

## Dooyeweerd on Religion and Faith: A Response

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Sifting through Dooyeweerd's writings in order to extrapolate his position on a particular topic can be a maddeningly difficult thing to do. Since he nowhere summarizes his entire position on any given question or theory, one must piece together such a summary inductively - something like the way one does with the Bible when attempting a systematic theology.

Besides this formidable difficulty, there are also obstacles of style, terminology, and translation to hinder the task. Moreover, even the strangest terminology, once introduced, is sometimes inconsistently employed. At times, then, charitable readings are required if the text is to make sense.

Despite these difficulties, I find that the context of discussion in the New Critique usually supplies implicit directions for the charitable rendition of terminological lapses, and that Dooyeweerd's positions on the topics he tackles generally come out to be far more convincing and coherent than Jim's paper suggests they do on religion and faith. In fact, I find that his position on religion and faith are among the most insightful and consistent in his writings.

As you have gathered from these opening remarks, there are substantial and important differences between my understanding and assessment of Dooyeweerd's position on these topics and Jim's. But as they are not all of equal importance, I will divide the comments which follow into minor disagreements and major disagreements.

## MINOR DISAGREEMENTS

### 1. THEORY.

Often in his essay Jim uses the term "theory" in the currently fashionable way, namely, as loosely as possible. Even among such writers on the philosophy of science as Feyerabend and Popper, the term "theory" is used to mean any sort of account, opinion, interpretation, or story. So, too, in this paper, Jim often refers to Dooyeweerd's theory of religion or faith.

It is worth noting, however, that Dooyeweerd himself does not use the term so loosely, and that the greater precision of his usage has real advantages. For Dooyeweerd, a theory is a hypothesis or a series of them which are postulated in order to explain something. So from his own viewpoint, there is little he has to say about religion and faith which is comprised of such explanatory guesses.

I have listed this point among my minor disagreements with this paper, but it should be pointed out that in other contexts it has led to major disasters. Take for example the accusation of Van Til that Dooyeweerd is wildly inconsistent when he holds that his transcendental critique is "theoretically neutral". By this Dooyeweerd meant that it is a descriptive account which is neutral between any guesses philosophers have made about interpreting or explaining the factors he is describing. But Van Til fails to see this, and misunderstands "theoretical" neutrality to mean religious neutrality. He then accuses Dooyeweerd of abandoning his own central thesis that theories are never religiously neutral. And from there on he misunderstands

virtually everything else about the purpose and function of the transcendental critique.

Another example of this same mistake is the description of the transcendental critique as a "theory of theories". At one time I myself misunderstood it in this way, and was emphatically corrected on the point by Dooyeweerd. "If the critique were itself a theory," he said to me, "then it would require yet another theory to explain it, and so on." Instead he saw it as a description of the conceptual activities involved in making any theory. These might be interpreted differently by opposing theories based upon opposing faiths. But the activities themselves, he thought, are undeniable and must be taken into account by any theory which purports to be critical. And, in the end, he thought describing these conceptual activities had the enormously important consequence of showing that no theory can justify its own basic (religious) presuppositions.

In my own work I have come to see more and more the value of using the term "theory" in a precise rather than a loose way. And I would urge my fellow Christians in philosophy not to be sucked into the Great Brimpen Mine of equivocating on the meaning of such an important term.

## 2. MEANING

One of the stranger terminological innovations Dooyeweerd introduces is the use of "meaning" to indicate "the mode of existence" of everything created. But it is clear to me that by this use, he was adding to the ordinary senses of that term, not subtracting from them. He wanted to convey the ordinary connotations that the things of creation make sense to, can be

known by, and have importance to, human understanding.

But he also wanted to make the point that it is the properties which make up the things of ordinary experience which are the very contents which our understanding combines to form concepts; the meaning of a concept is the properties combined in it, while a thing is a structural assemblage of properties. In this way, Dooyeweerd's thought brings ontology and epistemology closer together than ever before: that which comprises the meaning of our concepts is that which comprises the existence of the things, events and states of affairs which make up the created universe. In this way, things and events don't merely have meaning they are meaning; and a fortiori they are not an sich with respect to human knowing so that meaning is only in the mind of the knower.

Thus, in his analysis, the major genera or kinds of properties and laws (called "aspects") which are true of things in the universe, are also the major kinds of meaningfulness found within human experience.

Moreover, one of the chief points he wishes to make about these aspects is that they cannot be conceived apart from one another. No matter which aspect is abstracted for study, it inevitably forces the thinker to deal with other aspects because the properties and laws of each exhibit strong meaning-connections to the properties and laws of others.

Dooyeweerd speaks of this interconnectedness as the "referential" character of the aspects of meaning. The way in which each "refers" beyond itself epistemically, shows, he says, that no theory can ever justifiably claim any aspect is ontically

independent of its connectedness to the others. The outcome for Dooyeweerd's own ontology which results from this additional element appended to the use of "meaning", is that created things are totally dependent. They are not substances in the classical understanding of a substance which is "that which can exist of its own." In so far as things have meaning to us at all, their every meaning has a dependent, i.e., "referential", character.

For this reason, I find the suggestion on p.4 that "meaning emphasizes more expression from rather than reference to God" to be exactly backward. Even more importantly, I cannot agree at all with the identification of the meaning character of creation with religion, as the next section suggests. This suggestion arises out of a shift which is not found in the text of the New Critique at all: "meaning, in the sense of referring back to God" is the character of all created reality, but "religion" is never said to be. It is the character of humans alone to be essentially religious.

This same shift occurs in the next paragraph also. There we are told that "the expressive character of reality is also religious in nature", while the quote from Dooyeweerd offered in support in the following sentence says only that it is the human selfhood which expresses itself this way, not all reality.

Here I cannot resist the temptation to see these shifts, and the consequent suggestions Jim makes, as the product of the popularized motto with which he began his paper: life is religion. This may do very well as a bumper sticker, but it should not be allowed to function as a serious guide to a Biblical worldview, let alone to Dooyeweerd's philosophy.

Strictly speaking, it is false. Life isn't religion in the identity sense of "is", but is religious in the attributive sense of "is"; to wit: human life has the property of being religiously conditioned in the sense that people's interpretations of themselves, of the world, and their values, are always controlled by some religious belief or other. For now this is all I will say about this motto, but later its influence will surface again in the last (major) disagreement of this response.

### 3. TEMPORAL - SUPRATEMPORAL

On p. 5 we are told that for Dooyeweerd, time is the boundary between the "supratemporal sphere of human existence" and the "temporal diversity of meaning". And on p.6 the inference is drawn that this means that "time separates creation into the two realms of the temporal and the supratemporal".

My problems with this are: 1. I can't find this anywhere among the pages cited (e.g. N.C. I, 33); 2. I can't find it anywhere else in Dooyeweerd's writings; 3. it makes no sense. To say that time is what separates between itself and what is beyond it seems absurd. How can time be the separator when its one of the separatees? (3. is, I think, only a minor matter of the infelicitious wording of a point with which I otherwise agree.)

### 4. SELF and BODY

On the next page there is the remark that the human self (heart) is, among other things, "separate from the temporal, diverse, and mortal body". Perhaps this is also just a verbal slip-up, but it ought not to be allowed to pass. For Dooyeweerd

there are important ways in which the self is distinct from the body, but it is surely not separate. Putting his position this way makes it sound like the ghost of Descartes mind - body dualism, which it is not.

#### 5. WITHOUT FAITH REALITY CANNOT EXIST

On p.10 the point is made - and quickly dropped - that as a real aspect of creation, the faith aspect has an ontic status on a par with any other aspect. This is expressed by means of the remark that "without faith ... reality cannot exist".

It is true that Dooyeweerd does say this, and he does so in the section of the text which is cited (N.C. II, 302 - 305). But this is a point which, left as it is, would seem patently false to just about anyone. One need not be a nonChristian to object that surely most of the universe existed before there were people having faith, so how could the existence of the universe depend in any way on faith being exercised within it?

My suggestion, then, is that either some sketch of the preparatory explanation Dooyeweerd gives of the point be included (N.C. II, 52 - 53), or the point be deleted altogether.

#### 6. A SUPPOSED CONFUSION ABOUT FAITH

On p.12 there is a criticism of Dooyeweerd's discussion of faith which accuses him of defining it in such a way as to make false faith impossible:

"... if faith is by definition 'openness to Divine word-revelation' it would ... make no sense to talk of closed faith."

This, of course, is true. The trouble with it is that I do not find Dooyeweerd defining faith that way. The definition of faith which he gives reads like this:

...an original transcendental certainty, with-  
in the limits of time, related to a revelation  
of the ἀρχὴ which has captured the heart of  
human existence. (N.C. II, 304)

Here we read nothing of being open to the word of the true ἀρχὴ or  
creator, but only that faith is related to whatever ἀρχὴ has  
captured the heart of those who believe in it.

There are a number of places in the discussion which follows  
where Dooyeweerd does, to be sure, shift back and forth between  
speaking of true faith and faith per se without warning the  
reader. But I think not too much effort is needed to sort these  
out; in fact, one key to sorting them is precisely that wherever  
he speaks of faith in relation to the word-revelation of God, he  
is not speaking of faith per se, but of Biblical faith. However,  
there are also other indicators, such as the way he uses  
normative terms like "should" when speaking of "the light of  
God's eternity shining upon the world" via faith.

#### 7. FAITH IS A CALLING

On the bottom of p. 18, there is the remark that Dooyeweerd  
emphasizes that faith is a "calling", and that this emphasis  
highlights "the human responsibility to come to a faith decision"  
(top of p. 19).

This claim has no precedent in the text of Jim's paper - that  
is, there is nothing he has said or quoted so far to show this is  
so. But what is worse, there is no precedent for this in  
Dooyeweerd's text either! Dooyeweerd never says faith is a  
"calling", and if he did it would be inconsistent with his  
emphasis (already noted by Jim) that faith is a natural function  
of the human personality and not an option.



Perhaps all Jim means here is that people are called by God to true faith rather than false faith, but unfortunately that's not what this paragraph says, since the expression "a calling" has been used for a long time to mean a moral obligation to perform a certain task when it is in one's power not to perform it.

In this connection, the following phrase in the sentence which refers to a "faith decision" seems to me equally misleading. Though Billy Graham may use such expressions, Dooyeweerd, following St Paul, never speaks of a faith decision. In fact, he is at pains to use contrary expressions. He speaks of the direction of one's faith as a result of one's heart "being captured by" (N.C. II, 304) a particular Arche.

Even aside from whether Jim's statements reflect Dooyeweerd's position, they defend a view I find false. It seems to me that beliefs are almost never matters of decision. Beliefs, in the vast majority of cases, are involuntary. Once I see that it is pouring rain, I cannot believe it is a nice day; nor can the most fanatical Nazi still believe that Germany may yet win the second world war. Beliefs are generally compelled by our seeing that something is the case, and Scripture speaks in exactly that way about a person's believing in God: if the natural blindness of heart is not removed from someone by God, that person cannot turn his/her faith to God, while if God does remove the blindness of heart the person cannot fail to turn his/her faith to God.

#### 8. FAITH and REASON

At the bottom of p.19, there are some confusing statements about faith and reason. First we are told that it is perfectly

legitimate to ask whether an act of faith is rational or not. Then we are told that this does not mean asking for the reasons for an act of faith, but only whether the faith makes rational sense to the believer. Immediately thereafter follows the statement, "It becomes understandable that I might regard it as right to believe in God if, at this moment ... it makes little sense to me".

I must confess to being lost about what is going on here. I agree completely that reasons are not the basis for our faith. But if Dooyeweerd is right in his central contention that faith guides and controls reason, how can it ever be the case that one's faith does not "make rational sense"? Even more puzzling is why, if it is possible for one's faith not to make rational sense, it can nevertheless "become understandable" that one's faith may appear right but at the same time "make little sense"? And finally, having said that faith does not rest upon a foundation of good reasons (which I think is certainly correct), why does the paragraph end with the seemingly contradictory remark that "believing without good reasons is an uncomfortable and tenuous undertaking" (which I think is surely false)?

At the very least there are quite distinct senses of "rational" being used here without any of them being spelled out.

#### 9. CLOSED and OPENED FAITH

The terms "closed" and "open" are used in special way by Dooyeweerd, namely, to indicate whether a particular culture is not aware of, or aware of, (respectively) the distinctness of an aspect. A primitive culture may, for example, fail to distinguish between a person's being physically responsible for an act and

being legally responsible for it. (Dooyeweerd once told me of a case which illustrates this failure: in ancient China a boy who fell from a tree and landed on his father, killing him, was executed for murder.)

On pp. 13 ff Jim claims that Dooyeweerd shifts the meaning of these terms when he applies them to the faith aspect. The shift is supposed to be from whether the faith aspect is open or closed in the sense just explained above, to whether a faith is true or false. I don't see this happening.

What I do find happening is an addition to the meaning of "open" and "closed" in Dooyeweerd's application of them to faith, without shifting away from the previously established meaning.

In Dooyeweerd's terminology, the cultural "opening" of an aspect has to do with the point made earlier about the meaning-connections between aspects. When the cultural activities of a people deal with a particular normative aspect of life in such a way that it leads to the distinct awareness of another, then the first is said to be "opened" relative to the second. Moreover, there is, in Dooyeweerd's theory, a certain order to this "opening process", an order which corresponds to the order among the aspects. According to Dooyeweerd's theory of that order, the faith aspect is the last or "terminal" aspect so that there is no other aspect for it to refer (or be "open") to.

But, he maintains, from the Biblical point of view, the faith aspect can still be opened; not opened toward another aspect, but opened toward the eternal, transcendent God who is beyond all the aspects. It is in this sense that the faith aspect, along with

all the others, can also be "closed". If it is, faith is directed back toward some facet or feature of the universe instead beyond the universe toward God ( as Paul points out in Romans 1).

In the case of the faith aspect, therefore, being closed is the same thing as being false from the Biblical point of view. Thus Dooyeweerd has not equivocated on the terms "open" and "closed" at all. Rather, it is the case that because of the position of the faith aspect in the order of aspects, that its being closed includes its being apostate, misplaced, and false; while its being "open" includes its being Biblical, well-placed, and true.

This explanation is hinted at on p.15 where Jim admits that Dooyeweerd's reply to the charge of equivocation would have something to do with "the place of faith as the terminal function". His only rebuttal to this is to say that, for Dooyeweerd, this explanation would be "stretching his general theory". I don't see that to be the case at all, but anyway the rebuttal is simply undefended. There is no statement of just what it is that's supposedly getting stretched, how its getting stretched, or any citations from Dooyeweerd's text to substantiate that any stretching is going on.

#### MAJOR DISAGREEMENTS

##### 1. THE SUPPOSED PETITIO IN THE EXPLANATION OF THE RELATION OF FAITH TO CULTURE

The last minor disagreement above can serve to lead directly to the first of those I consider major, since Jim also connects them. He points out that Dooyeweerd maintains that closed

(apostate) faith is the chief cause of retarding the cultural opening process, and is therefore the chief cause of cultural primitivism. He recognizes, at the same time, that Dooyeweerd admits that not every form of apostate faith retards cultural development, however. Some forms of false faith have guided the production of remarkable cultures like that of ancient Greece.

The alleged circularity in Dooyeweerd's position arises, according to Jim, because Dooyeweerd then also holds that the growth of a faith which is not culture-retardant requires the achievement of a minimal level of culture. On p. 14 He cites two loci in the text of the New Critique which he takes to support this criticism. The first of these, he says, show that

Dooyeweerd explains the possibility of such development [of a culture-promoting apostate faith] in immediate connection with the "emergence of the respective peoples from a more or less primitive stage of civilization" (N.C. II, 320).

which, he says, shows Dooyeweerd to be maintaining that

Such unfolding [of faith] is dependent upon and presupposes a certain stage of cultural development (N.C. II, 179).

My contention in reply is that this is simply a misreading of the text of the New Critique. The first of the passages cited (N.C. II, 320) does not say that an apostate faith which produces a high culture is made possible by the emergence of a stage of civilization beyond the primitive level. It merely says that the two things, faith and a higher culture, are "immediately connected". Neither the sentence cited, nor the paragraphs preceding it say that it is the level of culture which makes possible the development of faith in "the transcendental

direction".

The heading under which the citation occurs does announce that the opening of faith is the subject to be treated in this section, and the paragraph following the heading clearly asks: "How is such an opening-process to be understood, and how is it made possible?" But the answer given over the pages which follow is, in short, that when apostate faith shifts to absolutizing entities from the normative aspects of experience rather than entities from the natural aspects, a different understanding of human nature arises which encourages cultural development (cmp. also N.C. I, 189 & 328).

By the way, Dooyeweerd explicates this idea at length, and gives numerous examples of it. So it is utterly incomprehensible to me why Jim says on p.13 that "according to Dooyeweerd's explanation no development of culture beyond the 'primitive' is possible for closed faith" in the face of an entire section of the text devoted to explaining how that is possible! And to make matters even more baffling, Jim later says (p.17), "... Dooyeweerd explains structurally how a person's faith commitment grounds, leads, and integrates all human activities...".

I just don't know what to make of the co-existence of these remarks.

As for the second citation (N.C. II, 179), there is simply nothing on that page or any of the immediately surrounding pages which say what Jim claims is there. The only thing remotely like what he claims is a remark on the preceding page (178) in which Dooyeweerd says that " the axiological differentiation in human feeling is dependent on the stage of our cultural development".

But "axiological differentiation" is not, of course, the same as faith.

To sum up this first major disagreement, then, I can find no wavering or circularity on the issue of the relation of faith to culture development in Dooyeweerd's text. He sticks with the notion that culture is made possible by faith, not vice versa, and the sections cited to show he commits the logical fallacy of *petitio principii* (circular argument) simply don't commit it.

## 2. CRITICISM OF THE BIBLICAL GROUNDMOTIVE

There is, as Jim notes, a shift in Dooyeweerd's use of the term groundmotive. At one point Dooyeweerd speaks of two basic groundmotives of human thought and action, the Biblical and the nonBiblical. Later, and more often, Dooyeweerd uses the term to speak of three nonBiblical groundmotives which he identifies and contrasts to the Biblical groundmotive.

This is a terminological lapse, though I don't think its a very serious one since its easily noted and easily compensated for. On the one hand, Dooyeweerd is thinking of religious belief itself as it functions as a culture - driver. In this sense there are ultimately only two such driving motivations: one which recognizes Yahweh as all the divinity there is and everything else as dependent on Him, and one which regards something(s) Yahweh has created as divine and all else as dependent on it (them). On the other hand, Dooyeweerd also often uses "groundmotive" when speaking of the more specific expressions of nonBiblical religious belief as they have acted as driving motives in Western culture.

More important than this verbal discrepancy, is Jim's criticism of Dooyeweerd's view of the Biblical groundmotive. As I understand him, Jim has two objections to what Dooyeweerd has to say about it. The first is that because Dooyeweerd distinguishes between the knowledge a believer has of God which is directly revealed to his heart ("its central sense") and the consequential knowledge which is rationally articulated in confessional statements, Jim accuses Dooyeweerd of saying that his own "...understanding of...the word of God is direct and pure", which shows that Dooyeweerd "tends to absolutize his own views" (p.25).

Ironically, I find Dooyeweerd's distinction between the revelation of God directly to the heart of a believer, and any subsequent rational formulations of its content, to be precisely an attempt to guard against any such "absolutizing". That is, it is precisely this distinction which provides for the very result which Jim describes counterfactually this way: "...we would expect the scriptural groundmotive as manifested historically to be, according to Dooyeweerd's theory, a creaturely and fallible response to the Word of God in human hearts." (p.24).

This is, I think, just what the distinction Jim rejects provides for. The knowledge of God which comes directly to the believers' heart and is independent of interpretation, is nothing less than the illumination which supplies the ability to recognize the truth of God's word. It is what Dooyeweerd describes elsewhere as "the renewal of our subjective perspective" by the power of the Holy Spirit. As such, it precedes and is the cause of any rationally articulated formulation of the content of faith.



As a consequence, we may rest assured that the same God has redemptively taken charge of the hearts of all believers even though they may offer varying confessional statements and diverse theological interpretations of their belief. Since there is an intuitive heart-knowledge of God which is pre-cognitive, and which is "independent of human subjective interpretation", the unity of God's people and their communion with one another does not depend upon their subscribing to verbally identical interpretations of their faith.

Just why Jim construes this point at 180 degrees from its intent, I'm not sure. But his second criticism of Dooyeweerd concerning the Biblical groundmotive arises from this construal. For having charged Dooyeweerd with trying to absolutize his own understanding of the Faith, Jim then tries to illustrate this by regarding Dooyeweerd's circumscription of the Biblical groundmotive as an example. He says that the summary-phrase "creation, fall, redemption in Christ, and communion of the Holy Spirit" is the absolutization of one particular, parochial interpretation of Biblical religion. To be more specific, it is the "...twentieth century neo-Calvinist community's" interpretation which may differ importantly from those of Lutherans, Anabaptists, Roman Catholics, etc.

In reply to this I have two remarks. The first is that if, indeed, Dooyeweerd's circumscription of the Biblical groundmotive is not genuinely ecumenical (as it was intended to be), then it should be revised. But any revision must have some content to it. It will not do to replace it with something as vague as "the word

of the Spirit of God, life-bestowing, life-grounding, life-directing". That substitute is not even specifically Christian, and could be agreed to by a Hindu or Moslem.

Secondly, I feel like saying that the expression "creation, fall, redemption in Christ, and communion of the Holy Spirit" seems to me an admirably ecumenical circumscription. It is not contentless. It is specifically Christian. And I do not find anything about it that is peculiarly 20th century or Calvinist.

After all, what about it would be objected to by a Lutheran? An Anabaptist? A Roman Catholic? An Eastern Catholic? What part of it would have been omitted by a 3rd century believer? A 7th century believer? A 12th century believer? Why is Dooyeweerd's circumscription any worse than the one Jim himself cannot avoid in the course of objecting to Dooyeweerd's when he says: "...each [Christian] community in terms of its own time and situation articulates a common faith in God as Creator and Reconciler."? What is this but another attempt to circumscribe what all Christians have in common? And since it leaves out that the reconciliation it mentions comes by Christ, and that his people are bound by their communion in the Holy Spirit, it is a circumscription which is - once again - not even specifically Christian. It could be subscribed by a Hindu, a Mahayana Buddhist, a Muslim, or a Jew.

### 3. PROPOSED REVISIONS IN THE UNDERSTANDING OF RELIGION

Beginning on p. 27, Jim proposes several revisions to Dooyeweerd's position concerning religion I which will comment or in the order in which they appear.

The first is that instead of saying that religion is the

central sphere of human existence (that people are essentially religious), religion should be described as the

"nature of creaturely existence in relation to the Creator-Redeemer God. To be creaturely means to be in relation to God, i.e., religious. In other words life is religion." (p.27)

This, I think, is a straightforward confusion between: 1) being dependent upon God and 2) being aware of being dependent upon God (or a God-surrogate). And it seems - once again - to have been instigated by the misleading motto "life is religion". The adjective "religious" must refer to a type of belief if it is to make any sense at all, so it is simply not true that all creaturely existence is religious. Stones, planets, oceans and clouds depend upon God, but they are not religious. Only people are religious. To be creaturely means to be in relation to God, yes. The relation is that of being dependent. But that is not the same as being religious.

This same confusion between one's being dependent on God, and one's being conscious of being dependent on God, plagues the next criticism and proposed revision as well. The criticism is that since Dooyeweerd speaks of the heart as the central locus of religion, then not all of human life is equally religious but is only indirectly religious "via the heart".

This is correct as a description of Dooyeweerd's position, but I think it is correct as a description of Biblical teaching as well. It is with the mouth one confesses one's belief, according to Scripture, but with the heart that one believes. The only reason Dooyeweerd's view could be objectionable is if dependency on God were again confused with belief in dependency on God. All

of life depends upon God at every moment in every respect whether a person acknowledges this or not. But the conscious living of life is religiously conditioned by the religious belief of every person. It is religious belief that controls one's other beliefs and values in every other aspect of life.

The next paragraph continues the same confusion when it accuses Dooyeweerd of having a view "in which the heart is one step closer to God than the faith function which is a half step closer to God than all the other diverse ways of functioning". In the sense of ontological dependency, this is just wrong. All aspects of a human are equally dependent on God. In the sense of religious belief, this is correct since it is religious faith which influences and controls all of life.

Thus there is no "tension", as Jim says there is, between having faith mediate the influence of one's religion to the rest of one's life, and the "conviction that all of created reality expresses the will of the creator". The only sense in which all reality could express the Creator's will is that which theologians have called God's "decretive" will, not what they called His "preceptive" will. Here too, the difference is between what God has secretly willed for all creation ("who works all things according to the counsel of His will"), and the things God has revealed in the covenant as approved of or disapproved of for those who believe in Him ("the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children to do them forever").

On p. 28 Jim follows all this with the claim that if we

abandon Dooyeweerd's view that religion influences the other aspects of life via faith, then the "equally religious character of every function of life is more easily portrayed".

Now I can't think of a deftly diplomatic way of stating my objection to this, so forgive me if this is blunt. I don't see any way at all to show that an aspect of life is religious except through the influence of faith upon it. So I will simply ask: if what you say can be "more easily portrayed", why don't you do it? Go ahead. Give even one example of how physics, or biology, or politics, or law are religious aside from the influence of belief.

The answer to this which Jim gives in his paper is to extend the confusion between creatureliness (dependence on God) and religion (belief in God) even further by proposing that we also abandon Dooyeweerd's distinction between the Divine order of creation and God's word-revelation to humans. Indeed, were it not for this (now pervasive) confusion, no such outlandish proposal would ever occur to anyone! What theologian or thinker in the entire history of Judeo-Christian thought ever before proposed that there is no difference between the laws which God has set over the universe, and his offer of a covenant of salvation in His Word? Here again is but another consequence of collapsing the difference between creation and religion: in order to find a sense in which the nonfaith aspects are religious, identify the nomological order of the universe with the redemptive offer of the covenant, and poof! - all aspects are equally religious! But no such slight of hand can erase the difference between the way unconscious things are governed by God's laws, and the conscious

acceptance of God's saving Word by the only creatures created for fellowship with Him.

#### ADDENDUM: AN AGREEMENT ABOUT RENAMING THE FAITH ASPECT

After all these disagreements, let me end on a more conciliatory note.

Dooyeweerd's inclusion of faith as an aspect of creation often causes consternation among those hearing his theory for the first time. It sounds to those who regard themselves as atheists or agnostics as though he's defining religion into existence. At the same time, though, I believe he is right to include this aspect, and that the main difficulty with it is what to call it. "Pistical" just won't do. Jim suggests "certitude" as a substitute. I think Jim's suggestion is an improvement, but I would like to make a suggestion of my own.

My view is that even "certitude" still carries too narrow a connotation to characterize the entire aspect, because it applies to only one property included in it - albeit the most important one. The aspect itself, I suggest, has to do with trustworthiness. Things really are or are not trustworthy in certain respects, and this property has its analog in every aspect: a thing may be physically trustworthy, biotically trustworthy, economically trustworthy, etc. But when we consider the characteristic of trustworthiness itself, we have abstracted the aspect which Dooyeweerd calls the faith aspect.

On this view of the issue, the qualifier "faith" is too narrow for the same reason the term "certitude" is; namely, they both pick out the highest degree of trustworthiness as the name for

the aspect which includes all degrees of it. In fact, as I see it, "faith" is even narrower than "certitude" because it picks out one particular kind of certitude - unconditional certitude. Let me explain.

On the view I'm proposing, there are as many kinds of trustworthiness as there are aspects, and a host of gradations of it within each aspect. Within the aspect of trustworthiness itself, we can pick out states of affairs, laws, etc., which we take to be completely trustworthy, i.e., certain. But even among these, distinctions can be drawn between those whose certitude lies in themselves and those whose certitude depends on something else.

My suggestion is that whatever a person regards as unconditionally certain in and of itself, corresponds to their religious trust, or "faith". For nothing could be unconditionally certain in and of itself without existing in and of itself, and that is the defining characteristic of what it means to be divine. As one theologian put it:

As I have often said, trust or faith of one's heart makes either God or an idol. If your faith is right you have the true God, if not you have an idol. But whatever your heart clings and entrusts itself to is, I say, really your God. (Luther's Commentary on the First Commandment)