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REFORMED THEOLOGY, MODERNITY AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

(Ph.D. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1996)

David Field

Introductory Note

This thesis was completed 17 years ago, since then the academic discussion in ecotheology has developed considerably. I have not attempted to update the thesis before submission to the Global Digital Library for Theology and Ecumenism. I have made minor typographical and grammatical correction. The combination of these corrections combined with the necessity of making changes to the format due to advances in computer technology means that the pagination is slightly different for the original. Since completing this thesis my own thinking has developed and changed in relation to some of these issues. For anyone interested in these developments I recommend that you consult the following articles:

"Confessing Christ in the Context of Ecological Degradation", *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa,* no. 98, (1997), pp. 32-44.

“The Ethics of Sustainable Development” in Louise Kretzchmar and Len Hulley, (eds.), Questions about Life and Morality: Christian Ethics in South Africa Today. (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1998)

"Snakes in an African Eden: Towards a Theological Ethic for Ecotourism and Conservation" in *Scriptura*. no. 69 (1999), pp. 165-180.

"Ecology, Modernity and the New South Africa: Towards a South African Theology of Eco-Justice", in *Journal of African Christian Thought,* vol. 2, no. 2 (1999), pp. 45-53.

“The Gospel, the Church and the Earth: Reflections on an Ecological Ecclesiology” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, no 111, (2001), pp. 67-79

With Gift Masengwe “Alienated Children of the Soil: The Challenge of the Land Crisis in Zimbabwe to Christian Eco-Theologies” in *Bulletin for Contextual Theology in Africa* vol. 8 nos. 2 & 3 (2002), pp.73-79

“Stewards of Shalom: Toward a Trinitarian Ecological Ethic” in *Quarterly Review* vol. 22, no 4 (2002), pp. 383-396

“The Fount of Shalom: Recovering a Biblical Image for an Eco-Justice Ecclesiology” in Africa University Faculty of Theology, *Reflections on Christian Faith in an African Context: Colloquium Presentations.* (Mutare: African University Press, [2003]), pp. 15-40

“Christianity- Calvin and the Reformed Tradition” in Jeffery Kaplan and Bron Taylor (eds.) *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Nature* (London: Continuum, 2005)

“Ecological Theologies as Contextual and Reforming Theologies?” in *Ecotheology,* 10:3 (2005), pp. 326-330.

“The Theological Authority of the Bible and Ecological Theology.” in *Scriptura,* 101 (2009), pp. 206-21

REFORMED THEOLOGY, MODERNITY AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

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By David Nugent Field

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ABSTRACT

Reformed Theology, Modernity and the Environmental Crisis

The prospect of global ecological disaster poses a fundamental challenge to modernity as the dominant contemporary socio-cultural matrix. This challenge can only be responded to through a radical socio-cultural transformation which favours those, human and otherkind, who have been marginalised and oppressed by modernity. This will include a change of human consciousness, and the development of an alternative vision of society in which all humans live in community with each other and with otherkind. It thus has a profoundly religious character. The thesis argues that the central truth claims of the Christian gospel, particularly as they have been understood in the Reformed Tradition, require the church to commit itself to working for such a socio-cultural transformation. However, the Reformed tradition can only contribute to this transformation once it is recognised that it has been deeply intertwined with modernity since its emergence, and has contributed to the legitimation of a culture which has degraded the environment.

The thesis provides a self-critical exposition of the tradition in the light of the environmental crisis; in dialogue with other Christian traditions, and making use of insights from contemporary biblical scholarship. First, the socio-historical relationship between the Reformed tradition and the rise of modernity is examined. It is argued that, under particular social and economic conditions, the influence of the Reformed tradition accelerated the emergence of modernity. In this interaction with early modernity important components of the tradition were suppressed. Second, the tradition is re-examined to develop a Reformed ecotheology centred on the motifs of the Trinity, the covenant and the

glory of God. This ecotheology makes a critical use of the theologies of important figures in the Reformed tradition, including John Calvin, Jonathan Edwards, Abraham Kuyper and Karl Barth. Third, a proposal is developed as to how this ecotheology can contribute to socio-cultural transformation. It does so by using insights gained from the role played by the South African church in the struggle against apartheid. It argues that the environmental crisis ought to be understood as a *kairos* for the earth which must lead to a new way of being the church in the contemporary world.

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INTRODUCTION

As humanity stands on the threshold of a new millennium it is confronted with the spectre of global ecological disaster. The exact consequences of the global depletion of resources, increasing pollution and fundamental alteration of the natural environment are uncertain. But it is certain that the ecosystems of the earth cannot sustain the destructive consequences of the dominant socio-cultural matrix.

This dominant matrix is broadly designated by the term modernity. It is the social structure, ideologies and worldview that has prevailed in Europe and North America since the enlightenment. Modernity has impacted the entire world through colonialism, neo-colonialism and various forms of cultural imperialism. While modernity has brought many benefits to humanity, both its capitalist and its socialist forms have engaged in massive exploitation and destruction of the environment and the oppression of powerless humans. Capitalism and neo-colonialist have exploited the economically powerless in the countries of the North and the countries of the South. Undemocratic communist regimes have oppressed their people. The exploitation and oppression of humans and the exploitation and destruction of the environment are closely intertwined phenomena. In both cases the other, human or otherkind,[1] is treated as an instrument or resource to be used for the benefit of the powerful.

Humanity has altered, exploited and degraded its natural environment since its earliest history. The consequences of these alterations have varied from culture to culture over the eras of human history. Ecological collapse played a

1 The term "otherkind" is used throughout this thesis to refer to all non-human living creatures.

significant but often unrecognised role in the demise of the dominant socio-cultural matrices of the past.[2] The consequences of human activity is seen in, what appears to be, part of the natural environment. The great temperate forests of previous eras have been transformed into the moors of England and Scotland and the prairies of North America.

The uniqueness of the present crisis is not the reality of the human transformation of the environment. It is the global scope and short time span of the contemporary degradation; the destructive power of contemporary technology, and the exponential growth of the human population. The world wide dominance of a single socio-cultural matrix with such destructive potential is without precedent in human history. Past ecological disasters resulted in the local human population either decreasing or migrating to another place. This allowed for the recovery of the original ecosystems or the gradual development of new ones in the devastated areas. Such options are not open to humanity in the contemporary crisis. It is thus imperative that humanity strives for the development of a socio-cultural matrix which will allow for the flourishing of all the inhabitants of the earth, human and otherkind.

Modernity is a complex socio-cultural system which has entrapped us all. The elite within modernity cannot escape from it, in order to challenge it. The powerless are enslaved and exploited by it as it destroys the environment. It can only be effectively responded to through a fundamental change of human consciousness and the development of an alternative vision of society in which all humans live in community with each other and with otherkind. Such a transformation has an

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2 See C. Ponting, *A Green History of the World* (London: Sinclair Stevenson, 199, pp. 18-87.)

inherently religious character. And if it is to be effective it must begin with the interests of those who have been disempowered and marginalised by modernity.

This thesis proposes that the Christian church in general, and Reformed tradition in particular, is compelled by the truth claims of the Christian gospel to strive for such a socio-cultural transformation. Yet the rise of the Reformed tradition was closely related to the rise of modernity. The tradition can only make a meaningful contribution to the process of change, when this is acknowledged and the tradition is re-examined in the light of its contribution to the rise of modernity. This thesis is an attempt to engage in such a re-examination of the tradition. First it examines the interrelationship between the Reformed tradition and the rise of modernity. Second, the tradition is re-read in the light of the environmental crisis. Finally, examples drawn from the role of the church in the struggle against apartheid are used to develop a model for the churches praxis in response to the crisis.

The first chapter examines the relationship between the Reformed tradition and the rise of modernity with particular attention to the development of capitalism, modern science, technology and the ideology of progress. No simple relationship is discerned between these two phenomena. Robert Wuthnow's theory of socio-cultural change[3] is used to uncover a complex set of inter-relationships. Under the particular social and economic context of England and the Netherlands the influence of the Reformed tradition accelerated the emergence of modernity. It contributed to a social order which encouraged the emerging modern culture. It was also used to

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3 See R. Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse - Ideologies and Social Structures in the Reformation, the Enlightenment and European Socialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

legitimate the development of science, technology, capitalism and the ideology of progress. These two factors contributed to a change in human consciousness giving rise to the development of the modern European subject. This process could however only take place when certain ideas within the tradition were suppressed or rejected.

The second chapter develops a doctrine of God rooted in a model of the Trinity as a sociality of persons, and in the motif of the covenant. While the social model of the Trinity has become popular in contemporary theology, most theologians draw on the Eastern Fathers to develop such a model. This chapter develops the model from the theologies of John Calvin, John Owen, and Jonathan Edwards. It argues that the theological developments of the Reformation imply a remodelling of the Trinity which combines the best elements in both the western and the eastern traditions. It combines the social model of the east with the western emphasis on the full equality of the persons of the Trinity. This model has four important consequences. First, the life of God is one of dynamic, interactive relationships of self-giving love therefore kenosis is inherent within the divine life. Second, God's freedom is preserved. Third, God's unity is an "ecological" unity in which the particularities of the persons of the Trinity are maintained and constituted by each other. Fourth, it makes possible a new ontology in which being and relation are both part of an ontological dynamic. In this model the one and the many have equal ultimacy and particularity and difference do not denote hierarchy but rather mutual dependence.

The theology of the covenant forms the basis of the proposition that God's relationship with creation reflects the self-giving relationships that exist among the persons of the

Trinity. God interacts with creation in a deeply personal manner which entails divine kenosis and pathos. This covenantal understanding has important implications for the reformulation of traditional understandings of divine sovereignty, and the doctrines of creation and providence.

This understanding of God leads to a re-examination of traditional perceptions of God's glory. The glory of God includes; not only numinous grandeur; but also the dynamic beauty of particulars existing in relationships of mutual dependency and mutual giving and receiving; and the kenotic love which culminates in the cross. God's glory is supremely displayed through God's self-giving concern for the welfare of creation. Hence to be theocentric is to be biocentric.

Chapter three develops a Trinitarian and covenantal understanding of God's action in creation and providence drawing on the theology of Calvin, Jonathan Edwards and Dutch Neo-Calvinism. In the Trinitarian perspective, creation is understood to be the finite self expression of the inner life of God. This is a consequence of the distinctive agency of each person of the Trinity in God's creative work. This understanding of creation facilitates a dynamic understanding of God's immanence and transcendence, the integrity of creation and creation's unity and diversity. In this understanding, creation (rather than human beings) is to be understood as God's covenant partner. The consequence of this is an understanding of the relationship between God and creation as a dynamic interactive relationship in which God is deeply, personally and emotionally involved in creation. God created a living dynamic community of creatures in order to enter into relationship with them. The eschatological goal of creation is thus that God should indwell this community. Creation is thus a divine sanctuary.

As the self-expression and covenant partner of God creation is the visible display of God's glory. It thus has to be understood as being: dynamically ordered; a living organic unity and as the meeting place between God and humanity. Despite this, creation is affected by the reality of suffering. In faithfulness to the covenant God is engaged in a struggle to transform the suffering of creation into the birth pangs of new life.

Chapter four recognises that humans have exploited and destroyed creation, but argues that this cannot be understood merely in terms of the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation. Human society is fractured through the abuse of power. Powerful humans use powerless humans to exploit creation for their own self interest, and they use the rest of creation to exploit and oppress powerless humans. Within this context the powerless are often forced to exploit and destroy the natural environment in order to survive.

Theologically humans are to be understood primarily as creatures. As creatures, humans may not claim divine prerogatives over other humans or other creatures. As creatures, humans are fellow creatures with the rest of God's creation. They are bound together in a covenant community. Humans experience their dependence on God through a particular dependence on other creatures. In all this, humans are elect creatures, called by God to a particular vocation for the benefit of the whole of creation.

Humans are called to be servants of God and servants of creation. The motifs of the image of God and human dominion are re-examined and it is argued that the crux of human relationships with each other and with creation is the use and

organisation of power. To bear the image of God is to organise and use power in accordance with the dynamic order of creation and in the service of their fellow creatures, human and otherkind. As bearers of the divine image, humans are called to be priests within creation and are to interact with it in a manner which cares for, enhances and preserves creation's integrity.

Human sin is embedded in all human social systems and is thus embedded in modernity. While not all environmental degradation is a consequence of sin, sin warps and twists all our relationships with the environment. Human sin involves three dimensions; it is the self centred claiming of divine prerogatives, the apathetic failure to act as the divine image, and the arrogance of preventing others from assuming their responsibilities and prerogatives as bearers of the divine image. Environmental degradation is to be understood as sin because it idolises humans or some part of creation, it desecrates the earth which is the divine sanctuary, it is unfaithfulness to the covenant and it inflicts suffering on God. Liberation theology and the Reformed tradition are used to expound the structural dimension of sin and its effects on human responsibility.

In chapter six the covenantal and Trinitarian perspectives are used to expound the meaning of the redemption of creation. Redemption is understood against the background of three factors: first the provisional character of creation, second the travail of creation and third the consequence of human sin. God's initiative to redeem creation begins with the calling of Israel to be God's people in God's land. Israel is a witness to the nations of God's salvific purposes. God's purpose with Israel reaches its climax in Jesus Christ through whom the eschatological reign of God is inaugurated. In

Jesus, God enters into creation in all its suffering and bears the consequences of human sin. God inaugurates the new creation through the resurrection of Jesus. The ascended Jesus takes creation in all its integrity into the presence of God. At Pentecost the Spirit is poured out on creation to lead it to its eschatological future.

The resurrection of Jesus enables us to hope for a future transformation of creation. It is to become the dwelling place of the triune God. The church, as the new covenant people of God, is the corporate sign of this cosmic redemption. Personal salvation is a proleptic participation in the cosmic redemption. Integral to personal salvation is the renewal of the relationship between human persons and the rest of creation. The Reformed doctrine of common grace is used to argue that God is also at work outside the church through the process of creation and human activity to create penultimate expressions of the ultimate transformation of creation.

Chapter six draws on the experience of South African Christians in the struggle against apartheid, to develop a model of Christian praxis in the context of the environmental crisis. It argues that this crisis ought to be understood as a *kairos* for the earth. The truth claims of the gospel require the church to take decisive action in rejecting the exploitative features of modernity and in promoting the development of a new socio-cultural matrix. This can only be achieved through the reformation of the church's worship and mission resulting in the emergence of a new human consciousness.

The church played a significant role in the demise of apartheid it can also play such a role in the development of

an eco-friendly socio-cultural matrix. It will only do so when it stands in solidarity with those who have been marginalised and oppressed by the forces of modernity. This "recycled" Reformed theology is offered as a modest contribution to this process.

Chapter 1

THE REFORMED TRADITION AND THE ROOTS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS

Many attempts to analyse the causes of the present crisis and to propose solutions to it have emphasised the role of religious traditions in shaping attitudes to the natural environment. In his much debated essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", Lynn White proposed that the roots of the present crisis lie in the impact of a particular form of the Judeo-Christian world-view on the culture of Western Europe. He argued that the environmental crisis is a consequence of Christianity's desacralisation of nature and its understanding of human dominance over the environment. [1]

White's essay sparked off a major debate.[2] In response it has been argued that he oversimplified the relationship between religious ideas and socio-cultural change. Religion is only one component in the complex dynamics of any socio-cultural matrix. Economic, political and social forces also play a significant role in the relationship between humanity and the natural environment. Massive ecological devastation has thus taken place in socio-cultural matrices which were dominated by religious traditions that are often regarded as more environmentally friendly.[3] It is thus significant that White fails to explain why the ecologically destructive convergence

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[1] L. White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis", in *Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes Toward Nature and Technology,* ed. by Ian G. Barbour (Reading: Addison Wesley, 1973), pp. 18-30. White did not regard all forms of the Christian tradition as having ecologically devastating consequences. He identified Eastern Orthodoxy and the attitudes of Francis of Assisi as providing important alternatives to the dominant western tradition.

[2] See the discussion and literature referred to in David N. Livingston, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis: A Reassessment", *Fides et Historia,* 16, (1994), 38-55.

[3] See Yi-Fu Tuan, "Discrepancies between Environmental Attitudes and Behaviour: Examples from Europe and China", in *Ecology and Religion in History*, ed by David Spring and Eileen Spring (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 91-113, and Richard A. Young, *Healing the Earth: A Theocentric Perspective on Environmental Problems and their Solutions* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), pp. 28-34.

of science, technology and capitalism only occurred in seventeenth and eighteenth century.[4]

In responding to White, Lewis W. Moncrief proposed that there can be no simple movement from Christianity to the environmental crisis. The relationship can only be understood with reference to the indirect relationship between Christianity and a number of the components of the dominant socio-cultural matrix. In particular he referred to capitalism, science, technology and democracy. These components are in turn related to a society characterised by urbanisation, affluence, private ownership of resources and an increased population density. It is these characteristics of contemporary society that are ecologically destructive. A non-Christian culture which developed similar characteristics would also be ecologically disastrous.[5]

Moncrief's argument correctly identifies the root of the ecological crisis as impact of the western social-cultural matrix. This matrix is commonly designated as modernity. What Moncrief fails to do, is to analyse the impact of modernity on the social and cultural life of the rest of the world.[6] The core of the present crisis is precisely the global impact of this dominant socio-cultural matrix. The problem of the ecologically destructive dynamics of modern western culture is not merely the problem of the western world, it is the problem of the whole world. In order to respond theologically to this crisis the dynamics of this dominating

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[4] White arbitrarily places this convergence in 1850, but there is evidence for this convergence in the seventeenth century, see R. K. Merton, *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 137 - 198.

[5] Lewis Moncrief, "The Cultural Basis of Our Environmental Crisis", in Barbour, *Western Man and Environmental Ethics*, pp. 31-42.

[6] Another problematic feature of Moncrief's argument is his tendency to identify democratisation with the private ownership of property. Thus his analysis of the role of democracy in ecological degradation in the United States of America only deals with the "democratic rights" of the settlers. It ignores the failure to grant any rights to the Native Americans. In chapter 4, 5 and 6 it will be argued that the establishment of structures of participatory democracy is a vital component of any eco-friendly socio-cultural matrix. It is through such structures that marginalised people are empowered to take communal responsibility for their interaction with the natural environment. This fosters the care of the environment.

socio-cultural matrix and its global impact must be analysed.[7]

REFORMED THEOLOGY, CULTURE AND THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

The recognition of the complex relationship between religious traditions and cultures that have exploited the environment does not relieve Christian theology from task of analysing this relationship. In particular, the close relationship between the emergence of modernity and the rise of the Reformed tradition demands that any response to the environmental crisis from within this tradition must be based on a careful examination of this relationship.

Modernity

Modernity is to be understood as the social order and intellectual ideology that has dominated the West since the eighteenth century and which, through the West's social and cultural hegemony, has impacted the rest of the world. Modernity is a complex and dynamic reality which has developed many different manifestations in different contexts. Even those who have rejected it have been shaped by its dominance. Throughout its different manifestations the heart of modernity has been the dream that human society will attain true fulfilment and liberty through the mastery of culture and nature by autonomous humans.

Responding to millennia of human powerlessness in the face of natural phenomena and centuries of oppression at the hand of other humans, modernity promised a society of freedom and prosperity for all. This was to be achieved through the combination of three dynamics. The first is the harnessing of science and technology to exploit and manipulate the natural environment for the benefit of humanity. The second is the pursuit of economic growth and prosperity through the exploitation and processing of natural resources. This has

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[7] See J. L. Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, trans. by John Dury, (Maryknoll: Orbis 1976).

been closely linked to the development of various forms of capitalism. Socialist economies have pursued the same goals but attempted to distribute the resultant benefits in a more egalitarian manner. The third dynamic was the promotion of liberal democracy as the ideal form of government. These three dynamics were driven by faith in their ability to bring about progressively greater experiences of human fulfilment through "ever-increasing possession and consumption."[8] The future was believed to contain unlimited possibilities for human achievement presupposing "that nature is there to be unhesitantly manipulated and dominated by human beings for strictly human purposes."[9]

The dream has turned into a nightmare for the majority of humanity. The ideal liberated human being was the middle class European male who enjoyed property rights and access to the newly developed democratic institutions. Women, the poor and people from outside Europe could only share the dream to the extent that they could conform to the ideal of the bourgeois European male. This was intensified as modernity was exported to the rest of the world through European colonial imperialism. Powerless people became the means through which the powerful achieved their liberation and prosperity. They became the co-victims with otherkind of the powerful, who exploited the earth with the best means available to achieve the greatest profit possible.

The limited resources of the earth cannot sustain the consumptive lifestyle of the rich and powerful societies. There is no possibility that this lifestyle can be extended to the powerless masses of the earth. The problem of the over-consumption of the powerful is intensified by the exponential growth in the world's human population. Unless drastic reductions are made in the consumption of the world's limited

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[8] Presbyterian Church (USA), *Restoring Creation for Ecology and Justice: A Report Adopted by the 202nd General Assembly (1990) Presbyterian Church (USA)* (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, The Presbyterian Church [USA], 1990), p. 18.
[9] Ibid. p. 18.

resources, modernity, as a a socio-cultural matrix, faces the prospect of ecological collapse. There is no place to migrate from modernity's entangling web and destructive consequences. Even the most desolate and uninhabitable areas of Antarctica have been affected by the environmental degradation and destruction. The interlocking ecosystems of the entire biosphere are under serious threat.

The Reformed Tradition and Rise of Modernity

In a response to Lynn White, R. J. Faircy proposed that one basic cause of the ecological crisis is the alienation between humanity and nature resulting from the teaching of the Reformation.[10] While Faircy's argument shares some of the problems of White's analysis in its treatment of the relationship between religion and socio-cultural change[11] it recognises the significance of the dramatic changes in western culture that took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

> [T]he seventeenth century is when Europe sheds finally the garments of medieval social patterns and strides forth in the attire which, with minor alterations, she wears still in the twentieth century.[12]

The Reformation and the emergence of the Reformed tradition

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[10] R. J. Faircy, "The Person-Nature Split: Ecology, Women and Human Life", *Irish Theological Quarterly,* 53 (1987), 203-218. This is in one sense the reflection of differences of opinion as to the religious origins of modern science. Stanley L. Jaki, a Roman Catholic, places it in the Middle Ages while R. Hooykaas, a Protestant, places it in the Reformation. See S. L. Jaki, *Science and Creation. From Eternal Cycles to an Oscilating Universe* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1974) and R. Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1973).

[11] Faircy does not discuss the exploitation of the natural environment that took place in the Middle Ages. His analysis of Reformation theology is also problematic. For example, he criticises the Reformers for rejecting the concept of the church as mother and thus contributing to the alienation between men and women, despite Calvin's explicit use of this concept. See John Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion,* ed by J.T. McNeil, trans. by F.L. Battles, Library of Christian Classics Vol. 20 & 21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 4:1:4. All future references to the *Institutes* in this thesis are taken from this edition and are referenced by the title *Institutes* and the appropriate book, chapter and section numbers.

[12] Charles S. McCoy, "The Covenant Theology of Johannes Cocceius", (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Yale University, 1956), p. 3.

was closely intertwined with this transformation in the European socio-cultural order. One cannot dismiss the role of Christianity in the development of the degradation of the natural environment in the manner that Wesley Granberg-Michaelson does, when he claims that the "problem lies in the church's historical captivity to western culture, rather than the reverse."[13] As John Drane affirms:

> [I]t is undeniable that the leaders of the Industrial Revolution were Christians, motivated not only by the Calvinist work ethic, but also by the conviction that God had put the world and its resources at their disposal. They were of course also deeply influenced by the Enlightenment, with its pretentious optimism about human potential. But this self-centred individualism nourished its roots in the Protestant Reformation, and the insistence that every individual is solely responsible for themselves to God undoubtedly encouraged (whether intentionally or not) a corresponding reduction in responsibility both towards other people and the wider environment. [14]

Any attempt to articulate a Christian response to the environmental crisis needs to recognise the contribution made by Christianity to modernity. The roots of modernity lie as far back as ancient Greece, Rome and Israel, and its rise in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was a consequence of a complex interaction of social, economic, political and ideological factors. Yet Christianity and the Reformed tradition in particular was a significant contributing factor in the emerging new shape of the European socio-cultural order. The dominant role that Christianity played in medieval European society prevented any radical socio-cultural changes that did not relate to it.

It is significant that the important precursors to the emergence of modernity were concentrated in England and the Netherlands.[15] It was there that the combination of science,

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[13] W. Granberg-Michaelson, *Ecology and Life - Accepting Our Ecological Responsibility*, Issues of Christian Conscience (Waco: Word, 1988), p. 34.
[14] J. Drane, "Defining a Biblical Theology of Creation", in *Transformation*, 10, No. 2, (1993), 7-11 (p. 7).
[15] This is particularly significant from a South African perspective due to

technology and capitalism, devoted to the ideology of progress, emerged as the dominating socio-cultural force. It was to these countries that the thinkers of the eighteenth century looked to for models for their philosophies.

There were a number of commonalties between these two nations. An important one is that both were significantly influenced by the Reformed tradition. Yet we must affirm with Ernst Troeltsch that:

> There is no direct road leading from Protestant Church-civilisation to the modern civilisation independent of the church. Its significance, while in general beyond question, must in many cases be an indirect, or even an involuntary one, and the common element that unites the two must lie very far down in the hidden depths below the surface of its conscious thought. There can, of course, be no question of modern civilisations having been produced simply and solely by Protestantism. All that comes into question is the latter's share therein. But even this share is nothing simple and homogeneous.[16]

It is not that modernity and the resultant destruction of the environment would not have developed had it not been for the Reformed tradition nor that there were no important contributors to modernity in Catholic and Lutheran countries. But given the historical reality of the concentration of activity in the Netherlands and England and the undeniable influence of Reformed theology, the nature of this influence must be examined.

It is also not to be assumed that because modern western culture was exported to other countries with different religious traditions that this invalidates this discussion. The issue at stake is the role of the Reformed tradition in the formative phase of early modernity. Many aspects of the influence of the Reformed tradition were severed from their

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the colonial role played by these nations.

[16] E. Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress - The Significance of Protestantism for the Rise of the Modern World* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), p. 41.

religious roots and functioned as constituent elements of modernity with no obvious link to these roots. Some of the Reformed tradition's important contributions to the environmental crisis, only became integral parts of early modernity when they were separated from other aspects of the tradition by socio-economic and ideological forces.

Religion and Socio-Cultural Change

The relationship between religion and socio-cultural is very complex. Part of this complexity lies in the contextual particularities of a given situation so that no theory is comprehensive enough to deal with all possible sets of relationships. In attempting to understand the role of the Reformed tradition in the rise of early modernity, we shall therefore make a critical and selective use of the illuminating model of cultural change developed by Robert Wuthnow in his book *Communities of Discourse*.[17] This model is particularly useful as it allows for a number of different relationships between religion and cultural change in different contexts.

Wuthnow proposed that the process of cultural change has nine components.[18] The first is the "environmental conditions" in which it takes place. This included the socio-economic context, various ideologies (both dominant and marginalised), the political order, and the available technological resources. Wuthnow's understanding needs to be supplemented by adding that the rise of new ideas often occurs through the thought of major figures and the recognition that ideas exist in relationship with various social groupings.

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[17] R. Wuthnow *Communities of Discourse - Ideologies and Social Structures in the Reformation, the Enlightenment and European Socialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989). In making use of Wuthnow we have taken into account the critiques of C. Calhoun and M. Gould. See, C. Calhoun, "Beyond the Problem of Meaning: Robert Wuthnow's Sociology of Culture", *Theory and Society*, 21 (1992), 419-444 and M. Gould, "Theory and History - Comments on Robert Wuthnow's *Communities of Discourse*" *Theory and Society*, 21 (1992), 445-450.

[18] Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse*, pp. 1-22

The second component is an "Action Sequence". This is the process of interaction between the various aspects of the environmental condition over a period of time. This results in the third component which is the production of a profusion of differing ideas. These different ideas interact with each other and their context. In particular this process is influenced by the fourth component, the "Institutional Context" that is, those structures informal and formal, which make the production and distribution of ideas possible.

The fifth component is the selection of ideas. This is a sociological process through which certain ideas rise to prominence and others fail to have any significant further influence. To be selected, ideas must display a degree of "articulation" with the environmental and institutional context. That is, they must be sufficiently related to the context for them to take root and flourish. Yet, if they are to be influential they must also display a certain "disarticulation" from their context. That is, they must be able to transcend their immediate context in order to impact new and changing contexts. Failure to articulate with the context will result in the ideas not being selected. Failure to disarticulate from it will result in them failing to transform their context.

The sixth component is the institutionalisation of the new ideas. If these new ideas are to impact society they must become institutionalised in various means of ideological production that can finance and support the dissemination of the ideology. These institutions include governments, universities, churches and various other social groupings.

These new ideas become part of a new environmental context that impacts future social change. Wuthnow proposes that a major element of this impact on the new context takes place via "figural action" within a "discursive field". The discursive field, the seventh component, is the particular ideology's description of reality that maps out specific

social and ideological issues in terms of the ideology.[19] Wuthnow's proposal would be enriched if it was supplemented with an understanding of the discursive field as a narrative through which persons come to an understanding of who they are and how they ought to act in the world. The discursive field must display both a degree of articulation and disarticulation with its context. "Figural action", the eighth component, is a presentation of the modes of thinking and behaviour of characters within the discursive field. This is an abstraction of the realities of the social horizon or context (Wuthnow's ninth component), and which displays a degree of articulation and disarticulation with it. The followers of a particular ideology view reality through the grid of the discursive field and identify their actions with the figural action described in it. The result of this is the development of a new type of person with a new set of cultural values.

The Reformed Tradition and the Environmental Crisis

A complete analysis of the relationship between the Reformed tradition and the rise of modernity is impossible within the confines of a single chapter.[20] We will discuss certain important issues which demonstrate the inter-relationship between the Reformed tradition and early modernity with particular reference to the development of its ecological destructive characteristics. The important developments were the rise of modern science and technology and the emergence of a capitalist social order.

Science and technology, in themselves, are not necessarily ecologically destructive. They become destructive when they are understood within a world view which portrays the natural environment as essentially a resource to be used for the promotion of "human" (that is the powerful humans) prosperity.

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[19] Wuthnow proposed that this is primarily to be understood as a set of polar oppositions, is however too narrow an understanding, it ought to be seen to include a more complex relationship of ideas, symbols and concepts.

[20] Such an analysis would need to include a study of the Reformation itself, which was deeply intertwined with the social dynamics of the sixteenth century, see Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse*, pp. 23-156.

They are then harnessed in the service of a socio-economic order committed to unlimited economic growth. Such a synthesis of science, technology and capitalism emerged in the eighteenth century. While socialist economic models of the twentieth century rejected capitalism, they did not reject the basic understanding of an economy devoted to unlimited growth through the mastery of nature. This was further complicated by the dictatorial character of many socialist countries which led to the removal of democratic constraints on ecological destruction.

Wuthnow's model provides us with a tool to demonstrate the different roles played by elements of the Reformed tradition in these developments and the role played by early modernity in suppressing elements within the Reformed tradition which contradicted it.[21]

THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXT OF EARLY MODERNITY

The Medieval Synthesis

The dramatic changes in human thinking and action that emerged out of the sixteenth and seventeenth century can only be understood against the background of the social order of the Middle Ages and its intellectual ideology. The medieval era, like all historical eras, was characterised by diversity and unity of social structure and thought. It is, however, possible to describe in broad outline the dominant ideas and how they related to the social structure.[22]

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[21] For a discussion of the relationship between the Reformed tradition and the emergence of democracy see, John W. de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy: A Theology for a Just World Order* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1995), pp. 57-94.

[22] More detailed treatments of the dominant ideas and the related social structures of the medieval world can be found in Bob Goudzwaard, *Capitalism and Progress: A Diagnosis of Western Society,* trans. by. Josina Van Nuis Zylstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), H. G. Koenigsberger, *Medieval Europe: 400-1500*, A History of Europe, (Harlow: Longman, 1987), Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature - Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution.*(San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990), pp. 2-68, B. B. Price, *Medieval Thought: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), Colin A. Russell, *Cross-currents: Interactions Between Science and Faith* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1985), pp. 22-35 and R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of*

The characteristic thinking of the High Middle Ages was dominated by a synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology. This synthesis was characterised by mutual modification of Christian theology and Aristotelian philosophy. Consistent forms of Aristotelian philosophy were subjected to ecclesiastical criticism. The social context of this intellectual construct was that of feudalism and the emergence of the medieval city.

The medieval view of reality was hierarchical organic and teleological. All of reality was understood as part of a great chain of being. The chain of being was pictured as a living organism, with each entity being an integral part of the body of the cosmos. This was understood within a teleological framework in which objects were seen to be in motion from potentiality to actuality.

Nature was viewed as a semi-autonomous living organism created by God. There was considerable debate on the exact relationship between God's sovereignty and the structures of nature. The more one conformed to Aristotle the more God was excluded from immediate involvement with the normal operations of nature. God was primarily seen to act providentially through the processes of nature. The only exceptions were the occasional occurrences when God intervened directly in miracles and the sacraments. Even in the sacraments God's involvement is mediated through the ecclesiastical hierarchy

The natural processes were the product of the hierarchical structure of the cosmos with the earth as its centre. The cosmos was composed of a series of spheres surrounding the earth that contained the moon, the sun and the planets. The whole cosmos is set in motion by the action of the Prime Mover (God) who moves the outermost sphere. As the cosmos is an interdependent organism, this movement sets the other spheres in motion and determines life on earth. There were two kinds

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Capitalism, (West Dayton: Penguin, 1938), pp. 17-74.

of motion, natural and unnatural. Natural movement is the movement of an object to its natural place. In the sublunary world natural motion is linear either ascending or descending to the earth. In the heavenly spheres natural movement is circular. Decay and change (other than natural movement) only take place in the sublunary realm.

As a living organism, nature was perceived to be characterised by imminent forces and causes that enabled her to unfold her various forms. All aspects of the cosmos were seen to be linked to everything else in a state of equilibrium. Changes to nature would upset this equilibrium resulting in major disruption to the natural order. Hence the natural order was not understood to be malleable, nor was it open to change through technology.

Organic characteristics were ascribed to nature. Nature was said to abhor a vacuum and objects were viewed as moving to their natural place with a kind of homing instinct. "Mother Nature" constantly reproduced herself in an organic manner. Minerals were thus seen to be reproduced in the "womb" of the earth replacing that which was mined.

The hierarchical chain of being was also manifested in the relationships among living beings. Plants were superior to matter as a result of possessing a vegetative soul and animals superior to plants because they possessed a sensitive soul. Human beings were superior to animals by virtue of possessing a rational soul but inferior to angels by virtue of having a body. Thus what made human beings truly human was their ability to reason and thus their highest activity was contemplation.

Society was seen to model the hierarchical organism of nature. It was however split into two realms, the realm of grace manifested in the church, and the realm of nature manifested in the rest of society. In the realm of nature the feudal society was constructed in the form of a hierarchical organism

with the king as the head. Each level of society was dependent on the other levels, and the system only functioned effectively when the various levels carried out their duties and responsibilities to those above and below them. At a village level there was a detailed understanding of mutual responsibilities and joint ownership of, and access to, natural resources. In the emerging cities, this communal organic relationship was manifested in the guilds, which were also characterised by a hierarchical structure.

This model of society was closely linked to the predominantly agricultural economy in which the value of goods was seen primarily to be the product of labour that was required to produce them. Aristotle's concept of money as barren was linked to biblical verses forbidding usury as a consequence making money by trade and business was viewed as being inherently unjust. The excess value could only be conceived to have arisen through exploitation.

> The medieval theologians theoretically justified the role of the merchant as necessary to society, but found in practice that this was so hard to do that the profession of trade remained for them an extremely sordid business.[23]

The realm of nature was good in itself but the highest good was to be found in the realm of grace. It was through the realm of grace that God acted directly upon the created order. The sacramental activity of the church was of supreme importance as the means of God's direct activity in saving people. The church also provided a place for the contemplation of God. As the highest human activity was contemplation, the supreme activity was the contemplation of God. This activity was the vocation of those who became priests, monks or nuns.

Nature was to be understood, not through empirical research, but by contemplation or rational imagination. Technology was

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[23] W. Fred Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary: John Calvin and His Socio-Economic Impact* (Richmond: John Knox, 1971), p. 78.

viewed as distinct from, and therefore of no relevance to science and philosophy. Science and philosophy were conceived of as attempts to understand the essence and purpose of an object or objects. The result of this process of contemplation was the understanding that the Aristotelian synthesis was the best explanation of nature. This conclusion was reinforced by the daily experience of most people.

> Aristotelian science was a comprehensible account of natural phenomena that was rather well suited to reality as it was experienced at the level of technology characteristic of the ancient and medieval world.[24]

Humanity and nature were understood as interdependent components of the same organism created by God. The aim in dealing with nature would be to act in accordance with nature and not against it. As the natural order was ordained by God the laws of nature were understood to have a moral rather than a merely descriptive character. The medieval synthesis thus carried a moral and theological authority. To live according to it was natural, to act contrary to it was unnatural and to act in disobedience to God.

When contrasting the medieval world with modernity, it is easy to idealise its understanding of humanity and nature existing as components of one organic whole. However, the suffering that existed in the medieval period must not be neglected. While society was theoretically an organic whole, the powerful members of society were often tyrannical, and the powerless peasants were used and abused in the service of the ambitions of royalty and nobility. The relationship between humanity and nature was often characterised by terror and death. Famine, disease and natural disaster brought untold suffering to the people of Europe.

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[24] C. Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 84.

The Demise of the Medieval Synthesis

The sixteenth and seventeenth century were times of considerable social ideological turmoil and the large scale production of new ideas. The rapid spread of these new ideas was facilitated by the invention of printing.

Various events opened the way for the radical critique of Aristotelian dominance of science and philosophy. The voyages of discovery and conquest provided an empirical critique of Aristotle's claim that the equatorial and antipodal regions were uninhabited. Astronomical observation produced major crises for the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic world picture.[25] In 1572 a new star, a super nova, appeared in the supposedly changeless super lunary heavens, in contradiction of Aristotle and the Scholastics. In 1577, the Danish astronomer, Tycho Brahe observed a new comet whose orbit crossed through Aristotle's crystalline spheres. Galileo's invention of the telescope in 1610 and the subsequent discoveries of spots on the supposedly perfect sun and of Venus' moons further discredited Aristotle. Johannes Kepler's more accurate measurement of Jupiter's orbit demonstrated that it was elliptical rather than circular.

The Thomist synthesis had given theological authority to the Aristotelian world picture. In a society dominated by the church, any change in a world picture which enjoyed theological legitimacy, required a theological critique. This was particularly true of medieval Catholic theology as it was dependant on Aristotelian categories in its understanding of transubstantiation. Thirteenth century Nominalism with its voluntaristic understanding of God's relation to creation

[25] While Copernicus' model had the advantage of greater mathematical simplicity, it remained primarily as a mathematical model as there was, for many years no empirical evidence to prove its superiority. See J. Dillenberger, *Protestant Thought and Natural Science: A Historical Interpretation* (London: Collins, 1961), pp. 1-21 and Russell, *Cross-currents*, pp. 37-52.

began such a critique through its rejection of the concepts of inherent tendencies and powers in nature. The laws of nature were not to be understood as qualities immanent within nature but rather as the regular pattern of the divine will imposed from the outside.[26] Despite the Nominalist critique, the Aristotelian synthesis maintained its dominance until the Reformation.

The Nominalist critique was complemented by a totally different ideological critique, that of Renaissance Platonism and Neo-Platonism. While these challenged the Aristotelian synthesis, they also made use of a hierarchical organic, almost pantheistic, view of the universe. Important elements emerging out of this alternative were an emphasis on mathematics and a mystical reverence for the sun. While this platonic revival influenced various parts of Europe, it had a more profound impact on English thinkers than any other group in northern Europe.[27]

The critique of the Aristotelian world picture was not a merely intellectual activity. On a social and economic level major changes took place with the rise of population as Europe recovered from the recurring plague of the "Black Death". The medieval social order was being fractured by the rising market economy and the forces of emergent nationalism. Trade and mining increased through the support of the great financial houses of the Medici's and the Fuggers. The voyages of discovery and conquest brought about a rapid rise in money circulation in Europe thus fuelling inflation and social disruption. Poverty and landlessness were increasing, a situation aggravated by the increasing population.[28]

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[26] See Eugene M. Klaaren, *Religious Origins of Natural Science: Belief in Creation in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp. 32-39, Alister McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp. 61-107, and H. A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 55-56.

[27] It is possible that this contributed to the more favourable reception of a heliocentric model of the universe, see Russell *Cross-currents*, p. 40.

[28] See H. Kamen, *European Society 1500-1700* (London: Hutchinson, 1984).

The rising capitalist economy led to a major revision of the concept of nature and natural place. Mining had been restricted by the argument that the natural place of minerals was underground and it was therefore unnatural to engage in mining operations which sought to extract them from the earth. In addition to this the mining industry was criticised for the environmental destruction that resulted. In response to this, defenders of the mining industry, such as George Bauer Agricola, argued that God's placing of minerals underground was no more significant than the placing of birds in the air or fish in the sea. People had never regarded the "natural" place of birds or animals as a hindrance to exploiting them for food. People had cultivated the land to produce crops, and mining was just another way of cultivating the land to extract God's good gifts for the benefit of humanity. Mining was thus no different from hunting, fishing or farming. The concept of what is natural was thus seen to be to some extent determined by socio-economic and technological factors.[29]

The movements seeking to reform the church contributed to the general ferment both on a socio-political and ideological level. The magisterial Reformation became a major contributor to the breakup of the medieval synthesis. On a socio-political level it was closely intertwined with the rise of the bourgeois and with the emergence of national states. It functioned both as a stabilising and a disruptive factor. Where it gained dominance it provided social cohesion to the emerging nation states. It also provoked the wars of religion and was used to legitimate other conflicts. This had the effect of causing general disillusionment with religious authoritarianism and promoted tolerance and limited pluralism. Ideologically, both Luther's and Calvin's theology were anti-Aristotelian, and both incorporated the Nominalist's voluntaristic concept of the relationship between God and creation. They provided not only a critique of Aristotelian philosophy but also articulated a form of Christianity which

[29] See Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science*, pp. 114-116 and Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, pp. 29-41.

was not dependant on Aristotelian philosophy for important elements in its theology. The reformation provided a third alternative which was engaged in a critical dialogue with both Renaissance humanism and the medieval syntheses.

Socio-Political Environment of Reformed Theology in England and the Netherlands[30]

Most of Europe was in social turmoil as a result of the forces unleashed by the economic changes and the Reformation. The Netherlands and England underwent an inter-related and in some ways, parallel developments.

From an economic perspective both England and the Netherlands were small countries with rising populations and relatively limited natural resources. Exploitation had exhausted many of these resources. They were thus both inclined towards merchant trading. This inclination was strengthened by the shifting of the trade axis from southern to northern Europe. Both became intensely involved in the Baltic wheat trade, which was essential for the survival of the southern European countries who were unable to produce enough wheat for their own needs.

What is now the Netherlands and Belgium was a collection of staunchly independent provinces under the rule of Spain, referred to collectively as the Low Countries or the Spanish Netherlands. While these provinces had a history of representative government, by the sixteenth century most of them had abandoned any form of elected governments. The governments were in the hands of the "Regency class", a select group of the upper bourgeois families who controlled all appointments to government. The economic position of the Low Countries was strengthened by their link with the Spanish

[30] For a more detailed history of this period see: M. Ashley, *England in the Sixteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), H. G. Koenigsberger, *Early Modern Europe: 1500-1789*, A History of Europe, (Harlow, Longman, 1987), H. G. Koenigsberger and G. L. Mosse, *Europe in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Longman, 1971) and G. Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985).

empire. Antwerp became a major financial and commercial centre. It was the crucial trading point between the Spanish empire and northern Europe.

The position of Antwerp was severely affected by the Spanish crown's declarations of bankruptcy and the disruption caused by the Dutch Wars of Independence from 1549 to 1581. Most of the leading merchants and financiers emigrated to various parts of Europe. Many went north to what was emerging as the United Provinces of the Netherlands and settled in Amsterdam which was rising to prominence as a commercial port. This reinforced and expanded the commercial role of Amsterdam. Most of these immigrants, who became prominent members of the trading community, were Reformed Christians.

The trading position of England was enhanced by relatively greater social mobility and the lack of restrictions on the nobility. On the continent the nobility were seeking to defend their status against the rise of the bourgeois. They emphasised the hereditary nature of noble status, thus hindering intermarriage with commoners. The nobility were also restricted from engaging in certain activities, notably trade. English society was more flexible. Leading merchants could become part of the nobility and the nobility were able to use their economic resources, gained from the ownership of land, for commercial purposes. There was thus a continued process of economic resources being reinvested in land and in business. In addition the changing social conditions resulted in the wealthier yeomen being elevated into the gentry and in turn becoming involved in trade.

The political conditions of England and the Netherlands were in a state of turmoil. Both countries had traditions of representative government and restrictions on royal power that arose out of the aftermath of the Hundred Years War. However the nature of the relationship between the various components within the governing structure remained unresolved. The result was that both were characterised by conflict during the

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In the Netherlands there was originally the conflict between the various provinces and the Spanish Empire. This conflict continued in various forms during the sixteenth century. There was also a period of trade and military conflict with England, its chief commercial rival. Internally there was conflict within the States General, which represented the various provinces and which was dominated by the representatives of Holland. These representatives formed an oligarchy consisting of the major business leaders of Amsterdam. In addition to this there was major conflict between the Amsterdam oligarchy (and thus the States General) and the House of Orange.

In England there was the conflict between parliament and the Stuart monarchy, which reached a crisis point during the Civil War. After the fall of the monarchy there was conflict between the army and parliament. The restoration of the monarchy did not alter the situation. The conflict continued until the "Glorious Revolution" and accession of William and Mary in 1689. In addition to this, there were wars with Spain and the Netherlands.

Netherlands and England were characterised by considerable religious diversity. In both countries the reformation was a gradual process. While members of the Reformed tradition were significant components of the ecclesiastical patchwork they never attained total dominance. Even when they played a significant role in the social and political developments they did not form the majority of the population and could not establish the kind of domination over all areas of life that characterised Geneva. There were considerable differences even amongst those who comprised the Reformed wing of the reformation.[31]

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[31] See Alastair Duke, "The Ambivalent Face of Calvinism in the Netherlands, 1540 - 1618" and Patrick Collision, "England and international Calvinism, 1558 - 1640" in Menna Prestwich, ed., *International Calvinism 1541 - 1715*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), pp. 109-134 and 197-224.

The various religious differences became closely intertwined with the political and economic differences. In the Netherlands, the Calvinists dominated the rural provinces and were fairly influential amongst the lower middle class in Holland. The upper bourgeois who constituted the ruling oligarchy of Amsterdam and Holland, and who dominated the States General, were largely Remonstrants. The House of Orange became staunchly Calvinistic and drew its support from the rural population. In England the monarchy and the nobility tended either towards Catholicism or Arminianism. Parliament and the business class tended towards Puritanism.[32] The lower class were Catholics or members of a host of different sects.

Centres of trade and commerce throughout Europe tended to display considerably more freedom of expression and religion than elsewhere. This social reality had contributed to the spread of the Reformation. While in both the Netherlands and in England there were attempts to enforce religious uniformity their position as emerging trading powers led to a greater freedom of expression and religion. This situation was enhanced by the extent of the religious diversity of their populations. This was true to greater extent in the Netherlands where trade was more important than it was in England. All sorts of religious and political ideas were tolerated and openly debated. There was no censorship and a wide variety of literature was published, some of which was banned elsewhere. In England there was far greater freedom during the Civil War and Commonwealth periods, which were characterised by an explosion of religious, scientific and

[32] The meaning ascribed to the term Puritan varies through the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Initially it was used to refer to those within the state church who argued for a more radical reformation to bring it into closer conformity to the Reformed churches in the rest of Europe. It then came to designate the numerous non-Anglican groups that sprung up during the civil war period ranging from Presbyterians to the Diggers and the Levellers. Finally during the Restoration period it came to be identified with the major non-conformist groupings in the Reformed tradition. The usage here refers to both the non-conformist groupings in the Reformed tradition and those within the state church who stood within the Reformed tradition.

philosophical ideas.

In contrast to the situation in the Netherlands and England, the Catholic Reformation, enforced the medieval synthesis of ideas with far greater rigour than it had been before the Reformation, consequently there was far less opportunity for creative thought and action in Catholic countries. As late as 1624 the death penalty was prescribed by the Parliament of Paris for "anyone who maintained a doctrine contrary to Aristotle."[33] The Tridentine insistence that the Bible was to be interpreted according to the consensus of the Fathers excluded attempts to reconcile theology with the new philosophical and scientific ideas, and the emerging capitalist social order.

Some components of Reformed orthodoxy, in attempting to articulate a coherent alternative to Catholic scholasticism, returned to the use of Aristotelian philosophy. This return was accompanied by an anti-catholic polemic on the nature of the Bible's authority which resulted in the adoption of a literalistic understanding of biblical authority. This combination of Aristotelian philosophy and biblical literalism hindered the development of the new socio-economic, philosophical and scientific developments in areas where life was under the domination of Reformed orthodoxy.

The concentration of creative developments thus took place in Protestant countries, strongly influenced by Reformed theology but displaying greater pluralism. Netherlands and England are primary examples of this tendency.

THE REFORMED TRADITION AND THE RISE OF EARLY MODERNITY

The Reformed tradition was one of a number of influences that contributed to the rise of early modernity. In particular, this tradition contributed to the production and

[33] Harold P. Nebelsick, *The Renaissance, the Reformation and the Rise of Science* (Edinburgh T & T Clark, 1992), p. 160.

institutionalisation of ideas and the creation of a new discursive field. It thus contributed to the emergence of a new type of person - the modern European subject – a person whose identity is shaped by a consciousness of human mastery over the natural environment.

> Mastery over nature means the extraction of resources from the natural environment to turn them into commodities for the satisfaction of needs, without apparent limit and without any regard for the appropriateness of those needs or the means chosen to satisfy them, judged according to some criteria for a truly human existence. In short: to get what we want (or what we think we need in order to be happy) by transforming the planet into nothing but a supplier of our wants - an abundant, unlimited, never-ending variety of goods.[34]

The Production of Ideas in the Reformed Tradition

The Reformed tradition's most important contribution to the rise of early modernity was the production of important ideas. Some of these were new, others were already present within medieval Christianity but they were given a new emphasis through their articulation within the Reformed tradition.[35]

The first important cluster of ideas is around the doctrine of scripture in the Reformed tradition. The reformation affirmation of *sola scriptura* reorganised the relationship between the traditional religious authorities of Scripture, church and tradition. Tradition and the church no longer dominated the interpretation of scripture thus opening the way for new ideas which contradicted the predominant medieval synthesis and the traditional interpretations of biblical passages.[36] Calvinists thus understood themselves as being ultimately answerable only to God's will expressed through the scripture. They were only answerable to other authorities to

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[34] William Leiss, *The Domination of Nature* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994), p. xxv.
[35] These concepts will be dealt with in greater detail in chapters 3-5.
[36] See G. B. Deason, "The Protestant Reformation and the Rise of Modern Science", *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 38, (1985), 221-240, (pp. 228-230).

the extent that these authorities implemented scriptural mandates. The Calvinist approach to life could thus be characterised as free and responsible. Related to this shift in the locus of authority was the emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. The ordinary Christian did not need a priestly intermediary, and was able to come to a valid understanding of the faith without the aid of the religious hierarchy. This opened the way for the layperson to critique political, ecclesiastical and philosophical authorities.[37]

One of the most significant aspects of Calvin's doctrine of Scripture was his concept of the accommodated character of Scriptural revelation. God spoke through Scripture in terms of the language, understanding and cultural conditions of the times. It is thus necessary for the interpreter to discern between what God's word demanded of the people in the time of writing and what it demands in the contemporary world. There could be no simple movement from the scientific, cultural and social ideas present in the Bible and the world of the sixteenth and seventeenth century.[38]

The second important cluster of ideas is those surrounding the doctrine of creation. For Calvin, God's relationship to creation is to be understood in terms of radical sovereignty. The reformer's soteriology and ecclesiology emphasised God's free and sovereign relationship with individuals. This strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God was also characteristic of Calvin's understanding of God's providence. God was seen to be as active on the earth as God was in the movement of the heavenly spheres. While Calvin recognised the role of secondary causes, he downplayed their significance in the light of his view of all events as the product of God's fatherly care of creation in general and the elect in particular. The intrinsic powers and immanent forces of the Aristotelian model of nature were excluded. Nature is essentially passive, even secondary causes gain their power

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[37] See Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, pp. 109-114.
[38] See F. L. Battles, "God was Accommodating himself to Human Capacity", in *Interpretation*, 31 (1977), 19-38.

from God. In addition Calvin proposed that phenomena that could not be explained in terms of contemporary science were the product of the direct action of God. He, for example argued that, from an Aristotelian perspective, the earth should be covered by the sea, the existence of dry land was thus the result of God's direct intervention on behalf of creation.[39]

Calvin thus proposed a twofold understanding of God's work in nature. The first was God's universal or general providence by which God worked through the secondary causes. The second was God's particular providence whereby God intervened in the regular course of events to provide for the created order, as in the prevention of the flooding of the Earth. In dealing with particular providence he emphasised its regular character to combat the claims to further revelation within the Catholic tradition and some Radical Reformation movements. God's intervention was not irregular or lawless, as God acted in ordained ways that could not be reduced to secondary causes, in the same way that God acted in salvation.[40]

Calvin understood God's relationship to the created order in a voluntaristic manner. God is not bound by any a priori concept of reason or morality, what is reasonable or moral is determined by God's will. It is, thus, not possible to come to a knowledge of God by a deductive and speculative rationalism. Knowledge of God can only be obtained through the study of God's acts arising out of a saving encounter with God in Christ.

Calvin's theology of God's relationship to the created order must not be reduced to a voluntaristic understanding; it has an important aesthetic dimension. Creation is constantly enlivened and ordered through the work of the Spirit so that

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[39] See Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations,* vol. 1, trans. by John Owen, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), pp. 294-296.

[40] See Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science*, pp. 120-138, and Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of the Divine Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Durham: Labyrinth, 1991), pp. 7-37.

it becomes a dynamic and beautiful theatre displaying the glory of God. God reveals Godself through the magnificent fabric of the world[41]

This beautifully ordered world has been subjected to disorder as a consequence of human sin and God's consequent judgement. Disorder affects all dimensions of creation. The non-human world has risen up against humanity constantly threatening human life with disaster. Human society is subjected to the forces of chaos and rebellion expressed in oppression, war, crime and other forms of social evil. God still retains ultimate control restraining the forces of chaos preventing them from totally destroying the created order.[42]

The universe was created primarily for the glory of God rather than for the benefit of humanity. Yet God created it with specific reference to the bearers of the divine image, who are given dominion over the earth. Yet this did not mean that humans could use and abuse God's creatures. Creation is to be used to the glory of God and for the benefit of humanity. Humanity thus had a stewardly function, which Calvin argued was to be used in such a way as to preserve its resources for future generations.[43]

The third cluster of ideas is those related to redemption. For Calvin redemption is God's action through Christ to restore order to creation. As a consequence of the cross God acts by the Word and the Spirit in human individuals and societies to progressively restore order to creation so that it might once more fully manifest the glory of God. This restoration of order will only be fully achieved when Christ returns.[44] .

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[41] See Klaaren, *Religious Origins of Natural Science*, pp. 39-5.
[42] See Schreiner, *The Theater of the Divine Glory*, pp. 28-30.
[43] See Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, Called Genesis,* vol. 1, trans. by J. King, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), pp. 125 and Chapter 4 below.
[44] See David E. Holwerda, "Eschatology and History: A Look at Calvin's Eschatological Vision", in *Readings in Calvin's Theology*, ed. by Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 311-342, M. Eugene Osterhaven, *The Faith of the Church: A Reformed Perspective on its Historical*

The church was identified with the Israel of the Old Testament. The new covenant in Christ was a continuation of God's covenant with Abraham. The church is God's chosen people, justified by faith and commissioned by God to bring light to the world by establishing order in life and society. As the elect people, the church was assured of its place in the sovereign purposes of God and its members could confidently face all who stood opposed to them.

The redirection of society was the means whereby God's original intention for humanity and the rest of the created order could be attained. This goal is summed up in Calvin's Geneva catechism:

> Minister: What is the chief end of human life?
> Child: That men should know God by whom they were created.
> Minister: What reason have you for saying so?
> Child: Because He created us for this, and placed us in the world that He might be glorified in us. And it is certainly proper that our life, of which He is the beginning, be directed to His glory.[45]

God's glory was to be the motivating force behind all the actions of believers. It was the task of Christians to actively seek the glory of God in their personal lives as well as in the church and society.

Discipline and order were the marks of a lifestyle which glorified God. The Reformed tradition was infused with a drive for discipline and order. There was to be a radical rejection of all that could bring disorder. Thus, while neither Calvin nor his followers discouraged the legitimate enjoyment of God's good creation, they did encourage a frugal and serious approach to life rejecting frivolity, levity and

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Development, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), pp. 162-193, and Schreiner, *The Theater of the Divine Glory*, pp. 97-114.

[45] "The Catechism of the Church of Geneva (1545)" in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, ed. by J. K. S. Reid. Library of Christian Classics, vol. 22 (London: SCM, 1954), pp. 88-139 (p. 91).

ostentation.

As individuals, Christians are called to act in society to re-establish order through the fulfilment of their vocation. This idea had first been developed by Luther to argue that it was not only the clergy who were called by God to perform certain functions. All the people of God were called to serve God in different occupations. Under the influence of Calvin and the Puritans the concept of vocation came to have dynamic character. People had a responsibility to seek an occupation in which they could be most effective in serving God by meeting the needs of humanity. Secular occupations were no longer viewed as a secondary or lesser good but as a primary duty to God to be fulfilled through disciplined activity.[46] In contrast with the medieval synthesis, Calvin emphasised the dignity and spiritual value of work. The medieval ideal of a life of contemplation was rejected as unproductive laziness. In contrast to both the medieval theologians and Luther, Calvin approved of commercial activity as a legitimate and godly vocation to be pursued for the good of humanity and the glory of God.[47] He was however scathingly critical of those whose primary goal in work was to obtain wealth, even if they displayed outward signs of religious devotion.[48]

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[46] See Lee Hardy, *The Fabric of this World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice and the Design of Human Work* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 44-76.

[47] See Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, pp. 77-94.

[48] Calvin rejected the kind of behaviour which epitomises Weber's "Spirit of Capitalism". An example of his attitude can be found in his sermon on Micah 3: 1-4: "Avarice is as prized as it should be condemned; it always provides men such a convenient facade behind which they hide their wickedness. Take the case of a man obsessed with greed, one who is in truth a loan shark, a bandit who pillages from one end of the land to the other. Many will say of him, 'What a righteous man he is. He is an excellent worker who knows his business and really pushes himself; he is an excellent provider and takes very good care of his family.' In brief, all the virtues will be attributed to avarice, all possible praise will be heaped upon it, in order to make it appear as righteous this vice God finds so detestable. Saint Paul says, 'avarice is the root of all evil.' Examine avarice carefully and you will find that there is not one evil it does not bring with itself. When a man is possessed of avarice, there is neither loyalty nor honor in him; all he cares about is getting what he wants; how does not matter; he will stoop to all sorts of cruel and inhumane behaviour, he will resort to perjury, treason, loan sharking, rapine and even murder, if he believes these methods will satisfy his lust. True, not every avaricious soul resorts to such ruthless methods but the vast majority are willing to." in Calvin, *Sermons on Micah*, trans. by Blair

The identification with Israel was sometimes linked (in English Reformed thought) to utopian and post-millennial eschatologies which viewed God as establishing God's reign on earth through the church prior to the return of Christ. While utopian visions had been common amongst marginalised groups during the Middle Ages, they became part of a more influential ideology through the efforts of the Puritans. As many Puritans saw themselves as being at the dawn of the millennial era, they attempted to establish the new Zion in England and New England.[49]

Reformed Tradition and the Rise of the Capitalist Social Order

Since Weber published his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*[50] the understanding of the relationship between the Reformed tradition and the rise of capitalism has been the subject of major debate. A detailed discussion of this controversy lies beyond the scope of this thesis.[51] Informed by the debate this chapter proposes a model for understanding the contribution of the Reformed tradition to the transformation of Europe from an essentially feudal society to one dominated by capitalism.

The contribution of the Reformed tradition can be seen in two main areas. The first is in the removal of certain barriers to capitalistic development. The second is in the creation of

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Reynolds, Texts and Studies in Religion, vol. 47, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon, 1990), pp. 151-153.

[49] See M. C. Jacobs, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720* (Hassocks: Harvester, 1976), Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, pp. 141-144 pp. 100-142, and Klaaren, *Religious Origins of Natural Science*, pp. 45-52.

[50] M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by T. Parsons (London: George Allen And Unwin, 1976)

[51] For a detailed discussion of this issue, see W. C. Coleman, "Providence, Capitalism and Environmental Degradation: English Apologetics in an Age of Economic Revolution", *Journal of the History of Ideas,* 37, (1976) pp. 27-44, S. N. Eisenstadt, ed., *The Protestant Ethic and Modernisation - A Contemporary View* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, pp. 77-94, 116-144 and 189-201G, G. Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism - An Essay on Max Weber's Protestant Ethic Thesis.*(New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) and Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*.

a new type of "person" with new cultural values, which were congenial to the emerging dominance of the capitalistic system. We are not attempting to prove that all capitalists were Calvinists, nor that Calvinism was the only factor which led to the development of the "spirit of capitalism". Rather we propose that in this particular set of socio-historical circumstances Reformed theology played an important role in removing certain obstructions to the development of capitalism and in reinforcing social dynamics which developed into capitalism. This only took place when those elements in Calvin's theology which were not conducive to the rise of capitalism were ignored or rejected. Calvinism played a role in encouraging the rising dominance of capitalism but at the same time was influenced by it.

The Removal of Barriers to the Capitalist Order

Capitalism had already emerged in pre-reformation Geneva, however Calvin's social teaching is not a mere legitimation of these developments. In common with his contemporaries Calvin attempted to regulate the economy for the common good of the community.[52] Despite this, Reformed theology accelerated the emergence of the capitalist social order.

The central Protestant doctrines of justification by faith, the priesthood of believers and the supreme authority of Scripture subverted the authority of a host of traditional restrictions on economic activity. The justified person was freed from the necessity of detailed obedience to regulations and freed to live in accordance with his/her conscience. In the context of the emerging capitalism, this freed Reformed businesspersons to pursue their economic activities in the way that they felt most appropriate as long as they sincerely believed their activity to be motivated by the glory of God and the good of humanity. The attempts by Calvin and other church leaders to regulate the economy were undermined by this new sense of freedom gained from the preaching of

[52] See Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, pp. 65-94 and 116-144.

justification by faith alone.[53]

Calvin's theology of vocation in general and his acceptance of commercial activity as a legitimate and godly occupation, removed the psychological burden of the religious disapproval of commercial activity. This is particularly true of his most direct contribution to the development of capitalism that is his acceptance of the legitimacy of the use of interest as a vital component of financial transactions. He rejected the simplistic application of Old Testament injunctions on usury and its synthesis with Aristotelian understanding of the barrenness of money. He regarded the Old Testament regulations as political laws accommodated to the needs of their cultural context. He re-affirmed the core value of a concern for the needy, but rejected a detailed application of the law. Calvin distinguished between interest on loans made to help those in need and those made by merchants and financiers in the context of business. The former was forbidden, but the latter was acceptable, if kept within responsible and fair limits.

The consequence of this was twofold. First, it raised a whole sector of economic activity from the denigration of being regarded as inherently sinful. Usury was actively practised in the Middle Ages, often on behalf of the church, but it could only be done via detailed casuistic legalism or by special permission of the church. Business always carried with it the taint of sinfulness, as it was viewed as seeking profit at the expense of others. Second, the ban on usury did not affect its removal from society, but rather had the effect of producing excessively high interest rates and thus discouraging capitalist activity. Calvin's legitimation of interest resulted in lower rates of interest in nations influenced by Reformed theology thus encouraging economic development. Calvin's teaching thus functioned to break down an important barrier to capitalistic development, even though

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[53] See Christopher Hill, *Challenge and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) pp. 81-102.

his own teaching placed restraints on it. It was only when these restrictions were removed that capitalism flourished.[54]

The Selection and Institutionalisation of Ideas

While the Reformed tradition drew its membership from all strata of society it had a large following amongst the lower middle class, which was rising to prominence at this time. The upper middle class who owned and directed the town, trading and financial houses tended to be liberal Calvinists, post-Calvinists or members of other traditions. This linkage to the middle class was an important factor in the selection of ideas.

A second important factor was the tradition of greater religious tolerance in the Netherlands and England. In the Netherlands the States-General was dominated by the Amsterdam oligarchy which tended to be Arminian, more liberal and Erastian in theology. In England the monarchy tended towards either Arminianism or Catholicism but was always Erastian. Since the Elizabethan settlement it had been more tolerant of minorities. While England did go through attempts to enforce religious uniformity these were never ultimately successful. Even when the Puritans dominated the Commonwealth, the strength of the Independents prevented religious uniformity.

These tendencies were combined with a third factor, the rising power and influence of capitalism. Capitalism was entrenched in the middle class with the lower middle class forming the backbone of the new economic order. They in turn were dependent on capitalism for their position in society. The radical newness and power of the capitalist dominated society made all previous theological economic ethics obsolete. Under the pressure of these factors, and within the context of a society in turmoil, some ideas of the Reformed tradition were

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[54] See Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary*, pp. 116-127 F. L. Gallassi, "Buying a Passport to Heaven: Usury, Restitution and the Merchants of Medieval Genoa", *Religion*, 22 (1992), 313-326 and H. Luthy "Once Again: Calvinism and Capitalism", in Eisenstadt, *The Protestant Ethic and Modernisation*, pp 87-108.

accepted, some rejected and others radically modified.

The concept of discipline was privatised so that it came to apply primarily to the individual's personal morality and lifestyle. Discipline, hard work and frugality were encouraged. Attempts to apply discipline on a grand scale to social and political life were abandoned due to the rapidly changing political scene and the failure of the Reformed parties to gain dominance. Where they did hold a dominant position, for example in the rural Dutch province, capitalism was stifled.

In relation to Calvin's business ethic, his understanding that the ban on usury no longer applied was selected. His teaching on the care of the poor and his regulations of the economy for the benefit of the poor were rejected, as were the attempts of the New England Puritans to regulate the economy to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth.

The emphasis on disciplined work as a response to God's call on a persons' life came to be seen as a means of proving one's salvation. When this was combined with the emphasis on discipline and individual responsibility, poverty came to be seen as a result of laziness and sin. The victims of the emerging capitalist society were seen to be sinful and responsible for their own condition. The presence of large numbers of vagrants, and unemployed people was perceived as a disruption to the order which glorified God. The solution to poverty was not corporate charity, as in Calvin, but the work house. Corporate responsibility was replaced with individualism. The seeking of God's glory in one's vocation came to be identified with success in business, at whatever level one was at. Disciplined hard work ensured not only the success of endeavour but often opportunities for promotion and gain. A frugal and disciplined lifestyle made money available and the decline of charity led to the view that excess money ought to be invested in further business ventures for the

glory of God.[55]

The result of this process of selection of ideas was that Reformed theology came to reinforce the virtues and sanctify the vices of the rising middle class. While it cannot be claimed to be the only factor in the development of the "spirit of capitalism" it was almost certainly a contributing factor and provided the religious legitimation of a break from a lifestyle that had been legitimated by the medieval syntheses. These ideas became entrenched in the institutions of the middle class, most notably in the business enterprises which encouraged the ideas and ethos which supported their own practices. On an ecclesiastical level they became institutionalised within the non-conformist churches. This encouraged the propagation of the ideas even when some of the original religious motivation was lost through the rationalism of the Enlightenment.

Figural Action and the Middle Class

The ideas that were produced and selected formed a discursive field in which the Reformed believers could identify themselves, their actions and their opponents. They were members of God's new Israel, called to bring glory to God by disciplined and ordered work. Their task was to strive for order amongst the chaos of the world by fulfilling their God-given vocation. Through their activity in the world they manifested their salvation. The result of this godly activity on a social level would be the continued progress in society towards the millennium. Opposing the Israel of God were the forces of disorder. These were people still committed to Roman Catholicism and those elements in society which encouraged disorder by their failure. This understanding of the Reformed believer's position within the discursive field articulated well with society. They were the godly group, predestined to ultimately succeed despite the hardships on the way. The forces of history were working for them.

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[55] See Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (New York: Athenium, 1976), pp. 199-231.

These Calvinists were closely identified with the rising middle class who thus came to identify themselves as the true Christians in society, responsible to God alone for their conduct. They were characterised by discipline, thriftiness and hardnosed business sense, as they sought to succeed in the world. Their enemies were firstly their foreign competitors, Spain, Portugal and France, who had remained in the Roman fold. Secondly, there were the poor, whose poverty demonstrated their sinful failure to live a disciplined godly life. Thirdly, they were the nobility and the merchant princes whose self indulgence demonstrated their sinfulness and the inevitability of their ultimate fall.

The Reformed members of the lower middle class, in many ways demonstrated the ideal character for a capitalist society. This character was reinforced by their sense of destiny and legitimated by their theology. In this context Reformed theology functioned as an important contributor to the rise of capitalism.

The Reformed Tradition and the Rise of Modern Science

At the core of the cultural shift from medieval to the modern world was the development of a new understanding of the relationship between humanity and its natural environment. This shift had two interrelated dimensions, first, a new vision of humanity's dominion over the natural environment, and second, the mechanistic corpuscular world picture. These are typified respectively in the work of two influential Englishmen, Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton. The combination of the two dimensions of thought had a determinative influence on the shape of the modern worldview.[56]

[56] The term "world picture" is used to refer to a descriptive and heuristic scientific model of the cosmos and the term worldview to refer a metaphysical description of the nature of reality. The movement from world picture to worldview takes place when a scientific model comes to be seen as describing reality in an all encompassing metaphysical manner. In early modernity the mechanistic world picture began to take on the characteristics of a worldview.

There is considerable debate as to the exact relationship between the Reformation and the rise of the new scientific consensus. While it is impossible to prove any causal relationship between the two, the existence of some connection is seen by the statistical data on the higher proportion of Protestant scientists to Catholic scientists, even in countries dominated by Catholicism and in the concentration of scientific development in England and the Netherlands.[57] A direct causal relationship is excluded by the significant contributions of Catholic scientists.[58] We will argue, with G. B. Deason, that there is an indirect relationship between the Reformed tradition and the emergence of modern science.[59] The Reformed tradition accelerated, rather than caused, the development of science in the contexts where it had a significant influence.[60]

Francis Bacon's Vision for Scientific Activity[61]

Science and technology always develop within the context of a broader legitimating narrative or, to use Wuthnow's terms, a "discursive field", which describes a particular socio-cultural order and its relationship to the natural environment.[62] This legitimating narrative arises out of the dynamic interaction between ideas and social structures described in Wuthnow's theory. Francis Bacon's vision of the

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[57] See R. Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, pp. 98-101 and Merton, *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England*, pp. 112-136.

[58] See W. B. Ashworth, Jr., "Catholicism and Early Modern Science", in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*, ed. by D. C. Lindberg and R. C. Numbers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 136-166.

[59] See Deason, "The Protestant Reformation and the Rise of Modern Science".

[60] A major exception must be made to this statement, that is, that in contexts where Reformed theology was closely integrated with Aristotelian philosophy, scientific development was hindered. See Deason, "The Protestant Reformation and the Rise of Modern Science", p. 227.

[61] Our discussion of Bacon is based on, Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, pp. 45-72 and 139 and 140, Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science*, pp. 142-150, Klaaren, *Religious Origins of Natural Science*, pp. 91-97, Leiss, *The Domination of Nature*, pp. 45-71, Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, pp. 164-190, and Nebelsick, *The Renaissance, the Reformation and the Rise of Science*, p. 189-219.

[62] See Max Oelschlaeger, *Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis* (New Haven: Yale, 1994), pp. 30-36.

scientific enterprise provided such a legitimating narrative. In this sense he acted as the "midwife of a new epoch in scientific thought."[63]

Bacon's vision is set within the traditional Christian theological categories of creation, fall and redemption. Adam was created with dominion over the earth and the other creatures. As a consequence of the fall humanity lost its dominion and the natural order was corrupted. Redemption was accomplished through Christ. The Reformation had brought about the renewed proclamation of God's grace in Christ making spiritual renewal possible. The restoration of human dominion over nature was however to be the consequence of scientific and technological advance. The natural environment was to be mastered by humans for the good of humanity as a whole. Science and technology were the tools to achieve the progressive development of human prosperity.

In Bacon's *New Atlantis,* scientists were given an almost priestly status as the possessors of knowledge and the solvers of all problems. Science and technology were gifts from God to be used for the glory of God. Nature as the product of God's activity was a visible display of God's glory. Science as the investigation of God's 'second book' was a means of demonstrating God's glorious handiwork and was thus a God-given vocation to be pursued with discipline and diligence.

Bacon argued that the application of Aristotelian categories to nature was a second fall. Aristotelians, in their pride, attempted to tell nature what it could and could not do, instead of listening to what nature was saying. What was natural was not to be discovered from Aristotle, but through the empirical investigation of natural phenomena. Nature had to be investigated in order to discover its secrets so that it could be transformed for the benefit of humanity. If nature would not give up its secrets they had to be wrenched from it

[63] Nebelsick, *The Renaissance, the Reformation and the Rise of Science*, pp. 190.

to facilitate the progress of science.[64]

In Aristotelian thinking humanity could only imitate nature or help it achieve its goals. Bacon in contrast argued that human beings should use the arts and sciences to conquer and surpass nature. This was the greater task as it demonstrated human dominion over nature. In the *New Atlantis,* Bacon speculated about the possibility of transforming present plant and animal species and even of creating new ones. Through the use of such means nature was to be shaped, changed and moulded to suit the needs of humanity.

While Bacon's original vision can only be understood within its religious context, it was to cut loose from this context through the process of secularisation that took place during the Enlightenment. As such it was converted into the secular dream of autonomous humanity's conquest of nature for the increased prosperity of humanity.

The Mechanistic World Picture[65]

Francis Bacon provided a vision for the role of science in the progress of human society. For this vision to be implemented it needed to be combined with a new understanding of the physical universe that permitted the kind of activities that Bacon proposed. The shift from the organic hierarchical of the middle ages to the emerging mechanistic and corpuscular world picture was to provide such a model of the universe.

The development of this new world picture was a complex

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[64] Merchant argues that the approach to nature advocated by seventeenth century scientists closely parallels the use of torture to extract information from suspects in the witch trials of this era, see *The Death of Nature*, pp. 168-172.

[65] The following is based on a critical use of Deason, "The Protestant Reformation and the Rise of Modern Science", idem., "Reformation Theology and the Mechanistic Universe", in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science,* ed. by D. C. Lindberg and R. C. Numbers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) pp. 167-191, Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, pp. 13-26 and 44-52, Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science*, pp. 96-222, Klaaren, *Religious Origins of Natural Science*, pp. 29-52 and 85-184 Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, pp. 192-235 and 275-289, and Russell, *Cross-currents*, pp. 37-98.

process. Different scientists and philosophers contributed in different ways to the emerging consensus. This consensus included the following elements; a Copernican astronomy, an emphasis on empirical research, a mechanistic world picture, and a theory of the corpuscular nature of the universe. Many of the early modern scientists only propounded some of these dimensions. They were often combined with elements from the old medieval synthesis and the hermetic and Neo-Platonism ideas which were popular in Renaissance circles. It is only towards the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century that the elements combine to form a dominant new world picture.

The most important development in terms of philosophical ideas was the various forms of mechanistic philosophy. These views understood the cosmos as being composed of particles which interacted with each other in terms of quantitative mathematical principles. The laws of nature were now understood as mathematical descriptions of reality. Movement and change was the rearrangement of the individual particles in space.

Rene Descartes, for example, described nature in purely mechanistic terms. Matter was composed of particles interacting with each other. This matter was completely passive there were no immanent forces such as gravity or magnetism. All interaction was the product of God's activity the laws of nature were therefore expressions of God's attributes. As God is immutable so God always acts to produce the same effects. Descartes' mechanistic ideas influenced key scientific thinkers, particularly in England. While not all of his ideas were accepted, the basic concepts of the mechanistic model shaped all scientific discourse.

The mechanistic model with its emphasis on the passivity of nature was used to emphasise the need for empirical research. As the laws of nature were not inherent in nature they could only be discovered by experiment and not deduction. This was

reinforced by a voluntaristic theology which emphasised that God's actions were not to be determined by human concepts of reason and could only be discovered through empirical investigation.

Various attempts were made to steer a middle course between the spiritualistic organic views of the Neo-Platonist and their successors and the pure mechanism of Descartes or the materialistic mechanism of a Thomas Hobbes. Isaac Newton argued that while matter was passive there were supra-mechanistic forces such as gravity and magnetism. These forces were a kind of mathematical version of a Spirit of Nature. Newton's importance was greater due to his synthesising of the various elements of the developing new science into a comprehensive and coherent world picture. His synthesis integrated a heliocentric astronomy, rational empiricism and a mechanistic and corpuscular view of nature; all of this could be described through mathematical principles.

The mechanistic model of the universe provided the theoretical framework for the integration of science and technology proposed by Bacon. Science described the workings of the cosmic machine while technology made use of this description to use the machine to produce new machines. Just as God was the cosmic designer and technician so humans, as the bearers of the divine image, were called to make new mechanisms which surpassed nature. One needed to understand the natural mechanism in order to develop new machines by rearranging the moving particles. Nature in the new model was malleable and could be changed without major consequences. It was this understanding that opened the way for the large scale exploitation of nature. Nature as a machine could be used, altered, manipulated and improved to facilitate the well-being of humanity.

The practical application of science to technology only began to take place on a large scale in the late eighteenth

century.[66] Until the early eighteenth century technological developments led to scientific discoveries, rather than the other way round.[67] However, many of the seventeenth century scientific experiments and theories were products of attempts to solve technological problems involved in the manufacture of munitions, and in the development of navigational and mining equipment.[68] The development of science was thus related to the emerging capitalist economy.

The Production of Ideas and Action Sequences contributing to the Development of Modern Science

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were characterised by the massive production of diverse ideas. Modern science arose out of these ideas in a particular socio-historical context. The Reformed tradition was an important component of this dynamic interaction which accelerated the emergence of the modern science.[69] This process of acceleration took a number of forms. The tradition contributed to the explosion of new ideas. It provided a form of Christianity compatible with the new scientific developments. In so doing it contributed to a social order in which the new science could rise to dominance. Aspects of the tradition were used to legitimate the new scientific world picture. In a particular case it is difficult to discern whether the Reformed tradition contributed to the emergence of a scientific concept or was merely used to legitimate it.[70]

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[66] See Russell *Cross-currents*, p. 101.

[67] See Russell, *Cross-currents*. pp. 101-102.

[68] See Merton, *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England*, pp. 137 - 198.

[69] On the general historical relationship between theology and Science, see John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science*, and Russell, *Cross-currents*. For details of the the debate on the relationship between the Reformation and the emergence of modern science, see Deason, "The Protestant Reformation and the Rise of Modern Science", Dillenberger, *Protestant Thought and Natural Science*, pp. 21-123, Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, Klaaren, *Religious Origins of Natural Science*, and Nebelsick, *The Renaissance, the Reformation and the Rise of Science*. In the discussion that follows I have drawn extensively on these sources though the precise argument differs from the arguments that they present.

[70] The Reformed tradition was not the only significant source of ideological production at this time. The Renaissance saw the rediscovery of a number of philosophical and religious traditions. The most important for the

The first important contribution of the Reformed tradition was the critique of all ancient authorities whether ecclesiastical or philosophical. In particular the major reformers were unanimous in their rejection of the dominant role that Aristotelian scholasticism had played in theology. They rejected speculative philosophical theology and attempted to construct a theology based on the empirical study of the Bible, directed towards the practical benefit of ordinary Christians. The theological critique contributed to the development of a socio-cultural context in which it was acceptable to subject traditional scientific concepts to critique.

Second, Calvin's doctrine of the accommodated character of Scripture provided the theological space to deal with those passages of the Bible which could not be reconciled with the new science. This opened the way for the acceptance of Copernican astronomy. The moderate Puritan, John Wilkens, explicitly appealed to Calvin in his argument for the separation of theology from science.[71]

Third, Calvin's emphasis on the radical sovereignty of God and his voluntaristic understanding of the relationship between God and creation was used to legitimate the mechanistic world picture philosophy with its emphasis on the passivity of matter. Both the Reformed tradition and the mechanistic model removed any view of "Nature" as a semi-divine entity which could compete with God for sovereignty in the world. God's actions could not be described by *apriori* general principles discovered by deductive reasoning, they could only be discovered through empirical research into the actual workings of the universe. God's actions are not totally arbitrary, as

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development of science was the Neo-Platonic tradition including the hermetic and cabalistic traditions. For details of the influence of these developments see Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science*, pp. 96-186, Klaaren, *Religious Origins of Natural Science*, pp. 53-83, Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, pp. 99-126, and Nebelsick, *The Renaissance, the Reformation and the Rise of Science*, pp. 79-147.

[71] See Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, pp. 126-130.

the Designer and Lawgiver of the universe, God's general providential activity was expressed through secondary causes. It was thus constant and could be described in terms of the predictable laws of nature. Thus the voluntaristic understanding of God was used to legitimate the rise of rationalistic empiricism.[72]

Fourth, Reformed theology gave new dignity to technology and manual work through the doctrine of vocation. This encouraged the rise of empiricism. The medieval ideal of idle contemplation was replaced with one of worldly activism for the glory of God and the good of humanity. The scientific discoveries of those engaged in technology and the applied sciences gained a new status; their value, along with all other forms of learning, was to be assessed by their benefits for humanity rather than their conformity to Aristotle.

Fifth, the growing emphasis on the usefulness of science for society was an important contributor to the creation of a hospitable environment in which science could develop. This was particularly true in the light of Calvin and the Puritan's insistence on the usefulness of true knowledge. English Protestant clergy popularised the ideal of science in the service of humanity. This had a significant impact in an age in which disease, drought and other natural disasters devastated human life at all levels of society.

Sixth, the doctrine that human beings bore the divine image and are thus called to have dominion over nature was to have growing significance. This was particularly true when it was related to the understanding that nature was fallen and needed to be returned to its place under dominion. In a context of growing scientific discovery, emerging capitalism and the colonial conquest of the "wilderness", the stewardly responsibility given to humanity was seen to be the manipulation and transformation of nature so that it could be

[72] Calvin himself had encouraged the careful study of natural phenomena in order to understand the way God acts in the created order. See *Institutes*, 1:14:21.

ordered for the benefit of humanity.[73] This understanding was given greater weight through the use of uncultivated nature as a symbol of evil.

Seventh, the Reformed tradition contributed to the developing concept of human progress. From the time of the Renaissance there was a growing awareness of "progress" in culture and learning. The new knowledge that was emerging led to the portrayal of the medieval period as the dark ages. In Puritan circles the Reformation came to be seen as part of this growing enlightenment. With the establishment of the Puritan commonwealth and the new scientific advances it seemed as if a golden age was about to dawn.

Theologically progress was viewed in terms of a post-millennial eschatology. The millennium was to be an era in which human dominion over nature, lost in the fall, would be recovered. Francis Bacon related this to the ideas of Hermetic thinkers and proposed that science was the means through which dominion would be recovered. Science and technology were viewed as an outcome of Christ's redemptive work. Progress in scientific knowledge was a product of God's grace. Even those who rejected these speculations viewed science and technology as gifts of God's grace to be used for the benefit of humanity. It was argued that the new found knowledge would lead to great improvements in the health and welfare of all people.

The acceptance of the legitimacy of the new scientific and philosophical developments was to lead to a growing separation of religion and science. The scientific, and therefore mechanistic, dimensions of nature were alienated from the religious, ethical and aesthetic dimensions. This took place

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[73] There was a significant transformation in the understanding and use of the concept of human dominion that coincided with the rise of early modernity. Jeremy Cohen argues that: "... with regard to Gen. 1:28... Rarely, if ever, did premodern Jews construe this verse as a licence for the selfish exploitation of the environment." "*Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master it:" The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 5.

on a number of levels. First, there was the rejection of the holistic approach to culture and science characteristic of both the Aristotelian and the Neo-Platonism models. Second, there was the emphasis that the Bible did not teach science thus theology and the churches should not interfere in scientific issues. This was related to the idea that God had given humanity two "books", the book of salvation, the Bible, and the book of nature. These books must be kept quite distinct. This was later developed into the idea that the Bible needed to be read in the light of the clearer revelation in nature. Finally, there was the emphasis that God always worked through second causes, which tended to exclude God from the realm of everyday events. Paradoxically a view which was meant to emphasise God's continual activity gradually excluded God from the cosmos. This tendency was increased as mechanistic theory developed to the point where it adequately explained the observed phenomena and Deism replaced orthodox Christianity. The consequence of this was the radical separation of the material from the spiritual which has characterised western culture since the Enlightenment.[74]

The Reformed Tradition and the Institutionalisation of Modern Science

The traditional universities of Europe were dominated by Aristotelian thinking and thus hostile to the new science. If the new scientific developments were to emerge and grow they would have to find a more receptive institutional base. A number of institutions were established to further the scientific developments in England and the Netherlands.[75] The Reformed tradition made some important contributions to this process.

The English Puritans attempted an educational as well as religious and political reformation. This educational reform program was influenced by the thinking of the Bohemian reformer John Amos Comenius, who based his system on the

[74] These developments can be traced in Kaiser's discussion, Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science*, pp. 96-269.
[75] See Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, pp. 88-97.

values of empiricism and utilitarianism. This led to an educational philosophy which emphasised science and technology. Another influential figure was the Protestant philosopher Peter Ramus who formulated an educational curriculum which stressed the value of the sciences.

This Puritan emphasis on the sciences provided the institutional context for the development of science. When the Puritans had a major impact on Cambridge and Oxford universities, they introduced a greater emphasis on empirical science. This emphasis was also central to the purpose of Durham University which was founded by Oliver Cromwell. In the aftermath of the Restoration, when the non-conformists were excluded from the universities, the Puritans founded a number of dissenting academies of university standing. The majority of these academies promoted modern science and were far more open to the new developments than the traditional universities. Protestant academies in the rest of Europe and in New England followed a similar pattern.[76]

The Selection of Ideas [77]

In this section we will seek to discover why certain ideas rose to prominence and why others were rejected in the process that gave rise to the modern scientific consensus. The emphasis will fall on England as it was here that the process culminated in the work of Isaac Newton and his successors. These thinkers were viewed, during the Enlightenment, as the models of rational thought. The selection of ideas that formed the emerging consensus can be seen to involve three factors; the empirical, the theological, and the sociological.

On the empirical level the newer theories were providing the most meaningful interpretations of the data gained from experimentation and observation in the realms of physics and

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[76] See Dillenberger, *Protestant Thought and Natural Science*, pp. 129 and Merton, *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England*. pp. 116-123.

[77] The discussion in Kaiser is particularly useful in demonstrating the different forces at work in the selection of ideas; see Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science*, pp. 187.

astronomy. In addition they provided accurate predictions of various phenomena.

On a theological level, in a society in which religion played a decisive role, theological legitimation was an important factor in the creation of an environment that was conducive to scientific development. The linkages between Reformed theology and early modern science, discussed above, contributed to its acceptance. In societies and institutions where the church played a dominant role and which were closely allied to Aristotelian ideas the new developments were retarded. This was true of both Catholic countries and those Protestant countries dominated by Reformed scholasticism.

Calvin and other Reformed thinkers rejected much of what they viewed as the superstition of the Hermetic and Cabalistic traditions. This lead to the suppression of some of the more creative possibilities contained in this tradition as well as the possibility of the construction of an organic alternative to the emerging mechanistic world picture. Despite this many early modern scientists retained a suppressed interest in ideas emanating from this tradition.

Social forces played a major role in the selection of ideas. Human life was to a large extent at the mercy of natural processes. There was a high birth rate yet the majority of children died at an early age and even those who survived childhood were constantly threatened by disease and natural disaster. Bacon's dream of nature at the service of humanity was an extremely powerful vision even though science and technology would take centuries to begin to fulfil it.

In the context of the social turmoil in England there was tremendous pressure to develop a new paradigm which would make sense of the new developments and would promote social cohesion and peace. During the Elizabethan settlement and after the restoration of the monarchy, ideas which were perceived to promote, or were associated with, "Radicalism"

were rejected. This lead to the rejection of the radical Puritan over emphasis on an understanding of God's sovereignty of God which excluded secondary causes in nature as this idea was used to reject the established governing authorities in the church and the state. In contrast to this it was emphasised that all God's activity was regular and in conformity to the laws that God had established at creation.

The civil war and commonwealth era provided the opportunity for the production of a wide variety of philosophical, religious and scientific ideas. The result was the progress in scientific research which transformed England into the leading nation in the development of the new scientific views. After the restoration of the monarchy there was a process of consolidation and selection of ideas under the influence of the new social and political order.

The Puritans during the commonwealth era were more open to the empiricism of the hermetic tradition. While the empirical method become established, the Restoration period saw a rejection of the more spiritualistic elements in the Neo-Platonic tradition which had become closely associated with the democratic, utopian and pantheistic ideas of the radical Puritan groups.[78] This model of the universe as an interrelated and interdependent organism was now politically unacceptable. On a more theological level the materialistic mechanism of Thomas Hobbes was viewed as being equally dangerous.

English scientists, like Newton, attempted to steer a middle path between these two extremes. They thus developed a mechanistic model which viewed nature as passive but dependant on the existence of supra-mechanistic forces. These forces were seen to be the laws that God had imposed on nature, as such they were not derived from matter and could only be discovered by experiment. While Newton drew on both the

[78] On the influence of these factors on Robert Boyle and the Royal Society, see Kaiser, *Creation and the History of Science*, pp. 171-172

Platonic and the mechanistic traditions, he interpreted the platonic concepts in terms of mathematical principles rather than spiritual influences.

The power of the new mechanistic world picture and the rising capitalist social order suppressed those elements in the Reformed tradition which would have contributed to the development of an alternative to Baconian/mechanistic vision of the human nature relationship. The aesthetic and dynamic dimensions of Calvin's theology of creation never became a part of the dominant world view. They were however to reappear in the Reformed tradition at other historical moments, for example in the work of Jonathan Edwards and the Dutch neo-Calvinists.[79] The concept of stewardship as the care of the earth did have some influence in Puritan attitudes to animals and in early movements to conserve England's dwindling natural resources.[80] But it never became a dominant characteristic of modernity.

Figural Action and the Social Horizon

This new picture of the world contributed to the creation of a new kind of person, the modern European subject, who developed a new consciousness with regard to the role and place of human beings within the natural order.

In this new consciousness, human beings were distinct from the natural order yet had a distinct function within it. Unlike the medieval person who sought to live in harmony with and in respect for the natural world, the new emerging subjects viewed themselves as distinct from the natural order with the power, the right and the duty to change and improve it. These changes and improvements were understood as part of the progressive development of human society directed towards the upliftment of humanity to previously unattainable heights[81].

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[79] See chapter 3 below.
[80] See Livingstone, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis".
[81] John Wilkens, for example, speculated on the possibility of space travel, see Hooykaas, *Religion and the Rise of Modern Science*, p. 69.

The possibilities for technological advance were seen to be limitless. The exploitation of nature for the good of humanity was viewed as a virtuous activity, while to conserve nature in an "undeveloped" state was to neglect one's God-given responsibility.

Progress and development were assured, the problems that could not be solved now would be solved in the future through empirical science, as humanity moved towards a golden age. Nature, as a great machine, could be subjected to change, improvement and development through the instrumentality of technology. Science broke it down into its component parts, to examine and, if necessary, alter it without reference to its broader environment. Unlike alterations to the harmonious organism of Aristotelian philosophy, alterations to one part of the mechanistic universe were seen to have no major effect on the whole. As nature was a lifeless mechanism, from which God was increasingly removed, there were no moral restraints on its exploitation. In fact one could argue that the exploitation of nature glorified God as it transformed the disordered wilderness into an ordered environment. Theology had legitimated this new approach to nature but due to its growing separation from science it was unable to critique it.

While science made only a limited contribution to technology until the late eighteenth century, the growth in scientific knowledge combined with the colonial and commercial expansion was such that the new vision articulated with the social horizon. It however disarticulated sufficiently for it to have a continued impact on society. It pointed to the future and gave people the optimism to believe that future progress would produce the hoped for dominion. This belief in progress was strengthened by the contact between European peoples and others who were regarded as primitive or barbaric.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN CONSCIOUSNESS

The eighteenth century saw the emergence of a new synthesis

which modelled reality on the basis of the mechanistic world picture. This new worldview provided a way of integrating the developments in the scientific, the economic, the social, the political and the philosophical realms. It thus provided a new understanding of human beings, their relationship with each other and their relationship with nature.

Newton and his successors' achievement in producing a rational, mathematical and mechanistic model of the cosmos became the ideal to be sort after in all disciplines. It led to the belief that all phenomena could be reduced to their component parts and explained in terms of rational and mechanistic principles. This process was facilitated by a realistic understanding of scientific models. If the Newtonian model described the nature of the physical universe then all other phenomena would display similar patterns. The Newtonian theory was thus transformed into a metaphysical description of all reality.

John Locke[82], Adam Smith and others developed an understanding of society which comprehended the emerging dominance of capitalism and the growing desire for democratic government. This understanding was closely related to the mechanistic world picture. Human beings were understood as individual particles reacting and interacting with each other. Society developed and progressed as each individual pursued his/her natural interests. In this way the mechanism of society operated for the best of the whole.

The emerging middle class European subject viewed himself[83] as such an individual. His approach to life combined the elements of the Protestant work ethic and the new mechanistic understanding of humanity and nature. By disciplined hard work he was to engage in the most productive business enterprise through the exploitation, manipulation and

[82] For a discussion of the more direct influence of the Reformed tradition on Locke see H. D. Foster, "International Calvinism through Locke and the Revolution of 1688", *American Historical Review,* 32 (1927), 475-499.
[83] The use of the masculine pronoun is deliberate.

domination of the natural order. As each individual did this he contributed to the good of society which was inevitably progressing toward a higher state of development and an improved cosmic "machine". The radical separation of the material from the spiritual removed the barriers to the exploitation of the environment. The increasing secularisation removed any awareness of the religious roots and motivations of this new lifestyle and self-consciousness.

This self-consciousness was carried by the colonial conquerors of the Americas, Asia and Africa. These territories epitomised nature in its "wild and disordered" state. They needed to be transformed and ordered. The natural environment was a "wilderness" that had to be transformed in order for it to become the servant of its new owners. The vast "new" lands were viewed as resources which would become the private property of European settlers who would use them to increase their own prosperity.[84]

The modern European subject was also increasingly defined in contrast to "the other." "The other" were those who for various reasons were regarded as closer to nature and thus to be subjected to mastery by the white middle class male. Woman had traditionally been more closely associated with nature than men. They were subjected to their fathers or husbands and to men in general.[85] The underclasses were an "other" because they did not display the middle class cultural values and norms and were thus regarded as wild and disordered. The native inhabitants of Asia, Africa and the Americas were "wild" others who had to be "tamed" and ordered along with the land they inhabited. Thus that which was supposed to distinguish humanity from its natural environment end to confer dignity on all humans, their separation from nature, became the means through which a hierarchy of domination amongst humanity was reinforced.

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[84] See Loren Wilkinson, ed., *Earthkeeping in the Nineties: Stewardship of Creation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 162-166.
[85] See Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, for a discussion of the symbolic relationships between women and nature.

God became increasingly remote from the affairs of the world. When God's activity was acknowledged it was in terms of providential oversight of the natural and social mechanism. While technically related to the reformers' understanding of the sovereignty of God the meaning given to the concept of providence was radically different. God was no longer the loving father who was constantly active in the care of the world. God became the director of the mechanistic cosmos, co-ordinating the actions of individuals seeking their own interest, in such a way that the good of humanity was served. The exploitation of nature, the accumulation of wealth, and the pursuit of scientific and technological development were virtuous activities to be pursued as the service of God and one's neighbour.[86] Such activity was seen to be natural, that is, in accordance with the working of the mechanistic cosmos. It was therefore morally right.

The irony of modernity is that it promised the emergence of a new type of human person who would be free from the threat of the destructive powers of the natural order. Such persons would be free to control their own destiny. In contrast to this the result of modernity has been the subjugation and exploitation of powerless humans and the natural environment. The consequence of this is the global environmental crisis which has placed the flourishing of human life under a greater threat than that from which modernity promised an escape.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has not uncovered a direct causal relationship between the Reformed tradition and modernity, and thus the environmental crisis. Rather it has argued that there is an indirect relationship in which the Reformed tradition accelerated the development of modernity. This acceleration took the form firstly of its contribution to a social order

[86] See Coleman, "Providence, Capitalism and Environmental Degradation", and Jacobs, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720*, particularly pp. 22- 71.

which encouraged the emergence of modernity. Secondly it was used to legitimate the development of capitalism, science and technology in a society devoted to human progress. As such it facilitated the development of a new type of person -- the modern European subject. In this process elements of the Reformed tradition which would have hindered the emergence of modernity were suppressed or rejected.

Chapter 2
THE TRIUNE GOD OF THE COVENANT

The catastrophic consequences of global environmental destruction and exploitation fundamentally problematise modernity with its pervasive anthropocentrism. Humanity can no longer be the measure of all things. Unless there is a radical reorientation of human consciousness, we will fundamentally alter the biosphere and make human survival impossible.

Re-appropriating the Reformed tradition, James Gustafson has proposed that such a reorientation ought to take place within the context of a radically theocentric ethic.[1] God is concerned about the whole of the created order and not merely the affairs of humanity; therefore humanity finds its place within the context of its inter-relationship with the rest of the created order. Gustafson's proposal is appealing to members of the Reformed tradition because of the theocentric core of the tradition. A core described by B. B. Warfield as

> a profound apprehension of God in his majesty, with the inevitably accompanying poignant realization of the exact nature of the relation sustained to him by creatures particularly sinful creatures.[2]

A mere assertion of theocentricity is not in itself adequate to meet the challenge of the environmental crisis, for human nature "is a perpetual factory of idols"[3] constantly creating gods to suit its desires. The Reformed tradition has, for all its theocentricity, contributed to the legitimation of the destruction of the environment. The important issue, as Calvin perceived, is not whether God is central but what sort of God is central "and what is consistent with his nature."[4]

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[1] See James Gustafson, *Theology and Ethics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), pp. 86-113.
[2] B. B. Warfield, "Calvinism", in *Calvin and Augustine*, ed. by S. G. Craig, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956), pp. 287-300 (p. 288). See also M. Eugene Oosterhaven, *The Spirit of the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 167-170.
[3] *Institutes,* 1:11:8.
[4] *Institutes,* 1:2:2.

It is thus not any God but the God revealed in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit who is the God of Life, the one who, in faithfulness to the covenant, acts to redeem creation. In an attempt to understand the character of God we confess with Barth that:

> Theology means rational wrestling with mystery. But all rational wrestling with this mystery, the more serious it is, can lead only to its fresh and authentic interpretation and manifestation as a mystery.[5]

THE TRINITY AS A NON-HIERARCHICAL SOCIALITY OF PERSONS[6]

In *God for Us:* Catherine Macvry LaCugna concludes her historical overview of the development of the doctrine of the Trinity with the comment that:

> In reaction to the metaphysical synthesis of Scholasticism, Martin Luther and John Calvin reorientated theology toward the experience of salvation especially the cross, that is toward economy.[7]

This did not result in a neglect of the doctrine of the Trinity. In his attempt to articulate faithfully the content of God's economic activity, Calvin developed a profoundly trinitarian understanding of God and God's economic activity.[8]

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[5] Karl Barth, C*hurch Dogmatics,* Vol. 1 part 1, *The Doctrine of the Word God,* trans. by G. W. Bromiley, ed. by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), p. 369.

[6] The strong emphasis on the full personality and equality of the persons of the Trinity raises the problematic issue of the use of gender specific language to refer to the different persons. A detailed discussion of this issue lies beyond the scope of this thesis. In the absence of such a discussion, the traditional designations and masculine pronouns have been retained. This does not imply that the persons are to be understood as being male as opposed to female. They are persons who, as to their deity, transcend gender. For a discussion of this issue see Catherine Macvry LaCugna, "God in Communion with Us: The Trinity", in *Freeing Theology: The Essential of Theology in Feminist Perspective*, ed. by Catherine Macvry LaCugna, (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 83-114, pp. 99-108, and Alvin F. Kimel, Jr., ed., *Speaking of the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).

[7] Catherine Macvry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), p. 1991.

[8] See Alexandrè Ganoczy "Observations on Calvin's Trinitarian Doctrine of Grace", in *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honour of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.*, ed. by Elsie Ann McKee and Brian G. Armstrong

For Calvin, the doctrine of the Trinity was not a speculative theological principal, but something shown by "the Scriptures and the very experience of piety itself."[9] It was "the immediate implication of Biblical soteriology."[10] The Trinity is thus a "special mark" by which God is distinguished "more precisely from idols." He went on to state:

> For he so proclaims himself the sole God as to offer himself to be contemplated clearly in three persons. Unless we grasp these, only the bare and empty name of God flits about our brains, to the exclusion of the true God.[11]

Thus for Calvin "the doctrine of the Trinity *constitutes* the doctrine of God."[12]

(Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), pp. 96-107 and Philip Walker Butin *Revelation, Redemption and Response: Calvin's the Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Calvin provides a brief summary of his perspective in his comments on Matthew 28: 19. "But from the start of the Gospel God was far more clearly revealed under three Persons, then the Father showed Himself in the Son, His living and express Image, and Christ Himself, by the brilliant light of His Spirit, shone out upon the world and held out Himself and the Spirit to the minds of men. There is good reason here for the explicit mention of Father, Son, and Spirit, for the force of Baptism cannot otherwise be appreciated unless it begins from the free mercy of the Father who reconciles us to Himself through the only begotten Son. Then Christ Himself advances into the midst, with the sacrifice of His death, and at last there comes the Holy Spirit also, through whom He cleanses and regenerates us all, and finally makes us partakers of all His benefits. So we see that God is not truly known, unless our faith distinctly conceives three persons in one Essence; and the efficacy and fruit of Baptism flow from thence: God the Father adopts us in His Son, and through the Spirit reforms us into righteousness, once we are cleansed from the stains of our flesh." *A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke,* vol. *3 and The Epistles of James and Jude*, trans. by. A. W. Morrison, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 253.

[9] Calvin, *Instruction in Faith (1537)*, trans. by P. T. Fuhrmann (London: Lutterworth, 1949), p. 46, see also B. A. Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 205-207. This understanding is echoed by Herman Bavinck, he argued that the development of this doctrine arose from a "practical and religious need. The church was not interested in a mere philosophical speculation or metaphysical problem, but it was concerned about the very core and essence of the Christian religion." *The Doctrine of God,* trans. and ed. by, W. Hendrikson, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), p. 333.

[10] Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response*, p. 128.

[11] *Institutes,* 1:13:2.

[12] Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response*, p. 128, the emphasis is Butin's.

Trinitarian theology is often divided into two broad models, the Eastern and the Western traditions. The Western tradition under the influence of Augustine has emphasised the oneness of God, the equality of the persons and has tended to depersonalise the Holy Spirit.[13] The Eastern tradition has emphasised the threeness of the Trinity and at times has tended towards a subordination of the Son and the Spirit. The relationship between the threeness (and thus the persons) of the Trinity and the oneness (and thus the divine nature) is a question of central importance for theology.

> The doctrine of the trinity is the sum and substance of the Christian faith, the root of all dogmas, the essence of the new covenant... The deepest question in every Christian dogmatics is this: How can God be one and three? The degree of purity with which the other truths are presented depends upon the degree of accuracy with which this question is answered.[14]

Its relevance for the development of an ecotheology has been emphasised by Grant Osborn and Colin Gunton. In comparing various Christian attitudes to the environment Osborn has proposed that the Western tradition's overemphasis on the unity of God has impeded the development of an ecologically sensitive approach to the doctrine of creation. He argues that those Christian communities which have given greater emphasis to the threeness of the Trinity have treated the creation with greater ecological awareness.[15] Gunton argues

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[13] These problems are further emphasised by the *filioque* clause, see Alastair Herron, "The Filioque in Recent Reformed Theology", in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the* Filioque *Controversy*, ed. by Lukas Visher (London: SPCK, 1981), pp. 110-117, particularly pp. 113-114. Following Heron we may note the following implications of the *filioque*. First the Western tradition has overemphasised the oneness of God, leading to the persons being subsumed under an un-differentiated Godhead. Second, the Spirit is depersonalised and subordinated to Christ, so that he is seen as merely the instrumental power of the Father and the Son. Third, salvation is reduced to the work of Christ on the cross to the detriment of the Spirit's work in the life and ministry of Jesus and in the redemption of the cosmos.

[14] Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, p. 333. In practice however, most theology before the twentieth century, including Bavinck's, has failed to work out the doctrine of God in the light of the fundamental nature of the Trinity and it is largely as result of the work of Karl Barth that some twentieth century theologians have begun to do so.

[15] See Grant Osborn, *Guardians of Creation: Nature in Theology and the*

that the underlying fault which has contributed to the ambiguities and contradictions of modernity, including the environmental crisis, has been the characteristic Western view of the Trinity.[16]

The socio-historical and theological dynamics are more complex than Gunton and Osborn's analysis indicates, but the insight that a theology of the Trinity that gives greater emphasis to the threeness of God is central to the development of a Christian ecotheology must be affirmed. Such a theology however must reject the tendency towards subordinationism that sometimes occurs in the Eastern tradition.

The Reformed tradition can provide important resources for the development of such a theology. Calvin's exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity makes use of elements within both the Eastern and the Western traditions.[17] From the Eastern tradition Calvin draws his emphasis on the persons over against the essence of God. From the Western tradition he draws his emphasis on the equality of the persons, rejecting any form of subordinationism.[18] The result is a doctrine which, when it emphasises the persons of the Trinity never does so at the expense of the oneness of the Godhead, and when it emphasises the oneness of the Godhead it never does so at the expense of the threeness of the persons.

Christian Life (Leicester: Apollos, 1993), pp. 101-107.

[16] See Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God Creation and the Culture of Modernity,* The Bampton Lectures 1992 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[17] Thomas Torrance, argues that Calvin draws on the Greek fathers and those western thinkers influenced by them. See his "Memoranda on Orthodox/Reformed Relations", in *Theological Dialogue Between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, ed. by Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985) pp. 3-18. and idem., "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: Gregory of Nazianzen and John Calvin", in *Calvin Studies V: Presented at a Colloquim on Calvin Studies at Davidson College and Davidson Presbyterian Church, Davidson North Carolina,* ed. by John Leith (n.p.: n.p. 1990), pp. 7-19, idem., "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity", *Calvin Theological Journal,* 25 (1990), 165-193. B. B. Warfield, however, argues that Calvin's understanding of the Trinity stands in the Augustinian tradition. See his "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity", in Craig, *Calvin and Augustine*, pp. 189-286, (pp. 229-230).

[18] See Gerald Bray, *The Doctrine of God,* Contours of Christian Theology (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1993), pp. 200-202.

The Full Deity and Equality of the Persons

The centre of Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity was his insistence on the full and authentic deity of the Son. This is obviously true of all trinitarian theologies; however Calvin's contribution lay in his determination to reject any way of conceiving the deity of Christ which would detract from his absolute equality in deity with the Father. It thus arose out of a deep soteriological concern with the identity of the Mediator as fully God and fully human within the context of theology of salvation as a relationship of persons.[19] If union with Christ is to be union with God, then the Son must be fully and authentically divine, and in no way inferior to the Father as to his divine status and nature.

Calvin thus argued that the totality of the divine nature is fully present in the Son and within each person of the Trinity. The Son, as to his divine nature, is *aseitas* that is he did not derive his divine nature from the Father. As such the Son is *autotheos* that is God in his own right. This emphasis on each person as *autotheos* and *aseitas* shaped the contours of Calvin's doctrine the Trinity. Calvin thus rejected any form of subordinationism. While Calvin's position is not always consistent the major thrust of his position is clear.[20]

Calvin's strong soteriological focus on the economic activity led to his resistance to the speculative ideas on being of God and the Trinity which had become common within traditional orthodoxy. This combined with his rejection of

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[19] See Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response*, T. F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction,* (London: SCM, 1965), pp. 169-191, and idem., "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity", pp. 8 & 9. Torrance proposes that in this area Reformed theology is closer to the thought of the Greek fathers than to the Latin ones. This tendency is seen particularly in his Eucharistic theology with its strong emphasis on personal union with Christ over against the tendency to depersonalise grace in Medieval Catholicism, see Kilian McDonnell, *John Calvin, the Church and the Eucharist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1967), pp. 105-155.

[20] See Warfield, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity", p. 260 and L. Hodgson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, The Croall Lectures 1942-1943 (London: Nisbet, 1943), pp. 165-173.

subordinationism led him to raise questions concerning the traditional concepts of the eternal generation the Son and the eternal procession of Spirit. While he affirmed them he rejected many of the speculative ideas of the Nicene and Medieval theologians. In particular, he rejected the notion that the Son and the Spirit derived their divine nature from the Father, for Calvin the Father was not the source of deity within the Trinity. Rather he affirmed that the concepts of "begetting and "procession" relate to the persons and not the essence of God. The Son derives his person from the Father, and the Spirit derives his person from the Father and the Son.[21]

This understanding "that the persons of the Trinity are not inferiour [sic] one to another in glory and excellency of nature"[22] is central to a Reformed understanding of the Trinity[23] and forms the core of our proposed model of the Trinity as a non-hierarchical sociality of persons.

Trinitarian Personhood

Fundamental to any re-appropriation of the doctrine of the Trinity is the understanding of the concept "person". This concept is extremely difficult to define, Colin Gunton

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[21] He even subjected the traditional proof texts for the concepts of "eternal generation" and "procession" to detailed exegesis and found them to have no relevance to the issues. See Warfield, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity", p. 248.

[22] Jonathan Edwards, "Observations Concerning the Scripture Oeconomy of the Trinity, and the Covenant of Redemption", in *Treatise on Grace and other Posthumously Published Writings,* ed. by Paul Helm (Cambridge: James Clark, 1971), pp. 77-98.

[23] Contemporary trinitarian theology, including that within the Reformed tradition, has largely failed to interact with Calvin's use of the concepts of *autotheos* and *aseitas*. Jürgen Moltmann, for example, states that whereas the Father "was called αυτοθεος it proved impossible for the west to describe the Son and the Spirit in the same way" *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God,* trans. by M. Kohl, (London: SCM, 1981), p. 182. Cornelius Plantinga, Jr's. also fails to interact with this tradition when he states that; "Father, Son, and Spirit are all divine persons, but there is only one font of deity, only one Father, only one God in *that* sense of *God.*" "Social Trinity and Tritheism", in *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays,* ed. by Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989) pp. 21-47

proposes that:

> [I]t is impossible to find a definition of it in other words, because it is both ontologically and logically primitive: the personal is both that from which other realities take their meaning and that which is irreducible to other (less than personal) entities.[24]

This issue will be dealt with from two perspectives. The first will be an examination of the implications of Calvin's understanding of the full deity of the persons. The second will be an examination of the defence of the personhood of the Spirit by early Reformed theologians in their debate with the Socinians.

Calvin defined the meaning of person in traditional terms as "a subsistence in God's essence, which, while related to others, is distinguished by an incommunicable quality."[25] Dispite this Gerald Bray argues, that the concepts of *autotheos* and *aseitas* reinforce a fuller understanding of personhood, which was implicit, but undeveloped, in Chalcedonian christology. Chalcedon reversed the traditional relationship between person and nature in which "a person is an aspect or manifestation of being"[26] In Christology one person has two natures and obtains the second one "not... by absorbing this nature into the divine one, but by attaching it directly to his person. The person of the Son therefore governs the second nature as he governs the first."[27] The person of the Son acts as a free agent who possesses and

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[24] Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), p. 10. The issue is complicated by the debate as to whether the modern concept of personhood is identical with the premodern one. See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* 1:1, p. 355-361, Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, pp. 179-196, David Brown "Trinitarian Personhood and Individuality" in Feenstra and Plantinga, *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement*, pp. 48-78 and Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), pp. 223-227.

[25] *Institutes* 1:13:6.

[26] Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, pp. 177. In contrast to Barth, Bray argues it is preferable not to use the term "mode of being" to refer to the persons of the Trinity as this returns the emphasis to the being or essence of God (compare Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1:1, pp. 358 ff. and Bray, *The Doctrine of God*,. pp. 183 & 184)

[27] Bray, *The Doctrine of God*, p. 178.

governs the divine nature.

Calvin's insistence that each of the persons of the Trinity are fully and equally God, that they each fully and equally posses the divine nature, provides the basis for expanding the implications of the Chalcedonian theology into trinitarian theology. The persons of the Trinity are to be viewed as agents possessing and governing the entire divine nature which they fully possess. This is the basis for the development of a relational understanding of trinitarian personhood and of a model of the Trinity as a "society or family."[28]

A second perspective is the focus on the personhood of the Spirit. As Karl Barth affirmed, "it is in the Holy Spirit that the mystery of God's trinitarian essence attains its full profundity and clarity."[29] It is only in affirming the personhood of the Spirit that full justice can be done to the personhood of the Father and the Son, and thus overcome some of the problematic elements in Augustine's psychological model of the Trinity.[30] In his confrontation with anti-trinitarians the focus of Calvin's doctrine was the deity of Christ. The personhood of the Holy Spirit does not play a major role. Thus while Calvin's theology emphasises the work of the Spirit there is a tendency to depersonalise the Spirit.[31]

Later Reformed theologians in responding to the challenge from Socinians and others emphasised not only the deity of Christ but also the personhood of the Spirit.[32] One of the important

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[28] Edwards, "An Essay on the Trinity", in Helm, *Treatise on Grace and Other Posthumously Published Writings*.

[29] Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* vol. 3 part 1, *The Doctrine of Creation*, trans. by J. W. Edwards, O. Bussey and H. Knight, ed. by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), p. 56.

[30] This is paradoxically seen in Barth's understanding of God's threeness in terms of the three modes of being of the same God. Barth argues that; "even if the Father and the Son might be called "persons" (in the modern sense of the term) the Holy Spirit could not possibly be regarded as a third 'person'. In a particularly clear way the Holy Spirit is what the Father and the Son also are." *Church Dogmatics,* 1:1 p. 469. A less than personal view of the Spirit can lead in consequence to a less than personal view of the other persons of the Trinity.

[31] See McDonnell, *John Calvin, the Church and the Eucharist,* pp. 252-254.

[32] This can be seen by comparing Calvin's treatment of the Spirit and the Trinity, which defends the deity of the Spirit, with that of Francis

consequences of this was the attempt to describe what the characteristics of personhood are. This perspective is important as it examines the economic activity of the Spirit in order to give content to the concept of personhood rather than engaging in speculative debate on the possible meanings of "person".

The writings of John Owen, the English Puritan, are an example this approach. Owen's doctrine of the Trinity combines traditional Western elements; such as the *filioque,* the definition of a person as the "divine essence... subsisting in an especial manner"[33] and the Spirit as the love between the Father and the Son; with elements which point to a different model. In his defence of the personhood of the Spirit, he uses the biblical references to the economic activity of the Spirit in order to argue that the Spirit is "an intelligent voluntary, divine agent".[34]

He then goes on to argue that the persons of the Trinity

> are distinct, living, divine, intelligent, voluntary principles of operation or working, and that in and by internal acts towards one another, and in acts that outwardly respect the creation and several parts of it.[35]

The persons are thus distinct entities who "know each other, love each other, [and] delight in each other."[36] The Spirit is not merely the love between the Father and the Son but he too engages in relationships with the Father and the Son.[37]

Turrentin which defends the Spirit's personhood and deity. See *Institutes,* 1:13:14 & 15 with Turrentin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology,* trans. by G. M. Giger, ed. by J. T. Dennison Jr., vol. 1 (Phillipsburg, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992), pp. 303-308.

[33] John Owen, *The Doctrine of the Trinity Vindicated,* in The Works of John Owen, vol. 2, ed. by W. H. Goold, (London: Banner of Truth, 1966), pp. 365-454, (p. 401). See also his Πνευμτολογια *or A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit,* in The Works of John Owen, vol. 3, ed. by W. H. Goold, (London: Banner of Truth, 1965), pp. 64-92.

[34] *The Doctrine of the Trinity Vindicated*, p. 401.

[35] Ibid., p. 405.

[36] Ibid., p. 406.

[37] This emphasis on the persons of the Trinity is reinforced by his understanding of the relationship between the believer and God. Owen

Owen's understanding of a person as a distinct, living, intelligent, voluntary agent who engages in relationships characterised by knowledge, delight and love provides a starting point for the development of an understanding of trinitarian personhood. The implications of this can be clarified by reference to characteristics proposed by Donald Macleod.[38]

First, the concept of "person" denotes agency. An implication of the concepts of *autotheos* and *aseitas* is that the divine nature is under the control of the agency of the persons and that the persons are not bound by the nature or being of God. The agency of the Father and the Son is generally recognised, but that of the Spirit is often neglected. The recognition that the Spirit is to be understood as *autotheos* and *aseitas* has as its consequence that agency has to be ascribed to the Spirit in the same way as it is to the Father and the Son.[39] In the New Testament witness this agency is seen in three areas, in relation to humanity, to the earthly life of Jesus and to the intra-trinitarian activity.

In relation to humanity, the Spirit as the *Paracletos*, not only convicts of sin (Jn. 16: 8-11) and brings about new birth (Jn. 3: 1-8), but also witnesses to believers' sonship (Rom. 8: 15-17), leads and guides them (Jn. 16: 12-15), helps them in their weakness (Rom. 8: 26), produces fruit (Gal 5: 22-24), sanctifies them (1 Pet 1:2) and equips them with gifts (1 Cor. 12: 1-11).

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affirms that the actions of the persons *ad extra* are undivided, and thus the believer has a relationship with God the Trinity. However, he argues that the believer has a distinct communion with each person of the Trinity. Even when an aspect of the relationship is ascribed to all three persons, it is done so in a manner distinct to each person. See *Of Communion with God the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost,* in The Works of John Owen, vol. 2, ed. by W. H. Goold, (London: Banner of Truth, 1966), p. 1-274.

[38] See Donald Macleod, "The Doctrine of the Trinity", *The Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, 3 (1985), 11-21, (pp. 12-14).

[39] For a detailed biblical defence of the full deity and distinct agency of the Spirit and the Son by a contemporary Reformed theologian, see Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., "The Hodgson-Welch Debate and the Social Analogy of the Trinity", (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1982)

The Spirit acts as an agent in the earthly life of Jesus. The Spirit acts upon the virgin Mary to bring about the conception of Jesus. The Spirit anoints him at his baptism, drives him out into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan and empowers him for his mission. It is through the Eternal Spirit that Jesus offers himself to the Father and it is the Spirit who transforms him at the resurrection declaring him to be the Son of God with power.

Agency is ascribed to the Spirit as well as to the Father and the Son in intra-trinitarian relationships with regard to God's salvific purposes. The New Testament speaks of the Father sending the Son, the Father and the Son sending the Spirit, the Son listening to the Father, the Father listening to the Son, the Spirit interceding with the Father, the Father glorifying the Son, the Son glorifying the Father, the Spirit glorifying the Son, the Son revealing the Father, the Father revealing the Son and the Spirit bearing witness to the Son. It is this interaction that has been described in the Reformed tradition in terms of the *pactum salutis*[40], which pictured the persons of the Trinity as responsible legal agents acting together to implement their unified purpose to redeem creation.

The Father, Son and the Spirit together implement the one divine purpose of salvation. Within that one purpose they exercise distinctive agencies. Thus, for example, it is Son who becomes incarnate and offers himself to the Father through the Spirit, and who sends the Spirit to renew the broken creation.

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[40] This concept proposed that the persons of the Trinity entered into a covenant agreement with each other to effect the redemption of humanity. In most cases it was viewed as a covenant between the Father and the Son, though there were some theologians who included the Holy Spirit within the covenant relationships. (See Richard A. Muller, "The Spirit and the Covenant: John Gill's Critique of the *Pactum Salutis*", *Foundations* 24 (1981), 4-14.) While the concept of a covenant relationship between the persons of the Trinity is speculative and open to major critique, it provides a model of the Trinity in which the persons act as agents in relationship. It is thus a movement towards a social model of the Trinity.

Second, the concept of person, as Owen argued, is linked to the ideas of relations and relationship. Persons are distinct entities which engage in relationships. While relationships exist in a non-personal context, personal relationships are those in which the Other is not constituted as an object, an extension of the person nor as a tool, but rather as a person. Inherent in the understanding of personhood is the idea that persons need to be in relationship with other persons in order to be fully themselves. Persons in relationship mutually constitute each other.[41] The theology of the *pactum salutis* describes these relationships in legal terms they are better described in Owen's terms of love, knowledge and delight. As Donald Macleod comments on John 1:1:

> [T]he Word was towards God. The withness of the Father and the Son is not some mere proximity: it is a face to face relationship, rich in self expression, rich in glorious outgoingness, rich in what we might call its external extrovertness, the outward lookingness of divine agape.[42]

The Western tradition has tended to expound the idea of relationships within the Trinity in terms of the relationship of love between the Father and the Son in which the Spirit is the Love or Communion between them. However, the affirmation that the Spirit is as fully a divine person as the Son and the Father are, must imply that personal relationships of love exist among all three persons. The clear implication (and presupposition) of the intra-trinitarian agency of the Spirit is the existence of such a set of relationships.

Third, personhood relates to those psychological and personal attributes which characterise a person engaging in relationships as a responsible agent. Owen ascribes to the

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[41] See Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, p. 10-13 & 90-98. This understanding of personhood is similar to the traditional African understanding of human personhood "enshrined in the Xhosa proverb *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu:* a person is a person through other persons." See Augustine Shutte, *Philosophy for Africa*,(Cape Town, UCT Press, 1993), pp. 46-51.

[42] Macleod, "The Doctrine of the Trinity", p. 14.

persons the faculties of volition and intellect, and the emotions of love and delight. Macleod proposes that "thought, intellect, purposefulness, volition, affection and, above all, emotion"[43] characterise the persons. An examination of the interaction amongst the persons of the Trinity with each other and with creation as described in the New Testament bears out these characteristics. In relation to the Spirit the New Testament describes the Spirit as blowing where he wills, as having desires, possessing a mind and groaning, and as being grieved and lied to.

Thus, with Owen, we affirm that the persons as distinct entities who engage in relationships. The persons are thus not individuals, who are defined by their separation from others, but persons who are defined in terms of their relationships with others. "Person" may not be reduced to relations and relationships; a person is a particular subject who engages in relationships of love, knowledge and delight. A person is thus a centre of consciousness, who is distinct, yet is in relationship with other persons. The distinct subjectivity and the relational dimensions of personhood must be seen to be linked in a simultaneous and reciprocal manner, but not dissolved into each other.[44] The existence of relationships implies both distinction and unity. If there is no distinction then the persons would be absorbed into a simple monad. If there was no unity the persons would be three gods.

Perichoretic Unity of the Persons

Since the time of the Cappadocian fathers the unity of the Trinity has been perceived to be guaranteed by the common origin of the Son and the Spirit in the Father as the source of deity.[45] Calvin, in continuity with this tradition, argues

[43] Ibid., p. 15.
[44] See Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God,* p. 171-174.
[45] It was this understanding that was to give rise to major difficulties when the Western church insisted that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. From the perspective of the Eastern church this view posited two sources of deity and thus destroyed the unity of the Trinity.

that the Father is the *principium* of the Godhead. However he qualifies this as being in relation to the persons not to the essence of God. The order of derivation of persons is the basis of an order of persons within the Trinity in which the Father is first, the Son is second and the Spirit is third.[46]

An important development of the concepts of *autotheos* and *aseitas* was thus the rejection of concepts of "eternal generation" and "eternal procession" by some members of the Reformed tradition.[47] These were rejected as it is meaningless to speak of the source of an eternal person and because they were seen to be incompatible with the full and authentic deity of the Son and the Spirit. If the Son and the Spirit were God in an absolute sense, they could not be seen to derive the divine nature in any way from another source. Thus there was no need for the Father to be seen as the underlying point of origin of the persons of the Trinity, for they each fully possessed the undivided divine nature.[48] In keeping with this tradition Macleod argues that:

> [T]here is no place in our thought of God for *principia*: not even to say that God is the cause of His own existence, because the truth is that God's existence is uncaused. God simply *is*. The divine ousia has no *fons...* The idea of a *principium* tempts us to go back to a God behind the *ousia*, who accounts

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[46] *Institutes,* 1:13:11, 1:13:25 and 1:13:29, Calvin is careful to reject any concept of a hierarchy of being and recognises that in relation to eternity there is no before and after, yet he maintains that "the observance of an order is not superfluous ... For the mind of each human being is naturally inclined to contemplate God first, then the wisdom coming forth from him, and lastly the power whereby he executes the decrees of his plan. For this reason the Son is said to come forth from the Father alone, the Spirit, from the Father and the Son at the same time." *Institutes,* 1:13:18, cf. Turrentin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 1. p. 281 and Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* vol. 4 part 1, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation,* trans. by G. W. Bromiley, ed. by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1954), pp. 197-210.

[47] See Warfield, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity", pp. 252-284, and Heinrich Heppe *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources*, rev. and ed. by E. Bizer and trans. G. T. Thomson, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), pp. 105-132.

[48] Proposals similar to this were made by Athanasius, Gregory of Naziansus, Didymus of Alexandria and Epiphanias, see Thomas Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church,* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), p. 191-247 & 302-340.

> for the *ousia*.[49]

The paradigm of origins cannot provide a basis for understanding the unity of the Trinity.[50] What is thus required is a different concept of unity in which "there is no room for any subordinationism"[51]

The economic relationships between the persons must be examined to find indications of the unity of the Trinity. We will begin with the vexed issue of the relationship between the Spirit and the Son. Hendrikus Berkhof writes:

> In the New Testament the relationship between them is presented in two ways. On the one hand the Spirit creatively precedes; he is greater than Jesus and controls him. Jesus is the work of the Spirit. On the other hand the Spirit is the work of (the risen) Jesus, interpreting Jesus and being ruled by him. Jesus is the fruit of the Spirit and the Spirit is the fruit of Jesus."[52]

If we are to hold the economic and the immanent Trinity together, the immanent Trinity must be seen to reflect these relationships. Thomas Smail proposes that the Nicene creed should be amended.

> If in the third article we say that the Spirit "proceeds from the Father through the Son," should we not also in the second article say that the Son is "eternally begotten of the Father *through the Spirit*?" This would have the merit of indicating in the creed the mutual dependence between the Son and the Spirit that we have

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[49] Macleod, "The Doctrine of the Trinity", p. 19.

[50] For a detailed critique of this paradigm from a biblical exegetical viewpoint, see Warfield "The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity", in *Biblical and Theological Studies,* ed. by S. G. Craig, (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1968), pp. 22-59 (pp. 49-53). For historical precedents for such views see his "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity", pp. 273-279.

[51] Hodgson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 102. He goes on to add "that the thought of the Father as the Source or Fount of Godhead is a relic of pre-Christian theology which has not been fully assimilated by the Christian revelation."

[52] Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith,* trans. by Sierd Woudstra, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 329. He goes on to state "the New Testament clearly speaks of a twofold relationship, to which the study of the faith has done no or scant justice."

discovered in the New Testament.[53]

This solution develops a more reciprocal and interactive model of the trinitarian relationships in order to transcend the *filioque* debate. It however still maintains the primacy of the Father within the paradigm of causality and origins.

Yet the Father is only the Father in relation to the Son, as Barth says: "God is the eternal Father in as much as from eternity He is the Father of the Son who from eternity and in eternity participates in the same essence as him."[54]

He later states "He is the Father of the Son in such a way that with the Son He brings forth the Spirit."[55] There is thus no Father without the Son and the Spirit, there is no Son without the Father and the Spirit, and there is no Spirit without the Father and the Son.[56]

The Biblical witness undermines the understanding that there is only one order of operation within the economy of God's actions, and that this order is grounded in the ontological relationships of the immanent Trinity.[57] It describes a variety of action sequences and employs a complex set of reciprocal relationships in which the different persons enjoy pre-eminence at different stages.

When we move this out of the paradigm of causation and origin we can conclude that within the Trinity the persons of the

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[53] Thomas A. Smail, *The Giving Gift: The Holy Spirit in Person* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1988), p. 141.
[54] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 1:1, p. 394.
[55] Ibid. p. 483.
[56] This understanding has roots in the theology of the early church and was expounded by Didymus of Alexandria, see Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, pp. 223 & 224.
[57] Moltmann proposes that we can find a number of sequences operating in the New Testament: "In the sending, delivering up and resurrection of Christ we find this sequence: Father - Spirit - Son. In the Lordship of Christ and the sending of the Spirit the sequence is: Father - Son - Spirit. But when we are considering the eschatological consummation and glorification the sequence has to be: Spirit - Son - Father." *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, p. 94. We might add that in the self offering of the Son on the cross the sequence is: Son - Spirit - Father

Trinity interact with each other in mutually constituting relationships.

> [T]he three persons of the Trinity exist only in reciprocal relatedness. God is not God apart from the way in which Father, Son and Spirit in eternity give to and receive from each other what they essentially are. The three do not merely co-inhere but dynamically constitute one another's being.[58]

This understanding of the unity of the Trinity is supremely authenticated via the theology of the cross for "the crucified Jesus is the 'image of the invisible God'"[59] God is fully revealed in Christ on the cross. Barth writes:

> Everything depends on accepting this presupposition, on our seeing and understanding what the New Testament witnesses so obviously saw and understood, the proper being of the one true God in Jesus Christ crucified. Granted we do see and understand this, we cannot refuse to accept the humiliation and lowliness and supremely the obedience of Christ as the dominating movement in our conception of God. Therefore we must determine to seek and find the key to the whole difficult and heavily freighted concept of the "divine nature" at this point where it appears to be quite impossible... the fact that Jesus Christ was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It is from this point and this point alone, that the concept is legitimately possible.[60]

More succinctly Gunton states "in his self emptying the Son is most fully divine."[61] If God is truly revealed in Christ crucified, then an aspect of the divine nature, of what it means for God to be God, is for God to be involved in eternal self-giving relationships. The persons of the Trinity engage in eternal self giving relationships of mutual disposability and availability.

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[58] Gunton, *The One, The Three and the Many*, p. 164.
[59] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 2 part 2, *The Doctrine of God*, trans. by G. W. Bromiley, J. C. Campbell, Ian Wilson, J. Stranthearn McNab, Harold Knight and R. A. Stewart, ed. by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), p. 123
[60] *Church Dogmatics*, 4:1, p.199.
[61] Gunton, *Christ and Creation* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), p. 84.

> [T]he Father's giving up of the Son to the horror of life in a fallen world and his consequent death; the Son's giving up of his life to the Father and for that fallen world: both are a kind of sacrifice, a self giving that actualises in time and space the very life of the Trinity in eternity.[62]

We are thus brought back to another concept employed by the Cappadocian's, that of *perichoresis.* The unity of the Trinity is constituted by the mutual indwelling of, and relationships between, the three persons.

In keeping with the concepts of *aseitas* and *autotheos* Calvin argued that, as the divine nature is fully possessed by each of the persons, they each mutually indwell and interpenetrate the other persons. He therefore states that the distinction between the Father, the Son and the Spirit

> is so far from contravening the utterly simple unity of God as to permit us to prove from it that the Son is one God with the Father because he shares with the Father one and the same Spirit; and the Spirit is not something other than the Father and different from the Son because he is the Spirit of the Father and the Son. For in each belongs his own peculiar quality. The Father is wholly in the Son, the Son wholly in the Father; even as he himself declares: "I am in the Father, and the Father is in me".[63]

The unity of the Trinity is thus "a dynamic mutual reciprocity, interpenetration and interanimation".[64] With Calvin we affirm that "our intellect cannot conceive the Father without comprehending at the same time, his Son... and the Spirit."[65] He thus quotes from Gregory of Naziansus, a passage which "vastly delights" him:

> I cannot think on the one without quickly being encircled by the splendour of the three; nor can I discern the three without being straightway carried

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[62] Ibid., p. 89.
[63] *Institutes*, 1:13:19.
[64] Gunton, *The One, The Three and the Many*, p. 163.
[65] *Instruction in Faith (1537)*, op. cit., p. 46.

> back to the one.[66]

The unity of the Trinity is not constituted a common origin in the Father, nor by a participation in an impersonal divine essence, it is rather constituted by the dynamic interaction of the *perichoresis* as the persons know, love and delight in each other.

> The simple Being of God is not simplex, and certainly not triplex, but is an indivisible unitary complex of interpersonal communion between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[67]

The concept of the Trinity is thus "something which enters into the very idea of God, without which He cannot be conceived in the truth of his being."[68]

> God is no more than what Father, Son and Spirit give to each and receive from each other in the inseparable communion that is the outcome of their love... there is no "being" of God other than this dynamic of persons in relation.[69]

God is not a static being but is rather a communion of persons engaged in eternal loving interaction of giving and receiving. For God to be God is to exist in mutual dependence and interaction. As Moltmann states:

> An eternal life process takes place in the triune God through the exchange of energies. The Father exists in the Son, and the Son in the Father and both in the Spirit, just as the Spirit exists in both the Father and the Son. By virtue of the eternal love they live in one another to such an extent that they are one. It is a process of the most perfect and intense empathy.[70]

This mutual interaction does not destroy or in any way

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[66] *Institutes, 1:13:17* quoting Gregory of Naziansus *On Holy Baptism,* oration 40:41

[67] Torrance, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity", p. 189, see also pp. 191 and 192.

[68] Warfield, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity", p. 191

[69] Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), p. 10

[70] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, p. 174 & 175.

denigrate the distinction of persons within the Trinity. Rather it is

> ... through the personal characteristics that distinguish them from one another, the Father, the Son and the Spirit dwell in one another and communicate eternal life to one another. In the perichoresis, the very thing that divides them becomes that which binds them together.[71]

Thus mutual interaction is dependent upon the particularities of each person and through it these particularities are enhanced as each person relates to the other persons as an other-in-relation. Thus within the Trinity there is that pluralism which "is always richness, manifoldness and inexhaustibility."[72] "The Trinity is thus a zestful, wondrous community of divine light, love, joy, mutuality, and verve".[73]

Particularities of the Persons

Having established the full equality, mutual dependence and self giving character of the persons of the Trinity, we can thus once more affirm that there are real distinctions of person and agency. It must be affirmed that the difference of agency that the persons display within the economy are rooted in the eternal particularities of the immanent Trinity. To fail to do so would be to open the door to some form of Sabilianism.

Calvin states in relation to the appellations Father, the Son and the Spirit:

> [I]n each hypostasis the whole divine nature is understood, with this qualification - that to each belongs his own peculiar quality... And ecclesiastical writers do not concede that one is separated from the other by any difference of essence. By these appellations which set forth the distinction (says Augustine) is signified their mutual relationships and

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[71] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, p. 175.
[72] Macleod, "The Doctrine of the Trinity" p.14.
[73] Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism", p. 28.

not the very substance by which they are one".[74]

The attempt to understand these particularities is faced with the two major difficulties. The first is the connection between attributes and relationships. The particularities of the persons have been traditionally designated by the attributes of "unbegottenness" for the Father, "begottenness" for the Son and "procession" for the Spirit. The descriptions of causality were converted into attributes and then seen to determine relationships. The result was the hierarchical ordering of the persons. Relationships and attributes are intimately connected but cannot be reduced to each other. This is particularly true of the relationship between the Father and the Son. If attributes are totally determined by relationships then the Spirit is excluded.

The second issue is the impossibility of adequately describing the attributes and relationships of the persons of the Trinity. It is only possible to do so by means of analogical and metaphorical concepts which point to the reality but never fully describe it.

The Father is to be understood as Father, not in a general sense, but in relation to the Son. He is the One who Jesus designated as Father in the personal, intimate and unique manner as *his* Father. The idea of Fatherhood has often been related to concepts of origin and superiority. However in examining the biblical usage of the term, it is better to speak of intimacy of relationship and, in certain cases, consubstantiality of being.[75] Yet there is another dimension, which we might term the agency of initiation in serving. In Jesus' earthly life he acts freely in response to the initiative of the Father. This serving initiatory activity of the Father must be understood within the context the mutual dependence of the persons of the Trinity and their relationships of mutual giving and receiving. It seems that the particular contribution of the Father to the intra-

[74] *Institutes*, 1:13:19.
[75] See Warfield, "The Biblical Doctrine of the Trinity".

trinitarian life is that out of his dependence on the Son and the Spirit he initiates activity within the Trinity.

This attribute of the Father is not to be understood in what might be described as "masculine" terms. God is only rarely called father in the Old Testament, and when this is done it is usually "in contexts of nurturing and fostering, rather than those associated with the attributes our society has come to label masculine".[76] In the New Testament the use of Father is relational and primarily used "in connection with the relation between Jesus and the Father."[77] In continuity with Calvin, we must reject any concept of the fatherhood of God which excludes God's motherhood; both of these analogies provide pointers to the attribute of the Father.[78] It is thus appropriate to describe the Father as a "motherly Father" and a "fatherly Mother"[79]

In addition to the name the Son, the Son is also called the Word and the Image of God. The name Son reflects intimacy of personal relationship but also the element of response to the initiative of the Father. This is again to be understood within the context of the mutuality of the persons. In responding to the Father, the Son reflects and gives expression to the character and life of God as one who exists in self-giving relationships. It is thus particularly appropriate that it is through the Son's mediatorship that God acts, for in doing so God acts through the one who in a particular way reflects the pattern of divine life, which is

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[76] British Council of Churches, *The Forgotten Trinity I: The Report of the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today* (London: British Council of Churches, 1989), pp. 38 and 39.
[77] Ibid., p. 39
[78] While Calvin was not sensitive to the issue of gender as it has been raised in contemporary theology, his understanding of God as father did not exclude an understanding of God as mother. He argued that such an understanding complemented the understanding of God as father and gives a fuller picture of God's gracious care of creation. See his commentary on Isaiah 42:14 and 46:3-4 in Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, vol. 3, trans. by W. Pringle, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), pp. 302 & 303 & pp. 435-438 and see Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), pp. 39-41.
[79] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, p. 164.

the glory and wisdom of God. It is also appropriate that it is the Son who becomes incarnate and offers himself in free response to the Father as the "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1: 15).

Defining the particularity of the Spirit is problematic. Moltmann, examines the manner in which the various metaphors for the Spirit are used, and concludes that the unique personhood of the Spirit is to be described as "presence and counterpart."[80] Gunton examines the economic activity of the Spirit as the one who perfects creation, enabling it to be itself, and as the one who by the virgin birth enabled Jesus to be fully human. This particularising work of the Spirit in creation provides an analogy of his activity within the Trinity. He thus develops the model of Richard of St. Victor. For Richard, perfect love is such that the lover and the beloved wish to share their love with a third person. It is this mutual loving of a third person which prevents them from being absorbed into each other or cloning each other. The unique particularity of the Spirit is not only to express the mutual love of the Father and the Son, but also to enable them to be truly themselves as an other-in relation. The Spirit unites the Father and the Son through differentiating them and bringing them as particular entities into communion with each other and with the Spirit. The Spirit, as the "presence and counterpart," particularises the *hypostasis* of the Trinity thus ensuring true diversity and outgoing love.[81] The Spirit thus "always points away from himself to the Son and the Father."[82] The Father and the Son are thus only the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is only the Spirit through the Father and the Son.[83]

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[80] Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation,* trans. by M. Kohl, (London: SCM, 1992),p. 289.
[81] See Gunton, *The One , The Three and The Many*, pp. 188-191, and *Christ and Creation,* pp. 43-66.
[82] Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation.* The Gifford Lectures 1984-1985, trans. by M. Kohl, (London: SCM, 1985), p. 97.
[83] See Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* 1:1, p. 470, where he states that the Spirit "is the act in which the Father, is the Father of the Son or the speaker of the Word and the Son is the Son of the Father and the Word of the Speaker."

Is there then an order amongst the persons of the Trinity? There is an order but it is one in which each of the persons enjoys pre-eminence.[84] The Father is pre-eminent in the serving initiation of activity; the Son is pre-eminent as the object of that action and the Spirit as the one who unites the Father, and the Son enabling them to be truly themselves.[85] In so doing each of the persons is *autotheos*, demonstrating the very nature of God in a particular manner.

What Kind of God is this?

The Reformed tradition thus provides resources for developing a model of the Trinity as a sociality of persons, in which the concept of the Trinity is seen to be "something which enters into the very idea of God, without which He cannot be conceived in the truth of his being."[86] This trinitarian understanding provides the defining characteristics of what kind of God must lie at the heart of a Christian theocentric ecotheology which can be described as follows:

First, the character of God, as a sociality of persons in relationship, is dynamic, self-giving love – a love which in its expression towards creation is supremely manifested in the cross which is the norm for all theological reflection.

Second, God as the living God who is constantly engaged in relationships of mutual dependence amongst the persons of the Trinity is self-sufficient. This trinitarian understanding guards the freedom of God without turning God into a static, uninvolved being. God is not dependent upon creation, but in freedom creates that which is not God in order to enter into a dynamic interactive relationship with it.

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[84] This proposal is based on a modified version of Moltmann's in *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, p. 177 & 178.

[85] It is interesting to note that in traditional discussions about an order in the Trinity no attention is paid to the saying of Jesus in the synoptic gospels that while blasphemy against the Son will be forgiven, blasphemy against the Spirit is unforgivable (Matthew 12:32 and Luke 12: 9 & 10). In certain contexts the Spirit obviously enjoys a unique priority.

[86] Warfield, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Trinity", p. 191.

Third, the persons are equal but uniquely particular, so that the unity of God is an ecological unity in which the unity is dependent upon the particular contribution of each person. The persons who are equally God are different, thus unity and equality in God is neither monistic nor is it a bland uniformity. This understanding must lead to a new way of understanding the unity of the external works of the Trinity, in which each of the persons is seen to make a unique contribution to the one purpose and activity of God.

Fourth, while a model of a sociality of persons is used this must not be done in such a manner that the Trinity is viewed as a kind of divine committee, leading to tritheism. An over-emphasis on the threeness of God leads to the cross being perceived as an act of divine "child abuse" rather than the self-giving act of the one God.

This understanding of God calls for a new ontology, for in God "[b]eing and relation can be distinguished in thought but in no way separated ontologically: they are rather part of an ontological dynamic."[87]

As a consequence we need to develop an ontology of relationship.[88] Such an ontology argues for the equal ultimacy of the one and the many interacting in relationships. Unity and particularity are ensured through mutual dependency and mutually constituting activity. In such a model, difference and particularity do not denote hierarchy but rather mutual dependence. Unity emerges through the interaction of diverse particulars in what might be termed an ecological unity.

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[87] Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, p. 214.

[88] Gunton develops the implications of this in *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, and *The One, the Three and the Many*. See also Douglas John Hall *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 113-139. Within the Reformed tradition such an ontology has precedents in the theology of Jonathan Edwards, see Sang Hyun Lee *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 47-114 and 170-241.

THE COVENANT MAKING GOD

For Calvin the question: "What is God?" is a subject for those people given to "idle speculation." The important issue in the knowledge of God is "to know of what sort he is and what is consistent with his nature."[89] If we are to understand what sort of God, God is, we do so, not by speculating as to what "he is in himself," but by seeking to understand God "as he is toward us."[90] It is thus the relationship between God and the people of God, described in the Bible, which provides us with the key to understanding the character of God.

The biblical documents use many motifs to describe this relationship. One, which has had an important function within the Reformed tradition, is that of the covenant.[91] Walter Brueggemann has argued that it is the character of the God of the Bible as a covenanting God, which distinguishes God from the other "gods" for these "gods offer no model for faithful interrelatedness, for steadfast solidarity, but only for occasional self-serving alliances."[92]

There is no simple biblical theology of the covenant for the motif of the covenant is used in a variety of ways within the Bible. The thesis develops a theological concept of the covenant, informed by the biblical presentation of the relationship between God and the people of God[93] - in doing so

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[89] *Institutes,* 1:2:2.
[90] *Institutes,* 1:10:2.
[91] For the history of the concept of the covenant within the Reformed tradition see Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Barker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition With a translation of* De Testamento seu Foedere Dei Unico et Aeterno *(1534) by Heinrich Bullinger*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), D. A. Weir, *The Origins of Federal Theology in Sixteenth-Century Reformed Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), Lyle D. Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevian* (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Duke University, 1980) and P. J. Le Roux, *Verbond en Gemeente: Die Betekenis van die Verbond vir Kerk en Kosmos*, (unpublished D. Th. Dissertation, University of South Africa, 1991), pp. 9-102)
[92] Walter Bruggemann, "Covenant as a Subversive Paradigm", *The Christian Century,* 47 (1980), 1094-1099, (p. 1095).
[93] For discussions of the motif of the covenant in the Bible see D. R. Hilliers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1969), D. J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant: A Survey of Current Opinions* (Oxford Basil Blackwell, 1973), idem., *Treaty and Covenant: A*

it will expand the motif by drawing on elements from other motifs used within the Biblical documents.[94]

Characteristics of the Covenant[95]

The following characteristics of the covenant are drawn from an examination of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel recorded in the Old Testament. Christians confess that Yahweh is not merely the god of an Ancient Near Eastern tribe, but the Creator and Redeemer of the world. Thus the relationship between Yahweh and Israel provides a paradigm for understanding the relationship between God and creation.

First, it is a covenant of grace, arising out of the free and sovereign initiative of God. This point is deeply embedded in the Reformed tradition's understanding of election and the covenant of grace. God "makes a move to earth to identify a faithful covenant partner."[96] God chooses Abraham and calls him into a covenant relationship. In faithfulness to this covenant, Yahweh acts to redeem a mob of oppressed slaves and creates a new nation whose life is centred on the worship of Yahweh. In acting to establish the covenant, Yahweh acts for the good of the people of Israel, desiring that they will find their fulfilment in a deep relationship with Yahweh.

Second, Yahweh's initiative includes both promise and command. In grace, Yahweh promises a future for the covenant partner calling Israel to respond in obedience to the covenant. In both promise and command Yahweh offers an open future of responsible freedom. In making the promise, God has a goal for history, but the covenant is not a blueprint for history. It is rather an invitation to enter into partnership, so that

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Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament, second edition, (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1978), and Ernst W. Nicholson, *God and His People: Covenant and Theology in the Old Testament*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986).

[94] For a methodological justification for this approach see Vern S. Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987)

[95] Other dimensions will be developed in the later chapters.

[96] Brueggemann, "Covenant as a Subversive Paradigm", pp. 1095

both Yahweh and the people shape the future. Israel responds to Yahweh's initiative and in turn Yahweh responds to the people's actions. Thus Yahweh promises Israel a land, but they must take it and their continued enjoyment of the land is dependent on their continued obedience. When Yahweh wants to destroy the people, after the incident of the golden calf, Moses intercedes on the basis of the covenant, and Yahweh relents and continues with the people. The history of Israel displays this character of God's initiative and Israel's response, sometimes in obedience sometimes in disobedience.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel look forward to a new Covenant in which the Spirit of God will so transform individuals that they will spontaneously fulfil the demands of the covenant.[97] This understanding of the ability of the covenant partner to respond to God is further expanded in the New Testament through Paul's understanding of Christian freedom in which the Christian empowered and gifted by the Spirit, is able to respond in a number of different yet legitimate ways to God's innitiative. Christians are thus called to responsible freedom in contrast to the stricter limitations and constraints of the covenant with Moses. It is the Spirit of God who enables Christians to respond in a manner which is authenticaly their own.[98] While the covenant goal and purpose of God is sure, the way God achieves it is dependent upon the faithfulness and behaviour of the people of God. God's history with Israel and the church is thus one of dynamic interaction.[99]

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[97] See Jeremiah 31: 31-34 and Ezekiel 36.

[98] The role of the Holy Spirit in enabling people to be authentically human in their response to God is an important theme in various Reformed theologies of the covenant. See Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevian*, pp. 24-92.

[99] This dynamic understanding of the covenant has been used within the Reformed tradition to relate God's initiative in grace to human responsibility. However the mere use of the concept does not guarantee that the correct balance is maintained. An over-emphasis on human responsibility will lead to the covenant being understood as a contract with its consequent legalism. See James B. Torrance "Covenant or Contract" *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 23, (1970), 51-76. An over-emphasis on divine grace and the *pactum salutis* can lead to hyper-Calvinism and antinomianism. See Muller, "The Spirit and the Covenant". See also J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition.* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1980), Lyle Bierma, "Federal Theology in the

Third, the motifs of covenant and kingship are related to each other, so that Yahweh is the divine suzerain who enters into covenant with Israel. As such Israel is called to a lifestyle of obedience to Yahweh and a rejection of all rival lords. This dimension is seen in the use of the suzerainty treaty format in some Old Testament covenantal passages, in the initial rejection of kings in Israel, and in the prophetic critique of monarchs and the people when they turned away from Yahweh.

Fourth, in the covenant Yahweh promises to be present with the people. Yahweh, the one whom the highest heavens cannot contain, desires to dwell with the people of Israel, to be at home amongst them. The climax of the exodus and Sinai narratives in the book of Exodus is thus the construction of the tabernacle, in which Yahweh dwells and from which Yahweh reigns over Israel. This presence is comforting in that it is a promise of intimacy, protection and blessing. It is also an awesome reality, for it is as the holy and transcendent One, that Yahweh is present with Israel.

Fifth, the covenant involves a deeply personal relationship. The relationship between Yahweh and Israel is often described in terms of that between a parent and a child, and that between a husband and a wife. When God enters into the relationship with Israel God opens Godself up to the joys and pains of such a relationship. Yahweh delights in Israel's faithfulness and love but is deeply grieved and hurt by their suffering and unfaithfulness. The covenant between Yahweh and Israel thus has divine suffering as a necessary consequence.[100] Yahweh's judgement is never that of a disinterested judge, but rather that of one who has been deeply hurt by Israel's sin, and who has patiently borne their rejection until it could no

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Sixteenth Century: Two Traditions?", *Westminster Theological Journal,* 45 (1983), 304-321, and W. D. Jonker, *Uit Vrye Guns Alleen: Oor Uitverkiesing en Verbond,* (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1988), pp. 79-101.

[100] What follows is indebted to Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984), pp. 109-148.

longer be borne. Even in judgement God mourns at the suffering of the people and their land, and so in love works to redeem Israel. Yahweh is not only affected by the sin of the people, but also by their suffering at the hands of oppressors. Commenting on Exodus 2:23-25, where God is said to know Israel's suffering Terence E. Fretheim states:

> "Know" here must have the broader sense of "experience," even "intimate experience," as it commonly does in the OT. In some real sense, God is depicted here as one who is intimately involved in such a way as to have experienced what they are having to endure, too.[101]

God, by embracing Israel in the covenant, refuses to remain aloof from the pain and struggles, as well as the joys and delights of creaturely existence.

Sixth, God acts in faithfulness to the people of Israel, despite their constant rejection and rebellion. God's actions are characterised by *hesed* or covenant loyalty.[102] This covenant loyalty has three main characteristics; first it takes place within the context of an established relationship. Second, it is the action taken to help someone in need by someone who is able to meet that need, the recipient is thus dependent upon the giver of loyalty. Third it is a free action, the one who gives loyalty is not constrained by any legal or societal requirements to act on behalf of the other.

> Divine loyalty within the covenant involved both God's commitment to Israel and the ever new free decision of God to honor that commitment by preserving and supporting the covenant community.[103]

Despite Yahweh having every reason to reject Israel, Yahweh perseveres in loyalty to them, working in each new situation to fulfil the purpose of the covenant.

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[101] Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, p. 128.
[102] What follows is indebted to Kathrine Doob Sakenfeld, *Faithfulness in Action: Loyalty in Biblical Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).
[103] Sakenfeld, *Faithfulness in Action*, p. 132.

THE TRIUNE COVENANT GOD

As a consequence of the confession that the God of Israel has been supremely revealed in Jesus Christ the theology of the Trinity must be related to the covenant motif. This provides us with a more comprehensive picture of the character of God. This link between the doctrine of the Trinity and the covenant has been developed in the Reformed tradition through the *pactum salutis* in which the relationship between the persons of the Trinity is seen to be analogous to that between God and the people of God. The God who exists in personal relationships enters into relationships with that which is not God in a manner which analogically reflects the relationships amongst the persons of the Trinity.

This connection between the doctrine of the Trinity and the covenant has, as its consequence, a re-examination of the understanding of divine freedom. Both trinitarian and covenantal theology emphasise the freedom of God. The God who is constituted by persons in relationship has no need for anything which is not God. However this triune God freely enters into a relationship with creation, thus binding Godself to creation. In doing so God restricts God's own freedom for the sake of a genuine relationship with that which is not God and so opens Godself to the consequence of such a relationship.

> Any commitment or promise within a relationship entails a limit of freedom .... in having freely made such promises, thereafter God's freedom is truly limited by those promises. God will do what God says God will do; God will be faithful to God's own promises, and that is a limitation of freedom. God's freedom is now most supremely a freedom *for* the world, not a freedom *from* the world.[104]

This is not a denial of divine freedom but rather a reaffirmation of it, for God is free in such a manner that God

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[104] Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, p. 36.

can restrict God's own freedom in order to freely express the divine character of self giving love.[105]

Two dimensions of this covenantal understanding of divine freedom are important for our study. The first, is that it forms the theological basis for the traditional Reformed doctrine of divine accommodation. In all of God's activity in relation to creation, God accommodates Godself to the finitude and fallenness of creation in such a way that it is able to relate to God. In God's relationship to creation the principle is not *finitum non capax infiniti*, but rather *finitum capax divinitatis per accommodationem.*[106]

The second dimension is that of a divine *kenosis*. The act of entering into a genuine relationship with that which is not God involves divine self-limitation and self-emptying. God in freedom limits the exercise of certain attributes in order to engage in a relationship with an other, in which the other is allowed to be fully itself. This self-limitation is not the denial of these attributes but rather the focusing of them in such a manner as to make the relationship possible. This *kenosis* reaches its ultimate culmination in the incarnation and crucifixion of Jesus the Christ. Both of these dimensions reflect the character of the divine nature, for God to be God is for the persons of the Trinity to live in self-giving relationships.

This understanding of God's freedom requires the rejection of traditional understandings of divine immutability. If we take seriously the doctrines of the Trinity and the covenant, then we must affirm that God is the living God who interacts in changeable ways with creation. Yet God always acts in a way

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[105] P. T. Forsyth developed this understanding in relation to the incarnation in *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ,* (London: Independent, 1909), pp. 293-320.

[106] This formula is closer to Calvin's thought than *finitum non capax infiniti*, see E. David Willis, "Rhetoric and Responsibility in Calvin's Theology", in *The Context of Contemporary Theology: Essays in Honor of Paul Lehmann,* ed. by Alexander J. Mc Kelway and E. David Willis, (Atlanta: John Knox, 1974), pp. 43-63, and Heiko A. Oberman "The 'Extra' dimension in the Theology of Calvin", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 21, (1970), 43-64.

which is faithful to the covenant. So God does repent and change in response to the actions of creation as God takes new initiatives in different circumstances to bring about the goal of the covenant. Yet in all this God does remain the same, in the sense that God always acts in accordance with God's character of self-giving love.[107] Thus God can be depended upon to act faithfully towards creation in the implementation of the covenant.

The traditional Reformed doctrine of the divine decree will also require modification. God's sovereignty is not to be seen in terms of the working out of a pre-arranged script, but rather as the faithful weaving together of the events in creation to accomplish the goal of the covenant. God has a set purpose for creation but the way it will unfold will depend on the response of God's creatures.[108]

In embracing creation in the covenant God is affected by creation in all its joy and suffering, its life and death. God freely enters into the life of creation and makes its experience God's own as God works from within to transform it. "There is no immunity for God here; embracing a partner is not an afterthought it is definitional for God."[109]

THE GLORY OF GOD AND THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS

The great slogan of the Reformed tradition has been *soli Deo gloria* - to God alone be the glory. The glory of God will be a central theme that runs through our ecotheology, but it is of crucial importance to expound what this glory is. A distorted view of the glory of God will contribute to the destruction of creation, rather than to its healing. The great temptation is to understand God's glory in terms of the naked majesty, omnipotence and supreme will of "the Almighty." Such an understanding has often been used to the denigration and

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[107] For a more detailed exposition of this understanding of God's faithfulness, see Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, pp. 147-154.
[108] For a more detailed outworking of this see chapter 3.
[109] Brueggemann, "Covenant as a Subversive Paradigm", p.1095.

servitude of humanity and the rest of creation.[110] It thus becomes, in Luther's terms, a theology of glory rather than a theology of the cross.[111]

God's glory is: "His dignity and right not only to maintain, but to prove and declare, to denote and almost as it were to make himself conspicuous and everywhere apparent as the One He is."[112]

Our understanding of the glory of God will thus arise out of our understanding of the character of God as the triune God of the covenant. The starting point for such a reflection must be the place where both the character of God and the reality of the covenant are most fully displayed, the place of the cross. As Calvin affirmed, at the cross

> as in a splendid theatre, the incomparable goodness of God is set before the whole world. The glory of God shines indeed in all creatures on high and below, but never more brightly than in the cross.[113]

Here God is revealed as the One who exists in self-giving relationships; the One, who in loving faithfulness to the covenant, will fully enter into the horror of suffering and death to redeem creation.

The cross shapes our understanding of the glory of God in three ways. First, God's glory is the outward display of the beauty of God's inner life.[114] It is the vibrant beauty of the

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[110] See John W. de Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology: A South African Contribution to an Ecumenical Debate,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 92-137.

[111] See Martin Luther, *The Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), in Luther's Works, vol. 31, ed. by Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1957), pp. 39-44.

[112] Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* vol. 2 part 1, *The Doctrine of God*, trans. by T. H. L. Parker, W. B. Johnston, H. Knight and J. L. M. House, ed. by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), p. 641.

[113] Calvin, *The Gospel According to John and the First Epistle of John,* trans. by T. H. L. Parker, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) p. 69, and see John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life.* (Louisville: Westminster, 1989) pp. 37-45.

[114] This understanding of the beauty of God has precedents within the Reformed tradition in the theology of Jonathan Edwards, see Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, pp. 82-83, 181-183 and 193-196.

persons of the Trinity engaging in free and loving relationships of mutual dependency and mutual giving and receiving. It is the beauty of unique particularities dynamically interacting with each other in a harmony in which diversity is not obliterated but rather enhanced, as each person enhances the particular beauty and glory of the others. The triune God is thus "distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above 'em [sic], chiefly by his divine beauty."[115] As the beautiful one God "is the one who is pleasant, desirable and full of enjoyment"[116]

Second, the cross reveals that "God does not will to be God without a life together with the world in freedom and peace."[117] The glory of God is not the glory of a selfish and supreme potentate, but the glory of the Suffering Servant who enters into agony and death on behalf of others. As such the glory of God is not at the exclusion of creation, for God as the faithful covenant partner is supremely concerned for the good of creation. Consequently, God is glorified when creation enters into relationships with the triune God.[118] A theocentric approach to creation is thus one which is supremely concerned with that with which God is supremely concerned, creation and its future. Theology that "is theocentric and christocentric ... has to be *geo*centric ... because that is where its *Theos* and its *Christos* are centred."[119]

Third, the significance of the crucified Jesus is only fully recognised when it is confessed that he is the risen Lord. Thus the emphasis on the glory of God revealed in the Suffering Servant must not obscure the recognition that the

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[115] Edwards, *Religious Affections*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards vol. 2, ed. by John E. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 89.
[116] Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 2:1, p. 651.
[117] Gabriel Fackre, *The Christian Story: A Narrative Interpretation of Basic Christian Doctrine*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), p.89.
[118] John H. Leith argues that for Calvin God is glorified when people enter into personal relationships with God, see *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, pp. 37-45.
[119] Douglas John Hall, *The Stewardship of Life in the Kingdom of Death*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 77.

glory of God includes the numinous grandeur of the free and sovereign God who does not tolerate rivals. All forms of idolatry must be subjected to the critique of this One, and rejected.

The glory of the triune God of the covenant is not the self-glorification of an absolute potentate who uses his creatures as pawns to achieve his own selfish ends.[120] It is rather the manifestation of the dynamic beauty, character and life of the One who is faithfully committed to the life and well-being of the other in the context of both the intra-trinitarian relationships and God's relationship with God's creatures. In all God's manifold relationships with creation, God displays the glory of the One who is self-giving love.

[120] The use of masculine pronouns is deliberate.

Chapter 3

CREATION: COVENANT PARTNER OF THE TRIUNE GOD

To perceive the world as creation is to confess that the earth with its ecosystems in their awesome grandeur, intricate complexity, breathtaking beauty and delicate vulnerability, can only be properly understood when seen in relation to the triune God of the covenant.

The doctrine of creation within the Reformed tradition has been forged within the tension between two of the traditions' most fundamental principles. The first is that God is the sovereign, active and living God whose sovereignty is manifested in transcendence and immanence. God is Lord over creation and yet is intimately involved in its most basic functions. The second fundamental principle is that God the Creator is distinct from, and not to be confused with, creation. Any such confusion is idolatry. The tradition has thus attempted to bring God into as close as possible a relationship with creation without denigrating the integrity of creation.

The location of the doctrine within this tension possesses both serious problems and creative possibilities. The most serious problem relates to the presence of evil and suffering within creation. This is particularly problematic since the traditional response of relating all suffering to human sin, has been invalidated by contemporary science. This tension however opens up creative possibilities for the development of an ecotheology. These possibilities will be explored by making use of the three inter-related perspectives of the covenant, the Trinity and the glory of God. This will then provide the basis for re-examining the reality of suffering.

CREATION AND COVENANT

The motif of the covenant has been used extensively in the Reformed tradition to describe the relationship between God and humanity. A minority component of the tradition has further developed this motif to comprehend the relationship between God and creation as a whole.[1] This development is grounded theologically in the confession that the God who revealed Godself redemptively in the history of Israel and in Jesus Christ is the Creator of the universe. Consequently God's relationship with creation as a whole is consistent with God's character and activity revealed in redemption. The

[1] Wolfgang Musculus (1497-1563) proposed that there were two covenants. The first was with Noah, and was a covenant relating to the temporal world and was the manifestation of God's general grace. The second was the eternal covenant of grace, made explicit in the covenant with Abraham, but relating to the faithful from the time of Adam. Caspar Olevianus (1536-1587) briefly developed an understanding of God being in covenant relationship with the created order. This was closely related to God's providential rule over creation for the benefit of God's people. God made a covenant with creation for the good of the elect, because the elect are in covenant relationship with God, and God is in covenant relation with creation, the elect are in covenant relation with the rest of creation. See Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Barker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition With a translation of* De Testamento seu Foedere Dei Unico et Aeterno *(1534) by Heinrich Bullinger,* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), pp. 22 and 36-39., Lyle D. Bierma, *The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevian* (unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1980), pp. 187-194 and idem., "Covenant or Covenants in the Theology of Olevianus", in Calvin Theological Journal 22 (1987), pp 228-250. The major twentieth century example of relating covenant and creation, is the work of Karl Barth. Barth proposed that creation was the external basis of the covenant, and the covenant the internal basis of creation. This attempt is however subject to two of the major weaknesses of traditional covenant theology. First, the covenant is viewed exclusively in terms of the relationship between God and humanity, the rest of the created order is merely the stage upon which the drama of the covenant unfolds. Second, the covenant is viewed primarily in relation to salvation. See Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3 part 1, *The Doctrine of Creation*, trans. by J. W. Edwards, O. Bussey and H. Knight, ed. by, G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), pp. 42-329, and Author C. Cochrane, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Covenant", in *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, ed. by Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 108-116. For a critique of Barth see H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), pp. 146-155, and idem. "Healing the Protestant Mind: Beyond a Theology of Human Dominion", in *After Natures Revolt: Eco-Justice and Theology,* ed. by Dieter Hessel (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), pp. 57-78. An important contribution to the development of a theology which understands creation in a covenantal context is Gordon J. Spykman's attempt to develop a systematic theology from the perspective of Reformational philosophy, see his *Reformational Dogmatics: A New Paradigm for doing Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 257-267.

Biblical witness provides explicit precedents for such a development. The covenant with Noah is described as being with Noah and his descendants, every living creature and the earth (Genesis 9: 8-17).[2] Jeremiah describes God as being in covenant with the created order, in a manner parallel to God's relationship with the people of Israel (Jeremiah. 33: 20-25).

The covenant with Noah provides a starting point for a re-examination of the covenantal understanding within the Reformed tradition.[3] Standing critically within the tradition, William J. Dumbrell argues convincingly that the covenant discourse in Genesis 9 is not to be understood as the establishment of a new relationship, but the renewal of an already established relationship in the light of new circumstances.[4] As such it is the renewal of the relationship that God entered into with the created order through God's creative activity. It is this which provides us with the basis for affirming with Gordon Spykman that:

> All God's dealings with creation are covenantal in character. Our life in God's world is set within a pervasively covenantal context. To be a creature is to have a covenantally defined place to be and role to play within the cosmos.[5]

While humanity has a unique function within this covenant, it cannot be reduced to a covenant with humanity, nor can human

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[2] In Christian responses to the environmental crisis this "Noahic or Rainbow covenant (Gen. 9: 8-17) is often interpreted as a powerful biblical symbol for ecological responsibility." James A. Nash, *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility.*(Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), p. 100. The implications of this discussion for the Reformed tradition are discussed in Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, "Covenant and Creation", in *Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology,* ed. by Charles Birch, William Eakin and Jay B. McDaniel (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), pp. 27-36.

[3] The issues surrounding the sources and authorship of biblical books lie beyond the scope of this thesis, the basic presupposition that underlies references to the biblical texts is that while the final redactors/authors made use of a variety of sources, the final documents are literary units and can be interpreted as wholes.

[4] William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenant Theology,* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), pp. 15-33, see Craig. G. Bartholomew, "Covenant and Creation: Covenant Overload or Covenant Deconstruction." *Calvin Theological Journal*, 30 (1995), 11-33.

[5] Spykman, *Reformational Dogmatics,* p. 259.

beings be seen as the exclusive mediators between God and the rest of creation.

> [T]he nonhuman creation everywhere, and particularly in the infinite space of the interstellar world, where there are no humans, has its own for us inaccessible relatedness to God ... God made the Leviathan apart from us, "to amuse himself with" (Ps. 104:26).[6]

God has been in relationship with creation over the aeons of time since its origins. God was involved with, and related to, all the living creatures that emerged, died and became extinct through the millennia that preceded the arrival of human beings.

Creation as the Covenant Work of the Triune God

The affirmation that God's act of creation is an act of covenant making provides an important and multifaceted perspective from which we can understand God's activity in creating and caring for the world and the nature of the created order. H. Paul Santmire describes this covenant with creation:

> God resolves in eternity graciously to communicate God's infinite life to interrelated and interdependent communities of finite beings in fitting ways, and to enter into communion appropriately with every community of finite being, mediated by the eternal Logos and energised by the eternal Spirit of God, in order to manifest the divine glory through a universal history, which God wills to bring to completion when the time is right, so that all things, in appropriate ways, might enter into the eternal sabbath rest of God.[7]

The Covenant as an Act of God's Free Grace

God's act of creation is an act of sovereign grace and love. As in all of God's covenanting activity the relationship exists as a consequence of God's free decision and is thus

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[6]Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith,* trans. by S. Woudstra, (Grand Rapids, 1986), p. 171.
[7] Santmire, "Healing the Protestant Mind", p. 70.

dependent upon God. Creation exists and continues because of God's primal decision in love to bring creation into being in order to enter into a deeply personal relationship with it in all its richness and diversity. Creation is thus the gift of God who acts in free grace giving existence to that which did not exist, giving life to the non-living, and providing bounteously for God's creatures. As Calvin states:

> [I]f the cause is sought by which he was led to create all these things, and is now moved to preserve them, we shall find that it is in his goodness alone. But this being the sole cause, it ought still to be more than sufficient to draw us out to his love, in as much as there is no creature... upon whom God's mercy has not been poured out.[8]

Creation is constantly dependent upon the grace of God for its very existence. Creation as the free gift of the Creator is to be received by all its component parts with deep gratefulness. Thus the Psalmist calls upon all of creation to praise God for all that God has done (see for example Psalm 145: 21 and 148: 1-14).

Creation is Distinct from God

God created something which was not God in order to enter into a relationship with it. While creation is dependent on God it is distinct from God. A genuine relationship is one in which the other is genuinely distinct from oneself, and the relationship is such that the particularity of the other is enhanced and not destroyed by the relationship. Thus when God creates a covenant partner, God limits Godself in order to enter into a genuine relationship which respects the integrity of creation as something which is distinct from God. God thus limits the expression of certain of God's attributes, in order to fully express God's own character as the One who exists in self-giving, mutually constituting relationships.[9] In another

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[8] *Institutes,* 1:5:6.

[9] This covenantal self-limitation is to be distinguished from Jürgen Moltmann's more speculative proposal that God's activity in creation is preceded by an act of withdrawal in which God creates "Nothingness", out of which God then creates the world. While Moltmann legitimately argues that God's act of creation implies God's self-limitation, his views become

sense this is not a limitation of God's attributes but rather a re-focusing of them in such way that, while at times God does work in surprising ways to express God's love and to further God's purpose, God generally works in and through the processes of the created order. In doing so God expresses God's own greatness in that God is able to achieve God's purpose by working in, through and with creation without violating its integrity.

This covenantal understanding of God's self-limitation preserves both God's immanence and God's transcendence in such a manner as to grant true freedom and integrity to creation. God is distinct from and thus transcendent to creation, yet not in a manner that tends towards deism, for God transcends creation in order to relate to it. God limits Godself, in order to be with creation, yet this does not obliterate the unique particularity of creation.

The Goal of the Covenant

In the Biblical descriptions of God's covenants, God's purpose in entering into a covenant is to create a covenant community with whom God wishes to enter into a relationship. Individuals who enter into the covenant not only enter into a relationship with God, but also with the covenant community. When God brought creation into being God created a complex community of interdependent and interrelated creatures. God's goal in bringing creation into being is to create a community of creatures who are in relationship with God and each other.

This understanding of the goal of the covenant with creation is enriched by a careful examination of the Genesis creation

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problematic when he proposes that God first creates a "literally God-forsaken space. The *nihil* in which God creates his creation is God-forsakeness, hell, absolute death; and it is against the threat of this that he maintains his creation in life." *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation,* The Gifford Lectures 1984-1985, trans by M. Kohl (London: SCM, 1985), pp. 87 & 88. For a critique of Moltmann's proposal, see Brian Walsh, "Theology of Hope and the Doctrine of Creation: An appraisal of Jürgen Moltmann", *Evangelical Quarterly,* 59 (1987), 53-76, and Steven Bouma-Prediger, "Creation as the Home of God: The Doctrine of Creation in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann" (unpublished paper, American Academy of Religion Annual Convention, 1994)

narratives. In the first creation narrative God is pictured as dramatically creating a beautiful, ordered and structured world which reaches its climax in the creation of living beings. As the days of creation progress, so God creates habitats for the various creatures. The purpose in God's activity is seen to be the creation of a dwelling place for living creatures, in which everything they need to live and prosper is provided for them. "The earth ... is a God-given habitat, an *oikos*...designed for use by living beings."[10]

God's intention is not merely to create a home for God's creatures. Biblical scholars have pointed out the parallels in structure and terminology between this creation account and that of the building of the tabernacle in Exodus.[11] God's act of creation is consequently the making of a sanctuary in which God dwells. Creation is ultimately the place where God and God's creatures dwell together in relationship with each other. That this is the goal for creation is emphasised by the first creation account reaching its culmination with the Sabbath. The day on which God rests, relaxes with, delights in, blesses and enjoys God's creatures. God desires that creation should share in the freedom, rest and joy that characterises the divine life.[12] The goal of covenant awaits complete fulfilment; the lion and the lamb do not as yet lie down together in the presence of God.

The second creation account provides us with a complementary perspective; it describes a garden which is rich in the symbolism associated with the tabernacle and the temple.[13]

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[10] Bernard W. Anderson, "Creation and the Noahic Covenant." in *Cry of the Environment: Rebuilding the Christian Creation Tradition,* ed. by Philip N. Joranson and Ken Butigan (Santa Fe: Bear and Company, 1984), pp. 45-61, (pp. 48-49).

[11] See John G. Gammie, *Holiness in Israel*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), pp. 14, U. Cassuto, trans. by I. Abrahams, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus,* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1967), p. 476-477 and 483, and Eric E. Elnes "Creation and Tabernacle: The Priestly Writers 'Environmentalism'", *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, 16 no. 2 (1994), 144-155.

[12] See Moltmann, *God In Creation*, pp. 5-7 and pp. 276-296.

[13] See William J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp. 24 and 25, Gordon J. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story", *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies,* 9 (1986), pp. 19-25, and idem., *Genesis 1-15,*

Eden is the archetypal sanctuary in which God was seen to be present in the same way that God is present in the Israelite sanctuaries. God walks in Eden, in the "cool of the day," to have fellowship with God's creatures. Eden remains distinct from the rest of the earth, but from Eden flow the four great rivers which bring fertility to the earth. God's goal is thus only accomplished in Eden, but this influences the rest of the earth. Other Biblical books describe the land of Israel in similar, sanctuary like, terms and look forward to the eschatological *shalom* when God will live with humanity and the rest of creation in harmony, as the whole earth becomes the divine sanctuary. The account of the Garden of Eden, thus, points to the future, God's purpose for creation is not complete. God dwells with creation now, but only at the eschaton will God dwell fully within creation. The New Testament continues this hope in Revelation 21 and 22, which looks forward to the New Jerusalem in which God will make God's dwelling in the midst of creation.[14]

In summary God's purpose for creation is the creation of a home in which God can dwell in relationship with the community of God's creatures. While God transcends creation, by accommodation God is capable of entering into the limitations of creation in order to relate to creation and all its constituent parts. A goal which, in New Testament terms, will reach its fulfilment when all things are reconciled to God through Christ to whom and for whom they were created. The *telos* of creation is thus fellowship with God through union with Christ by the work of the Spirit. As a consequence all creatures, find their ultimate fulfilment in the enjoyment of relationships with each other and with God.

A Dynamic Relationship between God and Creation

The discussion of the nature of covenants in chapter two would lead us to conclude that God's creative activity involves

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Word Bible Commentary, vol. 1, (Waco: Word, 1987), pp. 85-91.

[14] See Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament*, The Moore College Lectures 1983, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1985) and idem., *The Search for Order,* op. cit.

divine initiative, the response of creation and God's reaction to creations response. A careful reading of the Genesis creation narratives demonstrates such a dynamic interaction.[15] J. Richard Middleton argues that these texts depict;

> God as sharing his power with creatures, inviting them to participate in (as they are able) in the creative process itself. Thus, among the many purpose statements given for the creation of the sun and moon is the statement that they are to *govern* the day and the night (1:16-18). If we think about it, this correlates perfectly with their purpose (also stated) to *separate* day and night (1:14, 18). Both governing (ruling) and separating are paradigmatically divine acts not only in the ancient Near East... but also in Genesis 1, where God's sovereign creative activity on days 1-3 consists precisely in three acts of separation by which the major spaces or realms of the created order are demarcated. Likewise the "expanse" or "firmament" ... which God created (on day 2) is granted the god-like function of separating the waters above from the waters below (1:6), in imitation of God's own separation of light from darkness on day 1. Rhetorically, this implies that the sun, moon and firmament, like humans in God's image, participate in (or imitate) God's own creative actions. God grants these royal tasks to his creatures willingly, allowing them a share of his power and rule.
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> But these are by no means the only divine actions that creatures participate in. On days 3, 5 and 6 in vv. 11-12, 20 and 24), God commands or (perhaps better) invites the earth (twice) and the waters (once) to participate in creation by bringing forth living creatures. Whereas the earth is invited to produce vegetation (v. 11) and later land animals (v. 24), the waters are invited to team with water creatures (v. 20). They are invited, in other words, to exercise their own God-given fertility and thus to imitate God's own creative actions in filling the world with living things. Actually, God takes quite a risk in calling the earth to produce vegetation since up to that point in the story God has not yet engaged in the act of filling (it is not until days 4-6 that God fills with

[15] See Elnes, "Creation and Tabernacle", J. Richard Middleton, "Creation Founded in Love: A Rhetorical Reading of Genesis 1:1-2:3" (unpublished paper, Society of Biblical Literature Annual Convention, 1995) and Michael Welker, "What is Creation? Rereading Genesis 1 and 2", *Interpretation,* 48, (1991), 56-71.

> mobile things the regions or spaces he demarcated on days 1-3). So (on day 3) the earth literally has no model or exemplar to follow. Indeed, on the next day, it is *God* who imitates the *earth's* creative action by filling the sky with heavenly bodies which, in the literary structure of Genesis 1, is a derivative action. God is pre-empted by the earth.[16]

While Middleton probably overstates his case, there is no doubt that Genesis describes an interactive process in which both God and creation play a role. As Osborn comments:

> [T]he creative commands set limits upon creaturely existence - they impose order upon the formlessness and void. But at the same time they hold out the possibility of tremendous variety in the unfolding of creation within those limits.[17]

Creation is characterised by order and spontaneity. God's initial covenantal word provides an open-ended pattern, a framework to which creation will respond in integrity, dynamism and variety. Creation is thus contingent, while it is subject to the purpose of God it "is not controlled by some locked in inevitability."[18] God's ordering of creation is not the imposition of a static structure but rather the dynamic interaction between God's initiative, which creates ever new possibilities, and creation's spontaneous and dynamic actualisation of the potentialities contained within the divine pattern.[19] The "dependable world is at the same time open to surprise and change."[20]

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[16] Middleton, "Creation Founded in Love", op. cit., pp. 11-13, the emphasis is Middleton's.

[17] Lawrence Osborn, *Guardians of Creation: Nature in Theology and the Christian Life.* (Leicester: Apollos, 1993), p. 85.

[18] John H. Stek, "What says the Scripture?" in Howard J van Till, et al., *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), p. 255.

[19] Herman Bavinck thus proposed that: "Because God has created a world inexhaustible in its rich differentiation and variety, in which various kinds of creatures have their own nature, and in that nature each has received its own thought and property and law, therefore and only therefore evolution is possible. All such evolution takes as its point of departure, and at the same time its direction and its purpose, from this creation.", *Our Reasonable Faith*, trans. by H. Zylstra, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1977), p. 174.

[20] Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, p. 169.

Creation is God's faithful covenantal activity through which God interacts with creation as God leads it to its goal. In such a covenantal understanding we must view

> ... the creation of the world and humanity, not as complete, but as developing toward even greater fulfilment within the unfolding economies of the covenant of God. God's covenant is not a static order but a pattern of changing relationships in the world toward greater justice and love.[21]

The Fecundity of Creation

God pronounces a covenantal blessing on the created order. By blessing creation, God confers life, fecundity and procreation on the creatures of the earth. The Old Testament Israelite understanding of the fertility of the earth stands in contrast with that of the other Ancient Near Eastern nations. In the religions of these nations fertility was the consequence of the complex interrelationship of many gods which brought about the required union of forces necessary for fertility. This process was often symbolised in sexual terms and was seen to be facilitated through the performance of the correct rituals. Israel worshipped only one God and understood fertility to be the natural condition of the earth, the actualisation of fertility was brought about by God's action of bringing rain on the land. [22]

This understanding is depicted in the creation narratives, both describe how an uninhabited and infertile place becomes fertile and inhabited by plants, animals and humans.[23] In the

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[21] McCoy and Barker, *Fountainhead of Federalism,* p. 14. This dynamic understanding was generally developed through the concept of the Covenant of Works, see Geerhardus Vos, "The Doctrine of the Covenant in Reformed Theology", in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation: The Shorter Writings of Geerhardus Vos*, ed. by, Richard B. Gaffin Jr., (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980), pp. 234-267 (pp. 242-245).

[22] See Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses: Women, Culture and the Biblical Transformation of Pagan Myth,* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1992), pp. 82-99

[23] See David Toshio Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2: A Linguistic Investigation,* Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 83, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), particularly pp. 17-43, and John Sailhamer, "Exegetical Notes: Genesis 1:1-

first creation narrative this is emphasised in two ways. First, God created self propagating plants on the same day that God created the land, there is no time in between God's action of creating land and God's endowment of it with fertility. Human activity is not necessary to bring about fertility.[24] Second, God expressly blesses the animals and humans with fertility, conferring on them the power of propagation.[25] The diversity of the ecosystems and the fecundity of nature is an outworking of God's covenant blessing. God intended that the earth should abound with multitudes of different types of creatures, both animals and plants. Biodiversity must be affirmed theologically as God's blessing on the entire community of creation.

The Covenant as a Personal Relationship

The Bible uses the deeply personal metaphors of lover, wife and child, to describe Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh. This understanding of God's involvement with creation has been traditionally limited to God's relationship with humanity, but the biblical witness recognises that it extends to all of creation. God is deeply affected by all that takes place within creation. God delights with exuberance in creation's fecundity and bounteous life, yet is grieved and mourns at its suffering. At the end of the sixth day of creation God affirms his deep satisfaction in the work of creation that it is "very good." A statement which has "the overtone: '...and see, it was very beautiful.'"[26] Psalm 104 and Job 38-41 describe God's care for all of creation, and Jesus speaks of the Fathers loving care of the birds and the flowers (Matthew. 6:26-30 and Luke. 12: 6). More surprising is the description in Jeremiah, of God weeping and wailing because creation is suffering as a consequence of Israel's sin (Jeremiah 9: 10). God's care for the earth and its creatures is not a mere provision for their needs but also for their

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2:4a", *Trinity Journal*, new series no. 5, (1984), 73-82.

[24] See Frymer-Kensky, *In the Wake of the Goddesses*, pp. 92-95.

[25] While Genesis 1 refers only to sea creatures and human, Genesis 8:17 relates the blessing to birds and land creatures.

[26] Claus Westermann, *Creation,* trans. by John J. Scullion, (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), p. 63.

enjoyment (see Job 39 and Psalm 104:26).

Figures within the Reformed tradition have affirmed this intensely personal relationship between God and creation. Calvin thus describes God as "the best of fathers" who does not exclude any creature from God's care but who rather cherishes "all the parts of the world."[27] Jonathan Edwards praises the "exuberant goodness of the Creator, who hath not only provided for all the necessities, but also the pleasure and recreation of all sorts of creatures, even the insects."[28]

God is never neutral about what happens to creation, God is deeply and personally involved in it. As Richard Cartwright Austin expresses it:

> "[T]he Lord is an active participant in the life of the world. Neither passive nor remote, the Lord cares about the antelope in labor and feels the pains and the joys of all who live."[29]

The deeply personal images describing Israel's relationship to Yahweh are complemented by the metaphor of Israel as the people of God. They are a personal treasure jealously cared for and protected by Yahweh. If creation is God's covenant partner then: "The Earth is the LORD'S and everything in it" (Psalm 24:8). In a more particular way life belongs to God, whether it be human, animal or even plant life.[30] The whole earth, particularly its living components, belongs to God and is the subject of God's jealous interest. Human beings can never claim rights of ownership over creation; they are rather

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[27] Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 4, trans. by J. Anderson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 160.
[28] Jonathan Edwards, "Of Insects" in *Scientific and Philosophical Writings: The "Spider" Papers, "Natural Philosophy", "The Mind", Short Scientific and Philosophical Papers,* Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 6, ed. by Wallace E. Anderson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 154-162, p. 161.
[29] Richard Cartwright Austin, *Hope for the Land: Nature in the Bible,* Environmental Theology Book 3 (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), p. 48.
[30] This is symbolised in the Old Testament laws about animal and human blood (e.g. Genesis 9:4 and Leviticus 17:10-13). See Barth *Church Dogmatics,* 3:1, pp. 207-212 and Vol. 3 part 4, *Doctrine of Creation*, trans. by. A. T. Mackay, T. H. L. Parker, Harold Knight, Henry A. Kennedy and John Marks, ed. by G. W. Bromiley, T. F. Torrance, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1961), pp. 348-356.

to live as pilgrims and sojourners, not because the earth is not their home, but because it is not their possession. In particular life must be respected and may only be taken with God's permission. Creation at all times remains God's possession graciously given to all creatures for their benefit and enjoyment.

CREATION IN TRINITARIAN PERSPECTIVE

The doctrine of creation, as it has been expounded in western Christianity, has been plagued by two problematic features. The first is the strange enigma that the uniquely Christian understanding of God as Trinity revealed in Jesus Christ, has not played a major role in the development of this doctrine. The doctrines of creation and providence have generally been regarded as common ground shared with the other monotheistic religions and with philosophical theism. The second is that theologies of creation have been largely unsuccessful in doing justice to the unity and diversity of the created order; its divergent unfolding; its inter-relatedness and mutual dependence, and God's relation to it in immanence and transcendence.

These two problems are not isolated phenomena; Colin Gunton has argued that it is the tendency to see God's actions in a monistic fashion which has lead to the distortions in the doctrine of creation. It is this which prevents it from doing full justice to the integrity; the diversity and plurality of creation, and to God's relationship to it in immanence and transcendence.[31] This in turn has prevented an adequate theological response to the environmental crisis.

The roots of these problems lies in the Augustinian tradition with its psychological model of the Trinity and its argument that the external acts of the Trinity are undivided, and thus not to be ascribed to any one person of the Trinity, (*opera*

[31] See Colin E. Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God Creation and the Culture of Modernity*, The Bampton Lectures 1992 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Trinitas ad extra sunt indivisa). While there is a recognition that certain acts of the Trinity terminate in one of the persons, there is a tendency towards a monistic understanding of God's actions.

One of Calvin's contributions to the development of the doctrine of creation was his insistence that it should be understood in a trinitarian fashion. For Calvin the creation accounts in Genesis speak not only

> of the bare essence of God, but also sets forth for us His eternal Wisdom and Spirit; that we may not conjure up some other god than him who would have himself recognised in that clear image.[32]

This insistence on a trinitarian view of God's action in creation arises out of the confession that the creator God is the triune God revealed in, and as a result of sin, can only be known in Jesus Christ. This trinitarian understanding is developed from two perspectives. First, he expounds the doctrine in such a way as to ascribe various roles to different persons of the Trinity. Second, is his understanding of creation as arising out of and being intimately related to, the interrelationship of the persons of the Trinity.[33]

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[32] *Institutes,* 1:14:2. In his commentary on Genesis he argues that references to the Spirit and to the command (Word) of God as well as the divine declaration "Let *us* make man in *our* image" refer to the Trinity. See *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses called Genesis*, vol. 1, trans. by J. King, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948) pp. 69-75 and 91-93.

[33] Calvin's insights were largely ignored with the rise of Reformed Scholasticism. They were developed by Jonathan Edwards and the Dutch Neo-Calvinist tradition. For Edwards exposition see his "An Essay on the Trinity" in *Treatise on Grace and other Posthumously Published Writings,* ed. by Paul Helm, (Cambridge: James Clark, 1971), pp. 99-131, other insightful comments are scattered throughout his corpus, we will refer to particular passages at the relevant points. For Dutch Neo-Calvinism see Abraham Kuyper, *Locus De Creatione,* in *Dictaten Dogmatiek - Locus De Sacra Scriptura, Creatione, Creationis,* College Dictaat van een der studenten (Kampen: Kok, n. d.) pp 65-76 and Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, Vol. 2 (Kampen: J. H. Bos, 1908), pp. 442-465.

Creation and the Distinctive Agencies of the Trinitarian Persons

The first dimension of a trinitarian doctrine of creation is the confession that the persons of the Trinity exercise a particular agency in regard to the one action of the triune God. It is the recognition of the diversity of agency which provides the basis for expounding a theology that does justice to the unity and diversity of the created order as well as to the relationship between God's transcendence and immanence.

Calvin resisted the traditional identification of each person of the Trinity with a particular economic work of God, that is, the Father with creation, the Son with salvation, and the Spirit with sanctification. While recognising that all of the acts of the Triune God are acts of the one God, Calvin developed a theology which recognised that each person is involved in God's acts in a different way. The external acts of the Trinity reflect the dynamic interaction that constitutes the inner life of the Trinity. Consequently Calvin proposes that:

> [T]o the Father is attributed the beginning of activity, and the fountain and wellspring of all things; to the Son, wisdom, council and the ordered disposition of all things; but to the Spirit is assigned the power and efficacy of activity.[34]

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[34] *Institutes,* 1:13:18. This is related to Calvin's understanding of an order in the Trinity arising out of the Son being begotten by the Father and the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son. Calvin expressed some reservation about the traditional formula on the undivided nature of the works of the Triune God due to the different role played by the persons in the economy of God's actions. See his *A Controversy on Christ the Mediator: A Response to the Polish Nobles and to Francesco Stancaro of Mantua,* trans by. Joseph N. Tylenda in "The Controversy on Christ the Mediator: Calvin's Second Reply to Stancaro", *Calvin Theological Journal*, 8 (1973), 131-157, (pp. 51-152). This type of distinction is not unique to Calvin, they reflect similar proposals found in the Greek Fathers. Basil of Caesarea, for example, stated: "In creation,... bethink thee first ...of the original cause of all that are made, the Father; of the creative cause the Son; of the perfecting cause the Spirit", *The Book of St Basil on the Spirit - De Spiritu Sancto,* 16:38 in *St Basil: Letters and Selected Writings,* trans. B. Jackson, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second series, vol. 8, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), pp. 1-50 (p. 23).

Calvin's suggestive proposal is a major advance on traditional western formulations of the work of the Triune God in creation. It does not however do full justice to the personhood of the Holy Spirit, who is seen more in terms of power than of personhood.[35] Abraham Kuyper proposes the more personal work of the Spirit as the One who perfects and individualises creation.[36]

The Agency of the Father

The work of creation has traditionally been ascribed to the Father, thus Barth affirms that "it is meaningful and right to designate God the Father in particular...as the Creator, and God the Creator as the Father". [37]

This a consequence of the understanding that the Father is the origin of the other persons. We have rejected this paradigm of origins and argued that the particularity of the Father is to be understood in terms the intimacy of the relationship which Jesus shared with the Father and the serving initiation of the Father in relation to the other persons. Creation is thus particularly related to the Father as the person who initiated the project of creation. In doing so the Father acted in loving service of the Son and the Spirit, for the *telos* of creation is the glorification of the triune God. The Father also acted in loving service and fatherly care toward the created order which was to come into being. In this sense

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[35] Gerald Bray, however, argues to the contrary that this is a work "which requires as much personal initiative from him as from the Father and/or the Son." *The Doctrine of God,* Contours of Christian Theology, (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1993), p. 203.

[36] He writes: "That in every work affected by the Father, Son and Holy Ghost in common, the power to bring forth proceeds from the Father; the power to arrange from the Son; and the power to perfect from the Holy Spirit." *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, trans. by Henri de Vries, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 19. In another context he proposes that "de substantze is uit den Vader, de specialiseering door den Zoon an de indivisualiseering door den Heiligen Geest." *Locus De Creatione* in *Dictaten Dogmatiek - Locus De Sacra Scriptura, Creatione, Creationis*, p. 76. See also Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek,* vol. 2. p. 445.

[37] Barth *Church Dogmatics,* vol. 3:1, p. 49, see also vol. 1 part 1, *The Doctrine of the Word God,* trans. by G. W. Bromiley, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), pp. 384-398. Barth affirms that both the Son and the Spirit are involved in creation, but sees creation as particularly related to the Father as a consequence of the Father being the eternal origin of the Son and the Spirit.

we affirm with Calvin and Kuyper, that the Father initiated the activity and is the source of the essence of creation, the point of origin of the undifferentiated substance of creation.

The Father speaks the covenanting Word of promise and "exhortation"[38] that brings creation into being. His involvement with creation does not cease with this initiatory activity, it continues in the interactive covenant activity of the triune God. The Father is the continual source of the existence of the created order. He demonstrates his fatherly care by his continual commitment to the covenant with creation. He reacts to creations response to the covenanting word and superintends its unfolding life to bring it to its fulfilment. In this activity, the Father weaves together the divine initiative within the created order and creation's response, in order to accomplish the purpose for which he initiated the work of creation.

The Agency of the Son

The act of creation is through the Son, who is the Image and Word of God. In the Son's response to the Father, within the intra-trinitarian life, he reflects the pattern of life which characterises the triune God and thus gives expression to the wisdom and glory of God. Creation through the Son is thus creation in accordance with the pattern of the life, the wisdom, and the glory of God. This pattern of life is characterised by glorious variety; the mutual dependence of unique particularities; dynamic relationships in which the particularities of the participants are enhanced rather than denied, and constant living activity. Thus the arrangement and disposition of creation in all its variety, interrelationships, dynamism and life is the consequence of the mediatorial work of the Son.

This work of the Son in creation involves two dynamics. The first is that "The Word specifies and differentiates"[39]

[38] Middleton, "Creation Founded in Love", p 12, n. 24.
[39] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions.* trans. by M. Kohl, (London: SCM, 1990), p. 289.

creation. The activity of the Son is to bring about all the different types of creatures both living and non-living, giving them their specialised characteristics. Thus he "is the one through whom all things take their shape."[40] The second dynamic of the Son's agency, is that he arranges these diverse creatures in their dynamic order of mutual relatedness and dependence. As a consequence the variety and differentiation within creation is not a disorganised chaos, but is rather a complex harmony.

This understanding of the Son as the pattern for creation is not to be understood as a static archetypal idea, but rather as the living activity of a person. The Son brings about this complex harmony by uniting creation to himself, creating new and diverse analogies of the pattern of the life of the Trinity. Creation's unity is thus to be found in its relationship to the Word and not by reducing its diversity to one or more of its components or to some set of static ideas. Through the work of the Son the pattern of divine life is embodied within creation.

The Son is the one who sustains creation preventing it from dissolving into chaos and non-existence by constantly uniting it to himself through the work of the Spirit. This sustaining activity is not a static reality, for the Son is the goal of creation. The glorious pattern unfolded in creation is a dynamic one, moving towards the eschaton as the Son evokes "new dimensions - new levels - of order and complexity."[41] Creation will reach its goal in eschatological union with God through Christ.

The Agency of the Spirit

The Spirit is the "presence and counterpart"[42] who enables the Father and the Son to be truly themselves. The Spirit's

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[40] Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), p. 97.
[41] Lawrence Osborn, *Guardians of Creation*, p. 120.
[42] Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans., M. Kohl, (London: SCM, 1992), p. 289.

activity in creation reflects this particularity; he is present in creation as an Other who enables "the creation truly to be itself."[43] This enabling relates to creation as a whole and to its components in all their particularity. As the presence of the activity and power of God operative in creation, the Spirit brings creation into being in response to the Word of the Father. He then enables creation to respond with integrity and spontaneity to the dynamic pattern of the Logos. It is through the Spirit that God creates and sustains a world which is itself and not an emanation of God.

In enabling creation to be fully itself the Spirit performs three main activities. First, the Spirit is the "principle of individuation".[44] Individuation is a particularisation within the context of mutually constituting, dynamic interrelationships with the rest of the created order. The Spirit acts within the individual components of creation, enabling each component to attain a particular identity with the unique characteristics which distinguish it from all others. Thus, for example, the pattern in the Son calls forth pine trees, the work of the Spirit is to enable creation to respond with a manifold variety of individual pine trees, with each tree responding to its environmental conditions in a unique manner. Even the diligent efforts of the forestry industry cannot reduce or eliminate the particularity of individual trees.[45] Individualisation is not the creation of isolated individuals. It is the creation of unique individuals that emerge, develop and exist in a complex set of inter-relationships with other individuals. The dynamic inter-relationships of the complex eco-systems of the earth are a consequence of the Spirit's activity in creation enabling each particular creature to be fully itself as it responds in communion with the Logos.

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[43] Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, p.51.
[44] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 100.
[45] See the discussion in Brian J. Walsh, Marianne B. Karsh and Nik Ansell, "Trees, Forestry and the Responsiveness of Creation", *Cross Currents*, 44 (1994), 149-162.

Second, the Spirit is the source of all life, movement and energy within creation. As Calvin stated:

> [I]t is the Spirit who, everywhere diffused, sustains all things, causes them to grow, and quickens them in heaven and on earth. Because he is circumscribed by no limits, he is excepted from the category of creatures; but in transfusing into all things his energy, and breathing into them essence, life and movement.[46]

Kuyper expands this understanding further when he states:

> We observe ... in the host of heaven a life material, outward, tangible which in thought we never associate with the Holy Spirit. But, however weak and impalpable, the visible and tangible has an invisible background. How intangible are the forces of nature, how full of majesty the forces of magnetism! But life underlies all. Even through the apparently dead trunk sighs the imperceptible breath. From the unfathomable depths of all an inward hidden principle works upward and outward... And what is this quickening and animating principle but the Holy Spirit?[47]

The created order is thus a living organic reality produced by the Spirit in response to the Logos. Yet it is as this living reality animated by the Spirit, that creation is distinct from God with its own integrity. The Spirit is not to be identified with the energy and life of creation; this would deny creation its integrity. Rather the Spirit is the creative source which underlies all energy and life within creation. Thus Calvin states:

> God Himself distinguishes Himself from all creatures so that we may realize that strictly speaking He alone is, and that we truly subsist in Him, seeing that He quickens and sustains us by His Spirit. For the power of the Spirit is diffused through all parts of the world, to keep them in their place; and to supply the energy to heaven and earth which we see, and also movement to living creatures. This does not mean the way that crazy men talk nonsense about all things being full of gods, and even the very stones being gods, but

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[46] *Institutes*, 1:13:14, see also 2:2:16.
[47] Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit*, p. 25 - 26.

> that by the wonderful activity and instigation of His Spirit God preserves all that He has created out of nothing.[48]

The Spirit "is the loving, self communicating out-fanning and outpouring presence of the eternal life of the triune God."[49] As such the Spirit remains a counterpart, an Other who relates to creation enabling it to be fully itself. In this manner the Spirit is the person of contact, between the triune God and creation.

The third activity of the Spirit is to draw creation forward to its goal. The Spirit does so by unfolding the potential within creation through differentiation and particularisation drawing creation forward to new and more complex responses to and communion with the divine pattern of life, who is the Son, as creation "'diverges' towards the *eschaton.*"[50]

As a consequence this threefold activity of the Spirit is formed as an ordered and beautiful reality. Calvin comments on Genesis 1:2:

> We have already heard that before God had perfected the world it was an indigested mass; he now teaches that the power of the Spirit was necessary in order to sustain it. For this doubt might occur to the mind, how such a disorderly heap could stand; seeing that we now behold the world preserved by government, or order. He therefore asserts that this mass, however confused it might be, was rendered stable, for the time, by the secret efficacy of the Spirit.[51]

In bringing order to creation the Spirit gives to all things "their sweetness and beauty as He who is Himself the beauty and joy of the Creator."[52] Thus "the beauty of the universe

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[48] Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles 14-28*,, trans. by J. Fraser, Calvins Commentaries ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966) pp. 119-120, see *Institutes,* 1:13:14.
[49] Moltmann *The Spirit of Life*, p. 281.
[50] Osborn, *Guardians of Creation*, p. 123.
[51] Calvin, *Commentaries On The First Book Of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1, pp. 73-74.
[52] Jonathan Edwards, "An Essay on the Trinity" in *Treatise on Grace and Other Posthumously Published Writings,* ed. Paul Helm, (Cambridge: James

... owes its strength to the power of the Spirit."[53]

In summary the Spirit enables, animates and sustains the created order as a living organic whole, distinct from God yet reflecting the dynamic pattern of the Logos.

Creation as the Expression of God's Trinitarian Life

God's acts of creation are God's free and gracious gifts to that which is not God. For Calvin, God's activity in creation is an expression of God's fatherly care and goodness.[54] Motivated by God's own goodness, God creates in order to shower love, mercy and grace on creation[55] in doing so God demonstrates that God is "the best of fathers, and that no creature is excluded from his care."[56] God's creative activity is an expression of God's parental goodness towards creation.

In Calvin's understanding, God's fatherly relationship towards creation is grounded in the eternal trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son. In critiquing Servetus, he argues:

> It is clear that God would not have been called Father from the beginning unless there had already been a reciprocal relationship with the Son from whom all kinship or fatherhood in heaven and earth is named.[57]

Clarke, 1971), p. 111.
[53] *Institutes,* 1:13:14.
[54] Calvin employs the two closely related metaphors of "fountain head " and "fatherhood" to describe God's relationship with creation, see the discussion in B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) pp. 22-37.
[55] *See Institutes,* 1:5:6.
[56] Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 4, trans. by J. Anderson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 160.
[57] *Institutes,* 2:14:7 see also 2:14:5, and his *A Controversy on Christ The Mediator*, p.149. In his commentary on Colossians 1:15, Calvin states, "He is not called the firstborn because He preceded all creatures in time, but because He was begotten by the Father, that they might be created through him, and that He might be as it were, the substance or foundation of all things." in Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* trans. by T. H. L. Parker, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 309.

Creation is an expression of God's fatherly goodness rooted in the relationship between the Father and the Son.

In the light of the model of the Trinity developed in the previous chapter, it would be more fruitful to root creation in the dynamic, loving interaction amongst the Father, the Son and the Spirit. The inner life of God is one of free, exuberant, loving relationships of giving to and receiving from an other. When God acts to create and to enter into relationship with that which is not God, God acts in a manner which is rooted in and reflects the inner life of the Trinity. The persons of the Trinity are mutually constituted as they give and receive from that which is different from themselves. Out of this dynamic activity the Triune God wills to create that which is not God yet which will relate to God and in so doing reflect the relationships amongst the persons of the Trinity.

Creation is thus the free expression of the love which constitutes the essence of God. It was not necessary for God to create, for God's eternal existence was one of free loving relationships. There was no need for an other which is not God, for God to relate to. God freely and graciously gives existence and life to the created order and all its constitutive parts.

While creation is the expression of intra-trinitarian relationships it is not an emanation of God, it has its own unique integrity. In the same way that each person of the Trinity relates to the other persons in such a manner that their particularity is constituted and maintained, so God relates to creation in such a way that its particularity and integrity is constituted and maintained. In this relationship there is not the same reciprocity between God and creation as between the persons of the Trinity. God's particularity is maintained but not constituted, God remains the Creator but creation attains its unique particularity. Gunton thus argues that the doctrine of the Trinity provides the basis for saying

that:

> Far from being dependent upon the world God is free to create a world which can be itself, that is to say, free according to its own order of being... The world is itself, not God, but worldly according to its own measure of being. Yet it is so by gift of the God who creates and sustains it in such a way that it is itself.[58]

Creation as the consequence of the constant activity of the Triune God, by which the Spirit enables the existence of that which is not God in response to the pattern of the Son, arising from the initiative of and under the superintendence of the Father, is the finite self expression of the triune God. Creation is, however, not a pantheistic emanation from God.

Jonathan Edwards' understanding is helpful in this regard. For Edwards, God was complete and free in Godself, having no need for creation. It is however in God's "essence to incline to communicate himself".[59] This inclination is fully actualised within the relationships amongst the persons of the Trinity. In God there is thus "an infinite fullness of all possible good ... a fullness of every perfection, of all excellency and beauty, and of infinite happiness."[60]

Edwards goes on to say "this fullness is capable of communication or emanation *ad extra.*" God's creation of the world arose out of his "disposition to communicate himself or diffuse his own *fullness."* As such creation is an "increase, repetition or multiplication" of the fully actualised divine fullness."[61]

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[58] Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology.* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), p. 147.
[59] Edwards, *The "Miscellanies" (Entry no's a-z, aa-zz, 1-500)*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 13, ed. Thomas A. Schafer, (New Haven: Yale University press, 1994), no. 107, pp. 277 & 278.
[60] Edwards, *Dissertation Concerning the End for which God Created the World*, in *Ethical Writings*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 8, ed. by, Paul Ramsey (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 399-536, p. 433.
[61] For a detailed exposition of Edwards' understanding see Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards,* (Princeton: Princeton

While Calvin expresses himself in a less philosophical manner, his comments reflect a similar understanding. He wrote that "the universe is for us a sort of mirror in which we can contemplate God, who otherwise is invisible."[62] In another place he stated:

> [A]lthough God is invisible, yet his glory is conspicuous enough. In respect of his essence God undoubtedly dwells in light that is inaccessible; but as he irradiates the whole world by his splendour, this is the garment in which He who is hidden in himself, appears in a manner visible to us... That we may enjoy the sight of Him, He must come forth to view with His clothing; that is to say, we must cast our eyes upon the very fabric of the world, in which he wishes to be seen by us.[63]

Creation is thus the consequence of the free decision of the persons of the Trinity to bring into being a new actualisation of the pattern of the divine life which was already fully actualised within intra-trinitarian relationships. Creation, as the Spirit enabled response to dynamic pattern of divine life reflected in the Son, is a finite embodiment of God's beauty and love.

THE THEATRE OF GOD'S GLORY

Calvin, in many of his writings gives expression to his joy and delight in the manner in which God's glory is manifested in creation. His preface to Olivétan's New Testament is a typical example:

> [God] has raised everywhere, in all places and in all things his ensigns and emblems, under blazons so clear and intelligible that no one can pretend ignorance in not knowing such a Sovereign Lord, who has amply exalted his magnificence; who has in all parts of the

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University Press, 1988), pp. 170-241, and idem., "Jonathan Edwards on Nature", in *The Faithful Imagining: Essays in Honor of Richard R. Niebuhr,* ed. by Sang Hyun Lee, Wayne Proudfoot and Albert Blackwell, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, forthcoming).

[62] *Institutes,* 1:5:1.

[63] Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 4, p. 145,

> world, in heaven and on earth written and as it were engraved the glory of his power, goodness, wisdom and eternity... For the little birds that sing, sing of God: the beasts clamour for him; the elements dread him; the mountains echo him; the fountains and flowing waters cast their glances at him; and the grain and flowers laugh before him.[64]

In developing this theme in Calvin's theology, the Reformed tradition has emphasised the doxological character of creation.[65] The ground, purpose and goal of creation is that God's glory would be manifested and God's character and attributes celebrated by all creatures. As such creation is "the theatre of God's glory" - a global, cosmic stage whose beauty, order and wonder, mirror and act out the nature of its divine Creator."[66]

This description of creation unites the trinitarian and covenantal understandings of creation. As the display of God's glory, creation is both a divine self-expression and a manifestation of God's self giving.

From the covenantal perspective, the goal of creation is that God will indwell creation, entering into relationships with the diverse community of creatures that God has made. In doing so God displays what it means for God to be God, that is to be a living communion of persons in relationship. In the act of creation, God graciously creates a partner with whom God enters into a relationship. God relates to creation in

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[64] Calvin, "Preface to Olivétan's New Testament", in *Calvin's: Commentaries*, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 23, trans. by J. Haroutunian and L. P. Smith (London: SCM 1958), pp. 58-73, pp. 59 and 60, see *Institutes*, 1:5:1.

[65] This was particularly true of the Reformed scholastics; see J. J. F. Durand, *Skepping, Mens en Voorsienigheid,* (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1982), p. 26 & 27, a classic example of this approach is seen in Jonathan Edwards, *Dissertation Concerning the End for which God Created the World*, pp. 403-536.

[66] Alan E. Lewis, *Theatre of the Gospel: The Bible as Nature's Story,* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1984), p. 6. The image of a theatre does not imply for Calvin that nature is merely "the stage for salvation history" as Sally McFague seems to imply in *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology,* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), p. 182. Calvin uses the same imagery to refer to the cross, see Calvin, *The Gospel according to John and the First Epistle of John,* trans. by T. H. L. Parker, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), p. 69.

such a manner that both God and creation are affected by it. This manifests the free and loving character of God, which analogically reflects relationships amongst the persons of the Trinity.[67] God does not create a single partner, but a complex community of interdependent and interrelated beings, who together reflect the dynamic inter-relatedness of the Trinity. God's activity in creating, sustaining and guiding this community to its goal, demonstrates God's wisdom, power, majesty and love. Creation thus expresses the beauty of God's inner life in all its dynamic, order and variety, it is thus an accommodated and finite expression of who God is and as such it glorifies God. As Austin writes: "Only a freely giving God would make an earth so vital, so alive, so self sustaining."[68]

From the trinitarian perspective, God creates in order to bring into being a finite expression of Godself. Creation thus reflects the dynamic beauty of the inner life of the Trinity by existing in mutually constituting and dependent relationships. Yet God only expresses Godself fully when God enters into a self-giving relationship with this community. God therefore establishes a relationship with them in order to achieve this purpose, that is, God enters into a covenant with creation with the goal of making God's home amongst them. This union with God was not complete at the beginning of creation, but is a dynamic process which will only reach its fulfilment at the eschaton. God's glory in creation is thus a quality which is in the process of being unfolded, and which will reach its *telos* when "God is all in all" (I Corinthians 15: 28).

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[67] For Calvin nature does not reveal any god, it is a manifestation of the triune Creator revealed in the scriptures. A non-triune monotheistic view of the Creator is idolatrous as it repudiates Christ, the only one through whom God can be known. It is the scriptures which enable people to perceive that the Creator is not a simple monad but the Triune God revealed in Jesus Christ. He says, for example, "the Turks although they proclaim at the top of their lungs that the creator of heaven and earth is God, while repudiating Christ substitute an idol in the place of the true God." *Institutes,* 2:6:4.

[68] Richard Cartwright Austin, *Beauty of the Land: Awakening the Senses,* Environmental Theology Book 4 (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), p. 49.

The covenantal and trinitarian perspectives thus provide complementary perspectives on the doxological character of creation. Together they emphasise that the magnificence of creation is "a dazzling theatre" from which the "glory of God shines forth."[69]

"The beauties of the earth are truly expressions of the beauty of God."[70] All aspects of creation, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, in some way give expression to God's glory.

> God's glory in creation appears in various degrees and ways. An insect and a star, the mildew on the wall and the cedar in Lebanon, a common labourer and a man like Augustine, are all creatures of God; yet how dissimilar they are and how varied their ways of glorifying God.[71]

This doxological understanding "builds into Reformed theology a very positive assessment of, and sensitivity to, nature."[72] It provides a variety of perspectives from which we can make this "positive assessment" and "sensitivity" explicit.

The Sanctuary of Creation

As the manifestation of the glory of God, creation is a place of meeting between God and humanity. This understanding might seem strange to some members of the Reformed tradition, but it is the outworking of the concept of general revelation as it

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[69] *Institutes,* 1:5:8.
[70] Austin, *Beauty of the Lord,* p. 133.
[71] Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit,* p. 22. For an attempt to work this out in detail see Jonathan Edwards, *Images of Divine Things,* in *Typological Writings: Images of Divine Things; Typos,* The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 11, ed. by Wallace E. Anderson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 50-142.
[72] Lewis, *Theatre of the Gospel*, p. 6. This also provides a theological basis for developing a theory of the rights of the rest of creation. While the development of such a theory lies beyond the scope of this thesis, it needs to be noted that animals, plants and the earth have rights because God created them to relate to Godself and to manifest God's glory. This does not mean that they have the same rights as human beings, but it does mean, for example, that we are to understand cruelty to animals as an assault upon God causing God to suffer. An attempt to develop such a theocentric basis for animal rights is Andrew Linzey, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals,* (New York: Crossroads, 1987).

was expressed by Calvin when he wrote:

> [T]here is no spot in the universe wherein you cannot discern at least some sparks of his glory ... [thus] the universe is for us a sort of mirror in which we can contemplate God, who otherwise is invisible."[73]

In another context he states that creation is "the garment in which He ...appears in a manner visible to us" and if we are to "enjoy the sight of Him ... we must cast our eyes upon the very fabric of the world, in which He wishes to be seen by us."[74]

This description is even more remarkable when we discover in his commentary on Colossians 1:15 that Calvin uses similar language to refer to Christ:

> God in Himself, that is, in his naked majesty is invisible; and that not only to physical eyes, but also to human understanding; and that He is revealed in Christ alone, where we behold Him as in a mirror. For in Christ He shows us his righteousness, goodness, wisdom, power, in short, His entire self.[75]

Just as God reveals Godself in Christ in order that humanity might contemplate and enter into a relationship with God, so God reveals Godself in creation. Calvin and the Reformed tradition have been quick to add that, because of sin, human beings are blinded to this revelation of God which now only serves to make them accountable for their sin. Equally the Reformed tradition has pointed out that as a consequence of regeneration creation becomes once more a place where God meets with humanity. God is now clearly seen when creation is viewed through the "spectacles" of Scripture.[76]

When viewed from a covenantal position creation is to be understood as the home created by God so that God might live

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[73] *Institutes*, 1:5:1.
[74] Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 4, p. 145,
[75] Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, p. 308
[76] *Institutes*, 1:6:1.

amongst the community of creation. Creation thus becomes the means through which God meets with humanity. The reality of this meeting is attested by the great nature Psalms. A complementary strand within the Biblical witness is often forgotten. At particular stages in the history of God's relationship with God's creatures, God's presence is more intense. This occurs through God's actions in history, but it also occurs through the non-human creation in theophanies. In a theophany God takes on Godself elements of the non-human created world and reveals Godself through them.[77] These events demonstrate that "[a]ll of creation ... stands in relationship to God and is a suitable vehicle for God's presence."[78]

If we combine this with our trinitarian understanding of creation as God's finite self-expression, we can affirm that creation becomes a meeting place between God and humanity. This happens as God accommodates Godself to bear the finite creation in order to enter into relationship with God's creatures through the work of the Spirit. The Spirit uses creation to bring the creature into communion with God. As such creation has a sacramental quality, as a visible manifestation of God's grace and presence brought about by the work of the Spirit. The Spirit brings the believer into communion with the Father, through the Son, who is the divine pattern within creation. This is thus not a move into nature worship or natural theology, but is rather to affirm that creation is a sanctuary where humans can contemplate, worship and commune with the triune God. In rejecting any attempt to divinise the created order the biblical traditions do not de-sacralise creation but rather open the way for a new understanding of its sacral character as the sanctuary of God.[79]

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[77] See Ronald A. Simkin, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), pp. 128-152

[78] Ibid., p. 131.

[79] The sacral character of creation is a prominent but often neglected theme in the Old Testament. The Old Testament narratives describe human sin as polluting the earth. This pollution is seen to build up and as a consequence of such a build up, God acts in judgement to cleanse the earth. It is this pollution that leads to the flood, that causes the land of

The Dynamic Order of Creation

A characteristic of Calvin's understanding of the glory of God revealed in creation was his emphasis on creation's ordered character. To the contemporary person the notion of order conjures up pictures of a monotonous, banal and static universe. A picture at variance from the dynamic complexity and inter-relatedness of natural reality as it is described by contemporary physics and biology. Calvin's concept of order in creation was, however, by no means monotonous or banal. Order for Calvin "meant proper being, correct arrangement, beauty, harmony, things as they ought to be - in a word perfection".[80] Calvin states that:

> God by the power of his Word and Spirit created heaven and earth out of nothing; bringing forth living beings and inanimate things of every kind, that in a wonderful series he distinguished an innumerable variety of things, that he endowed each kind with its own nature, assigned functions, appointed places and stations ... he has so wonderfully adorned heaven and earth with an unlimited abundance, variety and beauty of all things as could possibly be.[81]

Canaan to vomit out its inhabitants, and which would cause Israel to be exiled if they continually sin against God. The flood is God's act to purify the earth from this pollution, and a number of the ritual laws provide for the purification of the land. The sinful actions of humanity defile the earth calling forth God's judgement. See Frymer-Kensky, "The Atrahasis Epic and its Significance for our Understanding of Genesis 1-9", *Biblical Archaeologist*, 40, no. 4, (1977), 147-155, and idem., *In the Wake of the Goddesses,* pp. 94-95 and 102. The Old Testament books do not link this to the motif of creation as a sanctuary. This motif does, however, provide a possible framework in which this rather strange dimension of the biblical witness can be understood.

[80] M. Eugene Osterhaven, *The Faith of the Church: A Reformed Perspective on its Historical Development.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) p. 165. There was one area where Calvin viewed creation in a static fashion, for him creation was completed in a literal six days and that the only change in nature was due to the fall. Sin had introduced disorder into creation and redemption is the process of restoring order. At the present time, God's providential activity preserves the essentially static order. He states that God has "nevertheless provided for the preservation of each species until the Last Day... he nourishes some in secret ways, and as it were, from time to time instils new vigour into them; on others he has conferred the power of propagating, lest by their death the entire species perish." *Institutes,* 1:14:20.

[81] *Institutes,* 1:14:20.

This understanding can be deepened from a trinitarian and a covenantal perspective. From a trinitarian perspective we would propose that creation displays a dynamic living pattern, which is a reflection of, and a response to, the pattern of divine life set forth in the Logos. Empowered and animated by the Spirit, the members of the community of creation respond to the Logos and therefore to the other members of the community so that the order in creation is a dynamic order reflecting the inner life of the living God. In a covenantal perspective, the order is to be understood as the spontaneous response of the community of creation to God's covenant with it. A response which unfolds and develops in greater diversity and complexity as the Spirit evokes creation to give new expressions to God's intention for it.

God's order for creation is thus the complex and lush inter-relationships of many species in a natural forest and not the precise rows of trees of the same height and species found in large timber plantations. The complexity and richness that we find in the earth's manifold ecosystems, and the dynamism and diversity discovered by an examination of natural history are consequences of this dynamic covenantal and trinitarian relationship.

The act of creation is thus not a once and for all event which establishes a static order, it is rather a dynamic continuous process. This has important consequences for the traditional understanding of the relationship between creation and providence.

The Reformed tradition has always maintained that there is a close relationship between God's activity in creation and providence. Calvin argued that "unless we pass on to providence ... we do not understand what it means to say 'God is Creator.'"[82] God's power is "not the empty, idle and almost unconscious sort ... but a watchful, effective, active sort,

[82] *Institutes,* 1:16:1.

engaged in ceaseless activity."[83] This activity is such that "not one single drop of rain falls without God's sure command."[84]

All that takes place, happens as a result of God's continual activity in working out God's purposes for creation. This continual activity of God is seen in the stellar movements, the weather, the existence and continuance of biological life, and in the affairs of humanity. In the light of his understanding of God's constant activity creation, Calvin could make the daring statement that, "while nature is best described as the order prescribed by God" that "it can be said, provided it proceeds from a reverent mind, that nature is God."[85] Calvin's exposition of God's providence thus brings him to the "very brink of pantheism."[86]

For Calvin, providence is the continuation of and the outworking of God's initial act of creation. He comments on Genesis 1:11:

> When he says "Let the earth bring forth the herb which may produce seed, the tree whose seed is in itself," he signifies not only that herbs and trees were created, but that, at the same time, both were endued with the power of propagation, in order that their several species might be perpetuated. Since, therefore, we daily see the earth pouring forth to us such riches from its lap, since we see herbs producing seed, and this seed received and cherished in the bosom of the earth till it springs forth, and since we see trees shooting from other trees; all this flows from the same Word ... God has once spoken, that is has issued his eternal decree; and the earth and all things proceeding from it yield obedience to the command of God, which they always hear.[87]

Our interactive model of God's creative activity draws

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[83] *Institutes,* 1:16:3.
[84] *Institutes,* 1:16:5.
[85] *Institutes,* 1:5:5.
[86] John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life.* (Louisville: Westminster, 1989), p. 112.
[87] Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, p. 83, see also *Institutes,* 1:16:4.

creation and providence into a closer relationship, so that it is impossible to draw a clear line of distinction between them. The origins and the continued existence of the created order are consequences of the constant activity of the triune God, the response of creation and God's reaction to creation's response. From the initial moment of creation until the eschatological climax of history, God is interacting with creation evoking new and diverse responses to the covenantal Word. Hence creation and providence cannot be separated into two distinct categories of divine activity. This understanding reflects the Biblical writers' use of the same concepts and terminology to refer to those actions which theologians have traditionally divided into God's acts of creation and providence.[88]

God is faithful to the covenant with creation and we can thus depend upon its stability and order. This faithfulness provides the openness for dynamism and spontaneity. It is this recognition of the dynamism and order in God's interaction with creation which enables us to recognise and celebrate the surprises and the continuities within creation. It provides us with a theological framework which can interpret the developments in contemporary science which have discovered order and spontaneity, determinacy and indeterminacy, within all levels of creation.[89] In biology both the gradual evolutionary changes and the surprising transformations that we discover in natural history can be understood as out workings of this trinitarian and covenantal interaction between God and creation. There is no need to resort to a "God of the gaps" to interpret, for example, the emergence of life and the development of new species.

This understanding of God's providential activity rejects the traditional Reformed understanding of providence, as the

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[88] See Stek, "What Says the Scripture", pp. 242-250.

[89] See John Polkinghorne, *Science and Creation: The Search for Understanding*, (London: SPCK, 1988), pp. 34-68, and Arthur Peacock, *Theology for a Scientific Age: Being and Becoming - Natural, Divine and Human*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), pp. 44-71.

outworking of a preordained plan contained in God's eternal decree.

> [T]he Divine *plan* for the universe is not an abstract map as it were, of everything that is to happen, but *the concrete, dynamic and all pervasive working now*, of the Divine intention to govern with power, wisdom and joy so as to be able one day to usher in the new creation."[90]

God has a purpose and goal for creation which he accomplishes through this interactive process which God superintends to lead creation to its eschatological fullness. God's superintendence does not violate the integrity of the creatures, for as Calvin states, God "guides all creatures according to the condition and propriety which He had given each when He made them."[91] Calvin goes on to say, that this "does not prevent each creature ... from having and retaining its own quality and nature and from following its own inclination."[92]

Creation is thus the product of God's constant activity but it is the personal and differentiated activity of the Triune God, who accomplishes God's purpose by interacting with and through the character, nature and response of each individual creature.

Creation As an Organic Community

Creation gives expression to the glory of God through its dynamic communal existence. From a covenantal perspective God created a community of diverse creatures with whom God enters into a many faceted relationship. From a trinitarian perspective creation is understood as the finite self-

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[90] H. Paul Santmire, *Brother Earth: Nature, God and Ecology in a Time of Crisis* (Camden: Thomas Nelson, 1970), p. 113, the emphasis is Santmire's.
[91] Calvin, *Against the Fantastic and Furious Sects of the Libertines Who are Called "Spirituals"*, in *John Calvin: Treatises Against the Anabaptists and Against the Libertines.*, trans. and ed. by Benjamin Wirt Farley, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), pp. 159-236, pp. 242 and 243.
[92] Ibid. p. 243

expression of life of God. It therefore reflects analogically the relationships to the Trinity, that is, it is composed of particularities in perichoretic relationships of mutual dependency, in which they mutually constitute each other.[93] Both these perspectives emphasise that "[t]o be a creature is to be constituted by, to be made what one is, by and in a network of relationships."[94] These include relationships with the rest of creation and the particular relationship with the Creator.

This dynamic inter-relatedness and mutual dependence of the creation can be seen at all levels of the created order from the realm of physics and astronomy to the interrelated ecosystems of the biosphere.[95] Particularly in this latter sphere we find a community of living creatures mutually dependent upon each other and the earth for their life. These creatures were mutually constituted within the biosphere over the millennia of natural history. Evolutionary developments and ecological relationships are both analogical reflections of the perichoretic relationships of the persons of the Trinity.

One of the thought provoking developments of contemporary science has been the discovery of the anthropic principle, that is, the recognition that in all its complex inter-relationships of mutual dependency the universe is fine tuned to produce life. "What we have is a bomb blast (the big bang) that is fine tuned to produce a world that produces us, when almost any other imaginable blast would have yielded nothing."[96]

God as the Living One has created a universe designed to bring into being living creatures, whose life, vitality and activity

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[93] See Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many,* pp. 136-154 & 163-178.
[94] Gunton, *Christ and Creation,* p. 36.
[95] For a brief description of how this is understood in contemporary science see, George F. R. Ellis, *Before the Beginning: Cosmology Explained* (Boyars: London, 1993).
[96] Holmes Rolston III, *Science and Religion: A Critical Survey* (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 72, see Ellis, *Before the Beginning*, pp. 89-101.

manifest the eternal, living vitality of the Triune God. A merely mechanical universe would not point to a living and active creator who is constantly at work within the created order. Austin expresses this when he writes that "environmental systems are expressions of God's beauty in that the Lord not only creates but also bestows creativity upon the earth."[97]

This raises the issue of whether it is theologically legitimate to go beyond this affirmation and use organic metaphors to describe creation as a whole. The Dutch Neo-Calvinist tradition argued that a trinitarian and, particularly, a pneumatological understanding of creation provides the theological basis for an organic conception of the created order. Bavinck contrasts the Christian worldview with that of modernity in precisely these terms. The Christian worldview is theistic, organic and rooted in the concept of creation. That of modernity is atheistic, mechanistic and characterised by the ideas of development and progress.[98] In the Christian perspective the world is a "levende, bezielde, organische eenheid".[99]

Kuyper argues that it is the individualising work of the Spirit which results in an organic as against a mechanistic worldview. An organic reality is characterised by the inter-relationship of unique individual aspects of the whole organism. In a mechanistic world there would be specialisation without individualisation. This organic individualisation is the consequence of the Spirit's brooding over the unformed mass of creation. The power and movement of the Spirit transformed the inorganic matter into a living organism. The distinction between inorganic and organic existence and that between the various levels of organic

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[97] Austin, *Hope for the Land*, p. 48.

[98] See Herman Bavinck, *Schepping of Ontwikkeling*, (Kampen: Kok, 1919), particularly pp. 11, 12 & 42-51. Bavinck makes no reference to the role played by the Reformed tradition in legitimating the mechanistic concept of the universe. He is however surprisingly perceptive of the fact that the ecosystems of the earth cannot sustain the kind of development proposed by the modern worldview with its ideology of progress (see p. 44).

[99] Bavinck, *Schepping of Ontwikkeling*, op. cit., p. 30.

existence are the consequence of greater degrees of individualisation.[100]

Kuyper went on to argue that it is the living and active presence of the Holy Spirit which animates creation so that all energy, activity and power in the universe is the outworking of the Spirits presence and activity. There is thus a sense in which creation, in its component parts and as a whole, is alive. This applies not only to the biosphere of the earth but to the universe, for throughout the universe we see the operations of forces that are the product of the work of the Spirit.[101]

Turning to our trinitarian perspective we can argue that because God is the living God who exists in dynamic relatedness, therefore creation which manifests God's glory must be an organic and dynamic reality. From a covenantal perspective, we have argued that the whole of creation is in covenant relationship with God, this assumes that God is in a living and intimate relationship with all of creation. "Each landscape and each creature has the capacity - and with it the obligation - to respond to God and respond appropriately to others."[102]

While it might not be legitimate to describe the dynamism and responsiveness of non-living matter in terms of organic life, it can never be reduced to a mere machine running according to static laws and principles. God blessed the earth with an inherent fertility and the ability to produce life in response to God's actions. Thus while we might hesitate to use an organic model to describe the universe it is certainly applicable to the biosphere.

This understanding of creation as a vital "organic" community

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[100] See Kuyper, *Locus De Creatione*, pp. 72-76.
[101] See Kuyper, *Locus De Providentia,* in *Dictaten Dogmatiek: Locus De Providentia, Peccato, Feodere, Christo,* College Dictaat van een der Studenten (Kampen: Kok, n. d.), pp. 58 & 59.
[102] Austin, *Hope for the Land,* p. 49.

has the important consequence that it argues for the goodness of creation yet posits further evolution, growth and unfolding through time. Creation is in an organic, integrated, and living process animated by the Spirit as it moves from its origin in the Father to its *telos* in the Son. The world was thus created good but not complete.

The Integrity and Value of Creation

A trinitarian and covenantal theology of creation enables us to come to a more adequate understanding of God's immanence and transcendence and thus the integrity and value of creation.

This trinitarian conceptualisation of creation provides a way of emphasising both the transcendence and the immanence of God. The Father is the transcendent person of origin, the Logos is the transcendent pattern of creation that is embedded within it through the work of the immanent Spirit, who nevertheless remains distinct from creation, as an Other in relation to it. While creation is distinct from God, it is never absent from the triune God, God is always present within it enabling it to be this distinct reality. Creation is never absorbed into God, for God relates to it in a perichoretic manner. In such a relationship the particularities of the parties involved are enhanced rather than reduced as a consequence of it.

The covenantal perspective enhances this understanding. God created a multifaceted covenant partner in order to enter a relationship with it. For God to relate to this partner it must be distinct from God, yet at the same time be present to, and in communion with God. God's transcendence and immanence is thus to be understood relationally. The God who relates to creation must transcend it yet at the same time be present with it.

As the covenant partner and self-manifestation of God,

creation is to be respected as being valuable, important and good. For it is as a reality distinct from God but deeply loved by God. Throughout Genesis 1 creation, in its component dimensions and as a whole, is declared to be good. Ontologically nothing within it is morally "evil, nothing is appearance, nothing is inferior."[103] This does not however mean that it is complete or even perfect but rather that; "die skepping wat uit God's hande voort gekom het, en gevolglik ook deur hom vir sy doel bruikbaar verklaar is."[104] Creation is thus "suitable for its purpose"[105] of displaying the glory of God as God's covenant partner.

The enhancement of creation's distinctive goodness and integrity within the context of a covenantal and trinitarian model is more conducive to the development of an ecotheology than the panentheism or pantheism. In those understandings creation has value, not by virtue of its own worth, but as a consequence of it being in some sense an extension of the divine, or of the divine being present within it. In the covenantal and trinitarian model creation has a worth in and of its self. The Creator loves it with a deep self-sacrificial love and regards it of such value that in faithfulness God will take upon Godself the full consequence of creaturely opposition and distortion.

Ethically this affirmation is a rejection of all forms of dualism which denigrate the material creation as inferior to that which is "spiritual" or regard it as intrinsically evil. Rather the way that human beings relate to the material creation has spiritual consequences, in the sense that God holds human beings responsible for their treatment of God's good creation. A dualistic spirituality which excuses human beings from being concerned about God's creation is an affront to the God who declared creation to be good. "To regard any part of creation as inherently evil... is both slanderous and

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[103] Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, p. 166.
[104] J. A. Heyns, *Dogmatiek* (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1978), p. 109.
[105] Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, p. 176.

destructive."[106]

This affirmation is also a rejection of all anthropocentric approaches to creation. Creation, animate and inanimate, is valuable regardless of its usefulness to humanity. As Daniel L. Migliore states: "The affirmation that creation is good is the ground of respect and admiration for all beings."[107]

The failure on the part of many Christians to demonstrate a positive attitude to creation is not because they do not reverence it as divine but because they fail to truly reverence the triune Creator. It is the failure of humanity to perceive the triune God who loves creation and who is revealed through it, that deprives creation of its glory.[108] In Calvin's understanding such a failure is the consequence of worshipping a God shaped by one's own misconceptions and thus one who is to some extent an idol.

THE TRAVAIL OF CREATION

In emphasising the goodness of creation as the self-expression and covenant partner of the triune God it is easy to neglect the reality of the "dark side" of creation that is the reality of pain, suffering, death and decay. Life in the biosphere is dependent upon death and it is out of the reality of death and destruction that some of the greatest beauty and dynamism emerges. The grace and agility of the springbok is a consequence of its need to escape from the speed and ferocity of the cheetah. What humans perceive to be beautiful and even awesome in the plant and animal realms are often attributes that are shaped by predatory relationships. "Creation is deeply ambiguous. It seems to affirm God and deny God at the same time."[109]

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[106] Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp 88.
[107] Ibid., pp. 88.
[108] See *Institutes*, 1:5:15.
[109] Linzey, *Christianity and the Rights of Animals*, p. 7.

A romantic view of creation is of no use in the development of an ecotheology. It is the reality of the "dark side" that has been a major motivating factor in human attempts to attain mastery over the rest of creation. Bacon's dream of human control over nature and its resources can only be understood against the background of the helplessness that many medieval people experienced in the face of disease and natural disasters. It is easy for those who have benefited from the advances of science and technology to idealise pre-modern societies and cultures. The majority of powerless humans still experience the threat of the "dark side" of creation. This is complicated by the realisation that attempts to overcome the forces of death and destruction have often contributed to ecological devastation. The most obvious example of this is the manner in which modern medicine has contributed to the exponential growth in the worlds population.

Traditionally the "dark side" of creation has been seen to be a consequence of human sin. Natural history has demonstrated that this dimension of creation existed millennia before the advent of humankind; a fact which is complemented by a careful reading of the Genesis narratives. Even on the most literal interpretation, one is confronted with the questions of why is Adam instructed to guard the garden? And where did the snake come from? In addressing this issue theologically we could affirm that this reality is part of God's good creation and/or we need to affirm that creation has in some way been twisted and warped.

The "Dark Side" of a Good Creation

In the light of contemporary science we are forced to recognise that biological life, as we know it, is dependent upon death and decay.

> We ... know that the negative phenomena are not purely negative, because they hang together with the good of the continuation of life. Through the food chain,

> animals which devour each other maintain a biological equilibrium, whose disruption would turn the earth into a desert, a jungle or a slaughter house.[110]

The goodness and beauty of creation must therefore be seen in an ecological perspective, from this perspective we can see a goodness and beauty even in death. Ecology helps us to see this:

> By showing how species sustain each other even as they consume each other, ecological analysis reveals the beauty even within the "eat-and-be-eaten" system that is the essence of life support on this planet.[111]

This seems to lead us to affirm that: "Die goeie wêreld sluit pyn en dood, stryd en ondergang in."[112] The Biblical witness, particularly in the wisdom literature, seems to affirm that death and finitude of humanity and the rest of creation is part of God's intention for creation. It is God's purpose for creation to go through struggle and resistance on its way towards its eschatological goal.

A covenantal and trinitarian perspective can deepen and expand our understanding of this reality. From a trinitarian perspective creation is the expression of the beauty of the inner life of God, a life that is characterised by the mutual giving and receiving of the perichoretic relationships, through which the persons of the Trinity are constituted. It seems that in a finite, time bound creation, such relationships of mutual dependence involve death and decay as the different components of creation draw on the life of others to live and flourish.

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[110] Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, p. 175, see Loren E. Wilkinson "A Christian Ecology of Death: Biblical Imagery and the Ecological Crisis", *Christian Scholars Review,* 5, no 4 (1976), 319-338. Berkhof's use of "a desert" and "a jungle" to describe the ecological consequences of a failure to maintain a biological equilibrium is problematic. Both jungles and deserts give evidence of delicate ecological balances. Some deserts are however a consequence of ecological damage caused by human activity. In this qualified sense a desert is a suitable symbol of the consequences of biological imbalances.

[111] Austin, *The Beauty of the Land*, pp. 28 and 29.

[112] Heyns, *Dogmatiek,* p. 109.

Covenantally, we argued that God is interacting with creation as God draws it forward to its ultimate goal when God will make God's home amongst the whole creation. The present creation thus has a provisional character, from its beginning it was "subject to frustration" (Romans 8: 20). Death and decay are components of the present creation which will be done away with in the eschatological future.

Migliore sums up this perspective:

> If all creatures are finite, limited, and vulnerable and if the challenge, risk, and growth are part of creaturely existence as intended by God, then there is no reason to suppose that *all forms* of suffering are inherently evil. There is, as Karl Barth puts it, a "shadow side" of the good creation.[113]

The "dark side" of creation has an important contribution to our understanding that creation gives expression to the glory of God. Diogenese Allen argues that the "dark side" points in its own way to God:

> [A] major part of having faith is to come to terms with the suffering caused by the operations of the natural world.... By enduring what we cannot or have not been able as yet to change, we can learn more about what the good God seeks to give us. Suffering helps break our egocentric and anthropocentric perspectives and enables us to realize that our wellbeing is to be found in the good that is God.[114]

The reality of suffering and death in the world forces us to recognise that creation is not divine, but only the finite self expression of God. The "dark side" thus points beyond creation to the Creator.

The experience of a "dark side" to creation destroys our anthropocentric view of the world by demonstrating that there

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[113] Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, p. 89, the emphasis is Migliore's.

[114] Diogenese Allen, *Christian Belief in a Postmodern World: The Full Wealth of Conviction* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989), pp. 112.

is much in God's creation which is alien to the needs and desires of humanity. God's interests stretch far beyond the needs and aspirations of human beings though they do not exclude them.[115] Creation was not brought into existence merely to provide for humanity. Human alienation from these dimensions of creation is exacerbated by humanities sinful refusal to accept its place within creation. Struggle and suffering are not necessarily the consequence of sin, but sin has distorted them.[116]

The "Dark Side" as a Distortion of Creation

Having affirmed that the there are elements of what we have described as the "dark side" of creation that can be understood as a dimension of a finite good creation, we are forced to admit that the reality of suffering, pain and destruction is beyond that which can easily be understood from this perspective. The Biblical witness with its note of strong protest against death and suffering and its hope for an eschatological *shalom*, found particularly in the prophetic literature and in the New Testament, will not allow such an easy acceptance of the "dark side" of creation. As Migliore states:

> There is much in the world that should *not* be. While creaturely existence entails finitude and limitations, the powers of disease, destruction, and oppression are not part of the creator's intention. God is not the cause but the opponent of evil forces in their individual and corporate expressions.[117]

There is thus a dimension of disorder present in creation, a negative dynamic, which distorts creation and directs it away from God's covenantal purpose for creation. Inexplicably creation has responded in a distorted and faithless manner to

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[115] This latter point is made strongly in the book of Job, see Bill McKibben, *The Comforting Whirlwind: God, Job and the Scale of Creation* (Grand Rapid's Eerdmans, 1994).
[116] See Douglas John Hall, *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* (Augsburg: Minneapolis, 1986), pp. 49-92.
[117] Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, op. cit., p. 89.

God's covenantal Word. Thomas Torrance writes that:

> Decay, decomposing and death could not be regarded as merely natural features and functions but as charged with anti-natural forces and giving natural entropy a dysteological twist at odds with the expansion of nature toward higher and more complex forms of organisation.[118]

The origin of this distortion in creation remains a mystery. It could be ascribed to the freedom and spontaneity granted to creation in God's covenantal relationship. Or it may be that "somehow nature has been infiltrated by an extrinsic evil"[119] as a consequence of a cosmic or angelic fall. In both proposals we are forced back to the enigma of the origins of evil. The question of why this should happen and how it could happen remain. Evil always remains a surd which cannot be explained. However evil is perceived to have originated, once it infested creation it let loose powers of death and destruction that have warped God's good creation.

God's Struggle against the Powers of Chaos

Traditional theological categories do not adequately comprehend creation as God's response to the powers of suffering, death and destruction. The often neglected motif of God as a warrior and of God's action in creation as a struggle against the powers of chaos and destruction must be recovered and developed.[120] While the violence of this motif might be considered problematic, it is still useful when it is read in the light of the understanding of God's character developed in chapter 2.

God does not stand aloof from the pain and suffering of creation. The suffering of creation is a consequence of the

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[118] Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Order* (Oxford University Press, 1981), p.123.
[119] Ibid., p. 123.
[120] See James McClendon Jr., *Doctrine*, Systematic Theology Volume Two (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), pp. 160-176, and Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid, *God is a Warrior*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

powers of chaos opposing God and God's covenantal purpose. Their activities are thus to be understood as an attack upon Godself. More than this as a consequence of the covenant relationship, God experiences the pain of creation as God's own pain. Despite the suffering that it entails God stubbornly refuses to abandon or destroy creation. In faithfulness to the covenant God enters into the struggles of God's creatures through the presence and activity of the Spirit. The Spirit engages the forces of death and destruction drawing creation into greater realisations of communion with the Logos.

God's engagement with the forces of chaos is not to be pictured as a violent struggle. It is the self-sacrificial entering into the life of creation to overcome the forces of chaos bringing life, beauty and joy out of death and destruction. God thus responds to creation's distorted response to the covenantal word by using death and destruction to bring about new and greater expressions of the life of the Triune God. It is because of the kind of God that the Triune God is, that we discover awesome splendour and graceful beauty emerging out of suffering and death. The Spirit of God groans with creation and transforms the suffering of creation into "the pains of childbirth" (Romans. 8:22) drawing creation forward to the glorious birth of the new heaven and the new earth in which there will be no pain, destruction or death.

CHAPTER 4
HUMANITY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF CREATION

The theatre of the divine glory has been defaced, much of it lies in ruins, the mirror that reflects God's character has become opaque with scratches and parts of it are shattered. The life of this created expression of the triune God is being slowly suffocated. Human beings are destroying God's creation in their ruthless pursuit of their own comfort and pleasure.

The environmental crisis confronts us with the enigma of the human creature. These creatures whose history is characterised by both dignity and depravity, selflessness and selfishness, creativity and destruction, are central both to the crisis and to its solution. The theological task in this chapter is to understand humanity as it lies within this crucible of guilt and responsibility. It is only once this has been done that we can proclaim the empowering and enabling message of God's grace, which calls human beings to become co-workers with God in the redemption of creation.

From another perspective the position of the human creature is enigmatic. Unlike other creatures, with the exception of those domesticated by humans, human beings have no particular ecological niche. Human beings, using their cognitive abilities, have made their home in all sorts of regions and environments, altering the environment to suit their own needs. More than this, they are physically weak and vulnerable. They are completely dependent on their ability to self-consciously use and alter the non-human creation. Without these abilities they would not be able to meet their most basic needs. But the rest of creation would survive and in some cases flourish without them. The question that faces us from a theological perspective is: What on earth are they here for? Why is God so interested in humanity, particularly in the light of humanity's destructive tendencies?

In understanding humanity in the context of the environmental

crisis we must be suspicious of any attempt to view human beings as a monolithic group, all of whom are equally responsible for the destruction of the environment. Unequal relationships of power have fractured human society into a complex network of conflicting interests. Significant fractures include those that divide women and men; poor and rich, and black and white. The powerful segments of society have abused their power to oppress the powerless and to abuse the earth. As Reinhold Niebuhr wrote: "It may be taken as axiomatic that great disparities of power lead to injustice whatever may be the efforts to mitigate it."[1] The fractures in society can thus only be overcome through the empowerment of the powerless resulting in a movement towards justice and liberation for all.

Human relationships with the rest of creation reflect the relationships of power that exist in human society. Feminist scholars have thus argued that human domination over otherkind is a reflection and consequence of patriarchal domination and exploitation of women.[2] Feminist theologians have used this analysis to develop incisive theological responses to the environmental crisis.[3] Our exploration of the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation will use the broader categories of the powerful and the powerless. There will be a particular focus on the relationship between the rich and the poor, the exploiters of the earth and those who have been exploited in order to gain the earth's riches. In the South African context this division has largely coincided with, and is complicated by, the fracture between black and white. The poorest of the poor and the most powerless group in society

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[1] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, The Gifford Lectures, one volume edition, vol. 2, *Human Destiny* (New York: Charles Scriber, 1949), p. 262.

[2] This relationship is symbolised in the widespread use of female symbols to describe the relationship between "man" and rest of creation. See Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature - Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution.*(San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990).

[3] See Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), Ann Primavesi, *From Apocalypse to Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) and Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

are usually poor black women.

Responses to the environmental crisis must take into consideration the power relationships which exist between these different groups. The responses of the rich and powerful often conceal their own interests and are carried out at the expense of the powerless. Countries of the South have become the dumping grounds for toxic waste and the sites for polluting industry. Environmental practices in South Africa and the United States of America have been characterised by environmental racism, with environmentally hazardous industry being situated in predominately black areas. Efforts to preserve the environment often display the same power interest, with people being removed from the land in order to create nature reserves for the leisure time activity of the powerful.

The degradation of creation that took place during the years of apartheid in South Africa has demonstrated the inseparable relationship between the oppression of people and the destruction of the rest of creation.[4] The poor and the rest of creation are subjected to systematic exploitation by the powerful. Thus the issues of social injustice and environmental destruction must not be viewed in isolation from each other, for they are two dimensions of a more complex phenomenon.[5]

All human prosperity is a consequence of interaction with the rest of creation. Human injustice towards, and oppression of, other people is a dimension of the domination and exploitation of the rest of creation by the powerful, who make use of other people as tools to attain their goals. In exploiting and dominating the powerless, the powerful make use of other

[4] See Jacklyn Cock and Eddie Koch, eds., *Going Green: People Politics and the Environment in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991), Alan B. Durning, *Apartheid's Environmental Toll,* Worldwatch Papers, 95 (Washington: Worldwatch, 1990), Mamphela Ramphele and Chris McDowell, eds., *Restoring the Land: Environment and Change in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (London: Panos, 1991).

[5] See Leonardo Boff, *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*, trans. by John Cumming (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), pp. 21-29.

components of creation as tools to achieve their goals. They exercise power over the powerless by controlling access to and the use of the resources of the non-human creation.

The oppression of the powerless has ecological consequences. The powerless are denied access to resources and are thus forced into ecologically destructive lifestyles. Denied the use of electricity they burn wood for energy, polluting the atmosphere and destroying natural forests. Forced off arable land they overpopulate marginal agricultural land leading to overgrazing, soil erosion and desertification. Yet to provide for the basic needs of the poor it seems that industrial development is necessary, with its inevitable destruction of the environment. The growing exploitation of the non-renewable resources of the earth combined with the ecological degradation will lead to an ever increasing competition for scarce resources. The majority of the earth's population will be subjected to increasing marginalisation and oppression as the powerful seek to ensure their continued control of these resources.

Throughout this complex set of interactions we find powerless people, animals, plants and minerals, being treated, not as members of the community of creation with their own intrinsic value, but as resources and tools to be used for the benefit of the powerful. This instrumentalisation of the members of the community of creation has been legitimated and intensified by the mechanistic world view of modernity in both its capitalistic and socialistic modes.

THE HUMAN CREATURE

Expositions of the doctrine of humanity in the Christian theology, including the Reformed tradition, have usually emphasised that human beings are distinct from, and superior to, the rest of creation. Humanity was seen as the crown of creation for whose benefit the rest of creation was brought into being. Calvin could thus claim, that if humanity would

cease to exist, then "the earth would exhibit a sense of desolation and solitude no less than if God would dispatch it of all other riches."[6] As the bearers of the divine image, human beings were not only seen to be superior to the rest of creation, but also as possessing dominion over them with the right to use them for their own benefit. The catastrophic implications of the environmental crisis seriously question the legitimacy of such an understanding and must lead to a re-examination of the tradition in the light of biblical witness.

In contrast to the tradition we have argued that God's relationship and interaction with God's creatures is a consequence of God entering into a covenant with the whole of creation. The first creation narrative reaches its climax, not in the creation of humanity, but in the sanctification of the Sabbath. The creation of human beings is thus not the climax and goal of God's creative activity. The climax is God's eschatological new creation in which God will dwell with all of God's creatures. All creatures, including human beings find their goal and destiny in the glory of God. The particularity of human creatures and God's relationship with them can thus only be understood within the context of their relationship to the greater covenant community.

Human Beings as Creatures

The ideology of modernity, often legitimated by Christian theology, has elevated humanity to a quasi-divine status. Human beings have been given absolute rights over the earth and its creatures, including powerless human beings. The powerful have assumed the authority to use, to exploit and to degrade the rest of creation as if it was their private possession. Autonomous man as the director of his own destiny and of the rest of creation has presumed to take upon himself the rights over the life and death of the rest of creation, rights that belong to God alone.[7]

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[6] Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms,* vol. 1, trans. by James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 401

[7] The use of masculine terminology is deliberate; this is not to assert

Central to the Reformed tradition is the distinction between the Creator and the creature and thus the polemic against idolatry. God alone possess the prerogatives of deity and no creature, human or otherkind, must be permitted to claim these prerogatives. Calvin wrote:

> [A]s often as Scripture asserts there is one God, it is not contending over the bare name, but also prescribing that nothing belonging to his divinity is to be transferred to another.[8]

Calvin commented on the account of Cornelius bowing before Peter.

> He had not advanced so ill in godliness as not to pay God alone the highest reverence. Therefore, when he prostrated himself before Peter, undoubtedly he did not intend to worship Peter in place of God, yet Peter earnestly forbade him to do it. Why, unless because men never so articulately discern between the honouring of God and of creatures without indiscriminately transferring to the creature what belonged to God? Thus if we wish to have one God, we must not pluck away even a particle of his glory, he must retain what is his own.[9]

The Genesis creation narratives are very careful to deny godlike status to human beings. The first account is characterised by a polemic against the deification of creation and its components.[10] While human beings are described as created in the image of God, in contrast to other Ancient Near Eastern narratives, they are not seen to be in a direct way to emerge from God or the gods. In most other narratives, humans are seen to be the product of divine procreation or conflict in which they are created out of some divine substance, such

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that only males are guilty of such action, but rather to recognise that this has largely been considered to be a male prerogative.

[8] *Institutes,* 1:12:1.

[9] *Institutes,* 1:12:3.

[10] See Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Polemical Nature of the Genesis Cosmology," *Evangelical Quarterly,* 46 (1974), 81-102, Conrad Heyers, *The Meaning of Creation: Genesis and Modern Science* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984), and Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary vol. 1, (Waco: Word, 1987), pp. 5-10 and 36-40.

as semen or blood. In the second narrative the essence of sin is the attempt by human beings to autonomously claim divine prerogatives.[11]

Human beings are to be fundamentally understood as creatures dependent on and subject to the Creator. This is their primary dignity and glory, any other status accorded to them is secondary to this, and must be understood in the light of it.

Human Beings as Members Of The Community Of Creation

To assert that human beings are creatures is to assert that they stand together with the other creatures in a unique communion as fellow members of a covenant community. Karl Barth expresses this when he asserts, that the Christian is one who has recognised and confessed one's own creaturehood by

> ... simply availing himself of a permission and invitation. He is going through an open door, but one which he himself has not opened, into a banqueting hall. And there he willingly takes his place under the table, in the company of publicans, in the company of beasts and plants and stones, accepting solidarity with them, being present simply as they are, as a creature of God.[12]

The Old Testament bears witness to this relationship between humanity and the rest of creation in four ways. The first is seen in the first creation account. While the account emphasises the particularity of the human creature it places this within the context of human beings being created on the same day as the other land animals. Closely related to Genesis 1 is Psalm 104, in which "both humans and animals are put on a level of equality in God's creation" they both "depend upon the Creator for their livelihood and are animated

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[11] See Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*, trans. by David G. Pearson (Leicester: Inter-Vasity, 1984), pp. 125-133.
[12] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics,* vol. 3 part 3, *The Doctrine of Creation*, trans. by G. W. Bromiley and R. J. Ehlich, ed. by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), p. 242.

by the divine *rûah*."[13]

The second is found in the second creation narrative where both the first human and the animals are formed out of the earth and are animated by "the breath of life." Thus human beings and animals are made out of the same earth from which the plants come forth. Humans, plants and animals share a common origin in the earth, from the earth they were taken and to the earth they will return.

Third, when Adam is found to be alone, God creates the other animals and brings them to him. While none of them is suitable as a companion, the whole process indicates an affinity between human beings and the other animals.

Fourth, the covenant described in the flood narrative portrays both humans and animals as possessing life symbolised by blood. While humans are permitted to eat animals, they may only do so in a manner which respects this common possession of life and honours the Giver of life. Human and animal life is sacred and may only be taken with the express permission of God.

Human beings, as creatures, are on the creaturely side of the divide between the Creator and the creature hence they have a greater affinity with the rest of creation than with God. They are part of the same covenant community which is together the covenant partner of God. Humanity and otherkind share in a common life as members of the community of creation move together towards God's eschatological goal for creation.

Humanity - Dependent On The Rest Of Creation

To be a creature is to exist in, and be constituted by, a particular set of relationships to God and to other creatures. A creature is one who is ontologically dependent on the

[13] Bernard Anderson, "Creation in the Bible" in *Cry of the Environment: Rebuilding the Christian Creation Tradition,* ed. by Philip N. Joranson and Ken Butigan (Santa Fe: Bear, 1984), pp. 19-44 (p. 32).

covenantal relationship between God and creation, through which God has created a world as "a network of mutually constituting *particularities*: distinct beings who yet take the shape of their being from one another."[14]

All creatures exist in symbiotic relationships with other creatures and with the rest of creation. Human beings are no exception to this. Thus a fundamental component of what it means to be human is to be a creature amongst other creatures, sharing the earth with them as our home. Human dependence on God is thus experienced through humanity's dependence on other creatures for the basic necessities of life. It is not that the rest of creation was created for the benefit of humanity, but that all of creation was created in such a manner that all creatures are dependent on other creatures so that their mutual dependence provides a finite reflection of the mutual dependence of the persons of the Trinity.

The relationship between humanity and the rest of creation is asymmetrical. Moltmann interprets the implications of the first creation narratives when he writes:

> [A]s the last thing to be created the human being is dependent on all the others. Without them his existence would not be possible. So while they are a preparation for him, he is dependent on them.[15]

Human beings are totally dependent upon the rest of creation for food, shelter and clothing, in a way which other creatures are not dependent upon humanity. Human beings are totally vulnerable if their ability to use the rest of creation to sustain them is removed. They have no fur to keep them warm and they have no claws to kill food or to defend themselves. Even the domesticated creatures would continue to thrive if humanity disappeared from the earth, but no humans could survive without their ability to make self-conscious use of

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[14] Colin Gunton, *Christ and Creation* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), p.37, the emphasis is Gunton's.
[15] Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation,* The Gifford Lectures 1984-1985, trans. by M. Kohl (London: SCM, 1985), p. 187.

the rest of creation.

Creation was made for the benefit of humanity, not in the sense, that all creatures find their ultimate goal and purpose in serving the needs of humanity, but in the sense that all creatures find their goal in glorifying God by serving each other. All the members of the community of creation are thus gifts of God to the rest of the community. In this context we can reaffirm Calvin's understanding of creation as a gift to be received in gratefulness by human beings.

Calvin wrote:

> [W]e ought in the very order of things diligently to contemplate God's fatherly love toward mankind, in that he did not create Adam until he had lavished upon the universe all manner of good things. For if he had put him in an earth as yet sterile and empty, if he had given him life without light, he would have seemed to provide insufficiently for his welfare. Now when he disposed the movements of the sun and the stars to human use, filled the earth, waters, and air with living things, and brought forth an abundance of fruits to suffice as foods, in thus assuming the responsibility of a foreseeing and diligent father of the family he shows his wonderful goodness towards us.[16]

While the anthropocenterism of Calvin's comments must be rejected, the central insight that God has provided bountifully and graciously for the needs and pleasures of humanity through creation must be affirmed. In providing for humanity creation points to God and through it God calls human beings to grateful recognition of and faith in the Creator.[17] This provision for humanity extends beyond the necessities of life, for God has created a universe which is aesthetically pleasing to humanity and we are called to enjoy the

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[16] *Institutes,* 1:14:2 see also 1:14:20 and 1:14:22.

[17] This theme of God's goodness and the need for human gratitude is central to Calvin's theology; see B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), pp. 21-49.

multifaceted magnificence of creation.[18] All this must be received with grateful thanks to God.

Humanity as the Elect Creature

The Christian faith confesses that human beings as creatures of the Triune God and fellow members of the community of creation with animals, plants and minerals, have a particular place within the creation. A trinitarian understanding of God's creative activity has as its consequence an organic model of creation. The organic model emphasises the living interdependency of all its members. But the particularities of the members is important, for it is only as they all make their particular contribution that the whole organism functions in a healthy manner. The issue is, what is the particular contribution that humanity makes to the health of creation?

Attempts to define this particularity have usually focused on those qualities by which human beings are perceived to be different from other animals. This search for human particularity has not been confined to theology, but has been carried out in other disciplines as well. Proposals include the use of reason, tool making, speech and self consciousness. None of these is ultimately satisfactory. The first three can be found in at least a rudimentary form in other animals, and as far as the last is concerned we have no means of discovering levels of self-consciousness in whales or dolphins.

A more fruitful approach is to begin with the acknowledgement of the creaturehood of human beings and the recognition that all creatures exist in relationships of service to the rest of the community of creation. The question then becomes in what particular manner human beings are called to act as gifts to the rest of creation. The focus is on the gifting and vocation given to humanity by Gods free and gracious election.

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[18] See *Institutes,* 3:10:2.

The particular vocation of humanity is not to be understood as a consequence of them having any inherent superiority, qualities, dignity or status, but purely as a consequence of God's free election. Their ability to fulfil their calling is a consequence, not a precondition, of their calling. As Calvin wrote of God in his commentary on Psalm 8:4:

> If He had in mind to exercise his liberality towards any, He was under no necessity of choosing men who are but dust and clay, in order to prefer them above all other creatures.[19]

Calvin understood the election of humanity as a paradigmatic example of God's gracious election which illuminated the election of Israel and the church.[20] However, the emphasis of the biblical witness is on God's dealings with Israel and the church. Thus their election and vocation provides a paradigm for understanding the election and vocation of humanity.

The concepts of election and covenant are closely interrelated, God chooses a people to enter into a covenant relationship with God in order that they might serve the purposes of God's reign within the world. These motifs bring us to the crux of the dynamic relationship between particularity and universality that characterises the biblical witness. When God elects a particular covenant community it is with the view towards a universal goal. Abraham is chosen not only for the benefit of his descendants but also for the blessing of all nations. David and his descendants are chosen in order to serve the nation. The election of Abraham and David reaches its ultimate fulfilment in the election of Christ, through whom the world is to be redeemed. As George S. Hendry stated:

> In the Bible... the universality of God is presented in a particular, and paradoxical, relation with his

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[19] Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 1, p. 100.
[20] See Calvin's commentary on Malachi 1: 2-6 in *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. 5, *Zechariah and Malachi*, trans. by John Owen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), pp. 471-482.

> particularity. And it is the particularity of God that has priority in the Biblical understanding. It is a prime characteristic of the God of Biblical faith that he elects: he introduces himself and relates his action to particular persons and a particular people. But the election of the particular is from the first instrumental to the attainment of the universal; it is the method, or strategy, of God to begin with the particular and advance to the universal.[21]

To propose that human beings are elected by God to enter into a specific covenant relationship with God and the rest of the covenant community of creation is to propose that they are elected for the benefit of the rest of the community of creation. Election is with a view to service and dependent solely on God's grace. Failure to recognise the free and gracious character of the election of humanity will return us to an illegitimate anthropocentric view of humanity's status in creation. Failure to recognise that humanity is elected to a particular vocation will exclude the legitimate emphasis on the responsibility that humanity must exercise in their relationship with creation.

All creatures serve both God and the rest of creation - what distinguishes human beings is the particular vocation that God has elected them to perform. The receive this vocation as *creatures* and, like other creatures, they only serve God and the rest of creation out of dependence on creation and ultimately on God.

SERVANTS OF GOD -- SERVANTS OF CREATION

In the history of Christian theology the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation has been understood in relation to two main motifs. These are that human beings are created in the "image of God" and that they have been given "dominion" over the earth. In developing an ecotheology we are faced with the dilemma that it is these two motifs that are often held to have legitimated the destruction of the

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[21] George S. Hendry, *Theology of Nature* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), p. 117.

environment. Yet contrary to the views of many ecological critics of Christianity, these motifs have not always been used to legitimate the exploitation of the earth. Jeremy Cohen, in his survey of ancient and medieval interpretations of Genesis 1:28, concludes that:

> Rarely, if ever, did premodern Jews and Christians construe this verse as a licence for the selfish exploitation of the environment. Although most readers of Genesis casually assumed that God had fashioned the physical world for the benefit of human beings, Gen. 1:28 evoked relatively little concern with the issue of dominion over nature.[22]

Even in the early modern period many seventeenth and eighteenth century Christians, including the Puritans, regarded these verses "as a command *against* tyrannical cruelty or abuse and a mandate for guardianship and benevolence".[23]

Despite this the legitimacy of the ecological complaint against some interpretations of these motifs must be recognised. Not only have they been used by some interpreters to legitimate the exploitation of the rest of creation, but traditional interpretations lend themselves to such use.

The Royal Image

The motif of the image of God has been variously interpreted throughout the history of Christian theology.[24] The text itself gives very few clues as to what it means. At the very least we can assert that in some sense human beings are to

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[22] Jeremy Cohen, *"Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master it:" The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 5.

[23] James A. Nash, *Loving Nature: Ecological Integrity and Christian Responsibility* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1991), p. 103. He bases his assertion on the evidence in Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of Modern Sensibilities* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), pp. 149-181, the emphasis is Nash's.

[24] Details of these interpretations can be found in Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 33-65, Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 88-112 and David Cairns, *The Image of God in Man* (London: Collins, 1973).

reflect and represent God in creation.

In the Ancient Near Eastern context, the concept of the image of a god was used in relation to two main areas. The first was that of a statue of the god used in worship. Rulers also used similar statues to represent them in the territory which they ruled. The second was in Egyptian and Mesopotamian royal theology. Pharaohs and kings legitimated their rights and prerogatives with the claim that they, unlike the rest of the population, were the image of a god. As the image of a particular god the rulers acted as a royal priesthood, representing the god to the people and the people to the god. Given the religious polemic and royal theology of the first creation narrative,[25] these Ancient Near Eastern parallels provide relevant indicators for how we are to understand the biblical motif. In both uses of the motif, the image was intended to reflect the character and personality of the deity and to represent the interests of the deity in a particular context.

Central to the Ancient Near Eastern use of the motif were the concepts of power and authority. Carved images and rulers were both perceived to represent the power and authority of the particular god. In the case of a ruler, the claim to be the image bearer of a particular god legitimated the ruler's authority and power over the mass of the population.

This royal interpretation of the motif of the image of God relates it very closely to the motif of human dominion over the earth. Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 8 both emphasise that human beings are called to rule over the earth. By linking the motif of dominion with the royal interpretation of the image of God we can affirm that the image of God is:

> [T]he royal function or office of human beings as God's

[25] See J. Richard Middleton, "The Liberating Image? Interpreting the *Imago Dei* in context", *Christian Scholars Review*, 14 (1984), 8-25 and John H. Stek, "What Says the Scripture", in *Portraits of Creation: Biblical and Scientific Perspectives on the World's Formation*, ed. by Howard J van Till, et al., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), pp. 203-265 (pp. 242-250).

> representatives and agents in the world, given authorised power to share in God's rule over the earth's resources and creatures.[26]

This royal interpretation needs further refinement. The rulers who claimed to be the image of a particular god had a priestly as well as a ruling function. The parallels between the first creation narrative and that of the building of the tabernacle, referred to in the previous chapter, suggest that the motif of the image of God has priestly as well as royal overtones. The second creation narrative gives further support to the idea that the final author of Genesis understood humanity as having a priestly vocation. The Garden of Eden can be described as a proto-sanctuary, and Adam is given the responsibility to "work it and take care of it." The Hebrew words used here are commonly used in the Pentateuch to refer to religious service, particularly that of the Levites.[27] Adam and Eve are pictured as priests in the sanctuary of Eden. If creation is a sanctuary then human beings are the priests within it. To be created in the image of God is to be called not only to represent God to creation but also to represent creation to God.[28] The declaration that human beings are created in the image of God thus comes as "clarion call to the people of God to take seriously ... their royal priestly vocation in God's world"[29]

While the royal understanding of the image of God is the most adequate interpretation of the text it raises the problematic issue the language of power. The language of power has often been used in a triumphalistic manner to legitimate modernity's destruction and exploitation of the earth. The royal interpretation of this motif will only remain useful if it can be separated from the connotations of the abuse of power.

The literary and historical context of the passage undermines

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[26] Middleton, "Liberating Image", p. 12.
[27] See Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, p. 67.
[28] See Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, pp. 99-103 for a different argument that comes to the same conclusion.
[29] Middleton, "Liberating Image", p. 21.

the validity of any interpretation of the motif in the service of the the exploitation of creation.

In Genesis 1 the sun and the moon are given the responsibility to rule the day and the night but neither of them engage in wholesale environmental exploitation, rather they are given the predominating influence over these time periods. It is their activity which facilitates the life and activity of the rest of creation. The dominion of the sun and the moon is a life sustaining rule and not a life destroying one, so it must be with the dominion given to humanity.

While humanity is given the authority to rule over earth, this rule is limited. It is probable that the author of Genesis 1:29, implies that God's creational intention for humanity was for them to have a vegetarian diet. Later in Genesis when, after the flood, human beings are given permission to eat animals, it is subject to the limitation of not eating the blood. Meat may thus only be eaten when it is recognised that all life belongs to God and may only be used with God's permission.

The giving of dominion to human beings is not a licence to exploit the earth for selfish gain, but rather the permission to use God's possession for the good of all human beings. In its historical context, human dominion over the earth refers to the farming activities of ancient Israel. Genesis legitimates the people's use of land for agriculture, the keeping of flocks and herds, and the use of force to protect their families and animals from wild animals. In granting dominion to human beings God is thus providing for the survival and flourishing of the human community.[30] Creation belongs to God and, it is by an act of God's grace that human beings are permitted to make use of it for their survival and enjoyment. As Calvin wrote:

> [I]t is of great importance that we touch nothing of

[30] See D. C. van Zyl, "Cosmology, Ecology and Missiology: A Perspective from Genesis 1", *Missionalia*, 19 (1991), 203-214, (p. 208).

> God's bounty but what we know he has permitted us to do; since we cannot enjoy anything with a good conscience, except we receive it from the hand of God.[31]

The historical and literary contexts thus exclude an exploitative interpretation of the text. But its use in the contemporary context remains problematic. The reality of the abuse of power to oppress and exploit other humans and the earth questions the validity of any use of the language of power. Unequal relations of power lie at the core of the environmental crisis and to the integrally related issue of the oppression of powerless human beings. However, the "question is not *whether* humans have power, but how they organise and use such power."[32] In cultures of domination, power has been concentrated in the hands of the elite and used to oppress and exploit the powerless. The liberation of these exploited communities is to be achieved, not through abandoning the use of power, but through the reorganisation of power in the service of the exploited and oppressed. These communities must be empowered to enable them to play their legitimate role as subjects within the community of creation.

Human beings, both male and female, rich and poor, have power over other creatures. Since the earliest history of humanity, human beings have self-consciously attempted to control their natural environment in order to promote the survival and flourishing of human community. It is easy to reject concepts of power over otherkind and promote a utopian dream of humanity living in harmony with "nature" from the luxury of Western Europe or North America. In countries of the South the exertion of power over otherkind is often a necessity of life. Here hunting and fishing are not the leisurely pursuits of the wealthy, but part of the daily struggle of survival for the poor. In many rural areas vital crops and herds are still

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[31] Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. by John King, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p. 99, see also Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3 part 1, *The Doctrine of Creation*, trans. by, J. W. Edwards, O. Bussey and H. Knight, ed. by, G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1958), p. 207.

[32] Middleton, "The Liberating Image", p. 16, the emphasis is his.

subjected to the threat of destruction by wild animals. For those living in absolute poverty deforestation takes place, not to provide hamburgers for fast food franchises, but to provide a basic supply of energy for warmth and food. For the poor, dominion over creation is often a matter of life and death.

In proclaiming that human beings are created in the image of God, Genesis 1 recognises the reality of human power and demands that it be organised and used in a particular manner. A manner that is to be understood in relation to the Israelite understanding of the monarchy, the character of God, the order of creation, the priestly vocation of humanity and an egalitarian and communal understanding of the image of God.

The Israelite Monarchical Ideal

Embedded deep within the biblical witness is a suspicious attitude to all human monarchies. The Old Testament records initial opposition to the establishment of a monarchy, and when it is established, important limitations are placed on it. These limitations present us with an ideal monarchy in the service of the good of the nation and under the authority of God. While this ideal was never fully implemented, it does provide us with a perspective from which we can understand the calling of human beings to be the image bearers of God.

First, the Israelite king had to be "a brother Israelite" (Deuteronomy 17:15), a member of the covenant community. In like manner when human beings are chosen to exercise power over the other creatures, they are chosen as fellow members of the community of creation in covenant with God. The unique vocation given to human beings emphasises their creaturehood and their relationship with the other members of the community of creation.

Second, the king was to be one who feared and obeyed God. God alone was the ultimate king of Israel and human kings were

vice-regents responsible to God for the way they ruled God's people. The people and the land of Israel were always God's possession and not that of the king. The king could never claim absolute rights over them, but had to rule in accordance with the law of the divine Owner. Human power over otherkind is likewise a delegated authority for which we are responsible to God. The earth is the Lord's and not ours. Humanity's use of power is subject to limitations imposed by God. These restrictions are symbolised in the Eden narrative by the commandment forbidding the eating of the fruit of one of the trees in the Garden. God remained the owner of the garden and not everything was given to humanity for its use. Limitations on human dominion are also implied in Job 38-39 and Psalm 104 where certain parts of the earth are explicitly described as being given to the wild animals. Humans are not given absolute dominion over the earth. Where they do have dominion they are to exercise it as those who are responsible to God for their actions.

Third, the king was to rule and administer justice for the benefit of the weak and powerless. As Psalm 72:4 states: "He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy." As one who was in covenant relationship with the people, he was expected to act in faithfulness to them, by engaging in concrete action on behalf the deprived members of the community.[33] In the same manner humans are to exercise their power to bring justice to all members of the community of creation, particularly the weaker and more vulnerable members. As Calvin commented on Deuteronomy 25:4; "men are required to practice justice even in dealing with animals."[34]

Fourth, the king was not to enrich himself, particularly if

[33] See Katherine Doob Sakenfeld, *Faithfulness in Action: Loyalty in Biblical Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), p. 131.
[34] Calvin, *Calvin: Commentaries*, trans. by J. Haroutunian and L. P. Smith, The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. 23, (London: SCM, 1958), p. 329, see also his comments on Deuteronomy 22:3, 6 & 7 and Exodus 23:5 in *Commentaries on the Four Last Books of Moses Arranged in the Form of a Harmony*, trans. by G. W. Bingham, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), pp. 56-58.

this was done at the expense of the poor. The prophets constantly condemned rulers who exploited the people for their own benefit. Humans are not to use their power over other creatures for their own enrichment at the expense of the rest of the community of creation. The exploitation of creation is to be condemned precisely because God has given human beings dominion over the earth. While we may question Calvin's assumption that cultivated land is superior to uncultivated land his comments on Genesis 2:15 remain pertinent.

> Moses adds, that the custody of the Garden was given to Adam, to show that we possess the things which God has committed to our hands, on the condition, that being content with a frugal and modest use of them, we should take care of what shall remain. Let him who possesses a field so partake of its yearly fruits, that he may not suffer the ground to be injured by his negligence; but let him endeavour to hand it down to posterity as he received it, or even better cultivated. Let him so feed on its fruits, that he neither dissipates it by luxury, nor permits it to be marred or ruined by neglect. Moreover, that this economy, and this diligence, with respect to the good things which God has given us to enjoy, may flourish among us; let everyone regard himself as the steward of God in all things he possesses. Then he will neither conduct himself dissolutely, nor corruptly by abuse those things which God requires to be preserved.[35]

Finally, failure to care for the people and to administer justice brought severe condemnation from the prophets. Ezekiel condemned the leaders of Israel for the brutal and harsh way in which they ruled (Ezekiel 34: 1-6). When human beings exploit the rest of creation in a harsh and brutal manner they are subject to divine condemnation. To bear the image of God and thus to have power over creation is an incredible privilege, but with the privilege comes an awesome responsibility. As Amos declared to the people of Israel: "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth therefore I will punish you for all your sins" (Amos 3:2). Human interaction with creation must be carried out in

[35] Ibid. p. 125

accordance with God's requirements of justice and care for the whole community of creation.

Raymond C. van Leeuwen summarises the Israelite monarchical ideal: "[B]iblical 'ruling' or 'dominion' always means *authority and power for the well being of the subjects.* A king is to rule as a *servant* of his subjects."[36] Human beings as God's image bearers in creation are the servants of creation.

Representing God to Creation

"Men and women have been created to play a critical role in the ecosystem; we are called to represent God to the "mighty throng" (Genesis 2:1 NEB) of created life."[37] As the representatives of the triune God within creation, human beings are to interact with the rest of creation in a manner which reflects the character and purpose of God.

The persons of the Trinity live in constant, self-giving relationships of mutual dependence. Out of their dependence upon one another they express their unique particularity. Humans can therefore only express their unique particularity, as bearers of the divine image, when they recognise their participation in, and dependence on, the whole community of creation. They represent God to creation as fellow members of the community of creation.

At the heart of the divine life is the exuberant activity of giving life and existence to others. This dynamic self-giving is expressed *ad extra* in the creation of the universe. In the covenant with creation, God limited Godself in order to create an other which was genuinely different from God and which had an integrity of its own. In limiting Godself, God re-focused

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[36] Raymond C. van Leeuwen, "Enjoying Creation - Within Limits", in *The Midas Trap*, ed. by David Neff, (Wheaton: Victor, 1990), pp. 23-40 (pp. 25-26). The emphasis is Van Leeuwen's.

[37] Richard Cartwright Austin, *Hope for the Land: Nature in the Bible*, Environmental Theology Book 3 (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988), p. 58.

the exercise of God's attributes for the benefit of creation. This self-limitation of God was taken further in God's acts of redemption culminating in the cross. Human beings as the bearers of the divine image are called upon to exhibit the same kind of exuberant self-giving for the sake of the rest of creation. They too ought to limit the exercise of their abilities for the benefit of the rest of creation. In so doing they are to focus the use of their particular faculties and abilities for the good of the whole community of creation, even when this demands sacrifice in their lifestyle.

Calvin described God as "the best of fathers"[38] who cares for all creatures. Calvin went further and portrayed God as saying to humanity:

> Moreover, my solicitude for thee has proceeded still further; it was thy business to nurture the things provided for thee, but I have taken even this responsibility also upon myself, wherefore although thou art, in a sense, constituted the father of the earthly family, it is not for thee to be over anxious about the sustenance of animals.[39]

In an era in which human beings were not aware of the extent of possible environmental degradation nor had the degradation reached the levels it has today, it was possible for Calvin to affirm that while humanity had a responsibility towards the non-human creation, God had taken care of it. Today it must be affirmed that as the bearers of the divine image, humans are called to reflect God's fatherly nurturing of the life of the whole creation.

Human responsibility to care for the rest of creation is mandated by the second creation narrative in which the first human is placed in the garden to "work it and take care of it." The word used for "work" is "the common Hebrew verb for

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[38] Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 4, trans. by J. Anderson, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 160.
[39] Calvin, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses called Genesis*, vol. 1, trans. by J. King, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p. 99.

serve."[40] When used in relation to the ground it usually means to cultivate. The word "care" has a number of nuances including "to watch or guard something."[41] "To till the Garden is to serve the Garden; to exercise power over it is to reverence it... to keep ... is an act of protection .... not ... possession."[42]

Humans thus have a responsibility to serve the rest of creation, protecting it from dangers that would prevent it from achieving God's purpose for it.

The call to care for creation can be misunderstood. First, it does not imply that if human beings did not exist that the rest of creation would degenerate into chaos. It rather means that in all their interaction with creation, human beings ought to act in such a manner that the integrity and continuity of creation is maintained and even developed. Second, while the term "fatherly care" has been used, it must not be understood in a dominating paternalistic fashion. God's fatherly care of all creation is such that creation is liberated and empowered to exist with its own unique integrity. Human care for the rest of creation must do the same.

God always interacts with creation in a manner that draws creation forward towards the goal of the covenant. This goal is for God to live with the community of creation as all its members live in harmony with each other. Human beings as God's representatives are called to further that goal by caring for creation, living in harmony with the rest of the community of creation and by seeking to overcome the powers of chaos which would thwart God's purposes.

In God's engagement of the powers of chaos in creation God

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[40] Richard A. Young, *Healing the Earth: A Theocentric Perspective on Environmental Problems and Their Solutions.* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), p. 163

[41] Ibid., p. 163.

[42] Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978), p. 85.

accommodated Godself to the realities of the situation.[43] God thus uses less than perfect means to achieve God's purpose of bringing abundant life and vitality to creation. God uses the forces of death and decay in the service of enhancement of the vibrancy and life of the whole creation. Humans in seeking the good of humanity and the rest of creation are also called to promote the dynamic life of the whole community. Sometimes in doing so, they have to use the reality of death and destruction in the service of life. Healing, for example, is often dependent on the destruction of harmful bacteria and parasites. Dangerous plants and animals may on occasions need to be destroyed. In certain cases the selected culling and hunting of game might be the prerequisite for the greater flourishing of a particular set of ecosystems.

In seeking to promote the flourishing of creation, humans must do so in a humble, careful and wise manner. If they do not do so, their well-meant attempts might lead to disaster. Thus for example, the removal of predators from an area does not in the long run promote the health of the prey. Predators play a vital role in promoting the life of their prey. They remove sick animals thus limiting the spread of infection and prevent the numbers of the prey from escalating to the extent that their food sources are seriously depleted.

Image Bearing In An Ordered Creation

Commenting on the first creation narrative Ronald A. Simpkin argues that:

> Although humans are given dominion over the earth, their rule is not absolute. The Priestly writer's discourse on the creation of humans cannot be divorced from the rest of his creation myth, the focal theme of which is the establishment of order. Human dominion must conform to the order of creation[44]

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[43] For a discussion of this in relation to the history of Israel see, J. Gordon McConville, "The Shadow of the Curse: A 'Key' to Old Testament Theology", *Evangel*, 13. no. 1, (1985), 2-5.

[44] Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creature: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), p. 201.

He goes on to state that: "Human rule of the earth serves to actively maintain the order of creation, or cause its disintegration. Human dominion is not neutral!"[45]

Failure to act in accordance with the order of creation by engaging in violence against each other and the rest of creation led to the Flood. After the Flood, God established laws to encourage a respect for the life of both humans and the animals in order to prevent a recurrence of such devastating judgement.

Living in accordance with the order and limits of creation is the theme of Biblical Wisdom literature. Humans are encouraged to observe, interact with the rest of creation, to learn from it and to live in accordance with the patterns present within it. In the Biblical Wisdom tradition there is an element of mystery. In engaging with creation one is not encountering a static order but rather the dynamic activity of the living God. To live wisely is an art of careful listening to God's ways with creation and then living responsibly in the light of one's observations.[46] This does not mean that it is possible for humans to have an exhaustive and comprehensive knowledge of creation, but that it is possible for them to understand it sufficiently to live in relationship with the rest of creation. We are thus called to examine carefully the earth's ecosystems, to discover their dynamic configurations and then to live in accordance with them.

In the New Testament the motif of the image of God is understood Christologically. To bear the divine image is to be created in the image of the Logos, who is the divine pattern of life which is expressed in the dynamic and diverse ordering of creation. Therefore to be elected to bear the

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[45] Ibid. p. 202.

[46] See Robert K. Johnstone, "Wisdom Literature and its Contribution to a Biblical Environmental Ethic", in *Tending the Garden: Essays on the Gospel and the Earth*, ed. by Wesley Granberg-Michaelson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 68-82

divine image is to be elected to live in accordance with the divine pattern that creation reflects. It is to be called to live in accordance with the diverse configurations of the complex ecosystems of creation as they unfold in their dynamic movement towards the eschaton.

The ordering of creation is not the creation of a static pattern but the dynamic interaction between creation and the Logos which creates new and diverse analogies to the pattern of the divine life. This interaction is moving in a multifaceted way towards the God's eschatological goal for creation. Humans are thus called to listen to creation in order to facilitate its movement towards the eschatological *shalom*. To live in accordance with the dynamic ordering of creation does not mean a stoic bearing of the suffering brought about by the "dark side" of creation or a refusal to mitigate the consequences of the destructive powers present in creation. In promoting the goal of creation there is a need to counter and transform these powers. This must be done through a careful examination of the dynamic patterns in creation with the purpose of releasing the creature's potential to promote its flourishing and that of humanity within the context of the whole creation.

If creation is created in accordance with the wisdom of God through the Logos, then the variegated and integrated arrangements of the ecosystems reflect the pattern of the divine life itself. The urge to impose humanly ordered structures on creation, and thus to fundamentally reorder it, verges on the sin of the Garden of Eden. It is the autonomous rejection of divine wisdom in favour of human wisdom. This is not to negate the legitimacy of agriculture, culture and technology, but to insist that they must function within the intelligible interrelationships of God's creational ordering. It is only after we have listened carefully to creation that we can develop appropriate ways of using it. Destructive interference with the integrity of the ecosystems is an affront to the God who created an order with an integrity of

its own.

Humanity's Priestly Vocation

To bear the divine image and to be called to work and care for the rest of creation is a priestly task. Within the covenant community the priest was the one who was called to represent the people to God. So humans as members of the community of creation are called to represent their fellow creatures to God. This is not to deny that other creatures glorify God. It is to assert that, through their words and actions, humans have a particular responsibility to give personal, self-conscious expression to the praise and groans offered by creation to God. While Calvin did not use the motif of humans as priests in creation, his understanding of the image of God involves precisely these dimensions.[47]

For Calvin the whole of creation responds to, and reflects God's glory and in a sense bears the image of God.[48] Humanity is different in that it does so in a conscious and responsible manner and is thus uniquely the mirror of God's glory. The image of God in humans comprises two elements. First, the image is that dimension of human existence which enables human beings to respond to God in grateful thanks. Second, it is the response in gratitude to God for all that God has done, through the living the whole of one's life to the glory of God. Calvin's understanding of the image of God is a thus priestly one.[49] This priestly vocation needs to be seen in

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[47] Calvin's understanding of the image of God is complex and subject to considerable debate, certain elements within it are relevant for our discussion. For a full discussion see T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man,* (Westport: Greenwood, 1977), pp. 35-82 and M. P. Engel, *John Calvin's Perspectival Anthropology* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 37-73.

[48] See Calvin's commentary on Psalm 19:1 in *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 1, trans. by James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), pp 308 and 309.

[49] George H. Kehm has attempted to develop an understanding of the priestly calling of humanity by bringing a Reformed theology of the Eucharist and the priesthood of believers into dialogue with the Orthodox traditions theology of humans as priests in creation. He does not however relate this to Calvin's understanding of the image of God or to the central role that thanksgiving plays within Calvin's theology as a whole. See his "Priest of Creation", *Horizons in Biblical Theology*, 14, no. 2, (1992), 129-142, on the central place of thanksgiving in Calvin's theology see Gerrish, *Grace*

relation to our reception of creation, to the goal of creation and to the order in creation.

If humans are to act as priests of creation they must receive their own life and interaction with the rest of creation as the gift of God. They thus recognise that God is, as Calvin put it, the "best of fathers"[50] who has provided abundantly for their every need and beyond that for their enjoyment as well. Out of gratitude they ought to respond by seeking to praise and glorify God in all our interaction with creation. Recognising that God's provision comes through other creatures our gratitude must also to be directed towards them.

All human interaction with creation "brings about irreversible changes in the network and dynamics of created reality."[51] If this interaction is to be a legitimate priestly activity it must promote God's purpose for creation. God's purpose for creation is that it might glorify God by giving ever greater and more diverse expressions to the pattern of the divine life as the Spirit brings it into communion with the Logos. As priests, human beings are equipped and empowered by the Spirit to enable creation to give greater and more fuller expression to the glory of God. This Spirit empowered human activity involves the transformation of elements of creation. But it is to be a transformation which enables creation to become more fully itself as the finite self-expression of the triune God.

This enabling activity can involve a number of dimensions. In some cases "the ends of creation may best be served by human *in*activity."[52] In other cases they are served by the careful attempt to discover the potential present within creation and "to create the conditions that will *facilitate* the realisation of natures potential"[53] in new ways through technology and

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and Gratitude.
[50] Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, op. cit., vol. 4, p. 160.
[51] Gunton, *Christ in Creation*, p. 125.
[52] Ibid., p. 124, the emphasis is Gunton's.
[53] Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Towards a Charismatic Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 146, the emphasis is Volf's.

agriculture. In some cases it might entail enhancing creation through art. Conservation, technology, genetic engineering, art or recreation are all to be judged by the norm of whether they enable creation to give greater expression to the glory of God.

Creation gives glory to God as it gives manifold expression to the Logos, that is, as it reflects the living dynamic pattern of the inner life of God. All art, science and technology must therefore begin with a creative listening to the God implanted patterns of creation and then seek to facilitate their unfolding. All that obscures the glory of God is to be rejected. There are no blanket answers to the questions about the legitimate use of creation, each case needs to be carefully examined. Does it promote the life and flourishing of the whole community of creation? Or does it lead to destruction, exploitation and death?[54]

In affirming humanities priestly calling it must be emphasised that it is from the context of our fellow creaturehood that we represent creation before God. This is

> the only condition under which we may represent the other creatures. We can represent them because we participate in the same creatureliness as them. We may represent them because (and if!) we have ceased to resent our own and their creatureliness. Accepting our rudimentary solidarity with them, our difference from them is not a boast, it is only a means of serving God and them.[55]

An Egalitarian and Communal Image

In contrast to the other cultures of the Ancient Near East the biblical witness affirms that all human beings are created in the image of God. This biblical usage served to subvert those

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[54] See Dieter T. Hessel, "Now that Animals can be Engineered: Biotechnology in Theological Ethical Perspective", in *Ecotheology: Voices from the South and North*, ed. by David G. Hallman (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1994), pp. 284-299.

[55] Douglas John Hall, *The Steward: A Biblical Symbol Come of Age,* rev. ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990) p. 212.

oppressive social systems which used this motif to legitimate the authority of the powerful at the expense of the poor. By affirming that all human beings, males and females, are created in the image of God, Genesis democratises the Ancient Near Eastern royal ideology in accordance with liberating message of Yahweh, the God who sides with the poor and powerless.[56]

To affirm that human beings; male and female, powerful and powerless, are created in the image of God, is to affirm that all humans have the privilege and the responsibility of representing God to creation and creation to God. It is a rejection of all dehumanising and oppressive social and economic systems which prevent groups of humans from exercising responsibility over the use of the resources of creation. It is a demand for the empowerment of the powerless in the name of the triune God, so that they might take their rightful place within the community of creation.

The image of God also has a communal dimension. The declaration that humans are created in the image of God is followed by the declaration that they are created male and female. Humans are created to live in community and it is as a community of persons that they represent God to creation and creation to God.[57] This understanding is strengthened by the much debated use of plural pronouns to refer to God.[58] Jürgen Moltmann argues that while "no developed trinitarian doctrine underlies the creation account... it is open to such a doctrine."[59] In the light of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ it must be confessed that human beings are created in the image of the triune God. It is thus only as persons in relationship that human beings can give full expression to the divine image.

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[56] See Middleton, "The Liberating Image", pp. 16-22.
[57] See Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3:1, pp. 183-206, and Moltmann, *God in Creation*, pp. 222-224.
[58] For an analysis of the different interpretations of this issue, see Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, pp. 27 and 28.
[59] Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 224.

When a few powerful humans claim the prerogative to decide on how humanity is to interact with creation the consequence will always be the abuse of both powerless human beings and the rest of creation. There will be no solution to the environmental crisis while humans are treated as objects or commodities to be used to further increase the power and wealth of the powerful. It is only as humanity is transformed into an egalitarian community that together we can exercise our vocation to be the bearers of the divine image. The struggle to restore integrity to creation is dependent upon the affirmation of human equality and community, and the struggle for liberation and a just democratic society.[60]

Image Bearers of God

"*To be in the image of God is ... to called to represent God to the creation and the creation to God,* by enabling it to reach its perfection."[61] As the Presbyterian Church in the United States declared:

> The Lord expects us to produce, to consume, to reproduce in a way that makes earth's goodness available to all people and reflects God's love for all creatures. The Lord bids us use our technical skills for beauty, order, health and peace.[62]

This relationship has often been summarised through the symbol of stewardship.[63] As a symbol, stewardship highlights some important issues, notably the need to make frugal and wise use of creation; the recognition of human responsibility before

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[60] The reverse is also true: "The affirmation of human equality, the struggle for liberation and a just democratic society, are, in the end dependent upon the struggle to restore integrity to creation." John W de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy: A Theology for a Just World Order* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1995), pp. 238-239.

[61] Gunton, *Christ and Creation*, pp. 102-103, the emphasis is Gunton's.

[62] "The Presbyterian Church in The United States, *A Declaration of Faith - 1976",* chapter 2:3, in *Reformed Witness Today: A Collection of Confessions and Statements of Faith Issued by Reformed Churches,* ed. by Lukas Vischer (Bern: Evangelishe Arbeitstelle Oekumene Schweiz, 1982), pp. 232-265 (p.235).

[63] The most extensive use is found in the writings of Douglas John Hall, see his *Imaging God*, idem., *The Stewardship of Life in the Kingdom of Death* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), and *The Steward.*

God for the way the earth is used; the need to care for creation, and the dignity of all human beings as God's stewards on the earth.

The symbol of the steward suffers from three major weakness. First, it tends to view humanity's relationship to the rest of the community of creation in terms of management. While it is undoubtedly true that in certain of our relationships with the rest of creation, we do act as responsible managers, this does not encompass the full range of our relationships with the rest of creation. Second, it fails to adequately deal with humanity's responsibility to enable creation to be itself. Third, it places far too great a task on the shoulders of human beings. Despite the advances in technology humans cannot possibly be responsible for all the dynamics of creation.

The discussion above provides the basis for describing the contours of an alternative view. This does not exhaust the significance of creation in God's image, but does indicate some of its implications for human ecological responsibility.

First, to be created in the image of God is an affirmation not a denial of humanity's creaturely status. As bearers of the divine image humans are a part of, and constituted by, the network of relationships that make up the community of creation. Even when they exercise power over other members of the community they do so as fellow creatures.

> An image *is only an image*. It exists only by derivation. It is not the original, nor is it anything without the original. Mankind's being an image stresses the radical nature of his dependence... Mankind remains infinitely lower than his Creator; he is a mere creature and nothing more.[64]

Second, human dominion over the rest of creation is not absolute, it is subject to God imposed limits. Within these

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[64] Blocher, *In the Beginning*, pp. 82, the emphasis is Blocher's.

limits humans have been given the privilege of making use of the rest of creation to meet the needs and provide for the enjoyment of all human beings. All human use of the rest of creation must respect the God-given limits that are a consequence of the dynamic configurations of the eco-systems. Failure to respect the order that God has placed within creation will inevitably lead to ecological devastation. The earth remains the Lord's and humans are accountable to God for the way that they interact with the rest of creation.

Third, humans are required to limit the use that is made of the rest of creation. In doing so they are to enable the rest of creation to exist and flourish with its God-given integrity and to protect it from any threat to its integrity. They thus also have a responsibility to repair the damage that they have done to the community of creation. In particular they have a responsibility to the defenceless and innocent members who are exploited needlessly for the pleasure and selfish indulgence of powerful humans. In this respect humans act not as Creation's managers but as its servants.

Fourth, the fulfilment of the vocation to act as bearers of the divine image arises out of gratefulness to God for God's abundant provision for humanity and the rest of creation. Thus at the heart of all our engagement with creation is worship. Ecological living and spirituality are integrally related. The care of creation and the promotion of justice are rooted in spirituality. An authentic Christian spirituality will manifest itself in the pursuit of justice and a care for creation

Finally, it needs to be affirmed that while creation in the image of God gives great dignity to all human beings, this is not as a consequence of certain innate qualities. Other creatures have attributes and faculties that humans do not have, and even when they have similar faculties they are sometimes developed to greater levels than those possessed by humans. "[W]ould a dolphin think that we could swim, a dog be

impressed with our sense of smell, or a migrating bird be awed by our sense of direction?"[65]

As John de Gruchy states:

> Human beings are not like God in the sense that certain innate faculties, such as reason and will, distinguish us from the rest of creation, but because we are in a covenantal relationship to God, a relation of trust and responsibility.[66]

The particular faculties that humans possess are rather to be seen as tools to be used in fulfilling vocation as bearers of the divine image.[67]

We now are forced back to our original question: "What are humans here for?" "What unique contribution do they make to creation?" Humans are to image God by promoting the penultimate manifestations of God's *shalom* when the whole of creation will live in harmonious relationships with each other and with God. This calls for creative attempts to oppose and transform the powers of chaos and destruction present in creation and to promote the flourishing of the full potential that God has placed within creation. They are thus to employ their God-given abilities in the service of God and creation. Art, technology and agriculture are to be employed in such a manner that when humans are finished interacting with creation the altered creation gives greater expression to the dynamism, variety and beauty of the divine life.

In the natural processes in the non-human community, the mutual dependence that characterises the life of the triune God is manifested through involuntary sacrifice for the benefit of others - a process of the survival of the fittest in which the vulnerable, marginalised and disabled are often the first victims. Humanity is called to manifest the divine

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[65] McFague, *The Body of God*, p. 120.
[66] De Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy*, p. 239.
[67] See Loren Wilkinson, (Ed.) *Earthkeeping in the Nineties: Stewardship of Creation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 308-311.

life through a lifestyle of self-conscious, voluntary and self-sacrificial action, using the gifts that God has given them for the benefit of others. They are called to act on behalf of, and in solidarity with, the oppressed and marginalised members of the human community and even beyond it. They thus act in, what might be described as, a counter evolutionary manner. The survival of the fittest is not the norm for human activity.[68] It is in this way that they make their particular contribution towards the attainment of God's goal for creation.

Richard Cartwright Austin provocatively summarises the challenge of this God given vocation.

> [M]en and women live at the moral centre of earthly life, for we and our descendants will determine whether the world can remain a just, caring and healthy place for all creatures. God has given us the responsibility of dominion to maintain and enhance the quality of life. The test of dominion will be whether creatures from their contact with us gain experience of the loving character of God.[69]

He goes on to state:

> Modern Christians, watching the world teeter on the brink of environmental disaster, may wish God had chosen a more prudent course. Nevertheless, we bear responsibility for life; God has given it to us, and God expects us to discharge our duty.[70]

HUMAN DEFACEMENT OF CREATION

While many socio-cultural systems of the past have degraded their environment, today we are faced with the destruction and exploitation of the environment on an unprecedented scale. Yet even as ecologically concerned people confront this reality we are forced to recognise that whether we like it or

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[68] See McFague, *The Body of God,* pp. 162-178.
[69] Austin, *Hope for the Land*, p. 58.
[70] Ibid., p. 59.

not: "We all contribute to the process of injury."[71] We might recycle our garbage, use environmentally safe products, eat low down on the food chain and even engage in advocacy work on ecological issues, but we still consume vast quantities of paper to promote ecological concern, we fly in energy wasting aircraft to attend conferences on the environment, we use electricity coming from polluting power stations and so we could go on. As Max Oelschlaeger puts it: "Chrysler and General Motors and you and I are caught up in modern society, acting out roles in a cultural script we did not write."[72]

Oelschlaeger argues that despite the rhetoric of the committed, there is no clear distinction between the ecologically innocent and the ecologically guilty. For the inhabitants of Western Europe and North America and the wealthy elites of the countries of the South this is certainly true. However in the case of the powerless and the poor another dimension must be recognised. While they contribute to the destruction of the environment, they do so as the victims of the dominant socio-cultural order and not as those who benefit from it.

In many cases the ecologically destructive activities that the poor engage in are a direct consequence of their being exploited and oppressed by the dominant socio-economic system. They are denied the resources to live in a sustainable manner yet they are constantly urged by the powerful to emulate the consumerist lifestyle of the elite minority of the world's population. The powerful then seek to maintain their pseudo-innocence by blaming the poor for overpopulation, deforestation, pollution and other ecological problems, conveniently forgetting the havoc they have inflicted on creation.

Human defacement of creation is the consequence of an entrapping system, which holds the powerful in its thrall and

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[71] Max Oelschlaeger, *Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 3.
[72] Ibid., p.3.

makes the powerless its victims as it exploits and destroys creation. The Christian tradition has described such systems as structural sin. It is sin as it has become entrenched in a socio-economic and cultural system.[73] Modernity as the dominant social order has manifested itself as such a system which entraps humans as it exploits creation.

In asserting this we are confronted with the irony of modernity. Modernity began as a movement striving for the freedom of humanity. While its perception of humanity was limited to white middle class males, these people, as well as those who were excluded, have become entrapped within the system. But the major contributors to the development of the ideological legitimation of modernity cannot simply be dismissed as deliberately forwarding the oppression of others. They were also entrapped within a particular worldview even as they tried to break out of it.

The inventors and developers of technology are not simply evil people set on exploiting the earth. In many cases they have had no idea of the consequence of their actions. In some cases technological developments were viewed as solutions to ecological problems, but they have turned out to be ecologically destructive. It is true that some people have deliberately exploited people and the earth in the full knowledge of what they are doing. But this cannot be said of all.

Theologically the system that has entrapped and oppressed humans and exploited the rest of creation, cannot simply be described in terms of sin. It is a consequence of the complex interrelationship of human sin and finitude. If we are to remain true to the confession that creation is good then these two ideas cannot be reduced to each other. Yet, in human activity they are always intertwined with each other.

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[73] See William H. Becker, "Ecological Sin", *Theology Today*, 49, (1992), 152-164, J. A. Heyns, *Dogmatiek* (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1978), pp. 183-184, and Albert Nolan, *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel.* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1988), pp. 31-105.

The Nature of Human Sin

Human beings are the bearers of the divine image and thus are entrusted with the task of promoting penultimate manifestations of the eschatological *shalom.* They are to oppose and overcome the powers of chaos and destruction. As a consequence they have become the focal point of confrontation between the purposes of God and the forces which would subvert God's purpose. The point of contention is whether they will use the gifts and abilities that God has given them to represent God and God's purposes in creation or use them for their own benefit at the expense of God's purposes and the flourishing of the whole created order. It is this confrontation that is graphically portrayed in the narrative of temptation and sin in Genesis 3.

The root of sin has been traditionally understood as pride, the "self-centred arrogance"[74] which misuses human freedom to gratify its own desires regardless of the expense to others. This definition is not without its problems for it fails to adequately deal with the sins of the powerless. In their case apathy or indifference might be more appropriate. This is the failure to assert ones dignity as a human person in the face of the powerful, thus succumbing to the system of oppression. At the heart, both apathy and pride, make "the self the centre of existence, in defiance of divine intentions and in disregard for the interests of other lives."[75]

Apathy and pride are failures to heed the call to bear God's image in the world. They are a consequence of being unfaithful to our God-given vocation. In pride human beings reject their position as image bearers of God and lay a claim to divine prerogatives, they forget that they are the finite creatures of God. Sin in this case

> ... expresses the human desire to control and

[74] Nash, *Loving Nature*, p. 118.
[75] Ibid., pp. 119.

> manipulate the world, to dominate the destinies of others, to determine what is right and wrong in terms of self-interest and the will-to-power.[76]

In apathy they reject the call to reflect and represent God in creation, seeking their own comfort instead of being involved in the costly work of seeking to serve creation and promoting *shalom* for all.

Pride and apathy are related in another way. The consequence of some humans acting in pride is that they dominate and exploit other humans - in doing so they restrict their ability to act as bearers of the divine image. In the interests of survival at the hands of the powerful, it is often easier for such people to fail to exercise their prerogatives as image bearers of God and become apathetic.

Calvin interpreted sin as arising out of unfaithfulness and disobedience to the Word of God giving rise to "ambition and pride, together with ungratefulness ... because Adam seeking more than what was granted him shamefully spurned God's great bounty, which had been lavished on him."[77] In failing to take on one's responsibility as an image bearer of God one also spurns God's "great bounty." In apathy and pride, humanity no longer ascribes to God the glory for all of God's goodness but instead ungratefully rejects its Creator and worships idols in the place of the true God.

The consequence of this is, as the Genesis narrative attests, alienation from God, our fellow humans and the rest of creation. Ecologically, both pride and apathy contribute to the defacement of creation. As a consequence of sin human beings have become blind to the glory of God displayed in creation. They no longer perceive God's gracious and constant activity in caring for creation. Calvin asserts that instead of responding in grateful praise to God, "we so obscure or

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[76] John W. de Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology: A South African Contribution to an Ecumenical Debate.* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 98.
[77] *Institutes,* 2:1:4.

overturn his daily acts, by wickedly judging them that we snatch away from them their glory and from their Author his due praise."[78] The failure to perceive God's presence and activity within creation is a consequence of humanity's "monstrous ingratitude"[79] for God's wondrous creation deprives creation of its full glory as the finite expression of the life of the triune God.

All living creatures modify their environment human beings however do so in a personal, responsible and transformative way. As the bearers of the image of God they bear a particular responsibility for their impact on the rest of creation. The consequence of their failure to receive creation as a gift from God and to recognise that "the beauty of the world is a communication of God's beauty",[80] is that this transformation arises out of greed or apathy so that it has as its consequence the exploitation, degradation and destruction of the natural order.

It is only when humans recognise, in gratitude to God, both our finitude and our vocation as image bearers of God that we can stand in right relationship to God, our fellow humans and the rest of creation. In failing to so human finitude becomes entwined with human sin. We do not recognise our inability to fully understand both the intricacies of creation and the full consequences of our actions. As a result we engage in actions which contribute to the destruction of the environment.

The Sin of Ecological Destruction

The defacement of creation as a consequence of our ungrateful failure to accept our vocation as the finite image bearers of God can be described in terms of the theological category of sin. This recognition must be deepened and enriched by

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[78] *Institutes,* 1:4:15.
[79] Calvin, *Commentaries on the First book of Moses Called Genesis,* vol. 1, trans. by J. King, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p.153
[80] Jonathan Edwards, *The "Miscellanies" (Entry no's a-z, aa-zz, 1-500)*, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, vol. 13, ed. by Thomas A Schafer, (New Haven: Yale University press, 1994), no. 293, p. 384.

relating it to the understanding of God and of creation that we developed in chapters two and three in order to demonstrate the full extent of human sinfulness.

Idolatry

Idolatry takes place "when divine honors are bestowed upon an idol, under whatever pretext this is done."[81] When humans fail to act as the image of God they offer the fruit of their labours to something other than God and are thus guilty of idolatry. They either elevate themselves to a godlike status or give such a status to another aspect of creation.

In the first instance the destruction of creation takes place when some humans fail to acknowledge their status as creatures and assume godlike prerogatives over other human beings and otherkind. In a covenantal context, creation is understood to be God's personal possession. In the Old Testament, the understanding that the land of Israel belonged to Yahweh and not to the people, was the basis of laws which promoted the equal use of resources by all Israelites, and a care for the rest of creation. The affirmation that the earth is the Lord's rejects any human claim to possess the right to use and exploit creation at the expense of humans and otherkind. Humans who engage in such activities are usurping God's prerogatives over creation. This attitude and action on the part of human beings must therefore be rejected as idolatrous.

Ecological destruction is a consequence of other forms of idolatry as well. When an idol replaces God at the centre of human life, then other things which were created to reflect and express the glory of God are deprived of their unique value and dignity. Through the idolatry of money, power and success, human beings and the rest of creation are reduced to tools to be used in the worship of these idols. They are not treated as having a particular dignity as the expressions of the divine glory.

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[81] *Institutes,* 1:11:9.

The Desecration of the Sanctuary of Creation

Creation as the sanctuary of the triune God, both manifests the glory of God and serves as a place of meeting between God and humanity. Within this sanctuary humans are called to be priests responding in praise and worship to the goodness of God. This priestly activity was intended to enhance the role of creation as a place of communion between God and humanity. Instead we have wantonly exploited, degraded and destroyed the sanctuary. We are turning its multifaceted magnificence into a banal monotony, polluting its beauty and destroying its life.

This degradation of creation obscures the visible display of God's glory and in some cases can obliterate it so completely that creation no longer points to its Creator. In many places the consequences of human activity prevent any meaningful contemplation of, and communion with, God through creation. The continued exploitation and destruction of creation will make any such encounter with God increasingly difficult. The people of the world are being deprived of experiencing the glory of God in creation.[82]

Such a defiling of the glory of God has an awesome significance. Calvin, in his commentary on Genesis 9:6, wrote that since human beings bear the image of God, "God deems himself violated in their person" when a human being is assaulted. He goes on to say "that no one can be injurious to his brother without wounding God Himself."[83] Creation is also the manifestation of the glory of God, thus it is reasonable to argue that God deems Godself to be violated when it is degraded and exploited.

Unfaithfulness to the Covenant

God created a community of creatures with whom God entered

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[82] See Bill McKibben, *The Comforting Whirlwind: God, Job and the Scale of Creation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 69-95.

[83] Calvin, *Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, vol. 1, p. 296, see also his *Sermons on Micah*, trans. by Blair Reynolds, Texts and Studies in Religion, vol. 47, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon, 1990), pp. 152 and 153.

into a covenant relationship. Human beings, as members of the covenant community, are in covenant relationship with the rest of creation. One of the constant themes in Old Testament covenant law is that fellow members of the covenant community have special obligations to each other. They are called to express a faithful commitment to the welfare of the other members of the community. In particular they are obliged to care for those members of the community who are weaker and more vulnerable than the rest, the poor, the widows and the orphans.

Human beings as a consequence of their vocation to bear the image of God have a responsibility to exercise their power in faithful service to the rest of the covenant community. In particular we have a responsibility to care for the weaker and more vulnerable members of the community. We are to enable the other members of the community to flourish. In particular we are to demonstrate a concern for those members who are threatened, by humanity, with destruction or great suffering. While God has given humans permission to make a limited use of creation, we have grossly exceeded these limits. Instead of enabling the covenant community to flourish, we are destroying whole species of otherkind who are fellow members of the community. Humanity has violated its covenantal obligations to creation.

Such a violation of the covenant is not only an assault on other creatures. God is intimately involved with the life of God's covenant partner. Human actions in relation to the rest of creation thus have ultimate significance. To bring joy and fulfilment to the community of creation and its many creatures is to bring pleasure to its covenant partner, the triune God. God, however, shares in the pain and suffering of God's creatures as well as their joys. A lifestyle that leads to the wanton and unnecessary suffering of God's creatures inflicts pain and grief on Godself.

Human Responsibility And The System Of Sin

God has called human beings to a responsible engagement with creation, we have however ungratefully rejected this vocation and have interacted with creation in such a manner that it has been exploited and destroyed. As the bearers of the divine image, humans stand responsible before God for our actions. As the "Brief Statement of Faith of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)" states: "[We] exploit neighbour and nature and threaten death to the planet entrusted to our care. We deserve God's condemnation."[84] Yet regardless of our intentions, we are entrapped within a system that involves us in the destruction and exploitation of creation, even as we seek to resist such destruction.

The Christian tradition has always recognised that:

> Sin as the mysterious misuse of freedom is intensely personal, but at the same time it is embedded in a world of infra- and suprapersonal powers which, on the one hand, drive (not force) man in the direction of sin, while on the other hand they link the sinful deed to consequences that far exceed the original offence.[85]

Humans are both victims of sin and responsible for sin. Different theological traditions have tended to emphasise one of the components of this dialectic.[86] The Reformed tradition with its theology of total depravity and original sin has emphasised that humans are the victims of sin. All dimensions of human life are affected by sin, so that even our best intentions are corrupted by sin. This understanding recognises that sin is a compelling power operating deep within the human psyche. It orientates our lives away from God and the purposes of God. As a consequence it distorts the

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[84] "A Brief Statement of Faith - Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)", lines 37-39, in William C. Placher and David Willis-Watkins, *Belonging to God: A Commentary on A Brief Statement of Faith,* (Louisville: Westminster: John Knox, 1992), pp. 23-25 (p. 24).

[85] Hendrikus Berkhof, *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith,* trans. by Sierd Woudstra, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 211.

[86] See Douglas John Hall, *Professing the Faith: Christian Theology in a North American Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), pp. 226-232 and Nolan, God in South Africa, pp. 5-105.

image of God and thus human interaction with creation.

This traditional understanding has been expanded and developed by interaction with Liberation theology with its understanding of the structural character of sin. As a consequence of responsible human action, sin has become imbedded in the structures and systems that we create.[87] These structures then become embodiments of the powers of chaos and destruction at work within creation. They disempower and oppress human beings preventing them from implementing their vocation as bearers of the divine image. Modernity, as a human construct, has imbedded within it, structures which distort human interaction with creation. In particular the powerless are victims of the sinful structures of the present world order.

The personal and structural dimensions of human entrapment in sin must be further deepened by an awareness of the ecological dimension. The inter-relationship of the earth's ecosystem is extremely complex therefore when these ecosystems are altered as a consequence of human sin, there is an impact on the entire planet. Deforestation and desertification have fundamentally altered the weather patterns across continents. Air pollution in one country has lead to acid rain in another. It is widely accepted that the release of the "greenhouse" gasses will result in global warming. The structural sin of modernity has already altered the biosphere as a whole. While we do not as yet experience or understand the full consequences of these alterations, they are already bringing suffering and deprivation to humans and otherkind. Sin as a power is preventing the biosphere from achieving the purpose for which God brought it into being.

Despite its emphasis on humans being the victims of sin the Reformed tradition has been a source of activism to transform society and overcome sin. It has emphasised human responsibility and its theologies of grace, election and vocation have motivated members of the tradition to transform

[87] See De Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology*, pp. 150-156.

the world. Sin does not have the last word, grace does. Through common and special grace the effects of sin in the world are restrained and overcome. By grace humans can be freed from the debilitating consequences of sin. On a personal level, humans need to be transformed and empowered in order to be reorientated towards God and God's purpose for humanity. On a structural level, the structures of human society must be transformed to liberate humans so that they can fulfil their vocation as bearers of the divine image. It is only through God's grace that such transformations can be brought about and the disastrous consequences of the present environmental crisis can be met and overcome.

Chapter 5
CREATION TRANSFORMED

Creation is in travail. It is oppressed and misused by the powers of destruction and chaos. It is being exploited and destroyed by human beings. These humans are themselves entrapped in evil structures and enslaved by sin. In stubborn faithfulness to the covenant, God has acted to redeem creation by transforming its travail into the birth pangs of the new creation.

The breadth of God's redemptive action has been obscured in the history of Christian theology through a narrow focus on the redemption of individual human souls. The Reformed tradition has not escaped this reductive tendency. Yet Calvin proclaimed that the purpose of God's redemptive action was the restoration of the order throughout creation, through the work of Christ by the power of the Spirit. For Calvin, creation was established in a pristine state in primeval history. As a consequence of the fall, creation has been subject to disorder leading to its steady decline.[1] Redemption is God's action to cleanse and renew creation, returning it to its original state. This redemptive action is as extensive as sin and its consequences affecting the individual, human society and the non-human creation.[2] Calvin commented on Psalm 145:9:

> "Our sins having involved the whole world in the curse, there is room everywhere for the exercise of God's mercy even in the helping of brute creation."[3]

While Calvin recognised the broad scope of redemption the

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[1] See *Institutes,* 1:14:20

[2] For a detailed discussion of this theme in Calvin's theology see David E. Holwerda, "Eschatology and History: A Look at Calvin's Eschatological Vision", in *Readings in Calvin's Theology*, ed. by Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 311-342, M. Eugene Osterhaven, *The Faith of the Church: A Reformed Perspective on its Historical Development,* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), and Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theatre of his Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin,* (Durham: Lambrinth, 1991), pp. 97-114, pp. 162-193.

[3] Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 5, trans. by J. Anderson, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1949), p. 276.

centre of his concern was the divine-human relationship. The relationships between God, humanity and the rest of creation were on the circumference of his thought.[4] If, however, the basis of God's relationship with humanity is the covenant with creation then the redemption of humanity is better understood as a dimension of this more fundamental relationship.

God's creative action had as its purpose the bringing into being of a community of creatures with whom God could make God's home. God's covenant with creation, set in motion a dynamic interaction between God and creation as God draws it forward from its provisional beginnings to its eschatological fullness. This interactive process has been perverted by the powers of chaos let loose in creation.

Human beings who were created to represent God and oppose the powers of chaos became the focus of the confrontation between God and the powers of chaos. In sin they rebelled against God and God's purposes. As a consequence of personal sin, humans no longer reflect the character of God in their interaction with creation. As a consequence of structural sin, powerless humans are prevented from acting as bearers of the divine image. This distorted the image of God and contributed to degradation of creation. Yet, in grace God remained committed to using humans to advance God's purpose for creation by restoring the image of God within them. Thus the salvation of humanity is a central focus in God's actions to redeem creation.

In the biblical narrative of God's redemptive purpose, God reaffirms the covenant with creation after the flood. In so doing God commits Godself "to bear with the creation in all its wickedness."[5] Humanity continues in rebellion against God, so God took the initiative and called Abraham and his descendants to become the new humanity through whom the world

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[4] See H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1985), pp. 127-133.
[5] Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia, Fortress, 1984), p. 112.

would be blessed. God continually called Israel forward motivating them to live up to God's ideal for them and pointing them to the future fullness of creation. The prophets spoke of the eschatological *shalom*, when God would come to make God's dwelling amongst a harmonious and peaceful creation. Jesus of Nazareth announced that through him the eschatological reign of God was present. The early church empowered by the Spirit bore witness to Jesus as the Christ proclaiming that through his death and resurrection the reign of God had been inaugurated. They called people to share proleptically in God's eschatological reign. The church bears witness in the expectation of the eschatological victory of God which will free creation to achieve God's purpose for it.

ISRAEL AND THE LAND

One of the basic presuppositions of twentieth century biblical scholarship has been that in contrast to other Ancient Near Eastern religions, the Old Testament portrays history, rather than nature, as the realm of God's activity. Creation faith was understood to be essentially an extension of, and in subordination to, the theology of redemption. Biblical passages which placed a strong emphasis on creation were perceived to be strongly influenced by non-Yahwistic religions. Some contemporary scholars have rejected this dominant paradigm arguing that this neat division between Israel and its neighbours cannot be sustained.[6] There is a dialectic between nature and history in the faith of Israel, but it "is a dialectic of nature as a divinely shaped universal process that includes God's liberating history with the human creature."[7] "God's work in creation provides the

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[6] See Richard Bauckham "Jesus and the Wild Animals (Mark 1:13): A Christological Image for an Ecological Age", in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ - Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology,* ed. by Joel B. Green and Max Turner, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 3-21 (pp. 3-4), Terence E. Fretheim, "Reclaiming Creation: Redemption and Law in Exodus", *Interpretation*, 45, (1991), 354-365, and Ronald A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel.* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), pp. 1-14 & 88-81.

[7] H. Paul Santmire, "The Genesis Creation Narratives Revisited: Themes for a Global Age", *Interpretation*, 45, (1991) 366-379 (p. 368).

basis for God's work in redemption; God's work in redemption fulfils God's work in creation."[8]

God's struggle to redeem and transform creation begins in a new way with the call of Abraham and his descendants. This call is to be understood as a re-affirmation of God's purpose for creation. This purpose will now be achieved in a particular way through the people of Israel as the new humanity.[9] In faithfulness to the promise given to Abraham, God acts to deliver the people of Israel from oppression in Egypt. In the exodus, God brought about "deliverance from oppression through nature (the waters and the wilderness), into an experience of the fecundity of nature (the Promised Land)."[10] God's actions in redeeming Israel are directed towards the reclamation of creation as the people are set free to become what God created them to be.

In Exodus 15: 1-18 the events of the exodus are put in a cosmological context as the victory of God over the anti-creational powers embodied in Pharaoh enabling "life... to grow and develop once again in tune with God's creational designs."[11] The people of Israel are redeemed to enable them to assume the role that God had intended for all humanity.

The people leave Egypt and enter into a covenant with God at Mount Sinai. Through the covenant the people are established as the people of God. They are a proleptic expression of God's intentions for creation within a particular socio-historical moment. The covenant law describes the complexly interwoven relationship incorporating "Yahweh and his people and his

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[8]Fretheim, *Exodus*, Interpretation: A Biblical Commentary for Preaching and Teaching, (Louisville: John Knox, 1991), p. 26.

[9] See David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch,* Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series, 10, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1978), pp. 45-79, William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenantal Theology* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984), pp. 57-64, idem., *The Faith of Israel: Its Expression in the Books of the Old Testament* (Leicester: Apollos, 1988), pp. 23-25, idem. *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus,* (Grand Rapids: Baker 1994) pp. 15-37, Fretheim, "The Reclamation of Creation" and idem, *Exodus*.

[10] Santmire, "The Genesis Creation Narratives Revisited", p. 368.

[11] Fretheim, "The Reclamation of Creation", p. 358.

land."[12] By giving attention to its relationship God and to the law, "Israel ... grows towards God's intention for the human, and indeed the entire world, laid out in the creation."[13] The culmination of the giving of laws in the book of Exodus, is the building of the tabernacle and the establishment of the cult.[14] God once more dwells amongst a community of God's creatures in order to enter into communion with them. It is through the cult that the people experience God's forgiving and renewing grace which empowers them to live a life of obedience to the covenantal law.

As a community of God, the people, the land and otherkind, Israel is a light to the nations reflecting in its life the character and glory of God. The law provides a paradigmatic portrayal of the relationship between God, humanity and creation in a particular socio-historical context.[15] The theme of the land provides a central perspective through which the relationship between God, Israel and otherkind can be examined.[16]

The land is seen to be Yahweh's possession. Yahweh has chosen it to be Yahweh's dwelling place and it is thus described in Edenic and sanctuary like terms.[17] The land is more than Eden, it is a further fulfilment of God's unfolding purpose for creation. But, on the negative side it is warped by the effects of human sin. As a sanctuary the land has a sacral character.

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[12] Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), p. 6.
[13] Fretheim, "The Reclamation of Creation", p.362.
[14] See Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*, pp. 34-39.
[15] See Christopher J. H. Wright, *Living as the People of God: The Relevance of Old Testament Ethics* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1983), idem., "The Ethical Relevance of Israel as a Society", *Transformation,* 1 no. 4 (1984), 11-21 and idem., *God's People in God's Land: Family land and Property in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990).
[16] Walter Brueggemann argues that "Land is a central, if not *the central theme* of biblical faith." in *The Land,* pp. 3. On the significance of land, see also Wright, *Living as the People of God*, particularly pp. 46-102., idem., *God's People in God's Land*, idem., "Biblical Reflections on Land", *Evangelical Review of Theology,* 17 (1993) 153-167, and E. A. Martens, *Plot and Purpose in the Old Testament* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1981).
[17] See Dumbrell, *The Faith of Israel*. pp. 56-57.

The land is the Promised Land, given to Israel as its inheritance. While ultimately it belongs to Yahweh, the people of Israel have permission to make their home there and make use of its wealth in accordance with the restrictions that God places on them. As a consequence the people are understood to be "aliens and tenants" (Leviticus 25:23). They are at home in the land, but at home in dependence on and under the protection of Yahweh. This principle is the foundation for laws governing socio-economic justice and ecological concern. No person had absolute property rights and the "[l]and...was not to be treated as a commercial commodity for private speculation and profit."[18] It was rather to be used for the benefit of the whole society and of otherkind. When Israel fails to recognise its dependence on God and that the land is a gift from God then the land becomes a temptation. Israel is tempted to possess and control the land for its own benefit, often through the use of Canaanite religious practises. This "temptation to private well-being is a way to death."[19]

As the land had a sacral character it was not to be polluted or destroyed. In a cultic context, disobedience to Yahweh in cultic and social issues resulted in the pollution of the land and as a consequence it led to God's acts of cleansing through judgement. The fertility of the land thus functioned as a kind of "spiritual thermometer"[20] indicating to the people whether or not their lifestyle conformed to the covenant requirements. While this idea is alien to contemporary westernised people, it testifies to an awareness of God's immanence in all dimensions of life and to the symbiotic relationship between humans and their environment. Religious faith, ecology and social justice are dynamically inter-related aspects of human life.

As a consequence of the Old Testament understanding of land, the true worship of Yahweh in Yahweh's land is to be

[18] Wright, "Biblical Reflections on Land", p. 162.
[19] Brueggemann, *The Land*, p. 59.
[20] Wright, *Living as the People of God,* p. 59.

manifested in a concern for social justice and for the well being of otherkind. This concern is most explicitly contained in the laws relating to the Sabbath, the Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee. During the Sabbath periods the people of Israel relax and, "no longer intervene in the environment through their labour",[21] depending on God to supply their needs through the fecundity of creation. During the Sabbath and Jubilee years land is to be redistributed; slaves are to be freed, and debts are to be forgiven. The Sabbath vividly demonstrates interrelationship between social justice and ecology. The land is only cared for as all the people of Israel are empowered to use the land for the good of their fellow humans and otherkind.

Other Old Testament laws provided for the regulation of agricultural practices.

> Taken together they amount to a ban on exploitative agricultural methods: intercropping to increase yields is forbidden (Lv. 19:19); fruit trees are not to be harvested until they are well established (Lv. 19:23-25); and the land is allowed to lie fallow during the sabbatical year (Ex. 23:10-11).[22]

Care for the welfare of plants extends to their use during times of war. Trees were to be protected, as humans and not the trees were the object of warlike activities (Deuteronomy 20:19-20).

Animals were to be cared for. The sabbatical laws provide for the welfare of wild and domestic animals (Exodus 20: 8-11, 23:10-11 and Leviticus 25:1-7). Agricultural practices were to be humane, providing for the needs of the animals involved, thus oxen may not be muzzled (Deuteronomy 25:4) and donkeys and oxen may not be yoked together (Deuteronomy 22:10). Wild birds were to be cared for, when eggs or birds are taken for food both the mother and the young may not taken. This

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[21] Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation,* The Gifford Lectures 1984-1985, trans. by M. Kohl,(London: SCM, 1985), p. 277.
[22] Lawrence Osborn, *Guardians of Creation: Nature in the Bible and the Christian Life.* (Leicester: Apollos, 1993), p. 91.

prevented the destruction of entire species (Deuteronomy 22:6-7). Care must also be extended to domestic animals belonging to friends and enemies (Exodus 23:4-5 & Deuteronomy 22: 1-4).[23] Care for ones animals is a sign of righteousness (Proverbs 12:10)

The prophets look forward to God's *shalom*, an eschatological Sabbath of peace and fecundity, when God establishes God's home within a transformed community of creation. God's law will go out to all the earth; the nations will turn from idols to serve Yahweh; evil, sickness and oppression will be removed; justice will be established; the poor will be liberated; the land will produce crops in abundance, and the lion will lie down with the lamb. This future for creation is consequently portrayed as being in continuity with the original creation and transcending it.

The prophets also pronounce judgement on sinful humanity including those who engage in the destruction and exploitation of the earth and otherkind. Thus Habakkuk declares God's judgement on Babylon:

> The violence you have done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and your destruction of animals will terrify you. For you have shed man's blood; you have destroyed lands and cities and everyone in them. (Habakkuk 2:17).

"'Lebanon' almost certainly is a figure for forests, as the parallel with 'animals' suggests."[24] This note of judgement on the destroyers of creation is complemented by Psalm 98's description of creation rejoicing when God comes to judge the earth.

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[23] It is to be noted that there are biblical passages which speak of the removal of wild animals from the land (e.g. Leviticus 26:6, Isaiah 35:9, Ezekiel 25:9), in the light of the other components of the biblical witness these should be understood as promises of protection for the people from wild animals in contexts in which this could only be envisaged through the removal of the animals. We must be careful not to impose contemporary western middle class values on an ancient text. It is easy for us to speak of the conservation of animals from the comfort of lifestyles which are not subject to the threat of attack from wild animals. It is very different when your crops, livestock and family are under threat.

[24] Wright, "Biblical Reflections on Land", p. 164.

JESUS AND THE INAUGURATION OF THE ESCHATOLOGICAL *SHALOM*

The New Testament writers consistently present Jesus as the eschatological Messiah, the New Israel, the New Adam, the One empowered by the Spirit, through whom God's purpose for Israel and creation are to be fulfilled.[25] Through the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus, God's *shalom* breaks into creation to transform it and redirect it to its goal.

Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. The Christian confession that Jesus is God incarnate has often been reduced to metaphysical speculation as to how one person can be both God and human. Yet fundamentally this confession is an eschatological affirmation of the inbreaking of God's purpose for creation.[26] The Triune God who exists in self-giving relationships and who has limited Godself in order to bring God's creation into being continues to act kenotically in the person of Jesus. In Jesus, God has made God's home amongst God's creatures as a member of the community of creation. The eschatological transformation of creation into the divine dwelling place has begun.

Through the life and work of Jesus, the eschatological Sabbath has dawned giving rise to the liberation of the oppressed, the healing of the sick, the establishment of justice for the poor and the renewal of relationships within the whole community of creation.[27] God has entered into creation in order to renew and transform it.

> This, like all true healing, is a renewal from within, not one externally imposed. The Creator restores his

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[25] See William Dumbrell, *The Search for Order*, Adrio König, *Jesus die Laaste, Gelowig Nagedink Deel 2 - oor die Einde,* (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1980.), N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God,* Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 1, (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 145-476, and idem, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

[26] See König, *Jesus die Laaste*, pp. 95-100 and 111-112.

[27] See John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), and Sharon H. Ringe, *Jesus Liberation and the Biblical Jubilee: Images for Ethics and Christology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

> own creation and cosmos only by becoming, in unspeakable humility, part of his creation, and taking upon himself the pain of his cosmos.[28]

As the one who fulfils God's intention for humanity, Jesus lives a life of devotion to God fully offering it to God in response to all that God has done. His life is one which images God in accordance with God's purposes for creation relating to God, humanity and creation in such a manner that God's glory is fully displayed. True deity and true humanity are not contradictory affirmations. Jesus is the incarnation of the Logos who fully displays the divine pattern for human beings who were created in the image of God. It is thus by being the incarnate *Logos* that he can be fully human.

The Life and Ministry of Jesus

Traditionally the life and ministry of Jesus have been understood to focus on human life. While the emphasis of Jesus' life and work is on humanity, this does not preclude it from being understood in relation to the eschatological renewal of the whole of creation. The focus on humanity ought to be understood in relation to the recognition that "human beings are the centre of the world's problems, and only by our redirection will the whole creation be set free."[29] Even in Jesus' redemptive intervention in the lives of human beings he acts to redeem the physical components of created reality. Jesus does not merely save souls; he heals the sick, raises the dead and drives out the demonic powers that distort God's creatures. There are a number of incidents in the gospels that demonstrate that Jesus' purpose was the renewal of the entire creation.

At the beginning of Jesus ministry Jesus went into the wilderness where he was to be tempted by Satan. After resisting Satan, Mark records that, Jesus was "with the wild

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[28] Alan Lewis, *Theatre of the Gospel: The Bible as Nature's Story* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1984), p. 21.
[29] Colin E. Gunton, *Christ and Creation* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1992), p. 64.

animals" (Mark 1:13). Jesus enters the non-human realm, he resists the demonic, enjoys the companionship of the wild animals and is ministered to by angels, thus providing a foretaste of eschatological renewal. Jesus, as the Messiah, establishes peace with the wild animals. In so doing "Jesus does not restore the paradisal state as such, but he sets the messianic precedent for it."[30]

Jesus instructs his disciples to pray "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). His miracles are signs pointing to the fulfilment of this prayer. Jesus turns water into wine, multiplies bread and fish, and miraculously provides enormous catches of fish. These incidents point to the fulfilment of the prophetic visions of a coming age of overwhelming fecundity and agricultural abundance. The calming of the storm on the Sea of Galilee and walking on its waters is not merely a nature miracle. It is a sign pointing to the overcoming of the powers of chaos in creation.[31]

The Death of Jesus

Throughout history God has acted as the ever patient One, bearing the rebellion of creation. All sin against humanity and the rest of creation has been an assault on God in whose image humanity is created and whose glory creation displays. This rebellion of God's creatures inflicts suffering on God. God went far beyond what was required by the covenant of creation and did not exact the judgement that was due to

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[30] Bauckham, "Jesus and the Wild Animals", p. 19.

[31] See Ron Elsdon, *Greenhouse Theology: Biblical Perspectives on Caring for Creation* (Turnbridge Wells: Monarch, 1992), pp. 146-149, and Chris Seaton, *Whose Earth?* (Cambridge: Crossway, 1992), pp. 82-87. The two incidents that could be interpreted as contradicting this understanding of Jesus ministry, the incident of the Gadarene pigs (Matthew 8:28-34) and the cursing of the fig tree (Matthew 21:18 and 19), can be understood within this paradigm. The destruction of the pigs as a consequence of demonic invasion points to the cleansing of the land through the removal and destruction of the demonic powers who had entered the unclean pigs. The cursing of the fig tree points to the judgement on the people for failing to respond to God's visitation of them through the Messiah, just as the fig tree failed to respond in eschatological fecundity at the presence of Jesus.

humanity preferring to suffer the consequences of creaturely rebellion. In the Old Testament, Israel's continued rejection of God intensified divine suffering and weariness leading to God's controlled acts of judgement on the people. In all of this: "God experiences great intensity of suffering, but stops short of crucifixion."[32] The good news of the New Testament is that in Jesus, God enters fully into the consequences of creaturely rebellion, taking them upon Godself to their fullest extent.

The crucifixion of Jesus involves both his rejection by humans and an assault upon him by the powers of evil working through the religious and political leaders. God was in Jesus bearing this assault and rejection. The Old Testament portrays the prophets as suffering rejection at the hands of the people, yet affirms that the people are not only rejecting them they are rejecting God. God fully identifies with the prophets in their suffering.[33] So when Jesus as the eschatological prophet, is rejected, God identifies with his suffering so that the peoples rejection of Jesus is the rejection of God. But this is no mere identification of God with a prophet. Jesus is God incarnate. "The meaning of the cross is that in Christ God himself took responsibility for the world's evil and absorbed its consequences into himself."[34]

Paul, in Colossians, affirms that through the cross, Christ triumphed over the powers (2:15) and reconciled all things to God (1:20). By absorbing the rebellion of the powers, God in Christ displayed their true character as powerless to defeat their ultimate Sovereign. Humanity, which had become the focus of the struggle between God and the powers, had been reconciled, and the powers were defeated. A defeat which was confirmed when God raised Jesus from the dead. The forces of sin, oppression, injustice and death no longer hold sway over

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[32] Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, p. 142.
[33] See Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, pp. 149-166.
[34] Stephen H. Travis, "Christ as Bearer of Divine Judgement in Paul's Thought about the Atonement", in Green and Turner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 332-345 (p. 345).

creation. The future is opened for freedom and justice for all God's creatures, human and otherkind.

This understanding of the cross is deepened by an image drawn from Isaiah 42:14-17. Here the suffering of God is portrayed as the "ever-intensifying labour pains... which finally burst forth in the travail of the emergence of a new creation... The new creation *necessitates* the suffering of God."[35] The suffering of the cross is the birth pangs of God as God brings forth the new creation.

While our theological reasoning is different, we can affirm with Calvin that the redemption of creation is achieved through Christ's work on the cross. He commented on John 13:31, that in the cross

> there was a wonderful change of things the condemnation of all men was manifested, sin blotted out, salvation restored to men; in short the whole world was renewed and all things restored to order.[36]

The Resurrection

God's new creation erupted into history in the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus' resurrection is to be understood in the context of Jewish apocalyptic thinking which expected God to raise the dead at the inauguration of the new creation. A single resurrection in the course of history was not expected. Jesus resurrection is a startling interruption of this age by the events of the age to come. It announces God's triumph over evil and the vindication of God's purpose for creation, prefiguring the final eschatological victory of God.[37]

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[35] Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, p. 147, the emphasis is Fretheim's.
[36] Calvin, *The Gospel According to John 11-21 and the First Epistle of John*, trans. by T. H. L. Parker, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), p. 69. See also his comments on John 12:31 on pp. 42 and 43, and on Isaiah 65:17-25 in *Commentary on the book of the Prophet Isaiah,* vol. 4, trans. by W. Pringle, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), pp. 67-78.
[37] See J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul's Apocalyptic Gospel: The Coming Triumph of God* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982) and idem, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989)

The resurrection announces that in Jesus, God has borne and overcome worldly evil. Human sin has been dealt with and the powers of evil defeated. Reconciliation between humanity and the rest of creation is made possible. Christ's triumph over death has removed the sting of death. It is now possible for humans to face death, the most alienating and threatening dimension of the creation, without fear. Humans can now truly be at home within creation without anxiety dominating their life.[38] The way is now open for God to renew creation by removing from it all that opposes God's purposes for it.

The resurrection does more than announce this; it manifests such a renewal and transformation of the body of Jesus. The gospel writers' and Paul's description of the resurrection body of Jesus describe a reality which is both in continuity with and transcends Jesus' original body. Creation is both vindicated and transcended. The new creation inaugurated in the resurrection affirms the goodness of the original creation, but at the same time points beyond to a new order for creation. The new heavens and the new earth are not merely the unfolding of the potential present within creation but rather this unfolding supplemented by a new action of God.

God has acted from the future, invading the present to inaugurate this new order for creation.[39] While this is a new order, it too is grounded in the Logos through whom and for whom the world was created. Creation and redemption are inseparably linked.

The Ascended Lord

The risen Jesus ascended to the Father to reign from heaven, thus taking an aspect of creation into the fellowship of the Triune life of God. In the debates surrounding the "real

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[38] See H. Paul Santmire, *Brother Earth, Nature, God and Ecology in Time of Crisis* (Camden: Thomas Nelson, 1970), pp. 166-167.
[39] See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions,* trans. by M. Kohl, (London: SCM, 1990), pp. 301-305.

presence" of Christ in the Eucharist, the Reformed tradition, in contrast to the Lutheran and Roman Catholic tradition, insisted that the humanity of Jesus retains its authentic creaturely nature.[40] To ascribe to it any attributes of deity was held to be compromising the true humanity of the resurrected Jesus. Calvin argued that the Christian's eschatological hope depended on the true unmixed humanity of the ascended Lord. He wrote:

> For what does all Scripture more clearly teach than that Christ, as he took our true flesh when he was born of the virgin and suffered in our true flesh when he made satisfaction for us, so also received that same true flesh in his resurrection, and bore it up to heaven? For we have this hope of our resurrection and of our ascension into heaven: that Christ rose again and ascended, and as Tertullian says, bore the guarantee of our resurrection with him to heaven. But how weak and fragile that hope would be, if this very flesh of ours had not been truly raised in Christ and had not entered into the Kingdom of Heaven! But it is the true nature of a body to be contained in space, to have its own dimensions and its own shape.[41]

The speculative details of this debate are far removed from the pressing issues of the contemporary world. Debates about the place of the body of Jesus seem rather absurd. There is however a dimension to this debate which is of significance for our discussion. It is that creation, even when drawn into the closest possible unity with God, retains its integrity as creation. This proleptic anticipation of the future communion of God with creation guarantees eternally the dignity and value of creation as creation. As Alan Lewis states:

> [T]he human body of Christ, and hence his whole humanity, is with God, beside God, embraced by God and drawn by God into the fellowship of his own triune being... we are assured, and the whole created order is assured, that flesh -- flesh transformed and

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[40] See for example *Institutes,* 4:17:11-4:17:31 and Francis Turrentin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 2, trans. by George Musgrave Giger, ed. by James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992-1994), pp. 321-332 and 366-369.

[41] *Institutes,* 4:17:29.

> transfigured, but still flesh; flesh raised and ascended, but still human and therefore creaturely and not divinised; flesh, by which men and women and our pets and our pests all receive our identity and in which we all are what we are -- flesh is with God eternally, and he with it. Of the *enfleshed* Son it is said, that of his kingdom there shall be no end. Thus we may laugh, with uncomprehending laughter, at the promise that this sometimes painful, sometimes ugly and constantly decaying stuff out of which we the creatures are made, a few minerals and a lot of H_2O, awaits a new tomorrow of everlasting beauty glory and joy.[42]

The Outpouring of the Spirit

In the visions of the Old Testament prophets the transformation of the old creation into the new would be accomplished through a new outpouring of the Spirit of God on creation (e.g. Isaiah 32:15-20 and Ezekiel 36:23-31). The inauguration of the new creation is not complete until the ascended Christ pours out the Spirit on the earth. This is usually associated with the transformation of individuals and the life of the church but it has far wider implications in the light of the Old Testament expectations. Christ rules and extends his reign through the work of the Spirit until all opposition to the purpose of God is removed and creation is transformed. The Spirit as the eschatological presence of God in the world creates penultimate anticipation of the new creation in the midst of the old, as he draws creation forward to its eschatological fullness. As Calvin commented on the description of the Spirit empowered church in the Acts: "The beginning of the reign of Christ, and, as it were, the renewal of the world is being depicted here."[43]

THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH

Creation will be transformed and transcended so that the lion will lie down with the lamb; trees will bear fruit throughout

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[42] Lewis, *Theatre of the Gospel*, p. 26.
[43] John Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles 1-13,* trans. by J. W. Frazer and W. J. G. McDonald, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 17.

the year; all violence will be removed, there will be no more pain and death; humans, otherkind and God will live together in harmony and joy. As Lewis comments on Isaiah 11: 6-9:

> It is an impossible possibility, an inconceivable conception, these surreal fantastic juxtapositions: the wild and the domestic, the voracious and the vulnerable, the predator and the prey, the brute and the boy. This convocation of God's creatures which contradicts all logic and experience, as natural enemies feed and rest and live together, a harmony so unnatural as to be 'out of this world'; and the prophet might be rather out of his mind just to imagine this earth free of hurt and destruction, its inhabitants sharing a knowledge of God as immense and deep as a global tidal wave.[44]

The biblical witness to God's intention for creation, the new heavens and the new earth, is the hope which ought to motivate Christian praxis on behalf of all God's creatures It provides the integrating motif which facilitates an understanding of the church's mission which unites the struggle for justice for the oppressed and a concern for the integrity of creation. Yet it is a hope which stands in sharp contrast to scientific understandings of the present and future of the universe. In affirming this hope we recognise with George Hendry that:

> This is the most extravagant, the most audacious, the most ecstatic aspect of the Christian hope. It is impossible to describe in sober detail. The Bible speaks of it in fantastic imagery of apocalyptic. But the validity of the hope does not depend on the plausibility of any description that may be offered of it. It has its ground in the resurrection of Christ from the dead.[45]

God has acted in Jesus to redeem his broken body, so God is acting in Jesus to restore and transform the dilapidated and broken creation so that it will become the dwelling place of God with all God's creatures. Like never before it will

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[44] Lewis, *The Theatre of the Gospel*, pp. 21-22.
[45] George S, Hendry, *Theology of Nature* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), p. 116.

manifest the magnificence of God's glory.

In the Bible this hope is expressed in the surreal and symbolic language of prophecy and apocalypse which we must not be interpreted in a literalistic manner. These are attempts to describe the indescribable and must be interpreted as pointing to a reality that outstrips the limitations of human language and imagery. A literalistic interpretation deprives the images of their evocative power. Calvin's warning must be heeded:

> For though we truly hear that the Kingdom of God will be filled with splendour, joy, happiness, and glory, yet when these are spoken of they remain utterly remote from our perception, and, as it were, wrapped in obscurities, until that day comes when he will reveal to us his glory, that we may behold it face to face.[46]

The New Creation in Trinitarian Perspective

A Trinitarian perspective on the new creation opens up a number of important perspectives from which this hope can be viewed.

A Trinitarian understanding provides a means for affirming both God's transcendence and God's immanence. Creation is in pain and in urgent need of healing, yet if God is entirely immanent in creation, then the possibilities of healing are confined to the limitations of the possibilities inherent within creation; possibilities that are fast being destroyed by human exploitation and which do not deal with the radical nature of evil that has impacted humanity and the rest of creation. The only hope § of true healing is one that has a transcendent source. As Richard Bauckham writes:

> If God is the transcendent source of all things, he could also be the source of quite new possibilities for his creation in the future. Creation is not confined for ever to its own immanent possibilities. It is open

[46] *Institutes*, 3.25.10.

to the fresh possibilities of its Creator.[47]

Because God transcends creation, there is possibility that creation will be healed.

If the healing of creation is to be a true healing, it must take place from within creation and be in accordance with the nature of the created order. Thus the healing must be brought about by a power that is active within creation. Thus for the healing to take place God must be immanent within creation.

A Trinitarian perspective also enables us to understand the relationship between God's action in creation and God's action in redemption. Calvin's theology provides useful orientation in the pursuit of a Trinitarian understanding of God's redemptive action.[48]

Calvin roots God's redemptive action in the intra-Trinitarian life of God; it arises out of the eternal purposes of the Triune God and is worked out through the particular actions of each member of the Trinity. Redemption has its origin in the Father. The Father, in sovereign grace refuses to abandon creation, and thus out of his fatherly concern and love for what he has made elects to redeem creation. Despite its problems and inconsistencies, Calvin's doctrine of election is an attempt to ground salvation in the free gift of a loving Father. While his doctrine of election focuses attention on the Father's free and gracious love for human beings, his understanding of the redemption of creation, suggests that the redemption of the whole of creation has its source in the eternal love of the Father for all of creatures.[49] It is

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[47] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 48.

[48] For the Trinitarian character of Calvin's understanding of redemption see Philip Walker Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine Human Relationship* (New York: Oxford, 1995), Alexandrè Ganoczy "Observations on Calvin's Trinitarian Doctrine of Grace", in *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honour of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.* ed. by Elsie Ann McKee and Brian G. Armstrong, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989) pp. 96-107, and M. Eugene Osterhaven, *The Faith of the Church*, pp. 162-193

[49] In his commentary on John 3:16 Calvin interprets God's love for the world

necessary to move beyond the explicit statements of Calvin and argue that the Father so loved creation that he sent the Son to redeem it, so that it might once more fully manifest the purpose that he intended for it, when in the mystery of eternity he initiated the intra-Trinitarian plan to bring creation into being.

The redemption of creation is achieved through the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of the Son. The Son who is the mediator of redemption is also the mediator of creation.[50] As the divine Logos, the Son unites creation to himself bringing into being the diverse and dynamic analogies to the pattern of the life of the Trinity. Creation is thus a finite expression of the life of the triune God. It was God's intention that creation should give greater and fuller expression to the manifold life of the Trinity through fuller union with the Logos.

However creation was distorted through "the powers of death, destruction and oppression" which were "not part of the creator's intention."[51] Humans have further contributed to this distortion of creation through their sinful rebellion against the Creators intention for them. The incarnation and the atonement achieve the restoration of those dimensions of creation, continually sustained in their life and dynamic vitality by their communion with the Logos, but which were disordered by human sin and the powers of chaos. As Calvin commented on Ephesians 1:10:

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as a love for the human race while his commentary on John 12:37 interprets the judgement of the world as the restoration of true order to the world, that is as the salvation of the created order. See Calvin, *The Gospel of John 1-10,* trans. by T. H. L. Parker, Calvin's Commentaries, eds. D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), pp. 73-74 and *The Gospel According to John 11-21 and The First Epistle of John,* pp. 42-43.

[50] On the importance for this in Calvin's theology see Joseph Tylanda, "Christ the Mediator: Calvin Versus Stancaro", *Calvin Theological Journal,* 7, (1972), 5-16, and idem., "The Controversy on Christ the Mediator: Calvin's Second Reply to Stancaro", *Calvin Theological Journal,* 8. (1973), 131-157.

[51] Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 89.

> Paul wants to teach us that outside Christ all things were upset, but through Him they have been reduced to order... The proper state of creatures is to cleave to God. Such an ανακεφαλαιωσις as would bring us back to regular order, the apostle tells us, has been made in Christ. Formed into one body we are united to God, and mutually conjoined with one another. But without Christ, the whole world is as it were a shapeless chaos and frightful confusion.[52]

Christ's mediatorship of redemption is grounded in his continual mediatorship of creation. In Calvin's Christology this understanding of the work of Christ has as its presupposition in, what later became known as, the *extra calvinisticum.*[53] The Logos is not to be reduced to the incarnate Christ but transcends him, so that the Logos continues to creatively interact with the universe during the incarnation.

> The Eternal Son's ordering of creation according to the Father's will is the more comprehensive category, and his reordering and restoring of rebellious men are special forms of the inclusive office of the Son.[54]

In terms of the broader understanding of God's creative and redemptive work, the Son's redemptive and restorative work must be seen to apply to all creation and not just to humanity.[55] The redemption of creation takes place within the framework of God's dynamic ordering of all creation.

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[52] John Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philipians and Colossians*, trans. by T. H. L. Parker, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 129. As is common in Calvin's writings he somewhat overstates the disorder in creation when he views it in relation to sin. This stands in contrast with his appreciation for creation as the theatre of the divine glory in his other writings. It is not clear in this passage whether he has thought through the implications of his interpretation for non-human creatures. In similar passages in his writings he recognises the validity of the understanding that Christ's work relates to otherkind but prefers to confine his exposition to humanity, see his comments on Colossians 1:20 on pp. 311-312.

[53] See E. David Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology: The Function of the So-called Extra Calvinisticum in Calvin's Theology.* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), pp. 67-78.

[54] Willis, *Calvin's Catholic Christology*, p. 71

[55] This is an understanding which is in accord with the broad contours of Calvin's' theology. See Schreiner, *The Theater of his Glory*, pp. 97-114.

The redemption accomplished at the cross is now being brought into reality, as creation is brought into a new dynamic union with the Logos in a manner which excludes all opposition to God and God's purposes. As Calvin commented on Acts 3:21:

> Christ by his death restored all things, as far as the power to achieve this and the cause of it are concerned; but the effect of it is not yet fully seen, because that restoration is still in the process of completion.[56]

This process will only be brought to completion when Christ returns to usher in the new heavens and the new earth.

The Spirit draws creation forward towards its eschatological fulfilment by bringing it into communion with the Logos thus provoking a new and fuller conformity with and dynamic response to the divine pattern of life set forth in the Logos. The Spirit's work implants within it the hope of renewal thus supporting and preserving creation in its present condition of partial dislocation from the Logos. As Calvin wrote:

> From hope comes the swiftness of the sun, the moon, and all the stars in their constant course, the continued obedience of the earth in producing its fruits, the upward motion of the air, and the power of the water to flow. God has given to each its proper task and has at the same time inwardly implanted the hope of renewal. The whole machinery of the world would fall out of gear at almost every moment and all its parts fail... were they not borne up from elsewhere by some hidden support.[57]

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[56] Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles 1-13,* trans. by J. W. Frazer and W. J. G. McDonald, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) p. 103, see also his commentary on Isaiah 65:17-25 in *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah,* vol. 4, pp. 67-78.

[57] Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul to the Apostle to the Romans and the Thessalonians,* trans. by R. MacKenzie, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Saint Andrews, 1961), p. 173. While Calvin does not explicitly state that the "hidden support" is the work of the Spirit, the role assigned to the Spirit in the rest of his theology and the parallel he draws in his later comments with the work of the Spirit in the believer, suggests that he thought of this support and hope as the consequence of the work of the Spirit.

Union with Christ by the Spirit lies at the heart of redemption, not only of humans but of the entire creation. This is not a union which obliterates the distinction between Creator and creature, rather one in which the creation as *creation* is brought into deep relationship with the Creator.

> The ultimate goal of all things thus does not lie in participating in the immanent-trinitarian life of God, but in the realisation of genuine creaturely existence and being before the face of God in accordance with his will.[58]

Redemption is the removal of the distortions of creation to enable creation to be genuinely itself in a new and transformed manner.[59]

This relationship of the triune God with creation as an other distinct from, yet in fellowship with God, reflects the perichoretic relationships amongst the persons of the Trinity. In these relationships the particularities of the persons are enhanced through their dynamic unity. In the eschatological relationship between the Triune God and creation, their unity in relationship enhances their particularity as Creator and creature, rather than obscuring it. Through this relationship creation will give an eternally, ever fuller and more dynamic, expression to the life of the Triune God. The eternal state is not a static boring existence, but a dynamic, living reality which will continually increase in magnificence, and verve, expressing the ever rich and multifaceted beauty of the divine life.

The New Creation in Covenantal Perspective

God's covenantal relationship with creation provides a

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[58] Arnold A. van Ruler, *Calvinistic Trinitarianism and Theocentric Politics: Essays Toward a Public Theology*, trans. by John Bolt, Toronto Studies in Theology, vol. 38 (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon, 1989), pp. 71-72.

[59] For the understanding that in Calvin's theology the redemption of humans enables them to enjoy a genuine creaturely existence through the work of the Spirit, see Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response*, pp. 76-94.

complimentary perspective on the hope of the new heavens and the new earth. This covenantal hope for creation is most vividly displayed in the apocalyptic visions in the book of Revelation with its culmination in the picture of New Jerusalem.

God in faithfulness to the covenant will not abandon creation to the destructive effects of the powers of chaos and the consequences of human sin. God's goal of making God's home amongst the community of creation will be attained. In describing God's faithfulness to creation biblical visions of the eschaton combine two apparently opposing motifs; the motifs of judgement and destruction, and that of renewal and restoration.

The "cosmic pyrotechnics"[60] emphasise that if God's goal is to be achieved all that is evil; all that is opposed to God and God's intentions, and all that would corrupt the earth must be cleansed from creation. In the vision of the new heaven and the new earth in Revelation there is no sea symbolising that the forces of chaos and disruption will be eternally removed from creation. Because God cares so deeply for creation; Revelation pronounces God's judgement on those who "destroy the earth" (11:18). The human degraders of creation will be held responsible by God for their actions. Judgement is not a contradiction of God's covenantal faithfulness to creation but an expression of it.

God will rule and all that opposes God's rule will have been defeated. All injustice, oppression, pain, suffering, sickness and death will be removed. Liberty and justice will reign for humanity and the whole of creation. Never again will the powerful trample on the powerless. Humans will be freed to be what God created them to be - image bearers of God. Creation will be liberated from its travail and transformed into a glorious new expression of the life of the triune God.

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[60] Lewis, *Theatre of the Gospel*, p. 30.

Creation will be cleansed and transformed, yet there will still be continuity between the new creation and the old. Calvin wrote that "the elements of the world.... will be consumed only in order to receive a new quality while their substance will remain the same."[61] The popular picture of God destroying the earth through judgement must be rejected as contrary to God's faithfulness to the covenant and to the biblical affirmation of the goodness of creation. As Miroslav Volf writes:

> The expectation of the eschatological destruction of the world is not consonant with the belief in the goodness of creation: what God will annihilate must be either so bad that it is not possible to be redeemed or so insignificant that it is not worth being redeemed. It is hard to believe in the intrinsic value and goodness of something that God will completely annihilate.[62]

Biblical apocalyptic descriptions of judgement by fire are to be understood as the purging and cleansing of creation and not its destruction. As Calvin commented on I Peter 1:10: "heaven and earth will be cleansed by fire so that they may be fit for the kingdom of Christ."[63] The goal of redemption is not translation into some new ethereal world after the destruction of this earth, but a transformed earthly life.[64]

God's covenant is with the whole of the community of creation and thus God's eschatological goal for creation must therefore be understood to comprehend the whole of creation and not merely humans. Bauckham comments on Revelation 5:

> Even amongst the worshipers human beings are not pre-

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[61] Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, and the First and Second Epistles of St Peter*, trans. by W. B. Johnston,, Calvin's Commentaries ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), p. 365.

[62] Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Charismatic Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 90-91.

[63] Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews, and the First and Second Epistles of St Peter*, p. 365.

[64] See Adrio König, *Heil en Heilsweg* (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1983), pp. 6-28.

> eminent. The four living creatures who lead the worship of the whole of creation are not portrayed as anthropomorphic beings, as angelic beings often are. Only the third has a face resembling a human face. The others resemble a lion, an ox and an eagle, and with their six wings and myriad eyes all have a heavenly superiority to earthly creatures (4:6-8). Their representative function is to worship on behalf of all creatures and therefore it is fulfilled when the circle of worship expands to include not only humans, but "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea" (5:13).[65]

There is an important, but undeveloped, theme in the Reformed tradition which affirms this restoration and transformation of whole community of creation. Thus, while Calvin maintains that it "is neither expedient nor right for us to inquire with greater curiosity into the perfection which will be experienced by beasts, plants and metals" he asserts that: "Their constitution will be such, and their order so complete, that no appearance either of deformity or impediment will be seen."[66]

The Puritan commentator Matthew Henry expressed a similar hope for all creatures:

> There shall be a glory conferred upon all creatures, which shall be (in proportion to their natures) as suitable and as great an advancement as the glory of the children of God shall be to them... What becomes of the souls of brutes that go downwards none can tell. But it should seem by the scriptures that there will be some kind of restoration of them.[67]

In giving content to this hope in a contemporary context we should share Calvin's reserve, but at the same time affirm that God has a purpose for all the members of the community of

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[65] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 33-34.
[66] Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul to the Apostle to the Romans and the Thessalonians*, p. 174.
[67] Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 6, *Acts to Revelation* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), p. 421. Abraham Kuyper expressed similar sentiments, see *Locus De Consummatione Saeculi*, in *Dictaten Dogmatiek: Locus de Magistratu, Locus de Consummatione Saeculi,* College Dictaat van een der Studenten, (Kampen: Kok, n.d.), pp. 322-323.

creation. Their life on earth has an eschatological significance for themselves and for the rest of creation. Whether we ought to hope for a personal resurrection and transformation of non-human creatures must remain in the realm of speculation.[68]

God's covenantal faithfulness to the community of creation is expressed in the hope for a renewed covenant community. The Isaianic vision of the predator and the prey living together is complemented by the picture of the tree of life in the New Jerusalem. The tree bears fruit every month and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. The redemption of all things embraces a new community in which humanity dwells in companionship with otherkind and finds its healing through its relationship with otherkind. There is thus no renewal of humanity without a renewal of the rest of creation. The New Jerusalem is a city in which a resurrected humanity dwells in harmony with all of creation. The best of human culture will be in tune with the magnificence of God's creation.[69] Together they will proclaim the glory of God's actions in creation and redemption. Salvation includes restored relationships with the rest of creation as well as with God and other humans.[70]

The New Jerusalem is the city of God, finally God has come to make God's home permanently amongst God's creatures. "The whole world will become God's home."[71] Calvin, commenting on I Corinthians 15:28, proposed that:

> [T]hen God will be governing heaven and earth by Himself, without any intermediary, and then in that way He will be all in all; and in consequence He will finally be in all, and not in all persons only, but in

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[68] A contemporary attempt to give some content to this hope through a process metaphysic can be found in Jay B. McDaniel, *Of God and Pelicans: A Theology of Reverence for Life* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1989).
[69] See Richard J. Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching In: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).
[70] See Carol Johnston "Economics, Eco-Justice and the Doctrine of God", in *After Natures Revolt: Eco-Justice and Theology,* ed. by Dieter Hessel (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) pp. 154-170.
[71] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God*, trans. by M. Kohl, (London: SCM, 1981), p. 104.

> all created things.[72]

This new presence of God in creation is not the absorption of creation into the divine being but rather as "the restoration of all things to God, so that they may be bound closely to him."[73] The integrity of creation's existence as that which is distinct from God is maintained, but God will in a new and unique manner indwell it. It is here that:

> God's creation reaches its ultimate fulfilment when it becomes the scene of God's immediate presence. This in the last resort is what is "new" about the new creation. It is the old creation filled with the God's presence.[74]

Creation has reached its goal, but we should not envisage that this is the end of the covenant. The multifarious and dynamic relationship between God and God's creatures continues. "The *eschaton* corresponds to the to-us-incomprehensible state of completely unbounded divine address and creaturely response: an infinite spiral of blessing and praise."[75]

ANTICIPATING THE END: REDEMPTION WITHIN THE PRESENT AGE

The wolf and the lamb are not yet lying down together and the kingdoms of this world have not become Kingdom of God. Yet the decisive event has already occurred.

> Christ by his death restored all things, as far as the power to achieve this and the cause of it are concerned; but the effect of it is not yet fully seen, because that restoration is still in the process of completion, and so too our redemption, forasmuch as we still groan under the burden of servitude. For as the Kingdom of Christ is only begun, and the perfection of it is deferred until the last day, so the benefits that are annexed to it are now only partly evident.[76]

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[72] Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians,* trans. by John W. Fraser, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), p. 328.
[73] Ibid., p. 328.
[74] Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, p.. 140.
[75] Osborn, *Guardians of Creation*, p. 127
[76] John Calvin, *The Acts of the Apostles 1-13,* p. 103.

We live in the in-between times. Death and sin still ravage creation yet in faith we confess that God, by the Spirit, is at work drawing creation forward to its eschatological fullness; more than that the Spirit anticipates this fullness through penultimate manifestations of the new creation in the present age. These manifestations have eschatological and therefore ultimate significance, for God will take them up into the new creation.

The eschatological expectation stands in critique of and as a lure to all human effort to create a just and sustainable society. As a lure it calls humans forward to implement ever increasing approximations to the eschatological *shalom*. It instils a profound restlessness into human efforts to promote "justice, peace and the integrity of creation". No penultimate expression of the eschatological *shalom* ever fully manifest God's ideal. Humanity empowered by the Spirit and inspired by the hope of the new creation must constantly strive to move beyond the most just and sustainable societies that have been established.

As a critique the eschatological hope proclaims that no human effort will ever achieve this goal. Complete ecological healing is an ultimate reality given by God when all that opposes God's intentions for creation is finally removed. We cannot force the wolf and the lamb to lie down together, or the lion to eat straw, without severe damage to the delicate balances woven into the fabric of creation. While utopias are important as goals to be striven for, the reality of evil always prevents their total implementation. Attempts to implement total ecological reconstruction assume that humans have the ability to achieve their own ecological salvation. They will thus end up repeating the errors of modernity. Such attempts will only achieve some measure of success by coercing people to comply with the plans of the ecological "experts". The consequence is a new form of idolatry of the experts which will end in the oppression of humanity and disaster for

otherkind.

The Church - Sign of Eschatological Renewal

> [The] church is not an aggregate of justified sinners or a sacramental institute or a means of private self-satisfaction but the avant-garde of the new creation in a hostile world, creating beachheads in this world of God's dawning new world and yearning for the day of God's visible lordship over his creation.[77]

The church is a sign pointing to the new creation within the context of the present creation. It is not an empty sign, for through the presence of the Spirit, it is a provisional foretaste of the eschatological community of creation.[78]

The Community of the New Covenant

Numerous motifs and images have been used in the New Testament and the history of the Christian tradition to illuminate the multifaceted character of the church.[79] The image of the church as the community of the new covenant is particularly appropriate in the context of the development of an ecotheology from within the Reformed tradition.

This image emphasises that the church stands in continuity with God's covenantal dealings with Abraham and the people of Israel. But the church is the community of the *new* covenant its identity is thus shaped by the eschatological expectations of the Old Testament prophets as they were fulfilled by Jesus the Christ.

The contrast between the new and the old covenant has been used to legitimate the church's pietistic withdrawal from

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[77] Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, p. 155.

[78] See J. A. Heyns, *Die Kerk* (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1977), pp. 352-355, idem., *Dogmatiek* (Pretoria: N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1978), pp. 352-355 and P. F. Theron, "Die Kerk as Eskatologiese Teken van Eenheid", in *Die Eenheid van die Kerk*, ed. by Piet Meiring and H. I. Lederle (Cape Town, Tafelberg, 1979), pp. 6-13.

[79] See Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City: Image, 1978) and Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960).

society. In contrast to the old covenant the new covenant has been seen to deal with inner renewal and the forgiveness of sin. This is a consequence of Jeremiah 31:33-34 being used as the primary paradigm for understanding the new covenant and hence the identity of the church. The Old Testament expectation of a new covenant is however far more comprehensive.[80] It is seen to entail peace with the wild animals; increased fertility of the land; justice for the oppressed, and safety from all threats. The new covenant thus establishes the all embracing community of the new creation re-establishing God's original purpose for the creation.[81] As the community of the new covenant the identity of the church is shaped by its participation in God's comprehensive redemptive purpose:

> God's redemptive concern for the world has to do with every aspect of life, whether personal, social, or environmental. The struggle for justice and liberation, the need for forgiveness and reconciliation, the healing of mind and body, the search for meaning and the awakening and sustaining of faith, hope and love, and the renewal of the earth, are all part of the *missio Dei*.[82]

Through its participation in the *missio Dei t*he church is a penultimate expression of the eschatological community which will receive its ultimate form in the new heavens and the new earth.

At the heart of the church's particular identity as the community of the new creation, is its experience of the presence of the Spirit. It is this which makes it different from other organisations involved in the transformation of human life and society. In fulfilment of the new covenant the

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[80] See Ezekiel 34:25-29 and Hosea 2: 18-23.

[81] See Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, pp. 164-200, idem., *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament*, The Moore College Lectures 1983 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), pp. 79-118, and Simkins, *Creator and Creation*, pp. 205-251.

[82] John W. de Gruchy, "Christian Community", in *Doing Theology in Context: South African Perspectives,* Theology and Praxis vol. 1., ed. by John W. de Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio (Cape Town David Philip, 1994), pp. 125-138 (p. 134).

ascended Lord poured out the Spirit into the community of disciples gathered at Pentecost. This community became the temple of the Spirit, the new locus for the eschatological presence of God in the world. It is through the presence of the Spirit that this obviously human and broken community is transformed into a penultimate manifestation of the new creation. As De Gruchy states:

> Paradoxically, the church cannot become a channel and instrument in the world unless it has a creative life of its own in the "fellowship of the Spirit". If the church has anything to offer the world, it is because the church is different from the world at precisely this point.[83]

Covenants are not unilateral relationships, when God enters into covenant with a community they are called to respond in covenant faithfulness to God. The church as the community of the new covenant responds to the new covenant by:

> *Remembering* that God's covenant, which is justice and peace, embraces all of creation;
> *Professing* our faith in God's promises for justice and peace on earth in its wholeness;
> *Repenting* of our turning away from God's covenant for justice and peace;
> *Renouncing* all idols of wealth, power, race and gender superiority and security which causes people to suffer and the earth to be dominated, plundered and destroyed;
> *Celebrating* God's justice and peace and the mystery of God's creation; and
> *Opening our lives* to respond in faithfulness to God's covenant with all living creatures, indeed with the earth as a whole.[84]

The church as the community of the new covenant ought to be characterised by a lifestyle that stands in contrast to the values and lifestyle of modernity with its exploitative approach to creation. Its own life must give visible

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[83] Ibid., pp 134.
[84] "Final Document: Entering into Covenant Solidarity for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation," in *Between the Flood and the Rainbow:: Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment (Covenant) to Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation*, ed. by D. Preman Niles (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1992), pp. 164-190 (p. 179).

expression to the reality of the new covenant thus a commitment to social justice and ecological healing is not an optional extra for the church, it is an inherent component of its eschatological identity.

The Church in Solidarity with a Suffering Creation

While the church is the sign and foretaste of the new creation within the present creation, it has not been removed from the realities and struggles of a creation in travail. As the community of the crucified Christ it is called to stand in solidarity with the suffering creation. Christiaan Beker thus argues that:

> Because the church is not an elite body, separated from a doomed world, but a community placed in the midst of the cosmic community of creation, its task is not merely to win souls but to bear the burdens of a creation, to which it belongs but to which it also must bear witness.[85]

In particular, as the people of the liberating God of the covenant, the church locates itself alongside the victims of contemporary society. As the Belhar Confession states the triune God "is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged".[86] The community of the new covenant

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[85] Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, p. 364.

[86] "The Confession of 1982", in *A Moment of Truth: The Confession of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church*, ed. by G. D. Cloete and D. J. Smit (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 1-6 (p. 3). Calvin expresses this in a sermon on Micah 2:8-11: "Micah speaks of widows, infants and orphans. Cruel as some men can be, still they will spare them. When they do not, it is a sure sign that they have not one drop of humanity and have become savage beasts. Widows, orphans and children are vulnerable and unable to support themselves; therefore take good care, lest you injure them. If you do evil to a man who can take care of himself, that is one thing. It is of course an offence against God Himself. But it is a completely different matter if you harm some poor feeble wretch. God will be doubly offended and personally avenge the poor soul. That is why God is called the protector of widows and the tutor of orphans. They are the ones that get run over first, for they are totally destitute of all human aid. That is why our Lord takes them into His safekeeping. If we do not stand up for their rights, we will have to deal with God in the end. Think long and hard on this point; for on judgement Day, God will make it clear that if we have oppressed widows and orphans, it is as if we injured his own person." He went on to affirm that people who oppress the powerless "torment not only men but God as well" Jean Calvin, *Sermons on Micah,* trans. by Blair Reynolds, Texts and Studies in Religion, vol. 47, (Lewiston: Edwin Mellon, 1990), pp. 121 & 122.

which seeks the new creation must follow Jesus "outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore" (Hebrews: 13:13). In carrying out its mission the church ought always to stand in solidarity with and bear the suffering and disgrace of the victims of society.[87] From this perspective the church must affirm that there will be no healing of the earth until the poor and powerless are empowered to interact with creation as the image bearers of God.

Personal Salvation - Proleptic Participation in the New Creation

When Christians have thought about personal salvation in relation to God's renewal of the rest of creation they have usually started with personal renewal and then moved in expanding circles outward. As Calvin stated: "[F]or we now begin to be reformed according to the image of God by his Spirit so that the complete renewal of ourselves and the whole world may follow in its own time."[88]

While the redemption of creation is intimately related to the redemption of individual human persons, it is better to see this relationship from another perspective. Humanity has become the focus of opposition to God and God's intentions for creation. As humans have rebelled against God and destroyed creation they deserve God's rejection. The gospel is the good news that God is renewing and transforming creation and has in an amazingly gracious manner included human persons in the centre of this process. Instead of removing the problem, God chose to transform it. God thus calls humans into a proleptic participation in God's new creation through union with Jesus Christ. United to Christ, through faith, by the work of the Spirit, humans participate in the death and resurrection of Christ and thus experience eschatological redemption.

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[87] See Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching In*, pp. 69-77.
[88] John Calvin, *A Harmony of the Gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke*, vol. 2., trans. by T. H. L. Parker, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 134.

The call to faith comes through the church as the sign of the kingdom and which is, in Calvin's words, our "mother."[89] Human beings experience salvation through the church; for it is here that the relationships between humans and God, between fellow humans, and between humanity and the rest of creation are healed through the work of Christ.[90] "[T]he gospel addresses us consistently as the people of God, the body of Christ, and individualises its message within this context."[91]

The Reformed tradition has used a number of concepts to describe various aspects of personal salvation. We shall focus our attention on four of them, namely, regeneration, the restoration of the divine image, the presence of the Spirit and the resurrection.

Regeneration

Human beings are entrapped in the multidimensional and pervasive reality of sin. The entrapment in the sinful structures of modernity is only one dimension of this larger problem. Sin has also affected the very core of the human person so that, even when we know what is right, we choose to do what is wrong. The environmental crisis and our failure to address it adequately is a consequence of sin. What are needed are transformed people who have the inner power to overcome this bondage to sin. Reformed Christians have proclaimed that God, in free grace, intervenes in human life to transform sinful people into new people. Not that sin is removed but that they are so renewed that they are enabled to overcome sin and begin a new life of progressive sanctification. This transforming work of the Spirit is traditionally designated regeneration.[92]

The Reformed tradition has largely failed to understand

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[89] Institutes, 4:1:4.

[90] Calvin wrote "We are said *to be in him* because, grafted into His body we are partakers of all His righteousness and all His blessings. *The Gospel of St John and the First Epistle of John,* p. 84.

[91] Gordon J. Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for doing Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), p. 485.

[92] See Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 93-112.

regeneration within the eschatological context in which it is presented in the New Testament.[93] It is through regeneration that one enters into God's eschatological reign. Regeneration is more than the entrance into the new creation; it is the eschatological re-creation of the individuals as a part of God's eschatological re-creation of all things.

> Die individuele weergeboorte is dus deel van die omvattende proses van herstel en verheerliking waarmee God besig is en wat Hy by die wederkoms van Christus sal voltoi. Die weergeboorte Christen weet dus dat sy heils ervaring onafskeidelik deel is van God se omvattende werk van weergeboorte of herskeping. Hy kan homself nooit van hierdie groter gebeure isoleer en die heil net tot sy private lewe of tot die weergeboorte van individue beperk nie. Daar is 'n groot skepping wat met gespanne verwagting uitsien na die omvattende vernuwing en verheerliking wat kom (Rom. 8:18 e.v.).[94]

Regeneration not only makes humans a new people but includes them in the process of the renewal of creation. They are thus united with creation in its movement towards eschatological renewal and have a responsibility to contribute to that process through involvement in the redirection of creation back to God. This broad responsibility includes both action for social justice and the care of creation. Empowered by the Spirit they are enabled to engage with creation, overcoming the destructive and enslaving influence of sin. To be regenerate is not to escape into a private piety but to be thrust into activity as a partner with God in the redemption of creation. It is to be engaged in a struggle against all that would oppress humans and destroy creation.

The Restoration of the Image of God

As a consequence of sin, humans are alienated from God, their fellow humans and with the rest of creation. They do not live as image bearers of God. The gifts that they have been given

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[93] See Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics,* vol. 2., trans. by D. L. Guder (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 355-358 and Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation,* trans by M. Kohl (London: SCM, 1992), pp. 147-153.

[94] König, *Heil en Heilsweg,* p. 135.

by God are not used to reflect the character and purpose of God to the rest of the community of creation. As a consequence creation suffers. The healing of creation is thus dependent on the restoration of the image of God in humans.

Central to Calvin's soteriology was the restoration of the image of God in the human person.[95] He wrote that "the end of regeneration is that Christ should reform us to God's image."[96] The Spirit unites us with Christ so that we are enabled to fully bear the image of God in the world. Salvation is a restoring of humans to the vocation that God has for them. It makes us truly human by restoring right relationships with God, our fellow humans and otherkind.

The restoration of the divine image is a gradual process of transformation. As Calvin wrote:

> The purpose of the Gospel is the restoration in us of the image of God which has been cancelled by sin and that this restoration is progressive and goes on during our whole life, because God makes His glory shine in us little by little.[97]

The Spirit works through the Word to bring about conformity to the image of God. This restoration of the image of God includes a restoration of the relationship between humans and otherkind, as the Word is addressed to this relationship. Enlightened by the Spirit and directed by the scripture, humans are enabled to see the glory of God displayed in the whole of creation. Creation now functions as a visible manifestation of God's glory;[98] it becomes a meeting place

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[95] See Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response*, op. cit., pp. 62-94, Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), pp. 103-111, and Lucien Joseph Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1974), pp. 111-116.
[96] *Institutes,* 1:15:4.
[97] John Calvin, *The Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians and the Epistles to Timothy, Titus and Philemon,* trans. by T. A. Smail, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 50.
[98] See Schreiner, *The Theatre of his Glory*, pp. 104-107 and Edward A. Dowey Jr., *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (New York Columbia University Press, 1952), particularly pp. 131-146 and 221-242.

between them and God.

Growth in spirituality is an unfolding conformity to the image of God, therefore a

> ... mark of Christian growth is a *maturing in solidarity*. By "solidarity" I mean regard for and love of all our fellow creatures... Growth in Christian life is a process of entering into solidarity with ever widening circles of community that are created and nourished by the Spirit.[99]

The restoring of the image of God has another dimension, for some people are prevented from imaging God by oppressive social systems. God's grace comes to them in two ways to restore the image of God. First, it empowers them to resist the oppressive and unjust conditions in which they are forced to live. By the power of the Spirit they are enabled to claim their dignity and responsibility to act as humans. The Spirit inspires their struggle against dehumanising powers. Second, the Spirit works through the church and in the world to bring liberation to them, overthrowing the forces of oppression so that they may be freed to serve God and creation as those who bear the divine image.

The Presence of the Spirit

As participants in the new creation, Christians are indwelt by the Spirit of God as God's eschatological gift to them. The presence of the Spirit is a present realisation of the eschaton guaranteeing our future participation in the redemption of all things. Calvin wrote:

> The Spirit, then is the earnest of our inheritance, that is, of eternal life, unto the redemption, that is, until the day of complete redemption comes... For the symbol and the pledge lasts till both parties have fulfilled the contract; and accordingly, he later says *until the day of redemption* (Eph. 4.30). But he is speaking of the day of judgement, for though we are already redeemed by the blood of Christ, the result of redemption is not visible; for every creature groans,

[99] Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, p. 181.

> desiring to be delivered from corruption. And we ourselves also, who have received the first fruits of the Spirit long for the same freedom; for we have not yet obtained it, except by hope.[100]

The presence of the "Spirit both conveys present eschatological peace and joy ... and yet makes us sigh relentlessly."[101] This experience of the Spirit should not lead to an other-worldly quietism but to an active engagement in the Spirit's mission in creation as a sign pointing to the coming liberation of all creation. "Gifted by the Spirit, all become contributors to the common welfare, partners in the creative and redemptive work of God."[102]

The Spirit who is present in the believer is the same Spirit who gives life to otherkind and who is drawing creation towards its eschatological destiny. The presence of the Spirit in the church unites it with otherkind.

> The particular experience of the Spirit that human beings have (the Spirit as firstfruits of salvation) serves not to separate them from the nonhuman environment but to unite them with it. For the possession of the Spirit as the firstfruits of salvation leads human beings into solidarity with the non-human creation.[103]

Spirituality is not an abandonment of creation but rather an embrace of creation as fellow participants in the birth pangs of the new creation.

The Resurrection of Humans and the Redemption of Creation

Calvin follows Paul in arguing that the redemption of the cosmos was bound up with the resurrection of believers.[104] It is only when human beings, as the ones who are in a particular

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[100] Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians,* p. 132.
[101] Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, p. 279.
[102] Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding*, p. 172.
[103] Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, p. 147.
[104] See Calvin, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Romans and the Thessalonians*, pp. 172-177, and Heinrich Quistorp, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Last Things*, trans. by H. Knight, (London: Lutterworth, 1955), pp. 181-186.

way the bearers of the divine glory, truly reflect that glory that the goal for creation will be achieved. C. E. B. Cranfield stands in this tradition when he argues that:

> [T]he whole magnificent theatre of the universe, together with all its splendid properties and all the varied chorus of the sub-human life, created for God's glory, is cheated of its fulfilment so long as man ... fails to contribute ... his part. The Jungfrau and the planet Venus and all living things too, man alone exempted, do indeed glorify God in their own way; but since their praise is destined not to be a collection of independent offerings but part of a magnificent whole, the united praise of the whole creation, they are prevented from being full that which they were created to be, so long as man's part is missing ...[105]

While this might seem to be an unacceptable form of anthropocenterism, it is rather the recognition of the gracious election of humans to be the image bearers of God and of the consequent role that humans in their sin have played in the corruption of the rest of creation. Humans became the focal point of creaturely resistance to the purposes of God and thus only as they are redeemed is it possible for the whole of creation to be redeemed.

The Spirit in the World

Through the doctrine of common grace, the Reformed tradition has affirmed that, God is at work in the world beyond the church to restrain evil, advance justice and promote human cultural and scientific development.[106] While all of human culture is warped by sin, the Spirit facilitates the development of that which is in accordance with God's purpose for creation. These good developments in human culture and society have eschatological significance. Purified of the corruption of sin they will find a place in the eschatological

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[105] C. E. B. Cranfield, "Some Observations on Romans 8: 19-21", in *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology presented to L. L. Morris on his 60th Birthday*, ed. by Robert Banks (Exeter: Paternoster, 1974), pp. 224-230 (p. 227).
[106] See *Institutes,* 2:2:12-17 & 2:3:3-4.

city of God.[107] Christ the Liberator is present by the Spirit even when his name is unknown and even rejected.[108]

In a world in travail brokenness often results in the destruction and disorientation of the complex ecosystems of the biosphere; this can happen through, natural disasters or human intervention in creation. The Spirit is at work restoring and developing ecosystems out of this brokenness so that the travail of one set of ecosystems is the birth pangs of a new system. Even desertification gives way to the development of desert ecosystems with their own unique creatures, creatures that would not be there if the previous ecosystems had remained. In the midst of pain and destruction the Spirit evokes life in whole new configurations giving further expression to the glory of the triune God. The Spirit thus acts against the powers of destruction and death in the hope of the cosmic renewal of all things.

The Spirit is also at work in human culture and society, inspiring great achievements which bring benefit and enjoyment to humanity. The Spirit promotes justice and righteousness in society, overthrowing the powerful and liberating the oppressed. Where the sick are being healed, the hungry fed, the naked clothed and the elderly and infirm cared for, there the Spirit is at work giving expression to the victory of the cross and anticipating the eschaton.

The Spirit is at work through human society promoting a care for, and activism on behalf of, otherkind. When whales are saved, national parks created, poachers apprehended, nuclear testing stopped and environmental rights enshrined in a constitution, the Spirit is at work. The Spirit inspires humans with the wisdom to observe and understand creation that they may develop eco-friendly agriculture and technology. It is the Spirit who enables us to restore damaged ecosystems so that the human-made deserts may bloom once more.

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[107] See, Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching In*.
[108] See Gabriel Fackre, *The Christian Story: A Narrative Interpretation of Basic Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 203-214.

The church in its commitment to the *missio Dei* is an agent of the Spirit's work in the world.[109] Yet the church's response to the issues of the integrity of creation has been ambiguous. The Spirit's work outside the church is calling the church today to heed the words and actions of those who do not confess the name of Christ or may in fact have rejected the church. To reject their call to action on behalf of creation is to reject the work of the Spirit.

[109] See Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith,* trans. by Sierd Woudstra (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 503-524.

Chapter 6

THE PRAXIS OF THE NEW COVENANT PEOPLE OF GOD

The church is called to work out what it means to be faithful to the gospel of God's new creation in the context of the environmental crisis. In doing so it needs to recognise that the present context demands a new way of being the people of God in the world. Jacklyn Cock has challenged the church: "At the moment in South Africa we stand between the desert and the rainbow. The intervention of the Christian church will help shape the outcome."[1] This is true of the situation of the church in a world context. The church will however only adequately play its role when it is recognised that ecological issues are not peripheral to Christianity. It is only when these concerns are seen to be direct consequences of the gospel; then an ecological dimension will become an integral to Christian faith and praxis.

A KAIROS FOR THE EARTH

The year 1985 was one of crisis for the people of South Africa. The tyranny of the unjust and illegitimate government was increasing as it met the ever more determined opposition of the oppressed masses. The townships were in flames; people were detained, tortured and killed; and a total conflagration seemed imminent. A group of church leaders and theologians courageously challenged the church and the nation, risking imprisonment and death.

> The time has come. The moment of truth has arrived. South Africa has been plunged into a crisis that is shaking the foundations and there is every indication that the crisis has only just begun and that it will deepen and become even more threatening in the months to come. It is the *kairos* or moment of truth not only for apartheid but also for the church and all other faiths and religions.
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> We as a group of theologians have been trying to

[1] Jacklyn Cock, "Towards the Greening of the Church in South Africa", *Missionalia*, 20, (1992), 174-185, (p. 184)

> understand the theological significance of this moment in our history. It is serious, very serious. For very many Christians in South Africa this is the *kairos*, the moment of grace and opportunity, the favourable time in which God issues a challenge to decisive action. It is a dangerous time because, if this opportunity is missed, and allowed to pass by, the loss for the church, for the Gospel and for all the people of South Africa will be immeasurable. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. He wept over the tragedy of the destruction of the city and the massacre of the people that was imminent, "and all because you did not recognise your opportunity (*kairos*) when God offered it" (Lk. 19:44) [2]

Tragically the call was only heard by a few, thousands more were to be tortured and killed and many communities were devastated in the nine years that were to precede the first democratic elections. Yet this prophetic word was not in vain, for it was an instrument in the hand of God in bringing life out of the death and devastation wrought by apartheid.

Today we face a new *kairos,* a moment judgement, of grace and of opportunity, not for a nation, but for the earth and for human life as we know it.

Signs of the Times

If we are to grasp the opportunity that this *kairos* places before us we need to read the signs of the times. We must understand the nature of the threat, the indications of hope, and the possible source of the new opportunity.

The Threat of Ecological Disaster

All cultures have altered the ecological context in which they have lived. In many cases this resulted in ecological collapse and the consequent demise of that particular socio-

[2] Kairos Theologians, *The Kairos Document: Challenge to the Church - A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1986), p. 1, a brief account of the story behind the *Kairos Document* can be found in Albert Nolan, "Kairos Theology", in *Doing Theology in Context: South* African *Perspectives, Theology and Praxis* vol. 1, ed. by John W de Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio (Cape Town David Philip, 1994), pp. 212-218.

cultural matrix. The present environmental crisis is a consequence of the destructive consequences of modernity. Modernity promised that culture and nature could be brought under human mastery. Humans would no longer have to live under the dominance of powers beyond their control; they would be free at last.

> But far more than that, through scientific knowledge and technology, and the extension of industrial civilization and democratic process, poverty, disease, and toil would be supplanted with an abundance that would permit the good life as one of enriching, individual choice in the context of enhanced stability.[3]

The vision of a great new world was shared by both the liberal capitalist and the socialist manifestations of modernity. As Larry Rasmussen argues:

> Even the most articulate, penetrating, and organised criticisms of industrial capitalism, the socialist ones, never abandoned the immaculate confidence in scientific technology or the root conviction of the busy bourgeoisie that we could have a world of our own making and it could be good. They claimed only to fulfil modernity's promise of abundance in a far more just and democratic way.[4]

This great dream was not to be realised. Despite the many liberatory and beneficial consequences that ensued from modernity, it failed to deal with the fundamental problem of human hubris and the will to power. As a consequence mastery over creation was exercised for the benefit of the elite of both the east and the west. In addition, modernity did not recognise the limited nature of the resources of creation and the complex interrelationships which link the various dimensions of creation together. Human mastery, manipulation and exploitation of creation has severely damaged the fabric of creation and brought the life of the entire biosphere under

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[3] Larry L. Rasmussen, *Moral Fragments and Moral Community: A Proposal for Church in Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress), p. 27.
[4] Ibid., p.29.

threat. The environmental crisis has shattered the underlying presuppositions of modernity and the earth and all its inhabitants are faced with a moment of awesome consequence.

The final document of the World Council of Churches' convocation on "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" held in Seoul in 1990, describes the threat of the *kairos* for the earth:

> Humanity seems to have entered a period of its history which is qualitatively new. It has acquired the capacity to destroy itself. The quality of life being diminished; even life itself is in peril. We are confronted by new and complexly interwoven threats:
> - from entrenched and deadly forms of injustice: while a few of the earth's citizens enjoy unprecedented affluence and power, millions languish in crushing poverty, hunger and oppression;
> - from universal violence in open and hidden conflicts and increasing violations of fundamental human rights: torture, extrajudicial killings and genocide have become a feature of our time;
> - from the rapid degradation of the environment: the process upon which life itself depends are being systematically undermined; already many species of animals and plants are lost forever.
>
> The real danger lies in the interaction of these threats. Together they represent a global crisis. Unless far-reaching changes are made *now* the crisis will intensify, and may turn into a real catastrophe for our children and grand children.[5]

As humanity stands on the threshold of a new century, it faces the prospect of levels of suffering far greater than anything which has ever been previously inflicted on the earth and its inhabitants. The reality of ever decreasing resources will almost certainly lead to increasing conflict and oppression, as the rich and powerful destroy humans, otherkind and the

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[5] "Final Document: Entering into Covenant Solidarity for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation", ed. by D. Preman Niles,in *Between the Flood and the Rainbow:: Interpreting the Conciliar Process of Mutual Commitment (Covenant) to Justice Peace and the Integrity of Creation* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1992), pp. 164-199 (pp. 164 & 165) This document will be referred to hereafter as the Seoul Covenant.

planet, in their attempt to maintain their extravagant lifestyles. Yet this catastrophe is not something that awaits the lives of "our children and grand children". It has already begun amongst the powerless nations of South as was affirmed in 1989 in *The Road to Damascus*. This document was a response by Christians in the South to the use of theology to justify oppression. It states that:

> Today most Third World Countries are no longer colonies, but we are still dominated by one or more imperial power - the United States, Japan and Western Europe. Their web of economic control includes an unfair international trade system, multinational companies that monopolise strategic sections of our economy, economic policies dictated by leading banks and governments together with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Even technology is used as tool of domination. The staggering size of the Third World debt is only one dramatic sign of our subordination to imperialism.

It goes on to say:

> The effects of imperialism upon the Third World form a litany of woes: our children die of malnutrition and disease, there are no jobs for those who want to work, families break up to pursue employment abroad, peasants and indigenous communities are displaced from their land, most urban dwellers have to live in unsanitary slums, many women have to sell their bodies, too many die without having a life that human persons deserve. We also suffer because of the plunder of our natural resources, and then we ourselves are being blamed for it.[6]

The authors of this prophetic call did not provide a detailed analysis of the relationship between the oppression and exploitation of humans and the destruction and exploitation of the rest of creation. Yet both are the result of a fundamentally unjust and unsustainable world order.[7] The

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[6] *The Road to Damascus: Kairos and Conversion* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1989), pp. 2 and 3.

[7] There are numerous examples of this relationship. The execution of environmentalist and minority rights leader, Ken Saro-Wira in Nigeria has highlighted the relationships that exist between multinational companies

degradation and exploitation of creation in the countries of the South is often a direct consequence of the over-consumptive lifestyles of the nations of the North. The poor and powerless nations are forced to exploit their resources in order to meet their debt repayments. This situation is exasperated by the corruption of the elite within these countries, who siphon off money to support luxurious lifestyles. While the centres of power shift from nation to nation, the world socio-economic system with its warped values has not changed. The international political and economic order is still skewed for the benefit of the rich and powerful, who defend their position and privileges at all costs. Ideals of development and democracy are expendable when they conflict with the interests of the powerful. The Gulf War and the hypocrisy of the differing relations that the USA has with China and Cuba are two clear examples of this reality.

Multinationals can only survive if they have cheap resources and expanding markets. Western consumerism is thus foisted on the peoples of the South as the goal of "development." They are forced to pursue this "development" under the watchful eye of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The policies encouraged by these institutions have often proved to be devastating to both the human and non-human inhabitants of these countries.

The end of the Cold War has been heralded as the vindication of liberal capitalism and the justification of the market

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and the local elites in pursuing policies that result in both ecological destruction and the oppression of the powerless. See John Vidal, "'Let People See Our Plight' - Ogoni", in *Africa Today*, 1 no. 3 (1995), pp. 17-19, idem., "Ogoni Trials "Breach Nigerian and International Law'", in *Africa Today*, 1 no. 3 (1995), pp. 20-21, Cindy Shiner, "Struggle that Led to Novelist's Trial", *Mail and Guardian*, 3-9 November 1995, p. 23 and Earthlife Africa, "Factsheet on the Ogoni Struggle", (unpublished paper, 1995). Another, less dramatic, example is the destruction of the delicate ecological balances in the semi-arid areas in Botswana by wealthy cattle ranchers through "development" programs sponsored by the World Bank and the European Economic Community, see Delia Owens and Mark Owens, *Survivor's Song: Life and Death in African Wilderness* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), pp. 279-282.

economy.[8] But the market remains the agent of the powerful and the instrument of a purely economic view of reality. It treats powerless people and the rest of creation merely as resources to be used in the pursuit of wealth. The GNP has become the sole indicator of national development regardless of the cost to creation. In contrast it must be affirmed that:

> [C]ertain social preferences - for example, sustainability, for the preservation of endangered species and wild places - are incapable in principle of being realised through the market.[9]

These preferences are not merely an optional benefit for the elite, but the preconditions for the continued existence of the biosphere as we know it and thus for a just and equitable human society. The continued exploitative policies and lifestyles of the powerful cannot be sustained by the fragile ecosystems of the biosphere. Dominant models of development and the consumerist cultures that are being foisted on the powerless peoples of the world will result in further, possibly irreversible, ecological damage.

The report "Evangelical Christianity and the Environment" lists seven dimension of the threat to the ecological stability of the earth.

> (1) *alteration of Earth's energy exchange* with the sun that results in global warming and destruction of the Earth's protective ozone layer...
> (2) *land degradation* that reduces available land for creatures and crops by "adding house to house and field to field" and destroys land by erosion, salinization and desertification...
> (3) *water quality degradation* that defiles ground water, lakes, rivers and oceans...
> (4) *deforestation* that each year removes 100,000 square kilometers of primary forest and degrades an equal amount by over-use...

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[8] See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992)

[9] Max Oelschlaeger, *Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 48.

> (5) *species extinction* that finds more than 3 species of plants and animals eliminated from the Earth *each day...*
> (6) *waste generation and global toxification* that results in distribution of troublesome materials worldwide by atmospheric and global circulations...
> (7) *human and cultural degradation* that threatens and eliminates long-standing knowledge of native and some Christian communities on living sustainably with creation, together with the loss of long-standing garden varieties of food plants.[10]

Two further threats need to be noted. The first is the continued exploitation of the Earth's non-renewable mineral resources to supply the ever increasing demands of the over-consumption of the countries of the North and the exploitative lifestyles of the wealthy elite in the countries of the South.

The second is the continually expanding human population. Simplistic judgements concerning the population of the Countries of the South must be rejected. The average child in the stable and even declining populations of the North consumes far more of the earth's limited resources than the poverty stricken children of expanding populations of the South. But increasing population does result in increasing poverty and further destruction of the Earth's resources. Population growth is directly related to the disempowerment and poverty of the people, particularly women, in the countries of the South.[11]

While scientists debate the exact consequences of the

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[10] World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission/Ausable Forum, "Evangelical Christianity and the Environment", *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 17 (1993), 122-133, (pp. 122 and 123), the emphasis is in the original. (This document will hereafter be referred to as the ECE Report). Cf. Calvin B. DeWitt, "Introduction: Seven Degradations of Creation", in *The Environment and the Christian: What Does the New Testament Say about the Environment?* ed. by Calvin B. DeWitt. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991), pp. 13-23. The Seoul Covenant is decidedly problematic in this area. It only refers, in any detail, to atmospheric pollution and ignores other issues.

[11] A South African perspective on this issue can be found in Barbara Klugman, "Victims or Villains? Overpopulation and Environmental Degradation", in Jacklyn Cock and Eddie Koch, eds., *Going Green: People Politics and the Environment in South Africa* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 66-77.

degradation of the biosphere. There is little doubt that unless drastic action is taken in the near future life in the biosphere will be radically altered.

Signs of Hope

Yet there are glimmers of hope and opportunity. Movements for justice and democracy have triumphed against the most unbelievable odds. The collapse of communism and the apartheid demonstrate that, even in seemingly hopeless situations, transformation is possible. People still care for the earth and its inhabitants and many are taking radical action on their behalf.

On an ideological level the socio-cultural hegemony of modernity has been subjected to severe question by the diverse and deliberately pluralistic approach to culture termed "post-modernity."[12] While the shape of this movement remains ill defined, it has heralded the crisis of modernity as a coherent way of understanding the world and questioned its viability in the future. The values and ideals of modernity no longer provide the meta-narrative through which the events of the world are to be interpreted. Nor is it the only world-view that sets the agenda for the pursuit of science, technology and economic activity. The crisis of modernity provides a pluralistic context in which a variety of philosophies of life compete for recognition and influence. The time is thus ripe for the rise of an alternative, eco-centric, consensus on how we should understand and live in the world.

Numerous movements motivated to care for the Earth and all its inhabitants have emerged rejecting the ideal of human dominance over the rest of creation. Throughout the world there is a growing concern for about the destruction and exploitation of creation. The most obvious example of this concern was, despite its ambiguities, the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.

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[12] See Charles Jenks, ed., *The Post-Modern Reader* (London: Academy Editions, 1992).

The world wide protest at the continuation of French nuclear testing in the South Pacific is another example. Some people, within these movements, display great courage and self sacrifice. Whether this enthusiasm about caring for the earth will continue when the demand for a radical change of lifestyle becomes apparent is an open question. Action on behalf of the earth provokes new approaches to ecological issues from the ranks of the powerful who wish to maintain their hegemony over the earth. These developments are often promoted as environmentally friendly. They however fail to question the fundamental assumptions of the socio-cultural matrix which has caused the destruction of creation.

Amongst all these signs of hope we are forced to ask: "Where is the church?" If the ecotheology developed in the previous chapters is a faithful outworking of the central message of the Christian gospel, then the church ought to be in the forefront of the movement for the transformation of our world. Significant statements have been made and some churches and Christian groups have contributed to these signs of hope. Yet with some important exceptions most of the church remains entrapped within the snares of modernity. It is tragically unaware of its complicity in the destruction of creation. While the earth community faces its greatest challenge, "[t]he church sleeps on - though it occasionally talks in its sleep."[13] Where the church is doing something, it seems to be engaged in a hasty attempt to catch up with what is happening in the rest of society; an attempt that has not made a major impact on the life and praxis of most Christians.

Places of Hope

The possibility of hope, poses the question about possible places where a new world order might emerge. Hope is not to be found in some simple reform of the present world order.

[13] These are the words of Trevor Huddleston, commenting on the Church in South Africa in 1954, in "The Church Sleeps On", *The Observer*, 10. 10. 1954, quoted in Alan Paton, *The Church and the Archbishop: The Life and Times of Archbishop of Clayton, Archbishop of Cape Town* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1973), p. 241.

The earth will not be healed by making modernity "environmentally friendly", while the wealthy and powerful maintain their domination over creation. What is required is a truly new world order which transcends modernity. Those values and institutions of modernity which promote the empowerment of the powerless and the healing of the earth must be retained. But they will have to be set within the context of a new socio-cultural matrix enshrining new values, norms and ideals. The emergence of a new international consensus on an approach to life which promotes justice, peace and the integrity of creation is the necessary precondition for any lasting solution to the environmental crisis.

The emergence of modernity out of the crisis of the medieval world, demonstrates that the potential for transformation does not lie with the powerful members of the previous socio-cultural matrix. While important contributions came from other nations, the two countries which were the incubators for the new culture were England and the Netherlands. It was not the super-power of that age, Spain, which provided the environment for the birth of modernity. While it would be incorrect to describe either England or the Netherlands as on the margins of European culture in the Middle Ages, they were certainly not at the centre of power. At the time they were characterised by considerable social instability. The empowerment of the bourgeoisie, through the emergence of early capitalism and democracy, and the emergence of competing world views, enabled them to seize the initiative. As a consequence the contemporary world order was transformed. This process was accelerated by the legitimation given to it by elements within the Reformed tradition.

Hope for the emergence of a new socio-cultural matrix is not going to emerge out of the powerful nations who benefit from the present order, but from those who exist on the margins. It will come from those people who see and experience the destructive consequences of the present world order. It is they who have the least to lose and the most to gain from its

transformation. It is these people who must be empowered to seize the initiative to transform the world.

Potential for transformation within the powerful nations is also to be found on the margins of society. These people, by virtue of their position in society, are forced to question the prevailing ideology and social order. Transformation should not be expected to emerge primarily from the middle class. Their concern for ecological issues is often a comfortable past time that does not significantly threaten their own problematic lifestyle.

Max Oelschlaeger has proposed that the Christian church and other religious bodies can provide a source of critique and transformation, as a consequence of their alternative understanding of the world.[14] However, the entrapment of the church in America and Europe within modernity, reduces the possibility of it being a place of hope. It is only as churches consciously identify themselves with the marginalised that they will begin to provide a place of hope.

The Environmental Crisis and the Gospel

The church, as the people of the new covenant, shares proleptically in the new creation, and it bears witness to the gospel message that God has not abandoned creation but has acted in grace to redeem it. It thus has an integrated and holistic mission which relates to all of life.

> While affirming this holistic understanding of salvation, we must be aware of the danger in doing so. If the redemption of every dimension of existence is the purpose of God's mission, it does not follow that there are no priorities in particular contexts. Mission is not to be understood as a carefully constructed balancing act which has no sharp edges or priorities. At any given time and place it will have a specific focus or set of foci which will give direction to the whole. In many instances this may be fairly diffuse; in others the context will be such that it

[14] See Oelschlaeger, *Caring for Creation*.

> presents a *status confessionis* for the church which determines the very structure and thrust of its mission.[15]

The nature and threat of the environmental crisis presents the church with the challenges to confess anew its faith in the triune Creator and Redeemer. If the church is to be faithful to the gospel of God's new creation in Christ then its confession, proclamation and praxis will be determined by the reality of the environmental crisis. For the church to fail to do so is to be unfaithful to its Lord and to deny the gospel. As Douglas John Hall states:

> One may understand much, believe much, proclaim much of what the church professes and still not confess the Christ. For confession requires that one has sensed the point where the gospel of the kingdom is being attacked and undermined, one has found somehow the course to confront the attacker in life, word and deed.[16]

To make such an assertion is to take the risk of being wrong and of thus leading the church away from the gospel. There is however, a greater risk in failing to articulate a concrete word and thus failing to meet the challenge of the *kairos*. In South Africa, far too many Christians hesitated in response to the various attempts by church leaders articulate a concrete Word to the ever increasing crisis of apartheid. This failure resulted in the continuance of tyranny, and the suffering and death of thousands of Southern Africans. In the context of the destruction, exploitation and manipulation of creation,

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[15] John W. de Gruchy, "Quo Vadis? Mission in a Future South Africa", *Missionalia*, 20, (1992), 3-18 (p. 6.)

[16] Douglas John Hall, *The Stewardship of Life in the Kingdom of Death* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 191. The confrontation with apartheid in South Africa was a prime example of this need to confess Christ in a time of crisis, see D. J. Smit, "What does *Status Confessionis* mean?", *A Moment of Truth: The Confession of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church,* ed. by G. D. Cloete and D. J. Smit (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. 7-32, and John W. de Gruchy, "Confessing Theology", in de Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, *Doing Theology in Context,* pp. 162-172. Some of the broader issues involved in confessing Christ in an ecumenical context are discussed in Ulrich Duchow, *Conflict over the Ecumenical Movement: Confessing Christ Today in the Universal Church*, trans. by David Lewis (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981).

the risk of not acting is too awful to contemplate. A concrete Word must be articulated with both boldness and humility, acting in dependence on God's grace in the knowledge that we are justified through faith alone.[17]

If the ecotheology developed above is a faithful exposition of the Christian gospel then we have no other option but to declare that:

> [A] moment has dawned, in which nothing less than the gospel itself,...[the] most fundamental confession concerning the Christian gospel, is at stake, so that...[we are] compelled to witness and act over against this threat.[18]

The central confession of the Christian gospel is that God has acted through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to redeem God's creation. This redemption is now present through the work of the Spirit, but will reach its fullness when Christ returns to usher in the new heaven and the new earth. The church is called both to affirm God's good creation and point forward to the new creation. The environmental crisis offers a fundamental challenge to this confession.[19]

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[17] There are a number of examples of such a concrete prophetic word being spoken. The *Kairos Document has already been referred,* Dietrich Bonhoeffer's speeches at ecumenical gatherings provides another, see his "A Theological Basis for the World Alliance", in Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords: Letters, Lectures and Notes from the Collected Works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer Volume 1,* ed. by Edwin H. Robertson, trans. by Edwin H. Robertson and John Bowden, (London: Collins, 1965), pp. 157-173.

[18] Smit, "What does *Status Confessionis* mean?", p. 16. He is referring to the conditions required when declaring a *status confessionis.* There is an important difference between the present context and that of both apartheid South Africa and Nazi Germany. In those situations churches had given official theological sanction to the ideologies of apartheid and nazism thus raising the issue of heresy. There is no similar official theological legitimation of the degradation of creation.

[19] Some contemporary Reformed Confessions have included sections dealing with creation and human responsibility to creation. These include: "The New Confession" of the Presbyterian Church" in the Republic of Korea, "The Confession of Faith" of the Presbyterian and Reformed Church in Cuba, "The Song of Hope" of the Reformed Church in America, "A Declaration of Faith" of the Presbyterian Church of the USA, "The Confession of 1967" of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA and "A Brief Statement of Faith" of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Copies of these, with the exception of the last, are contained in *Reformed Witness Today: A Collection of Confessions and Statements of Faith Issued by Reformed Churches,* ed. by Lukas Vischer (Bern: Evangelishe Arbeitstelle Oekumene Schweiz, 1982). *A Brief Statement*

The Ecological Degradation is a Denial of Creation and an Assault upon God

To confess our faith in the triune God is to affirm that the true identity of the universe in general and the earth in particular, can only be understood when it is seen in its relationship to its Creator. This relationship is reaffirmed in the gospel messages of God's action to redeem creation regardless of the cost to Godself. By virtue of this relationship, creation has a unique value which is prior to and has precedence over its utility to humanity.

Creation identity is defined by its being the covenant partner of God. As a complex community it is deeply loved by God. Yet God's beloved covenant partners are degraded, oppressed and exterminated. God's deep love for creation is such that God enters into its joys, pain and suffering, taking these experiences into Godself. In a particular way this is true of humankind. The destruction and abuse of creation that has been perpetuated by humanity on a global scale is an assault on God's beloved partner, and more than that, it is an assault on God.

As God's covenant partner creation belongs to God, it is God’s precious possession. God has given permission to human beings to make use of it to meet their needs and to provide for their enjoyment. But to exploit and destroy it to satisfy human greed and the will power is to steal and abuse God's prize possession.

Creations unique identity is also constituted by its being the finite expression of the life of the triune God. Its complex beauty and magnificence is a manifestation of the glory of God. God intended it to be a means of contemplating and communing with Godself. The theatre of God's glory lies in

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of Faith is published in William C. Placher and David Willis-Watkins, *Belonging to God: A Commentary on A Brief Statement of Faith.* (Louisville: Westminster: John Knox, 1992), pp. 23-25. Many of these confessions retain a fundamentally anthropocentric approach to issues involving creation.

ruins and the magnificence of the triune God is no longer displayed. To destroy and exploit creation is to deface God's glory and to prevent creation from giving expression to the fullness of the divine life. God is dishonoured and creation is prevented from being a means through which God communicates Godself to humanity. It is a human action which consciously or unconsciously, attempts to frustrate God's purpose for creation; a purpose which God reaffirmed in Christ.

God brought creation into existence as God's home, where God would live with God's creatures. Creation was thus intended to be a divine sanctuary possessing sacral character. This temple is being defiled; it has been desecrated and polluted by the abuse; tyranny and exploitation carried out by powerful humans. Humans are destroying God's home as they progressively destroy the teaming multitudes that compose the community of creation. Ecological devastation frustrates the purpose of God for creation.

To confess that ecological degradation a denial of the true nature of creation is to affirm that it is an assault upon the Creator. To exploit, manipulate and destroy creation is to denigrate and inflict pain on the triune God who gives creation its unique identity.

The Ecological Degradation is a Denial of True Humanity

Human beings enjoy a unique relationship with God and otherkind as fellow members of the covenant of creation. Humanity has a particular vocation within this community to represent God to creation and creation to God – a relationship that is summarised by the motif of the image of God.

As fellow members of the community of creation and image bearers of God, humans are called upon to care for, preserve and enhance the community of creation. While this is only partially realisable in the present creation, to engage in the wholesale destruction and exploitation of the other members of the community is to violate humanity's covenant

responsibilities. Instead of loving, caring for and preserving otherkind we are bringing destruction and death to many of our fellow members of the covenant community.

The destruction of creation is a consequence of the denial, in practice, that human beings are created in the image of God. The powerful deny that they are only *images* of God and assume godlike prerogatives over powerless humans and otherkind. They claim the right to use and abuse them as they wish in the pursuit of wealth, pleasure and power. The powerless are deprived of their dignity and vocation as image bearers of God through systematic denigration and oppression. They are prevented from caring for, enhancing and preserving the rest of creation. They are then forced into an existence which further contributes to its destruction.

Human manipulation, exploitation and destruction of creation are a refusal on the part of humans to live in accordance with the complex patterns which are embedded in creation through its response to Logos. It is legitimate to counteract the powers of destruction and chaos at work within creation. But the arrogant manner in which human beings have attempted to re-order creation to serve their own ends is a sinful assertion of human autonomy and a rejection of God's wisdom. God's wisdom brings life out of death while human re-ordering has brought death to the dynamic life of the eco-systems. Humans are failing to image God and thus denying their own humanity.

The Ecological Degradation is a Denial of Redemption through Christ

The New Testament proclaims that just as God raised Jesus from the dead, so God will transform this present creation through the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. God has determined to save creation from the powers of chaos and the ravages of human sinfulness in order to transform it into the new heaven and the new earth. To participate in the destruction of the earth and its creatures is to deny this

confession through our praxis.

The affirmation that there is an eschatological future for creation has ethical implications for the way we treat creation. Calvin's understanding of the ethical implications of the resurrection of the body is a useful analogy in this regard. Commenting on 1 Corinthians 6:14, Calvin stated: "[I]t is a disgraceful thing to prostitute our body to the filth of the earth, when we will be sharers in the blessed immortality and heavenly glory of Christ"[20] Whole persons must be cleansed from the corruption and disorder brought about by sin, because they are destined for eternal glory. In an analogous manner creation must not be subjected to degradation and exploitation through human sinfulness for it too is destined for eternal glory. To oppress, degrade and exploit creation is to deny that it has an eschatological future as a consequence of Christ's redeeming work. It is to deny the gospel.

Positively, because of Christ's work of redemption, what is done for the preservation, healing and enhancement of the creation has eschatological consequences. It, along with all that is good in the present creation and in human culture, will be taken up into the new creation. [21]

The church as the community of those who share proleptically in the community of the new creation has a particular relationship with creation. It shares a common eschatological destiny with the rest of creation. It is indwelt and sanctified by the same Spirit who is drawing creation forward to its eschatological fullness. To destroy and exploit creation is to refuse to acknowledge this common eschatological work of the Spirit.

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[20] Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians,* trans. by J. W. Frazer, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) p. 129, see also Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of his Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin,* (Durham: Lambrinth, 1991), pp. 100 & 101.

[21] See Richard J. Mouw, *When the Kings Come Marching In: Isaiah and the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983)

Modernity as Idolatry and a False Gospel

While modernity has produced much which is of great benefit to humanity and the rest of creation, the environmental crisis forces us to recognise that it is subject to fatal flaws. Theologically these flaws can best be understood through the concepts of idolatry and a false gospel.

A faithful church must reject the idolatrous dimensions of modernity. When human beings claim the right to determine the life of other creatures and use creation as if it was their private possession they are assuming divine prerogatives. This must be rejected as idolatrous. It is idolatry to put one's faith in scientific progress as the infallible means of finding solutions to the environmental crisis. The Lord must reject "[T]he worship of money, power, privilege and pleasure ... [that] has been organised into a system in which consumerist materialism has been enthroned as a god."[22] The affirmation that human fulfilment is to be found in the pursuit of material prosperity at the expense of other humans and the rest of creation is another form of false worship. To confess that the triune God is Creator and Redeemer of creation is to reject all these forms of idolatry.

In 1968 in response to the intensifying implementation of apartheid in South Africa, the South African Council of churches issued its "Message to the People of South Africa", which amongst other things declared that:

> There are alarming signs that this doctrine of separation has become, for many, a false faith, a novel Gospel which offers happiness and peace for the community and for the individual. It holds out to men a security built not on Christ but on the theory of separation and the preservation of their racial identity. It presents separate development of our race groups as a way for the people of South Africa to save themselves. Such a claim inevitably conflicts with the Christian Gospel, which offers salvation, both social

[22] *The Road to Damascus* p.11.

and individual, through faith in Christ alone.[23]

Modernity promised salvation through the mastery, manipulation and exploitation of creation by autonomous humans. The church must confess that salvation is to be found only through the restoration of the divine image within humanity, as Christ acts through the Spirit in the world. Human beings are called to become God's fellow workers in the out working of his salvific purposes. They accomplish this through sacrificial service on behalf of creation, thus following the example of Jesus Christ.

Challenge to the World

The Christian gospel demands the radical re-orientation of human life and society so that God's glory might shine forth with a new vigour from creation. Further, the life of creation must be preserved and held open in a penultimate way for the ultimate manifestation of the glory of God. The Seoul Covenant affirms that: "The present impasse is of human making. If it is to be broken, a radical re-orientation is required." It goes on to state that: "God confronts us all with the call to repentance and conversion."[24]

Concretely, God demands of us that we create a new socio-cultural matrix in which the community creation is cared for, healed and enhanced. This can only take place through the transformation, empowerment and liberation of human beings so that all humans are enabled to fulfil their vocation as bearers of the divine image. All dimensions of human life and culture need to be related to each other in a new set of complex inter-connections so that they contribute to the health and enhancement of the whole community of creation.

The Liberation and Empowerment of the Powerless

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[23] South African Council of Churches, "A Message to the People of South Africa" in *Apartheid is a Heresy*, ed. by John W. de Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio, (Cape Town: David Philip, 1983), pp. 154-159 (p. 155)
[24] The Seoul Covenant, p.167.

The empowerment of the powerless involves a number of interrelated factors. They must be liberated from the domination of the powerful in order that they may make a meaningful contribution to decisions concerning the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation. The powerless will not be the only contributors to the decision making process; the contributions of people with special expertise in the relevant scientific, economic and political areas is an essential component of such a process. But the agenda must be set in accordance with the needs and interests of those who have been marginalised and oppressed. If the powerless are not empowered to contribute to this process, it will continue to be dominated by the powerful with their claims to know what is best for all of humanity.

If those who have been marginalised are to make a significant contribution to a decision making process, they must be enabled to understand the, often complex, issues involved. This does not mean a re-education in accordance with contemporary western thinking for there is much to learn from the wisdom of all cultures[25]. On the contrary they must be empowered to critique and reject the destructive ideals of modernity, which the powerful portray as the goal of development.

Severe limitations must be placed on the role of powerful commercial and industrial interests. National government agencies must act in co-operation with the local communities. This can only be achieved through the thorough democratisation of the decision making process. It is in this way that the rise of a new dominant class which tyrannises the powerless can be prevented.

Theologically, the powerless must be empowered in such a manner that they may fulfil their vocation to be the image of God in creation. Such empowerment is the consequence of a

[25] See Edward P. Antonio, "Letting People Survive: Toward an Ethic of Ecological Survival in Africa", in *Ecotheology: Voices from South and North,* ed. by David G. Hallman (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994), pp. 227-234.

reorganisation of the power structures of a society so that power is used for the benefit of all. In some cases this will entail that the powerful relinquish dimensions of their power and wealth. In other cases the resources of the powerful need to be redirected in the service of the powerless. Thus one ought not to attempt to deprive a person of the intellectual power that they have attained, as happened in the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Rather these intellectual resources must be redirected towards the benefit of others. Such a reordering of power will entail self-sacrifice on the part of the powerful.[26] In certain cases it will only be attained through the dethroning of some people from their positions of power and wealth, to prevent them abusing the earth and all its creatures.

This inter-relationship between the liberation of the oppressed and the healing of creation has been affirmed in both the Seoul Covenant and the ECE Report. The ECE Report states:

> In poor countries, sustainable development requires first and foremost addressing the following interrelated tasks: the establishment of a just and stable political power; economic development to provide jobs and alleviate poverty; capital investments in human development to stabilize populations and enable people to improve their well-being and their livelihoods; protection of God's creation, in large part by providing poor and landless peoples with

[26] The contribution to the struggle against apartheid and the transformation of South African society by people who have come from the former elite provides many significant examples of such a process. In the theological sphere the best known example would be Beyers Naude. A significant but less well known contribution from the academic community is that of George F. R. Ellis. Ellis is a cosmologist and professor of applied mathematics at the University of Cape Town. He was active campaigner against apartheid. In particular he used the tools of scientific thinking to demonstrate the involvement of the security establishment in the fomenting of violence in South Africa when there was very little legal evidence. A theory which has subsequently been confirmed through the confessions of those involved. Recently he drafted a report on the future priorities for academic work. It argued for a fundamental reorientation of academic work in the service of those who had been marginalised and oppressed. This proposal undermines the continued use of resources to fund research in his own field of cosmology. See W. Wayt Gibbs, "Thinking Globally, Acting Universally", *Scientific American*, 273, no. 4. (1995), 28-29.

> alternatives to the over-exploitation of marginal lands; and support for improved development practices that are both appropriate within the culture and the task.[27]

This however does not raise the more fundamental issue of the world socio-economic order which is addressed in Affirmation II of the Seoul Covenant, which states that:

> While we support the need for diaconal services and urgent response to emergencies, we recognize in our time that the needs of "the least" can only be met by fundamentally transforming the world economy through structural change. Charity and aid projects alone cannot meet the needs and protect the dignity of the world's poorest billion people of whom women and children are the majority. The solution of the debt crisis can only be met through a just world economic order and not in palliative measures like rescheduling of debts.[28]

Importantly, the Seoul Covenant recognises that:

> [P]overty, lack of peace and the degradation of the environment are manifestations of the many dimensions of suffering which have their root in the overarching structures of domination, i.e. racism, sexism, casteism and classism, which are evident in all situations of suffering in diverse and insidious forms.[29]

An adequate response to the global environmental crisis will thus arise out of the global liberation and empowerment of the marginalised and oppressed peoples of the world. The genuine liberation of the marginalised and powerless does not compete with the healing of the earth - it is the prerequisite for such healing.

The Reduction of Consumption and Population

One of the fundamental causes of the environmental crisis is the over consumption of resources and the resultant production of waste materials. It is essential that these increasing

[27] The ECE Report, 128p.
[28] The Seoul Covenant, p. 169 &170.
[29] Ibid., p. 177.

levels of consumption and pollution be reduced if the health of the biosphere is to be maintained. The roots of this problem can be found in two phenomena. The one is the over consumptive lifestyle of the powerful. The other is the exponential growth of the human population.

Global society needs to aim at a future in which both consumption and population are reduced. This will provide space for the other members of the community of creation to survive and flourish unhindered by human exploitation. Theologically it must be affirmed that the command to be fruitful and multiply was given to otherkind as well as to humanity (Genesis 1:22 & 28, 8:17). Biodiversity is a blessing from God to be preserved and cared for.

Over consumption and over population are bound up with the fundamental problem of the unequal power relations of the present world order. No long term reduction of the consumptive lifestyle of the rich and powerful is possible without a fundamental subversion of the ideology of modernity and the socio-economic injustice that sustains the present world economic order.

The population explosion is bound up with two other complex issues. The first is cultural values concerning families and children - a variety of culturally sensitive approaches to the issue need to be explored. The second is the inter-relationship between population growth, powerlessness and poverty. For the poor and powerless children are often sources of economic security for the future. In addition women are deprived of the ability to exercise responsibility over their own fertility through the unavailability of contraceptives and domination by men. The reduction of the population is thus dependent on the empowerment of the poor and marginalised people, particularly women. Empowered people can exercise reproductive responsibility in accordance with there cultures and context.[30]

[30] It is surprising that the Seoul Covenant does not deal with the issue of

A New Socio-Economic Order

The present ecological malaise is a consequence of modernity. An integral component of modernity is a socio-economic system in which growth through the mastery of creation is the primary goal. This system has produced a previously unheard of luxury for the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor and powerless. Prior to the end of the cold war, socialism presented a partial alternative to the dominant order, though it too was based on growth through the mastery of nature. The environmental crisis and the contradictions of modern society demand that we seek to develop an alternative system premised on the empowerment of all people to care for, preserve and enhance the life of the whole community of creation.[31] This is not merely a system in which "people come first", as the Seoul Covenant argues,[32] but one which is aimed at the health of the entire biosphere.

Without such a fundamental change in the organisation of human society all other attempts to deal with the environmental crisis will turn out to be an ineffective reformism. Such reformism merely fine tunes the present order, enabling it to survive for a longer period of time and thus in the end increase the long term ecological destruction.

The Redirection of Science and Technology

Science and technology arose as a component of the emerging early modernity. They were legitimated by their usefulness in promoting human mastery over creation. In particular they offered hope of overcoming the "dark side" of creation. More recently they have become the major tools of promoting the social, political and economic hegemony of the North over the powerless nations of the South. Yet science and technology are not to be rejected as inherently destructive of creation.

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population expansion or control.

[31] See, for example, Bob Goudzwaard and Harry de Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Affluence: Toward an Economy of Care*, trans. by Mark R. Vander Vennen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

[32] Seoul Covenant p. 180.

The problem was the purpose for which they were used, and the dominant ideology which understood that knowledge was to be obtained through the domination of creation.

Science and technology are necessary tools to be used in the process of overcoming the environmental crisis and promoting the healing of the earth. In the past, billions of dollars have been spent on research into military and space technology. These resources ought to be redirected towards the development of appropriate technology which will contribute to the care, preservation, healing and enhancement of creation. The laudable aim of overcoming the "dark side" of "nature" must be maintained. It must, however, be implemented in a manner which works towards greater community between humanity and otherkind. Science and technology must proceed out of a careful observation of the dynamic processes at work within creation, and work from within and in harmony with creation to bring healing and life. This can only be done on the basis of an epistemology which arises from a sense of inter-relatedness with otherkind, rather than dominance over otherkind. Science and technology must emerge out of a love and respect for the whole community of creation.[33]

Transformed Ethics and Values

Radical change in the socio-political order must be accompanied by a fundamental change in human consciousness. Human identity must no longer be constructed in terms of our distinction from and mastery over creation. The creation must no longer be perceived as the possession of humans to be disposed of as they please. The value of non-human creation and powerless humans must no longer be measured in merely financial terms as resources in the pursuit of economic growth. A society must be created in which the oppression of humans and the wholesale destruction, manipulation and exploitation of creation is unthinkable.

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[33] See Sallie McFague, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), pp. 47-55.

A new culture must emerge in which all humans perceive themselves and are perceived as members of a community along with the rest of creation. We live together with the living and non-living creatures in complex relationships of mutual dependence. While the exact relationship between humans, and rocks, apples, trees and elephants will differ, none of our fellow creatures may be reduced to a resource. They each, as individuals and as components of complex systems, have a value and dignity of their own, beyond their mere usefulness to humans. Theologically this value arises out of their position as God's covenant partners who give expression to God's magnificent beauty. This community of creation must be freed to be itself.

Human particularity must be found in the vocation to care for, heal, preserve and enhance the whole community. In fulfilling this vocation all humans must have equal dignity and status. This must be a culture in which status and achievement is not measured in terms of money and power over others. It ought rather to be seen in successful participation in, and contribution to, the community of creation. When such a new type of human person emerges then the earth community will travel down the long road to true freedom.

Challenge to the Church

The church's response to the environmental crisis is not a matter of indifference or just another issue to add to an already crowded agenda. The gospel demands of the church that it take urgent and dramatic action. It is called to concretely confess its faith in the triune God in relation to the issues raised by the environmental crisis. The way humanity relates to and uses creation is not an issue of *adiaphora*, it has become a test of faithfulness to the gospel.

The Transformation of Culture

In this present time of crisis and opportunity the whole church, and with it the members of the Reformed tradition, is

called to contribute to the emergence of a new socio-cultural matrix. This could parallel the role played by the Reformed tradition in accelerating the emergence of modernity in England and the Netherlands.

Fundamental to everything else is the development of new values in which human actions will be evaluated by their contribution to the care, preservation and enhancement of the community of creation. The creation of such values is the province of religion.[34] Christianity has a unique role to play in this regard. This is not a pragmatic attempt to use a particular religious tradition for an alien social or political goal. The church's contribution arises out the gospel it proclaims and its identity as the community of the new covenant called to be a sign of the new creation.[35] The church's vocation to participate in the *missio Dei* includes a calling to contribute to the creation of a socio-cultural matrix that approximates to God's ideal for creation. It is by being faithful to its true identity and mission that the church contributes to the development of a new type of human consciousness and praxis.

In the task of transforming culture and the developing of a new type of human consciousness the church has five particular contributions to make. First, is its recognition of the reality and pervasiveness of human sin. Human sin will continue to warp the community between humans, and between humans and otherkind. Second, is its confession that the ultimate community of creation is an eschatological reality which is in continuity with present reality but which will not be created through human effort. True community will only occur when God acts in Jesus Christ to inaugurate the new heaven and the new earth. It is only then that the powers of chaos and destruction will be removed and God will dwell with the whole community of creation. Third, the church proclaims the message of God's gracious action in Christ by the Spirit

[34] See Oelschlaeger, *Caring for Creation*, pp. 19-51

[35] This is not to deny that other religious traditions have a role to play, see the section on Dialogue as Mission below.

to transform human persons and communities. While perfection is not possible far-reaching transformation is. Fourth, the church confesses its trust in God's faithfulness to the covenant of creation. It thus acts from a position of hope and confidence that God will use its actions (and those of others) to transform society. Fifth, it confesses that activity which contributes to the healing and enhancement of creation has eschatological significance.

A Call to Repentance

If the church is to be involved in the creation of a new socio-cultural matrix it must begin with confession of its participation in the destruction and exploitation of creation and of other human beings. The church has participated in this devastation of creation through its participation in, legitimation of and entrapment by modernity. It was the means through which many of the destructive dimensions of modernity were conveyed to the countries of the South. In pursuing the benefit of humanity, the church brought with it the ideology of progress which has led to the destruction of the earth.

The church is a fallible and broken reality and ought not to be seen in an idolatrous manner as the saviour of the world. Jesus Christ is the Saviour of creation and the church is his fallible and sinful instrument. In grace God uses it to further the redemption of creation. It is only when the church recognises its failure and brokenness that it can contribute in a meaningful way to the healing of creation.

> All of us who profess to be followers of Jesus of Nazareth are in continuous need of conversion. While we see clearly the idolatry, the heresy, the hypocrisy and the blasphemy of others, we ourselves need to search our own hearts for remnants of the same sins and for signs of triumphalism... [and] self-righteousness... There should be no place in our hearts for any kind of complacency.[36]

The confession that Jesus is Lord entails the rejection of any

[36] *The Road to Damascus*, p. 20.

triumphalism which regards institutionalised Christianity as being without sin in regard to the exploitation of creation.

The validity of this repentance will only be seen when the church provides an example of God's purpose for all creation. To do this it must stand in solidarity with the suffering creation. The church, which proclaims that all human beings are created in the image of God must locate itself alongside those who are dehumanised and oppressed. In doing so its communal life must display the character of the gospel in which there "is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female" (Galatians 3:28). Its solidarity must extend beyond the human community to the suffering of the rest of creation. The church is called upon to adopt a lifestyle which rejects the consumerism, exploitation and wastage that characterises so much of modernity. It must carefully examine the way its property, finance and other resources are being used. Where resources are being used in a manner which contributes to the destruction of the earth and the disempowerment of humanity, this must be acknowledged and changed. A determined effort must be made to use them in a manner which contributes to the healing of the earth and the empowerment of humanity.

A Call to take Sides

The reality of the *kairos* for the earth challenges the church to take sides. If it is to be a sign of the new creation it cannot stand on the sidelines in this time of crisis and opportunity. Nor can it claim simplistically to be an alternative community which stands in contrast to the opposing segments of human society. The understanding of the church as an alternative community has an important contribution to the identity and mission of the church, but the church's compromises and complicity with modernity prevent any simple assertions in this regard.[37] Through the covenant, God has

[37] Such understandings of the church were subjected to severe criticism for their failure in the context of the South African struggle. See *The Kairos Document*, and Anthony Balcomb, *Third Way Theology: Reconciliation, Revolution and Reform in the South African Church during the 1980s*

taken sides amongst the oppressed of the earth both human and otherkind. God has entered into and born the suffering of the victims of human society. The church must take its place amongst victims of modernity, standing "by God in his hour of grieving."[38] It is only here that the church can give a faithful expression to its nature as the community of the new creation.

A NEW WAY OF BEING THE CHURCH

The reality of the *kairos* for the earth has demanded that we re-examine our understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ and thus what it means to be the faithful people of God in the contemporary world. This re-examination has highlighted important themes that have been neglected in the history of Christian theology. It has broadened and deepened our understanding of the gospel as it relates to the whole community of creation. The fuller understanding of God's purpose for the whole of creation, calls for the further reformation of the life and praxis of the church in accordance with the principle of *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est.* The historical Reformed tradition has important insights to contribute to the shaping of this new way of being the church.

At its root Reformed spirituality is a response to the vision of the greatness and grace of God revealed in creation and redemption. The only adequate response is to worship God through the living of the whole of ones life in obedient gratitude to God. This is done by seeking the glorification of God in all dimensions of life and society. At the heart of this gratitude is liturgy; the communal (and personal) communion between God and God's people. It is composed of adoration, praise, listening to the Word and celebrating the sacraments.[39] Liturgy is of no value if it is not the core of

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(Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1993).

[38] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison,* ed. Eberhard Bethge, trans. by R. Fuller, F. Clarke and J. Bowden (London: SCM, 1971), p. 348

[39] See Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Reformed Liturgy", in *Major Themes in the*

a lifestyle of obedience in society. The church is called into both communion with God and co-operation with God in the accomplishment of God's purposes.[40]

The two dimensions of worship, liturgy and transformative action, while dynamically interrelated, have integrity of their own. Liturgy empowers and equips Christians for faithful praxis in the world but it cannot be reduced to empowerment. It is a manifestation of God's ultimate purpose for creation that is communion between God and God's creatures. Liturgy without praxis is hypocrisy, for it is to claim to live in relationship with God and then to deny it in practice. Faithful praxis is an authentic response to God's grace and blessings, but without liturgy it is reduced to mere activism and is not worship.

As the people of God respond to God's deeds, proclaimed in the Scripture, through this communal "rhythm of adoration and action",[41] their character is transformed into greater conformity with God's purpose for humanity. This must be worked out in the particular context of the environmental crisis. This does not reduce the life and witness of the church to a response to the environmental crisis. It does however recognise that many dimensions of the church's praxis cannot be carried out in isolation from this dominant crisis of our time.

In the midst of the environmental crisis, the church's identity is still shaped by its constituting narrative of God's actions in creation and redemption revealed through the story of Israel and Jesus Christ. The particular shape that this identity takes in the context of the environmental crisis

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Reformed Tradition, ed. by Donald McKim (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 273-304.

[40] See Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, The Kuyper Lectures for 1981 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1983), pp. 3-22 & 146-161, and Miroslav Volf, "Worship as Adoration and Action: Reflections on a Christian Way of Being-in-the World", in *Worship: Adoration and Action*, ed. by D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), pp. 203-211.

[41] Volf, "Worship as Adoration and Action," p. 207.

will be an outworking of a dialectic relationship between its understanding of its constituting narrative and its praxis. The narrative shapes the praxis and the praxis shapes the interpretation of the narrative. When this happens the church becomes a community where the good news of God's redeeming grace is proclaimed; the powerless are empowered; the broken are healed, and oppressed set free.

The new way of being the church consists of a dynamic interplay between mission, liturgy and the transformation of human character. Its aim is the transformation of human societies' relationship with God and the rest of creation. Through participation in this community and its praxis a new type of human person emerges - a person who finds his/her home as a worshipper of the triune God as a member of the community of creation. These different dimensions of the praxis of the church exist in a dialectic relationship of mutual dependence with each other. Society will only be changed by transformed people, and people are changed as they engage in the praxis of transforming the world. It is liturgy which motivates and empowers both of these aspects of transformation. Without the process of transformation liturgy is hypocrisy. In all this the goal is to give expression to God's covenant purpose of establishing a community with whom God enters into a dynamic relationship.[42]

The Mission of the Church during the *Kairos* for the Earth

Reformed spirituality is characterised by a turn toward

[42] The relationship between narrative, community, character and praxis is treated in a related but different manner by Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Towards a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), and *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Social Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983). See the important correctives to Hauerwas in Sheila Briggs contribution to *The Kairos Covenant: Standing with South African Christians,* ed. by Willes H. Logan (New York: Friendship, 1980, pp. 80-94, Rasmussen, *Moral Fragments and Moral Community*, pp. 136-169 and Neville Richardson, "Ethics of Community and Character" in *Doing Ethics in Context: South African Perspectives,* Theology and Praxis vol. 2, ed. by Charles Villa-Vicenio and John de Gruchy (Cape Town: David Philip, 1994), pp. 89-101,

society in order to refashion it so that it approximates to God's eschatological goal for creation.[43] The passionate desire of the early Reformed Tradition, was to transform all dimensions of life, so that they resounded to the glory of God. The English puritan, Thomas Case, thus challenged the House of Commons to reshape the whole of society, arguing that:

> Reformation must be universal ... Reform all places, all persons and callings; reform the benches of judgement, the inferior magistrates ... Reform the universities, reform the cities, reform the Sabbath, reform the ordinances, the worship of God ... you have more work to do than I can speak ... Every plant which my heavenly father hath not planted shall be rooted up.[44]

Today the people of God are called to a similar disciplined and continual activism as they participate in God's mission in the world. Through this they give visible expression to the reconciliation of the community of creation, achieved by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As W. D. Jonker argues:

> Omdat Christus die *wêreld* met Homself versoen het (2 Kor. 5:19), daarom is dit duidelik dat die versoening ook 'n universele betekenis het, in die sin dat daar vanuit die gemeente 'n wil tot 'n alles-omvattende vrede in die wêreld openbaar moet word... Vanuit die versoening kan die gelowiges hulleself nie meer negetief teenoor die wêreld opstel nie, maar moet hulle soek na die heil en die beswil, die vrede en die veiligheid van die wêreld waarin hulle gestel is.[45]

The church must therefore commit itself to the healing of the exploited and destroyed creation. Yet the church needs to act

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[43] See Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace,* pp. 3-22.

[44] Thomas Case, *Two Sermons Lately Preached* (London, 1642), II, 13.16., quoted in Michael Walzer, *Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics*, (New York: Atheneum, 1976), p. 10 and 11

[45] W. D. Jonker, *Christus, die Middelaar* (Pretoria, N. G. Kerkboekhandel, 1977), p. 209. Jonker is referring here to relationships between humans, but if we take seriously the reconciliation of the whole of creation, what he writes is applicable to the relationship between the church and the whole community of creation.

with humility and repentance, for it was the means through which many of the destructive dimensions of modernity were conveyed to the countries of the South. In pursuing the benefit of humanity, the church brought with it the ideology of progress which has lead to the destruction of the earth.[46] It now needs to repent and produce the fruits of repentance by seeking to restore the health of the earth.

Evangelism as Mission

> Evangelism is the ... task of proclaiming the gospel so that people may experience the transforming power of, and liberating grace of Jesus Christ within particular life-situations. Evangelism is always about the good news of God's saving and liberating grace in Jesus Christ, about redemption from the power of evil, the gift of new life, and experiencing community. But the way the poor, the oppressed, and the blind receive and appropriate God's salvation may not be identical with the way salvation came to Mary Magdalen [sic], Nicodemus, or Zacchaeus.[47]

The environmental crisis poses the challenge of what it means to proclaim the good news of God's reign in response to the degradation of creation. In the context of the transformation of society, described above, God's liberating grace must be proclaimed as a call to conversion from the idols of modernity; to redemption from the power of sin which binds us to ecologically destructive lifestyles; to a new experience of community with the whole creation, and to become fellow workers with God in the redemption of creation. To the rich and powerful, evangelism is a call to renounce the abuse of power to maintain their over consumptive lifestyle. It is also a call to participate in the care of creation through the liberation of the powerless. To the powerless, evangelism is the announcement of God's empowerment which enables them to assume their dignity and responsibilities as image bearers of God. It is thus a call to become participants in the creation of a new society.

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[46] See J. J. Kritzinger "Mission, Development, and Ecology", *Missionalia*, 19 (1991), 4-19.

[47] De Gruchy, "Quo Vadis? Mission in a Future South Africa", p.8.

To both the powerful and the powerless, evangelism is a call to incorporation into the new covenant community of God, humanity and otherkind through union with Christ by the power of the Spirit. It is a call both to accept the world view proclaimed in gospel and to reject the false gospel of salvation through human mastery of creation. It is through this call that evangelism contributes to the transformation of human self-consciousness.

In contexts where evangelism is portrayed as a call to self-fulfilment or escape from difficulties, it must be stressed that evangelistic proclamation is a call to costly discipleship. This is particularly true when, what is portrayed as the "blessings" of Christianity, are no more than a superficially christianised forms of modernity. Evangelism is a call to a lifestyle of uncompromising loyalty to Christ in the midst of a society whose lifestyle and values often stand in conflict with those of God's reign.[48] Such a lifestyle is one characterised by serving God, our fellow humans and otherkind. Liberation theologians have emphasised that the pursuit of justice is a characteristic of such faithful discipleship. In responding to ecological degradation, care for creation "needs to... consciously and systematically taught as a mark of Christian discipleship."[49]

Vocation as Mission

Vocation is one of the characteristic concepts used in the Reformed tradition to expound the responsibility of individual Christians to transform society. All members of the people of God are called to be co-workers with God in manifesting God's reign in the world. This commitment finds expression through the understanding that each believer is given a vocation by God to serve God in a particular dimension of creation.[50]

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[48] See David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series, No. 6, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991) pp. 417 & 418.

[49] ECE Document, p. 131.

[50] See Lee Hardy, *The Fabric of this World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice and the Design of Human Work* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), and

Within the Reformed tradition this application of the concept of vocation to different types of human work was based on two presuppositions. The first is the affirmation that God is at work in creation, through the Spirit, establishing God's reign. God calls people to become participants in this redemptive process though faith in Jesus Christ. The believer is to be a servant of God working for the establishment of God's reign. Christians participate by recognising that their occupations are an out-working of this calling from God, and are to be used in the service of God's redemptive purpose.

Second, vocation is based on the recognition that God provides for the needs of human society through the work of human beings. As human society is communal, God calls each of us to work in such a manner that all benefit. To exercise one's vocation is not an excuse for accumulating wealth and power for one's self. It is the means by which we serve one another.

To perceive one's occupation as a vocation is to use gifts and abilities, that the Spirit has bestowed on one in creation and redemption, for the purpose of establishing and maintaining human community, in a manner that expresses God's eschatological intention for humanity.

This understanding of vocation must be deepened in the context of the understanding of creation and redemption developed in this thesis. Vocation is to be understood as God's call to people to become fellow workers with God in the outworking of God's redemptive purpose for the whole of creation. They are called to use their gifts and abilities for the care, protection and enhancement of this community in a manner which reflects God's purpose in creation and proleptically manifests God's eschatological goal for the entire creation.[51]

Donald McKim, "The Call in the Reformed Tradition", in McKim, *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, pp. 335-343.

[51] Volf's, *Work in the Spirit*, provides a detailed attempt to work out a similar understanding of work.

Vocation is the call to image God in a multifaceted way, as those who are renewed and empowered by the Spirit, who draws creation forward to its eschatological fulfilment. It is a renewal of the call to serve the living God through service to God's creation in all its manifold dimensions. It is a vocation in the service of life in opposition to the forces of chaos and destruction manifested in human society and the entire community of creation. Christians are called to view their occupation as the service of God and creation, and not primarily as a means of acquiring possessions, power or self fulfilment. Trusting in God to supply their need, they are to engage in acts of service in a manner which runs counter to the values and ideals of modernity. This requires of Christians, not only that they actively seek occupations which promote the healing, preservation and enhancement of creation, but that they consciously reject occupations that irredeemably contribute to its destruction. In whatever occupation they are engaged, they ought to be seeking to transform the practices of that occupation so that it limits the degradation of creation and promotes its enhancement, preservation and healing.

This assumes that people have a measure of freedom and responsibility in relation to their work. Many people in the countries of the South have very little control, if any, over their occupational choices. Lack of education prevents meaningful occupation in the increasingly technological society. Poverty and the spectre of unemployment force many to accept degrading and dehumanising work conditions. In many situations any attempt by workers to assert their rights are met with immediate suppression by the state and business community. The exploitation of workers and of creation often go hand in hand in the service of maximising profits.[52] A

[52] This is well illustrated by the case of Thor Chemicals toxic waste recycling plant. A lack of sufficient safety precautions lead to mercury contamination. Workers suffered the effects of mercury poisoning and the nearby Umgeweni River, a source of water for other communities, was contaminated. See Rod Crompton and Alec Erwin, "Reds and Greens: Labour and the Environment", in *Going Green*, pp 78-91. *People, Politics and the*

major area of Christian mission is, therefore, the transformation of the conditions of work through the empowerment of workers.

In addition to this, millions are unemployed. As part of their vocation Christians, who have resources, need to foster the creation of employment which contributes to the flourishing of the whole community of creation.

Ecological Activism as Mission

This century has witnessed a new recognition on the part of the church that its mission does not merely involve providing social help for the needy but includes community, social and political action aimed at transforming socio-political systems so that justice might prevail.[53] There is a growing recognition that a fuller understanding of Christian mission must include community, social and political action to transform our society into one which cares for creation.[54]

Fundamental to the church's contribution to ecological activism, is its commitment to the preferential option for the poor. The church stands in solidarity with the victims of society and affirms that the healing of creation is dependent upon the empowerment of the powerless. The marginalised must be liberated to fulfil their vocation as image bearers of God. In this process of liberation societies will be transformed into ecologically sustainable communities. This is dependent upon the meaningful participation of all people in the decision making process concerning human interaction with creation.[55]

Environment in South Africa, ed. by Jacklyn Cock and Eddie Koch (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991)

[53] See Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp. 400-408 & 432-447.

[54] See for example Bernard Przewozny, "Integrity of Creation: A Missionary Imperative", in *Trends in Mission: Toward the Third Millenium - Essays in Celebration of Twenty-five Years of SEDOS*, ed. by William Jenkinson and Helene O'Sullivan (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), J. J. Kritzinger, "Mission, Development, and Ecology", *Missionalia, 19 (1991) 4-19*, P. J. Robinson, "Integrity of Creation and Christian Mission", *Missionalia*, 19 (1991), 144-153, J. J. Kritzinger, "Mission and the Liberation of Creation: A Critical Dialogue with M. L. Daneel", *Missionalia*, 20 (1992), 99-115.

[55] The ecological devastation in former communist states, amongst the Ogoni

Ecological dimensions have to be integrated into the mission activity of the church in rural and urban areas if the church is to contribute to the reconstruction and transformation of communities. Empowerment of the marginalised must include the setting up of participatory and democratic decision making processes, the education of those involved and the equitable distribution of the products of human interaction with creation. The development of sustainable agriculture, afforestation, the provision of water and electricity, proper waste disposal and the restoration of soil eroded land should be included in the church's contribution to the transformation and reconstruction of communities.[56]

Activism needs to move beyond community development, to action which contributes to the establishment of a transformed social order. During the height of the oppression in South Africa, it was church and other religious leaders who assumed the mantle of political leadership when the political leaders were imprisoned. While this kind of direct political activism was strongly opposed by the apartheid regime and those who represented their interests within the church, it made a major contribution to the downfall of apartheid and the establishment of democracy in South Africa.[57] The *kairos* for the earth presents the church with a similar challenge to direct involvement in activism on behalf of the whole community of creation as a witness to the new creation. Such activism includes prophetic proclamation, informed contribution to ecological debate, and direct political and

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of Nigeria and in black areas in apartheid South Africa, are a consequence of the denial of an effective decision making role being accorded to the local community in the affected area.

[56] Case studies of this kind of work can be found in Calvin B. DeWitt and Ghillean T. France, eds., *Missionary Earthkeeping* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1992), see also Wayan Wastra, "Environment and the Christian Faith: Holistic Approach from Bali", *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 17, (1993), 259-268, and Calvin Redekop and Winter Stahl, "The Impact on the Environment of the Evangelization of the Native Tribes in the Paraguayan Chaco", *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 17, (1993), pp. 269-283.

[57] On the role of church leaders in South Africa and in other similar contexts, see John W. de Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy: A Theology for a Just World Order* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1995), pp. 129-224.

economic action.

The church is called to a prophetic announcement of God's standards of righteousness and justice and the denouncing of human sin and idolatry. As the ECE Document states:

> The Christian community, who [sic] follow the one who is the Truth, must dare to proclaim the full truth about the environmental crisis in the face of powerful persons, pressures and institutions which profit from concealing the truth. Such recognition of hard truths is a first step toward the freedom for which creation waits.

It goes on to state:

> The Christian community must be willing to identify and condemn social and institutional evil, especially when it becomes embedded in systems. It should propose solutions which both seek reform and (if necessary) replace creation-harming institutions and practices.[58]

The church may not stand idly by when God's earth is being exploited and destroyed.

The church must not only denounce sin, it must also play an active role in the discussion around issues of ecological concern, seeking to contribute to the development of constructive proposals as to how society ought to deal with them. As the ECE Document states: "The Christian community needs to develop practical policy approaches to the environment and environmental issues, based on biblical principles and sound analysis."[59]

The church has been conspicuous by its absence in recent South African debates on issues of development and ecology.[60]

During the struggle against apartheid church leaders and

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[58] ECE Document, p. 132.
[59] ECE Document, p. 132.
[60] See Cock, "Towards the Greening of the Church in South Africa", pp. 175-179.

members organised protest marches and demonstrations, they supported sanctions and boycotts, and some became involved in the armed struggle. The church needs to consider such activity in the cause of the suffering creation either as part of already established environmental pressure groups or as initiatives of its own. Companies that persistently pollute and exploit the environment ought to be boycotted. Positive support needs to be given to NGO's, business concerns and government agencies which are pursuing caring for creation. The church must commit itself to

> ... acting together globally and locally with environmentalists, scientists, social activists, young people, political leaders, economists and others from different backgrounds and religions who are searching for just forms of society, which will help maintain the ecological balance of creation.[61]

P. G. J Meiring asks:

> [A]re the Greens to be considered avant-garde missionaries, secular prophets, men and women who - much like the Anti-slavery Movement in the 18th and 19th centuries in Britain and the United States of America, who often showed more understanding of the implications of the gospel of Jesus Christ than the established churches of the day – indeed to be taken seriously as messengers of the Lord?[62]

The church needs to answer Meiring's question with a definite but a repentant: "Yes." The various environmental groups who are seeking to bring healing to the earth are instruments of the Holy Spirit in drawing creation forward to its eschatological fullness.[63] It is a repentant "yes" for these groups which have shown a greater commitment to the creation than most churches and Christian organisations have.

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[61] Seoul Covenant, p. 186, see also Cock, "Towards the Greening of the Church in South Africa", pp. 179-184.

[62] P. G. J. Meiring, "The Greens - Avant-Garde Missionaries?", *Missionalia,* 19, (1991), 192-202 (p. 198.)

[63] This is not however to pass a judgement on their ultimate soteriological position before God nor to engage in a religious imperialism which co-opts them as anonymous Christians.

Christian involvement in ecological issues is shaped by our understanding of the gospel of God's new creation. This will differ from some of the underlying philosophies and motives of other activists. Nevertheless Christians will share many penultimate goals with them. Christians ought therefore to stand in critical *solidarity* with such groups. Yet it must be a *critical* solidarity. The programs and purposes of these groups must always be evaluated in accordance with the gospel of Jesus, the Lord of life. Where goals and strategies are contrary to the purpose and character of God revealed in Jesus Christ, Christians must critique, and if necessary, oppose them. They must also be suspicious of groups within the dominant elite who have embraced the environmental label without any radical rethinking of their fundamental approach to socio-economic realities. The consequence of these people's affirmations of a concern for the environment is that environmentalism is used in the service of consumerism and other damaging expressions of modernity.

Involvement within the broader environmental movement also provides a unique opportunity for bearing witness to God's action in Christ to redeem creation. The Christian gospel has a unique contribution to the way that these issues are faced. The message of God's free grace and the expectation of the new creation provide a source of hope, that by grace, humanity can make a significant contribution to the healing of the earth. This enables one to move beyond the doomsday scenarios of many environmental prophets. The eschatological hope also places a reserve on what can be expected and an element of realism in the search for solutions. Christians ought not to succumb to utopian dreams that do not take the reality of human sinfulness seriously.

Dialogue as Mission

In the 1980's people of different faiths marched down the streets of South African cities into the wrath of apartheid security forces. Inevitably these marchers were led by

religious leaders from a wide variety of traditions clothed in their liturgical vestments. Dialogue and inter-faith activity was a necessity forced upon the participants by the urgency of the situation. The seriousness of the *kairos* for the earth brings with it a similar urge towards dialogue and closer relationships between people of different faiths. In a future, eco-friendly, social matrix Christianity will almost certainly not play the dominant role it has played in the past. The church needs to wrestle with what it means to bear witness to people of other faiths in a post-Constantinian age. Common involvement with people of other faiths in ecological activism can provide an important contribution to the process.[64]

Many environmental action groups recognise the importance of spirituality in the response to the mechanistic and secularist dynamics within modernity. It is common for secular environmental organisations to commit themselves to the encouragement of spiritual development, personal and social growth, and the freeing of human potential.[65] This recognition takes various forms. In westernised populations it is often manifested in an integration with the eclectic mixture of eastern religions, pre-Christian European traditions and Native American religious practices, often described as the New Age Movement. Some groups, notably the World Wide Fund for Nature, have sought to draw the major religious traditions into standing with them in defence of the earth.[66] In Zimbabwe, African Traditional Religion and the African Independent churches have been drawn into an alliance in caring for creation.[67] If the church is to engage in

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[64] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, pp. 474-489 summarises the present discussion on the relationship between mission and dialogue.

[65] Earthlife Africa, "Earthlife Africa: Statement of Belief", (unpublished paper), point 1:f.

[66] They have, for example, sponsored a series of books under the series title of *World Religions and Ecology,* volumes include: Aubery Rose, *Judaism and Ecology* (London: Cassel, 1992), Elizabeth Breuilly and Martin Palmer, *Christianity and Ecology* (London: Cassel, 1992), Martine Bachelor and Kerry Brown, *Buddhism and Ecology* (London: Cassel, 1992) and Ranchor Prime, *Hinduism and Ecology* (London: Cassel, 1992).

[67] See M. L. Daneel, "The Liberation of Creation: African Traditional Religious and Independent Church Perspectives", *Missionalia,* 19 (1991), 99-

ecological activism it has to relate to this diverse set of religious convictions.[68]

Authentic dialogue begins with an affirmation of the central truth claims of the Christian gospel. As David Bosch wrote:

> The Christian faith cannot surrender the conviction that God, in sending Jesus Christ into our midst, has taken a definitive and eschatological course of action and is extending to human beings forgiveness, justification, and a new life of joy and servanthood, which, in turn, call for a human response in the form of conversion.[69]

In the context of responding to ecological degradation this statement must to be expanded to include the confession that God has acted in Jesus to redeem the whole community of creation. It is precisely because of these central truth claims, that Christians are conscience bound to become involved in the preservation and healing of the earth. It is this message which sustains their hope of final success, even when there seems to be no possibility of it being achieved. To surrender or alter these core claims is to lose the *raison d'être* for their involvement and to reject the particular contribution that Christianity makes to the discussion on ecological issues.

Christians need to respect the religious views of other members of environmental action groups out of a recognition that Christians are called to serve and not dominate others. It is by respecting and listening to such views that they can gain an insight into the presuppositions, motivations and world views which drive particular approaches to ecological issues. These differing approaches often provide complementary insights which ought to be integrated into a

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[68] Dialogue and witness within this context has its own possibilities and difficulties. J. J. Kritzinger raises some of these issues in relation to the theology and praxis of M. L. Daneel in "Mission and the Liberation of Creation: a Critical Dialogue with M. L. Daneel", *Missionalia, 20 (1992)*, 99-115.

[69] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 488.

more comprehensive approach to the environmental crisis. The different religious traditions and belief systems will, in various ways, contribute to the development of a new socio-cultural matrix. To affirm the truth of the central claims of the Christian gospel is not to claim that Christians have a monopoly on the truth.

The sensitive listening to people of other faiths is particularly important due to the ecological critique of Christianity. Christianity has contributed to the legitimation of ecological degradation and the church has failed to become actively engaged in the healing of the earth. There is no place here for a defensive and triumphalistic claim to innocence. Christians must re-examine their theology and praxis in the light of the critique and the biblical witness. Such a re-evaluation will provide the basis for the development of an ecotheology that is rooted in core truth claims of the gospel.

The urgency of the crisis and the need for global action carries with it the danger of an unsophisticated attempt to harness the diverse religious traditions for meeting a common goal and thus of an easy syncretism. By an easy syncretism I mean what Ramachandra describes as the:

> ... persistent invocation of Eastern philosophies as antecedent in point of time but convergent in their structure with deep ecology. Complex and internal differentiated religions - Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism - are lumped together as holding a view of nature believed to be quintessentially biocentric.[70]

One might add that elements of other traditions are often also invoked. These include pre-Christian European religions, Wicca, Celtic Christianity and Native American beliefs. The result is an eclectic mixture that is often labelled "Green

[70] Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique", in *The Ethics of the Environment*, ed. by Andrew Brennan (Aldershat: Dartmouth, 1995), pp.71-85, p. 76.

Spirituality".[71] This type of approach ignores the diversity and complexity of these traditions and fails to engage in the crucial task of the self-critical examination of each tradition's approach to ecological issues. Mutual involvement in a common task can only take place within a context of mutual recognition and respect for the particularities of each tradition. While there are common features, they may not be reduced to a bland uniform approach. Taoism, Buddhism, African Religions and Christianity have very different understandings of the nature of reality and the role of humanity within it. These differences will lead to different approaches to ecological activism and to proposed solutions to the environmental crisis.

Religions play a significant role in the transformation of socio-cultural systems because the core concepts and values of their traditions provide a point beyond the socio-cultural system from which it can be critiqued. While all traditions are to a varying extent affected by their context, there is within most of them a set of norms and values which does not fit the socio-cultural matrix. This provides a transcendent point of critique. This is particularly true of traditions which have a long history in a variety of socio-cultural contexts. If a religious tradition is to maintain its transcendent point of critique of both contemporary society and the environmental movement it must retain its particularity. It is from the perspective of its particular understanding of the nature of reality that it stands over against society to critique and transform it. It is only as the *Islamic* tradition, or the *Christian* tradition, or the *Buddhist* tradition that a religion can make a contribution to the resolution of the environmental crisis. This does not negate the need for a critical study of each tradition in relation to the issues raised by the environmental crisis. But it recognises that it is through the critical study of its *own* character, that a religious tradition can provide a vision

[71] See Lawrence Osborn, *Guardians of Creation: Nature in the Bible and the Christian Life* (Leicester: Apollos, 1993), pp. 41-59.

of society that critiques the present order and draws it forward to greater respect for all creation.[72]

It is within this context of respect and dialogue that Christians are called to "give a reason for the hope that they have" (1 Peter 3:15). The religious awareness of those involved in environmental groups is often related to an awareness of transcendence within nature and a sense of the interconnectedness of reality. The first aspect leads to a reverence for nature. The second involves the recognition that human beings are part of a whole interconnected reality which includes physical and spiritual dimensions. These factors often lead to pantheism or panentheism with strong affinities to primal and eastern religions.

The Christian faith provides a framework in which these beliefs can be understood. It affirms that we live in a creation that manifests the glory of God. Human beings, who are created in the image of God, have an innate awareness of God and a desire to worship. Creation was brought into being as a complex community to be the home for God to dwell amongst God's creatures. It is therefore not surprising that those who are most intimately concerned with creation come to an awareness of the divine presence within creation and to the mutual interconnectedness of all of reality. The task of Christian witness is to recognise this awareness and to point to the triune Creator revealed in Jesus Christ as the divine presence within creation and the One who makes true community with all of creation possible. The particular character of the Christian gospel is that it does not involve the dissolution of ourselves into some ultimate monistic unity. It is rather a calling into a perichoretic relationship with God and creation which emphasises and strengthens both the unity and the particularity of the members of the community. Moreover the message of the cross and resurrection of Jesus

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[72] Examples of this approach can be found in Steven C. Rockefeller and John C. Elder, eds., *Spirit and Nature: Why the Environment is a Religious Issue - An Interfaith Dialogue* (Boston: Beacon, 1992), and on a popular level in the works cited in note 71 above.

provides a confident hope for the future of all creation with God.

Ultimate goals and Penultimate Realities

Christian mission in response to the environmental crisis stands in the middle of two dialectical relationships involving the tension between ultimate goals and penultimate realities. First there is the tension between present manifestations of the reign of God and the ultimate dawning of the new heaven and the new earth. Second there is the tension between the demand for a new socio-cultural matrix and economic order to replace the present world order and the reality of having to care for the earth within the context of the present system.

"The church through its life and praxis, is called ... to be the sign and anticipation of the coming reign of God."[73] Yet "it belongs to the essence of Christian theology that it doubts that the eschatological vision can be fully realised in history."[74] It is this tension which characterises the particular contribution of the church to the healing of the earth. It provides a critical distance from human pretensions of being able to provide the ultimate solution. The pretensions often become tyrannical when they are imposed upon unwilling people. At the same time it provides motivation for concrete involvement in seeking to heal the earth.

The motivation of seeking to give expression to the new creation in the midst of the old requires the church to be in the forefront of promoting the wellbeing of all the inhabitants of the earth. It can never be satisfied with a simplistic "back to nature" ideology for it must strive to overcome the forces of death and destruction that are present in the created order. Yet it must do so in a manner which recognises the integrity of creation. It must follow after God in seeking to enhance creation by working from within it.

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[73] John W. de Gruchy, "Christian Community", in de Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, *Doing Theology in Context*, pp. 125-138, (p.130)

[74] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 509.

Well intentioned plans to overcome the "dark" forces at work within creation can easily backfire causing greater devastation to other components of the eco-systems.

The church is often forced to opt for a kind of realism that attempts to achieve its ultimate goals in the context still determined by the very system it is opposing. The countries of Africa and elsewhere in the South are struggling to meet the economic needs of their people. The requirements of "development", as it is defined by the dominant world order, often pressurise them to develop ecologically destructive industry or agro-business. The alternative that is often proposed is that of eco-tourism. However, eco-tourism is still bound up with the ecologically destructive world order. It is the present unjust world order which creates a wealthy elite who can come to observe "wildlife". This wealthy elite then use ecological destructive transport to travel to these distant destinations. Here they model the consumptive lifestyle of modernity to the local population. Yet the alternative seems to be the massive destruction of biodiversity.

Realism demands some form of compromise. In this compromise the ultimate goal must never be lost sight of. As Charles Villa-Vicencio states:

> Responsible political theology *must* be utopian and priests must be turbulent and (annoyingly) visionary in even the most socially responsible societies. And yet, the church must *also* be realistically committed to what is attainable *here* and *now* as part of a greater vision. A theologically responsible notion of what is possible and realisable at any time must, however, always be assessed from the perspective of the poor and marginalised of society. This is because the church, biblically understood, is obliged to counteract the bias in favour of the powerful which undergirds most political societies. To neglect this obligation is for the church to neglect its most fundamental political role in society.[75]

[75] Charles Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation Building and Human Rights* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1992), p. 31. The act of

This must be qualified by the assertion that it is not just the "perspective of the poor and marginalised" humans which must determine realism, but that of the oppressed and exploited creation. The goal must always be to give greater expression to God's beauty through the flourishing and growth of the community of creation. Thus eco-tourism could function within the context of such realism, provided that it contributes to the empowerment of the poor and marginalised and the health of creation.[76]

The Community in Communion with God

At the heart of the church's praxis in society is communion with the Triune God. While this communion includes the dimensions of personal piety it must be understood as communal rather than individualistic. It arises and is nurtured in the community of the people of God as they gather to praise, to pray, to hear the word proclaimed and to celebrate the sacraments.

Communion with the triune God arises out of God's gracious action to redeem people from their rebellion against God, by uniting them to Christ, through faith, by the work of the Spirit. A person who is thus united to Christ is drawn into a new fellowship with the persons of the Trinity and the redeemed community. Such a person is empowered to enter a new lifestyle as participants in the new creation. The church as the community of the new covenant enjoys a dynamic

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covenanting contained in the Seoul Covenant contains admirable goals, but many of them tend too much towards the idealistic range of the spectrum, and do not have enough healthy realism about the possibilities of achieving them. The goals remain important but they need to be complemented by realistic intermediate steps which push the process further toward the greater goals.

[76] There are many cases of where so called eco-tourism initiatives have contributed to the exploitation, disempowerment and even oppression of local inhabitants. See Marco Turco, "The Greed Behind 'Green' Tourism", *Open Africa*, no. 15, supplement to the *Mail and Guardian*, 1-7 December 1995, pp. 4-5. South Africa has a legacy of forcibly removing people from their land to create nature reserves, see for example, The Association for Rural Advancement, "Animals Versus People: The Tembe Elephant Park", in Cock and Koch, *Going Green*, pp. 223-227

relationship with the persons of the Trinity participating in the perichoretic life of the Triune God.[77]

The participation in the life of God does not divinise the human community but rather enhances its humanity. As the faithful experience fellowship with the Father so they are conformed to the Father's intention for humanity through union with the Son. This union takes place through the work of the Spirit who enables the persons of the Trinity to be fully themselves and creation to be fully it's self.

Central to the life of the new covenant people of God is the communal liturgy when they gather on the Lord's Day to hear the proclamation of the Word and to celebrate the Lord's Supper.[78] "This liturgy is a meeting between God and God's people, a meeting in which both parties act, but in which God initiates and we respond."[79]

The Spirit draws the people of God into the presence of the Father through the mediatorship of Christ as the people respond in grateful thanks to God for God's actions in creation and redemption.

The liturgy can be viewed from a number of perspectives. "It is the reflection and representation of the covenant event."[80] The covenant with creation is reaffirmed as the Word is proclaimed and the people respond in faith and commitment. It is a foretaste of the communion of the eschatologically transformed community of creation with the Triune God celebrating the new life that God has given to the church.[81]

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[77] See Calvin's comments on John 17: 21 in Calvin, *The Gospel According to John 11-21 and The First Epistle of John,* trans. by T. H. L. Parker, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959) p. 148.

[78] The Churches of the Reformed tradition ought to recover Calvin's ideal of the weekly celebration of the eucharist. See *Institutes,* 4:17:43-46 and Wolterstorff, "The Reformed Liturgy".

[79] Wolterstorff, "The Reformed Liturgy", p. 291.

[80] Hendrikus Berkhof, *Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Study of the Faith*, trans. by Sierd Woudstra, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), p. 379.

[81] See Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. by M. Kohl, (London: SCM,

It is an affirmation of fundamental loyalty to the triune God in the face of all idols. Through this the people are strengthened and empowered to proclaim in example, word and deed the salvific reign of God in Jesus Christ. But as Daniel Migliore states:

> Hearing the Word of God and partaking of the sacraments are concrete and regular practices of the community of faith that help to engender ... [a] new way of thinking, feeling, and living in solidarity in Christ with the whole groaning creation. If they do not serve this purpose they are empty religious rites.[82]

The Proclamation of the Word

Since the earliest history of the Reformed tradition, the proclamation of the Word has been the central focus of worship. It is through preaching that God the Father speaks the divine Word by the power of the Spirit, calling the people of God to faithful living as members of the new covenant. Through preaching, the Spirit draws the people to respond to promises and commands contained in the Word uttered by the Father. As David Buttrick argues: "The purpose of preaching is the purpose of God in Christ - namely the reconciliation of the world."[83] God acts through preaching to create and build the community of the new covenant as a community of God, humans and the rest of creation.

Through the proclamation of the Word the people of God obtain true wisdom. Calvin stated that:

> Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes the other is not easy to discern.[84]

1977), pp. 261 & 262.

[82] Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 181.

[83] David Buttrick, "A Brief Theology of Preaching" in McKim, *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, pp. 318-325, p. 320, Buttrick focuses on the human community and gives no attention to the role of preaching in the creation of community with the whole of creation.

[84] *Institutes,* 1:1:1.

Calvin's analysis must be supplemented to argue that, true and sound wisdom consists of three parts: the knowledge of God, ourselves and the rest of creation. But, while joined by many bonds, which one precedes the other is not easy to discern.[85]

As a consequence of the Spirit's work, creation can be perceived for what it really is as it is viewed through the "spectacles" of Scripture.[86] Creation is now seen to be the finite self-expression of the life of the Triune God and human beings are seen to be the image bearers of God.[87] The whole of creation (including our fellow humans) becomes a meeting place between God and humanity. It is now experienced as being full of the presence of God. The Word does not turn people away from creation but rather turns them to it to perceive it in a new manner. Through the Word, creation gains a new glory as the finite manifestation of the beauty of God.

The Word does not provide new scientific information, but rather a new perspective through which our present scientific understanding of the universe can be interpreted. The universe becomes creation as it is perceived in relation to the Triune Creator. It is by pondering and examining creation through the "spectacles of scripture" that we come to a new awareness of the glory of God that is revealed in it. As we examine the beauty of the animals and plants, we are pointed to the beauty of the God who created them. The complex inter-

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[85] This is not to say that Calvin did not recognise the importance of the knowledge of creation, but rather that it lay at the circumference of his thinking and tended to be subsumed under the knowledge of ourselves. Edward A. Dowey Jr. thus proposes that: "The 'knowledge of ourselves' is a term which Calvin uses by synecdoche for all man's knowledge of creation. Man is a microcosm of the universe in which are to be found in unusual concentration and in higher quality than in other forms of life, the marks of God's creative activity. Actually the knowledge of man and other parts of the created world form a single category which stands in correlation with knowledge that specifically concerns God." *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (New York Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 21. It is this tendency to see the knowledge of humanity and the rest of creation as part of a single category that obscures Calvin's insights on the relationship between God, humanity and the rest of creation and focuses attention on the relationship between God and humanity.

[86] See *Institutes,* 1:14:1.

[87] See *Institutes,* 2:6:1.

relatedness and mutual dependence of all living things in their ecosystems manifests the perichoretic relationships amongst the persons of the Trinity. These complex relationships also bear witness to God's abundant provision for the needs and pleasures of God's creatures. The manner in which life, beauty and vitality is brought out of death displays God's character as the one who enters into the life of creation, embracing its pain and suffering in order to bring life out of death. Human gifts and abilities, when they are used in a manner which demonstrates the character of God, point to the grace of God to humanity and the whole of creation.

The preaching of the Word also summons us to faith and repentance. Faith in God's covenantal commitment to creation that, despite the devastation we have wrought, God will not abandon creation. In calling us to faith it issues a summons to repentance for the way that we have defaced the glory of God in creation and humanity. It announces that through God's grace it is possible to enter into a new relationship with God, our fellow humans and the rest of creation.

The Celebration of the Lord's Supper

In a unique way the Lord's Supper focuses the life of the church as the community of the new covenant. A variety of terms have been used in the history of the church to refer to the Lord's Supper. The term Lord's Supper emphasises its communal character; it looks back to the Last Supper, and forward to the eschatological feast in the New Jerusalem.

The nature and meaning of the Lord's Supper remains an area of disagreement among Christians despite ecumenical efforts to resolve them; in the context of this debate, Calvin's theology still provides some useful guidelines.[88]

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[88] For detailed treatments of Calvin's views on the Lord's Supper within the context of the Reformation debates see *Institutes,* 4:7, Killian McDonnel, *John Calvin, the Church, and the Eucharist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), pp. 124-190, and Philip Walker Butin, *Revelation, Redemption and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian*

Calvin insisted that the communicants really participate in Christ, as human and divine, by the power of the Spirit. At the core of this insistence, is the confession that the risen Christ is present at the Lord's Supper to commune with his people. As a consequence they are strengthened, transformed and empowered to act as the co-workers of God in the service of creation.

The Lord's Supper is "a regularly repeated renewal of the covenant."[89] From God's side it affirms God's faithfulness to the covenant with creation, a faithfulness that culminated in the cross and resurrection. From the human side it is a public affirmation of our position as members of the new covenant community who wait in eager expectation for the full dawning of the goal of the covenant - the new heaven and the new earth.

The Lord's Supper is the communion between the Christian community and the incarnate Logos. It is a means through which the people of God are brought into relationship with the One who is the divine pattern of life for creation and who is in a pre-eminent manner the image of God. They are thus progressively transformed into the image of God and enter into a renewed relationship with the rest of creation which reflects the pattern of the Logos. Participation in the Lord's Supper thus contributes to the enhancing and healing of creation.

The Lord's Supper is communion with the ascended Christ who is the prototype of the eschatological transformation of creation. Hence, the Lord's Supper is a foretaste of the messianic feast in the New Heaven and the New Earth. Then the community of creation will gather together with God to enjoy

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Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 114-121. Robert Shelton relates Calvin's concerns to contemporary issues in "A Theology of the Lord's Supper from the Perspective of the Reformed Tradition", in McKim, *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, pp. 259-270.

[89] Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, p. 367.

each other's fellowship and to celebrate God's victory over the forces of destruction and death. This gathering was anticipated in the meals that Jesus ate with the disreputable members of society.[90] To participate in the Lord's Supper is thus to experience the life of the new creation in the midst of the present life. Hope for the renewal of creation is strengthened and the community is empowered in its struggle to give expression to this hope through working for the healing of creation.

The Lord's Supper points the community to both the past and the future. Elements of the old creation become the means for bringing in the new.

> The sanctification of the earth, the healing of the wounds it has sustained in this fallen world, is ... symbolized by the setting apart of these symbols in anticipation of that fulfilment.[91]

It is reaffirmed that God does not abandon the covenant with creation. Creation will be taken up and transformed when the new heaven and the new earth are inaugurated.

Central to this affirmation of hope for creation is a reminder of the cost of God's faithfulness to the covenant. Creation is to be healed as a consequence of God entering into it and taking into Godself all the suffering of creation's alienation from God. Jesus calls the new Covenant people of God, who participate in the Lord's Supper, to take up their crosses and to follow him in seeking the redemption of creation.

Praise and Prayer

The third traditional component of the communal liturgy is praise and prayer. One of the characteristics of Reformed liturgy at the time of the Reformation was the re-introduction

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[90] See Berkhof, *Christian Faith*, pp. 366 - 367 and Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, pp. 246-256, both Berkhof and Moltmann interpret this in terms of human community rather than the whole of the community of creation.

[91] Gabriel Fackre, *The Christian Story: A Narrative Interpretation of Basic Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 192

of the communal singing of psalms and later hymns as a means of prayer and praise.[92] It is in prayer and praise that the church can give expression to its fellowship with otherkind as fellow members of the new covenant community.

As an act of praise, singing gives expression to the praise offered to God by the whole community of creation. The great creation psalms manifest a uniting of human praise with that of otherkind (e.g. Psalms 19, 33, 104 and 148). The church needs to recover the use of such psalms and other hymns which express the unity of humanity and otherkind in the praising of God, in expectation of the day when "every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea" (Revelation 5:13) will find their ultimate fulfilment in worshipping God.

The church communally prays for all creation, giving voice to the groaning of a world in travail. As creatures we share in the pain and suffering of creation. The Spirit leads the church into an even greater solidarity with the groaning creation. Yet this is a groaning in hope for the Spirit of God is present in creation, experiencing the pain of creation and drawing it forward to its eschatological fullness. Humanity and the rest of creation share a common eschatological destiny. "For this reason those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit cannot be indifferent to the destruction of the non-human creation"[93] thus the church "intercedes with God who loves the world, maintains it, and wants to save it."[94]

Communion with God through Creation

A component of the personal piety in the Reformed tradition, which has not been developed in the corporate liturgy of the tradition, is that of communion with God through creation. John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards are important examples of

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[92] See Wolterstorff, "The Reformed Liturgy", and LindaJo H. McKim, "Reflections on Liturgy and Worship in the Reformed Tradition" in McKim, *Major Themes in the Reformed Tradition*, pp. 305 -310,

[93] Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Towards a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford, 1991), p. 153

[94] Berkhof, *Christian Faith,* p. 421.

this dimension of the tradition. Wolterstorff argues that:

> [I]f ever there was a theologian who saw the universe sacramentally it was Calvin. For him, reality was drenched with sacrality ... Calvin's reforms meant a radical turn toward the world. But for him ... the world to which one turns is a sacrament of God.[95]

Jonathan Edwards' "Personal Narrative" includes a description of his experience of this communion with God through creation:

> I walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture, for contemplation. And as I was walking there, and looking up on the sky and clouds, there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious *majesty* and *grace* of God, that I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction; majesty and meekness; and joined together; and also majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high, and great, and holy gentleness.
>
> After this my sense of divine things gradually increased and became more and more lively, and had more of that inward sweetness. The appearance of every thing was altered; there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost every thing. God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love seemed to appear in everything: in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind. I often used to sit and view the moon for continuance; and in the day, spent much time in viewing the clouds and the sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things; in the mean time, singing forth, with a low voice my contemplations of the Creator and Redeemer. And scarce any thing, among all the works of nature, was so sweet to me as thunder and lightening; formerly, nothing had been so terrible to me. Before, I used to be uncommonly terrified with thunder, and to be struck with terror when I saw the thunder storm rising; but now, on the contrary, it rejoiced me. I felt God, so to speak, at the first appearance of a thunder storm; and used to take the opportunity, at such times, to fix myself in order to view the clouds, and see the lightnings play, and hear the majestic and awful voice

[95] Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace*, p. 160.

> of God's thunder, which often times was exceedingly entertaining, leading me into sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God. While thus engaged, it always seemed natural to me to sing, or chant for my meditations; or, to speak my thoughts in soliloquies with a singing voice.[96]

Calvin argued that the Christian should take "pious delight in the works of God open and manifest in this most beautiful theatre."[97] He thus wrote:

> There is no doubt that the Lord would have us uninterruptedly occupied in this holy meditation; that, while we contemplate in all creatures, as in mirrors, those immense riches of his wisdom, justice, goodness, and power, we should not merely run over them cursorily, and, so to speak, with a fleeting glance; but we should ponder on them at length, turn them over in our minds seriously and faithfully, and recollect them repeatedly.[98]

The magnificence and manifold variety of creation gives expression to the greatness and glory of God which cannot be reduced to words. Leading Calvin to confess that:

> [I]f we chose to explain in a fitting manner how God's inestimable wisdom, power, justice, and goodness shine forth in the fashioning of the universe, no splendour, no ornament of speech, would be equal to an act of such great magnitude. [99]

As he states elsewhere:

> It is ... fitting, therefore, for us to pursue this particular search for God, which may so hold our mental powers suspended in wonderment as at the same time to stir us deeply.[100]

This incredible display of God's glory in humanity and the

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[96] Jonathan Edwards, "Personal Narrative" in *Jonathan Edwards: Representative Selections,* ed. by Clarence H. Faust and Thomas H. Johnson, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), pp. 60 & 61, the emphasis is Edwards'.
[97] *Institutes,* 1:14:20.
[98] *Institutes,* 1:14:21.
[99] *Institutes,* 1:14:21.
[100] *Institutes,* 1:5:9.

rest of creation ought "to arouse us to worship God"[101] having perceived God anew in creation we turn to God to commune with God in wonder and praise. Creation becomes a place of personal encounter with God. In the context of the environmental crisis churches needs to find creative ways of enabling a corporate experience of communion with God in and through the rest of creation. It is time for members of the Reformed tradition to follow the example of the African Independent churches and meet in the open, amongst the community of creation, on a regular basis.

Towards a New Type of Person

The Reformed tradition accelerated the development of modernity by contributing to the creation of a new type of person, the modern European subject. If it is to contribute to the emergence of a socio-cultural matrix which gives a fuller expression to God's intention for the community of creation, it must also contribute to the creation of a new type of person. This process is not something that it does over and above its praxis and liturgy. It is a consequence of participation in the praxis and liturgy of the community of the new creation.[102]

The new post-modern person will be, in Catherine Keller's terms, an "eco-ascetic".[103] Eco-asceticism combines a delight

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[101] *Institutes,* 1:5:10.

[102] In this chapter we have developed a theological perspective on the role of the Church in the transformation of culture. It is however important to note the parallels between our discussion here and Robert Wuthnow's sociological model used in chapter 1. The theological proposals can be described in Wuthnow's categories. The entire thesis is an exercise in the "production of ideas". The Church functions as an "Institutional Context" for the production of ideas. The use of language and concepts drawn from a particular theological tradition insures that what is said "articulates" with the context of the Reformed tradition. The use of these concepts in a new way leads to a "disarticulation" which could lead to the transformation of the context. The discussion of the new way of being the church provides a means through which the ideas can be "institutionalised". The discussion of the role of humanity in creation, power relations in society and the empowerment of the marginalised provides a "discursive field" which describes a particular set of "figural actions". As a consequence of engaging in such figural action is the emergence of a new type of person.

[103] See Catherine Keller, "Chosen Persons and Green Ecumenacy: A Possible Christian Response to the Population Apocalypse", in Hallman, *Ecotheology*,

in the goodness of creation, a joy in being free from the demands of the consumer society and the considered decision to limit the gratification of one's desires for the benefit of the whole community of creation.

> [A]t the heart of the new eco-asceticism lies not self denial *per se*, but a lively choice to awaken desire to the needs of the larger earth-community, that is, to know oneself as a creature inextricably created in interdependency with all the other denizens of creation.[104]

A Member of the Community of Creation

Eco-ascetic Christians are those who have become deeply aware that humans and otherkind form a complex interconnected community of mutual dependence. Their primary self understanding is not to be found in distinction from, and mastery over, the rest of creation but in their symbiotic relationship with it. Their particular human identity as servants of creation and servants of God arises out of common participation in the covenant community of creation. While there is a particular sense of communal solidarity amongst the members of the human community there is a solidarity which extends to our relationships with otherkind.

As fellow members of the community of creation eco-ascetics live in grateful dependence on the other members of the community for their life. It is through humanity's dependence on creation that we are dependent upon God for the provision of our daily needs. Eco-ascetics recognise that God also provides for our (and otherkind's) pleasures and joys through our interaction with the bounteous glories of creation. With Calvin they recognise that:

> In grasses, trees, and fruits apart from their various uses, there is beauty of appearance and pleasantness of odor. For if it were not true, the prophet would not have reckoned them among the benefits of God, "that wine gladdens the heart, that oil makes his face

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pp. 300-311.

[104] Keller, "Chosen People and Green Ecumenacy", p. 308.

> shine"... the natural qualities themselves of things demonstrate sufficiently to what end and extent we may enjoy them. Has the Lord clothed the flowers with the great beauty that greets our eyes, the sweetness of smell that is wafted upon our nostrils, and yet will it be unlawful for our eyes to be affected by that beauty, or our sense of smell by the sweetness of that odor? What? Did he not so distinguish colors as to make some more lovely than others? What? Did he not endow gold and silver, ivory and marble, with a loveliness that renders them more precious than other metals and stones? Did he not, in short, render many things attractive to us apart from their necessary use?[105]

A life of thanksgiving flows out of this recognition of one's dependence on God through God's activity in creation for all of one's life. Thus as eco-ascetic Christians interact with other human beings and the rest of creation they do so in gratefulness to God and to the fellow members of the community of creation. The many dimensions of creation are thus not objectified as tools or resources to be used for the selfish ends of some humans. Rather they are treated with gratefulness and respect as fellow members of the covenant community of creation and as the gift and self expression of God. In particular, humans are treated with the dignity they possess as bearers of the divine image. Ultimately all our interactions with creation are personal for in all of them we are interacting with God through God's creatures.

A Person Living in Hope of a New Creation

The eco-ascetic Christian is one who lives in hope of a new creation which stands in continuity with, but which transcends the present creation. The "meditation on the future life" was an important characteristic of Calvin's understanding of the Christian life.[106] In view of the comprehensive character of the eschatological redemption of creation this activity is better described as the meditation on the future of life.

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[105] *Institutes,* 3:10:2.

[106] See John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life,* (Louisville, John Knox, 1989) pp. 74-82. Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), pp. 87-93,

This hope is nourished from two sources. The first is the communion with Christ in the communal liturgy of the church. It is through this communion that we experience an anticipation of the eschatological fellowship with the triune God. As Calvin described our union with Christ: "[W]e so live in the world that we also live in heaven; not only because our Head is there, but because, in virtue of union, we have a life in common with Him."[107]

Second, Calvin argued that our contemplation of creation ought "to awaken and encourage us to the hope of the future life."[108] As we contemplate creation we discover not only its beauty but also its pain and struggle. While God's glory is seen in the manner in which God brings life out of pain, death and destruction; God will only be fully glorified when these realities are transformed and transcended. In the midst of this travail, the Scripture provides a renewed perception of the manner in which God's presence and activity in creation is directed towards the eschatological future.

Eco-ascetic Christians meditate on the future of life, not as a means of escape from the present world, but to bring their experience of the present world into the focus of God's redemptive purpose for creation. Such persons have a unique motivation for seeking the healing, preservation and enhancement of the whole community of creation. They recognise that their interaction with it has ultimate significance, for God will take it up into the new creation. More than that, they confess that they are called to give expression to the new creation in the midst of the present creation. Hence they strive for a relationship between humanity and otherkind that gives greater expression to God's intention for creation.

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[107] Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, trans. by T. H. L. Parker, Calvin's Commentaries, ed. by D. W. Torrance and T. F. Torrance, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), p. 43.
[108] *Institutes,* 1:5:10.

The confession that creation has a future and that redeemed humanity will participate in that future motivates the eco-ascetic approach to the use of creation. Creation is received as a good gift from God to be enjoyed in a spirit of thanksgiving to God for God's abundant provision. Yet it is recognised that total fulfilment and satisfaction is to be found only in the eschatological communion with the Triune God in the company of the community of creation. Therefore ultimate satisfaction will not be gained through the possession and use of creation. The eco-ascetic, while enjoying the goodness of creation, pursues a moderate and frugal lifestyle in the expectation of the future of life.

A Person Zealous for the Glory of God

Motivated by the desire to glorify God, the early Calvinists displayed a confident and disciplined restlessness, as they sought to transform all of life and society. Today a similar disciplined restless activity is required in the pursuit of a society that lives in true community with creation.

> One of the prime characteristics of Reformed spirituality is "zeal to show forth the glory of God."[109] This is the grateful response to God for whom God is and for what God has done for us in creation and redemption. As Calvin and the other reformers contemplated the state of the church they were deeply moved by the manner in which the corruption of the church dishonoured God. In response they devoted their lives to seeking, in Calvin's words: "[H]ow God's glory may be kept safe on earth, how God's truth may retain its place of honor, how Christ's Kingdom may be kept in good repair among us."[110]

The challenge that stands before Christians today is the manner in which God's glory is being defaced by the oppression

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[109] Calvin, "Reply by John Calvin to the Letter by Cardinal Sadolet to the Senate and People of Geneva" in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, ed. and trans. by J. K. S. Reid, The Library of Christian Classics, vol. 22 (London: SCM, 1954), pp. 221-256, p. 228.

[110] *Institutes,* "Prefatory Address to King Francis I of France", p. 11.

of those who bear the divine image and the destruction of creation which displays God's glory. An apprehension of the character of God revealed in Jesus Christ ought to motivate a deep concern for the manifestation of God's glory in all of creation. As Ronald S. Wallace summarises Calvin's thinking:

> [The] desire for the glory of God should be so intense that it should turn to anguish of heart when the honour of God is wounded. It ought so to consume us that, as in the example of our Lord himself, no amount of suffering will make us shrink from maintaining it.[111]

God's name is dishonoured as powerless humans are prevented from living out their vocation as image bearers of God. God's name is desecrated through the idolatry of those who worship the god's of money and power. It is profaned when the powerful seize for themselves godlike prerogatives over the lives and destinies of the powerless. God is blasphemed when the powerless cry out: "How can we believe in God in a society that systematically crushes and destroys us? How can we believe God is personal when the world conspires to deny our personhood?"[112]

God's glory is defaced when the earth is no longer full of the glory of God, when human exploitation prevents creation from proclaiming the abundant goodness of the Triune Creator. God's honour is ruined, when rivers dry up; when the air is polluted; when fertile land is turned into desert; when species are destroyed through human greed.

As we contemplate the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ we recognise that it is supremely manifested when God in Christ took into Godself the travail of creation in order to bring healing and transformation. Those who would zealously seek the glory of God are called to follow Jesus in a path of disciplined self-sacrifice in the service of all creation, secure in the hope that their ultimate satisfaction will be

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[111] Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*, p. 38.
[112] Robert McAfee Brown, *Theology in a New Key: Responding to Liberation Themes* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), p. 64.

achieved in the eschatological community of creation.

This action in the pursuit of the glory of God arises out of a confident hope in the ultimate attainment of our goal. This assurance is grounded in the faithfulness of God to the covenant with creation and the recognition that when we act in accordance with God's purposes, God is working through us to achieve God's goal for creation. It is this hope which will enable us to face the struggles and opposition that will stand in the way of a communal relationship between humanity and the rest of creation. With this confidence, we pursue a life of disciplined restlessness. Motivated by this hope, we can persevere in the long struggle for the manifestation of the glory of God throughout the whole community of creation.

CONCLUSION

God's glory is being obscured and God's name is being dishonoured by the defacement of the sanctuary of creation – a defacement that has often been carried out with the direct or indirect legitimation of the church. In deep repentance for its role in this sacrilege and an enduring passion for the glory of God; the church must commit itself to the healing of creation. This is not an optional extra to be added to an already burdened agenda for the church. It is demanded of the church by the gospel it proclaims. The church cannot proclaim that God gave God's very self for the redemption of creation and then sit back while it is destroyed. To fail to act in the face of the environmental crisis is to deny the gospel.

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