeyr's previous suggestion that the Sermon on the mount was not as authoritative as the last speeches of Jesus. He nevertheless firmly held to a real and steady growth in Jesus' insight into the will and ways of God. He did not consider that Jesus' uniqueness as Son of God either impeded or limited his being an example to us.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The Sonship of Jesus was the prototype of our sonship (1887:106). This concept enabled Hofmeyr to incorporate the example of Christ on a much higher plane than

He therefore emphasized the relationship between knowledge and obedience. In line with the ancient dictum: 'I believe in order to understand', he said that 'one can be proficient in various branches of science by his intellectual ability ... but the knowledge of God is only possible when man seeks life in God and is obedient to God'.<sup>47</sup> To attempt to know the holy without being under the power of the holy, or to know God without submitting to him, loving him and worshipping him, 'was unthinkable for Jesus' (160). This knowledge is not a question of information, but an ethical and religious relationship.<sup>48</sup> The greater part of the knowledge of God is 'knowledge of the reason why He created man and how He works it out in the relationship between man and man' (161).

To this Hofmeyr added the necessity of sharing the knowledge of God. 'God sees no man separate from others' (1887:161). Jesus did not use his unique knowledge and insights to enhance his own ego, but he dedicated himself to telling people what the Father revealed to him. The knowledge of God 'can only germinate in hearts that seek the salvation of others' (161). It is impossible to know God if I am not a willing instrument of his love. Where there is no 'priestly love that makes us to resemble God', where the willingness to bear the cross is absent, there the Holy Spirit cannot be our teacher. 'To be God's prophet, to know God's loving will, means that I must also be God's priest' (161).

#### Subjected to every human condition

Hofmeyr was fond of the saying: 'I am a man, and nothing human is foreign to me'.

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'modern' theology could do.

<sup>47</sup> 1887:159. Hofmeyr referred to John 5:45, 7:17 and 17:3.

<sup>48</sup> Hofmeyr is here in line with the wisdom-literature of the Old Testament.

Kestell applied this to Hofmeyr, but for the latter it was preeminently a description of the attitude of the Saviour.<sup>49</sup> Jesus submitted himself to 'all the rules of true human existence'.<sup>50</sup> Writing in the second half of the 19th century, it is not surprising that the first rule he mentioned is 'the law of development'. All created life is subject to development. 'Even the microscope' cannot distinguish the difference between human and animal life 'in the mother cell'. And yet, in such a primitive cell exists the possibilities of 'a Plato, a Calvin, or a Newton' (1887:112). The amazing fact of the incarnation is that God has subjected his Son to the precarious process of human development (113).

To illustrate the way in which Jesus was subjected to the 'law of development', he again referred to his growth in knowledge (1887:113). For his early religious development Jesus was especially dependent upon his mother. God used her teaching as a foundation for all other knowledge of God in his mind:

From her lips - and not from those of angels - He heard the name of the God of Israel for the first time, and from her He learnt to pray to God as his God. The Father in heaven used her to awaken in him the first thoughts of God, as the indispensable foundation on which all other knowledge of God was based, until it eventually expanded into unlimited knowledge.<sup>51</sup>

He was also dependent upon his contemporaries. He did not ask the momentous religious questions of his time, he found them already among the people. His intellectual environment provided the necessary stimulus to prompt him to seek the answers to these burning

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<sup>49</sup> 'His sympathies were very wide. The words of Terentius could be applied to him: Homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto.' (Kestell 1911:157).

<sup>50</sup> 1887:112. He referred to Hebrews 2:17.

<sup>51</sup> 1887:115. Hofmeyr adds, typically: 'In what his mother was for Him, we see what each mother should be for her child'. Mascall also emphasized the role of his mother in this respect (1977:168).

questions. He is 'the universal doctor', but he became that within and dependent upon a specific historical and geographical context (1887:115). He was, likewise, dependent upon the fathers. It was through the teaching of Moses and the prophets that he came to understand that he was the promised Messiah (115). God honoured his unity with the human race in making Jesus dependent, for his knowledge of God, on what He revealed to Israel (159). He was eventually superior to Moses and the prophets, 'but only because He was their disciple for many years'. God did not break the human bond that existed between Jesus and his own time, or that between him and the previous centuries (115).

He was also fully human in his dependence on his physical environment. His body was dependent on the earth for its existence and sustenance. He learnt all he could from the world around him. 'We, in our foolishness, desire to transcend the visible world in order to see the invisible face to face', but Jesus thought and spoke about the highest things from the experience he has gained from the visible world. 'In him the divine wisdom became thoroughly human'. The fact that his teaching reflects the daily life of 'his time, and country and people' is the most striking proof 'that Jesus Christ is the incarnate Son of God' (116). In a similar context he said:

And it was not by chance that He, more than any other teacher, clothed his thoughts in examples and parables taken from nature and from human life as He experienced it in Palestine. His intellectual life developed in the closest communion with the natural and the human; He could therefore not think in other terms (forms) than in those belonging to his environment. He shared his deepest experiences, born from a deep communion with God, in these (Israelite, Palestinian) terms ... <sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> 1887:158. He added: 'His increasing and anthropomorphic knowledge of God and divine things, is the mirror of our knowledge of God'.

His Miracles, Human or Divine?

Whereas in popular theology, the miracles of Jesus are the most obvious support of Jesus' claim to divinity, we may note that Hofmeyr refused to ascribe the miracles of Jesus to 'his divinity'.

His first point was that Jesus' power to work miracles formed an integral part of his preaching, as 'both started at the same time' (1887:46). The miracles 'were not added afterwards' as confirmation of his preaching, they were not intended to come to the aid of the 'weakness' of the word. Word and miracle were so closely related that those who rejected his word demanded 'special signs' prescribed by themselves (46).

Jesus' power over nature revealed itself especially in healing, 'the healing of the sick was therefore a revelation of the character of the Kingdom of God'.<sup>53</sup> Healings were assurances that his announcement of the Kingdom was not 'without meaning'. They indicated that God had visited Israel and that the Kingdom of God would exist on earth (46). In Deuteronomy God announced to Israel that He was their Healer. When the people of Israel saw the miracles of Jesus some of them realized that there is a close relationship between Jesus and the God of Israel. 'The Kingdom of God was coming in the person of Jesus' (1887:47).

The power of Jesus over nature was, therefore, in a sense a divine power. 'In him it could now be observed that man has become a partner of God in his power over nature'

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<sup>53</sup> 1887:46. Hofmeyr mentioned the fact that he visited 'various institutions in Europe where the sick are being healed in the name of Jesus'. (52). According to Kestell he visited two institutions in England and six on the continent during 1884, mainly for his own health, as his one remaining eye was seriously strained. Institutions at Ma'nendorf, Chardonne, Bad Boll and Cannstatt are mentioned (1911:177ff). It is noteworthy that in 1882 his friend Andrew Murray visited various institutions in Europe for his health and returned a convinced believer in 'divine healing' (Du Plessis 1920a:347ff).

(48). Jesus used this power 'in a divine way, that is: merely by the exercise of his will'.<sup>54</sup> But it is also a human power: 'Jesus' power over nature is a revelation of Gods power over nature in a human way, in human form' (48). It was not at the incarnation, but at the baptism of Jesus, that this power was given to mankind in and through Jesus:

It is remarkable to realize how God's power has become a human power in the life of Jesus; that it was not added to the human nature as if from outside, but was united with the indwelling of the Spirit in the human nature of Jesus since his baptism. He was able to use this power because, since his baptism, it was united with the communion with God to which human nature was elevated, in him.

Do not say that this power of Jesus over nature is only the property of the divine nature in him. In such a case you separate the divine and the human nature in him; it would mean that human nature gained nothing by the incarnation; that in him the Word did not become man. In Jesus Christ the aim of the creation of man is made clear to us. God willed, among other things, that man should share in his power over nature. But before this could happen, the eternal Son himself had to become man, and had to bring the unity between God and man to perfection in his person.<sup>55</sup>

That the power of Jesus over nature does not belong essentially to 'the divine nature' in him, seems clear enough, but the problem is that Hofmeyr related this power to Jesus' baptism with the Spirit. This would be a biblical view, if understood as a Messianic gift. But Hofmeyr related his power over nature to both his baptism and his incarnation, thereby indicating that he 'had to bring the union between God and man to perfection' (51). This gives the impression that the incarnation itself was, in a sense, gradual, and that the full unification between God and man - that was for Hofmeyr the purpose of creation - only

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<sup>54</sup> 1887:48. Apparently Hofmeyr was thinking of 'divine healing' in contrast to the use of medicine.

<sup>55</sup> 1887:51. This is to some extent in line with Ebrard's view that Jesus was pleromatic man who possessed all the qualities which man was supposed to have if there were no sin (cf A B Bruce 1889:259).

took place when the Spirit came on him at his baptism.<sup>56</sup>

We have to commend Hofmeyr for taking the life of Jesus with all his historical experiences, including his baptism, as seriously as he did, but to suggest that the union between God and man reached perfection when Jesus was baptized with the Spirit, seems to involve a confusion between his person and his work. One cannot find fault with Hofmeyr's affirmation that Jesus was the incarnate Son of God, nor with his view that the baptism with the Spirit 'was a new experience for Jesus'. But from the biblical point of view this experience was not a part of the process of unification, but a gift that enabled him to fulfil his Messianic calling. Perhaps his emphasis on Jesus as example and prototype of the believer, as well as his view that man is 'partly divine', as we have seen in a previous chapter, played a role in the formation of his views on the unification between God and man in Jesus through the Spirit.

Hofmeyr made a distinction between Jesus' power over sickness and his power over the spirit world. In 1884 he visited institutions where the sick were healed and evil spirits were exorcised. Till that time he had 'no experience' to enable him to understand the Bible on this point (1887:52). But what happened at these places 'were amazingly similar to the cases mentioned in the gospels'. Hofmeyr learnt there that people could be delivered from evil spirits by prayer and fasting (54). He noted that there was a difference between the sick and the possessed, because the sick flocked to him, but the possessed 'could not stand the presence of Jesus' (55). In Hofmeyr's view Jesus exercised a different office in these two different cases. When he commanded the spirits to leave the possessed he exercised

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<sup>56</sup> There can be no misunderstanding here, Hofmeyr repeated this statement three times (1887:51). This seems very close to Adoptionism and would contradict his teaching that 'the first cry of Mary's child was the cry of the incarnate Son of God'.

his kingly office, but when he healed the sick, he exercised his priestly office. His compassion revealed his priestly identification, but when he expelled evil spirits he revealed his royal power (58).

This is yet another example of the influence of personal experience in Hofmeyr's theology. After his visit to Europe he believed that 'the power of Jesus over nature continues to this day in the Church' in order to bless human beings bound by illness (1887:52). Jesus 'was conscious of the unity of God and man in his person' and that this power would now belong to the those who believed in him. He gave this power to his disciples, and after his ascension he gave it to 'not a few' in the Church.<sup>57</sup> This new insight suggests why Hofmeyr differed from Ebrard. While the latter allowed for the possibility of 'minor ailments' in Jesus (1863:226), Hofmeyr said that although Jesus could become very tired he was not subject to illness (1887:178). It would seem that, as a result of his experience, Hofmeyr's emphasis on the example of Christ developed along pneumatic and charismatic lines.

#### His Power to Forgive Sin

What about his power to forgive sins? Did Jesus 'stop being human' when he forgave sin? (1887:95). Hofmeyr answered that 'Jesus never spoke a more human word', than when he forgave the paralytic. 'It was so powerful, because it was spoken by the true man'.<sup>58</sup> The people rejoiced and said that God gave the power to forgive sins to human beings, it was

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<sup>57</sup> 1887:51. He referred to 1 Cor 12:9 and James 5:14,15.

<sup>58</sup> Het oefende juist daarom zulk eene kracht uit, omdat het door den waarachtigen mensch werd gesproken. (1887:96).

now indeed 'a human power'. The scribes, 'who had an idolatrous honour for the letter of Scripture', understood nothing of the living spirit of Scripture. They had no idea of the high value Scripture placed on human beings. Instead of seeing in Jesus what true man should be, they judged him a blasphemer (101).

#### His powerlessness.

In order to emphasize his utter dependence on the Father, Hofmeyr said, on the other hand, that Jesus was 'the most powerless' of men. 'No-one had a deeper experience of what it meant to be a thoroughly powerless human being ... was there ever one who went as deep into total powerlessness and utter helplessness than He?'<sup>59</sup> Even when he exercised his power over nature he was 'thoroughly human' and as deeply dependent on God as he was in Gethsemane'.

#### Man of his own Time

Jesus was 'in all respects a man of his own time.'<sup>60</sup> He was so one with the people and his times that the superficial observer could never have dreamt that he was a man for all times, the 'property' of all nations, the Head of the whole human race. He looked like and had the manners of a Jew. He 'certainly spoke' both Greek and Hebrew (1887:74). He did not immitate the ancient prophets, but lived and worked like the rabbis of his own time. He did not live in the past or the future. The accident at the tower of Shiloam and the cruelty of Pilate when he killed the Galileans made a deep impression on him. He saw the

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<sup>59</sup> 1887:95. He referred to 2 Cor 13:4 and Hebrews 5:2,7.

<sup>60</sup> In alle opzichten een kind van Zijnen tijd (1887:74).

plight of the poor 'with an open eye' and he was moved with great compassion for them. From his parables it is clear that he had an intimate knowledge of the lives of the common people (75).

He attended the synagogue and the temple as a good Israelite and even had respect for the Sanhedrin. He subjected himself to the Roman government and taught that people should pay their taxes. He did not try to change society in a violent way, but he exposed the besetting sins of his people: Their pride as descendants of Abraham; their despising of strangers; their love of the externals of their religion; their demoralizing traditionalism; their desire for miracles that would only satisfy 'the flesh'; their haughtiness towards the ignorant and their cruelty towards the poor; their hypocrisy and love of money; their lack of faith and trust in God (1887:76). He lived in such close contact with reality that 'all his teaching' arose from and was directly related to the context in which he lived (77).

#### Man for all times

But he was also the man for all nations and all times. He who understood better than any other how to speak relevantly to the needs of his time 'also taught in such a way that it was relevant to the needs of all times and nations' (1887:80). How was that possible? Jesus realized that the old was passing away, not only in Israel, but among all nations (77). On all sides people were looking for something new. No gospel but the gospel of the Kingdom of God could satisfy them, specifically a Kingdom that transcended all barriers between nations, social classes and individuals. 'A Kingdom in which God concerns himself with man, as man' (78). There was nothing in his teaching that indicated that his Kingdom would have a national character, as was the case with all religions up to that

time (78). That is the reason why 'only those who were looking for eternal values' accepted his teaching. The differences between high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, disappeared 'by themselves' (78). As his words satisfied their 'eternal needs', they became words for all who seek after God, throughout all ages, satisfying their needs 'by his own person' (78). 'He, the man of his own time, is the man for all times' (79).

### True or Normal Man

Hofmeyr emphasized the fact that Jesus lived a normal human life. The following quote was a hyperbolic overstatement, but it well illustrates his emphasis: 'Nowhere else do we have a record of a more human life than the life of Jesus as described by the Evangelists'.<sup>61</sup>

When he was a child he behaved as a true child, when he was a young man, he assisted his father in his work, as was the custom. After Joseph's death he had to support his mother (1887:82). His brothers, who knew him 'as only brothers can know each other', took exception when he claimed to be the Messiah (80). The same was true of the other people of Nazareth. His disciples honoured him as an exceptional person, but, in their eyes, he was never more than a man.<sup>62</sup> This was why 'the poor and the unlearned' were so attached to him, 'because he was so human'. His true humanity was also the secret that

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<sup>61</sup> 1887:81. On the other hand he also called Jesus 'the ideal man', in whom all human excellences (*voortreffelijkheden*) were complete (1887:88, cf 142). It seems clear that he did not think of Jesus in terms of a Platonic idea, but that he saw him as our prototype. He called Jesus the Incomparable One, and added that, the more excellent the individual human being is, the deeper he humbles himself before his unattainable glory (88).

<sup>62</sup> That is, of course, before his resurrection.

attracted children to him, they knew intuitively that he was their friend, 'no-one is put off more easily by something unreal or untrue than a child' (81).

Two arguments in favour of his true humanity reveal as much about Hofmeyr as about Jesus: his ability to make special friends, 'to be bound to others by the tender affections of friendship,' and his 'love for and response to the beauty of nature'. The flowers, the sun, the sea of Galilee, the stars

awoke in him that rich variety of emotions they were designed to evoke in man's breast. All who are not deaf for the voice of God in nature should be able to comprehend to some extent what took place in the pure heart of Jesus when He saw a beautiful sunset or sunrise, when He walked on the shores of the beautiful sea of Galilee, or when He climbed a mountain at night under the stars. (1887:83).

Hofmeyr also found his anger, his joys and his fears convincingly human. He rejoiced that the unlearned accepted him and that sinners turned to God (83). He loved the rich young man, even though he was not willing to follow him. When he thought of Jerusalem he could not resist his tears, even though he was among a jubilant crowd. 'And how moving was his farewell to her, because she did not want to listen to the voice of love, and did not care to seek salvation in that love' (82). He was deeply moved when he told his disciples that one of them would betray him and in the garden of Gethsemane' he was gripped by fear (83).

Some consider the sinlessness of Jesus as an indication that he was not fully human, but Hofmeyr believed that Jesus was the truest of men, because he had no sin. As sin 'destroys the humanity of man', his sinlessness made Jesus more and not less human.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Hoe meer de zonde in den mensch heerscht, des te meer wordt het zuiver mensche-lijke in hem verwoest. (1887:87). In the words of Jean Galot: 'Sin is a frustration of human nature, not an expression and expansion of it' (Mascall 1977:178).

And what is more, because he willingly identified himself with the worst of sinners, his sinlessness brought him nearer to, instead of separating him from humanity. As normal and true man he was also the man for others: 'As true Son of man, He was everything for the fallen human race' (87).

### Patriot and Universalist

Hofmeyr believed that a Christian would be a patriot in the best sense of the word. His claim that Jesus was 'a true patriot' therefore deserves special attention (1887:82). In a chapter entitled 'One with Man', he showed how the love of Jesus developed from true patriotism to a universal love for all humanity. His birth established his unity with mankind in a profound way, for it would have been possible for God to create Jesus in the same way as He created Adam, 'without a human mother' (143). But, in order to be truly united to mankind, he had to become man in the normal way, to belong to a family and to a specific nation.

Hofmeyr distinguished between a 'natural', a 'moral' and a 'religious' unity. Jesus' natural unity with man was established by his birth. His moral unity with us was based on his free decision to identify with our sin at various stages of his life, and for this it was necessary that he should grow up in a normal family.

Jesus was initially conscious of his unity with his family in Nazareth. As a child the whole humanity was represented for him in his immediate family, and He was called to live as part of it. He did just that. He dedicated himself to his family. He did not separate himself from ordinary domestic life. He lived in love towards parents, brothers and sisters. And He did that until his thirtieth year. (1887:144).

His moral unity with mankind also necessitated his connection with a nation (volk). Because of his character and upbringing in the faith of Israel, he understood that he had a

responsibility towards his own people. Accordingly he 'dedicated himself totally' to the salvation of Israel. 'By his moral unity with Israel He became a true man in a broader sense than was the case with his unity with his family only' (1887:145).

But, as nations consist of families, mankind is made up of nations. 'Of this Jesus became more and more conscious, and with the broadening of this consciousness, his love was also enlarged, until it eventually encompassed the whole of humanity' (145). It is true that he limited his personal work mainly to his own people, but he did it in view of the eventual well-being of the whole of humanity. He laid the foundations of the Kingdom of God in Israel, in order that it could develop from there as from a base camp, over the whole earth.

He breathed this world-encompassing atmosphere. He lived in this world-wide love. Without denying his love to his family and his people, He dedicated his life to the salvation of the world. He thought of the love of God as a universal love, and talked of the other sheep that did not belong to the fold of Israel ... This life, transparent with a perfect love to the whole human race, was a new phenomenon, a new revelation of what it meant to be, not Israelite, Roman or Greek, but to be MAN. (1887:146).

In the practice of dedication and obedience to God, going through severe struggles, his 'natural unity' with the human race became a 'moral unity'. He 'conquered in this struggle only because He allowed the love of the Father to live with all its divine power in him. And in this way his moral union with mankind became a religious union'. And as Jesus realized his unity with the human race, he also increasingly realized the unity of the human race 'a unity in which all national distinctions disappear as being of no value' (146).

It seems as if Hofmeyr wanted to say: If we find it difficult to move from loving our own families to loving the nation, and from loving the nation to loving all mankind, we must not imagine that it was easy for Jesus. He was the first person who realized this

unity of all mankind. But he added, on the other hand, that Jesus was conscious of the fact that his love for all mankind had its origin in the Father's love, and that in his love the love of the Father was put to the test (146).

His love for family and nation was not an 'immature love', it was rather an indispensable stage in the development of his love for the whole of the human race. His love for his family was therefore sharply tested by the unbelief of his brothers, and his love for Israel was severely tested by their persistent enmity.<sup>64</sup>

In a similar context Hofmeyr reminded his readers of the general situation in the time of Jesus when each nation loved only their own people and thought it their duty to hate the foreigner. In a rare reference to the contemporary situation he added: 'And how selfish is the attitude of the Europeans towards the natives in the different colonies, established by Europeans' (1886:10).

He explained that Jesus did not deny the differences between various peoples, nor the possibility that one nation might, in a certain area, be more advanced than other nations (11). Jesus did not censure a natural love for one's own people, or an acknowledgement of the good and praiseworthy in one's own nation. He respected other nations, and 'prohibited a single derogatory word against them' but he was nevertheless in all respects a Jew.<sup>65</sup> His disciples followed him in this: 'Their preaching in Israel was thoroughly Israelite in character'.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> 1887:147. He added: 'And although He is today still the rejected one ... He rejoiced in anticipation, while yet on earth, that they would accept and love Him as their Saviour'.

<sup>65</sup> 1886:12. He even claimed that Jesus felt as Jew something for his people, that He could not feel for others. Hij gevoelde als Jood iets voor zijn volk, dat Hij voor geen andere volkeren doen kon.

<sup>66</sup> Referring to Rom 9:1-3, he added that this shows us 'how bitterly painful was the

But Hofmeyr was emphatic about the universality of the love of the historical Jesus.<sup>67</sup> The parable of the good Samaritan and his attitude towards the Samaritan woman show clearly that Jesus saw his neighbour in the foreigner no less than in the Israelite. 'We feel how his heart beats for the foreigner as for a brother and how He praised without prejudice and large-heartedly what is praiseworthy in him'. Jesus revealed something radically new with this parable: 'We are as humans much closer to each other than as people of the same nation' (1886:12). Our relationship with our own people is subordinated to our relationship with other people. My relationship to my own people is 'a school' where I must learn how to have a fruitful relationship with others (13). Although Jesus was door en door Jood in speech, way of life and character, he was, to a much greater extent, also door en door mensch.<sup>68</sup>

In answer to the question how Jesus reveals his union with mankind today, Hofmeyr said: 'In his people!' (1887:148). As believers become progressively 'what they should be, their natural unity with all mankind develops into a moral and religious one'. This means that they will develop as Jesus did, from patriotism to universalism: 'The Spirit of Jesus Christ motivates the believing child to dedicate himself to his family, to his people, and to

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unbelief of their people (volksgenooten) for the disciples of the Lord'. (1886:12).

<sup>67</sup> In the light of the contemporary struggle for the Afrikaans language, it is significant that he remarked that Jesus 'nowhere censures the fact that thousands of his people' have exchanged their own language in favour of Greek. 'It cannot be denied that He himself often spoke Greek, for example with Pilate' (1886:11). He added that his disciples followed Jesus in this, both in their preaching and in the writing of the letters and gospels. It may be kept in mind that these lectures were delivered in 1882, when the national feeling among the Cape Afrikaners was strongly awakened by the Transvaal war of independence.

<sup>68</sup> He added that Jesus was 'not partial towards the Jew against the Greek. His love to the Jew did not make him careless towards the Roman' (1886:13).

all mankind' (148). This true love for family, fatherland and mankind is not to be equated with a natural love for die volkseie, it is a work of the Spirit.<sup>69</sup> Hofmeyr's words of a century ago are worth being quoted in full:

And the more we see selfishness separating man from man, society from society, and nation from nation, arming themselves like wild animals against each other, the more powerfully will the Spirit of Christ work against this selfish spirit in the believers, enabling them to labour with a self-sacrificing love, perhaps through suffering, for the salvation of family, nation and all mankind, until the ends of the earth. (1887:148).

The followers of Jesus were slowly but surely influenced by this new liberal spirit. The self-sacrificing labours of Paul among the nations 'was a new phenomenon' as he was not motivated by a selfish proselytizing spirit, but laboured in love to make the nations partakers of the salvation in Christ, the Head of the human race (1886:14). The contemporary missionary movement was inspired by the same spirit.

In the same way Jesus Christ is for his people a Saviour from a prejudiced and selfish spirit which causes the enmity between the various nations, to their own destruction. When the truth will eventually rule universally, all nations will become members of one great family, without losing their national characteristics, where all will be all for the others, as true brothers. May that time come quickly. (14).

Hofmeyr clearly believed, on the basis of the gospel, that particularistic and nationalist claims had to be superseded by universal considerations. It may also be noted again that the example of Jesus played a decisive role in his theology.

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<sup>69</sup> This love is a gift of the Spirit, but it is important to observe that Hofmeyr relates the gifts of the Spirit to the obedience and the love of the human Christ. The true humanity of Jesus will continue to bless the world through the lives of the Christian community. 'We have learnt the nature of true unity, that unites all mankind, from Jesus Christ'. His people 'progressively realize and reveal this unity in their lives, (they are) people in whom the holy humanity of their Saviour lives to bless the world'. (1887:148).

### The Divinity of Christ in Hofmeyr's Theology

Hofmeyr preferred not to use the distinction 'as God' and 'as man' in his Christology, because, as he put it, Jesus 'should not be thought of as being two'.<sup>70</sup> Although he did not use the term Nestorianism, he was unambiguous in his rejection of what was historically understood as Nestorianism. As a result, in spite of his emphasis on the humanity of Christ, his writings contain statements that seem to be 'Alexandrian' in character.<sup>71</sup> But, even these 'Alexandrian' statements do not threaten his views on the humanity of Christ.

He repeatedly argued that the 'divine was not added to the human' in Christ. Even at 'the highest point of his life, the human was always present' (1887:102). Neither is there the least suggestion that his divinity 'was absent' at certain times of his life.

Is there not a point where we must say 'here I do not see the Son of God any more, but only the son of man?' The answer is: No! The divine life belongs even then to his being, when He descended into the depths, as .... the human belonged to his being, when He obtained the highest position. Nowhere is the one without the other. (1887:102).

In a similar context he said:

He did not stop now and again being human to show his superiority over all human beings. Being human and being more than all men are not two opposites in him, neither do they exist next to each other. He is always and everywhere man and always and everywhere more than all men. (84).

Jesus was not partly son of man and partly Son of God. 'In that case the separation between God and man would have remained. Not next to, but in the humanness, in Jesus Christ, do we see the Son of God' (1887:110). He often repeated that Jesus 'was always

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<sup>70</sup> Niet als twee gedacht (1887:99). Sometimes Hofmeyr found it necessary to use the terms 'Son of God' and 'son of man' in accordance with the popular use, but he preferred the term Theanthropos (cf 1886:146 and Mascall 1977:179ff).

<sup>71</sup> The Christology of Karl Barth, who emphasized 'the humanity of God', has also been described as 'basically Alexandrian' (cf Waldrop 1984).

and everywhere, thoroughly (door en door) son of man and always and everywhere' Son of God (95). Since the incarnation 'the divine and the human in Jesus cannot be separated. They have become one'. Therefore the two 'can never exist separately next to each other ... They reveal one person by being together one living whole' (103). Referring to the discussions of Jesus with the Jews, recorded in John 10, Hofmeyr said: 'In the very moment when He emphasized his true humanity, He also witnesses that the Father is in him and He is in the Father' (93).

As in the Athanasian tradition, Hofmeyr's teaching and preaching was always aimed at the personal appropriation of the truth. He said therefore that if some one would seek salvation from sin 'in the Son of God', he must look to the son of man, because even though he was the Son of God he forgave sin as the incarnate one, as 'man on earth' (1887:104). His incarnation is of supreme importance for our salvation, because even though he was the Son of God 'the coming of the Spirit depended on his glorification as son of man' and, while in heaven, he supports his people on earth 'as son of man' (104). There is indeed nothing more important and no greater reality than

the becoming-man of the eternal Son of God. The unique characteristics of Jesus as the Son of God became, in a human way (op menschelike wijze), his property as son of man. What we receive from him ... at God's right hand, come to us from him as glorified son of man, in a human way. The fulness of God exists bodily in him - in other words, in his human nature. (104).

One of the most serious objections raised against kenoticism was the question whether we can at all be sure if it was the true God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ. As T F Torrance has argued, the importance of the doctrine of the incarnation lies in the very fact that there is no 'credibility-gap' between God as He is in himself and as He revealed

himself in Christ.<sup>72</sup> It is remarkable how Hofmeyr's teaching, in spite of his closeness to kenoticism, anticipates and answers this objection. On the basis of Philippians 2:6,7 and John 1:14 he emphasized that the real and complete humanity of Christ is a trustworthy revelation of God. 'As truly as his words and deeds, his prayers and his tears were human, they were also divine words, deeds, prayers and tears' (105). To deny this would mean that:

The highest and deepest truth, that is the foundation of every religious truth and the root that brings forth all religious truths, would disappear; it would mean that the Son of God did not BECOME man, the Logos did not BECOME flesh; it would have meant that the Son of God only ATTACHED himself to ... a man.<sup>73</sup>

It seems clear that Hofmeyr realized the supreme religious and historical importance of the incarnation. In his Jezus' Heerlijkheid he wrote: 'The Son (is) in all his words and deeds the perfect mirror, the full revelation of . . . the Father'.<sup>74</sup> In another context he said that it does not matter how deeply we look into the humanity of Jesus, even from his first origin as a human being, and in all the details of his life, we see nothing less than the human existence of the eternal Son of God:

The totally unique significance of the life of Jesus Christ lies in the fact that it was the human life of the Eternal Son of the Father. The first breath of Mary's child was the breath of the incarnate Son of God. His first heart-beat was the heart-beat of the incarnate Son of God. His first cry was the cry of the incarnate Son of God. His first faltering speech was the speech of the incarnate Son of God. The first dawning of his consciousness: I am a human being, I am a child of God; was the dawning consciousness of the incarnate

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<sup>72</sup> Cf Torrance 1981b:xiv,xv.

<sup>73</sup> 1887:107; Hofmeyr's emphasis. Is this not what the idea of assumption, which was accepted in orthodoxy since Aquinas implies? This was also Cyril's objection to the idea of assumption, which he identified with Nestorianism (cf T F Torrance 1975:150).

<sup>74</sup> 1886:47; cf also 1886:26,57,128.

Son of God.<sup>75</sup>

Hofmeyr sometimes based his arguments for the incarnation on the assumed compatibility between the human and the divine. This is yet another indication of the influence of mediating theology on him. He said, for example, that the scribes 'tried to protect the honour of God by insisting on an absolute separation between the divine and the human, between being-God and being-man'. He observed that Jesus did not defend himself by saying: 'I do not call myself the Son of God as man; I do not mean that I am one with the Father as man; I say this only as Son of God' (1887:99). His point was here that Jesus taught a close compatibility between God and man, and that the one does not of necessity exclude the other.

On the other hand, he added immediately that an absolute separation between God and man would be a denial of 'the central truth by which all religious truth must either stand or fall', namely the incarnation. That would mean that 'the Logos remained the Logos and did not become man'.<sup>76</sup> In another context Hofmeyr said that the incarnation is the fact on which Christianity, as well as the unity between God and man, hinges. 'Nothing in the whole universe is truer than that' (1887:112).

One must therefore acknowledge that, in spite of the influence of mediating theology, Hofmeyr's basic orientation was to argue from the particular to the universal, and not the other way round. He said on more than one occasion that the incarnation is a mystery that explains the riddle of human existence. With immense conviction he repeated again and again that 'nothing in the whole universe is more real and more true' than the fact that the

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<sup>75</sup> 1887:108; Hofmeyr's emphasis.

<sup>76</sup> Dan was de Logos Logos gebleven, en niet vleesch geworden (1887:99).

eternal Logos became man, and that 'He lived a genuine human life'.<sup>77</sup>

The Double Consciousness.

Hofmeyr referred in a few places to the problem of the 'double consciousness' of Jesus. Although he did not discuss the problem systematically, he emphasized the unity rather than a possible duality in the mind of Christ.

The two consciousnesses express a single, deeper and common consciousness (grondbewustzijn) that can never exist separately next to each other. This deeper common consciousness expresses itself in the following way in Jesus Christ: the same I which says: I am the Son of man, the same I, and no other I, says: I am the Son of God.<sup>78</sup>

The consciousness of Jesus was the 'thoroughly human' expression of the divine consciousness:

There is no greater reality than the incarnation of the Word, the becoming-man of the eternal Son of God. The unique characteristics of Jesus as the Son of God became his property as son of man in a human way. Since the incarnation the eternal Son of God does what he does in an anthropomorphic way. His eternal consciousness became a human consciousness, similar to any other human consciousness gradually developing to greater wisdom. When he realized as child that 'God is my Father', it was the provisional revelation in him of his eternal consciousness, which came to its clearest expression at his baptism. (1887:104).

In Hofmeyr's view, the idea of a 'double consciousness' in Jesus involved the Nestorian idea of two persons, with its dualism and 'credibility gap' between God and his revelation in Christ. It would mean that his personal life 'would not be a living unity. In that case we would have in Jesus Christ not one I but two I's (Hofmeyr 1887: 107). In answer to

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<sup>77</sup> Hij heeft een door en door menselijk leven doorleefd (1887:112; Hofmeyr's emphasis).

<sup>78</sup> 1887:103. In this context Hofmeyr even tried to explain this problem with an analogy from Christian experience!

whether there were 'two lives' in Jesus, one 'originating from his unity with mankind and the other from his unity with the Father', he said:

Not at all. It was the one I, the one self-consciousness, the one person who always spoke in him. What then was the relationship between the divine and the human, the moral to the religious in him? The human was the revelation of the divine. In the human the divine assumed the specific form in which it will reveal itself into all eternity. THE WORD BECAME FLESH (John 1:14). The fulness of God lives bodily in Jesus Christ (Col 2:9). There is nothing divine that belongs to him that could be conceived of as separate from his humanity; everything is in the human. (1887:154).

It cannot be denied that the biblical doctrine of the incarnation implies the recognition of two consciousnesses in the person of the Son in some way. The French Chalcedonian, Jean Galot, recognizes two consciousnesses in the Logos but qualifies this in the following way:

We must exclude immediately any intrusion of the divine consciousness into the human, which would result in modifying the nature of the human consciousness's apprehension ... by introducing divine elements into it ... There is in him no human ego; there is human consciousness of a divine ego.<sup>79</sup>

Galot argued that the manhood of Christ is seriously effected if an 'intrusion' from the divine to the human consciousness is assumed, at least in the period of his humiliation. It is also doubtful whether the biblical picture of Jesus demands the acceptance of such an 'intrusion' (cf Mascall 1977:163). Hofmeyr's discussion of the 'double consciousness' is not as convincing as that of Galot, but it is noteworthy that he tried to preserve the unity of the person of Christ, without having recourse to 'psychological Nestorianism' (cf 1887:103). He believed that the theory of a double consciousness in the mind of the incarnate Son was in fact more Nestorian than his view of Christ's 'human personality'. In the nature of the case, it would be presumptuous to demand a psychologically convincing

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<sup>79</sup> Quoted by Mascall 1977:163. Mascall also believes that 'we must carefully distinguish between a divine operation and the human operation of a divine person' (164).

theory of the incarnation, but the theory of a 'double consciousness' is based on the doctrine of the two natures rather than on the evidence of Scripture. Hofmeyr was clearly concerned to uphold the psychological unity of the person of the historical Jesus, but his major objection to the theory of the 'double consciousness' was its 'Nestorianism', the opening of a 'credibility-gap' between the human and the divine in Jesus.

### The Personality of Jesus

Hofmeyr did not consider the term 'the personality of Jesus' a Nestorian aberration.<sup>80</sup> This is not the place to discuss the problem of the anhypostasia, but it may be noted that most of Hofmeyr's orthodox contemporaries taught that 'the personality of Christ is in the divine nature ... the human nature of Christ ... is impersonal'.<sup>81</sup>

One can have sympathy with attempts to guard against an Adoptionist separation between Jesus and the Logos, but it cannot be denied that the idea that the human nature in Christ is 'impersonal', perhaps more than any other Christological doctrine, created the impression that Chalcedon undermines the reality of the human life of Christ. The emphasis on the 'impersonality of Jesus' by many orthodox scholars was probably an over-reaction

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<sup>80</sup> Cf two chapters in his book Jezus' Heerlijkheid (1886) on the 'personality of Jesus'.

<sup>81</sup> C Hodge 1883 II:391. Hodge said that Christ 'had a finite intelligence and will, and also an infinite intelligence' but he denied that intelligence implied personality (390). Even Berkouwer, who did so much to disentangle reformed theology from scholasticism, defends the 'impersonal human nature' of Christ and recalled that Kuyper and Bavinck did the same (1954:305ff). But he admits that reformed critics of this expression, for example Korff and Vollenhoven, were not Nestorian, but concerned about the fact that this view 'imperilled the truly human nature of Christ' (314).

to modernism.<sup>82</sup> In contrast to this Hofmeyr's position was refreshingly biblical. He believed that the personality of Jesus was the human expression, the 'anthropomorphic' revelation, the real human life of the person of the Son. Without any qualification or limitation he said 'that the personality of our Lord is the revelation of the Divine personality'.<sup>83</sup> This enabled him to identify Jesus with the eternal Son, without the suggestion of an 'artificial intrusion' of the divinity in the incarnate life of the Logos, thus preserving the integrity of the human life of Jesus.

#### Was Hofmeyr a kenoticist?

In spite of this exceptional emphasis on the humanity of Christ, Hofmeyr never questioned Christ's divinity. Yet he preferred the kenotic 'the Logos became man' to the more orthodox terminology for the incarnation, such as the 'immutable Person of the Logos ... assumed into itself a nascent human nature' (A Hodge 1883: 380). On the basis of Philipians 2:7, John 17:5 and 2 Corinthians 8:9 Hofmeyr specifically accepts the term kenosis. If we think of what he was before his incarnation, and then see him 'as man on earth, serving the Father, and eventually dying on the cross,' then we cannot say anything other than 'that He emptied himself, until the Father filled him again' (1887:114). Hofmeyr understood the kenosis not in the later reformed sense of the 'hiding of his glory', nor in the Lutheran sense of laying down the use of his divinity 'in secret'. The incarnation itself was indeed the kenosis: 'He was emptied from all that distinguished him from the creatures

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<sup>82</sup> For this reason V Hepp, the successor of Kuyper, suggested that the reformed philosopher Vollenhoven was heretical (cf Berkouwer 1954:315).

<sup>83</sup> 1886:128; Hofmeyr's emphasis.

... He gave up his glory ... He who was rich, became poor (114).

In line with the views of Ebrard, Godet and others, he believed that Jesus, as true man in the fullest sense, was not conscious of being God, at least not before the commencement of his public ministry. 'He grew up in God's presence as a child in relation to his Father' (1887:3). He was conscious of his relation to the Father, which was an 'anthropomorphic' or truly human expression of his eternal relationship to the Father, but he was not conscious of being God in the ontological sense. His life was of one piece (10), a truly human life of faith and obedience.

Hofmeyr's Christology was Alexandrian in the sense that he utilized the biblical teaching on the kenosis to emphasize both the divine and the human in Christ.<sup>84</sup> His position was that the Son identified himself so fully with man that 'since his union with mankind, He is what He is and He does what He does, in an anthropomorphic, in a human way' (1887:104). His eternal knowledge, namely that he was 'the Son of the Father', became a human knowledge, and, 'just as every other human consciousness, developed step by step until it attained meridian clarity' (104). Therefore, when Jesus, as a boy of twelve,

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<sup>84</sup> According to T F Torrance Cyril of Alexandria was able to explain the divinity and humanity of Jesus consistently 'by taking his stand on the position established by Athanasius who ... insisted that the Logos became man and did not just enter into man. Since in becoming man or flesh Christ came as man and was not just in man, Cyril could think consistently of Christ as him in whom God and man completely concur, so that the same person is at once God and man. That is why he could think of the incarnate Son as acting completely as man, in a perfectly human way, and yet as acting completely as God in a perfectly divine way, without having to posit some kind of conjunction between two persons or two realities or some kind of alternation between divine and human activities. The incarnate Son is one divinehuman subject or reality. For Cyril this meant that the human experiences of Christ were the experiences of God the Son incarnate, but that as such they were authentically and substantially human experiences, for they were the experiences of the man God the Son became'. (1975:157f). Mascall quotes Athanasius in the same sense (1977:181).

came to realize that God was his father, it was the 'initial expression in him of the eternal consciousness' that he was the Son of God.<sup>85</sup> His human or anthropomorphic knowledge of God was nothing else than his eternal knowledge that was experienced in the form of human knowledge (105). Before the incarnation he was omniscient, yet as a child he knew nothing, slowly increasing in knowledge until, sitting at the right hand of the Father, he is again omniscient (113). Because he was the incarnate Son of God he had the possibility of becoming omniscient. The same is true of his powerlessness as child, and yet now he sends his powerful Spirit over all creatures. Because he was the incarnate Son of God, the weak infant could become head of all creation (113). 'The babe on Mary's lap was as truly the Son, as the Son at the right hand of the Father, is (truly) that child'.<sup>86</sup>

Modern as well as contemporary opponents of kenoticism argued against it from the point of view of the basic incompatibility, or the essential difference between God and man.<sup>87</sup> Hofmeyr, on the other hand, argued from the biblical witness that man is the image of God, and concluded that the *imago Dei* made the incarnation a real possibility. The man Jesus 'mirrored' the image of God, just as a child is an image of his father. His moral

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<sup>85</sup> 1887:104. He adds here: 'Presumably this consciousness attained its full development at his baptism ... (because) since then He spoke and acted with a power not previously experienced, in the consciousness that He was the Son of God' (105). Galot also struggled with this problem: 'The essential problem of the psychology of Christ is not to know how a man has acquired consciousness of being God, but how the Son of God has humanly acquired consciousness of his divine identity, in the way in which a human consciousness awakens and progressively develops' (Quoted by Mascall 1977:185).

<sup>86</sup> Zoo waarachtig dat kind, op Maria's schoot, niemand anders is dan de Zoon van God, zoo waarachtig is de Zoon aan 's Vaders rechterhand niemand anders, dan dit kind (1887:114).

<sup>87</sup> It is noteworthy that the essential difference between God and man was also the view of Arius, whose theology has been described as 'deistic' (cf T F Torrance 1981b:38).

qualities reflected those of God. The scribes quite rightly understood that the term 'Son of God' implied moral equality, but they took this, in 'their superficiality', as being blasphemous, not realizing that it 'is the destiny' of each human being, it belongs to his nature to become like God.<sup>88</sup> 'No single human moral perfection is something original in man'. Man has these from God, 'having communion with the divine nature, as man is from God's race, that is, consubstantial with God, in the good sense of the term'.<sup>89</sup>

The kenoticists were accused of reducing the incarnation to the belief in a 'small-scale God', thus destroying the very thing they wanted to uphold, namely the humanity of Christ. According to this interpretation kenoticism amounts to a kind of Arianism, because God did not become man but a 'scaled-down' tertium quid.<sup>90</sup> This seems an unfair argument, at least as far as Hofmeyr is concerned, for, as we have seen above, his emphasis on the humanity of Christ was quite remarkable.

In fact, Hofmeyr asserted that Jesus not only revealed the nature of God to us, but also the nature of man. His argument is similar to Osiander's: Jesus is the original of which we are only the copies.<sup>91</sup> As the Son he 'reveals MAN to us because we become, if we reach our destination, sons of God' (1887:92). In another context he said: 'Man is for himself an inexplicable riddle, a dark mystery, until he sees himself in Jesus Christ' (142).

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<sup>88</sup> 1887:90; 'to become like God' translates gelijkvormig aan God.

<sup>89</sup> 1887:90. With 'the good sense' I presume Hofmeyr meant non-pantheistic. He referred to 2 Peter 1:4 and Acts 17:28,29.

<sup>90</sup> Cf Mascall 1977:179,201. According to C Hodge kenoticism implied that the 'Logos did not assume human nature, but human attributes: He appeared in the fashion of a man' (1883 II:437).

<sup>91</sup> 1887:92. He explained: 'If there was no creation, he would have remained the Only-begotten One, but now he is also the First-born, the eldest of many brothers'.

In addition to this, he also made the important point that the divinity of Jesus was not an impediment to his humanity but, on the contrary, guaranteed its authenticity.<sup>92</sup> Admittedly this is a difficult point to accept if one argues within an intellectual framework that assumes a dualism between God and man and between the spiritual and the material world. But Hofmeyr saw no dualism here.

He was in everything and always thoroughly human. The divine did not 'over-awe' the human in him. The divine did not push the human to the background. It did not hinder the human. It did not inhibit his true human development. It was not a troublesome addition to his humanity. On the contrary: the divine made the human truer, more genuine. The human was not diminished by the divine, but the divine clarified and enhanced the human in him. No one was more simply and clearly human than He. (1887:142f).

In a similar context he said:

His humanity was not dissolved in his divinity. God and man remain eternally distinguishable. Divinity did not extinguish humanity, neither did humanity obliterate divinity in him. Divinity filled humanity.<sup>93</sup>

The reality of the incarnation is strikingly expressed in the following quotation. It also proves that Hofmeyr's kenoticism left no room for the 'credibility-gap' between the human and the divine in Christ.

In his human love we feel the heart-beat of his eternal love ... In his human anger vibrated the divine wrath ... In his human sighing we hear the divine sighing ... In his human agony in Gethsemane is revealed to us how his eternal heart was crushed by the thought of our misery, long before the incarnation. (Isaiah 63:9). In his obedience to the Father we see that the eternal Son never willed anything but what the Father willed. In the honour He as man gave to the Father, we see how the eternal Son glorified the Father, before the creation. As human as were his words, deeds, prayers, tears, so truly were they also divine words, deeds, prayers and tears. What

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<sup>92</sup> Mascal made the same point and explained that the incarnation involved the principle that created being is totally dependent 'on the uncreated self-existent deity' (1977:181; cf also Torrance 1981b:84 n30).

<sup>93</sup> 1887:117. He referred to Col 1:19 and 2:9.

were in him in the form of God, took, since his incarnation, a human form ... The eternal Word became man in him. (1887:105).

Far from undermining the humanity of Christ, Hofmeyr taught explicitly that the Son of God entered permanently into the human existence so that, since the incarnation, the Son communicates in no other way than in a human way.<sup>94</sup> And to this he added that, because the human existence of Jesus is the 'anthropomorphic revelation' of the eternal Son, Jesus is not only one among many human individuals, a man, but 'THE MAN who is also the head of humanity; he is not only a son among many sons, but THE SON of God and therefore head of all the sons of God, that is, head of the Church' (108).

Hofmeyr's doctrine of the incarnation agrees on many points with the views of Chalcedonians such as Mascall, Galot and T F Torrance, who all reject 19th century kenoticism. It may be argued that he was not a typical kenoticist, especially as he had much in common with Alexandrian patristic kenoticism. For example, he insisted that the Son became man, but he denied, that 'to become man' means that the Son 'was changed into' a man.<sup>95</sup> That would destroy the 'relational identity', to use Galot's term, between his existence before and after the incarnation. 'To imagine that the Son of God changed into a man, is a foolish, an unthinkable thought'.<sup>96</sup> The incarnation did not consist in the 'destruction of his eternal personality' because in that case it would have been impossible to save

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<sup>94</sup> 1887:107f, cf154. This idea, often expressed by Hofmeyr, is in line with strands in Lutheran theology, kenotic and non-kenotic, which implies a rejection of the extra Calvinisticum.

<sup>95</sup> This was the view of W F Gess (cf C Hodge 1883 II:435).

<sup>96</sup> Hofmeyr 1887:111. Galot defines 'person' as 'relational being'. He says that 'the person of the Son is a relation to the Father ... When the Son humanly takes consciousness of himself, he does it as a Son, by taking consciousness of his relation to the Father'. (Mascall 1977:166). Mascall describes this as the 'Abba-argument' (1977:157,162,167).

us, but 'in his utter humiliation' (1887:5).

Hofmeyr did not follow any of the contemporary kenoticists consistently. A major criticism of the kenoticists was that they rejected the immutability of God.<sup>97</sup> They defended their position by arguing that immutability should not be understood in a static sense: God is able to 'change himself in freedom and love'.<sup>98</sup> As Hofmeyr did not believe that the 'thoroughly human' life of the Logos implied a change in the divine nature, he did not concern himself in this context with the immutability of God. On the other hand, it would appear that both Hegelians and Chalcedonians tended to criticize a simplistic and reductionistic view of kenoticism.<sup>99</sup>

While the views of such radical kenoticists as Gess invited criticism, it should also be remembered that it is not difficult to ridicule the concept of a divine incarnation. For Hofmeyr the incarnation was a mystery that reveals the love of God and yet remains a mystery. He said: 'The more we understand the mystery of the incarnation ... the greater become the unfathomable depths of this mystery, so that we can only find rest in the love of him who understands everything'. And: 'The further we advance in knowledge, the more

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<sup>97</sup> Cf Muller 1931:133. C Hodge said that the immutability of God is a 'clear doctrine of both revealed and natural religion' and kenoticism therefore 'contradicts the first principles of all religion' (1883 II:439).

<sup>98</sup> W F Gess, as quoted by Muller (1931:134).

<sup>99</sup> C Hodge's claim that kenoticism 'destroys the humanity of Christ' is a case in point (1883 II:440). Muller followed Hodge in this criticism on the one hand, but claimed that kenoticists like Gess made Jesus 'only a man' (1931:173). The Hegelian Biedermann described kenoticism as 'a kenosis of the mind' (Muller 1931:173). Biedermann himself, however, believed in the unity between God and man and spoke 'boldly about the humanization of God' but rejected the incarnation 'because it limits the humanization of God to the person of Christ' (Berkouwer 1954:26).

we realize our ignorance'.<sup>100</sup> In other words, although we cannot reach God with our minds, through Christ we are within reach of his love.

### The Humanity of God.

Without actually coining the phrase, Hofmeyr thought in terms of the 'humanity of God'. All that make Jesus unique, and the object of the worship of millions of people, he said, 'is thoroughly human in character ... man can only understand and admire, yes, worship what is human' (1886:169). We can know God only insofar as we can think and talk of him in a human way. If his love was not a human love, it would have been impossible for humans to understand his love.

I can know God alone insofar as I can think and talk of him in a human way. If I think of his love, I think of nothing else but that what I call love in myself and in human beings. A God who is not in the highest sense of the term a human God - a God, according to whose image man was made - cannot be known or loved by any man ... Eternal truth is human by nature, and when truth wanted to reveal himself, he had to become a human being. Here we have again what I so often pointed out, namely that the God who wants to reveal himself to man, must become man, and, that revelation was always in Gods plan, because He is eternal love.<sup>101</sup>

### The Work of Christ.

Perhaps the most significant point in Hofmeyr's thinking on this topic is the fact that the work of Christ was dependent on his person. 'His personality explains his teaching, his

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<sup>100</sup> Hoe doorzichtiger het mysterie der menschwording ... des te peilloozer is ons de diepte van dit mysterie. Zoodat wij alleen rust vinden in de liefde van Hem, die alles weet ... Hoe verder onze kennis reikt, des te duidelijker worden wij onze onkunde. (1887:118).

<sup>101</sup> 1886:169. According to J I Marais, Oliver Lodge used the term 'the humanity of God' in relation to 'the divinity of man' (GM July 1912).

doctrine and his life' (1886:126). What he was, gave supreme value to all that he did and said. In a sense, therefore, his major work was one of revelation. He fully revealed, in earthly terms and in concrete human existence, the character of the Father. His work of reconciliation was fully integrated into his work of revelation. 'His personal being shows us the essence of the Father. In what He is and did and suffered, He reveals to us the being of the Father'.<sup>102</sup> John 1:14 is quoted time and again and was also the theme of his book Jezus' Heerlijkheid weerspiegeld in zijn aardsche leven.

Even in a chapter on his work in the above-mentioned book, where one could expect a discussion of the three-fold office of Christ on traditional Calvinist lines, Hofmeyr emphasized his work of revelation: 'It was the calling of Jesus to reveal the truth in its fulness' (1886:117). His person and all his words and deeds revealed the whole truth to total man and to the whole of mankind. Before Jesus could lead mankind to renewal and salvation two things were necessary: 'full assurance as to the knowledge of the truth and full certainty about reconciliation with God' (121). Both of these are given by Jesus, not as purely intellectual knowledge, but as knowledge in communion with God.<sup>103</sup> Put in another way, we can say that Hofmeyr emphasized the prophetic office of Christ, he was the revealer of God's nature and purpose.<sup>104</sup> But he was prophet because he is the Son.

It is not that Hofmeyr denied the priestly and kingly offices of Christ. The cross is

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<sup>102</sup> 1887:133. De Christus der Evangelie"n has three chapters on the theme 'The Son who reveals the Father', and not a single chapter which deals exclusively with his work of reconciliation. In Jezus' Heerlijkheid (1886) there is likewise only one chapter on the cross, one specifically on his work and at least four on Jesus as the one who reveals the Father.

<sup>103</sup> As has been noted above, this is in line with the view of knowledge found in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament.

<sup>104</sup> 'God's nature is love and his purpose is the Kingdom' (1887:213f).

indeed the 'highest point' in the work and life of Christ, but it is also the perfect revelation of God's response to man's need (1886:122). The finished work of Christ, 'is the foundation of our present salvation, as well as our future glory' (124). As we would expect, in view of his doctrine of the Kingdom of God, the kingly office of Christ is also recognized, but Hofmeyr emphasized the future more than the present aspect of Christ's royal office. This was an unfortunate tendency, because it paved the way for a later neglect of the kingly office of Christ, specifically in premillennialism.

The second point of importance regarding Hofmeyr's views on the work of Christ is his emphasis on the concept of identification. We have noted his statement that Christ progressively identified himself with mankind at various stages of his life. Although the two concepts, a 'legal' or vicarious representation and a 'personal' identification are related to each other, the idea of a personal identification is the more prominent in Hofmeyr's thinking.

He starts with the close unity between Jesus and mankind already present at creation, because man was created in the image of the Son.<sup>105</sup> Incarnation or kenosis followed creation and in turn led to his further 'physical, moral and religious identification' with us. His calling to reveal the love of the Father and to bring about a reconciliation between man and God depended on this willing identification with mankind. Because of sin this total identification involved suffering, separation from God and death, but by his persevering faith and trust in the Father, Jesus eventually conquered sin and death.<sup>106</sup> Because of

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<sup>105</sup> 'You cannot think of creation without thinking of the Son, because it could only achieve its destiny in him, the Incarnate one' (Hofmeyr 1886:140).

<sup>106</sup> He added that the life and death of Jesus also revealed the terrible nature of sin and death (1886:87-94).

his identification with man, those who trust in him participate in everything that happened to him. Hofmeyr did not deny that Christ's death was vicarious, but he emphasized his literal representation and our real participation. As head of the sons of God he represents them in everything. They were involved in his separation and death, but they also share in his victory over sin and death.<sup>107</sup>

To the idea of a personal identification should be added, thirdly, what the suffering and death of Christ meant to him as man. Gethsemane' is described as 'the most desperate struggle, ever engaged in on this earth'.<sup>108</sup> There Jesus fully realized the implications of death's claim on him because of his unity with sinful man.

And no-one can understand what happened in his heart when death cast his shadow over his soul. We read that He was dismayed, full of anguish and horror. But what can we understand of this? He, the only one who had nothing in common with death, was on the point of becoming a victim of death. He shuddered in the depths of his soul before this unholy, repulsive, loathsome, accursed death. Everything in him cried out that He did not deserve death.<sup>109</sup>

Because he identified himself with us, he had to choose 'either to die on our behalf, or to let us go, and to return to the Father, without experiencing death' (1886:85). The temptation to turn back was so severe that he had to pray three times to the Father. In the end his love for us conquered, and he was ready to face the experience of the cross (86).

The 'central word' on the cross was therefore the cry: 'My God, why have you

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<sup>107</sup> In his later works he put considerable emphasis on the work of the Spirit in this respect. 'Through the Spirit Christ is everything for the believer, and the believer is everything for Christ ... His assurance is your assurance, His anointing becomes your anointing' (1905:38f).

<sup>108</sup> Den bangsten strijd, die ooit op aarde gestreden is (1886:82).

<sup>109</sup> 1886:85. Hofmeyr added that we are not able to comprehend this, because we are 'used to' death, as a result of sin.

forsaken me?' It provides the key to the understanding of his suffering (1886:86). Hofmeyr considered the experience of Jesus during the three hours of darkness on the cross as three hours of the most literal separation from the Father. The horror of death is not 'the separation between body and soul' but the separation between man and God (87). This experience of Jesus was the most terrible one in all history.

He descended into the abode of death. The Father alone knows what his Son experienced during those three hours. It was for him as long as three eternities. He was in total darkness, where the light, the reflection of his Father's friendly countenance, was extinguished; where life in the true sense, life in the light of God's presence has become impossible.

These were the holiest, the most awe-inspiring (ontzagwekkendste) hours in the history of the Son of God and therefore of humanity.<sup>110</sup>

The stark reality of this experience was such that the outcome seemed uncertain:

It now remained to be seen if He, the only one who could save us, could enter the realm of death without - I hesitate to say this - remaining eternally in the power of death. And what do you think would have caused him to remain in the power of death, were it possible? It seems to me that it would have happened if He let go the hand of the Father, who could not - in the abovementioned sense - descend with him into the abode of death.

We cannot comprehend what it meant for the Son to experience the total reality of death, and to have been forsaken by God ... this is too deep for us. (1886:88).

This does not mean that death is a mysterious arbitrary primordial power beyond God, as 'the old pagans, who saw dark fate behind everything, also behind death (1886:95). There is only one reason why Jesus was separated from God in such a fearful way, and only one reason why mankind lives in this separation from God - a separation that is worse than

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<sup>110</sup> 1886:87. In 1905 his emphasis was still on the terrible reality of this experience. 'What a moment was the death of Jesus in the history of redemption! What an experience did He go through!' He 'descended into the depths and experienced the curse on guilty humanity' (1905:22). Again he wrote: 'An inexpressible feeling of being forsaken by God came on Him. It seemed as if death, mighty death, had scored its greatest victory' (48).

death - and that is sin (94). If we contemplate the miseries and mysteries of human existence we will understand that man has no greater enemy than sin.

Sin is a stranger, an intruder, a tyrant. And therefore death is a stranger, an intruder, a tyrant. If death was something natural for man, it would have been natural for Jesus, and in that case Jesus would have remained in death, and that would have proved that there is no more tragic being in the whole universe than man. (95).

Fourthly, Hofmeyr believed with Murray that the death of Christ was basically substitutionary. His work of reconciliation was far from a mere 'legal transaction', it was a personal encounter.<sup>111</sup> He used many of the commonly-accepted categories to explain the work of Christ, but he interpreted them in a fresh way. In one such discussion, for example, he explained how Jesus honoured the sovereignty of God in the process of reconciliation:

We cannot for one moment think of the Son as not being unconditionally obedient to the will of the Father. This is for us a new, all-surpassing revelation of the sovereignty of God ... He honoured the absolute sovereignty of his Father in a glorious way in contrast to rebellious angels and men, and showed that a creature, if he wants to become what he should be, must humble himself before God, the higher he stands in the row of creatures, the deeper must he bow before God's sovereign will. (1887:135).

Hofmeyr similarly gave his own explanation of how Jesus upheld the righteousness of God. 'We do not understand the righteousness of God, because we cannot understand that He loves the sinner whom He punishes' (1887:135). He used the analogy of 'an earthly father' whose 'righteousness appears most clearly when he has to punish a child whom he loves'.

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<sup>111</sup> In the light of his interest in healing, it is strange to relate that Hofmeyr referred in only one context to the cross as a victory over evil powers. Jesus was a 'warrior against the powers of darkness' and when he gained the victory he 'obtained for the sinner who believes in Him, reconciliation with God' (1887:184f). I deduce that the strong 'ethical' bent of his theology made it difficult for him to fully appreciate this important dimension of the Christian faith. In this he was a true 'man of his own time', because it has been argued that the one message which was most necessary and most neglected in Christian missionary preaching, was an emphasis on the victory of Christ over evil powers.

The concept of the 'satisfaction of divine justice' was used once, but he avoided the idea of a 'legal transaction' and the usual terminology of a penal substitution. His point was that Jesus identified himself so fully with mankind that divine justice demanded that he should be punished like a sinner, but he gave no detail or indication as to how we should understand the transfer of guilt from the sinner to Christ:

With his incarnation God's Son became truly one with sinful humanity. He identified with their fate (Hij werd met haar lotgemeen). He shared with them in all suffering occasioned by sin. If the Father considered the Son as He really was in himself, the Sinless, the Holy One, God's righteousness would have demanded that the Son should be protected from all suffering that was, justly, visited on sinful humanity. But in that case the Son would have remained infinitely separated from mankind, because his incarnation would then have revealed only their sin. There would have been no real unity with mankind. The deep significance of his incarnation would have disappeared in that case. But now that He has identified himself with sinful humanity, divine justice demanded that He, among other things, should experience death, the just punishment of God on the sinner for his sin.<sup>112</sup>

After emphasizing how difficult it was for the Father to punish his Son, whom He loved from all eternity, he explained once more that all this was the result of his total identification with sinful humanity:

More than once the Son went deep into the human condition of separation from God, because of his unity with sinful humanity. Then He would sigh under the heavy burden that pressed down his heart ... And finally the time came when He perfected his unity with sinful humanity by his descent into the arena of death, his descent into the hell of God-forsakenness.<sup>113</sup>

There is no indication that Hofmeyr accepted the teaching associated with the Synod of Dort, namely that Christ died 'only for the elect'. His avoidance of the common evangelical terminology and imagery is also too obvious to be coincidental. He was apparently

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<sup>112</sup> 1887:136; my emphasis (GT).

<sup>113</sup> 1887:136f; Hofmeyr's emphasis.

influenced by the mystical theory of the atonement, possibly through F C Oetinger.<sup>114</sup> It is clear, on the other hand, that Hofmeyr considered the death of Christ as a sacrifice for sin.<sup>115</sup>

The last point of importance in Hofmeyr's teaching on reconciliation is the love of the Father in relation to the suffering of Christ. After he referred to the cross as a revelation of God's righteousness, he immediately added that there is a 'new, more glorious' revelation in the sacrifice of Christ namely that of God's love (1887:138). Without any fear of 'patripassionism', Hofmeyr suggests that the death of Christ was not only a sacrifice of the Son, but also of the Father.

The cross was a terrible episode in the history of the relation between Father and Son. The Father loved him from eternity, and in addition to that a new love developed, awakened by his Son's life of absolute obedience on earth. No creature can tell us what happened in the heart of the Father when He, as it were, had to let go his Son from his loving embrace (*Zijn boezem*) and gave him over without mercy to cruel death. (136).

Almost twenty years later, in his lectures on Ephesians, he said: 'The Father alone knows what it cost him to give his Son in this way as Saviour; and the Son alone knows what He had to experience for us on the cross until death' (1905:16). The Father was therefore fully involved in the act of reconciliation.

When Jesus descended into the depths and experienced the curse on guilty humanity, the Father did not coldly look on him from afar. Away with a thought so unworthy of God! Was Jesus not the Beloved of the Father? If He took refuge in the Father's loving heart in Gethsemane, how much more on darkest Calvary! his Father's love was never stronger towards him than

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<sup>114</sup> Osiander held similar views on the atonement.

<sup>115</sup> His fear of death as well as his separation from the Father on the cross 'can only be explained as a sacrifice for sin ... Who can speak about sinners, without remembering that they stand in need of the expiation of their guilt by means of a sacrifice? And who could be the sacrifice for sin? No-one else but Jesus Christ, the only Innocent one among all the guilty ones' (1887:183).

on Calvary - when, in obedience to the Father, He took the place of the guilty one on the cross. (16).

Salvation was historically determined by the love of the Father in the suffering and obedience of the Son. Not even in his lectures on Ephesians did Hofmeyr teach a 'limited atonement'. Neither do we find the opposite extreme of an excessive emphasis on the human act of acceptance. The dominating note in his teaching on reconciliation is the love of the Father as revealed in the Son. 'God reconciled the world with himself in him' (1905:22). Because we see here 'nothing but free and unlimited love, (the sacrifice of Christ) is able to raise the most unworthy to the position of a child and heir'.<sup>116</sup> This love 'worked so mightily in God that He decided to adopt millions of people ... with his Son, as his children and heirs'. God's love is 'as an ocean of immeasurable circumference and unfathomable depth' (17).

### Conclusion.

Where 'Jesus of Nazareth fits desperately badly' into Schleiermacher's system (Barth 1973:432), the historical Jesus provides the key to Hofmeyr's theology. In a sense his Christology was, in the words of Jonker, a Christology 'from below' (1977:112). And yet, it would be wrong to oversimplify this dimension, because he repeatedly emphasized that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God to man, and that 'there is indeed nothing more important and no greater reality than the becoming-man of the eternal Son of God'. While Hofmeyr was obviously influenced by contemporary Dutch and German kenoticism,

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<sup>116</sup> 1905:16. He would have agreed with principal Denney who said: 'The propitiary death of Christ, as an all-transcending demonstration of love, evokes in sinful souls a response which is the whole of Christianity'. (Marshall 1969:223).

strands of patristic 'Alexandrian' kenoticism played an important part. This enabled him to emphasize the humanity of Christ as much as his divinity and to resist all forms of Nestorianism.

His fascination with the incarnation and the historical Jesus was not merely romantic feeling, but deeply religious. He emphasized that the man Jesus was a trustworthy revelation of God as He is in himself. This was in contrast to the modernists who could say that Jesus lived a genuine human life, but could not say that 'the eternal Logos became man in him'. Nor could they affirm that Jesus was the final and direct revelation of the love of the Father. But Hofmeyr's position was also in contrast to the confessionalists who could 'explain correctly and orthodoxly' what they believed, but were not excited by the momentous events of the incarnation. Hofmeyr was overwhelmed by the assurance that the fatherly love of God to mankind was perfectly revealed in the 'utterly human' Jesus of Nazareth.

On the other hand, Hofmeyr saw in the realities of the historical life and development of Jesus - in the religion of the historical Jesus - the amazing answer to the Christological problems of his time. He was briefly but profoundly influenced by the pantheistic tendencies of the 19th century. The answer to these temptations of the mind, wrought within his own struggling soul, was the real human life of the historical Jesus. The religion of Jesus provides the key to Hofmeyr's theology. It is important to add, however, that in Hofmeyr's view, the religion of Jesus was not the rationalist and moralistic religion imagined by the modernists, but was above all an experience of sonship, continually challenged by a multitude of temptations.

Neither the modernists nor the confessionalists properly appreciated the temptations of Jesus. Hofmeyr emphasized the importance of his temptations, because he saw that Jesus had to overcome these by faith, trusting in the love of the Father. He had to live by faith while he experienced the utter loneliness of the desert, Gethsemane and the cross, or, when the multitudes wanted to make him King of Jerusalem. Hofmeyr also understood that only because Jesus lived by faith, can we live by faith, and only because Jesus by faith conquered sin in the midst of the most terrible human temptations we can conquer by faith. He could therefore understand that justification is not merely a declaration of forgiveness, but an experience of oneness with Christ, a sharing in the justification which Jesus received from the Father at his resurrection.

The sonship of Jesus was the prototype of our sonship. But like his sonship, ours would not be easy. It is a huiiothesia, continually challenged by human temptation of various kinds. This emphasis seems to have inspired some of the brightest young men and women of Stellenbosch to follow Christ into Africa and to convert Transvaler and Free Stater, Afrikaner and African. That missions could be contemplated in the midst of national ruins after the Anglo-Boer War can best be explained by a theology of incarnation and huiiothesia.<sup>117</sup>

But Hofmeyr's strength was also his weakness. With his overriding interest in the incarnation and huiiothesia, he did not maintain the New Testament's emphasis on the sacrificial death and high priestly work of Christ. On this point John Murray was closer to the theology of the reformation than Hofmeyr.

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<sup>117</sup> The huiiothesia-theology of Hofmeyr may also explain the influence of the NGK on the Afrikaans people before, during and after the Anglo-Boer War (cf Louw 1963).

## Chapter 6

## HOFMEYR'S ECCLESIOLOGY AND ESCHATOLOGY

Abraham Kuyper was of the opinion that contemporary Dutch theology, including the ethical school, had too low a view of the church.<sup>1</sup> Generally speaking the revival of a higher view of the church in European theology only gained momentum in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Rasker affirmed, on the other hand, that the ethical school valued the church.<sup>3</sup> The position may best be summarized by saying that the ethical school indeed loved and valued the church, but the confessionalists held stronger views on her divine nature and authority.

Du Toit believes that Hofmeyr had a low view of the church, because of her inability to live up to her calling.<sup>4</sup> In his 'anxiousness to promote the effectiveness of the church'

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<sup>1</sup> A major factor in Kuyper's 'conversion to the church' was the reading of The Heir of Redclyffe. This 'masterpiece of Miss Yonge', said Kuyper, was 'the instrument which broke my self-satisfied and stubborn heart' (Bakhuizen van den Brink 1962:299ff). According to Langman, Kuyper was particularly attracted to 'the high value of the sacraments, the set forms for family prayers and public worship, the impressive liturgy and the unction of the Prayerbook' of the Anglican Church (1950:34).

<sup>2</sup> Cf Weber 1983 I:144ff. The Anglo-Catholic Movement and the Disruption (in Scotland), which were both motivated by high views of the church, occurred somewhat earlier. Weber makes the point that this revival, eventually expressed in confessionalism, was partially motivated by romanticism.

<sup>3</sup> Their theology 'was rooted in the faith of the church' and they believed that the Holy Spirit 'was the real subject in the church' (Rasker 1974:133).

<sup>4</sup> Hofmeyr found that even the revival did not bring the church to a proper sense of her calling to evangelism, missions and the Christianization of society (Du Toit 1984:204)

Hofmeyr encouraged the use of auxiliary Christian societies, instead of working for the renewal of the church on biblical lines (1984: 204). It was his 'disappointment with the church' that led him to make use of these 'non-biblical agents' instead of using the church itself 'as a divine institution with a unique responsibility'. His 'piety and his pastoral care were individualistically aimed' (204). It was only around 1900 that 'Hofmeyr discovered the wonder of the church as the body of Christ' (420). 'He could now, as did Paul, put the church in the centre' (393).

There are two objections to this view. First, there is the presence in Hofmeyr's earlier writings of a reasonably high view of the church. Second, there is no indication that Hofmeyr himself was conscious of discovering something radically new in this later period. As his excitement over the huiiothesia shows, he was not the kind of man who could keep a discovery to himself. The church is the major theme of Ephesians, and Hofmeyr had to pay attention to it, but his theology was still largely dominated by Christology and pneumatology.<sup>5</sup>

In the early sixties Hofmeyr appealed to a high view of the church. H H Loedolff, elder of the Zwartland congregation,<sup>6</sup> initiated court proceedings in 1862 against the moderator of the Cape Synod, Andrew Murray Jnr, and A A Louw, minister of Fauresmith in the OFS.<sup>7</sup> Loedolff believed that congregations constituted outside the borders of the

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<sup>5</sup> Cf Hofmeyr 1905:38, 41-51. Another indication that he did not experience a 'paradigm-shift' on the doctrine of the church, is the fact that he still considered auxiliary societies not only as legitimate, but as the very work of the Holy Spirit (1905:157).

<sup>6</sup> That is Malmesbury.

<sup>7</sup> Louw was Hofmeyr's brother-in-law, while Loedolff was an uncle of Moorrees, Hofmeyr's successor.

Cape Colony did not belong to the Synod; the presence of their ministers and elders was therefore illegal. On 26 November the supreme court declared in favour of Loedolff, and representatives from Natal, OFS and Transvaal had to leave the meeting.<sup>8</sup> Subsequently Synod suspended two ministers, J J Kotze and T F Burgers, on charges of heresy. They appealed to the civil courts, and in 1864 the supreme court declared the suspension illegal and ordered Synod to reinstate the two ministers.<sup>9</sup>

In 1865 Hofmeyr reacted to this situation in his De Kerk en de Rechtbank. His argument was that the supreme court, in the ecclesiastical matters before it, had accepted Erastian principles and subjected the church, 'whose head is Christ', to itself. Hofmeyr emphasized that the church has 'divine authority', because 'it is called to be the witness to the Holy Truth'.<sup>10</sup> This did not mean that the church may use coercion, it is not even called to convince by argument, it must only be a humble witness to the truth.<sup>11</sup> The 'wise, the law-makers and the authorities do not know the truth. They must be brought to its knowledge by the witness of the Christian church' (1865:151).

Modern theologians, said Hofmeyr, attack the very foundation of the church. In their

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<sup>8</sup> Van der Watt 1977:109ff; cf also Van der Watt 1973. Loedolff was a 'modernist' while the greater majority of these representatives were orthodox.

<sup>9</sup> Van der Watt 1980:36f. Synod subsequently appealed to the Privy Council, but without success.

<sup>10</sup> 1865:151. Hofmeyr explained the nature of truth in line with the ideas of the ethical school: 'Religious truth is a moral power which masters, through the conscience, the whole man - body, soul and spirit - because it brings him in a relation to the personal God'. But later it became pure reformation doctrine: 'The truth is the almighty and irresistible power by which the Holy Spirit leads man to know Jesus and through him, God' (151).

<sup>11</sup> 1865:151. Hofmeyr considered it the duty of the church to discipline ministers who confessed not to believe what the church believes. They were 'commanded, in the Name of the Lord, to leave the ministry' (153). But he also said that he could hardly believe that the minister of Darling (J J Kotze) realized the seriousness of what he did (152).

eyes Jesus was 'nothing more than the son of Mary and Joseph' and the Scriptures are to be understood as the work of 'narrow-minded Jews'. The Christian community is 'just a group of people who are seeking to satisfy their religious needs ... not the communion of saints who have found reconciliation with God in Jesus through the truth' (1865:152). The problem arose because the civil courts had been misled into accepting the heresy that the church was a mere human society, 'standing under ordinary laws' (154). If the church denied her special calling and independence, 'she does not believe in her own existence and will dissolve into the rest of society'. Those who assert that the church stands under the special guidance and authority of the Holy Spirit 'stands openly against the Supreme Court'.<sup>12</sup>

Hofmeyr appears to have favoured some form of civil disobedience. How can the church confess that she is guided by the Spirit, he asks, and then 'submit to the control of the state, when it is controlled by the beggarly elements of this world? If Jesus redeemed his church from Mosaic law, how much more from common civil law?' (1865:156). The church does not claim infallibility for her witness, she only wants to be obedient to the Holy Spirit (151). If the Privy Council also decides against the church, 'we will have to protest against an unjust decision' (157). It is our duty to witness to the truth and to leave the results in the hands of God. If we have witnessed faithfully it becomes a matter not between us and our adversaries but between them and God (160). God works through his

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<sup>12</sup> 1865:154. Hofmeyr did not refer to precedents in contemporary Dutch history because Erastianism took a heavy toll there. He mentioned an example of resistance when the state interfered in favour of the Arminians, in 1606, as well as the strict enactments of the Church of Scotland against ministers who appealed to the civil courts. He also referred to the papal laws against 'lay investiture' as a worthy example of resistance to state interference (155).

holy word, through the lives of his people and through holy suffering (160). The suffering of the church is holy when it is 'the result of her service to the Lord and to humanity. Her suffering is then a sacrifice offered to God and to the neighbour'.<sup>13</sup> She would be a blessing to South Africa only if she were willing to take the way of the cross (1965:162).

But the church can be frustratingly weak and unwilling to suffer. Hofmeyr reminded his readers that, in spite of the existence of the church for more than 200 years 'in this Colony', one could not even say that it has taken root among its own members:

Where are the blessings that should have resulted from the church? Where is the power for good she should have exerted? What has she done for the extension of the kingdom of her Lord? What is the value of what she does in relation to her numbers and possessions? (1865: 161).

This comparatively high view of the church was mainly developed in opposition to Erastianism. When the immediate threat to the independence of the church diminished, the doctrine of the church fell into neglect. It was a loss for the NGK that the more docile Dutch tradition of the 18th century concerning the relation of the church to the state, was not replaced by the more robust Scottish tradition of the independence of the church.<sup>14</sup>

The biblical view that the church is the object of God's election received little attention in Hofmeyr's theology. As we have seen, he understood election primarily as election to service, a view that emphasizes the calling rather than the nature of the church.

The most obvious aspect of Hofmeyr's view of the church was its mixed character, it

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<sup>13</sup> 1865:160. Hofmeyr often specifically combined service to God and service to the neighbour: 'In serving my neighbour, I serve God' (Kestell 1911:126).

<sup>14</sup> Since the rise of modernism in Holland the Free Church of Scotland was more and more looked upon as an example for the NGK (cf GM Sep 1893). Professor De Vos used Hodge's Systematic Theology for many years as textbook, but this work suffered from the common weakness of contemporary American theologies in that it did not have 'a separate locus on the church' (Berkhof 1959: 553; cf Hodge 1883 III:547ff).

consists of those who have experienced the huliothesia as well as of those who are still 'servants'. But he did not explain the relationship of the 'servant' to the church; he gave no clear answer to the question whether the 'servant' is a believer who needs to be enlightened by the Spirit, or a non-believer.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps we should say that Hofmeyr viewed the church as the divinely ordained community where 'servants' must be led to realize their sonship. The church was primarily 'an institute of salvation' rather than 'the company of the elect' or 'the community of believers'.<sup>16</sup> His great emphasis on the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer makes his view of the church therefore both pneumatic and therapeutic.<sup>17</sup>

The idea that the church is an institute of salvation is of course part of the truth.<sup>18</sup> If, however, the church is not also seen as the company of believers or the bride of Christ, the border line between the obedient people of God and the disobedient nations, subtle as it often is, is in danger of becoming fatefully blurred.

In his lectures on Ephesians there is no definite attempt to correct the teaching that over-emphasized its mixed character, although he said many beautiful things about the church. It is 'God's dwelling-place' and 'the holy temple' of the Lord (1905:92). The glorified Lord, with whom we have communion through his Spirit, 'wants to share his own blessedness with his church' (55). In the Old Testament the temple was the symbol of

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<sup>15</sup> On the one hand he extolled the fundamental difference between the child and the servant, but he could also say that 'as long as we live in the body, the servile spirit clings to us' (1896: 88ff).

<sup>16</sup> Macpherson, whose work was used by Professor de Vos, defined the church as 'the entire company of those who exercise faith in Christ and through faith are sanctified' (15).

<sup>17</sup> Hofmeyr 1896,1898 and 1905; cf Weber 1983 II:522f.

<sup>18</sup> Calvin's concept of the church as our mother clearly implies this (cf CI IV:1:4).

God's presence in Israel, but, with the coming of the Spirit, the presence of God among his people is a reality. The symbol is now no longer needed. God reveals himself to his people as Saviour through the Spirit because he wants to reveal himself through the church to the world (92). 'Nothing in the whole universe exists for its own sake, the church least of all' (55). The ancient church lived in the power of the Spirit. Its existence was nothing less than a miracle against the background of the pagan societies.<sup>19</sup>

What is true of the community as a body is true also of each individual believer. 'You are God's dwelling-place in the Spirit' (1905:93). 'The new creation consists in the renewal of individuals' (117). This individualistic dimension remained with Hofmeyr in spite of his social emphasis and even after his so-called 're-discovery' of the doctrine of the church.<sup>20</sup> But in spite of this individualistic tendency, Hofmeyr held high views on the unity of the church, as we will see below.

Hofmeyr also relates the church, as 'the beginning of the new creation', to the resurrection of Christ, the coming of the Spirit and the eventual renewal of the whole creation. 'The resurrection was beginning, promise and prophecy of the unification of heaven and earth' (1905:27). 'With the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit inaugurated the new creation, and with that the new age, that will find its ultimate fulfilment in the renewal of heaven and earth' (124).

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<sup>19</sup> 1905:118. Hofmeyr added that 'the Spirit was not always victorious' in the daily life of the apostolic church.

<sup>20</sup> Hofmeyr speaks in his later publications (1896,1898 and 1905) mainly of gemeente rather than kerk (cf Weber 1983 II:515n).

### The Unity of the Church.

Two ministers who had a great influence on Hofmeyr in his youth were the low-church Lutheran G W Stegmann and the low-church Calvinist Abraham Faure.<sup>21</sup> He followed these men in the evangelical-ecumenical tradition and not even the tragic divisions during the Anglo-Boer War changed his mind. To claim the superiority of one's own denomination or theological tradition was for Hofmeyr nothing less than an indication of 'the spirit of bondage'.<sup>22</sup> The consciousness that they are children of God through Jesus Christ 'gives birth to the communion of the saints ... and they think less and less about denominations ... traditional forms and theological definitions in which the truth is clothed' (1896:241).

Because of the work of reconciliation and the coming of the Spirit 'the enmity between Jew and pagan was overcome in a higher unity - a unity in Christ' (1905:84). The Holy Spirit 'who taught Christ on earth to say Abba, Father! also taught both Jew and gentile' (85). The prayer of sonship is a sure sign of unity, 'because they became one body by both being taken up in one body of which Christ is the head' (86). This unity of Jew and gentile in a common salvation was a miracle of divine grace. 'What a joy for the Saviour and the holy angels when, after centuries of separation, Jew and gentile were able to meet each other as children of God' (85). It is abundantly clear that Hofmeyr was not thinking of the 'invisible' church when he said:

In this body - the congregation - there was no separation as between citizens and strangers. The differences, belonging to a lower state, do not exist. There Jew and gentile have together the highest privileges. There both are 'fellow citizens of the saints and of the household of God' ... within a short time

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<sup>21</sup> Faure received theological training at Utrecht and in the 'Dissenting Academy' of Dr Bogue at Gosport (cf Gerdener 1951:39).

<sup>22</sup> 1896:241,274. In the 19th century a high view of the church often meant a high view of one's own denomination, but this was totally contrary to Hofmeyr's thinking.

even the leaders of the congregation were not of Jewish but of gentile descent.<sup>23</sup>

Hofmeyr accepted the 'principle of diversity' as expressed in Ephesians 4. Whereas some later theologians justified separate church services for 'people of colour' from this biblical principle,<sup>24</sup> he did nothing of the kind. It is a diversity of gifts, where 'all diversity serves the whole body' even as 'the rich diversity of nations' enhances the 'higher unity of mankind' (1905:121). 'One grace, (but) many gifts' were given to the church.<sup>25</sup> These were given to build up the church 'the beginning of the new creation' (125). The communion of saints, that is a product of the Spirit, constitutes a unity that cannot be destroyed. 'One Spirit lives in them all' (1896:241). Hofmeyr hoped that the church would soon become one:

The time is certainly drawing near when this consciousness will become as strong as in the days of the apostles and that all God's children will unite in one visible community, as it was in the days of the apostles - one, yet allowing each local community to develop freely.<sup>26</sup>

In an exposition of John 17:21 Hofmeyr pointed out that the unity of the church is firmly grounded in the love between the Father and the Son (1898:318). Christian unity is more than a mere imitation of this union, it originated from this love and is rooted in it. Love between believers

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<sup>23</sup> 1905:85f. He made a rare direct application in the same work when he said: 'All who give themselves to Christ become partakers of the same blessings ... the highest blessings imaginable, to ... man and woman, free and slave, civilized and uncivilized - we would say white and black' (1905:117).

<sup>24</sup> Cf Loubser 1987:76f.

<sup>25</sup> 1905:124. Unlike his successors he believed that the charismatic ministries were not restricted to the apostolic age, but that they 'certainly still exist in the church' (125).

<sup>26</sup> 1896:241; my emphasis. With the last sentence he apparently meant that there was no dominant centralizing authority in the ancient church.

is nothing less than the mutual love between the Father and Son that has been poured in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. This love ... is consubstantial with divine love. (319).

But this mutual love cannot prosper if there is no real communion between Christians. As 'it is the living Christ himself who unites you to the other believer', it is not only those who 'belong to the same nation, the same church, the same group' who are loved, but all those who love Christ (1898:321). If a Christian values his particular confession or denomination more than this unity, he 'veils his face' and cannot see 'the unity of believers in Christ in all its glory' (321). The Holy Spirit is grieved because the united love of the Father and the Son for the salvation of the world is not yet seen in a united love among Christians.<sup>27</sup>

Hofmeyr was encouraged by John 17:21 to expect this unity in the not too distant future. 'Not a single prayer of our Saviour will remain unfulfilled, least of all this prayer that believers would be one as He and the Father are one' (1898:320). The time is near when 'the Holy Spirit will work with such a power in the believers' that their love for one another will be the amazement of the world. Jesus 'had a unity in mind that the world could see, about which the world could not be in doubt' (320).

This unity is an eschatological reality, yet it has meaning in the present. Though its perfection belongs to the fulness of the future, we must now live in the reality of the future. We must 'anticipate this glorious future' (1896:241). Even in apostolic times 'the church was not always in reality as Paul wanted it to be. He lived more in the future than

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<sup>27</sup> 'You are pained because believers have allowed themselves to be divided into different churches and sects (kerken en kerkjes); but at the same time you are joyful because the Spirit of God is convincing them of the sinfulness of this division. You understand that nothing grieves the Holy Spirit more, than this division. His sorrow is the sorrow of the Saviour' (1898:323).

in the present, because he believed in a beautiful future, for himself and for the church'.<sup>28</sup>

The unification 'of Jew and gentile into one body in Christ' was not immediately realized by the believers in primitive times. 'For some time ... it remained a mystery even to the apostles' (1905:101). Eventually it was understood 'by Paul and others' that the gentiles were 'co-inheritors of God's promises in Christ', belonging to the same body. Paul was enthusiastic about the revelation of the mystery of unity. 'What a discovery! What a gospel!' exclaimed Hofmeyr (101). The result of this wonderful discovery was the founding of numerous congregations outside Palestine 'where Jews and gentiles became welded together in Christ into one new man' (101). It is impossible to imagine that Hofmeyr did not think of the relationship between unity and mission in South Africa at this point, but, strangely, he did not make this application.

By way of summary we may say at this stage that Hofmeyr's view of the church was, generally speaking, in line with that of 'low-church' evangelicalism, with a strong emphasis on the presence of the Holy Spirit and the unity of the church. In his opposition to Erastianism, he consciously relied on the reformed tradition.

#### Hofmeyr's view on the Sacraments.

Hofmeyr rarely referred to the sacraments. Amazingly, in a chapter on the 'means of grace' he used the word sacrament only once when he said: 'The Holy Spirit makes the whole creation ... into a sacrament' (1898:159). His point was that only the immediate work of

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<sup>28</sup> 1905:126. Hofmeyr did not attain the insight that the church is the eschatological community. It is an indication of real progress in theology that Weber could say: 'It is no longer necessary to document the fact that the New Testament conceives of the ekklesia as the "eschatological community of salvation"'. (1983 II:514).

the Spirit in the heart of the believer transforms what is perceived and experienced into a means of grace. He denied explicitly that a means of grace is constituted 'by its specific objective characteristics'.<sup>29</sup> As the characteristics of a rite belong to the core of any doctrine of the sacraments, this creates the impression that Hofmeyr had very little interest in the sacraments.

In a rare reference to infant baptism Hofmeyr said that baptism does not create but acknowledges the relationship between Christ and the child. In the same context he said:

The Spirit assures the mother of the newly-born infant that it belongs to Him. Especially in baptism and in response to the prayers of the parents, He presses the infant to his heart. (1905:159).

To the Lord's Supper he referred only incidentally in a few places in his writings. We must therefore conclude that his views on the sacraments were very low. Yet what can be higher than the almost tangible assurance of the Lord's love suggested in the reference to baptism we have just quoted? Further, when Hofmeyr withdrew from the celebration of the Supper for a time, it is clear that he valued this sacrament (Kestell 1911:171). He did not develop a doctrine of the sacraments, but he believed that a sacrament becomes a special assurance of God's love by the work of the Holy Spirit.

#### Hofmeyr and racial prejudice

Hofmeyr was not in the habit of applying his exposition of Scripture in detail, as he believed that the Spirit would apply the truth to his hearers. From his teaching on unity, we may safely deduce that he believed and hoped that the South African church would, when fully realizing the 'mystery of the gospel', experience this biblical unity between

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<sup>29</sup> Wat aan dat genademiddel eigen is (1898:156; Hofmeyr's emphasis).

black and white Christians.<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that Hofmeyr held J T van der Kemp, whom many reviled, in high esteem.<sup>31</sup>

It is a well-known fact, on the other hand, that Hofmeyr favoured the notorious decision of the Synod of 1857. This Synod recognized that it 'was desirable and biblical' that converts from paganism should be taken up into existing congregations but, where it was not possible 'because of the weakness of some,' such converts should be enabled to worship in separate buildings.<sup>32</sup> Hofmeyr and his friends saw this as a temporary measure 'until the deeply-rooted colour-consciousness could be overcome' (Botha 1986:59). Although Andrew Murray Snr was the proposer of this compromise motion, he and the other older members of Synod, both Dutch and Scotch, were unanimous in ascribing the colour-prejudice to human sinfulness. The younger 'Reveil-group', on the other hand, represented in the discussion especially by Hofmeyr and William Murray, were more decidedly in favour of the temporary compromise.<sup>33</sup> One gets the distinct impression from this that they,

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<sup>30</sup> Cf 1905:117. As he wrote this work shortly after the Anglo-Boer War, we can assume that he also had the relationship between English and Dutch-speaking Christians in mind (cf F W Sass 1956:55).

<sup>31</sup> Du Toit 1984:46,288; Gerdener 1951:24. The same is true of the older Dutch evangelicals such as G W A van der Lingen and M C Vos. It is significant that Gerdener tried to minimize the importance of this fact. Enklaar rejects Briggs's statement that M C Vos became one of Van der Kemp's 'most inveterate foes' (Enklaar 1988:118) and also points to the good relationship between Van der Kemp and Van der Lingen's father (158, 173). This is not to deny that his friends were scandalized by his marriage, but the great discrepancy in age between them was certainly a legitimate cause for concern.

<sup>32</sup> For the full text and the most recent discussion of this decision, cf A J Botha 1986:56-61.

<sup>33</sup> Botha 1986:59. William Murray, who also studied at Utrecht, was a younger brother of John and Andrew. During 1857 he ministered in Richmond, Cape. He later settled at Worcester where he was instrumental in the founding of the school for the blind. He was the father of the famous Dr W H Murray of Malawi, who translated the Bible into Chichewa (Retief 1958).

as South African born whites, were more influenced by their context than the older ministers.

In the case of the Xhosa student at the Kweekskool, David Gezani, Hofmeyr and his colleagues opposed racial prejudice (Mackinnon 1887:60). His writings indicate that he hoped that the work of the Spirit, through the preaching of the Word, would in due course overcome the oppressive racial feeling. In the light of Hofmeyr's clear insight into the unity of the church 'as the beginning of the new creation', the real question is why he, who could be such an ardent controversialist on themes such as modernism, missions and total abstinence, was not similarly uncompromising on the unity of the local church? If one remembers his courageous stand in connection with total abstinence, one has to conclude that it was not because he was lacking in moral courage.

We saw that Hofmeyr detected a non-perfectionistic dimension in the life of the apostolic church. It is possible that this insight allowed him to have patience with the 'weak Christians' who were still in the bondage of racial prejudice. His view of the church as 'an institute of salvation', rather than as the company of believers, would provide ample space within the boundaries of a congregation for nominal Christians. Kestell also reminds us that he said, in connection with those who did not agree with him on total abstinence: 'Judge not too harshly ... our God is very tolerant' (1911:176). Although an ardent controversialist, he never allowed a bitter feeling to impede his relationship with others. This was presumably the reason why he was patient with those still in the bondage of racial prejudice; such people did not yet have the spirit of sonship. It is nevertheless true that Hofmeyr wrote less against this sin, than against the other sins of his time.

It would be wrong to assume that Hofmeyr would have approved of the separation of the NGK and the N G Sendingkerk into two 'denominations', as they exist today. This is not the place to trace the history of this separation, but it cannot be denied that the original arrangement was pragmatic.<sup>34</sup> Although Hofmeyr allowed separate places of worship, or 'institutes of salvation', as a temporary measure, he believed that 'the people of colour must indeed be incorporated in the church of the whites' (Kestell 1911:49). One of the reasons why he strongly insisted that the Cape Church must be more active in missions, was the very fact that the converts of the other missionary societies were organized in denominations that separated them from the white congregations of the NGK. 'He disapproved of the fact', said Kestell, 'that they formed small communities on the missions stations that are ecclesiastically separated from the whites' (48). His support of missions in the Cape Colony was not in the cause of denominationalism, but expressed his belief in the unity of the church.

#### The Christianization of Society: The Kingdom of God

Most Christians in the 19th century believed that the state and society should be Christian in some sense.<sup>35</sup> Hofmeyr shared this view, but he was especially conscious of the sins and

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<sup>34</sup> The formation of five of the 'mission' congregations into a 'Synod' after 1881 was clearly not intended as a permanent arrangement. Some of the Dutch missionaries insisted that the 'institutions' they were serving had either to be recognized as congregations within existing presbyteries, or, should be organized in their 'own' synod. As these missionaries did not have University training in theology, the Cape Synod was not prepared to accept them as full ministers. There seemed only one way out and that was to allow those who so desired to form a synod which operated under the supervision of the Cape Synod (cf I J van der Walt 1963:419). Only one of them, F N Lion-Cachet, was accepted as a full minister of the NGK as he had been ordained by the Free Church of Scotland (Gerdener 1951:59).

<sup>35</sup> The established Churches in European countries were supported by numerous

tragedies that resulted from state churches. 'Governments and princes utterly without the Spirit of Christ, often imagined that they worked for the Kingdom of God, because they zealously protected the forms and traditions of the state church' (1896:274).

Although he rejected the idea of a state church, Hofmeyr believed that a general adherence to the Christian faith was necessary for the continued existence of Western society. This did not only mean that the state should acknowledge the Christian faith, or that more individuals must accept Christ, but also that the principles of the gospel should be applied to society. During the struggle against modernism he warned against the threatening deChristianization of the state and society:

At this moment the fate of the Christian states depends apparently on the question: 'What do you think of the Christian church?' With astonishing speed it is becoming generally accepted that the church is a human institution, and that, if she confesses that she was born of and guided by the Holy Spirit, she is either arrogant or fanatic! Soon all may agree that it is necessary for the general good that she be silenced and, if necessary, be expelled. Then all those who fear God in truth will follow the Rejected One, and thus the anti-Christian society, led by the anti-Christian church, will be overtaken by internal decay and external destruction. (1865:ix).

Du Toit was surprised by Hofmeyr's interest in the 'christianization of society' (1984:422). His surprise is understandable; Rauschenbusch said that very few authors 'whose minds were formed before the eighties appreciated the social point of view'.<sup>36</sup> His social awareness is even more remarkable if one considers that Hofmeyr advocated the social dimen-

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Christians, but even those who opposed establishments believed that the principle of establishment was a major reason for the de-Christianization of society (cf Balfour 1875.) The exceptions to this general rule were small groups in the Anabaptist tradition and individuals like S Kierkegaard. The Baptist Rauschenbusch passionately believed in the Christianization of society.

<sup>36</sup> Rauschenbusch mentioned Schleiermacher, A Ritschl and R Rothe as prophets who pointed to the 'solidaristic conceptions of Christianity' (1917:27). It is difficult to pin-point the sources of Hofmeyr's thinking, but Du Toit records that he read Rothe (1984:288).

sion of the gospel during the revival. At a meeting of the Evangelical Alliance held in January, 1861 he delivered an address with the title: 'What can we do to give society a more Christian tone?' Although his words are plain enough to the modern reader 'the radical newness of his ideas' was not appreciated by his contemporaries and there was no discussion (Du Toit 1984:167). Hofmeyr expressed the opinion that the revival of the church must be seen as an instrument in the reformation of society. Anticipating Rauschenbusch he said that the reform of society is a more noble work than the revival of a congregation, and 'if society as such is excluded from your Christian labour of love, the whole person, real humanity, will never come under your benevolent influence'.<sup>37</sup> He urged ministers to support church-members in their daily struggle to live for Christ in society:

We speak too seldom as people who are not only concerned about the salvation of individuals but also of that of society. We speak too seldom the language of life and of reality ... We must be men of the people, in the best sense, as our Lord was a man of the people. For a long time now I have felt that our way of preaching in this respect is in need of a change. But do not misunderstand me. The minister may never speak as a man of a party. He is above all parties. (Du Toit 1984:169).

Aspects of society to be Christianized included trade practices and the press. Such Christian action is especially necessary in democratic countries where legislation expresses the will of the people.<sup>38</sup>

In the sixties Hofmeyr was less optimistic about the possibilities of success than later. As we have noted above, he expressed the opinion that modern states would become

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<sup>37</sup> Du Toit 1984:168. Rauschenbusch said: 'The Kingdom of God is not confined within the limits of the Church and its activities. It embraces the whole of human life' (1917: 145).

<sup>38</sup> Du Toit 1984:168f. This was written about ten years before the Cape received self-government.

progressively more un-Christian. This view was in line with those of Edward Irving, whom Hofmeyr read in the late fifties.<sup>39</sup> In later years he was more optimistic about what might be achieved: 'the day will surely come, when ... your seemingly sterile witness will bear fruit' (1896:276).

One immediate result of this concern was the founding of De Volksvriend. This paper, founded by Hofmeyr and a few friends, was intended to be a 'secular' newspaper, but written from an avowedly Christian perspective (Du Toit 1984:204). From the historical point of view De Volksvriend is of special significance because, after the resignation of W R Thomson, Jan Hendrik Hofmeyr, started his public career as editor of this paper at the age of 17.<sup>40</sup>

A study of the gospels during the eighties enriched Hofmeyr's theological views considerably and in 1896 he returned to the theme of the Kingdom of God. In a chapter on 'the citizen's highest duty' he defined the Kingdom of God in social terms, 'where people live as children of the heavenly Father'. He explained that the Kingdom should not be identified with one's church.<sup>41</sup> What is distinctly modern about Hofmeyr's view of the Kingdom of God is its inclusiveness. He saw the Kingdom as a present reality, where the work of the Spirit is not confined to the church but includes the whole of human culture.

The eyes of the child of God have been opened for this most important

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<sup>39</sup> Cf Du Toit 1984:168. He read Irving's Perilous Times of the Last Days with appreciation while still at Calvinia, but when he visited the Irvingite Church in London thirty years later he was not impressed (Kestell 1911:57,146).

<sup>40</sup> According to Hofmeyr's son, who was the first biographer of 'Onze Jan', it was his idea to ask his young nephew to take up this post. His younger brother Servaas also belonged to this group (cf Hofmeyr 1913:55).

<sup>41</sup> Those who work for the extension of their own denominations 'retard the extension of the Kingdom' (1896:274)

truth, that everything that belongs to mankind is destined to be taken up in the Kingdom of God and, what resists, will disappear. (1896:275).

Hofmeyr appeals again to the believer's experience. 'You find the key to this truth in your own experience ... all your gifts and abilities, have found their destiny in the acceptance and worship of Christ' (1896:275). Just as Christ has saved the believer 'from those sinful influences that corrupted every noble ideal', the Spirit desires to save all that is good in human society. But, even the best in society 'must of necessity become a curse' if it chooses to remain outside the Kingdom (275). This danger is especially acute in times of prosperity, because it makes people selfish, arrogant and unsympathetic to the needs of the poor.

The priority of the child of God is the Kingdom of God, and therefore his motto is: 'Let the Spirit of Christ reign and let his power be extended, and all that is good shall be preserved' (275) The Christian has no divided loyalties. His experience as a new person has taught him his first duty as citizen: to strive in prayer, by his example and by practical work, that society should come as much as possible under the influence of the Kingdom of God'.<sup>42</sup>

Thirty years earlier, when discussing the Christianization of society, Hofmeyr mainly thought of the liquor trade and of the influence of modernism in the press and in the courts. Now he saw the problem much wider and recognized the fact that, 'generally speaking, laws that were passed in favour of the weak, have, in the course of history, been forced from the rulers' (1896:276). Hofmeyr's definition of what is politically wrong is

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<sup>42</sup> 1896:275. As a 'true patriot' the child of God will work for the extension of God's Kingdom in his own country (274). 'Patriotism' is 'infinitely higher' in the mind of the child, than in the mind of the servant. The child will therefore 'oppose, as much as is within his power, selfishness in government' (276).

now also wider than in the early days of the revival. A law that is contrary to the Spirit of Christ is therefore contrary to the Kingdom of God (276).

But his view of the Kingdom did not mean that the church should continually be involved in politics: 'A man who never involves himself directly with legislation, but wins many of his fellow-citizens for God's Kingdom, does the greatest service to his nation' (1896:277). 'History teaches us' that a mutual respect and love are the only lasting bonds between the people of a country, and if the Kingdom of God is extended among them, 'the Spirit who rules in the Kingdom will bring mutual respect and love, between those people' (276).

Nevertheless Hofmeyr believed that the church should, under certain circumstances, involve herself directly in politics. He fully approved, for example, of the action of eighty delegates of the Transvaal church, who, under the leadership of a former student, P G J Meiring, successfully negotiated the limiting of liquor outlets with the Transvaal government (1897:2). In any event, it is clear from his Niet Knecht maar Kind that all Christians should be actively concerned about legislation. If laws are passed that are 'contrary to the Spirit of Christ', the Christian citizen 'is called to protest against such laws and to make use of all possible influences against them'.<sup>43</sup> He addressed voters as well as representatives who 'are called to be directly involved in legislation by their participation in political institutions as members of lower and higher civil bodies' (1896:277). One detects a note of impatience in the following words, that have lost nothing of their relevance:

It is time that the children of God ... who occupy these important positions,

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<sup>43</sup> 1896:276; my emphasis (GT). Hofmeyr did not qualify the allen mogelijken invloed, but it is clear that he did not approve of revolution. Although he sympathized with the republics during the War of 1899, he was not in favour of the rebellious movement in the Cape.

realize that they must judge everything in the light of God's Kingdom and that they must live accordingly. Each law that is opposed to the Spirit of Christ, is opposed to God's Kingdom and hastens the downfall of the people. (277).

Hofmeyr put his finger on the Achilles heel of Christian attempts to influence political parties from inside when he said:

There is nothing more contrary to the holy calling of the child of God than the so-called political principle that a member of a legislative body has to vote in the interests and according to the wishes of his party; and it is to be feared that even those who call themselves God's children act on this unholy principle. Those who do this, act not in the confidence that God rules and that He will put to shame each party that follows its own mind and seeks its own advantage, instead of the well-being of the nation.<sup>44</sup>

Where those in government use that power to their own advantage, instead of helping the weak and the fallen, they resist the will of God and no-one will be able to stop the evil consequences that must follow sooner or later from this abuse.<sup>45</sup> This is so because it is God and not man who rules, and in words anticipating liberation theology he added 'and He, the God of love, is the God of the weak and the fallen' (1896:277). If Christians would only fully realize that God's self-giving love is 'their own life-principle' they would always live accordingly and thus become the salt of the earth and the light of the world (278).

Although they were seldom mentioned in his books, the 'people of colour' were

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<sup>44</sup> 1896:277; my emphasis (GT).

<sup>45</sup> 1896:276. He added: 'While the legislative power is always in the hands of selfish men, small wonder that it always serves the interests of the ruling party and of the ruling class in society ... It is a tragic fact that the strong have by means of legislation, even among the so-called Christian nations, selfishly oppressed and sacrificed the weak for the sake of their own interests ... in a large section of the civilized world, the low are in revolt against the high and the poor against the rich. Why? Mainly because by their selfishness the latter made the former into their enemies'.

included within Hofmeyr's vision of Cape society. This is especially borne out by the fact that he considered the problem of the indiscriminate supply of liquor to farm labourers as the running sore of the Cape. It was this situation that motivated his dedication to the principles of total abstinence, and he continually urged his students and his other audiences, wherever he went, to correct this malady as far as lay within their power.

Du Toit criticized him for distancing the church too far from the Kingdom (1984:379), but, judged within his historical context Hofmeyr is to be commended for understanding something of the Kingdom in a time when evangelicalism was moving towards individualism and eventually found itself in active opposition to the 'social gospel'. While there was a strong individual element in his theology, his doctrine of the Kingdom prevented the extreme individualism towards which evangelicalism was drifting. It is not too much to say that the social concern of leading Afrikaners, such as J D Kestell, D F Malan and N J van der Merwe, were originally inspired by Hofmeyr's vision.<sup>46</sup>

#### Hofmeyr and the Volkskerk

At present the concept of a volkskerk is associated with racial or tribal churches that mainly serve fairly homogeneous sociological groups, but during the 19th century it was more or less an equivalent for a National Church.<sup>47</sup> In a sermon, preached on 1 December 1892, Hofmeyr indicated that he had no objection against the use of the term volkskerk.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> In view of his influence in Stellenbosch, it is not far-fetched to suggest that the seeds of J C Smuts's holism were planted by Hofmeyr (cf Hancock 1962:28. For D F Malan and N J van der Merwe, cf chapter 9 below).

<sup>47</sup> Cf Langman (1950) with reference to the Netherlands, and Hoekendijk (1948) with special reference to the problem in German missiology.

<sup>48</sup> It was delivered at the induction of J R Albertijn as co-minister of Andrew Murray

He discussed the work of a minister as a servant 'of the Kingdom, of the church, of our people ... of the Word, of Jesus Christ'. Explaining the role of the minister as servant of the people, he said:

Because the origin of our church coincided with the founding of the colony, and because the majority of the population belongs to this church, she is to be called a national church (een volkskerk) in a sense that fits no other denomination in the colony. Because of these reasons our ministers are called to be leaders of our people, in the best and holiest sense of the term. They must be for our Dutch-speaking population what the prophets were for Israel. No-one else can be for our people what they could be for them. What is then their calling? They must guide the life of the people in the right ways and warn them, with all the spiritual power available to the ministry, against back-sliding and degradation. (GM Dec 1892; my emphasis).

He enumerated the duties of the ministers of the volkskerk regarding a 'thorough and Christian' education, the 'poor whites', alcoholism, race relations and the 'abuse of the Sunday'. On the 'impoverished and still lower sinking whites' he said that 'if our ministers would not make powerful attempts at uplifting these people, they will not only worsen their own condition, but will have a bad effect on others'. Of the duty of the ministers of the volkskerk in regard to race relations, he said:

Is the attitude of the white population towards the coloured and the heathen population groups, always and everywhere, what it should be? Is there not the danger of a mutual enmity that may have the most woeful results following them to future generations? And who are the men who, in the first place, are called to encourage the better, the Christian sense of the white towards the coloured and the heathen? Are they not the ministers of our church?' (GM Dec 1892:14)

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in Wellington (GM Dec 1892).

Hofmeyr expressed similar principles in his 'Open letter to the ministers of the United Church' in Transvaal.<sup>49</sup> Because it was the largest denomination in the republic, he said, it 'is worthy of the name volkskerk' (1897:77). Four points in this letter indicate his thinking on the relationship between the Christianization of society and the volkskerk.<sup>50</sup> He exhorted the ministers, most of whom were his former students, to identify themselves with their congregations. He wanted them to be, first and foremost, good pastors who loved the people and faithfully preached the gospel to them.

Dedicate yourselves to them, labour with so much self-denial, minister the Word to them with such enthusiasm ... that it becomes clear to all hearts and all consciences that you are God's servants. (1897:77).

Secondly, he exhorted them to identify themselves with 'the people of Transvaal', specifically the older population as distinct from the later arrivals, whether Uitlanders or Cape Afrikaners. With this he meant that the young ministers from Stellenbosch should study the Transvalers' history, their points of view and their way of thinking. He added:

Do not stand aloof. Judge not harshly whatever you, as ministers of the gospel, may find necessary to censure. Win their love, and guide them with a friendly hand, where necessary, to clearer insights and to higher views. Become, in the true Christian sense, a Transvaler for the Transvalers. (Hofmeyr 1897:78).

His third exhortation was not to limit their vision to what may be called the spiritual needs of the people. 'There is a most intimate connection between the religious and the social life of a people ... be concerned about the so-called social questions' (1897:78). Hofmeyr reminded them of their success in limiting the liquor-trade, and encouraged them to rectify

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<sup>49</sup> Cf Hofmeyr 1897:77ff. After the union between the NGK and the NHK in Transvaal (1885) it was called the Nederduitsch Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk, or simply the Verenigde Kerk (cf Scoltz 1956 I:278-296).

<sup>50</sup> Cf his sermon delivered in Wellington, quoted above (GM Dec 1892).

other social evils. 'Let a holy fire burn in you as it was in the prophets of Israel' (78). He also encouraged them to seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit, so that 'the Spirit may continue to flow from God to the people of Transvaal', and finally expressed the conviction that 'the future of Transvaal depended in the first place on the quality of her ministers' (79).

This was no romantic idealization of the people of Transvaal, as could be found, for example, even in a man like Abraham Kuyper.<sup>51</sup> Hofmeyr knew the temptations and the weaknesses of the Transvaal population and was concerned about the furtherance of the gospel among them, realizing the leading role Transvaal would play in the future of South Africa. He saw Transvaal as a young country that had to choose between Christ and chaos (1897:22).

This exhortation to the ministers in Transvaal explains Hofmeyr's view on identification. It demanded a total dedication to preach the gospel to the people, to love, to understand and to care in order to save as many as possible. It was a challenge to the true 'children' in the church to become involved in rectifying social abuses and in bringing others to Christ.

But his idea of identification did not imply an unqualified acceptance of all their religious, social or political points of view, any more than did Jesus' identification with Israel imply total approval (cf 1887:18,38). It is impossible to imagine that Hofmeyr would exchange the Erastianism of the state for an 'Erastianism' of the people, by being subservient to the prejudices of the people. The volkskerk was divinely ordained to work for the

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<sup>51</sup> Cf Kuyper's enthusiastic speech when President Kruger visited the Netherlands (Du Toit 1917:277f).

salvation of the people, not to be ruled by them. The Word and the Spirit would work in this institute of salvation to save, to sanctify and to make active in the cause of Christ. For this work ministers needed love, faith, faithfulness and patience.<sup>52</sup>

Generally speaking, Hofmeyr's view of the church was in line with the Dutch and Scotch tradition that saw the reformed church as an 'institute of salvation' for all members of the nation who would 'claim their rightful heritage' by giving themselves to Christ (cf Haitjema 1964). We have also seen his emphasis on election to service, both individually and corporately. This view of election unites well with the concept of an 'institute of salvation'. The church was not primarily the company of the saved, but a divine instrument, chosen to bring the people to salvation.

The Dutch-speaking population of South Africa was the immediate responsibility of the volkskerk. We must add, however, that most contemporary NGK churchmen did not limit the church's mission to Afrikaners only, it had a duty to all inhabitants of South Africa. Admittedly the 'people of colour' were never fully accepted within the volkskerk, but neither were they abandoned. They were always seen as the responsibility of the volkskerk,<sup>53</sup> even at the time when the theory of a volkskerk was questioned.<sup>54</sup> Equally

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<sup>52</sup> The work of his former students in the Boer commandoes and in the POW camps was apparently an application of Hofmeyr's views (cf Louw 1963; Kuit 1948; Lourens 1960.)

<sup>53</sup> This responsibility found expression in the following exhortation: 'Go forward to each city and town in the Cape until there is a congregation of the NG Sendingkerk in each one of them' (Joubert 1934:3).

<sup>54</sup> It is ironical that the idea of a volkskerk was rejected by the followers of Kuyper, at the very time when the NGK was in the last stages of becoming an Afrikaner volkskerk. This contradiction is epitomized in the words of T N Hanekom: 'Even though we do not have a volkskerk, our "Afrikaanse volk" is not without its own church'. (1957:123). Moodie interprets this work as an attempt to integrate 'the volkskerk notion with Murrayite

significant is the fact that up till the time of the Anglo-Boer War, English-speaking people were officially regarded as the responsibility of the volkskerk, at least in places where there were no English-speaking denominations.<sup>55</sup>

#### Was Hofmeyr an Afrikaner-nationalist?

In this context we must briefly look at Kestell's claim that Hofmeyr was an Afrikaner-nationalist (1911:209). He described Hofmeyr as a man 'whose heart was on fire for his country and people' (211), but this does not make him 'a nationalist'.<sup>56</sup>

For the purpose of this discussion we may define a nationalist as a person who puts his nation at the centre of his thinking.<sup>57</sup> Kestell's arguments are mainly based on Hofmeyr's attitude as revealed in his charge to his former students in Transvaal, reviewed above. To this he added three pieces of information: attempts by Hofmeyr and other leaders to stop the Anglo-Boer War; his special sympathy for those who suffered as a result of the War; and his evident respect for the sacrificial leadership of President M T Steyn (Kestell 1911:210ff). But these points really add nothing new because they are fully

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ideals', but it was rather an attempt to reconcile the volkskerk tradition with the Kuyperian anti-volkskerk model (cf 1975:69n).

<sup>55</sup> English services in the Cape NGK were commonly held in the 19th century. The rule that candidates for the ministry had to be able to preach in English was only discontinued in 1940 (Botha 1986:66ff).

<sup>56</sup> Kestell served as chaplain in the Anglo-Boer War, often risking his life to attend to the wounded on both sides (Nienaber 1971:21). He became a confidant of M T Steyn and C R de Wet. In later years he was moderator of the OFS Synod, editor of Die Kerkbode, translator of the Bible into Afrikaans, rector of Grey University College and active in uplifting the 'poor whites'. Nienaber noted that Kestell, whose father was a British Settler, never again preached in an 'English Church' after the Anglo-Boer War (19). This seems to suggest that Kestell was indeed an Afrikaner-nationalist.

<sup>57</sup> Cf Van Wyk 1978:13ff, for a discussion of nationalism as an ideology.

compatible with Hofmeyr's belief that a Christian minister has to identify himself with the people in order to win them for the gospel.

On the other hand, Kestell related that Hofmeyr's lifelong friend, J H Neethling, minister at Stellenbosch, was deeply offended because Hofmeyr did not share his belief that 'God would give the victory to the Boers' (1911:213). As Moodie has pointed out, the belief that the republics would win the War was an article of faith of Afrikaner 'civil religion' (1975:33ff). We do not know Hofmeyr's arguments, but his conspicuous objectivity, in a time of great emotion, indicates he did not put the Afrikaner people at the centre of his thinking.<sup>58</sup>

Judging from Hofmeyr's theological views, it would seem that nationalism, in this case Afrikaner-nationalism, was for him a 'point of contact' between the gospel and the people, or, a 'bridge' between the Kingdom of God and human society. In his view a bridge or 'a handle' was indispensable to enable(!) grace to lay hold on nature.<sup>59</sup> The problem is, of course, that nationalism may in turn try to use the church as 'a handle' or, as Bengt Sundkler has observed in a similar context, a bridge can also be used to go in the opposite direction.

We may conclude at this stage that Hofmeyr saw the volkskerk as an institute of salvation for the whole nation. Ministers and 'living' members were called to identify

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<sup>58</sup> It is interesting to note that the Swiss religious socialist Leonhard Ragaz believed that, because God is just, the republics would win the War. He therefore had to rethink his theology after the War (Bock 1984: xii).

<sup>59</sup> 'Grace ... seeks a point of contact, a place of attack, a sure foundation in nature. Without a handle in nature, it cannot get a grip on nature' (Hofmeyr 1885:43). That Andrew Murray held a similar view is borne out by his statement that 'the development of a stronger national life in our slumbering Dutch population would provide a stronger trunk on which a Christian life could be grafted' (Du Plessis 1920a:431).

themselves with the people and to be actively concerned about their total life. In Hofmeyr's mind there was no contradiction between the call to serve the Afrikaner-people and the call to evangelize the other tribes of Southern Africa. The gospel-imperative to identify with the people did not imply an uncritical acceptance of their sins and prejudices, but called for finding a 'point of contact' and the patient guiding of the people in the truth.

#### Towards a theological understanding of the volk

We have noted earlier that Hofmeyr accepted the dictum of Aquinas, namely that 'grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it'. It seems clear that Hofmeyr's views on church and nation were related to his views on nature and grace, with the nation being 'on the level of nature' and the church on that of 'grace'. Weber declared that this statement of Aquinas is still 'the uncontested basis' of the self-understanding of the Catholic Church, and he mentioned various effects of this doctrine on the relationship between church and state. 'The presupposition of Roman Catholic ecclesiology is the idea that ... society, is in need of gracious enhancement, and is passively capable of it'. The church, as the bearer of grace and truth is able to recognize 'the remnants of creation' in a particular society, 'acknowledge them and develop them, even place them under the dominion of grace'. This means that society, 'and the state as one of its structural forms, unconditionally requires its own enhancement through the grace administered by the church'.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> The full paragraph reads: 'The presupposition of Roman Catholic ecclesiology is the idea that the natural, in this instance society, is in need of gracious enhancement, and is passively capable of it. There is an ontological continuity between the "realm of nature" (regnum naturae) and the "realm of grace" (regnum gratiae). Thus, natural society must appear as a preliminary stage of what grace causes to happen in the church, and the church in turn can recognize in the society it finds the remnants of creation, acknowledge them and develop them, even place them under the dominion of grace. This means, of course, that natural society, and the state as one of its structural forms, unconditionally requires its own

Hofmeyr taught two contradictory views of grace, but there is no doubt that he believed that 'God created nature in such a way that it could only become what it should be, by grace' (1885:43). He also strongly emphasized that grace respects the given-ness of nature: 'Grace works according to nature. It honours each law of nature; (nature) is not rejected, neither is it circumvented ... (grace) respects everything that is from God' (1885:42).

In practice this means, as Weber pointed out, that there is 'divine sanction for interfering' in the political and social life of the people (1983 II:528); and secondly, that neither the nation nor the state is 'an enemy of God', but rather, a society that 'requires its own enhancement through grace'.<sup>61</sup> In a protestant context this would imply that the nation, as the 'realm of nature', needs the church with the gospel, as the 'realm of grace', to bring the nation to what it was meant to be, or 'to fulfil its calling'. The important point is the following: This 'catholic' view of grace provided the relationship between church and nation with a theological basis. For a long time it has been assumed that the 'theological understanding' of the relationship between kerk en volk in the Afrikaner tradition was

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enhancement through the grace administered by the church. The church and the world are related to each other as two different, but mutually dependent stages in the process of the realization of being'. (Weber 1983 II:527).

<sup>61</sup> Weber 1983 II:528. Some of the results of this view mentioned by Weber are: Firstly, the church is therefore able to 'absorb the natural qualities of the world' which derive from creation, those things not sinful in themselves. In doing this the church is capable of presenting itself as a 'perfect society', comparable with the state, but also superior to the state. Secondly, it implies that the world needs the church because 'nature' needs 'grace.' The church benefits the world, it can therefore rightly intervene, also politically, in order 'to lead nature to perfection'. According to Weber, this is the reason why the Roman Catholic Church has historically always understood the political role of the Church as legitimate. Therefore, while there is confusion in the ranks of the Evangelical Churches 'the Roman Catholic Church reveals the quiet superiority of the man who is sure of his case' (1983 II:527f).

occasioned by an identification between the Afrikaner and Israel. There is, however, no evidence that Hofmeyr or his colleagues ever made this type of identification. Does the answer lie in Hofmeyr's neo-protestant doctrine of grace?

Finally, this 'theological understanding' of the relationship between church and nation fits in very well with the parallel concept, suggested in a previous paragraph, that nationalism was seen as a God-given 'point of contact' between the gospel and the people. It may also go a long way towards explaining the apparently contradictory development from Hofmeyr's 'social gospel' to the 'Christian nationalism' of a later generation.

### Hofmeyr's Eschatology

S J du Toit, who graduated from the Kweekskool in 1872, claimed that Hofmeyr had a special interest in prophecy. It is, however, precarious to build too much on this short and somewhat cryptic statement.<sup>62</sup> Hofmeyr read Edward Irving's Perilous Times of the Last Days early in his ministry, but one does not get the impression from Kestell that Hofmeyr was 'especially interested in prophecy'. When one compares the writings of Du Toit with those of Hofmeyr, it is the former who emerges as an ardent student of prophecy, with strong premillennial predilections (cf Du Toit 1878).

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<sup>62</sup> Towards the end of his life Du Toit told his son: 'I studied in harmony with professor Hofmeyr and what I have learnt at Stellenbosch of the reformed faith, especially the prophecies, I owe to professor Hofmeyr. He drilled us thoroughly in Romans 9-11'. (Du Toit 1917:9). This statement was possibly intended as an apology for his views and actions, which were often very controversial.

There is some evidence that the young Hofmeyr expected a crisis in Western society,<sup>63</sup> but as he was at that time involved in various schemes to 'Christianize' society, it could hardly mean that he expected the final crisis at that time. In order to explain the discrepancy between the claim of S J du Toit and the writings of Hofmeyr, it seems logical to conclude that, if Hofmeyr was exceptionally interested in prophecy, it was so during his early period.<sup>64</sup> But even so, as he was also interested in the Christianization of society during this period, it is unlikely that he ever agreed with the extreme apocalyptic views of Du Toit.

Hofmeyr was no typical premillennialist. His biographers gave very little information on his eschatological ideas, but Du Toit noted an 'inconsistency in his millennialism' (1984:231). An anonymous paper in the journal Elpis may help to explain this 'inconsistency'.<sup>65</sup> Any one who is acquainted with Hofmeyr's style would agree that this article is from his hand. The contents reveal that the author had a unique interpretation of the 'signs of the times'. The fact that this paper was read in 1867 may also be a circumstantial indication that Hofmeyr was 'interested in prophecy' during his early period.

In certain ways the article in Elpis is the very opposite of premillennialism. The author saw the growing spirit of unity among Christians and the 'merging of confessional lines', as an indication of the coming of the universal Kingdom of Christ. 'It is a sign of

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<sup>63</sup> This was in the sixties, during the struggle against modernism, when he warned of a threatening de-Christianization of society (cf 1865:ix.)

<sup>64</sup> Du Toit was a student at Stellenbosch from 1869-1872, in other words, still in Hofmeyr's early period. It is nevertheless remarkable that Romans 9-11 remained the main locus of Hofmeyr's eschatology, from Du Toit's time, through 1887 until 1905.

<sup>65</sup> Cf Elpis April 1878; paper originally read in 1867.

the times that Jews, Roman Catholics and Protestants can translate the Bible together in France' (1878:66). He also differed from Irving and later fundamentalism in his positive appreciation of the increasingly 'philanthropic character' of contemporary Christianity. It is a 'sign of the times' that the best people in all the churches understand today 'that they are not called to glorify their own denomination, but to labour for the uplifting of people ... from their misery' (67). Another 'sign of the times' was that even theologies were converging and becoming more universal.

It is not any more either Lutheran or reformed theology. It is increasingly becoming the science of the most fundamental and universal religious truths. The excellent German theologians belong to the universal church. (Elpis 1878:67).

Christians have usually tended to promote the interests of their own particular tradition, 'but this time is fast coming to an end' (68). The author welcomed the contemporary interest in and the emphasis on the historical Jesus and the fact that people

do not hold fast any more to abstract Christian dogmata. The historical Jesus is becoming more and more the slogan of the believers against unbelief ... Christ is becoming, in a higher sense than ever before, the focus of all believers; until they will embrace each other, in the living Christ, as brothers of one family.<sup>66</sup>

This general drive towards universalism is not bad, because Jesus was the most universal and progressive of men (1878:71f). But there is also another 'universal spirit' at work in the world. This spirit 'from below' will inspire a mighty anti-Christian movement that will even try to eliminate 'the hated Christianity' by the sword.

Everything seems to indicate that the modern anti-Christian spirit will not rest before it has penetrated all scientific, religious, social and political systems, and has constructed a modern world on the basis of these systems. But, as the civilized world carries the seed of Christianity within itself, (this

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<sup>66</sup> Elpis 1878:68; my emphasis (GT). Hofmeyr could obviously not have anticipated Bultmann.

anti-Christian spirit) will only be successful if it destroys (Christianity) with force. (73).

The author believed that the centre of the anti-Christian power will be in Jerusalem. This empire would - and here he agreed with the premillennialists - be physically crushed by the power of God, but he did not also believe with them that Christ would personally reign in Jerusalem after the victory. He evidently expected a spiritual kingdom - more in line with postmillennialism - where the present denominations will make way for 'the One Catholic Christian Church, in which people have always believed, but has never seen in its developed and visible form'.<sup>67</sup>

As we have seen in a previous chapter, Hofmeyr had a deep spiritual experience at the age of forty.<sup>68</sup> Judging from his subsequent publications, he did not continue with an emphasis on eschatology, he rather tended towards a practical, if not a theoretical, 'realized eschatology'. The immediacy of the Christian's filial relationship with the Father and his communion with the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit were the great realities that he emphasized; he encouraged Christians to appropriate and experience their huiiothesia.

The consciousness of our sonship helps us to realize that the heavenly kingdom has broken through powerfully in us. It is also our guarantee that the Son will not rest until He shall have brought forth a new world, fully in harmony with the new life that was created in us. (1887:216).

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<sup>67</sup> Elpis 1878:75. Hofmeyr believed that the Kingdom to be revealed at the parousia would be the final Kingdom, and would consist, among other things, in a permanent renewal of the physical world. He explained 'the periods of history' in the following 'non-dispensational' way: The first period was that of creation until the fall. The second period includes the preparation for and the appearance of the second Adam. The third period is the present age which was inaugurated by the coming of the Holy Spirit. The last period will see the consummation of the Kingdom when Jesus will return in glory for the final renewal of the world (1887:215).

<sup>68</sup> That was around the year 1867 (Kestell 1911:121f).

The ancient believers, says Hofmeyr, were very conscious of their unity with Christ and with creation. When they thought of Christ in his glory, they were so sure about their union with him that 'they saw themselves as already in glory' (1898:231). The life, death and resurrection of Christ provide 'the joyful guarantee' that the individual believer and the whole creation will surely arrive at the destiny for which God created and saved them. The focal point of this new life is the Holy Spirit.<sup>69</sup> The 'earthly' and the 'heavenly' have been united in Christ; the difference between them is only one of degree (1898:229). Although Jesus is at present at the right hand of the Father, he is still most intimately involved with this world:

Because He is the Incarnate One, you cannot separate Him from it. Through the incarnation He was united to creation in such a way that His life is her life, and His future is her future. If the terrible impossibility did in fact happen, namely that Jesus remained under the power of death, it would have resulted in the disintegration of the whole creation. (1898:230f).

Hofmeyr emphasized the Christian hope of the resurrection of the body as well as the future renewal of the earth. In spite of a tendency towards a 'realized eschatology' he never lost the biblical 'not yet'. On these points his theology contrasted strongly with that of contemporary 'modern' theology.<sup>70</sup>

Sometimes he based his hope for the renewal of the earth on the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in the individual. At other times he said that the foundation of the future renewal was already given in the pre-historic relationship between the Son and creation.

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<sup>69</sup> 'On that day (Pentecost) the glorified Christ started His blessed work in the church. Through the Holy Spirit He came to them in order to renew them into His image' (1898:231).

<sup>70</sup> D P Faure, minister of the 'Free Protestant Church' in Cape Town, made no secret of the fact that he rejected the bodily resurrection of Christ (1869:193).

But he mainly related his eschatological hopes to the incarnation. In the incarnation 'the consummation was guaranteed to us. Our hope for a glorious future ... for the whole creation, is based on the truth that Jesus Christ is the Incarnate Son of God' (1887:110). 'Jesus is head of all creation. If He had been conquered by death, the whole creation would have relapsed into chaos' (1905:49). In communion with Christ we may now celebrate the future renewal of everything.

You live (as believer) in what will appear only at the end. You set yourself in anticipation on yonder heights, where Christ is now; and you look down, as it were, on your present poverty, knowing that the way leads from below to the top, from the imperfect to the perfect, from the unfinished to the finished. You celebrate in anticipation, in the glorification of Christ, your own glorification, that of the church, of saved humanity and of renewed creation. (1898:233).

In contrast to the prevailing pessimism of premillennialists, who believed that the world was going from bad to worse, Hofmeyr was optimistic. Because of union with Christ and an experience of

the triumphant power of grace over sin ... you were changed from a pessimist into a Christian optimist ... this joyful experience has opened your eyes for the presence and the work of Christ in the world around you. And even if it looks dark, and even if you know that it will still become darker, you believe nevertheless that Christ is working in the darkness, calling forth, in His own way and in His own time, a new world in which only his glorious light will shine. The Christ in you is your 'HOPE OF GLORY'.<sup>71</sup>

The words 'it looks dark' is an indication that he was not so naive as not to expect various crises in the future. Shortly after the crisis of the Anglo-Boer War Hofmeyr wrote:

Alas, the so-called Christian world is far from being a truly Christian civilization. The Christian civilization is at present being attacked by an anti-Christian movement, and is threatened by total destruction. But, whatever may happen, it has a bright future. The day will come when the enemy will be bound, and in Christ 'all that is noble, all that is just, all that is pure, all that is admirable' will be enkindled, until a renewed humanity will live on a

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<sup>71</sup> 1898:234f; Hofmeyr's emphasis.

renewed earth. Only then will we see the full development of the new man as God intended him to be in Christ. (1905:87).

Contrary to tendencies in premillennialism, Hofmeyr had a universalistic vision, in line with postmillennialism. Jesus is the head of the church, because he is the head of the human race (1886:171). The church over which Jesus rules 'is not a party or a sect', a separate section of humanity. The church represents humanity, it is 'the heart' of humanity.

Because they submitted and dedicated themselves to Jesus Christ as their Head, they do what the whole human race should in fact be doing. They know this, and therefore, since the very beginning of her existence, the church never stopped preaching to the whole human race: Jesus Christ is your Brother, your Saviour, your Lord .... give yourself to Him and allow Him to bring you to your destiny. (171).

Christians do not generally understand that Jesus is the head of humanity. It 'presupposes a broadness of outlook, that one can only attain gradually, in communion with Jesus Christ' (Hofmeyr 1886:172). It took some time even for the apostles to gain the insight that all nations were to be co-heirs of God's promises (172). It was Paul's special calling to dedicate his life to the 'revelation of this mystery'. Because so few Jews believed the gospel, the early Christians assumed that Jesus was to be the head of only a certain party in Israel. But in Romans 11 Paul resists this teaching and insists that Jesus is and remains the head of all Israel (173). In our own day the relative smallness of the number of those who have believed, has been taken

as a sign that there is here on earth no future for the nations, for the human race in her totality. In believing this Christians have made the church into a sect or a party that, separated from the whole, has another future than the whole. In this way Christ has become a leader of a sect or of a party among the peoples of the world. (Hofmeyr 1886:173f).

In contrast to this, the apostles had a world-wide vision. They saw the church as the focus of the human race, where the light of God's grace is concentrated, to spread from there to

the ends of the earth (1886:174). The church is 'the heart of the human race' whose members labour in deep sympathy and priestly concern for the salvation of others. The belief that Christ is the head of all humanity must be held fast and preached to all nations. Christians are 'the first-fruits' of the harvest,

the prophecy and the promise that a saved human race, who know Christ as their Saviour and who serve Him as their Lord, will eventually inhabit the earth. All the ways of the Lord with the nations, all His judgements over them, will eventually lead to the time when all the kingdoms of the world will be gathered into one kingdom in Christ.<sup>72</sup>

### Hofmeyr and Universalism.

In the light of his broad vision it is not strange to find that Hofmeyr was attracted to full-fledged universalism. In his De Christus der Evangelien he discussed Paul's agony over Israel's rejection. Because of his love for Israel, Paul was even willing 'to be rejected by Christ for a time, for the sake of his people, just as Jesus was forsaken by His Father for a time, for the sake of sinners'.<sup>73</sup> But, in order to console him in this unbearable agony, God showed him 'that this way of strict justice was only a preparation for divine love'.<sup>74</sup> The rejection of Israel is only for a time because the grace of God will finally triumph over sin and disobedience. Those prophets who lived in the times when Israel experienced the severest judgements of God were the quickest to see and proclaim the days of Israel's

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<sup>72</sup> 1886:174. Hofmeyr referred to Rev 11:15, Acts 13:57, Col 1:27-29 and James 1:18.

<sup>73</sup> 1887:141. The 'for a time' is Hofmeyr's interpretation of Paul's meaning. The reference to Romans 12:14-36 in the text is obviously a printing error. It should be Romans 11:14-36.

<sup>74</sup> Dat deze weg der strengste gerechtigheid, slechts de doorgang der goddelijke liefde was (1887:141).

restoration.

When we see how the love of God triumphed in the life of Jesus and in the history of Israel, it is quite natural that we should ask the question whether this does not mean that all men and angels will eventually be saved. (1887:142).

It is significant that Hofmeyr did not simply dismiss this possibility, but he recognized that speculation about universalism would carry him beyond the bounds of Scripture. He answered that 'the Bible does not open this possibility for us', and he tried to solve the dilemma by saying: 'God's love is not forced on anybody. He who rejects that love, remains under God's wrath' (1887:142).

Having said this, Hofmeyr reminded us that we as sinful human beings 'have no idea of what the wrath of God is'. He therefore came back to the Christological argument, expressing the major focus of his theology. In Jesus Christ God revealed himself fully to us; He did not reveal his wrath, but his love. More than that, He revealed himself as love (142). In an anonymous article,<sup>75</sup> Hofmeyr affirmed that the revelation of 'the nature of God as love', was sufficient for him, in spite of all contradictory evidence:

Because of sin we live under a dark shadow ... that hides the nature of God for us. Hence the mistrust (achterdocht) with what we regard God, as if He is a being without love (een liefdeloos wezen). But through the incarnation of the Son this veil is destroyed. His life is one continuous and clear witness: God is love ... it has now become impossible for me to say that God will treat even the worst of sinners cruelly and without love (liefdeloos en wreed). He cannot deny himself. He cannot destroy his own nature. Whatever the wrath of God may be, his wrath cannot cast a shadow over his loving nature, as revealed to me in the life of the Incarnate One. The Son unveils to me the heart of the Father ... To know that it was the Incarnate Son of God who died on the cross, is sufficient for me. I cannot desire a

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<sup>75</sup> De Vleeschwording van Gods Zoon GM Aug 1892. Judging from the contents as well as from Hofmeyr's unique style, there can be no question about the authorship of this article. The Gereformeerd Maandblad was published under the editorship of J I Marais, Hofmeyr's younger colleague (cf chapter 7 below).

clearer revelation of the nature of God.<sup>76</sup>

### The Future of Israel.

Like John Murray, Hofmeyr believed that the Jewish people still had a special role to play in the world. On the basis of Romans 11:15 he held that there will be a large-scale conversion of Israel in the future.<sup>77</sup> Then Israel will become 'an immeasurable blessing to the nations' (1905:39). Israel's conversion would have a profound influence on the world and would lead to the conversion of the nations on an unprecedented scale. But the conversion of Israel would be preceded by a great crisis in Palestine.<sup>78</sup>

Jesus will reveal Himself gloriously to Israel as their Saviour, when in dire need. Then the veil will be removed from Israel's face. They will turn to Christ and will be a blessing to the other nations, more than any of the so-called Christian nations ever was. Only then God's purpose with Israel's election will be fulfilled and it will be seen that 'God's gifts and calling are irrevocable'. For centuries Israel's prophetic and apostolic writings brought immeasurable blessings to the nations, but when the day of their national conversion dawns, the blessings will be infinitely multiplied. 'If their

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<sup>76</sup> He added: 'In his love to us, He revealed the love of the Father to us ... He was indeed also wrathful ... but was He ever without love? How can He treat his enemies without love, who commanded us to pray for our enemies, and to love those who hate us? ... (Jesus) was conscious of the fact that He suffered in this way for them, because He followed the Father, and because his love for his enemies reflected the Father's love for his enemies' (GM Aug 1892).

<sup>77</sup> This interpretation of Romans 11 was prevalent among Calvinists in Scotland, Holland and America up till the middle of the 19th century, and formed the theological basis for the interest in Missions to Israel among them (cf Murray 1971; Kik 1971). The Amsterdam Seminary of the Free Church of Scotland was inspired by this hope (cf chapter 2 note 3). There is still considerable confusion because of certain similarities between pre- and postmillennialism. It was probably these similarities which caused S J du Toit to assume that Hofmeyr agreed with him (Du Toit 1917:9), and which caused S du Toit to think that Hofmeyr contradicted himself (1984:231).

<sup>78</sup> 1905:34. Hofmeyr explained that the apostle Paul believed that God will one day bring the whole Israel to salvation, in much the same way as Paul himself was brought to salvation.

rejection meant the salvation of the gentiles, their acceptance will be life after death'. It is God's gracious purpose that the richest blessings for the world should come through Israel. (1905:34).

It seems possible to reconcile these words with the views, expressed in the anonymous article of 1867, that the centre of the anti-Christian Kingdom will be in Jerusalem, until God will intervene on behalf of the Jewish people 'as He once did in Egypt' (1878:75). It is also in line with postmillennialism, which held that, after the conversion of the Jewish people, there will be an unprecedented success in the gentile mission of the church.<sup>79</sup>

Hofmeyr expressed similar views in a lecture delivered at the closing of the academic year, on 31 August 1893.<sup>80</sup> He discussed aspects of the letter to the Romans under the theme: 'Where sin abounds, grace will abound even more'. He explained Paul's view on the problem of the rejection of Israel as follows. Although Paul 'suffered more than anybody else' because of Israel's hardening, his love for them grew steadily - in imitation of his Lord. Constrained by this love he never ceased to pray for the salvation of his 'brothers according to the flesh'. Therefore God revealed to Paul that the 'election of grace' was a guarantee that there will be a future restoration of Israel, when the whole nation would be sanctified to the service of God.

Then the truth: when sin abounds, grace will abound even more, will be attested to on an unprecedented scale. Incalculable blessings will flow from Israel to the nations. (GM Sep 1893).

Hofmeyr did not believe that Jesus would return physically to Jerusalem before the millennium. In fact, he did not use the term 'millennium' at all. After the conversion of Israel, there will be a great missionary expansion of the church. 'Not only individuals, but

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<sup>79</sup> Cf M Kik 1971:3-14; Iain Murray 1971:59-76.

<sup>80</sup> Blikken in den Brief aan de Romeinen. (GM Sep 1893).

whole nations will be converted to the Lord'. (GM Sep 1893). As for the last judgement, Hofmeyr differed from premillennialism with his belief that the parousia and the final judgement will coincide. Jesus would return to make all things new and to judge. 'In the distant future, He will come again in glory ... to judge the entire human race' (1887:101).

On the basis of Romans 8:18-22 and Revelation 21:1-6 Hofmeyr believed that the ultimate revelation of the Kingdom of God will involve the renewal of the earth. The Christian hope is not 'a pie in the sky', but that the meek will inherit the earth in the most literal sense, when heaven and earth will be united, and God will be all and in all.

In Him heaven and earth are members of the same body. It is impossible for heaven to be perfect when the earth is still imperfect ... The terrible situation on the earth, caused by sin, has cast a dark shadow on heaven itself - also the angels mourned. Their joy will not be perfect until the images of the glorified humanity on the glorified earth will be reflected in heaven. How joyful were they when they saw the guarantee of the future renewal of the earth in the birth, resurrection and ascension of Christ. But their joy will be infinitely multiplied when ... heaven and earth will be perfectly united in Christ, their common head. (GM Sep 1893).

### Conclusion.

Although aspects of Hofmeyr's ecclesiology were very commendable in themselves, the biblical emphases were counter-balanced by negative factors. In the end practically all his ecclesiological ideas strengthened the relationship between the NGK and the Afrikaner people.

As his theology was based on the Bible and experience, his idea of the church was influenced by his experience of huiiothesia. In his view the church consisted of the 'sons of God' and those who were in the process of becoming sons of God. Related to this was his strong emphasis on the church's calling to serve in evangelism, missions and the Christi-

anization of society. Although the motif of service was biblical, it could easily move from service to God to the service of the people.

Hofmeyr believed in a national church or volkskerk, as opposed to a state church. He also believed that nationalism is a God-given 'point of contact' between the gospel and the people. This provided him with a theological understanding of the relationship between church and nation. However, the reformation doctrine of the church as the body and bride of Christ, the company of the elect, was largely absent from Hofmeyr's theology. The result was that the self-consciousness of the church as a divine institution was diminished. The church was indeed an institution for the salvation of the volk, but the emphasis was not on the church as a divine institution. Although this was a common tendency in contemporary theology, it was especially detrimental at a time of a surging Afrikaner nationalism.

Hofmeyr's emphasis on the unity of the church was a positive contribution. He obviously thought in terms of a spiritual but visible unity, as happened, for example, in 1885 when the NGK and NHK formed the 'United Church' in Transvaal. However, the divisions occasioned by the Anglo-Boer War, especially the break between the NGK and the Free Church of Scotland, was a serious setback for his ecumenical vision.

In his early period Hofmeyr had a high anti-Erastian view of the church. Nevertheless, in the last decade of the 19th century, when it was most needed because church and people were moving closely together, Hofmeyr emphasized the more individualistic aspects of salvation. Although his concept of a volkskerk was rooted in the Dutch ethical view, and not in the idea of an 'ethnic' church, after his death his ideal of a national church gradually shrunk to that of a denomination for the Afrikaner people.

Hofmeyr's eschatology contained important biblical dimensions. In contrast to premillennialism, which believed that the world was going from bad to worse, he expressed an optimism generated by the reality of the incarnation and the resurrection. But, as his eschatological views were not systematically integrated into his theology, they could not check the inexorable move towards premillennialism.

## Chapter 7

J I MARAIS (1848-1919)

In 1877 the curatorium called Johannes Izaak Marais, minister at Hanover, as 'third professor'. He was thus the first alumnus of the Kweekskool who taught at this institution. Marais was born in Cape Town where his father was in business. Like Hofmeyr, he received his early education at the Tot Nut van 't Algemeen and subsequently with Dr Changuion, the great opponent of the Kweekskool. He then went to study at the S A Athenaeum, later called the S A College. According to Keet his fine literary talents and complete mastery of both Dutch and English should be ascribed to the influence of Changuion and Professor Noble (1934:96). In 1866 he received the gold medal for the best student at the S A College, where he was also one of the founders of the debating society.

After finishing at the Kweekskool he studied in Utrecht and in Edinburgh. During this time he wrote two articles on philosophical problems, that were published in the 'British and Foreign Theological Review'.<sup>1</sup> On his return to South Africa in 1873, Marais was offered a post in mathematics and physics at the 'Stellenbosch College'.<sup>2</sup> Instead, he accepted a call to Hanover, a congregation that experienced a secession as a result of the

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<sup>1</sup> Cf editorial, Die Burger 29.8.1919; Keet 1934:96. Die Burger adds that 'professor Calderwood of Edinburgh offered him a professorship in a college in India' (cf also Kroniek GM Sep 1911).

<sup>2</sup> Keet 1934:96. In 1887 the 'Stellenbosch College' was called the 'Victoria College', in honour of the Queen. Marais was at that time chairman of the managing board.

ministry of the Reverend Thomas F Burgers.<sup>3</sup> Within a short time Marais gained the confidence of both parties and was able to heal the schism when the minister of the seceders accepted a call elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> In August 1876 he married Hester Fehrsen, daughter of a medical doctor from Cradock.<sup>5</sup>

Marais was only 29 years old when he started a teaching career that lasted for 42 years. He was originally appointed to teach 'Natural Theology and Speculative and Practical Philosophy' but was also given responsibility for Biblical Studies, History of Missions and Church Polity.<sup>6</sup> He had a good command of both French and German and an excellent knowledge of Greek, Latin and Hebrew.<sup>7</sup> A typical 19th century polymath, he often gave public lectures on various philosophical and scientific topics that were well received by students and public.<sup>8</sup>

He was a member of the council of the 'Victoria College' from 1878 and its chairman from 1883 till 1912.<sup>9</sup> He received honorary doctorates from the University of St Andrews

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<sup>3</sup> Subsequently President of the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (Transvaal).

<sup>4</sup> Keet 1934:97. Rev C W du Toit served the 'Free Congregation' at Hanover, but accepted a call to Pearston in 1874.

<sup>5</sup> Du Plessis, who was born at Cradock, mentions that she was his Sunday school teacher (1920b:15).

<sup>6</sup> Snyman 1934:57f. According to the official notices in De Gereformeerde Kerkbode, Jan 1879, Marais was responsible for lectures in 'Ethics, Philosophy and Natural Science (Geology)' (36). During the 1890ties he also taught OT Introduction (cf GM Jan 1900: 139n).

<sup>7</sup> Cf Du Plessis 1920b:15 and Keet 1934:97f.

<sup>8</sup> Keet 1934:97. In 1893 the Gereformeerde Maandblad carried a long series of articles on the solar system. In 1894 he published Darwinism, an exposition and criticism (Cape Town: N H Marais).

<sup>9</sup> The 'Stellenbosch Gymnasium' was established in 1866 and a principal was obtained from Scotland with the help of Dr Duff who visited Stellenbosch at that time. The

and the University of South Africa.<sup>10</sup> In 1910 Marais was appointed by the government to make a study of the educational system of Denmark,<sup>11</sup> and in 1918 he was chosen as the first chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch.<sup>12</sup> He served the Cape Church on numerous commissions, especially in connection with missionary and ecumenical matters, and was its senior representative at the famous World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910. Here he was chosen on the 'Continuation Committee for Africa'.<sup>13</sup>

He regularly took his professorale preekbeurt<sup>14</sup> in the Stellenbosch congregation. After the death of Murray, Marais was also responsible for the 'Scottish service' in the hall of the 'Bloemhof School'.<sup>15</sup> According to Gerdener his sermons were unforgettable models of spiritual inspiration and intellectual stimulation (1951:111). Keet highly valued his qualities of mind, coupled with 'the beauty of his character, and his nobility of soul' (1934:99). Du

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Gymnasium became a College in 1874, when the new 'Law on Higher Education' allowed colleges to prepare students for the higher examination of the University of Cape Town (GM June 1892:4f).

<sup>10</sup> Cf Du Plessis 1920b:15; GM Sep 1893.

<sup>11</sup> His rapport was published in the blue book entitled: Bisschop Grundtvig en de Volkshogeschool in Denemarken. (Keet 1934:98).

<sup>12</sup> Keet 1934:98. Marais was also interested in the individual student. He encouraged the young Du Plessis and even supported the young Jan Smuts financially (Du Plessis 1920b:15; Theron 1982:104; cf Hancock 1962:35ff).

<sup>13</sup> Kotze 1978:454. Kotze noted that S J du Toit criticized this meeting as being 'from man' while Marais compared it to the great Ecumenical Councils of the Ancient Church (453).

<sup>14</sup> Cf chapter 3 note 23.

<sup>15</sup> Gerdener 1951:111. These services were started by John Murray when he arrived at Stellenbosch in 1858. Initially the Lutheran Church was used, but afterwards the services were held for many years in the Moederkerk, until 'certain people' complained, probably in 1896 (GM Dec 1915).

Plessis rated him highly as a scholar and as a gracious and selfless person, but thought that his wide knowledge and good memory inhibited the development of originality (1920b:16). P J G De Vos said that he 'had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, but he counted theology, the truth of God, above everything' (Gerdener 1951:114).

It is unfortunate that Marais, with his wide interests and signal abilities, did not publish a major book.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, he 'served his generation' as editor and contributor to various journals. He was one of the editors of De Christen during the years 1880-1884 and a permanent contributor to Elpis and Het Z A Tijdschrift (Gerdener 1951:112). He contributed seven articles of evident quality to the International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, published under the editorship of professor James Orr of Glasgow.<sup>17</sup> In 1892 he founded, in association with his friend C F J Muller, the Gereformeerd Maandblad, a 'religious and social journal for South Africa', that was widely read, especially by his former students.<sup>18</sup> He retired from its editorship in 1918, but not from his teaching responsibilities, and died in 1919, at the age of 71.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> It can hardly be doubted, however, that his interests and example stimulated his students, such as Du Plessis and Gerdener.

<sup>17</sup> Two of these, 'Anthropology' and 'Psychology', were major ones, consisting of several pages. The five others, on 'Heart', 'Mind', 'Soul', 'Spirit' and 'Body' are considerably shorter.

<sup>18</sup> The 'list of contributions' reveals the names of ministers, educated laymen and missionaries of various denominations. C F J Muller, who had some legal training, was mainly responsible for the administration, while Marais was responsible for the majority of the articles. Keet said that Marais 'was especially brilliant as writer of the column Kroniek' which he continued after his resignation as editor (1934:98f).

<sup>19</sup> He was buried on the same day as the General Louis Botha. Someone remarked that the 'prime minister of the church' was buried on the same day as the prime minister of the state (GM Sept 1919).

### General Theological Orientation

D F Malan, editor of Die Burger at the time of Marais's death, praised his 'theological erudition' and wrote as follows about the general orientation of his theology:

In Systematic Theology he inclined towards a moderate Calvinism. In the struggle occasioned by higher criticism, he held firmly to the orthodox position. In Apologetics he took up the cudgels fearlessly against the negative ideas of men like Semler, Strauss, Renan, and rationalism in general. In speculative philosophy he tried to give an objective explanation of the ancient systems and the more modern philosophies, without identifying himself with any one system.<sup>20</sup>

A study of Marais's writings confirms Malan's verdict. His articles in the ISBE gives the impression of a thorough knowledge of the biblical languages and the relevant literature and of a general conservative approach.<sup>21</sup> But this does not mean that Marais was 'a fundamentalist' in the sense of being a literalist. He said, for example:

That the serpent in the OT is not identified with Satan ... may be true. That the narrative of the Fall is figurative or symbolical may also be granted ... Great historic truths are imbedded in that narrative, whatever we may think of the form which that narrative has assumed.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Die Burger 29.8.1919. As Malan studied philosophy under him, and subsequently received a doctorate from Utrecht University on the philosophy of Berkeley (cf Malan 1905), his opinion of the abilities of Marais should carry considerable weight. In 1903 Marais wrote to A Moorrees: 'Malan did a respectable (fatsoenlike) examination in philosophy. At present I read Spinoza, Kant and Descartes with two students' (File P8 1/1 NGKA-CT). It may be added that Marais was opposed to the idea that Afrikaans should replace Dutch as the official language of state and church (GM June 1906). Marais also believed that the 'armed protest' of 1914 was sinful and that the NGK should have said so clearly. Malan disagreed with him on both counts (cf GM Dec 1915; Van der Watt 1987:308,344f).

<sup>21</sup> According to the 'Preface' it was intended to be 'reasonably conservative' (ISBE I:viii).

<sup>22</sup> 1915:492f. In 1892 he noted the 'amazing difference between the concepts of God and of sin (of the Pentateuch), and those of the pagan mythologies'. He admitted, on the other hand 'that it is not impossible that some of the laws were later additions. It is clear that our Pentateuch was revised ... It is therefore not improbable that in the later editorial work also such laws were taken up in the Lawbook which, though not dating from the

He tended to harmonize the differences between the first two chapters of Genesis, rather than emphasizing them, but he did not want to foreclose 'the critical question' (1915:147). It is, on the other hand, typical of Marais the apologist that he regarded 'the so-called critical theories' on the origin of the Pentateuch less seriously than the objections raised by contemporary science. He therefore dedicated a considerable part of his articles to the discussion of problems science raised.

More serious have been the objections raised on scientific grounds. The cosmogony of Gen has been disputed, and elaborate comparisons have been made between geological theories as to the origin of the world and the Mosaic account ... To this a twofold reply has been given: (1) The account in Gen is not scientific, or intended to be so: it is a prelude to the history of human sin and Divine redemption ... The aim is practical, not speculative; theological, not scientific. (2) Others have emphasized not the differences between science and Gen, but the harmony. (1915:147).

Marais realized the dangers inherent in both conservatism and radicalism. He founded the Gereformeerd Maandblad to keep his former students abreast of what was happening in the theological world. He was fairly open towards 'modern criticism' and emphasized its apologetic origin. Scholars want to make 'both the Bible and Christianity more acceptable to opposers'. It is very wrong when Christians are too unbending and put off honest seekers after the truth with an 'obstinate and precipitous orthodoxy'. But he warned that a policy of give and take is dangerous and not always successful. One may give so much away, that in the end 'one is left with only a skeleton, the rattling bones of a Christianity that died twice'.<sup>23</sup>

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time of Moses, were in any case added to the laws of Israel under the guidance of God' (GM Oct 1892:13).

<sup>23</sup> GM June 1892:15. Marais reported that 'the Social-Democrats in Germany' published a Bible on the basis of the ideas of 'higher criticism'. It claimed: 'Even if there is a God ... the Bible does not assure us of his help or gives us any Revelation'. Marais commented: 'From this we see clearly in which direction the work of a Colenso, a Kuenen

If Marais was a 'moderate Calvinist' a question should be asked about his relationship to the scholastic Calvinism of the 17th century. We have seen in a previous chapter that Hofmeyr rejected basic aspects of scholastic theology. Marais continued in this non-scholastic tradition.<sup>24</sup> In discussing the Fall he did not refer to the 'covenant of works' and related controversies around the imputation of sin, but simply said that Scripture 'clearly states that man's sinful condition stands in direct connection with the transgression of Adam' (1915:2498). Equally significant is his dismissal of a major 'proof-text', supposed to teach that Adam was obliged to fulfill a covenant of works: 'The OT allusion in Hosea 6:7 can hardly be referred to Adam's transgression'.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, Marais stood consciously within the reformed tradition, having a healthy and intelligent respect for the confessions. His evaluation of the Heidelberg Catechism is well worth repeating. Quoting an unnamed German source, he said that it 'combined the piety (innigheid) of Luther, the clarity of Melanchthon, the simplicity of Zwingli and the fire of Calvin' (GM July 1899). On the authority of the confessions, he said:

We accept them not in so far as, but because they are in accordance with the Word of God. They are therefore in no way above, not even equal to the Word of God, but they contain an explanation of the eternal truth of God, that was given as a wonderful fruit of the Spirit to the church through the

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and a Wellhausen takes us' (GM Oct 1892).

<sup>24</sup> In discussing the claim that there is a developed system of psychology in the Bible, he said: 'The Bible does not present us with a systematized philosophy of man, but gives in popular form an account of human nature in all its various relationships ... Great truths regarding human nature are presupposed in and accepted by the OT and NT; stress is there laid on other aspects of truth, unknown to writers outside of revelation, and presented to us, not in the language of the schools, but in that of practical life' (1915:2494).

<sup>25</sup> 1915:2498. Herman Bavinck, on the other hand, believed that this text does support the concept of the Covenant of Works (cf 1897 II:547). For a recent discussion on the origin of the foedus operum, cf Visser (1987) and McGiffert (1988).

centuries.<sup>26</sup>

In 1911, debating on the relationship between Scripture, confession and conscience, Marais said:

I dare not say that each person may judge Scripture, confession and revelation according to his conscience. Revelation is supreme, then the confession, based on the revelation, and finally the conscience, which must be enlightened by God's revelation. The conscience can only be a witness by the light of the Holy Spirit reflected in the confession derived from Scripture.<sup>27</sup>

Like the Heidelberg Catechism itself, Marais did not emphasize the doctrine of election, not even when he discussed the history of the Synod of Dort.<sup>28</sup> In the Maandblad of May 1893 he quoted Chalmers as saying that the gospel is an unlimited invitation to all to come to Christ: 'Salvation is for all ... it says "every one", and that includes you. It says "all", and that includes you ... what could be more certain and more free than that?' Like Hofmeyr, Marais emphasized the love of God, but in his case it was divine love as manifested in the atonement, rather than in the incarnation, that controlled his thinking.<sup>29</sup>

Marais identified five 'directions' in the Dutch Church, namely the Groninger, modernist, ethical, confessional and biblical-apologetical schools (1913:303). As he grouped

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<sup>26</sup> GM Jan 1893:6; emphasis in original.

<sup>27</sup> He added that Professor Calderwood of Edinburgh laid much emphasis on the 'infallibility' of the human conscience. Marais related that he was called upon in class to give his opinion on the matter, and, after much gestamel en gestotter he replied that he did not understand how the conscience could be infallible. 'The worthy man listened to me with great patience and called me after the lecture to walk with him. And so we went down Prince's Street and further in the direction of Morningside, he talking and I listening, all the way on the Kantian "infallible conscience."' (Kroniek GM Sep 1911).

<sup>28</sup> Cf GM Dec 1893 and Marais 1919:30ff. He took exception to the statement of Motley 'from whom one could expect something better', that the Synod 'pronounced the Heidelberg Catechism infallible' (1919:30).

<sup>29</sup> Cf for example his article on 'The Divine Sacrifice' in GM Jan 1894:140.

Kuyper with the confessionals, one may assume that he would have classed himself in the biblical-apologetical school of Utrecht but, according to Theron, he preferred Scottish theology to contemporary Dutch theology (1982:53). We may conclude that Marais was a biblical theologian, holding to the great truths of Scripture, orthodox in the sense that he rejected all rationalist modifications of the Christian faith. If he inclined more towards contemporary Scottish Calvinism than to Dutch theology, it should be understood that his was a non-scholastic biblical Calvinism.

### Anthropology

Marais believed that man is unique, 'called into existence by direct Divine interposition, after a Divine type' (1915:146). He said that the verb bara' in the creation narrative 'denotes God's creative activity without the use of second causes', but he did not reject the idea of evolution altogether.<sup>30</sup> On the differences between Genesis 1 and 2 he said that the first chapter describes man as the climax of creation, while the second describes him as its centre. The name Adam 'is applied to the race as well as to the individual' and it is therefore no wonder that Scripture calls man a son of God. Accordingly Marais emphasized the unity of the human race in the face of other theories such as polygenism and pre-adamitism (1915:147).

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<sup>30</sup> 'This much may fairly be granted, that within certain limits Scripture accepts an evolutionary process. In regard to the lower animals the creating (Gen 1:21) or making (v 28), is not described as an immediate act of Almighty Power, but as a creative impulse given to water and earth, which does not exclude, but rather calls into operation the powers that are in the sea and dry land ... It is only in the creation of man that God works immediately ... The stride or jump of Lyell and Huxley, the "halmatogenesis" of De Vries are names which in the simple narrative disappear before the pregnant sentence: "And God said." Theologians of repute have given a theistic coloring to the evolution theory' (Marais 1915:150).

In the light of the racial situation in South Africa, it is important to note his views on the nature of man. After mentioning possible differences between image and likeness, he made it clear that man bears the image of God. It is also remarkable that he quoted Calvin himself in this context:

At any rate we have scriptural warrant (see especially Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9) for the statement that the "image is the inalienable property of the race" (Laid-law), so that offence against a fellow-man is a desecration of the Divine image impressed upon man. Calvin has put it very clearly: *Imago Dei est integra naturae humanae praestantia* ("The image of God is the complete excellence of human nature").<sup>31</sup>

In answer to the question of the constituents of the image of God in man, Marais referred to Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10: 'Knowledge, righteousness and holiness may fitly be considered elements in the character of man as originally designed by God'.<sup>32</sup> Here there is a definite improvement on the view of John Murray who held that even unfallen man had to become the image of God, because the preexistent Logos was really the image of God.<sup>33</sup> He explained:

What is said of the Son of God absolutely, 'He is the express image

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<sup>31</sup> 1915:146; my emphasis (GT).

<sup>32</sup> 1915:146. He explained the 'image' further: 'Certainly in what is inalienably human - a body as the temple of the Holy Ghost ... and the rational, inspiring, inbreathed spirit. Hence man's personality ... linking him with what is above and separating him from what is beneath, constitutes him a being apart - a rational, self-conscious, self-determining creature, intended by his Creator for fellowship with Himself.' On the different OT terms for man he concluded that 'adham indicates 'the earthly side of man's origin', 'enosh describes man 'in his impotence, frailty, mortality' while 'ish describes man in his strength and vigour (145).

<sup>33</sup> Perhaps thinking of Murray and Hofmeyr, he wrote: 'Some, like Tertullian, considered the "image" to be that of the coming Christ (Christi futuri); others have maintained that Adam was created after the image of the Logos ... Of all this Scripture knows nothing. There man is represented as made after the image of "Elohim," of the Godhead and not of one person of the Trinity. Paul calls man "the image and glory (eikon kai doxa) of God (1 Cor 11:7). We may safely let the matter rest there' (1915:146).

(character) of God,' is applied to man relatively; the created son is not the only-begotten Son. The created son was 'like unto God' (homoiosis; 1 John 3:2), and even in his degradation there is the promise of renewal after that image: the eternal, only-begotten Son is God's equal (Phil 2:6,7), though he became a servant and was made in the likeness (homoiomati) of men.<sup>34</sup>

On the origin of the soul Marais says that man, 'inspired by God, was thereby constituted a nephesh hayyah'. This means that Scripture rejects 'all doctrines of emanation, by which is meant a natural, forth-flowing life from God into the human sphere' (1915:2495). This also means that Scripture does not teach the preexistence of the soul, 'a doctrine found in the extra-canonical, platonically inspired Book of Wisdom'.<sup>35</sup> On the age-old problem of creationism or traducianism he says: 'Whichever theory we accept, the difficulties are great either way. The problem is and remains insoluble'. Although he distinguished to some extent between psuche and pneuma he nevertheless rejected the tripartition of man (1915:2496).

His views on the difference between psuche and pneuma are based on a thorough discussion of the original texts, but in the end one is not quite sure of the result. He seems to suggest that 'soul' and 'spirit' are practically synonymous, but adds: 'And yet there is a

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<sup>34</sup> He added: 'Many ancient nations seem to have grasped this thought ... St Paul quotes a pagan poet in Acts 17:28, "We are also his offspring" (Aratus of Soli). This statement also occurs in the beautiful hymn to Jupiter, ascribed to Cleanthes, a Stoic native of Assos in the Troad, and contemporary of Aratus. Psychologically and historically therefore the Bible is justified' (Marais 1915:146).

<sup>35</sup> 1915:2495. He added that although 'this doctrine ... was taught in Talmud and Kabbalah' it was not an OT idea, but derived from Plato via Philo. Coming to modern writers, he said that the doctrine of the preexistence of the soul 'was accepted in modified form by Kant, Schelling and others, and was specially defended by Julius Mu"ller, who held that the soul had a timeless preexistence and underwent a fall before the final act, whereby it was united in time to the body as its temporary home.' (2495). It may be noted that both Hofmeyr and Murray were impressed by Mu"ller's work on sin (cf Kestell 1911:57).

distinction, whatever the real nature of it may be'.<sup>36</sup> After giving some more examples he concluded 'that philosophic distinction or scientific accuracy of expression' is not found in Scripture.

Man is there represented as a unity, and the various terms employed to indicate that unity in its diversity of activities or passivities do not necessarily imply the existence of different essences, or of separate organs, through which they are realized. Psychical action is sometimes ascribed to the body, as well as to the soul, for soul and body are inseparably united to each other. It is the possession of the soul which makes the body what it is, and on the other hand, a soul without a body is unthinkable. Hence in Scripture spirit and soul are interchangeably used with body for human nature in general, not as though indicating three separate entities, but as denoting a parallelism which brings out the full personality of man. Soul and body are threatened with destruction (Mt 10 28); body without spirit is a corpse (Jas 2 26); soul and spirit are interchangeably united.<sup>37</sup>

Again he said, on the relationship between body and soul: 'The body is not a prisonhouse, but a temple; not an adjunct but an integral part of the human being. The Bible ... speaks not only of a soul to be saved, but of a body to be redeemed' (1915: 2498). Yet, after these remarkable insights, he still attempted to define the difference between 'soul' and 'spirit'. Referring to various texts,<sup>38</sup> he said: 'Nephesh in man is the subject of personal life, whereof pneuma or ruah is the principle'.<sup>39</sup> He provisionally concluded that

'Soul', therefore, may well stand for the personal, living, animated being - the suffering, acting, thinking, reasoning, dying creature ... (while spirit may) indicate the all-embracing power, guiding the inward and outward life ... Hence by an easy gradation it may stand for the abysmal depths of per-

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<sup>36</sup> 1915:2496. In another context he made it clear that 'soul' and 'heart' can never be synonymous in Hebrew (1351).

<sup>37</sup> 1915:2497; my emphasis - GT. In another article he said: 'Properly speaking the Hebrew has no term for "body"'. (492).

<sup>38</sup> John 10:11; Luke 9:55; 4:36; 23:46 and Eph 2:2.

<sup>39</sup> 1915:2837. He added Oehler's distinction: 'Man is not spirit, but he has it: he is soul. In the soul which sprang from the spirit, and exists continually through it, lies the individuality - in the case of man his personality, his self, his ego'.

sonality; while 'soul' would express man's individuality in general. (1915:2497).

In spite of what he said about the unity of body and soul, it seems as if Marais, as was common in his time, indeed believed that the soul 'possesses immortality', not perhaps by its own virtue, but by its relationship with 'spirit'. 'Not as though immortality was absolutely lost; for with sin came decay, degeneration, death, not of the inbreathed spirit, but of the body into which the soul (psuche) was breathed by God' (1915:2498).

In a paragraph entitled 'The Immortality of the Soul' Marais moves imperceptibly from 'immortality' to 'resurrection'. He started off with the question: 'If the body is mortal, is the soul immortal?'<sup>40</sup> Pointing out that the OT does not teach 'this doctrine' as clearly as the NT, he concluded that the OT believer based all his hope on fellowship with God. 'That hope strengthened his soul when he shuddered at the darkness of Sheol' (1915:2499). Coming to the NT he talked about death as 'a separation of body and soul'. He finally emphasized that Christ is the 'Resurrection and the Life' without distinguishing between 'the immortality of the soul' and the 'resurrection of the body'.

One would have expected that Marais, with his thorough biblical and philosophical background, should have detected the fact that popular ideas about 'the immortality of the soul' are basically pagan, because they assume that the soul itself 'possesses' immortality. It is true that the Bible, not being a technical text book, does not make an absolute separation between the fact that 'God is my hope even in death' and 'the resurrection of the body'. Furthermore, as Marais has shown, there is a close relationship between the concepts 'body' and 'soul' on the one hand, and 'soul' and 'spirit' on the other. Neverthe-

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<sup>40</sup> 1915:2499. His summary of OT views on these questions is impressive.

less, the OT idea, namely that 'God is my hope even in death' is far removed from the popularized Platonic idea of 'the immortality of the soul'. One would have liked to see a clearer discontinuity between nature and grace, between 'the immortality of the soul' and the resurrection of the body.<sup>41</sup>

What is perhaps of more significance is the fact that Marais tended to use Scripture not principally as the witness to God's revelation in Jesus Christ, but as 'a mine' of theological information. On this point his departure from the tradition of Murray and Hofmeyr is quite distinct.<sup>42</sup>

### Sin

Like Hofmeyr Marais made it abundantly clear that the body is not sinful as such. The 'very first sin' was spiritual in its origin - an act of rebellion against God - the will of the creature in opposition to the will of the Creator' (1915:492). He concluded 'that the theory which connects sin with the physical body, and gives it a purely sensuous origin, is alien to the whole spirit and letter of revelation' (493).

On the other hand, he recognized the results of the fall on the whole man, specifically

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<sup>41</sup> As we have seen in chapter 4, Hofmeyr was influenced by similar Platonic or 'Kantian' ideas. Another example of this influence on Marais is his statement that body and soul is a dualism: 'Scripture acknowledges a dualism, which recognizes the separate existence of soul and body. It rejects the monism which makes man but a "doublefaced unity"'.(1915:2497). He defended dualism as the key to the philosophical problems of his day (Marais 1878).

<sup>42</sup> Even when Hofmeyr 'defended' the Bible, as it were, he still emphasized the centrality of the incarnation. 'How joyful should we be while we know that the Son of God became man ... How fortunate we are that we have the Bible that reveals this fact to us in all its glory ... What a light is cast by this fact on the nature of God! The most glorious thing we know about God is his love ... and how clearly is that love revealed in the Incarnation.' (The Incarnation of the Word GM Aug 1892; his emphasis).

on human psychology (1915:2498), and believed in the doctrine of total depravity:

The radical corruption of human nature is ... brought into connection with the heart. It is "uncircumcised"; and "hardened; "wicked"; "perverse"; "godless"; "deceitful and desperately wicked". It defiles the whole man; resists, as in the case of Pharaoh, the repeated call of God ...(but) ... the "heart" may be "renewed" by grace, because the "heart" is the seat of sin'.<sup>43</sup>

As apologist Marais took issue with evolutionism on the problem of death. Death is not a 'natural phenomenon', but is related to sin, and in revealing this 'Scripture alone accounts for death and explains it' (1915:2498). Death came indeed by man, according to the Scriptures, but the resurrection from the dead will also come by man.<sup>44</sup> 'The resurrection-body has become a possibility through the atonement and resurrection of Christ'. Therefore

Whatever the ultimate verdict of science may be regarding the "utility" of death in regard to the human race, Scripture considers it abnormal, unnatural, a punishment ... the result of man's wrongdoing ... but death is not a hopeless separation of body and soul ... for Christ has brought "life and immortality to light." (1915:2499).

### Christology

As Marais was often occupied by the problems of Apologetics, his theology focussed far less on Christology than either Murray's or Hofmeyr's. His references to Christ are therefore often found in relation to other topics, such as Christ and the OT, Christ and civilization or Christ and culture.

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<sup>43</sup> 1915:1351. He added that the heart 'has come to stand for the centre of its moral, spiritual and intellectual life ... (it) is sometimes rendered mind ... thus "heart" comes to stand for "conscience", for which there is no word in Hebrew' (1351).

<sup>44</sup> 1915:2499. At this point one feels he should not have said 'will come', but the resurrection came by man, the Man.

In his column Kroniek in the first edition of the Gereformeerd Maandblad Marais reported on the criticism of the Pentateuch. He mentioned the conservative argument that Jesus himself 'put his stamp' on the Mosaic origin of these books and how this was 'a well-nigh impossible' hurdle for those who accepted the new teaching. He also referred to the 'kenotic argument' as used, among others, by Bishop Gore in his work The Incarnation of the Son of God, but without giving his own views of the matter:

There are those who say simply that the Saviour accommodated himself to the popular beliefs, and mentioned Moses without giving authority thereby to the opinion that he was the author of the books named after him. Others again say that the Saviour as man, as Jew and child of his own time, did not know what the critics of our time know. They argue that at the incarnation he emptied himself and gave up his divine characteristics, specifically also his knowledge. Of things not strictly related to his calling as Saviour of the world, He as a human being, knew nothing. (GM May 1892:4).

In successive editions of the Maandblad Marais often came back to the problem of the Pentateuch, and, as critics gradually became more radical, Marais became more conservative. As we have noted above, by 1915 it was clear that he did not accept the major propositions of the critical views on the Pentateuch. It is remarkable that he never claimed the authority of Jesus for the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch. Neither did he return to the kenotic argument on this problem.<sup>45</sup> This was, of course, methodologically the soundest way - the Pentateuch problems had to be discussed on their own merits. Although this does not necessarily mean that he rejected kenoticism, the fact that he never discussed it in his writings would suggest that he did not follow Murray and Hofmeyr in their Christological views.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> As we have seen in the previous chapters, the kenoticism of Murray and Hofmeyr was not related to 'higher criticism', but to the reality of the humanity of Christ in general.

<sup>46</sup> The silence of Marais on the historical Jesus stands in contrast to Hofmeyr's fascination with him. Equally significant is Hofmeyr's silence on the Pentateuch problem.

Marais was understandably interested in the relationship between civilization and Christianity. The ancient civilizations were 'defective in morality' and this led to their downfall. The Christian faith, on the other hand, provided certain basic teachings absolutely necessary for the development and preservation of civilizations:

The triumphs of humanism ended in chaos ... At the time when Paganism came to an end, Christianity came on the scene. It both acknowledged a breach and it attempted to heal the breach, it demanded repentance, it offered forgiveness, it preached salvation ... sin, grace, salvation are the necessary stages on the way, and only then can the excelsior flag be hoisted. (GM April 1900:184).

Christianity is therefore not in conflict with humanism, rather humanism's only hope. 'The humanity of man is not destroyed by Christianity, but it ennobles, sanctifies, reforms, and renews'. In one instance Marais based his idea of the Christianization of human culture on the incarnation: 'Starting from the fact that God became man, Christianity tries to bring man and God together'. But he made no attempt, within this context, to develop the significance of the incarnation. Equally important for our understanding of Marais is the fact that he applied this view to both contemporary Western civilization and the 'civilizing function' of missions (GM April 1900:185).

### Ecclesiology

Marais was interested in the well-being of the church: its organization, the training of its ministers and its practice of philanthropy and missions. In respect of the relationship between the local church and Synods, he was a convinced Presbyterian, who believed that the principles on which the binding power of classical and synodical decisions were based,

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were Scriptural. In his view this system expressed the unity of the church 'in the most biblical way'. In a number of articles in the Maandblad he therefore took issue with what was called a tendency towards 'Independentism' in the NGK.<sup>47</sup> His discussion of the Shand case in Tulbagh shows that he disapproved of the Puritan view of the church as a gathering of the regenerate only (1919:173ff).

During the conference on the 'rebellion', or 'armed protest,' held in Bloemfontein in January 1915, Marais discussed the theme: 'The Lord of the church'.<sup>48</sup> He pointed out that the church was going through a difficult time, but he reminded his hearers that 'the church was founded under the cross and expanded under the cross'. In the book of Revelation the Lord assures each congregation: 'I know your works'. Marais emphasized that the church is the ekklesia, called by the Lord, but also kuriake, 'wrought by the Lord, belonging to one community of faith in the Lord Jesus'. We must not be pessimistic because we are assured in Revelation that the Lord holds the church in his right hand, but, if we believe this, we must, like John, 'fall down before Him as dead', realizing our dependence on the Lord of the church.<sup>49</sup>

In the various editions of his Kroniek during those months, he likewise emphasized the necessity of obedience to the Lord of the church, and not to 'popular movements', as

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<sup>47</sup> Cf GM June 1906. He was especially concerned about the fact that some congregations failed to support synodical projects, for example, the scheme for 'poor whites' at Kakamas. In 1915 he endorsed an article by D G Malan, which expressed the same views (Het Presbyterianisme GM Sep 1915).

<sup>48</sup> The second speaker was Rev A J Louw whose theme was: 'The Church of the Lord' (cf P R du Toit 1982:65).

<sup>49</sup> A summary of his speech appeared in De Zuid-Afrikaan verenigd met Ons Land, Tuesday 2.2.1915.

well as the Christian duty of forgiveness and brotherly love.<sup>50</sup> In July 1915 he published and fully endorsed the open letter of Andrew Murray to D F Malan, where the former said: 'Give the Lord what is his: The Lordship over his church, the unity and the love of his children and the devotion of the church and its servants ..'.<sup>51</sup> A few months later he published Murray's open letter to all members of the NGK, again heavily underscored by himself. Murray emphasized the 'new commandment' given by Jesus, which meant that 'they must love each other as he loved them ... It is clear that just as the love for sinners is the highest glory of God, in the same way brotherly love is the highest glory of the church on earth'.<sup>52</sup>

From these, admittedly fragmentary pieces of evidence, it would be wrong to conclude that Marais had a low view of the church. Although there is little direct information on his views, we may safely assume that they were more in line with Scottish Presbyterianism than with Dutch Kuyperianism.<sup>53</sup> It is unfortunate that Marais was not responsible for Systematic Theology, because that would have given him the opportunity to develop his doctrine of the church.

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<sup>50</sup> Marais did not approve of SA's participation in World War I. He defended his attendance of a prayer meeting in the Cape Town city hall, 'because we were used, during the Boer War, to come together in prayer' and it was an opportunity to pray 'for one of my nephews in a French hospital, for the sons and grandsons of ministers of our Church and other young men from our congregations' fighting in Europe (Kroniek GM April 1918).

<sup>51</sup> GM July 1915; cf also Du Plessis 1920a:442ff; GM Aug 1917.

<sup>52</sup> GM Sep 1915. Murray added: 'The Church over-emphasized faith in Christ, and neglected to preach love, the indispensable fruit of faith. The result is that people consider themselves Christians, while they do not consider that love to the brethren, just as love to their enemies, is the most important characteristic of a disciple of the loving Jesus'.

<sup>53</sup> On his relationship with Kuyper, see paragraph on Ecumenical Relations, below.

### Ecumenical Relations

Marais expressed his views on ecumenical relations in a comment on two inter-denominational meetings held in 1892. The one was a regular meeting at Keswick and the other was a meeting at Grindelwald, in Switzerland, where a number of ministers from a variety of denominations came together at the suggestion of Dr Lunn, editor of the 'Review of the Churches' to discuss church unity. Marais commented:

Grindelwald proposed a unification of denominations: Keswick a unity of all believers. With the former the denomination is prominent; with the latter it is in the background. The former see mainly the external; the latter see mainly the internal. (GM Sep 1892).

In later years Marais had reservations about Keswick, but at that stage he gave it his full support.<sup>54</sup> He expressed appreciation for their emphasis on Christ and on a more 'victorious life', teachings that 'encourage a real unity'. But he was not very enthusiastic about the prospects of the embryonic ecumenical movement.

The danger of the Grindelwalders is to make too much of the denomination and thus to put external unification in the place of an inner unity ... What is going to happen to Grindelwald no-one can say. To us it looks too much like a number of mercury-drops that have come together. They are united for a time, but the least bit of movement is enough to divide them again. Unity without external unification is better than an external unification without unity. Only there is unity where love for Christ binds the members to each other. (GM Sep 1892).

This view was not prompted by any desire at isolation *per se*. The Gereformeerde Maandblad itself was an expression of ecumenicity. With this publication Marais wanted to keep South African Christians in contact with the church in the world. The fact that Marais preferred Keswick to Grindelwald is an indication of the type of ecumenicity he believed

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<sup>54</sup> Cf GM Sep 1892. Marais wrote, for example: 'Good and pious evangelists sometimes do preach an extreme and unbiblical perfectionism which did a lot of harm, but at Keswick people try to avoid this type of thing'.

in.<sup>55</sup> It was a far cry from the spirit that saw isolation as a virtue. Numerous examples from the Gereformeerd Maandblad may be cited to indicate his sustained interest in the world church.

The edition of August 1892, for example, carried reports on the China Inland Mission, mission work by the Presbyterian Church of England, the Basle Mission, 'Irish Church Missions', the Rhenish Missionary Society and the world-wide work of the Moravians. In October 1892 there is a report on the impressive missionary work of the United Presbyterian Church 'of our esteemed friend, dr Laws', another on the mission work of the Free Church and a notice of the meeting of the 'Panpresbyterian Council'. The edition of December 1892 carried a report on the office of deaconesses in the German churches. The issue of June 1894 related the history of the Paris Evangelical Mission in Lesotho, and in the same issue there is a notice of the unexpected death of Adolphe Mabile at the age of 54.

His relationship with the churches in the Netherlands was ambiguous. This was of course partly due to the influence of rationalism in the theological faculties, but it is very clear that Marais did not find the ideas of Abraham Kuyper, the defender of orthodoxy, very congenial.<sup>56</sup> Although he sometimes quoted Stemmen voor Waarheid en Vrede of the

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<sup>55</sup> With reference to the proposed meeting of missionary societies in New York in 1900, Marais expressed the hope that 'there will soon be a visible bond ... which would unify the whole body, of which the result will be: one great, mighty, World-wide Missionary Society' (GM Dec 1899:122).

<sup>56</sup> In his Kroniek (GM July 1893) Marais said: 'Dr Kuyper does and says the most extraordinary things. There is no end to his fault-finding with those who differ from him. This time he has attacked Missions. Starting from the thesis that "our fathers did not speak ... of Mission, but of the planting of the Church," he raised the following objections against non-denominational missions (niet-Kerkelijke Zendingsverenigingen)'. After giving a summary of eight objections, Marais commented: 'How difficult a time Paul would have had, if Dr Kuyper heard him saying: "Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the

confessional party in the State Church, he had little enthusiasm for the ecclesiastical scene in Holland.<sup>57</sup> In contrast to this Marais held the Scottish Presbyterian Churches in high esteem.<sup>58</sup> In 1894, for example, the Maandblad ran a series of four very appreciative articles on the history of the Free Church.<sup>59</sup>

On the other hand, suggestions that the NGK should unite with the 'Episcopal Church' raised the ire of this otherwise peace-loving man. Marais saw this as ignorance combined with arrogance. In 1892 he reported that the 'new bishop of Bloemfontein' had said in London that his great desire was 'to bring the NGK back to the fold of the Catholic Church'. He expressed his amazement about how difficult it was for some 'Episcopalians' to understand 'that Presbyterians have no desire at all to become members of their church' (GM Aug 1892). In June 1894 a correspondent in the 'Southern Cross' expressed the opinion that 'the Afrikaners' respect for the Nagmaal' might easily be converted into a respect for the 'true eucharist'. Marais pointed out that such ignorance of the NGK of

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gospel." ... Is it not most dreadful that a minister of the gospel should say such things of Missions? Should any one be surprised at the fact that the Netherlands do so little for the extension of the Kingdom of God, with this type of spiritual leader?"

<sup>57</sup> According to his report on the 'Church Struggle in Holland' he found the 'bickering' between Kuyper and the confessional party in the State Church 'terrible', and prayed that God would keep 'our church from this type of conflict' (GM Nov 1892:9).

<sup>58</sup> During the second half of the 19th century practically all theological students of the NGK who proceeded overseas, went for a shorter or longer period to Scotland. Among them were Marais himself, P J G de Vos, J Roos, A M McGregor, G W Stegmann jnr, J du Plessis, B Marchand, etc. T B Muller received a doctorate from Edinburgh University in 1913.

<sup>59</sup> January to April. The jubilee-festivities of the 'Free Church', held in May 1893, were reported in the Kroniek of July 1893. The issue of September 1892 carried a particularly long report on the General Assembly of the 'Free Church'.

necessity put any hopes of unification into the distant future.<sup>60</sup>

Even stronger was his disapproval of the Roman Catholic Church and all attempts to submit in some way to her influence. Marais, and his co-editor C F J Muller, reminded their readers from time to time of the importance of the reformation heritage. In the Gereformeerd Maandblad of November 1892, for example, he encouraged ministers to pay more attention to the annual anniversary of the reformation, and in the issue of December 1892 there appeared a long article on the persecution of evangelicals in Spain.

#### The War and Ecumenical Relations

In April 1900 Marais discontinued the publication of the Gereformeerd Maandblad because of the disruption of postal services in parts of the country. We therefore have his comments on the war for only a few months, but they reveal him as a man of peace. He was, of course, no extremist. There is ample evidence that he was a loyal subject of Queen Victoria and quite proud to live under British rule.<sup>61</sup> Because of the granting of monopolies and the accusations of corruption, it is not strange that he was critical of the Transvaal government.<sup>62</sup> And at Stellenbosch Marais was unpopular with 'certain people' because he persisted in holding services in English in spite of the fact that it was frowned upon after

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<sup>60</sup> Two decades earlier the position was more favourable for union, but even Andrew Murray could not accept episcopacy. It is interesting to note that while Bishop Gray appealed to the ecumenical Calvin, the NGK firmly held to the letter of the Institutes (Du Plessis 1920a:264ff).

<sup>61</sup> Cf his comment to his US friends in GM Sep 1892:13.

<sup>62</sup> When the Saturday Review claimed that corruption was rife in the Transvaal administration, Marais expressed the earnest hope that the people of Transvaal would now, after the Jameson raid, 'take hands and clean the Augean stable' so that the 'Transvaal State would be Christian in deed, as it is already in name' (GM Aug 1896:50).

the Jameson raid.<sup>63</sup>

However, as one reads the columns of the Maandblad, it becomes clear that he was sympathetic towards the Transvaal cause.<sup>64</sup> And yet, it is remarkable how objective he was in his outlook on the war. Although he had access to German and Dutch journals, he never used their accusations against the British without other verification; and for most of his information he relied on British papers.<sup>65</sup> He often quoted from The Christian, the Review of Reviews of W T Stead, The Sentinel, the British Weekly and other secular and religious papers. This does not mean that the Maandblad suddenly became a propaganda machine - very far from it. The paper continued with its usual ecclesiastical, theological and devotional articles; it was mainly in the Kroniek where Marais discussed topics relating to the war.

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<sup>63</sup> According to an article in GM Dec 1915, Dr Viljoen and certain students complained about the English services conducted on Sunday evenings in the Moederkerk. It was presumably Dr W Viljoen, professor of education, who became Superintendent of Education in the OFS in 1903. The Kroniek of March 1897 reported that a portion of the congregation at Graaff-Reinet objected to the English services. Marais defended the session's decision to continue with the English services 'as this custom existed since 1834 in the NGK' and 200 young people attended the English services in Graaff-Reinet.

<sup>64</sup> One could expect him to have sympathy with the Republics because of the ties of faith and language which bound the Afrikaner-people together. Second, as England's cause was not a popular one in Europe, it would have been strange for him not to have sympathy with the Republics. However, it is equally clear that Marais did not favour, let alone encourage, the taking up of arms by citizens of the Cape Colony. Marais was therefore consistent when he condemned the 'armed protest' of 1914.

<sup>65</sup> In Jan 1900 he reported in his Kroniek that England ceded the Samoa islands to Germany to keep the Germans from helping Transvaal. The report was taken from The Christian, which deplored the fact that the work of the LMS suffered greatly because of that opportunistic political move. In the same edition Marais poked fun at a report from the Cape Times which said that the sultan of Turkey has refrained from giving signs of partisanship with the Boers. 'Amazing!' said Marais, 'according to the Cape Times the anti-Christian Turk is the only one in Europe who sympathizes with England!'

From what he has written it is obvious that he was greatly disturbed by the fact that two 'Christian nations' were at war. He quoted The Christian of 9 November 1899, that said that 'this generation has witnessed nothing so humiliating as two Christian nations in mortal struggle a few months after the Peace Parliament from which people had such high hopes' (Kroniek GM Jan 1900).

Marais was genuinely surprised by the fact that the greater majority of British people, including many Christians, did not oppose 'the war of the capitalists' that was so brutally and blatantly unjust. It seemed as if the British volk suddenly became blind or intoxicated.

Even those whose honour and character we do not doubt, support Chamberlain, a man in whom the darker side of the English national character is incarnated ... the famous and highly-civilized Farrar, who has shown that he has an open eye for the sins of the house of Herod, supports the government with his considerable influence, and the poet Swinburne encourages violence. It is extremely sad that the ear of the English people is deaf for the voice of righteousness, to say nothing of the voice of peace.<sup>66</sup>

He was especially scandalized by the fact that the British Weekly attacked Andrew Murray, 'who has previously received so much honour, but who condemns the war'. He added that Murray could find no audience and no publisher for 'his pious and manly protest' (Kroniek G M April 1900).

If he was severely shocked by the attitude of some, he was greatly encouraged by the voices of warning and moderation that came from certain sections of the British press. He therefore gave ample space to reports that showed that there were indeed some who spoke out against the spirit of violence. Marais quoted a letter of a Reverend Kennedy of the diocese of Carlisle, who responded to an episcopal letter which instructed ministers to pray

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<sup>66</sup> Kroniek GM April 1900. It should be noted that 'English' is normally used in Afrikaans for either 'English' or 'British'.

for a victory of British arms. With admirable courage Kennedy wrote:

How can a minister who knows the facts, pray for this murderous raid (moordenaarsroofocht), this reckless attack and brutal use of might over right? The war was occasioned by capitalists, Chamberlain and Rhodes; its aim was to steal the mines and to establish an empire. To pray for success in such a war one has to turn to the devil, not to God. (Kroniek GM March 1900).

Marais lamented the fact that 'unsuspecting young men' were sent out to kill an enemy that has done them no wrong and asked if this is the Christian way to solve problems between nations. 'Must the sword forever consume? Will there never come an end to the rule of the strongest?' (GM March 1900). In January 1900 he published a long quotation from the Review of Reviews which condemned the war as motivated by the passion to rule. He quoted W T Stead as saying, among other things: 'If Christianity is not a mere sham ... (this war) is a deadly sin'. Stead particularly exposed the fact that it was a war of revenge, and that certain 'war-loving' spiritual leaders 'could find no words to warn their flocks not to give themselves over to a spirit of primitive barbarism'. This was the case in spite of the fact 'on the railway platforms ... when they landed in Natal ... when they stormed Elandslaagte with bayonet in hand, the words "Revenge for Majuba!" were on the lips of our soldiers'. Stead added: 'Nothing more unworthy is to be imagined than a mighty Empire, justifying a war of extermination with the desire to revenge a reverse which one regiment received in a skirmish on the border'.<sup>67</sup>

But Marais did not dwell excessively on the sins of others. He was obviously very concerned that South African Christians should not judge or hate the British people. He therefore distinguished between the aims of the government and the British people,

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<sup>67</sup> In the same issue Marais referred with gratitude to The Sentinel who objected to the fact that Andrew Murray was attacked by a section of the British press.

especially the Christians among them. In the Kroniek of March 1900 he warned that 'it would be a bad day if we should hate the British nation. Hate is never Christian. All hatred is evil'. He then recounted some of the contributions of the British to Christianity and civilization.<sup>68</sup> He concluded that 'under the subjects of Queen Victoria there are many, many sincere Christians who adorn their faith with their lives'. In the following issue he enlarged on the same topic.<sup>69</sup>

Neither were his eyes closed for the sins and weaknesses of his own people. After 88 years his words sound strangely modern:

It is possible that we as a South African people have a cleaner slate than the government of Transvaal. Nevertheless, there is enough reason to humble ourselves before God because of our sins as a people. Furthermore, how will this nation be saved from becoming a prey to war-fever, if the people of God would not do everything in their power to purify and uplift public opinion? If a strong retarding influence is absent, this war will do immeasurable harm in strengthening the war-sentiment of the people. It must be our sincere endeavour to restrain the passions and to subdue the spirit of revenge, so that it may eventually be possible to encourage a just, merciful and permanent peace.<sup>70</sup>

Marais ascribed the 'moral decline' of Britain to the fact that many of their leaders have become agnostics, 'because their faith was undermined by writers such as Stuart Mill, Spencer, Huxley, Tyndal, Lecky, Lubbock and Lyell'. Another cause was a mere ritualistic

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<sup>68</sup> He mentioned English literature specifically, as well as the contribution of English-speaking South Africans to trade and commerce, and 'above all, their contributions to philanthropic and missionary work'.

<sup>69</sup> Under the title War and Missions, Marais pleaded with his readers not to condemn the British people 'because their government has brought this terrible disaster on our country' (Kroniek GM April 1900).

<sup>70</sup> Kroniek Jan 1900; my emphasis (GT). In another issue Marais, referring to the influence of the French revolution in Holland, said: 'In the previous century, we have danced around the dead tree of freedom, cursing the house of Orange. That was not very noble, let us not judge England so easily' (GM March 1900).

religion. 'All these influences have diminished the moral power of England' (GM March 1900). He expressed the hope, on the other hand, that the war would have a beneficial influence on the Afrikaners themselves, in a true dedication to God and a new obedience, especially in relation to the missionary task of the church. Right from the beginning, therefore, he called for prayers. In the Kroniek of November 1899 he gave a short summary of the war situation, and continued:

We are only at the beginning of the travail. The wind was sown, we are still to reap the whirlwind. And what a harvest will it be for our poor depressed and plague-ridden fatherland! In the meantime, while the world derides us, the people of God over the whole of SA are humbling themselves before the throne of grace ... We believe in God, and therefore we pray. We love our fatherland, and therefore we pray. We are depressed by the need of the times, therefore we pray ... but oh, how many years must still pass before there will be peace in this land of 'Good Hope'. Up till today it was and still remains the 'Cape of Storms'.

From all this it is clear that his ecumenical spirit was put to the test by the war. He did not expect much sympathy from the local 'Episcopal Church'. Neither were relations with the 'Congregational Union' on a good footing, ostensibly for theological reasons.<sup>71</sup> It was, however, his love and respect for the 'Free Scottish Church' that was subjected to the severest test. In the issue of January 1900 Marais reported that a Presbyterian congregation has recently been founded at Stellenbosch, served by 'one of the ministers who fled from Johannesburg'. This 'young minister' made remarks on the 'sentimental howling' of the

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<sup>71</sup> A letter received from Rev J C Ritchie of the 'Congregational Union', invited the NGK to leave its 'lager of ecclesiastical conservatism and to come out from between the wheels of the ox-wagon Cherubim, where our Dutch friends defy the "Higher Criticism"'. Marais commented: 'What a glorious thing to be under the influence of the spirit of the times if this is the result! Truly, the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican may well be read and reread in our days, and not the least at the meetings of the "Congregational Union"'. (GM Oct 1892:5).

NGK on a day of humiliation and prayer appointed in view of the war.<sup>72</sup> Marais commented: 'He is young and without experience and will surely eventually learn more wisdom'. But it must have been a particularly hard blow for Marais, who has led the 'Scottish services' at Stellenbosch for many years. He added however, that according to The Christian, many people in Britain were also calling for a day of humiliation and prayer. The same issue reported on a speech by Dr James Stewart of Lovedale:

It pains us to say that Dr Stewart of Lovedale has identified himself with those who encourage the war. The 'Edinburgh Evening News' rapped him smartly over the fingers, and Reverend Muller, our new professor, has roundly rebuked the doctor from Lovedale ... We only want to add that we expected something nobler from Dr Stewart.<sup>73</sup>

Many expected that hostilities would soon be terminated, but as they wore on, Marais became less patient with his brethren of the Free Church of Scotland'. In the Kroniek of April 1900 he said that, in spite of their beautiful words 'we have experienced in these times very little friendship' from them, and added:

We honour the 'United Presbyterians' who defended our church, while the 'Free Church' remained silent, and her Moderator opposed us. Professor Orr deserves our gratitude. He took trouble to understand our country, our people, our church. But the Cape Presbyterians, who have so much to say about brotherly love, have proved that speaking and doing are not always the same. (GM April 1900:181).

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<sup>72</sup> Cf Een Sentimenteel Gezanik (GM Jan 1900:132).

<sup>73</sup> GM Jan 1900:133. The previous issue contains a short article on 'Dr Livingstone and the Boers', in response to the fact that 'Dr Stewart has repeated the old story in Scotland, England and America, of the way in which Livingstone was treated by the Boers, and said things which cannot pass the test of truth.' Marais referred to the work of Theal and to the contemporary report of Scholtz (GM Dec 1899:117ff), also quoted later by Du Plessis on the same topic (1911:44ff).

### Church and People

In 1881, on a day of thanksgiving for the restoration of peace in the Transvaal, Marais preached a sermon at Stellenbosch entitled 'True Patriotism'. This sermon gives us an insight into his views on the relationship between church and people. The sermon was by no means a fiery nationalistic one. Marais commenced with a warning that he would not enlarge 'on various political views', and expressed the hope that God would keep all ministers of the gospel from the temptation 'to mix the earthly with the heavenly' in order to obtain a temporary popularity, because 'patriotism without piety is of little value' (Marais 1898:1). Patriotism is a honorable word which people should not abuse in 'worldly politics'. Patriotism is not 'public opinion', that fickle and changing feeling of the majority 'that is often an idol'; 'public opinion ... had stoned Stephen, beheaded Paul and crucified Jesus'. True patriotism is found with the minority 'who are bowed down with the suffering of the country, who shed tears over the sins of the people, who, like Moses, pray ... before the Lord: "O God, save the people, and if not ... blot me out the book which you have written!"' (1898:2).

With reference to Genesis 11, Marais reminded his hearers that the variety of nations and languages is a bitter fruit of sin. In view of the subsequent history of the interpretation of this text in the NGK, it is significant that he saw the separation occasioned by the tower of Babel not as a blessing 'but as the necessary result of godlessness'. Equally important is the fact that Marais interpreted Babel in the light of Pentecost:

Is it not remarkable that, when God intervened again in the history of the world, there came an end to national identity and differences of language? On Pentecost the disciples, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, spoke one language ... God himself destroyed the lines of division that were drawn between language and language, and nation and nation. (1898:3).

The spirit of separation, says Marais, is from the evil one. 'The devil rules by separation; God unites. He blesses by unifying'. And God is preparing this world gradually to enjoy the eventual unification of nations and languages and peoples. That day will surely come, but only in God's good time (1898:3). Unfortunately Marais weakened his argument by postponing the full significance of Pentecost, in contrast to Babel, to heaven. There is, no doubt, truth in believing that full unity will only be experienced 'when God is all and in all'. But, as Scripture was given to guide believers on earth, it is hardly correct to understand the unity of Pentecost as only a prophecy concerning a future state. Pentecost was certainly God's answer to the curse of Babel.<sup>74</sup>

Marais argued that God approved of the separation of nations: 'The separation of nations occasioned by sin is now being used by God to bring his wise plans to fulfillment' (1898:3). He explained that God acknowledges the varieties of national gifts, 'because each nation has to make its particular contribution to the development of Gods glorious plans with this world'. On the basis of this fact Marais argued that 'separation has become something natural' (3). Remarkably he mentioned as dangerous the fusion of nations in 'Socialism and Communism and the spirit of revolution of our times'. If these ideas found general acceptance it would spell the end of the nations and even of the unity among Christians (4). Some aspects of the small intellectual stock of the doctrine of apartheid were coined long ago: 'With the obliteration of divisions, acknowledged by God, every-

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<sup>74</sup> Although Marais did not use this text as it came to be used later, it was probably the first time that this notorious 'proof-text' for apartheid was quoted in the context of a discussion on unity and diversity in SA.

thing is being given over to dissolution and destruction'.<sup>75</sup> His main concern in this sermon was to warn against 'a still greater' danger: 'A narrow-minded, morbid, biased patriotism has done immeasurable evil throughout history'.<sup>76</sup> This all too common one-sided patriotism is a curse, and he warned that where it prevailed in a nation, it worked against all real civilization and progress.

People cut themselves off from others, they become narrow-minded, suspicious, they nurse hatred and jealousy, and all these work an inner perversion that will eventually lead even to the dissolution of a nation, a state and the church. We cannot warn enough against this danger, because human beings are prejudiced by nature, because our sinful hearts are narrow-minded by nature. If one desires to save his people, he must have a wide and balanced view, a strong love and an enthusiasm coupled with wisdom. (1898:5).

If a fusion of the nations is not a good thing, neither is a total separation. A Christian loves his country, but his eyes are always on the other Fatherland. Therefore he 'acts in a reconciling manner' between these extremes. True patriotism cannot destroy the bond of brotherly love. Whether the brother is

Barbarian or Scyth, servant or freeman, Jew or Gentile, German or Englishman - where there is love for the Lord, the divisions caused by patriotism are destroyed. If God has brought them together in one country, they work together for the well-being of that land ... Each gift, each talent, each originality is necessary; the glorious harmony is found exactly in a unity in

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<sup>75</sup> 1898:4. It is clear from the context, however, that Marais did not refer here to racial distinctions, but to the separate political and cultural existence of various nations.

<sup>76</sup> 1898:5; emphasis in original. In 1906 Marais warned against a misuse of nationalism. He encouraged SA students to qualify themselves as best they could in view of the educational needs of the country. 'If we are satisfied with a BA, and better qualified foreigners are appointed to senior posts, we must not be dissatisfied and cry up national feeling.' He reminded his readers of the example of the Japanese who see to it that they first master 'European knowledge' and afterwards return to serve their country (GM June 1906:83).

the midst of diversity.<sup>77</sup>

The Christian patriot does not hate or despise those who differ from him in politics. He has one supreme aim, and that is 'to bring his country and his people under the power of God's sanctifying love' (1898:6). Therefore the noblest kind of patriotism is found in the Bible, where we see people like Paul, Moses and the prophets rebuking the sins of the people and resisting public opinion. 'The Christian patriot will never flatter; he will always pray. And when sin increases in the nation, he will warn and admonish even when the majority would ... throw suspicion on his noblest motives' (7).

Coming specifically to the question of the Transvaal independence he said that 'there was too much self-congratulation and too much pride in our patriotism'. Public opinion had its shibboleths and a person was not allowed to have his own views, even if he 'was deeply concerned and prayed continuously for the Transvaal'. Amid the enthusiasm of a superficial patriotism so few really made that situation a matter of prayer. There were indeed a few 'whose hearts sighed for the Transvaal, precisely because they felt very deeply that God's hand rested heavily on that country'. They were the people who prayed: "'We have sinned and have been unjust and we have done wrong by departing from your ways and statutes. Therefore the curse written in the law of Moses came upon us'" (1898:8). Up to now, Marais continued, people had been interested in the political situation in the Transvaal, but the time had come that Christians should look at the ecclesiastical, educational, social and moral situation in that country, which was not encouraging.

Piety is waning, because (political) passions were victorious. The conqueror is often the conquered, a victory on the battlefield is all too often a defeat in regard to the moral and religious life. (1898:9).

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<sup>77</sup> 1898:5; my emphasis (GT).

Marais viewed patriotism or nationalism as natural and neutral. The important question was what would become of an 'awakened nationalism', in 'which direction will our patriotism develop itself? What kind of fruit will it bear for Transvaal?' (1898:8). He therefore challenged the congregation of Stellenbosch, 'that is known for her patriotism', to do something practical to remedy the situation. Young people of Stellenbosch would naturally prefer to stay in the Western Cape, but they should go to Transvaal as ministers and teachers to uplift the people with education and the gospel.<sup>78</sup>

There is something sentimental in our national character. Our religion sometimes degenerates into mere feeling ... And many leave it at these experiences. Shall our patriotism likewise degenerate? ... Prayer and obedience are inseparable, not confused and yet united. If we want to see Transvaal saved, in God's name, let us pray, but let us also take each others' hands in dedicated action for the salvation of that country. (1898:9).

On the 25 August 1892, at the end of the academic year, Marais delivered a lecture on the ecclesiastical situation in the United States.<sup>79</sup> After an appreciation of the country's history and geography he deplored the darker aspects of contemporary American life: the increase of crime and 'weaker types of immigrants'. Marais especially deplored 'the heaping up of capital' and 'the terrifying power' of plutocracy. 'Before her everything must go. This is possibly America's greatest curse' (GM Sep 1892:13). He quoted an American writer who said that capitalism, and not apostasy from the doctrines of the church, made the 19th century the most irreligious of all.

'There is a depth which is lower than Atheism ... and we have fallen in this depth. It is the terrible carelessness about everything which does not add to prosperity. The worship of almighty Dollar, incarnated in the Capitalist, is a self-deification from which even Vespasian with his ut puto deus fio would

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<sup>78</sup> It should be kept in mind that this sermon was preached in 1881.

<sup>79</sup> Marais visited the USA earlier that year (cf GM Sep 1892: 13).

have shied away'.<sup>80</sup>

His main point was that the churches in America were alive and rising to the challenges of the situation.<sup>81</sup> The spirit 'of Edwards, Brainerd, Finney and Nettleton has not completely disappeared'. After giving a considerable amount of information on theological education, including the Bible-colleges movement, he brought the lesson home:

America with its originality, its sense for the practical, its enthusiasm and courage, can teach us a lot. A church such as ours, that has 19% of the population of the colony under her influence, and has the support of 59% of the European population, has a calling that is not to be neglected ... Her influence will have to be extended in length, but also in breadth and depth ... She should not be satisfied to influence society from above as it were, from the pulpit, but must also influence society from within, under the pulpit. She will have to uplift the people as a people. God has put her here in order to use her. (GM Sep 1892:14).

Marais explained that a nation can only be uplifted 'by the Word'. A people who 'honour and obey God's Word has a future', and a church that 'bows before the commands of her King has a more powerful weapon than any other in achieving this aim ... (and) will train ministers in view of the manifold needs of those around her'. Continuing in this vein, it becomes clear that one of the major aspects of the calling of the NGK was the evangelization of Africa. It must Christianize not only the Afrikaner, but all the tribes of Africa.

It is a matter of great joy to me that a number of you have recently come to

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<sup>80</sup> Marais did not identify his source. He went on to say that when capitalism and luxury increases, a country goes towards its ruin. 'Democracy and plutocracy are sworn enemies. When Babylon went down 2% of the population possessed everything. The people died of hunger. When the fall of Rome approached - so people who should know declare - the Roman empire belonged to only 1 800 people'. In the United States in 1873, according to 'a reliable source, capitalists owned 63% of the national economy' (GM Sept 1892:13).

<sup>81</sup> He added: 'I am not inclined to enlarge on the political situation ... Expedience and not principle rules: right, morality and religion must often give way to party considerations ... One heard and saw things there about which one would rather remain silent. Often I assured my friends that we in South Africa have more freedom under the British flag, than they have under their star-bespangled banner.' (GM Sep 1892:13).

realize the seriousness of your calling. The silent influence of our Students' Missionary Society is becoming increasingly clear. One of you is going to Nyasaland. Another offered himself for missionary work in relation to our own church. A third received a call to Mashonaland. This is to me a promise of greater things ... to God be the glory! ... May He make our Seminary into a beacon of light for this part of the world.<sup>82</sup>

In October 1892 Marais reported in his Kroniek that Bismarck has expressed himself on 'how to save' the German people. After the political unification of Germany, his great concern had been to find a principle or idea that would unite the German people.<sup>83</sup> Bismarck therefore proposed that 'the idea of the Nation' be put in the place of 'the idea' of the church: 'We have no National Church, but should not the idea of the Nation be the sanctuary around which all parties could be united?' Marais commented that the problems of the industrial nations are very serious and cannot be solved by 'Pope Leo with his idea of a sovereign church neither by Bismarck with his idea of a Nation that has taken up all other elements into itself'.<sup>84</sup> The answer lay in the true faith: 'Only the power of faith, only people, raised up by God for that purpose, will be victorious'. It seems safe to conclude that Marais's concept of a volkskerk was not related to the mystical ideas about 'the nation' derived from German idealism, that later became popular in the NGK.

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<sup>82</sup> GM Sep 1892:14. The later Professor J du Plessis was a member of the final year class of 1892, as well as his friend William Murray, who did sterling work in Nyasaland (cf Retief 1958: 18).

<sup>83</sup> This was after the so-called Kulturkampf when Bismarck was forced to acknowledge the power of the Catholic Church in Germany (cf Latourette 1970:288ff).

<sup>84</sup> In the same report Marais also commented on the encyclical Rerum Novarum, which was published in May 1891. For once Marais was able to agree with the Pope. Leo understands correctly 'that the curse of our day is not so much the power of the lower classes ... but it is the power of money' (Kroniek GM Oct 1892).

From all this it is clear that Marais's idea of the church did not encourage either a spirit of self-congratulation that would pamper the chauvinism of the volk, or a spirit of subservience to the prejudices of the volk. This is confirmed by his own example, specifically in the case of the 'armed protest' of 1914, which he condemned on various occasions.<sup>85</sup> The concept of a serving church was part and parcel of his idea of the church, but this service was not confined to the Afrikaner people, it was a means to a still greater end, the evangelization of Africa.

On the other hand, Marais gave a very positive appraisal of Tobie Muller's speech Die Geloofsbelydenis van 'n Nasionalis.<sup>86</sup> He recommended it without any criticism as an important contribution towards the cultivation of 'a national self-respect among us'.<sup>87</sup> From the point of view of biblical theology the problem with this speech is the assumption that there is a continuity between Western culture, the Christian faith and nationalism - the very seeds of 'civil religion'.<sup>88</sup> Muller advocated a unity between Afrikaans and English-speaking South Africans, an admirable gesture at that time, but he also saw the black and the 'coloured' communities as not fully belonging to the South African nation.<sup>89</sup> Although Marais opposed a narrow Afrikaner nationalism, his unqualified approval of Muller's

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<sup>85</sup> Cf GM Dec 1915; Van der Watt 1987:343ff; P R du Toit 1982:64ff. His position was very unpopular in certain areas of the country.

<sup>86</sup> 'The Confession of Faith of a Nationalist' (Keet and Tomlinson 1925:126ff). This remarkable speech must be one of the most seminal in the history of Afrikaner-nationalism (cf also Moodie 1975:79ff).

<sup>87</sup> Het is een belangrijke bijdrage tot de aankweeking van een nationaliteitsgevoel en nationaal zelfrespek onder ons. (Kroniek GM April 1914).

<sup>88</sup> It was, of course, written at the high water mark of 'civil religion' in the Western world, on the eve of the first World War.

<sup>89</sup> Keet and Tomlinson 1925:129.

speech suggests that Marais himself contributed to 'Afrikaner civil religion'.

### The Church, Missions and the Poor Whites

Like the Murrays and Hofmeyr, Marais believed that God's purpose with the NGK was the evangelization of Africa. As one reads the regular editions of the Maandblad, there can be little doubt that mission - including missions in South Africa - was for Marais a mark, yes even the mark, of the true church. From the prominence he gave to it, even when the Afrikaners were in the throes of the war of 1899, it would appear that it was more important to him than the uplifting of the 'poor whites'.<sup>90</sup> In 1915, when the situation of the 'poor whites' caused national concern, and when there were serious political divisions among the members of the NGK, Marais pleaded with the Cape Synod to give more support to missions. In answer to those who objected to the expansion of the missionary work, because of the pressing needs of the 'poor whites', he said: 'Be assured of one thing, the place of mission in the Christian church must be in the centre, and nowhere else. If we give this fact its place in all our plans, our politics, our prayers ... we can leave the future in God's hands' (GM Nov 1915:166).

Marais's use of the term 'poor whites' does indicate a definite racial distinction in his thinking. It was perhaps inevitable that he should be influenced by his South African cultural context. It should be added, however, that in the speech at the Synod quoted

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<sup>90</sup> For example, in the Kroniek of June 1906, both topics are addressed in the same issue. Mission was a prominent topic in the Maandblad right from the beginning. It was Dr Muir, pleading the Scottish example in a speech at Worcester, who convinced Marais of the necessity of providing free education for the 'poor whites' (cf Kroniek GM Feb 1897). On the other hand, the lack of support from the congregations for the work among the 'poor whites' at Kakamas was quite scandalous (cf GM June 1906).

above, Marais said that he was convinced that those who are devoted to missions in Africa, 'are equally concerned about the unfortunate poor - white and black - whom we meet on the streets of our cities and towns' (GM Nov 1915:166). It should, finally, be kept in mind that 'mission' - even in those days - meant much more than mere verbal evangelization. It involved the provision of educational and medical facilities on no small scale. If it is true then that a 'racial flaw' existed in his thinking, Marais was certainly a 'verligte'.<sup>91</sup>

### Marais and Race Relations

From articles and reports in the Maandblad, as well as in his writings on the history of South Africa we may safely conclude that Marais saw the promotion of good race relations as his duty. It is remarkable how often he commented favourably in his Kroniek on the 'American Negroes', while at the same time expressing disapproval of 'racial hatred'. For example, he reported the following on 'The Future of the American Negroes':

Racial hatred is a curse and it still rests on the Southern States of America. White and black stand there strongly against each other, and often one finds the most disgusting scenes. It seems as if many negroes decided to leave their country and to emigrate to Africa, and coloured preachers encourage them in this. If this exodus should come to pass the interior of Africa will soon change for the better.<sup>92</sup>

The report evaluated the progress the blacks had made since the times of the civil war 'when they or their fathers or mothers were sold as pieces of furniture'. In the Kroniek of

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<sup>91</sup> Marais was disturbed by the fact that the 'great majority' of SA juvenile delinquents were 'Dutch-speaking' (GM July 1916). At the Cradock congress on the 'poor whites' he argued against 'the living together of the races, as found - alas - in the Southern States of America' (Kroniek GM Dec 1916). It is remarkable that he pleaded for industrial training for the 'poor whites', from what he have learnt from Booker Washington's The American Negro (he also quoted Stevens's White and Black. South Africa's greatest problem).

<sup>92</sup> GM June 1892:5; my emphasis (GT).

December 1892 Marais reported on the 'Coloured Baptists of the Southern States' who shortly before held their annual convention in Savannah, Georgia. After giving information on their 'astonishing progress', Marais said: 'They suffer much. Colour still bars the way to real unity and brotherhood. In social life the Africans are oppressed; in name they are politically free'. He explained that they use the annual 'Day of Thanksgiving' as a day of prayer for deliverance from the limitations still placed on them.<sup>93</sup>

Marais's support of good race relations within South Africa is obviously of much greater importance. Especially at that time the problem of race relations was closely related to missions. Missions were coming under fire because they preached the equality of the black man.<sup>94</sup> To defend missions or missionaries thus implied an appeal for better race relations. That was probably one reason why there appeared regular articles on the work of various Missionary Societies in the Maandblad. For the same reason Marais consistently tried to put the 'notorious' Dr John Philip in a good light. In the issue of July 1892 he said that Philip indeed 'made many people bitter enemies of missions' with his exaggerations, but that 'we must be grateful that he pleaded so strongly for the rights of the

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<sup>93</sup> In the same report Marais quoted from 'a private letter' of a black student who was studying in Halle, Germany. "In most cases the blacks are being deprived of their rights by shameful fraud. In one district, where the population mainly consists of negroes who are very intelligent, while there are whites who are very backward, people try in various ways to deprive blacks from their rights and privileges. For example a great number of votes were once disqualified because the paper had a light-blue colour ... In another case all the votes were disqualified because the paper was not of the correct size." Such things explain why the annual day of thanksgiving is set aside for prayer to God for deliverance from the burdens that press increasingly on the shoulders of the negroes'. (G M Dec 1892). Cape liberalism was somewhat premature in its self-congratulation.

<sup>94</sup> The contemporary 'Ethiopian' movement, on the other hand, accused missions of not practising what they preach.

slaves'. He added that 'we should also be grateful that he did so much to open the eyes of Christians in Europe and in South Africa for the salvation of Africa'.<sup>95</sup>

In July 1892 he wrote: 'In South Africa people are, alas, too anxious to exaggerate the mistakes made by missionaries; many even take a delight in it. This is not right ... let us beware of a partial judgement'. In the last edition of the Maandblad during the war,<sup>96</sup> Marais again defended missions in a long article: 'Even if the present war brings the mission kaffir, who fights on the side of the English against the Boers, in bad report, we want to hold the crown above the heads of the missionaries'. We do not understand God's ways, says Marais, but we may hope that the war may be an instrument in God's hands to open new opportunities for the gospel. 'Here in South Africa there is still a lot of work to be done. Prejudice, hatred, contempt must be gradually overcome' (GM April 1900).

Another method to encourage better race relations from within the church was to try to show that historically Afrikaners were in sympathy with missions. Regular articles appeared on the history of the various congregations in the Cape Colony, that often contained information on attempts at missionary work (cf GM Aug 1892). In the same vein he also told of a 'native commissioner' in the Northern Transvaal with the venerable surname of Potgieter. Even though his father had been killed in a battle against blacks, 'the son was a friend of missions, who feared the Lord and treated the Reverend Helm with great friendliness' (GM Aug 1892:8).

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<sup>95</sup> GM July 1892. In June 1894 Marais gave full recognition to the fact that it was Philip, 'the well-known friend of negroes and slaves of earlier days', who encouraged the French Christians to undertake missions in Lesotho.

<sup>96</sup> In the leader of April 1900 Marais explained that between 200 and 300 subscribers had not received their editions of the Maandblad for some time. It was therefore decided to discontinue its publication till the cessation of hostilities.

In his small book on the history of the NGK up to the Great Trek, Marais stated bluntly: 'An Afrikaner who is not in favour of missions, is not worthy of the name, and is opposed to the best traditions of his country and his people' (1919:16). The emphasis was obviously on the 'best'. He also mentioned without adverse comment such 'unpopular' facts as that 'Van Riebeeck encouraged marriages between whites and people of colour', and that baptized slaves were accepted on a basis of full equality with whites.<sup>97</sup> The general spirit of this book is remarkably objective, compared to the works of some of his contemporaries on Afrikaner history,<sup>98</sup> and his final words are well worth recalling. After a discussion of the situation in the Transvaal at the time of the Great Trek, he compared it with the wars between the indigenous Americans and the Puritan settlers:

With the reading of the history of our people, standing still at many a tale of bloody revenge on the heathen by the attacking Boers, we were deeply moved by the thought that bloodbath after bloodbath were brought about among the kaffirs by men who had a knowledge of the gospel and loved the Bible.<sup>99</sup>

### Eschatology and Missions

Marais did not have a special interest in eschatology. For many years he continued the

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<sup>97</sup> Marais 1919:16. On the other hand, this statement reveals the strong link - in the mind of Marais - between church and people. His arguments and appeals quoted here are clearly civil and not theological.

<sup>98</sup> For example, Nico Hofmeyr's De Afrikaner Boer en de Jameson-Inval, the earlier writings of S J du Toit, and the work of J C Voigt: Fifty Years of the History of the Republic in South Africa (1795-1845).

<sup>99</sup> 1919:198. He added: 'May God forgive our church her unfaithfulness of the past!' Marais was concerned about the fact that the urge to speak to the blacks of the love of God was absent from the minds of many Voortrekkers. Accordingly he quoted the words of John Robinson to the governor of New Plymouth: 'Oh, that you had won some of them for the Saviour before you killed them!' He was equally upset by the wanton bloodshed.

'received opinion' of the mild postmillennial tradition of Murray and Hofmeyr. In the years before the Anglo-Boer War, he seemed to have looked forward to the time when 'there will be no more war'.<sup>100</sup> As late as November 1899, he expressed the hope that, as the 19th century was one of 'revolution, conflict and war', the 20th might prove to see the fulfillment of the hope 'which maketh not ashamed' (GM Nov 1899). On the other hand there are signs that he was eventually affected by the rising expectations that the second coming of Christ might be very near. In an article on missions appearing a month later he said: 'He is coming. We hear his footsteps. We see the signs'.<sup>101</sup>

But Marais was not yet converted to premillennialism. The one great sign of the coming of the Kingdom was still for him the extension of the missionary work of the universal church of Christ. When he described how 'three commandos of King Jesus'<sup>102</sup> entered Zimbabwe, he exclaimed: 'We are witnessing the coming of the Kingdom of God!' (GM Aug 1892). In another article, he gave an overview of the missionary expansion of the church since 1792, listing various Missionary Societies with the number of missionaries and converts. 'More than ever before the church of Christ experiences the desire to win the whole world for the Saviour', he said. 'The mustard seed of the Kingdom has already

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<sup>100</sup> Cf Kroniek GM July 1894:46, where Marais deplored the millions spent on preparations for war in Europe.

<sup>101</sup> GM Dec 1899. In the same issue Marais encouraged his readers with Romans 15:13. He also reminded them that the 16th century closed without peace in sight for Holland and Germany, the 17th century shortly after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, with various wars in Europe, and the 18th century closed with the French revolution and the wars of Bonaparte.

<sup>102</sup> The Methodist missionary Isaac Shimmim entered Mashonaland in 1890; A A Louw of the NGK crossed the Limpopo in 1891 and Wedepohl and Meister of the Berlin Missionary Society arrived in Mashonaland in 1892 (GM Aug 1892:16, cf Du Plessis 1911:289,350).

become the biggest of all trees' (GM Dec 1899). He indeed related the world mission of the church to the second coming, 'we hear his foot-steps', but the second coming was not the central and over-powering focus of his eschatology. The missionary obedience of the church was seen as a necessary stage in the coming of the Kingdom, of which the second coming would be the climax.

In his Kroniek of April 1900 Marais commented at considerable length on the problem of the 'small success of missions' with reference to an article in Fraser's Magazine that denied that there were any real converts in contemporary missions (GM April 1900:183). He still stressed the gradualness of the coming of the Kingdom. In the same context he mentioned that certain missionaries were 'under the intoxicating influence of the spirit of (the Anglo-Boer) war', which brought criticisms of missions from certain quarters.

In his discussion he warned against the 'dangerous' attitude that demanded quick results from missions. 'Only if one loves the missionary cause will he be able to come to a true appraisal of the situation'. It is not in one day that 'Jesus Christ will be King of the whole earth'. The glorified Christ has 'an immeasurable influence on nations who still reject Him', but silently and gradually the 'powers that resist God are being bound and overcome'. If we keep in mind that the Kingdom works 'like yeast', we will realize that it is both wrong and dangerous to calculate the success of missions by the numbers of converts.<sup>103</sup>

In March 1900 Marais discussed premillennialism in an article with the title: 'Is the end of all things near?' He enumerated twelve 'signs of the times', or possible indications

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<sup>103</sup> He compared the article in Fraser's Magazine with Darwin's praise of the results of missions in New Zealand and the Pacific isles (GM April 1900:183).

of the nearness of the second coming, and concluded:

These views do not satisfy us. Not a single one of the twelve (signs) provides conclusive evidence. Neither do we believe that the time or the hour is known to anybody. It is certain that the end of all things is near, but we just cannot accept that it is possible to calculate the correct year of the coming of the Lord. May our readers watch and pray in these difficult times and be always ready for the coming of the Son of man on the clouds, whenever that day may come! (GM March 1900).

Marais now believed that the second coming was near, but he was not yet convinced that it was definitely at hand. However, as the 19th century ended in darkness for the Afrikaner people, other voices proclaimed more pessimistic eschatological views.<sup>104</sup> The first World War had a momentous influence on European theology, and only during this war was Marais himself finally converted to premillennialism. In June 1917 he addressed a 'Conference on the Second Coming', with the topic 'Maranatha or Utopia?' Marais instanced the anarchistic Paris Commune of 1871 and the New York Congress of Religions in 1907 as examples of 'universalism without Christ'. Most recently, 'in the midst of this terrible war, the world still hopes for a human brotherhood' without Christ.

He was especially conscious of the weakness of the contemporary church exposed in her inability to prevent the terrible and senseless bloodshed. Influenced by the spirit of Utopia, the church had become 'stereotyped, materialistic and hypnotized'. She needed two things: conversion and faith. Faith is 'the realization of the merciful and mighty presence of the eternal God in daily life'. Although the ancient church 'anticipated the second coming' too strongly, they had 'the consciousness of the presence of the living Jesus' which the contemporary church had lost (GM Jun 1917:85).

On the question of premillennialism, he stated his position clearly:

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<sup>104</sup> Cf paragraph on eschatology in chapter 8.

I am here on your invitation, not because I want to speculate about or prophesy the coming of the Lord, but because I believe in the communion of saints, and am convinced that this present age is fast coming to an end. With you I believe that the Lord will come before, and not after the millennium; with you I believe that the world will become worse, not better, and that only when the Lord comes, will the better order appear, to which we look forward with so much hope. With great hesitation I dare to speak on this topic. I still have a lot to learn. (GM Jun 1917:83).

It would seem then that Marais finally adopted premillennialism. Where he had previously emphasized the 'yeast-like' character of the missionary process and expressed the hope that 'Jesus Christ will be King of the whole earth' (GM April 1900), he now believed that Jesus will return before the millennium and that 'the world will become worse, not better'. However, he was not in the least interested in the intricate chronological speculations based on a literal interpretation of prophecies, so typical of certain premillennialists, nor did he accept the idea that Judaism would be restored in some form during the millennium.<sup>105</sup>

### Conclusion

Marais was a man of piety and integrity, moderation and peace, a versatile scholar, a good pastor, a good teacher and a gracious Christian. He wanted to continue in and build on the ideals of his predecessors and colleagues Klaas Hofmeyr and John Murray. To these should especially be added the name of Andrew Murray.<sup>106</sup> Marais shared their interest in education, missions, ecumenical matters and social issues and like them dedicated his life to the upbuilding of the church.

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<sup>105</sup> He said that 'this view leads us away from the main point of Scripture, that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, to the particularism of the OT' (Kroniek GM Aug 1916).

<sup>106</sup> Andrew Murray indicated before his death that either Marais or Du Plessis should write his biography (Du Plessis 1920a: 5).

His views were based on a thorough study of the best theological and philosophical sources available, together with a sound knowledge of biblical, classical and modern languages. Although he did not always agree with the latest theological fashion, he kept abreast of its trends.

Politically, Marais was anything but a radical. During both the Anglo-Boer War and the first World War he criticized the wanton slaughter and the lack of serious attempts at maintaining the peace, but he never advised revolutionary action. During the 'armed protest' of 1914, he unequivocally condemned rebellion against the lawful government, an unpopular stance in certain parts of the country.

Yet in spite of his many good qualities and his desire to conserve and extend a precious tradition, certain tendencies in his emphases indicated a new direction in Stellenbosch theology.

1. The most important shift was that the focus of Marais's theology was markedly less Christological than his predecessors'. He was not as fascinated by the historical Jesus as Hofmeyr had been. He did not consciously break away from the tradition; he accepted the centrality of Christ as a fact of Christian doctrine and life, but focussed his attention on the burning issues of his time, such as evolution, the origin of the Pentateuch, missions, social problems, 'wars and rumours of wars'. His main interest was the defence of the faith and, sometimes, the defence of the NGK.<sup>107</sup> In the light of contemporary controversies this shift is quite understandable, but it does not take away the fact that any movement away from Jesus Christ, as the complete self-revelation of God, is a step in the wrong direction.

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<sup>107</sup> This was mainly during the Anglo-Boer War.

2. Secondly, the way in which Scripture was used also changed. For Hofmeyr, not Scripture in the first place, but the man Jesus Christ was God's revelation; Scripture was only the indispensable witness to him. For Marais, on the other hand, Scripture was more a source of reliable theological information.<sup>108</sup> This was the start of a very gradual process which was only completed with the triumph of fundamentalism in the 1930ties, but therefore it was also a momentous shift.

3. While the life and work of Marais, in many ways, witnessed against a narrow nationalism and racism, we find in his writings some of the seeds which later germinated into 'Afrikaner civil religion'. Like Hofmeyr and the Murrays, Marais believed that the NGK was called in a special way to preach the gospel in Africa. But, where nationalism was for them a point of contact between the gospel and the people, Marais accepted nationalism - admittedly a broad and inclusive one - as part of the Christian world-view.<sup>109</sup> In spite of his high view of the church, his arguments revealed the strong link in his mind between church and people.

4. Towards the end of his life Marais adopted a pessimistic eschatology. As the leading figure in the NGK,<sup>110</sup> his 'conversion' paved the way for the influence of premillennialism in the 1930ties, just when the NGK needed a vision of the Kingdom of God as a present reality and a divine power in the renewal of society. This was an unfortunate deviation from the more biblical eschatology of Murray and Hofmeyr.

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<sup>108</sup> Cf especially his articles in the ISBE.

<sup>109</sup> Cf paragraph Church and People above.

<sup>110</sup> It should be remembered that Marais taught theology for 42 years. After the death of Andrew Murray (1917), he was indeed the 'prime minister of the NGK'.

## Chapter 8

## P J G DE VOS (1842-1931) AND C F J MULLER (1845-1915)

After the death of John Murray A D Luckhoff was called to fill the vacancy.<sup>1</sup> He declined because of ill health and in his place the minister at Riversdale, Pieter Jacobus Gerhardus de Vos, was called as successor of the deeply mourned Murray.<sup>2</sup> De Vos was born and educated in Worcester. Later he studied at the S A Athenaeum, where he was a contemporary of 'Onze Jan' Hofmeyr, Henry de Villiers and F W Reitz.<sup>3</sup> In 1862 he proceeded to the Kweekskool. After completing his third year at Stellenbosch, he studied for a year at the New College in Edinburgh, where he was in class with Alexander Whyte. He was licensed as probationer of the Free Church of Scotland on 7 June 1866, and, after a few

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<sup>1</sup> Anton Daniel Luckhoff (1836-1916), son of the Rhenish missionary at Stellenbosch, received his classical training at the Missionshaus in Barmen and his theological education in Utrecht. Of him Professor du Plessis said: 'He was our George Muller, Barnardo and Von Bodelschwingh all in one. Before the time of father Luckhoff our Church did virtually no philanthropic work, now the country is full of charitable institutions.' (Gerdener 1951:80).

<sup>2</sup> Du Plessis seemed to have levelled a veiled criticism at De Vos with his comment: 'Dit was ongetwyfeld 'n swaar verlies vir die NG Kerk toe Ds Luckhoff die beroep wat in 1883 op hom uitgebring is ... van die hand gewys het'. (cf Het Zoeklicht 15 June 1932:163).

<sup>3</sup> De Villiers was the later judge-president and Reitz became president of the Orange Free State. De Vos was awarded a special prize by the visiting Prince Alfred 'for proficiency in Classics, English Literature, Physical Science, Dutch Language and Literature.' (Gerdener 1951:155). Keet noted that this was 'after the departure of De Villiers' (1934:-100).

months of study in Utrecht, returned to South Africa.<sup>4</sup>

In February 1867 De Vos married Anna Margaretha Brink.<sup>5</sup> Shortly after his marriage he was inducted into the congregation of Piketberg. Subsequently he also served churches in Caledon and Riversdale, where he exerted himself especially for the improvement of educational facilities (Keet 1934:101). He accepted the call to the Seminary in 1883. In addition to Systematic Theology, De Vos was also responsible for Old Testament and Church Polity. Gerdener mentioned De Vos's love for his subject, the conscientious preparation of his lectures and his general thoroughness (1951:158,162). Keet emphasized the quality of his life, his great humility and his childlike faith (1934:103). He was no great orator, but 'he developed his text systematically and calmly without employing any rhetorical effects'. His sermons were examples of thorough study and spiritual insight, although his delivery, as in the lecture-room, was somewhat tedious (102). He taught at the Seminary until 1919, when he retired at the age of 77, but he retained an interest in all the aspects of educational and ecclesiastical life. After the death of Marais, in 1919, he was chosen as the second chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch.<sup>6</sup>

Both Gerdener and Keet mentioned his services as volksman. He was the leader of the deputation sent by the volkskongres of Graaff-Reinet to Britain in 1900, to plead the cause

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<sup>4</sup> Keet 1934:100. The Archives contain a letter from New College, Edinburgh, signed by Professor James Buchanan (25.2.1866), certifying that 'De Vos delivered a popular sermon which was approved and sustained as being sound in doctrine and creditable to his talents'.(NGKA-CT, file P25).

<sup>5</sup> Their marriage lasted 65 years (Keet 1934:100).

<sup>6</sup> Keet 1934:101. The Litt D was conferred on him at the same time.

of the Boer republics.<sup>7</sup> Although they were not successful, De Vos won wide sympathy for their cause by his integrity and calm dignity.<sup>8</sup> 'His heart was filled with love for his people and a sense of justice' (Keet 1934:101). In later years he was asked to act as chairman of the Bloemfontein congress where attempts were made to heal the breach between Hertzog and Botha. This initiative was not successful, but, 'without any doubt, his influence lessened much of the bitterness of the conflict' (102). On a different level of volksdiens, De Vos was the inspiration behind the establishment of Industria at Stellenbosch. This 'faith-venture' was an institution where young men of limited means could learn technical skills (Gerdener 1951:161). He died at Stellenbosch in 1931, at the age of 89.

#### General Theological Orientation

According to Professor du Plessis, De Vos used Ebrard's Dogmatik for some time for the teaching of Systematic Theology.<sup>9</sup> Gerdener, who graduated from the Kweekskool in 1905, reported that De Vos used Van Oosterzee's Dogmatiek in his time.<sup>10</sup> The notes taken down by Van Wijk in the last years of the 19th century confirm that he used Van Oosterzee. These notes also indicate that he discussed numerous biblical references, more or less in

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<sup>7</sup> The delegation consisted of De Vos, Rev R P Botha of Richmond, Rev P L du Plessis of Cradock with D J de Wet as secretary (Van Reenen 1984:439).

<sup>8</sup> Emily Hobhouse said that 'his saintly bearing and old-world dignity made a deep impression. He resembled some prophet of old'. (Van Reenen 1984:23). As they had no one to organize their meetings, and 'it seemed impossible to fix them', the effects of their visit were small (24).

<sup>9</sup> Cf Het Zoeklicht 15 Dec 1931:362.

<sup>10</sup> 1951:159. He added that Heppé's Christelijke Ethiek was used for Ethics and Macpherson's Presbyterianism for the study of Church Polity. Van Wijk's notes confirm that Heppé's book was used for Ethics in 1896. (Heppé was Reformed professor in Marburg, cf CENV II:552).

the manner of the traditional 'proof-texts' (cf Van Wijk 1897). He was a solid worker who honestly searched for the meaning of Scripture; Gerdener specifically mentioned his thorough exegesis of OT texts (1951:159).

A study of the notes of Van Wijk reveal that De Vos made extensive use of the three-volume work of Charles Hodge. The notes of 1898 reflect, for example, a discussion of the work of Christ which closely follows that of Hodge. References to the relevant pages in the Systematic Theology appear regularly in the notes.<sup>11</sup> In his discussion of soteriology and the doctrine of the sacraments De Vos also followed Hodge very closely, with continuous references to his work.<sup>12</sup>

Gerdener mentioned the high value De Vos placed on the sovereignty of God (1951:159). This is confirmed by his letter to Du Plessis, on the latter's appointment at the Kweekskool, expressing doubts about Du Plessis's adherence to the Canons of Dort.<sup>13</sup> A study of his sermons does not reveal, on the other hand, any special emphasis on the doctrine of election.<sup>14</sup> He certainly emphasized the greatness of God but did not neglect human responsibility.<sup>15</sup> Keet reminded us that his farewell-lecture, at the age of 77, was on

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<sup>11</sup> For example, De Vos discussed the question: 'For whom did Christ die?' using the same arguments as Hodge (cf Van Wijk 1898a and Hodge 1883 II:544-562).

<sup>12</sup> Van Wijk 1898a; cf also Van Wijk 1897 and 1899.

<sup>13</sup> In a letter, dated 3 April 1916, De Vos referred to a report that Du Plessis was not convinced of the idea of a limited atonement (die wil maar by my niet in. Cf file P2 3/3, NGKA-CT).

<sup>14</sup> In his sixteen published sermons there are references to election in sermons on Luke 18:7, John 15:16 and Acts 27:26. There is only one reference to Calvinism: 'It is not only truly Calvinistic but also truly biblical always to say: God rules; under all circumstances I have to do with him in the first place.' (1906:2). There is also one reference to Calvin's views on vows in one of the sermons (231).

<sup>15</sup> In the sermon on Acts 27:26 he emphasized Paul's faith in God's promise, but added: 'It was not enough that he prayed, he had to do his duty and use his common

the sovereignty of God. He added, however, that De Vos fully realized 'the limitations of human reason and never tried to give a rational explanation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity or of predestination' (1934: 103). He 'commended the reformed view objectively without judging other points of view unconditionally' (102). De Vos represented a more conservative and scholastic Calvinism than either Hofmeyr or Murray,<sup>16</sup> but his position should not be equated with that of S J du Toit.

### His Doctrine of Man

Where John Murray's doctrine of man was influenced by the concept of development, De Vos, like Marais, emphasized the biblical doctrine, that man was created in the image of God. He specifically noted that the 'image was definitely not destroyed by sin'. Not only was the first man created in the image of God, but also the whole human race.<sup>17</sup> He rejected the idea that 'image' and 'likeness' were two different aspects of man. The concept of the image of God included man's 'original righteousness and holiness' and his calling to rule over creation (Van Wijk 1897). Following Hofmeyr on some points, De Vos explained that Adam had true knowledge and true love of God: 'He was related to God with a bond of the purest love'.<sup>18</sup>

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sense; and in doing that he was used as an instrument to save (the others) from even greater danger'. (1906:93).

<sup>16</sup> The notes contain a list of 22 dogmatic themes discussed by De Vos. Some of the topics were: The nature of sin; texts on the depravity of human nature; the grand purpose of the death of Christ; most important texts concerning election; supra and infra-lapsarianism; what the Word teaches on original sin; etc (Van Wijk 1897).

<sup>17</sup> Van Wijk 1897. He referred, among others, to James 3:9, where it is said that 'we curse people created in God's image'.

<sup>18</sup> 'Hij was verbonden met God door den band der reinste liefde'. (Van Wijk 1897).

De Vos cited numerous texts to prove that sin was not an original characteristic of mankind and he rejected the idea 'of Leibnitz and Hegel that evil was indispensable for our development' (Van Wijk 1897). Without referring to his predecessor, he moved away from Murray's view on the relationship between creation and incarnation, the view that, even if man did not fall into sin, it would still have been necessary for the Son of God to become man, 'so as to show man what he should become'. His answer to this speculation is simple: 'The Scriptures know nothing of this' (Van Wijk 1897). On this point he followed Calvin more closely than did either Murray or Hofmeyr.<sup>19</sup>

On the doctrine of total depravity De Vos was no less clear than his predecessors. In a sermon on John 16:33 he discussed the question why God allowed evil to flourish.

If God would not sometimes allow ... such manifestations of the evil of sin, most people would never believe the doctrine of the total depravity of human nature, of the necessity of regeneration, of grace and the blood of reconciliation ... Where evil appears in its true colours, where the monster is revealed ... then people see that such human instruments as enlightenment and civilization can, of themselves, do nothing ... not only the pagan world needs the Word of God ... but also the school, the social as well as the religious life of the Christian nations (Christenlanden). (1906:45).

He went on to say that God has no pleasure in sin, and does not need it to fulfil his purposes. Sin 'is man's doing', but as it is there, and 'is what it is', God allows sin to reveal its true nature in order to overcome it.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> However, there is no reference to Calvin. I could find only one specific reference to Calvin in the notes of Van Wijk, and that is in the discussion of the sacraments (1898a). There is no evidence that the Institutes were used at the Kweekskool, either as text book or as major reference book.

<sup>20</sup> De Vos 1906:45. 'The devil usually desires ... to hide evil as much as possible ... in order to reach his evil aim. He knows that man is not yet a devil ... God works here to open mankind's eyes and to win him for that which is good'. (43).

### The Christology of De Vos

Where Murray and Hofmeyr emphasized the true humanity of the incarnate Son, De Vos emphasized his divinity. Special attention was given to 'statements by Jesus himself' in this regard. 'He spoke of his personal preexistence before Abraham, yes, before the creation of the world'.<sup>21</sup> He also noted that, 'in the letters of James and John, the name Kurios which was in the Old Covenant given to the Deity himself, is used repeatedly for the Christ'. (Van Wijk 1897). His approach was in line with that of Hodge, but he also occasionally referred to Van Oosterzee. Although the latter was a kenoticist, there is no indication that De Vos inclined towards kenoticism.<sup>22</sup> On the contrary, from the extensive use De Vos has made of Hodge - an outspoken anti-kenoticist - it seems natural to conclude that he did not follow Murray and Hofmeyr on this point.

His popular commentary on Matthew, on the other hand, shows a certain continuity between De Vos and Hofmeyr. He said, for example, that Jesus 'received the Holy Spirit at his baptism, and, in this way, was anointed by God for his work on earth'. (1910:6). On the temptation in the wilderness he said that the victory of Jesus at the beginning of his ministry 'was of great value to him throughout his whole life on earth'.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> He referred to John 8:58 and Matthew 5:17; 7:21; 9:2; 11:27 and 18:20 (Van Wijk 1897).

<sup>22</sup> The list of 22 dogmatic themes (n16 above), provides circumstantial evidence that De Vos was not a kenoticist. The seventeenth topic reads: 'Since whose time people have used the term "God-man"?' We do know that the kenoticists, including Hofmeyr, often used the term Theanthropos.

<sup>23</sup> De Vos 1910:7. Strangely, he also agreed with the quaint view of Hofmeyr that the sermon on the mount was not the final teaching of Jesus: 'He preached now, yet not as clearly as later, how men may enter the Kingdom, and who He himself was. In a sense He was at this stage still continuing the work of John the Baptist, to prepare the people to know him and eventually to accept him.' (8).

A similar partial continuity with the views of Hofmeyr and Murray appears in a sermon on Hebrews 5:7-9. He explained that Jesus had to be perfected as man, 'not only to enable him to have sympathy with weak and suffering mankind, but also in order to stand in the right relationship to God as High Priest'. (1906: 29f). Just as the child Jesus increased in wisdom and grace with God, the man Jesus 'struggled and prayed and suffered', because 'He had to learn an increasingly higher obedience step by step'. (30).

It seems then as if an element of the real obedience of the human Christ, of crucial importance for Christology, was present in De Vos's thinking. He admitted, for example, that Jesus 'was gripped by the fear of death' and that 'everything was dark for him'.<sup>24</sup> He compared Jesus with Job who, in the midst of his unbearable suffering and temptations, had a terrible choice presented to his mind:

It was either because He forsook God, that God had now forsaken him, or, as God forsook him in spite of his righteousness, He had to conclude that God was an unjust God. No, neither of the two! He declined to make a choice, even though, in the terrible darkness, He did not have an answer to these questions.<sup>25</sup>

De Vos did not return to the theme of the real humanity of Christ. The obedience of the human Christ was not integrated into his theology, as was the case with Murray and Hofmeyr, with their emphasis on the necessity of the temptations, the reality of his struggle as man, and especially Murray's crucial emphasis on the example of Christ. De Vos was

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<sup>24</sup> 1906:32. He added that we would understand Heb 5:7-9 better if we studied Psalm 22 (33).

<sup>25</sup> 1906:32. He added that Jesus could therefore only pray in agony: 'My God, my God! why have You forsaken me?' With this 'mysterious' question in the midst of that terrible darkness and suffering, Jesus was saying that although He 'knew nothing and could do nothing', He was willing to drink the cup of suffering till the end, and he became a perfect sacrifice in doing so (33).

also less outspoken about the ignorance of Jesus. Where Hofmeyr suggested that Jesus did not realize who the 'impressive stranger' was who tempted him in the wilderness, De Vos said 'He had the clear conviction that it was the devil who tempted him' (1906:31). He was much more careful than Hofmeyr to explain that Jesus had 'no tendency towards disobedience' (30). Accordingly, he said nothing about his status privatus, but emphasized his mediatorship and substitutionary death:

Here is not only expected from Jesus what is due by each child of God - and therefore also from him as Son - as the perfect law requires; after all, He loved and fulfilled the law continually in a perfect way. Something quite extraordinary was expected from him as high priest. He had to take the sin of the whole world on him; become sin for their sake; bear all the punishment for this, though guiltless; and He had to do this by dying an accursed death on the cross.<sup>26</sup>

On the basis of the available evidence, we may conclude that De Vos moved away from kenoticism. The fact that he particularly emphasized the divinity of Christ and used the Systematic Theology of Hodge, an outspoken critic of kenoticism, further strengthens this conclusion.

### The Work of Christ

In his discussion of the atonement De Vos followed Hodge very closely, with regular references to the relevant pages.<sup>27</sup> In his notes Van Wijk enumerated the views of 'the

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<sup>26</sup> 1906:30. De Vos still reveals the influence of his predecessors when he adds that Jesus did this freely, 'forced by no power outside himself, willingly in obedience to the Father ... Therefore He was not called immediately (to his sacrificial death) by his Father, but was slowly led towards it'. (30).

<sup>27</sup> The notes discuss the following topics in the same order as Hodge: The priestly office of Christ; the satisfaction of Christ; for whom did Christ die? Theories on the atonement; the intercession of Christ (Van Wijk 1898a; cf Hodge 1883 II chapters VI to X).

Lutherans', 'the Reformed', 'the Semi-Pelagians', 'the Wesleyans' and of 'the French school of Saumur', following Hodge's order. According to the reformed view the aim of Christ's death 'was not only to make salvation possible for all, but to assure salvation for the elect'. Romans 5 is explained in terms of covenant theology. In his discussion of the intercession of Christ De Vos again followed Hodge closely (Van Wijk 1898a). However, on the work of Christ generally, he did sometimes refer to Van Oosterzee. He admits the latter's objection to 'simplistic Anselmianism', that 'it is man who was reconciled to God, and not God to man'. This is partially true, said De Vos, 'because the sacrifice of Christ was the result of the love of the Father'. Satisfaction was nevertheless necessary because, 'even God was unable to bring about a reconciliation that was not in agreement with his high Majesty' (Van Wijk 1898a). Generally speaking, as far as the work of Christ is concerned, De Vos preferred the interpretation of Hodge.

#### The Soteriology of De Vos

References to the relevant places in Van Oosterzee's Dogmatiek appear in his discussion of soteriology, but the more scholastic scheme of Hodge is preferred. 'According to Hodge regeneration precedes (faith) - we agree with this. Faith is the first deed of the regenerated soul'. Van Oosterzee's view that 'conversion and regeneration as one and the same thing, seen from two sides' is not accepted (Van Wijk 1898a). His summary of the major 'stages' of soteriology coincides fully with Hodge.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, De Vos was not unduly dogmatic in his sermons. In a sermon on

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<sup>28</sup> Cf Van Wijk 1898a and Hodge 1883 vol II:chapter XIV and vol III: chapters XV - XVIII. Hodge deals in consecutive chapters with vocation, regeneration, faith, justification and sanctification.

Hebrews 5:7-9 he emphasized that the text does not say that Jesus became a saviour to all those who believe, but 'to all those who are obedient to him'. The obedience of the Christian 'is mentioned just as explicitly as the obedience of the Saviour' (1906:35). And this means that, 'if Jesus had to learn obedience ... how much more the believer ... and if Jesus had to be sanctified by suffering, how much more us!' (36). It is not enough that we should meditate on the suffering of Christ; it is sometimes necessary that Christians should suffer themselves, in order to learn obedience. In such circumstances we have to remember the example of the suffering Christ (36).

### Church and People

We have already noted that, compared to the views of Hofmeyr and other ministers of the NGK, John Murray's view of the church was fairly high. However, in spite of his contact with Scotland, there are no indications, either in his lectures or in his writings, that De Vos had a pronounced ecclesiology. This was also true of Van Oosterzee and Hodge.<sup>29</sup> In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we must conclude that De Vos's doctrine of the church was deficient. It is clear from his sermons that he believed in the idea of a Christian nation, but, with one small exception, there is no evidence that he discussed this problem in his lectures.<sup>30</sup>

According to the introductory note his Sermons in view of the Need of the Times

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<sup>29</sup> Hodge saw the church basically as 'a means of grace' (1883 III: 230). He discusses obedience to the church in his treatment of the fifth commandment (360), and further enumerates certain characteristics of the church in his discussion of infant Baptism (547ff).

<sup>30</sup> On the 'conversion of Constantine' he said: 'State and Church were now equal. A mutual benevolent influence was the result, but the danger was that the true religion could be lost' (He referred to Heppe's Ethiek, Van Wijk 1896a).

were delivered during and shortly after the War of 1899.<sup>31</sup> De Vos was concerned that many of his readers did not know what God was saying to them at that time. Others again, were 'so bitterly disappointed and offended by the results of the war', that they failed to humble themselves properly before God.<sup>32</sup> The text for the first sermon summarizes the spirit of the book: 'Humble yourselves under God's mighty hand, and He will lift you up in due time' (1 Peter 5:6).

These sermons were apparently preached on 'ordinary' Sundays and it should be emphasized at the outset that they were not 'political sermons'.<sup>33</sup> They were intended to encourage professing Christians in their faith and to bring them to a new dedication to God. The war and its after-effects are specifically mentioned in only three or four sermons,<sup>34</sup> but the problem that confronts us in these sermons is not the references to the war. These represent, after all, the context within which the sermons were preached. The

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<sup>31</sup> Cf his *Voorbericht* (1906). He also said that the country was troubled, in addition to the war, by 'a heavy and long drought, by locusts and pests; so that there is at the moment still great need for the most basic things in the country! However, the injury and physical suffering are not the worst of the matter, but the pain which hurts like a sword in many a heart; the deep *zielesmart*, the humiliation, the powerlessness which make the future for many so foreboding, so dark!' (2).

<sup>32</sup> 1906:7. In a sermon on Matthew 11:6 he said: 'Oh, how many of whom one would expect something better have been offended by Jesus in the difficult times which came over our country.' To bring them back to the faith De Vos reminded them that Jesus prayed for sinners, 'especially for his own, as He alone can pray.' (67).

<sup>33</sup> With 'political sermons' I mean sermons which consciously aim at showing the political relevance of the Christian faith on issues within the body politic. The aim of such a sermon would generally be to enlighten Christians and to encourage them to take a stand on such an issue, in obedience to God.

<sup>34</sup> In one or two others there are general references to 'long periods of suffering' and 'bitter injustice' (cf 1906:42). In the rest there is not even that, for example, in a sermon on the love of Christ (Eph 3:18,19) there is a single comment on how difficult it is 'to forgive our neighbour', but without any reference to the war (150).

problem is that when De Vos used the term volk, it is usually in the phrase 'church and people', without any attempt at defining either 'church' or 'people'. In the last two sermons the volk is in fact directly addressed.<sup>35</sup> What shocks the modern reader is his indiscriminate and unqualified bundling together of these two realities.

In the first sermon De Vos said, referring to the war and subsequent miseries, that 'it seemed as if the very existence of church and people was in the balance' (1906:2). He subsequently asked the question whether his hearers realized what exactly is God's purpose with 'us as people, as church, as individuals?''<sup>36</sup> De Vos reminded them of 'a Samuel, a Jehosaphat, a Daniel, a Nehemiah' who humbled themselves before God and pled for mercy for their people. He expressed the hope that

those who have more light, and who are still standing in the faith, might understand how great the task is to which God is calling them, and that they might make up their minds to intercede for the weak as well as for the whole people, and to pray to God for mercy. (1906:9).

In a sermon on Jeremiah 6:16 similar examples abound. De Vos started off by saying that, in times of transition, important decisions are necessary in the life of a nation. 'In this respect it is often with a volk and a church as with individuals' (1906:206). 'A young nation' especially has to make up its mind about where it wanted to go, and this text is speaking to 'such a nation or an individual' (211). He reminded his readers of what 'has already happened between our people' and the Lord.

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<sup>35</sup> In the other sermons there are only a few references to the volk.

<sup>36</sup> 1906:8. De Vos honestly desired that the members of the church would humble themselves before the Lord. This first sermon is, given the context, a remarkable sermon in many respects. He warns, for example, that 'it is usually the guilty ones, who do not realize that they should be the first to humble themselves ... on the other hand, the best and the most serious of the people are usually the first humbly to confess their own sins and that of the volk'. (9).

What a tender relationship existed from long ago! Truly, the good ways are for us the old ways ... How many hundred-thousands of our ancestors from the Christian nations (of Europe) did not walk in these ways and found that they were good! All that was great and good in those nations derived ultimately from the old ways. And do not we as people and as church have a history that can witness ... (that God) worked wonderfully with us? How much tenderness and patience and faithfulness and chastisement and deliverances; what powerful workings of his Spirit from time to time ... by which the holy fire was kept burning on the altar of our church!<sup>37</sup>

It is also clear from this quotation that, in spite of the experiences of the recent war, a war between 'Christian nations', De Vos still believed in the idea of a Christian nation. But typically, he does not use this belief to criticize others. Rather he challenges his hearers:

The question that should be put to a Christian nation, is not simply what it knows and what it confesses ... the question is what it is and what it does; not only how it compares with other nations, but whether and in how far it corresponds to its privileges and whether its conduct is according to the Word of God. A nation may confess a form of godliness, but may deny the power thereof.<sup>38</sup>

In the last section of this sermon there is a powerful appeal to anyone 'who has two shirts, to give to him who does not have one'.<sup>39</sup> But his focus was not on the poor among the

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<sup>37</sup> 1906:214. He added: 'Truly, if some one from this volk would say that the old ways do not show us "what is the good way", it would not only be his own responsibility if his soul cannot find rest, but his own ancestors will, in the last day, rise up against him to judge him.

<sup>38</sup> 1906:215. Up to this point the sermon gives the impression of being addressed to the nation, but the following sudden reference to the church shows the close link in his mind between church and people: 'If the members of the church are not well versed in Scripture and in the teachings of the church, it is small wonder when they are swept away by every wind of doctrine and are ruined by a woeful superficiality in their religious life.' (218).

<sup>39</sup> 1906:223. In a tantalizing aside he said: 'All of us know that not all the old ways of our people are to be commended ...' (Iedereen weet, dat niet al de oude paden van ons volk aan te bevelen zijn). (220). One wonders what he had in mind? It is also noteworthy that he disapproved of the contemporary trek to Argentina, comparing it with Israel's trek to Egypt in the time of Jeremiah (221).

black population. We must help 'the stranger' in his need, as our neighbour, even as the Good Samaritan, but 'how much more should we not help our volksgenoot between whom and us the Lord has put such a strong bond!'<sup>40</sup>

In the last sermon De Vos encourages his hearers 'to appear before the Lord, as a people, to bring our vows before him'.<sup>41</sup> His point is unambiguous: the volk must covenant with God so that they should be his people. He reminded the people that they are in dire straits, and that 'our first calling is therefore, to humble ourselves before the Lord and to seek mercy from Him' (1906:232). They had to come to God in earnest prayer, making a true and humble confession of guilt, and praying that God 'would keep us as a people, that He would save us and give us deliverance in our need, and that He would make us his people, who would do his work in this part of the world' (233). But in such critical times prayers were not enough. 'In this important period of our existence', our vows must be added to our prayers.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> 1906:222. He added: 'I know about all the complaints against ... the "poor whites", as if it is of no use to help this class of people; but it is here just as with that which many bring in against mission work. Because some ... do not respond, people react as if no-one responds. Our labour colony at Kakamas proves the contrary'.

<sup>41</sup> 1906:233. The text was Genesis 28:20-22, on the vow of Jacob. In this sermon appears the single reference to Calvin's views. Speaking of the vows made at a marriage, a Baptism a Communion 'or other holy acts', he explained that vows may only be made, trusting in God's grace. 'Their vow is therefore a sign and pledge of their serious decision to do what they have promised ... in this sense Calvin also approved of vows, although he otherwise strongly condemned Roman abuses'. (231).

<sup>42</sup> De Vos explained that they would 'witness thereby that we are deadly serious in our prayers; and indicate thereby that we understand our calling as nation, and that we therefore bind ourselves in love and gratitude; humbly trusting that it is according to his holy will, and (trusting) that He will enable us to do his will by his grace. We must do it to the glory of God, for the sake of ourselves and our children, in the deepest humility as an act of faith. It is, I think, high time that we should come to this, so that we should know what we want to do, and act in unity and with determination; and that the Lord will know what He may expect from us, and could deal with us according to the riches of his

De Vos believed that 'a Christian nation' has a specific 'calling' and should therefore make a covenant with God. This 'national covenant' depended on the 'personal covenant' of individual Christians. Each one had to commit himself to God, 'it must of necessity be done first' (1906:233). But to personal commitment must be added 'a new act of faith', in which individuals should bind themselves 'to do everything within their power that the Lord will be a God also for their people. Should that not be the first fruit of all the chastisement we have received?' (233f).

It is breath-taking how the church, the covenant community, silently disappears between the individual and the people. In this sermon he spelled out five implications of being a covenanted nation. As these views were expressed before 1906, we give them here as fully as possible. It is highly significant that both his second and third point have a bearing on 'the racial problem' and already foreshadow the policies of a later generation.

First, being a covenanted nation demanded the Christianization of society. The people should desire that the true God should really be the God 'of our hearts, our homes, our society, our business, our politics ... Christendom does not realize enough what it means: Let God be God'.<sup>43</sup> This implied that Sunday-legislation, education and commerce should be ordered according to the Word.<sup>44</sup>

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mercy.' (1906:233).

<sup>43</sup> 1906:234. He added: 'Some act and speak as if ... knowledge of the laws of nature is already so far developed that man is now ... less dependent on God. As if our interests, our rights may be put ... above those of God? As if it is foolish to desire that trade and politics should be put second ... for the sake of a law of God. The majority have come so strongly under the influence of the *tijdgeest*, that it seems to them obvious that the strongest, the richest - even if they are the most unprincipled - should have right of way, and should not be restricted by anything or anybody'.

<sup>44</sup> 'Our schools, up to the highest level, should be the property of our King, the Lord Jesus Christ, that we and our children, with our land with its gold and diamonds, our

Second, being a covenanted people, called for dedication to the evangelization of Africa. 'We should commit ourselves as a people, if the Lord would call us and enable us, to do his work in this part of the world' (1906:235). De Vos does not yet use the term the Afrikaner-Christian, but he said: 'We must see the expansion of his Kingdom as a volksaak, as our highest calling and honour, and in particular we must not aim at greatness and riches' (235). Differing from the balanced missiological views of Marais, De Vos favoured a 'purely spiritual' mission:

We must promote true biblical mission, not mere civilization without God, filling the head with all kinds of vain ideas, that would make them dissatisfied with their state, without giving them the one thing needful. The salvation of souls must be our main aim.<sup>45</sup>

Third, 'we must do what we can to ensure that right should be done to the natives in all spheres, according to the Word of God and in accordance with their ability'. De Vos claimed that 'it was never even contemplated by any part of the people of this country, to enslave them or to oppress them' (1906:236). We should make it clear to ourselves that we do not believe 'that they were created for our benefit, but that we know that we should give them their rights with wisdom, and should acknowledge all their gifts and talents'. (236).

Fourth, a covenanted people should resist in the name of the Lord 'the sin of drunkenness, that is today a world-wide sin'. The vine-growers should show that 'not all those who are involved with the production of wine and in the liquor trade, desire to sacrifice a part of the population for time and eternity, just for the sake of selling their wine'

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whole national life (volksleven), should be sanctified to the Lord ...' (1906:235).

<sup>45</sup> 1906:236; my emphasis (GT). 'Main aim' translates hoofdzaak niet bijzaak.

(1906:237). A covenanted people should resist such a spirit without compromise.<sup>46</sup>

The fifth implication of being a covenanted people had to do with 'the foreigner in our midst'. Referring to immigrants and uitlanders, De Vos noted that such people should be treated 'in all fairness, as the Word of God teaches us', with 'justice and love' (237f). His main point was that, although there is much that 'we can learn from other nations', their customs should not be followed.<sup>47</sup> Within the context of the covenant De Vos advocated reconciliation with those who were on the side of Britain during the war:

We say therefore humbly to our God, that, if He would have mercy on us, and should deliver us, and keep us as a people from total ruin, and provide for us in our material and spiritual need, we will do all in our power to resist bitterness and a thirst for revenge; but, instead assist in building up a people (volk) who live in peace and quiet and who honour and serve the Lord as King.<sup>48</sup>

Although De Vos promoted the idea of a covenanted nation, he did not refer to the 1838 covenant. From his silence we may conclude that the 1838 covenant did not yet evoke the strong religious and political emotions that it developed later.<sup>49</sup> The 'new covenant' with God which De Vos urged the people to make had broader implications than the Voortrek-

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<sup>46</sup> He added that this should also be done for the sake of the vine-grower himself, because 'we do not believe that such depravity and sin will, in the long run, be to his advantage; it will surely be a curse on him and his children.' (1906:237). It should be remembered that De Vos grew up in a wine-producing district (Worcester).

<sup>47</sup> He explained: 'We must be careful that neither we nor our children should follow them in everything, as if we have no character or self-respect as a people, being so unsatisfied with our condition, that everything which is new must of necessity be better than that which the Lord gave us.' (1906:237).

<sup>48</sup> 1906:238. It is important to note that, as is common in Dutch, De Vos uses the term volk (people) as synonym for natie (nation).

<sup>49</sup> As Moodie suggests, the Voortrekker covenant was integrated with the 'civil religion' during the 1930ties (1974:11ff). Unfortunately he overstates his case for the 'Calvinist origins of Afrikaner civil religion'.

kers'.

Oh, if my voice could reach the ears of all the people of this country; I would make this proposal to them and ask them: Are you prepared for this? And I would call on them to stand united before the face of the Lord, and to offer this vow to him.<sup>50</sup>

Does this imply that De Vos propagated a kind of popular 'civil religion'? We turn to evidence in his sermons that argue against such an interpretation.

He reminded the people that first and foremost, they had to do with the living God. He repeatedly made the point that, whoever may be responsible for a Christian's suffering, he has to consider that 'it is God's strong hand that presses on him'.<sup>51</sup> Peter's assertion that the believers 'are suffering as Christians' is understood to mean, not that the persecutors will have to answer to God, but that 'the victims' have to suffer 'as Christians', that is, people who realize that they suffer according to God's will (1906:3).

Closely related to this was his major theme, namely that his hearers should humble themselves before God.<sup>52</sup> This means that the unconverted must repent and turn to God, and that everyone should make sure that his conversion is not superficial (1906:5f). In this respect he gave the following contextual information:

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<sup>50</sup> 1906:239. After urgent warnings not to deal lightly with the Lord 'lest something worse befall us', De Vos said: 'Beloved volksgenoten and fellow Christians ... our God is waiting for our vow or a similar proof that we as a volk humble ourselves under his powerful hand ... Must our poor and our children be exposed longer than is necessary to danger and suffering, because we do not understand how to act in faith? ... let us draw near to God, as priests, in the name of the people, in faith and in a love which encompass them all ... offering ... in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, our sacrifices on the God's altar with "powerful prayers" to the God of the covenant'. (240).

<sup>51</sup> 1906:3. He therefore also referred to texts like Amos 3:6 and Isaiah 45:7.

<sup>52</sup> In the last sermon he says: 'Oh, I would plead with our people to bend low, very low, before the holy but merciful God; so as to come to a true realization of our weakness and sin ...' (1906:239).

A (lay) brother, who ... took part in the last war; and who also did spiritual work in the (prisoner-of-war) camps, and therefore had a lot of contact with members of our church, complained about the great amount of carelessness and even unbelief among members of our volk. Many went backwards rather than forwards as a result of these trials; and not a few declared that, as a result of what happened to them, they no longer prayed, and ... did not trust in it (Gods Word) any more, because God has treated them in this way.<sup>53</sup>

In answer to why this happened, it was suggested that many people took themselves for Christians, while they were not 'or at least their conversion was very superficial'.<sup>54</sup> But it may also mean that the Christian is chastened because of disobedience or sin in his life. He reminded his hearers that 'our own hearts are deceptive, and in a case between us and others, (we should) remember that there may also be injustice and sin on our side'.<sup>55</sup>

De Vos was obviously concerned that his hearers should grow in faith and obedience. In his sermon on Hebrews 5 he said that a Christian may learn valuable lessons when he cannot understand God's ways, when that which the Lord brings over him seems so unjust.

When it would seem to him that God does not rule any more, or, as if the Lord has forsaken him, while he does not know the reason ... It is very difficult to give up certain possessions for which one has worked hard, certain rights, that one value very highly, strong convictions, deep-seated

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<sup>53</sup> 1906:7. A particularly outspoken example of this spirit is to be found in an undated letter from E B Hoffman in Edinburgh. His father told him before his death that he has 'sacrificed himself and his children for his country'. He wrote: 'I cannot be patient if I think of the almost helpless situation in which my sisters and mother find themselves, to say nothing of myself. I could have wished that the blow came when I still had a childlike faith. In that case I would at least have known where to seek comfort; now I can only gnash my teeth in powerless resistance.' He wrote to Professor Moorrees, at that time minister of Paarl, because he had no-one to turn to 'except an invisible and inconceivable being' against whose 'inexorable predestination' (onverbiddelike lotsbestiering) he could do nothing (cf file P8 1/1 NGKA-CT. He was presumably the son of Dr J M Hoffman of Paarl, a prominent member of the Afrikanerbond, who formed an ambulance unit during the War. Cf Davenport 1966:212,227).

<sup>54</sup> 1906:7. The nation has to confess openly that 'if someone is not born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God' (235).

<sup>55</sup> 1906:10. Unfortunately De Vos did not enlarge on this last point.

aspirations ... One feels sometimes that God may claim almost everything from one, but not this! And then it happens that He takes just that. (1906:37).

It does not matter who are responsible as 'second causes', the main point is that we must learn obedience to God through what happens to us (1906:37). We should not only learn obedience when suffering is forced upon us; we must be willing to dedicate ourselves to God 'as true priests' for the salvation of our fellows. Such obedience may bring one at times into thick darkness (38). Remembering the example of Jesus, it would not always be clear how our suffering would contribute to the salvation of others or to the glory of God (38). Only the example of Christ, and the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, could enable us to follow in the way of obedience (39). De Vos closed this sermon by saying:

Who would then dare to complain of trials, when it is the will of his Lord to sanctify him through them, to enable him to conquer through them and to prepare him for the highest glory? If he knows that he only follows his Leader, who was sanctified by suffering, and that he may in this way glorify his Lord and bring so much blessing to his neighbour? That we may be more than conquerors through all this, we owe to our great High Priest, who was sanctified by suffering for our sake.<sup>56</sup>

Although De Vos clearly believed in the idea of a Christian nation, in view of his personal humility and his Calvinistic theology, it would be wrong to suggest that he propagated a 'civil religion'. In his eyes God was too great a God for anyone to 'use him' as an instrument of political power. We find nothing in his teaching that might have been used to encourage among the Afrikaners a feeling of superiority as a supposedly chosen people. But a very weak point in these sermons was that he failed to spell out what he meant by 'injustice and sin on our side' (1906:10).

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<sup>56</sup> 1906:40. In the last sermon he returns to this theme: 'If, doing this, we would not forget our vows and the costly lessons which we have learnt in the last years, then we and our children will continually thank the Lord for all that suffering'. (239).

### Eschatology

Where Murray and Hofmeyr were, generally speaking, in agreement with the traditional largely postmillennial eschatology, De Vos inclined towards premillennialism much earlier than Marais, who became a reluctant convert towards the end of his life.

He used the Systematic Theology of Hodge extensively in his discussion of eschatology,<sup>57</sup> but the roles were changed, because De Vos preferred Van Oosterzee, the 'premillennialist', to Hodge, the representative of the 'old or common view' of the church (Van Wijk 1899). He summarized Hodge's postmillennial view in three points: At the end of time Christ will come to judge; before the second coming there will be a great period of success for the gospel in the world; shortly before the end the Antichrist will appear.<sup>58</sup> He explained that 'chiliasm received a bad odour' because of the extremism of its previous advocates. 'The Reformers disliked the fanaticism of the anabaptists who advocated carnal and worldly power and enjoyments, established by force'. Nevertheless, the apostles and the earliest Jewish Christians 'were chiliasts', as well as Hermas, Barnabas and Irenaeus. Today 'in Europe and America many believers live in the daily expectation of the coming of the Lord'.<sup>59</sup>

Van Wijk's notes contain a very detailed exposition of premillennialism and enumerate the following major teachings: The pagan nations will not be converted neither will the

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<sup>57</sup> His discussion of the 'Roman Catholic doctrine of Antichrist' is a summary of the material of Hodge (Van Wijk 1899; cf Hodge 1883 III:831ff).

<sup>58</sup> Van Wijk 1899; cf Hodge 1883 III:836.

<sup>59</sup> Van Wijk 1899. Barth relates that a coach was kept ready at Bad Boll, year in and year out, to enable Blumhardt to set off to the Holy Land to meet Christ at his second coming (1973:647).

Jews believe in Christ before the second coming.<sup>60</sup> Christ will come personally and in glory to Jerusalem to establish his Kingdom, that will last for a thousand years. Those who died in Christ will be raised at his coming, and will rule with him. The Jews will then be converted and will be instrumental in the conversion of the pagan nations. The general resurrection will take place at the end of the millennium (Van Wijk 1899).

De Vos mentioned the following arguments in favour of premillennialism: The present situation of the church and the world 'does not justify' the expectation of a millennium before the second coming. The coming of the Lord, and not the millennium, is the blessed hope of the church. The coming is universally described in Scripture as being at hand. The Lord commanded us to wait for his coming. The NT teaches that the second coming and the establishment of the Kingdom will occur simultaneously. Postmillennialism was not embodied in the confessions of the reformation (Van Wijk 1899).

Postmillennialism is not explained in the notes in any detail, but De Vos discusses various criticisms of premillennialism, especially those mentioned by Hodge, with some of which he agreed. These were mainly on the question of the restoration of the religious and national life of Israel.<sup>61</sup> In this respect he warned against an excessive literalism in the interpretation of prophecy, and concluded that 'so much is certain: Israel is still to play an important role in the future revelation of God's power and grace to the world' (Van Wijk 1899). De Vos's exposition was indeed thorough and as previously mentioned, he tried to

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<sup>60</sup> It would seem that he meant a 'national conversion' both in the case of the 'pagan nations' and of Israel.

<sup>61</sup> He said: 'It is remarkable how everything that belonged to the national kingdom of Israel seemed to disappear entirely from the thoughts and ... (word unclear) of the apostles after the coming of the Holy Spirit'. (Van Wijk 1899).

be as objective as possible.

De Vos referred to the dominical sayings in Matthew 25 which indicate that we shall be judged according to our works. He harmonized the faith-works dilemma in the usual evangelical way, explaining that 'they could only do the (good) works, which they did for him, as believers. Our relationship to him is therefore decisive. Faith working by love, works salvation'.<sup>62</sup> Still on the last judgment he referred to the views of Ebrard and Van Oosterzee, namely that pagans who lived uprightly but had never had an opportunity to hear the gospel, would receive 'a second chance'. Here again De Vos was closer to Hodge, arguing that Ebrard's exposition of Revelation 22:2 was 'against the context. The Lord will allow the pagans to enter by their faith'.<sup>63</sup>

If De Vos inclined towards premillennialism in 1899, the experiences of the war confirmed him in these views:

The believer may and must therefore hold fast that no hair of his head will fall without the will of God ... Nevertheless it remains true that terrible things happen on earth that cannot be reconciled rationally with the rule of God. If a person has hoped previously that an increase in knowledge and civilization, or the extension of God's Kingdom, would make an end to such things, experience has surely disappointed him. And if he would ask from Scripture what is to be expected in the future, the answer is that, generally speaking, until the millennium, it will become increasingly worse. The 'apostasy' will come, 'the man of sin', 'the son of iniquity', 'the lawless one' will be revealed 'whose future is according to the work of Satan in all power and signs of the lie and in all the delusions of unrighteousness in those who are perishing'. What a future for the people of God! and ... for his cause on earth!<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Van Wijk 1899; emphasis in original.

<sup>63</sup> Van Wijk 1899. He added: 'Acts 10:35 must also be understood in this way'. Other texts quoted were Rom 2:6-8 and Rev 21:6.

<sup>64</sup> 1906:116; in a sermon on Luke 18:7.

### C F J Muller

In 1899 Christoffel Fredericus Jacobus Muller, minister at Cape Town, was called to the Kweekskool as 'fourth professor'. He was brought up in the Karoo in circles where the works of the Calvinist pietists or oude schrijvers were still being read.<sup>65</sup> According to his own testimony he believed that it was presumptuous to claim an assurance of salvation (GM Sep 1909). Touched by the revival of the sixties, he dedicated his life to the ministry. He was older than the other students, but obtained his BA and theological qualification in spite of financial problems (Keet 1934:105). Hofmeyr was instrumental in bringing him to an assurance of salvation.<sup>66</sup>

Before moving to Cape Town, Muller served the congregations of Swellendam, where he was successor of Dr W Robertson, and George, where he did much for the education of the poor. According to Keet he was a beloved minister who imparted a thorough knowledge of the Bible to his congregations (1934:107). He was appointed at the Kweekskool to teach 'the Dutch Bible' and Biblical Archeology. He published numerous articles in the Gereformeerd Maandblad, of which the most comprehensive was a series on the book of Revelation.<sup>67</sup> All his publications bear the marks of thoroughness.<sup>68</sup> He was straight-forward,

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<sup>65</sup> Muller's father was an American of Irish parentage. He worked on a ship but was forced to stay in Holland for a time because of ill health. There 'Miller' became 'Muller'. He emigrated to SA, eventually settled in Graaff-Reinet and married a local girl (GM Nov 1899:101).

<sup>66</sup> GM Sep 1909. Muller arrived in Stellenbosch in 1868. He later married Johanna Louw, a younger sister of Hofmeyr's wife (Keet 1934:106).

<sup>67</sup> Cf GM Oct 1910 to July 1912.

<sup>68</sup> While still in George he wrote a book on Biblical Archeology (Muller 1885). In Cape Town he wrote against Seventh Day Adventism (no date) and in defence of Protestantism against the well-known convert to Catholicism, Dr Kolbe (cf Muller 1889).

but also open-minded and sympathetic (Keet 1934:107). He served the Kweekskool with dedication and distinction until his death in 1915.<sup>69</sup>

Muller's general theological orientation was similar to that of his friend and colleague J I Marais, i.e. moderately conservative but at the same time well-informed. There is no indication that he appreciated Hofmeyr's special insights into Christology, like Marais, his concerns were apologetical. The trustworthiness of the message of Scripture was the main burden of his theology.<sup>70</sup> From the thorough discussion of the book of Revelation in the Maandblad we can see that Muller inclined towards premillennialism, but, like Marais, he did not accept its theories in all their details.

According to Keet, Muller was the first professor at the Kweekskool who sympathized with Afrikaans as ecclesiastical language, as opposed to Dutch.<sup>71</sup> He visited Europe in 1900 to prepare himself for his appointment at Stellenbosch. A report from Edinburgh shows that he was in sympathy with the republics during the War.<sup>72</sup> He wrote nothing specifically about church and people, but he distinguished sharply between the visible and the invisible

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<sup>69</sup> He was the father of T B Muller and the grandfather of the historian, Professor C F J Muller.

<sup>70</sup> Between Feb and June 1911 Muller disputed with Rev D J Pienaar of Tarkastad, who defended the 'higher critics' (GM Jan 1911). Muller quoted the authority of Davidson, Orr, Hodge, Ebrard, Van Oosterzee and Bavinck (GM April 1911). In response to Pienaar's assertion that the 'moderate critics want to save the Bible', Muller asked: 'Does the Bible really need our defence? Is it not able to save itself?' (GM Feb 1911).

<sup>71</sup> 1934:107. His son, T B Muller, was a leader of the Afrikaans language movement (cf Keet and Tomlinson 1925).

<sup>72</sup> GM April 1900. He revealed that many SA students 'who did not previously feel strongly Afrikaans' became pro-Boer because of the 'propaganda' in the British press. He specifically mentioned the accusation that the Transvalers 'are the only (Christian) people who still practise slavery'. Another cause of 'student unrest' was ministers who publicly prayed for a victory of British arms (GM April 1900). These were mainly medical students, but some studied law and theology.

church.<sup>73</sup> There is no evidence that he moved away from the commonly held Stellenbosch view of a volkskerk.<sup>74</sup> It is very probable that he adhered to the 'received opinion': the 'visible' confessing church was national and the 'invisible church' universal in character.

### Conclusion

De Vos espoused the Christological views of Hodge - described by Ebrard as Nestorian - which were distinctly more 'conservative' than those of Murray and Hofmeyr. He moved away from their emphasis on the humanity of Christ and increasingly emphasized his divinity. The concept of the 'vicarious humanity' of Christ was totally lost. In his approach to Scripture, De Vos approached full-blown fundamentalism. In soteriology, likewise, he exchanged Hofmeyr's teaching of the huiiothesia for Hodge's more rigidly scholastic ordo salutis.<sup>75</sup>

The absence of a pronounced doctrine of the church as the covenant community was an extremely serious weakness in the theology of De Vos, not only because he was professor of Systematic Theology, but also because of his deep sympathy with the Afrikaner people. These factors strengthened the existing link between the people and the NGK, not only in the popular mind, but also in that of many ministers.

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<sup>73</sup> Commenting on Rev 12 he said that the woman probably represents the visible church, while the child represents the invisible church! (GM Jan 1911).

<sup>74</sup> Muller expressed admiration for General C F Beyers, elder of the NGK, because he resigned from his position as Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Force when the SA government decided to attack Namibia in 1914 (P R du Toit 1982:15).

<sup>75</sup> Cf Van Wijk 1898a. In the 1940ties F J M Potgieter, professor of Church History, propagated a similar scheme, strongly influenced by Kuyper and V Hepp (Potgieter 1953). However, the scholastic ordo salutis was never fully popularized in the NGK, presumably because of the writings of Andrew Murray.

Excepting S J du Toit, who was very much persona non grata in the Cape Church, De Vos was the first Stellenbosch theologian to accept premillennialism before the Anglo-Boer War. Even more than Marais, he laid the foundation for the popularization of a pessimistic eschatology in the eventful years between the two world wars.

Muller was much less of a scholastic theologian than De Vos, but his emphasis on the authority of the Bible tended to reinforce the fundamentalist views of De Vos. His views on eschatology, as expressed in his study of the book of Revelation, were in the same direction as those of De Vos. Though his emphasis on the reformation, as opposed to contemporary Roman Catholicism, was in line with the Stellenbosch tradition, Muller's approach did not bring the NGK to a fresh and independent study of the writings of Calvin and the theology of the reformation.

## Chapter 9

## EPILOGUE

The 19th century was the age of industrialization, of progress, and of a great variety of scientific discoveries. It was also the age of Western imperialism, that complex and controversial phenomenon considered both a blessing and a curse to many peoples. At the same time it was a period of an unprecedented missionary advance of the Christian church,<sup>1</sup> a movement which came to be closely associated with imperialism.<sup>2</sup> The 19th century also saw the continuation of the philosophical and historical criticisms of the Christian faith, initiated during the 'Enlightenment'. Not only outsiders, but many official teachers of the faith went to considerable lengths to criticize the Bible and to modify the doctrines of the church accordingly.<sup>3</sup> Closely associated with biblical criticism was the process of 'the secularization of the European mind'. This movement started to gain momentum from the 'Enlightenment', but received great stimulus during the 19th century because of the dominant trends in science and philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Protestantism was characterized by an abounding vitality and a daring unequalled in Christian history ... for the first time, plans were seriously elaborated for bringing the Christian message to all men ... Never before ... had the followers of any faith formulated comprehensive plans covering the entire surface of the earth to make these purposes effective'. (Latourette 1941:44).

<sup>2</sup> Cf Neill 1984:322ff.

<sup>3</sup> Latourette 1970 II:41-52,243f.

<sup>4</sup> Although, as Chadwick (1977) has shown, secularization was by no means a consistent process.

The main purpose of the founding of the Kweekskool was to minimize the influence of secularization and modernism on church and people. From this point of view, the fathers of the NGK were clearly successful. Murray and Hofmeyr belonged to one of the last groups of students who pursued all their literary and theological studies in Europe. After 1859 only some students went for a shorter or longer period to Holland or Scotland, after completing their studies at Stellenbosch.<sup>5</sup> Although the NGK had to accept the 'voluntary principle' in its relationship to the state, secularization, in the strict sense of the term, was not a serious problem. Marais gave his students a good introduction to Western philosophy, but he was not an Opzoomer who shocked their evangelical faith. Biblical criticism was duly noted, but never fully accepted.<sup>6</sup> A number of individual ministers held fairly progressive views on these subjects, but even Du Plessis, who was tried for heresy, was no radical (Malan 1933:261).

If biblical criticism and secularization touched the NGK only slightly, the situation was quite different, as far as the missionary movement and imperialism were concerned. South Africa was a popular 'mission field', where numerous denominations made more or less successful attempts to convert the indigenous peoples. After two centuries of isolation, members of the NGK suddenly came into contact with a variety of denominations, sometimes in competition with each other. In due course the Cape Church was also awakened to the challenges of the missionary age. Through the influence of the revival of

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<sup>5</sup> There were exceptions to this rule. B Marchand, editor of De Kerkbode from 1906-1910, and an active promotor of the Kakamas scheme for 'poor whites', studied 'exclusively in Scotland' (Dreyer 1934a:118).

<sup>6</sup> The Gereformeerde Maandblad was founded by Marais in 1892 to inform the ministers of what was happening in the theological world, and to counteract radical influences.

1860 and people such as the Murrays, Hofmeyr, J H Neethling, and others, an active interest in missions became an integral part of the Stellenbosch theological tradition.

At the same time South Africa was also at 'the receiving end' of imperialism. After many wars between the colonial powers and the indigenous peoples during the 19th century, at the close of the century the two Afrikaner Republics were engaged in a mortal struggle with imperial Britain.<sup>7</sup> Like the American civil war and anticipating the first World War, it was a war between 'two Protestant nations'.

As the experiences of the first World War shocked some Christians in Europe into neo-orthodoxy, it is not strange that the Anglo-Boer War had a marked influence on the theology of the Afrikaners. Some lost their simple evangelical beliefs,<sup>8</sup> but others were driven to a deeper experience of their faith. Revivals in the prisoner-of-war camps on the islands of St Helena, Bermuda and Sri Lanka were not uncommon. Many were converted in connection with the work of ministers and elders of the NGK, and a large number of young men offered themselves for missionary service (Gerdener 1958:15). Generally speaking, the change in theological direction was not related to attempts at a theodicy, resulting from the problems created by the war. After the war theological students increasingly preferred the Free University of Amsterdam to Utrecht, partly because of Kuyper's positive attitude towards what he described as the 'Calvinistic liberation struggle of the Afrikaners'.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Although not officially involved, many black people were directly affected by the war (cf Warwick 1983).

<sup>8</sup> At least one burgher was attracted to Islam for a time (M E R 1976: 254).

<sup>9</sup> Cf Du Toit 1917:277ff. The reason why Stellenbosch students preferred Princeton to Edinburgh for post-graduate studies after the war, was also just as much political as theological. C W Hodge and B B Warfield were very acceptable theologians, but it was equally

The change in Stellenbosch theology at this time was gradual but significant. In spite of their ability and the respect Marais and De Vos had for their senior colleagues, they did not fully appreciate the importance of the Christological views of Murray and Hofmeyr. It would seem that they were not able to enter into the experiences of their predecessors in such a way that their insights could be carried forward.<sup>10</sup>

### Christology

The most distinctive feature of Stellenbosch theology was certainly its Christology.<sup>11</sup> As we have seen, Murray understood that the whole human life of Christ, including his present intercessio, was vicarious. He integrated the example of Christ into his theology, without compromising the primacy of grace, as happened in contemporary liberal theology. Hofmeyr was clearly fascinated by the historical Jesus. His insights into the centrality and finality of Jesus were not gained in the lecture halls of evangelical theology, but forged in the midst of the temptations of modernism and pantheism. The realities of his human experiences - the religion of Jesus - provided Hofmeyr with the answer to the Christological problems of his day. Christology was in the centre of his theology, because the sonship of Jesus focused and patterned our sonship. But, because of his interest in the incarnation

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important that the USA did not take part in the Anglo-Boer War.

<sup>10</sup> Augustine struggled with the temptations and challenges of his age, but only a truncated version of his theology was transmitted to the Middle Ages (cf Warfield 1956:319f). Beza did not share the insights of Calvin on crucial points (cf Torrance 1988:259), and Melancthon did not uphold the primacy of grace in the same way as Luther (cf Cunningham 1967:156).

<sup>11</sup> Hofmeyr's books, 'The Christ of the gospels' (1887) and 'Not a servant but a son' (1896) represent the high water mark of Stellenbosch theology.

and huiiothesia, he did not emphasize the sacrificial death of Christ to the same extent as Murray did.

The theology of Marais was significantly less Christological than his predecessors'. He represented the best in contemporary evangelical theology, but not having experienced all the temptations of modernism, he did not appreciate Hofmeyr's fascination with the real human life of the historical Jesus. Marais emphasized man's faith in Jesus, but not the faith of Jesus. The same is true of De Vos, who espoused the scholastic Christological views of Hodge. The latter was a learned reformed theologian, but he did not fully appreciate the human life of Christ. Christ was indeed proclaimed as saviour and substitute, but his 'vicarious humanity' disappeared from the theology of De Vos.<sup>12</sup> The fear of modernism closed the eyes of De Vos and others to the significance of the heritage of Murray and Hofmeyr.

The most important figure in the NGK after the death of Hofmeyr was certainly Andrew Murray. It is difficult to assess the full extent of his influence.<sup>13</sup> Initially his Christological views coincided with Hofmeyr's, but he increasingly emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit within us.<sup>14</sup> Admittedly Murray always insisted that we must expect that God will work in us, but the general tenor of his teaching was to emphasize what God can do in us, rather than what God did and is doing for us in Christ. Both the critical Coetzee

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<sup>12</sup> Cf Hodge 1883 II 380-396 and Van Wijk 1897.

<sup>13</sup> Anderssen denied that his theological influence was significant, but went on to distinguish between his theological and his 'spiritual' influence (1979:9).

<sup>14</sup> His most typical work on Christology was his devotional commentary on Hebrews, published in 1893, where he emphasized communion with the glorified Jesus (AMVW Vol IX, cf Murray 1907). Although his brother John was critical of some aspects of the revival (Du Toit 1955:213), Andrew Murray and Hofmeyr were ardent supporters.

and the sympathetic Anderssen concluded that Murray over-emphasized the subjective.<sup>15</sup>

Adriaan Moorrees, who succeeded Hofmeyr in 1908, was the last representative of Dutch ethical theology in the Kweekskool.<sup>16</sup> Although he was brought up in an anti-confessional atmosphere, he stood within the Christocentric tradition of the ethical school. There are also indications that he appreciated certain of Hofmeyr's Christological insights.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, as ethical theologian Moorrees believed in a volkskerk.<sup>18</sup> Ever since the Anglo-Boer War he was continually occupied by numerous ecclesiastical, political and educational matters.<sup>19</sup> Even if he appreciated Hofmeyr's major insight - which is not certain - he did not develop it in his theology.

Two other prominent theologians who studied in Utrecht after the war were D F Malan and T B Muller. They both specialized in contemporary apologetical and philo-

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<sup>15</sup> Coetzee 1986:224 and Anderssen 1979:198. Even his close friend, J R Albertyn, a man full of wisdom and love, criticized the tendencies of Keswick and the 'higher life movement' in Andrew Murray's theology (GM Nov and Dec 1918).

<sup>16</sup> His father, J C le Febre Moorrees, belonged to the 'moderate' group in the Cape Church (Hanekom 1951:435). As his mother died at his birth, he was brought up by his father's sister, who was married to the modernist elder of Malmesbury, H H Loedolf. After completing his studies at the Kweekskool in 1878, he studied for a year at Utrecht (Gerdener 1951:196).

<sup>17</sup> Cf his reference to the temptations of Christ (DK 26.8.1931:382).

<sup>18</sup> Representing the Cape Synod in Transvaal in 1894, Moorrees said: 'We want to give expression to the unity which exists between the Afrikaner people here and in the Colony ... we are one people, one nation, one blood and one Church of the Lord ... our loyalty to the Queen will do you no harm' (Gerdener 1930:524).

<sup>19</sup> Cf incoming letters from 'Onze Jan' Hofmeyr, Emily Hobhouse, President M T Steyn, J B M Hertzog, John X Merriman and F S Malan (file P8 1/1 NGKA-CT). He was a member of the Parliamentary Educational Committee, for many years chairman of the Taalbond, president of the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie and a member of the prestigious Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde of Leyden (Gerdener 1951:202).

sophical problems.<sup>20</sup> It is significant that there is no reference to Christ in Malan's thesis.<sup>21</sup> Muller, a son of C F J Muller, indicated his appreciation for certain aspects of Hofmeyr's theology, but he died in 1918.<sup>22</sup>

In 1921 N J van der Merwe received a doctorate from the Free University of Amsterdam on 'The Social Teachings of Jesus Christ'.<sup>23</sup> He grappled seriously with the personal poverty and the social teachings of Jesus, and the social gospel of Rauschenbusch. Van der Merwe followed Kuyper in his criticism of capitalism, but without accepting the principles of socialism. He represented a position in advance of contemporary evangelical thinking when he asserted that 'evangelization and Christian social action are not to be separated'. He also proposed that 'a Christian Labour Union of non-political nature should be started as soon as possible in South Africa' (1921:177). Unfortunately, this never became a reality. Van der Merwe is the clearest link between the social gospel of Hofmeyr and the 'Afrikaner social gospel' which was mainly concerned with the 'poor whites'.

In 1928 Johannes du Plessis, who succeeded C F J Muller in 1916, was accused of holding heretical views on inspiration, 'higher criticism' and Christology (Malan 1933:91). He was a versatile scholar with a special interest in missions and in the relationship

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<sup>20</sup> The subject of Muller's thesis was 'The Epistemology of the Anglo-American Pragmatism' (Keet and Tomlinson 1925:20). Malan, who made a study of Berkeley's philosophy, expressed the view that we can deduce the existence of God from contemplating reality (nature) and personality (spirit). (1905:212-230).

<sup>21</sup> His speeches (Pienaar and Scholtz 1964) do not give the impression that Christology was a dominant theme in his thinking (but cf Malan 1945).

<sup>22</sup> Keet and Tomlinson 1925:141.

<sup>23</sup> A son-in-law of President M T Steyn, he was openly in sympathy with the 'armed protest' of 1914 (cf his letter to Moorrees, dated 7.12. 1914 in file P8 1/1 NGKA-CT). He resigned from the ministry to enter politics and became a member of Parliament in 1924.

between faith and science. His integrity and devotion to Christ was never in doubt, but kenoticism became a factor in the debates which he initiated mainly because he denied that one might invoke the authority of Jesus regarding the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch (Snyman 1965:5). Like Hofmeyr he had no desire to be dominated by 'old and out-dated' confessions (cf Malan 1933:23), but he did not share Hofmeyr's emphasis on Christology.<sup>24</sup>

D R Snyman has documented the fact that it was P J G de Vos who initiated the opposition to Du Plessis (1965:13ff), but E E van Rooyen, professor of Old Testament, played a major role in the case against his colleague. He was an ultra-conservatist who identified kenoticism with 'American modernism'.<sup>25</sup> Moorrees did not agree in everything with Du Plessis, but he retired in protest in 1930 when the Synod suspended Du Plessis. For the same reason he declined to take part in the 75th anniversary festivities of the Kweekskool, although he was eminently suited to be the main speaker at such an event.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> In 1927 the celebrated Afrikaans author C J Langenhoven published one of his lesser-known books Skaduwees van Nasaret (Images of Nazareth, 1956). In this work Jesus is depicted as a very real human being, appreciating with tears in his eyes, the loving care of Martha 'the old maid of Bethany', when 'the sorrows of the whole nation bore him down' (1956:81). The Jesus of Langenhoven was the man of sorrows with 'a new philosophy of sacrificial love'. He was not conspicuously divine, indeed a kenotic Jesus, but his love transformed those who met him (91). Langenhoven supported Du Plessis, as did most of the Afrikaner intelligentsia, but he also contributed to the 'Afrikaner civil religion' (Moodie 1974:11ff).

<sup>25</sup> Cf OP Dec 1929:222 and Snyman 1965:29. On the other hand, Du Plessis, who was professor of NT and Missions, openly contradicted the views of Van Rooyen, both in his lectures and in his journal (Snyman 1965:4).

<sup>26</sup> 'I stood on the side of Du Plessis, not because I agreed with his views and his actions, but because I believe that there should be in our church, and has always been, room for differences of opinion, as long as these are not against the confession, and because I gladly give to another the right to his own opinion, which I claim for myself'. (Cf undated fragment and his letter to Snyman, 26.7.1934, in file P8 1/1 NGKA-CT).

B B Keet, successor of De Vos in the chair of Systematic Theology, supported Du Plessis and took over the editorship of his paper, Het Zoeklicht,<sup>27</sup> when Du Plessis had to retire. Like Moorrees, Keet believed that there should be freedom for theological investigation within the parameters of the reformed confessions. Although one cannot say that he was fascinated by the historical Jesus, Keet emphasized and in doing so certainly retarded the move away from the humanity of Christ in Stellenbosch theology.<sup>28</sup>

D R Snyman, minister at Stellenbosch, continuously attacked Du Plessis in his paper Die Ou Paaie, in the presbytery of Stellenbosch and in the curatorium. Snyman's own views on the person of Christ verged on pure Apollinarianism. He emphasized what he believed to be the 'orthodox' view, namely that the humanity of Christ was 'impersonal'. When Jesus spoke it was 'the divine person who spoke in and through him. It is therefore totally wrong and heretical to speak of the "human personality" of Jesus'.<sup>29</sup> With his fundamentalist training Snyman was unable to understand the point of view of Du Plessis,<sup>30</sup> and the latter was not the kind of man to make a compromise when he believed that the truth was at stake. It is good to put on record that, after the visit of Lionel Fletcher to South Africa in 1934, and a few months before the death of Du Plessis, Snyman confessed that he opposed him in a bitter spirit, and asked his forgiveness.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Literally a search-light or lighthouse. A supporter of the Afrikaans language movement, Keet changed the title to Die Soeklig.

<sup>28</sup> Cf Keet 1945:146. To date there has been no biography of Keet.

<sup>29</sup> OP April 1930:413.

<sup>30</sup> Snyman received a doctorate in the New Testament from the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky (cf chapter 1 n27).

<sup>31</sup> Cf letter Snyman to Du Plessis, dated 6.12.1934, in file P2 3/4 NGKA-CT.

In 1931 J J Muller received a doctorate from the Free University of Amsterdam for a thesis on the development of Christology since the reformation. He declared that kenoticism was heretical, but recognized the importance of the humanity of Christ for theology. However, after the dismissal of Du Plessis in 1932, it was all but impossible to revive the Christological views of Murray and Hofmeyr. In retrospect it is clear that his dismissal, and the subsequent move towards fundamentalism was a major blow for the development of Stellenbosch theology (cf Geldenhuys 1982:10f).

Fifteen years later B J Marais wrote a thesis on 'The Christian doctrine of brotherly love' (1946). This study represents the views of his promoter, B B Keet, as much as those of Marais, but it did not revive Hofmeyr's emphasis on the 'thoroughly genuine' human life of Jesus. In the same year P K Albertyn published the only full length 'life of Jesus' ever published in South Africa.<sup>32</sup> This study was in line with many of the typical 19th century lives of Christ.<sup>33</sup> It did not attain to the views of Hofmeyr and Murray, but it indicated that there was still an interest in the human Christ in Stellenbosch theology.

However, as time went on the confession of the humanity of Christ came to be little more than a mere formality - at least among the opponents of Du Plessis. J D Vorster, in later years moderator of the Cape Synod, actually found it possible to deny that Jesus was a Jew.

He alone could call himself Son of Man because He was, as far as race was concerned, not bound to either Jew or Aryan ... He alone was truly man. We find therefore only one place where He was called a Jew in the Bible ... a Samaritan woman, a heathen, called Him that ... Jesus never called himself a Jew ... he called himself what He was in truth and in the fullest sense of the

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<sup>32</sup> He was a cousin of Professor du Plessis's wife, 'Daughty' Albertyn.

<sup>33</sup> He acknowledged his indebtedness to Van Oosterzee, Edersheim, Farrar, Stalker, Paterson Smith and others. (1946:iii).

term, the Son of Man ... this expressed the fact that the whole fullness of humanity lived in him ... Any limitation of Jesus to one group, one nation or race, is of necessity a limitation of his majesty and highness as Saviour. He is the Son of Man, equal to all people, and yet different from all people ... (his sinlessness) emphasized his uniqueness and his supra-national existence.<sup>34</sup>

Vorster motivated this assertion from the 'impersonality' of Jesus. He argued that 'the assumption of a human personality' would imply that Jesus was limited to one nation 'because only a human person can be limited to one nation. And Jesus did not accept a human personality'.<sup>35</sup> With this view we have reached the lowest point in the development of Stellenbosch theology; here we are far removed from Hofmeyr, who affirmed that because Jesus was a true Jew, he could also be 'the man for all men' and that the love of the 'utterly human' Jesus assures us that God is love.

Vorster was well-known for his very 'conservative' views on racial matters. There is also solid evidence that some of the most ardent opponents of Du Plessis, specifically D R Snyman and C R Kotze, held similar views.<sup>36</sup> It is very significant that Vorster argued, on the basis of his understanding of the humanity of Christ, that 'apartheid ... is the will of God'.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Vorster 1982:37,40f. In the 1930ties Vorster was very sympathetic towards Germany. This work represents his mature and more moderate views.

<sup>35</sup> Vorster 1982:40. Obviously referring to Nestorianism, he added: 'This heresy was condemned ages ago'.

<sup>36</sup> Cf the decision of the Kerkraad of Stellenbosch on 'The Fort Hare Conference' (OP Oct 1930:121) and Kotze (1932 and 1955).

<sup>37</sup> Vorster 1982:62. It has to be kept in mind that Du Plessis was in favour of a certain degree of separation, but he also emphasized the need for unity and co-operation. He often referred to the saying of Booker Washington: 'Separate as the fingers, united as the hand' (cf Gerdener 1943:191).

The point seems clear: When people are not convinced that God's love was fully revealed in the 'utterly human' Christ, when the humanity of Jesus is neglected, what will prevent them from neglecting the humanity of their fellow men?<sup>38</sup>

### The Purpose of Scripture

Closely related to the previous point was a change in the use of Scripture in Stellenbosch theology. For Murray and Hofmeyr the focus of God's revelation was not Scripture in the first place, but the incarnation. Scripture was, of course, the primary and indispensable witness to Christ. Even when Hofmeyr discussed the trustworthiness of the Bible, he emphasized the centrality of the incarnation (GM August 1892). He certainly did not have 'an idolatrous honour for the letter of Scripture', as he used to put it (1887:101f). Hofmeyr believed that theology developed through the centuries, under the guidance of the Spirit, and he could therefore not take one period, not even the reformation, as normative for its interpretation. Scripture was indeed an ancient book that demanded serious intellectual study, but it could only be understood under the influence of the Holy Spirit. For Hofmeyr the Bible was neither a revelation of a system of truth, nor a 'mine' of information on a series of theological themes, but an instrument of the Holy Spirit and a witness to Jesus Christ, the perfect revelation of God.

For Marais, on the other hand, Scripture was more in the nature of a treasure-house of information on a variety of important theological themes. He admitted that the Bible was not a 'technical textbook', but he nevertheless tended to use the Bible as a source of doc-

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<sup>38</sup> Cf the important discussion in Torrance 1988:264ff.

trine, rather than as a witness to God's revelation in Jesus Christ.<sup>39</sup> This change in the use of Scripture was even more evident in the theology of De Vos, who made extensive use of 'proof-texts'. Scripture references were piled up in abundance, but the texts were seldom discussed within their contexts.<sup>40</sup> And, as we have seen above, there was a direct link between the conservative views of De Vos, and the full-fledged fundamentalism of D R Snyman.

Even before apartheid became the official policy of South Africa in 1948, the Kuyperians claimed to have discovered a biblical basis for racial segregation.<sup>41</sup> The way in which biblical texts were used leaves no doubt that a fundamentalist attitude towards Scripture facilitated this process.<sup>42</sup> The only professor at the Kweekskool who resisted the new trend was B B Keet, professor of Systematic Theology for forty years.<sup>43</sup> A theologian of the school of Herman Bavinck, he was never a strict Kuyperian.<sup>44</sup> When attempts to defend

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<sup>39</sup> Cf his views on biblical anthropology (chapter 7 above), and Marais 1915:146, 1351,2495f.

<sup>40</sup> In his discussion of man's original relationship to God, he referred to Hosea 6:7, without any attempt to explain it within its context. Another example is his discussion of the divinity of Christ (Van Wijk 1897; cf also Van Wijk 1898a and 1899).

<sup>41</sup> Cf Botha 1986:198ff and Loubser 1987:76ff.

<sup>42</sup> Loubser 1987:58ff. It would be wrong to conclude that apartheid originated from Kuyperianism or fundamentalism. We have noted that D F Malan himself was neither Kuyperian nor fundamentalist.

<sup>43</sup> From 1920 to 1959. B J Marais, a former student of Keet and professor of Church History at the University of Pretoria since 1953, was the first NGK theologian to oppose the 'biblical foundation' of apartheid (Loubser 1987:71). The most consistent opposition to apartheid came from C F Beyers Naude, who studied at the Kweekskool from 1936 to 1939.

<sup>44</sup> In 1913 Keet received a doctorate from the Free University of Amsterdam on the theology of Ernst Troeltsch, with Bavinck as promoter. Keet was not convinced of the value of Wellhausen's paradigm; he contributed articles to the first editions of Snyman's Die Ou Paaie (cf OP Oct 1926). His support of Du Plessis was clearly a protest against

apartheid on the basis of Scripture became the vogue after 1948, the besadigde, even-tempered Keet firmly rejected the false exegesis of the proponents of apartheid (Loubser 1987:73f).

In 1955 Keet summarized his views in his book Suid-Afrika Waarheen?<sup>45</sup> He explained that 'our colour-consciousness' originated in the colonial period and should therefore not be perpetuated (1955:9ff). He pointed to the danger of allowing an 'abstraction, unrelated to reality' to dominate our ecclesiastical, political and social policies (74). Apartheid militates against our Christian faith and flies in the face of the witness of the entire world church; it is a confession of the poverty of our Christianity (54). With great restraint Keet denounced apartheid as a 'pipe-dream', a flight from the realities of contemporary South Africa, and an evasion of our Christian calling (89ff).

It is of special importance to note that Keet did not understand Scripture in a simplistic fundamentalist way, as 'a source of reliable religious information', but as a witness to Jesus Christ.<sup>46</sup> Scripture was not 'a cultural history of the Jewish people', but the history of salvation.<sup>47</sup> But unfortunately Keet and his associates were unable to stem the rising ideological tide.<sup>48</sup>

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extremism.

<sup>45</sup> An English translation was published the following year under the title: Whither South-Africa?

<sup>46</sup> While his opponents claimed the authority of Scripture, he asked: Wat se^ die Skrif, wat van Christus getuig, omtrent die beginsels wat die verhouding van rasse en volke moet beheers? (Keet 1955:17).

<sup>47</sup> Loubser 1987:74. J B Torrance has recently reminded us, in the same context, that Scripture must be interpreted in the light of Jesus Christ (1988:267).

<sup>48</sup> This process has been described adequately by others (cf Botha 1986:188ff; Geldenhuys 1982:9f; Loubser 1987:75ff; etc.).

### Nature and Grace

J B Torrance has said: 'We need to recover the concept of the all-inclusive humanity of Christ, as Creator and Redeemer, to transcend the deep dualisms of our culture' (1988:267). Hofmeyr's Christological focus, especially his emphasis on the incarnation, approached this concept,<sup>49</sup> but it was not developed by the next generation of theologians. On the other hand, the contemporary emphasis on man's religious consciousness also played an important role in Hofmeyr's theology.

This emphasis implied that religious man could have something to rely on in himself. Instead of trusting in the undeserved grace of God and obeying his will unconditionally, 'religious man' could rely on his own experience of reality, and devise norms for himself and for society on the basis of his 'religious' experience of reality. And this happened when apartheid was developed as a volksteologie. While J I Marais and P J G de Vos became more conservative in their theology, other Kweekskool graduates moved further along this 19th century road.<sup>50</sup> Three decades after Hofmeyr's death C R Kotze appealed to the authority of the historical experience of the Afrikaner people - in the name of Calvinism - forgetting Hofmeyr's other and more authentic emphasis on the finality of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

T D Moodie suggested that neo-Fichtean ideas were married to liberal Afrikaner nationalism during the 1930's (1975:220ff). It is beyond the scope of this study to pursue this subject, but it is very possible that an emphasis on the authority of man's religious

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<sup>49</sup> What I have described as his 'Orthodox Vision' (cf chapter 4 n45).

<sup>50</sup> According to his son, D F Malan favoured the ideas of Hegel and Fichte (personal communication Rev D F Malan, 2.2.1978).

consciousness prepared the way for the popularity of apartheid as an ideology.

Hofmeyr's view that 'grace takes the form of the vessel into which it is poured', and that 'grace works according to nature, honouring each law of nature' had similar consequences. It implied that nature can, to a dangerous degree, prescribe to 'grace'.<sup>51</sup> A door was left open for 'sanctified' nature, or rather 'sanctified' race to prescribe to grace. His nature-grace model specifically prepared the soil for the acceptance of missiological principles which led to the formation of separate 'denominations' in the NGK. This model gave rise to the idea of Volkseigentumlichkeit in German missiology. When introduced by Du Plessis, these missiological principles soon found universal acceptance and provided an additional stimulus for the missionary outreach of the Church. The NGK formed separate churches for blacks within the borders of South Africa on these principles, but, at the same time the existing social context of racial separation was allowed to influence the shape of the church. Because of the influence of contemporary protestant theology, 'nature' was allowed to prescribe to 'grace'.

#### Church and People.

Practically all NGK theologians of the 19th century believed in the idea of a national church. This included both the ethical theologians, who studied in Holland, and the 'Presbyterians', such as Marais, De Vos and Du Plessis, who studied in Scotland. In this respect there was no discontinuity between Murray and Hofmeyr and their successors. Their views were carried forward, perhaps not with the same emphasis, but in a similar direction. This emphasis, together with a number of other factors worked powerfully towards the

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<sup>51</sup> 'If grace works in nature, it works according to nature'. (Hofmeyr 1885:42f).

closing of the small distance that might still have existed between the NGK and the Afrikaner people.

The most obvious historical factor in closing this distance was the support given by the NGK to the women and children, the prisoners of war and the 'citizens in arms' during the Anglo-Boer War (cf Lourens 1960). De Vos and Moorrees had different theological emphases, but both of them did all within their power to put a stop to the war and to help the poor and the suffering after the war.<sup>52</sup> Du Plessis, later to be charged with heresy, always believed in the concept of a non-Erastian volkskerk.<sup>53</sup>

Another reason was the fact that men like Andrew Murray and N J Hofmeyr saw nationalism, or a sense of nationhood, as a 'point of contact' between the gospel and the people. Equally important, Afrikaner nationalism, which grew rapidly in the second decade of this century, was promoted by prominent theologians such as D F Malan and N J van der Merwe.<sup>54</sup> A particularly unfortunate weakness in Stellenbosch theology was the absence of a pronounced doctrine of the church.<sup>55</sup> This left a dangerous vacuum in the minds of the people, and was bound to cause confusion.

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<sup>52</sup> Moorrees visited England during the Anglo-Boer War and addressed a number of public meetings. Emily Hobhouse said that he 'did valiant work' and she urged him to stay longer (cf letter Hobhouse to Moorrees, 1.9.1900, file P8 1/1 NGKA-CT). He addressed meetings in Oxford and in Bristol, 'his eloquence creating a deep effect' (Van Reenen 1984:24). In 1903 Hobhouse recuperated in the Moorrees parsonage at Paarl (303).

<sup>53</sup> Cf Du Plessis 1925:37f;186. Being minister in Zastron in the Orange Free State Du Plessis was present at the famous battle of Stormberg in 1899 as chaplain of the Zastron Commando (cf letters in file P2 3/4 NGKA-CT).

<sup>54</sup> J I Marais described Moorrees with D F Malan and others as 'men who are known as witnesses to the aspirations of our people' (GM March 1913).

<sup>55</sup> Before Keet John Murray held the highest view of the church, although he also believed in a non-Erastian national church.

In the minds of the theologians, at least, this relationship was not a simple one. As we have seen, Moorrees believed in the concept of a volkskerk, but this does not mean that he was a political extremist. When the Union government decided to attack Namibia in 1914, the 'armed protest' brought an unprecedented moral crisis to the NGK. Some time before the rebellion of Maritz, Moorrees received a letter from ex-President M T Steyn, informing him about the dissatisfaction in the Orange Free State.<sup>56</sup> Together with his colleagues and other ministers, Moorrees published an open letter, addressed to 'the ministers of our church', warning against the dangers and the sinfulness of rebellion.<sup>57</sup> This letter was unpopular in certain circles, but it nevertheless represented the view of the most experienced leaders in the Cape Church, who were all known for their sympathies with the people.<sup>58</sup>

In the view of the Stellenbosch theologians, the concept of mission did not militate against the idea of the volkskerk. As we have seen, they believed that the NGK was called in a special way to preach the gospel to the peoples of Africa. It is remarkable that this emphasis on mission was not diminished in the new political situation after the war, but rather augmented by the experiences of the war.<sup>59</sup> However, De Vos referred to the mission to Africa as a duty, not of the church, but of the Afrikaner people. Without denying the

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<sup>56</sup> Cf letter Steyn to Moorrees, dated 17.9.1914, file P8 1/1 NGKA-CT. Steyn was not in favour of an 'armed protest', but he was gravely concerned that the actions of the government would be its direct cause.

<sup>57</sup> 'Die Ope Brief van Stellenbosse predikante' (DK 15.10.1914; cf Appendix 2). Judging from a draft found among his papers, Moorrees initiated this letter (file P8 1/1 NGKA-CT).

<sup>58</sup> Cf further P R du Toit 1982.

<sup>59</sup> Cf Louw 1963; Thom 1982:358.

sacrificial services of many individuals and congregations in this field, this view reveals the close link between the NGK and the Afrikaner people in the minds of the majority. Even B B Keet, who held a comparatively high view of the church and rejected the 'biblical basis' of apartheid, referred to the Afrikaner people as a Christelike volk.<sup>60</sup>

In spite of the fact that Kuyper was informed by a high view of the church, SA Kuyperianism manifested itself in very divisive terms.<sup>61</sup> It is one of the strange ironies of South African history that the Kuyperian movement, although ostensibly opposed to the idea of a volkskerk, largely contributed to the subservience of the Afrikaans Churches to the volksteologie of apartheid.<sup>62</sup>

### Eschatology

In the 19th century it was mainly the maverick minister, S J du Toit, who preached an extreme premillennialism.<sup>63</sup> However, after the Anglo-Boer War there was a definite change in direction in Stellenbosch eschatology - from a moderate postmillennialism to the moderate premillennialism of De Vos, and eventually the 'consistent' premillennialism of D R Snyman and C Rabie.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Keet 1963:48; 1955:23; cf also Keet and Tomlinson 1925.

<sup>61</sup> It caused division within the NGK and between the NGK and the GKSA (cf Du Plessis 1925).

<sup>62</sup> Botha 1986; cf Hexham 1981. In the 1930ties the Kuyperians were convinced nationalists to a man (cf their contributions in Stoker and Potgieter 1935; Stoker and Vorster 1940 and 1941).

<sup>63</sup> Cf S J du Toit 1878 and 1898.

<sup>64</sup> Snyman 1940; Rabie 1948. However, since the later thirties, the Kuyperians moved to amillennialism (cf Kotze 1943).

In the eschatology of Murray and Hofmeyr there was the 'larger hope' of progressive outpourings of the Spirit, that would result in a continuous expansion of the church and a more general application of the gospel to society. In premillennialism, on the other hand, there was a strong assurance of individual salvation in a world that was increasingly becoming worse. If the revivals and the unprecedented missionary expansion of the church in the 19th century seemed to confirm the postmillennial view, the wars of the 20th, beginning with the Anglo-Boer War, seemed to confirm premillennialist expectations. It is therefore not strange that Marais adopted premillennialism during the apocalyptic first World War.<sup>65</sup>

Unfortunately this pessimistic eschatology limited the vision of Afrikaans Christians concerning the success of the gospel in Africa. The new eschatology affected both the missionary outlook of the church, and the hope of applying the teachings of the gospel to society.<sup>66</sup> It was a time of various crises - the depression, the great drought, 'rumours of war', the 'poor white' problem as well as the perennial racial problem.<sup>67</sup> At such a time the church needed the assurance that God's Kingdom was not only a promise for the future, but a present reality. However, premillennialists believed that there is an absolute

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<sup>65</sup> According to Snyman Marais was writing a commentary on the book of Revelation at the time of his death (1940:4).

<sup>66</sup> Missions were still actively promoted, but very much 'within the bounds of race' (Gerdener 1958:38; Botha 1986:124).

<sup>67</sup> The 'Native Economic Commission' reported in 1932 that blacks 'were faced with mass starvation' and the Poor White Commission reported that 'nearly one-fifth of the European families in South Africa lived in dire poverty. As if all that were not enough ... (in Jan 1933) Hitler had become master of the Reich; two months later credit collapsed in the United States; on March 27 Japan gave notice of withdrawal from the League of nations'. (Walker 1962:635).

discontinuity between the church and the Kingdom of God. The rule of Christ belonged to the millennium.<sup>68</sup> This view would obviously inhibit attempts to apply the teachings of Christ to South African society as a whole.<sup>69</sup> Premillennialism also taught that 'the world becomes increasingly wicked ... (the gospel) ... presents no commands to improve society as a whole'.<sup>70</sup>

At such a time the church needed to trust and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, who rules his people with royal authority and priestly mercy. But this pessimistic eschatology rather augmented the spirit of fear and isolation already fuelled by the political and socio-economic crises of the early thirties. It is strange that the breakaway from the National Party was led by D F Malan (Walker 1962:637), an 'ethical' theologian, but it is not strange that he was supported by premillennialists and Kuypersians.

### Conclusion

Ostensibly a conservative movement, the new direction in Stellenbosch theology did not represent a complete rediscovery of the reformation. It also undermined the traditional Stellenbosch emphasis on the human Christ as our representative and as God's complete revelation as love, coupled with the confident hope that God would pour out his Spirit on all the peoples of Africa. In conjunction with various strands of mediating theology, the

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<sup>68</sup> Walvoord 1963:305. 'The premillennial concept of the present age makes the inter-advent period unique and unpredicted in the Old Testament'. (134). 'The millennial kingdom is the main theme of prophecy' (227).

<sup>69</sup> Senator F S Malan, NGK elder of Cape Town and friend of Du Plessis, was one of the very few in Parliament who opposed the removal of the 'Cape Native franchise' (Walker 1962:645).

<sup>70</sup> Cf Walvoord 1966:134.

new direction prepared a spiritual and intellectual matrix within the NGK which was congenial to the development of the racially biased volksteologie of apartheid.

But the Word of God ever contains a promise of renewal. God has promised to pour out upon the church the Spirit of repentance and renewal.<sup>71</sup> According to Scripture and history, renewal was always deeply rooted in a true biblical theology focussed on Jesus Christ. In spite of the heady influence of apartheid, B B Keet remained steadfastly obedient to Scripture. When he was succeeded by F J M Potgieter in 1960, the victory of ideology seemed complete.<sup>72</sup> But, since the appointment of W D Jonker to the chair of Systematic Theology in 1971, there have been numerous signs of renewal in Stellenbosch theology.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> During the entire period of the 'last days', between Pentecost and the parousia.

<sup>72</sup> Cf Botha 1986:214f and Loubser 1987:76f.

<sup>73</sup> Cf Theron and Kinghorn 1989.

## APPENDIX 1

On the 30th June 1899, leaders of the Cape Church presented the following petition to Lord Milner:<sup>74</sup>

As men holding the responsible position of members of the Moderamen of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, as preachers of the gospel of peace, as representing a Church one in creed, language, membership, blood-relationship with the burghers of the Transvaal, as loyal subjects of our beloved Queen, we desire to urge upon your Excellency to leave nothing undone which may tend to avert active hostilities. We shudder to think of the consequences which are sure to follow such an eventuality. The race-feeling between the two sections of our South African community would become irreparable, the allegiance of Her Majesty's loyal Dutch subjects would sustain the severest shock it has ever been subjected to, and the hope of a United South Africa would be gone for ever.

To us standing outside the political arena the difference between the proposals of your Excellency and those of President Kruger would hardly appear to justify the horrors in which active warfare between Her Majesty's troops and the burghers of the Transvaal Republic would involve the whole of South Africa for many a day.

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<sup>74</sup> Published in Stead 1899:62. It was signed by the Moderator, J H Hofmeyr of Somerset-East, A Moorrees (Assessor) and J I Marais. According to C F J Muller, at that time minister in Cape Town, the authors of this document were N J Hofmeyr, J I Marais and 'Onze Jan' Hofmeyr (File P8 1/1, NGKA-CT). W T Stead added the following comment: 'A graver warning was never addressed by a religious body to the head of a State on the eve of a terrible war, but like all those which preceded it, it fell upon deaf ears.'

## APPENDIX 2

OPEN LETTER TO THE MINISTERS OF OUR CHURCH.<sup>75</sup>

Dear Brothers,

We are convinced that you agree with us on the gravity of the situation in which we find ourselves as a result of the terrible war that rages in Europe and in which our country is also involved. We therefore take the liberty to address the following letter to you, trusting that you will do all in your power to keep some of our people from embarking on an extremely dangerous and reckless action, which may bring the greatest pain and misery to our beloved fatherland and which may threaten the very existence of our volk.

From public utterances as well as from other sources it has become clear that there are persons who believe that the time has now come for South Africa to separate itself from the British Empire. They want to make use of the war in which the Empire is presently engaged to take their opportunity. However, this will be the cause of a bloody civil war in our country and will certainly result in the downfall of those who take part in it.

It should not be necessary to remind you that such an action would be a faithless betrayal of the treaty of Vereeniging and an open sin against God, whose all-wise providence is to be seen in everything - also in this period of our history. Neither would it be necessary to remind you of the incalculable calamities which may result from such action, not only for the perpetrators, but for our whole nation, who will certainly have to bear the results of the misdeeds of some of their number.

Therefore we plead with you, where it may be necessary, that you use all your influence, with wisdom and moderation, to counter this disastrous movement and to endeavour to show those who may be in danger of being carried away, where they are wrong, and to warn them against the danger to which they expose themselves and others. We especially plead that you guard against any word or deed which may increase the unrest and stress in these times, or which may encourage a spirit of discontent. In such times a single spark is sufficient to cause a terrible conflagration. A child may light a fire, but who is able to calculate the full extent of the destruction that will be caused by a fire?

This is also true of the agitation initiated against the decision of the highest legislative bodies regarding the expedition to German territory. Many of our people are indeed very unhappy about this decision, but, as it has now been taken, it is not within our power to change it. We can only evoke or encourage a spirit of bitterness, unrest and division by

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<sup>75</sup> This letter was published as an appendix to De Kerkbode of 15 October 1914. The long Dutch sentences and style of the original point to Moorrees or Steytler as possible authors.

unguarded statements at a time when it is above all necessary to set people's minds at rest and to encourage our volk to trust whole-heartedly in our heavenly Father without whose will not a single sparrow will fall to the ground.

As children of our volk, who feel deeply about all that effect the well-being of our nation, it is unavoidable that we should make up our own minds about important contemporary issues; as citizens of the country it is our fullest right to do so, but as ministers of the gospel we should be careful not to become involved in party politics, through which we may run the risk of bringing dishonour to our holy calling and to make the gospel which was entrusted to us powerless, at least for some of our people.

Our place is not in the midst of the conflict but on the mountain with Moses, Aaron and Hur, where, by lifting up holy hands without anger and strife, we should plead with the God of our fathers for country and people. In this way we will do a greater service to our people than when we would act as party-leaders - positions for which there are others at least as well qualified as we are. There is always the danger that we may confuse the welfare of the country with the victory of our own views and our personal views of the truth with the truth itself.

May the Lord give us all grace in these troubled (onrustbarenden) times to live in the shadow of his tent.

The Lord have mercy on our dear people!

A I Steytler  
 J I Marais  
 P J G de Vos  
 C F J Muller  
 A Moorrees  
 W A Joubert  
 B P J Marchand  
 D S Botha  
 J P van Heerden  
 Geo S Malan  
 P G J Meiring.<sup>76</sup>

Cape Town  
 14 October 1914

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<sup>76</sup> A I Steytler, the chairman of this meeting, was minister at the Groote Kerk, Cape Town, D S Botha was minister at Stellenbosch and P G J Meiring at Paarl.

## Post Script

At a meeting held in Cape Town, in addition to those mentioned above, the following brothers were present: H E du Plessis, F X Roome, H P van der Merwe, J G de Bruyn, G J du Plessis, A M McGregor, J W L Hofmeyr and elder T J Louw (Paarl).

The following decision was taken:

This meeting expresses the deepest indignation because of the treacherous action of Lieut-Col Maritz. We consider his deed a honourless breach of trust, which will undoubtedly put our people in a bad light and will have the most disastrous results for our whole country. We would therefore also urge all our church members to act in the spirit of this 'Open Letter', and to support the government in all possible ways to keep law and order.

It was further decided to send a copy of this decision to the government, with the request that its contents be made known, in the quickest and most effective way, to the whole country.

A I Steytler  
Chairman

Cape Town

14 October 1914

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