The Miracle of Nature
And the Nature of Miracle

A study of the thought of J H Diemer concerning Creation and Miracle

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Master of Philosophical Foundations

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Johan Heinrich Diemer

1904-1945
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A note on the Web version of the thesis, January 2009

The text of the thesis is unchanged from 1985 apart from minor corrections and stylistic changes. The text has been re-formatted with a modern font and as a result the pagination has been changed, and references now appear as footnotes beneath the text, while the original thesis had end-notes at the end of each chapter.
Chapter One

The Nature of the Problem

1. INTRODUCTION

In the doctrine of creation many of the most difficult and pressing problems in theology have both their root and their most problematic expression. Their root, in that many difficulties rise from an inadequate doctrine of creation; and their most problematic expression, because in expounding the doctrine of creation these inadequacies become evident. The most difficult and at the same time most crucial aspect of this doctrine is the relationship between God and created reality. For we must not only deal adequately with the intimate and constant covenantal relationship between God and the creation, but also clearly distinguish between them.

The formulation of this relationship has always been at its most problematic with respect to miracle. Both creation and miracle involve the most complex aspects of the relationship between God and created reality, and they follow parallel formulations. That is, the way in which the doctrine of creation is developed leads naturally to a particular formulation of the doctrine of miracle, and a doctrine of miracle implies a particular doctrine of creation.

In reflecting on the inter-relation and inter-dependence of these two doctrines, the problems which need to be resolved become apparent. As a result, the areas of greatest difficulty can be isolated for consideration and reformulation, in the context of a renewed study of the Scriptural givens. The doctrine of creation has been the subject of renewed interest in recent years, and the prominence given to miracles in many Christian circles, notably in the charismatic movement and its Pentecostal forebears, requires consideration of what exactly we mean by a miracle. This thesis will then focus on the doctrine of creation with respect to the way it provides the
foundation for the doctrine of miracle, and as these two express the relationship between God and his creation.

Because the doctrines of creation and miracle therefore involve matters which lie at the heart of the Christian faith, and govern both its foundations and character, it is important that we attempt to reformulate these doctrines in a way which is faithful to Scripture. One of the most significant attempts to do this has been that of the neo-Calvinist Reformational movement, whose principal architects are Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck and Jan Woltjer in the 19th century, and Herman Dooyeweerd and D. H. Th. Vollenhoven in this century. The tradition shaped by these men has been a powerful force in the renewal and recovery of a truly Biblical understanding of reality. Since the doctrine of creation is foundational to the Christian faith, it is not surprising that it figures prominently in their writings. For instance, in Bavinck’s theology we find this doctrine given a central place. “The creation story of Genesis 1 does not give a philosophical world-view, but it is an historical story, revealed by God to mankind, and it lays the foundation for the Christian religion.”

The significance of the doctrine of creation does not rest there. It also shapes the character of the faith. “The essence of the Christian religion consists in this, that the creation of the Father, devastated by sin, is restored in the death of the Son of God, and recreated by the Spirit into a kingdom of God.” In this confession of Bavinck we find not only the importance of creation, but also of re-creation, which includes miracle, the sign of the coming of God’s kingdom. In this tradition, miracle is not seen as an intrusion into the creation, but a sign of the restoration of a creation corrupted by sin. In this view it is sin which is the intruding factor.

According to Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, the creation was called into being by God by his Word, and is subject to this Word, the law-order for the creation, which maintains all things in existence with their proper character and individuality. That is, this Word provides the Law or condition for the existence of the creation and governs

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1 H Bavinck, *Godsdienst en wetenschap*, pp. 122-3. Translations from Dutch works are my own unless otherwise indicated.

the functioning of all things. The entrance of sin into the creation through rebellion against God was the result of the refusal to be subject to that law-order, and brought with it brokenness and disorder. And yet even in this situation God sustains his creation, and through the redeeming death of his Son, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, the devastated creation is being restored as the kingdom of God.

The most significant attempt within the Reformational movement to work out the implications of this concept of creation and its relationship to miracle was made by J. H. Diemer. In this thesis we will focus on the way he develops the doctrines of creation and miracle and examine how his thought was influenced by Augustine, and the Augustinian tradition as it was modified by the neo-Calvinist reformational movement. Diemer’s work builds on that of his predecessors and contemporaries within this movement, and shares to varying degrees the strengths and weaknesses of their work. The strengths arise from the degree to which Diemer has utilised the radically Biblical insights of the reformational movement, while the weaknesses derive from his failure to adequately discern the extent to which a number of unbiblical concepts, dominant in the work of Bavinck, Kuyper and Woltjer, have influenced his thought.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

While the Reformational rediscovery of the Biblical witness concerning God’s relationship to the creation is in stark contrast to many other current approaches to this problem, nevertheless it did not appear out of the blue. It is the development of a long tradition of thought about creation, and still reveals its affinities to that tradition. In order to understand that tradition, the context in which this study takes place, it is necessary to consider its earliest roots.

It has been the confession of the Church since its earliest days that God created all things and constantly maintains them in existence. This continuing relationship of God to his creation includes the mighty acts of power performed on behalf of his people, to bring healing, deliverance and provision of many needs. These mighty acts aroused wonder and reverent awe in those who witnessed their unusual power and
appropriateness. The people of Israel had no difficulty in acknowledging the ability and the willingness of God to perform such acts on their behalf, and this is reflected throughout the Old Testament.3

These mighty acts of power were revealed once again in Christ, who in his ministry, and later through that of his disciples in Palestine, and the apostles throughout the Roman Empire, showed his victory over the power of sin to distort and ruin, and his ability to restore and heal the brokenness. These mighty acts we find recorded throughout the New Testament.4

However, the Church eventually came into contact with the heritage of Greek thought with its emphasis on theoretical analysis. The Biblical perspective was concerned with the ultimate meaning and significance of the creation, and thus did not provide this kind of analysis. So when the Church Fathers attempted to define more closely the Biblical understanding of the relationship between God and the creation, they borrowed concepts from Greek philosophy to do so.

Since the Greek concept of reality was not derived from the Biblical perspective, the blend of these two approaches produced problematic formulations. The principal problem was the concept of substance. In Greek thought, substance or matter was the basic material from which everything was made. It was formless, and had to receive its shape and individuality through the imposition of the activity of non-material forms. This matter was conceived to be independent from God (although some held that God had created matter), and therefore was eternal and self-sufficient in its own right. The forms which gave shape to matter had a similar independent character, and were used by God in creation but were not themselves created by him. Thus the early church Fathers’ formulation of God’s relationship to the creation unavoidably lost sight of its intimate covenantal character.

This inadequate and unbiblical formulation of the relationship between God and the creation by the church fathers had a profound influence on their concept of miracle. For God to work miracles in a creation which has an independent character, self-

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3 E.g. Pss 78:11-13; 1 Chr. 29:11-16.

sufficient over against God, and functioning according to natural law (i.e. a law intrinsic to nature and not established, or at least not sustained continually by God) he must break into this independent nature. A miracle, assumed to be contrary to natural law, can occur only by abolishing or suspending a natural law. Thus instead of the Biblical view of God’s intimate and constant relationship with the world, in this view God is exiled from his own creation.

In developing the doctrine of creation, Genesis 1 of course played a significant role in the thought of the early Church Fathers. This is not in the least surprising, since it is here that the Scriptures establish the principal features and frame work for the Biblical understanding of reality as the handiwork of God. And it is in the interpretation of Genesis 1 that we see the main features of every type of creation doctrine brought to the fore. During the period between Philo Judaeus of Alexandria (c. 20 BC - 50 AD) and Basil, Bishop of Caesarea (329 - 379 AD) nearly every method of interpretation of Genesis 1 had its origin. The main streams were established by the early Church Fathers, and their successors followed these paradigms. The principle streams were:

A. The emphasis on the physical aspects of creation to the neglect of the doctrine of the divine plan in creating; represented by Theophilus of Antioch, Hippolytus and Basil.

B. The allegorical method, such as that followed by Philo, Irenaeus, Justin, Clement and Origen.

C. The emphasis on the pre-existence of the forms of things in the Word to the neglect of the physical aspects of creation. This has its origin in the Platonic-Philonic elements which provide the basis for logos theories. The principal and greatest exponent of this method was Augustine.5

5 F E Robbins, The Hexaemeral literature, p. 36f. Vollenhoven also identified three basic interpretations concerning origins. He discovered cosmological or purely structural thinkers, who emphasise physical creation to the detriment of development; theogono-cosmogonic or mythologising thinkers, who include speculation about the origin of the gods in their theories; and the cosmogono-cosmological thinkers, who consider both structure and development, but reject mythological or speculative thought about origins. The theogono-cosmogonic pattern does not appear in orthodox Christian thought, but is
When Diemer began investigating the doctrine of creation and miracle, in the winter of 1942-43, he found in the works of Augustine the main framework for his thought. During the time that he was in hiding from the Germans in 1943, Diemer studied the works of Augustine in Latin.\(^6\) This included *De Genesi ad litteram*, Augustine’s most extensive commentary on the first three chapters of Genesis, in which he develops most fully his view of creation and miracle. Diemer studied Latin as part of his education at the Gymnasium,\(^7\) and he constantly refers to this commentary of Augustine’s by its Latin title.

On a number of occasions Diemer expressed his appreciation for the work of Augustine in this area, and consciously followed his lead. He did critique aspects of Augustine’s work, but nevertheless in developing his theory of creation and miracle, he was influenced most significantly by the thought of Augustine, and his resulting concept is in many ways identical to that of Augustine. In this respect Diemer is continuing in the tradition established by his predecessors.

Diemer’s work is still worth study, according to Uko Zylstra, who said “Diemer’s analysis of the meaning of miracle in creation and recreation is still relevant today.”\(^8\)

The thought of Augustine has been one of the greatest single influences in the development in Western Christianity, and his theology has provided the basis for prominent in pagan and Gnostic views. The thinkers mentioned in the second group identified by Robbins are all identified Vollenhoven as pure cosmological thinkers. Robbins would need to add a fourth category to his scheme to accommodate those thinkers identified by Vollenhoven as “mythologising.” For details of Vollenhoven’s approach see C Seerveld, “Biblical wisdom underneath Vollenhoven’s categories for philosophical historiography,” and A Wolters, “On Vollenhoven’s problem-historical method.”

\(^6\) Dr Magnus Verbrugge relates that while he was in hiding in Holland during the war, he took refuge in a cottage where Diemer was also hiding, some time in 1943. During their time together Diemer was reading the works of Augustine in Latin. This would be some time after Diemer had resigned his post at the University. See footnote 23 below.

\(^7\) Wilma Bouma, translator of *Nature and miracle*, suggested this to me.

\(^8\) Uko Zylstra, *Ultrastructure and histochemistry of the skin of the freshwater snails Lymnaea Stagnalis and Biomphalaria Pfeifferi*, Free University, 1972, “Stellingen, No. 6.”
Reformed thought ever since the days of Calvin, who admired Augustine above all other church fathers. It is of interest then to examine the work of Diemer, who is essentially a twentieth-century Augustinian. Such a study provides insight into both the continuing influence of Augustine in our day, and the relationship of the reformational movement to the rest of historic Christianity. Thus even in a movement which is reconsidering many of the traditional formulations and concepts of the faith and pointing the way towards a renewal of Christian thought in obedience to the Scriptures, the forces which have shaped the course of Western Christianity are far from absent. Not least for this reason will the study of Diemer’s work prove both fruitful and timely.

3. STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The analysis of Diemer’s thought begins in Chapter Two with a study of his views on creation. His principal aim was to combat dualism, especially scholastic views which see reality as a combination of form and matter or substance. This he rejects in favour of a reformational view of the creation of “things.” However, his own views were not entirely free from scholastic influences. This comes out strongly in his use of the Logos theme, and we will examine the influence of Bavinck, Kuyper and especially Woltjer on his view of the Logos, which emphasises the unity of all things in the Word. This significantly shapes Diemer’s view of the creation of all things in the Word, Christ.

We will then turn to his view of creation as it took place “in the beginning,” that is, in Christ, the Logos. He explicitly follows Augustine’s identification of the beginning with Christ. This beginning also encompassed the days of creation, the next theme to be considered. In these two sections we will also examine his views on time, which are derived from Augustine and Dooyeweerd, who was influenced by Augustinian views of time.

After having laid bare the basic framework of his view of creation, we will explore the ontological model he employs, using the method developed by Vollenhoven. This
will clarify his view of creation further, as well as providing some valuable insights into his view of miracle, to be studied in the third chapter.

The last section will summarise our assessment of his view of creation made thus far, and will consider his dependence on Augustine, who established the principal paradigm followed by Diemer, and also the influence of Bavinck, Kuyper and Woltjer, as well as that of Dooyeweerd. We will recapitulate the critique of his position as it has been developed through the chapter, and indicate the areas of revision needed. In the last chapter these, as well as the fruitful insights in Diemer’s thought, will be developed in an attempt to continue Diemer’s reforming vision.

The nature of miracle will form the principal topic for the third chapter. We begin by examining his view of providence, or the constant relationship of God in covenant-faithfulness to his creation, and its relationship to his view of the creation in the beginning. On this foundation Diemer built his view of miracle. Miracles are signs both of creation, and of the coming kingdom of God, to be worked in faith. To see the need for miracle, which includes a breaking of the power of sin so as to restore the original condition of creation, we will consider Diemer’s view of the Fall and redemption in Christ, which includes the miracle of recreation. But since a miracle for Diemer (and the tradition he works in) is based on the possibilities of creation, miracles can also arise through the power of the kingdom of darkness. We will need to consider his approach to discerning between a true and a false miracle. Again, in the concluding section Diemer’s views will be analysed in terms of his dependence on Augustine and various reformational thinkers.

Having analysed Diemer’s position and its roots in Augustine and reformational thought, we will attempt to redefine the doctrine of creation and its relationship to miracle in the last chapter. We hope to do this in a way which avoids the scholastic pitfalls remaining in Diemer’s thought, while drawing on the Biblical insights he has developed. In this chapter emphasis will be placed on the Biblical givens, including a study of Genesis 1, the nature of the fall and its effects on the creation, and the redemption of Christ which encompasses all of creation. One example of the significance of the doctrine of creation which will be considered is the way it
influences political theory. We will discuss miracles as signs of redemption, and reflect on the place of miracles in the church today.

The only major critical study of Diemer’s thought appears in Steen’s thesis on the thought of Dooyeweerd. This study, although dealing only indirectly with Diemer, has proved invaluable for this thesis both for analysis of the major themes of Diemer’s thought, and understanding his relationship to Dooyeweerd and their mutual agreement on many points.

It is remarkable that so little has been written about Diemer, especially since his work *Natuur en wonder*, and the English translation, *Nature and miracle*, have proved enormously popular. It is hoped that this study will both unravel some of the complicated threads in his argument, and assist Christians to reflect profitably on his contribution to reformational thought, especially on the themes of creation and miracle.

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“After the meeting of the Mathematics and Natural Sciences section.” Taken at the first Congress of the “Christelijke Vereeniging van Natuur- en Geneeskundigen in Nederland,” 18 April 1936. Diemer is at the centre of the back row. Rev. N Diemer, the father of J H Diemer, is in the centre holding his hat in his hand. Dr W J A Schouten is second from the left, front row, Dr G J Sizoo is directly behind him, and Dr R Hooykaas directly behind Dr Sizoo. At this meeting Diemer presented his paper “The new holistic biology.”

4. BACKGROUND AND WORK

Dr Johann Heinrich “Harry” Diemer was born on November 7, 1904, in Dronrijp, a town in Friesland. He was the son of a pastor of the Gereformeerde Kerk, Ds. N Diemer, who studied for the ministry at the Free University under Abraham Kuyper,
and was ordained in 1899. Diemer attended school in Gameren, Vijfhuizen and Haarlem, where he attended the Gymnasium department of the Christian Lyceum. He passed his final exams there in 1925, and then commenced study in biology at the University of Leiden.

While at university he struggled with the problems of the relationship of Christian faith and science. In his search for answers in this perplexing area, Diemer diligently studied the thought of Abraham Kuyper, Herman Bavinck and especially Jan Woltjer. He was heavily influenced by the doctrine of the Logos as it appeared in the thought of the latter. This is apparent in his earlier writings, for instance *Christ and modern natural science* (1933) in which the Logos-idea figures prominently. “Science lays bare the rich diversity of structures which creatures display in all the different aspects of their existence. This diversity is without exception subject to the Law, the logical order of the fully created Logos.”

Dooyeweerd points out in his article “Kuypers wetenschapsleer” that the speculative doctrine of the Logos leads to an inner absolutisation of the law-spheres. The diversity of created things is a diversity within the Logos, within objective rational ideas which can only be of a logical nature. This neo-scholastic Calvinist thought incorporates a hidden dualism, one which Diemer recognised and sought to overcome. Hence his enthusiasm on encountering the work of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, who had also recognised this dualism, and while continuing in the Biblically-reforming spirit of the three earlier thinkers of the Free University, saw more clearly the way to express their view of reality in terms and concepts which avoided the pitfalls of scholasticism.

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11 *Almanak* “Fides Quaerit Intellectum,” 1913, p.114. He was himself an active member of the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy. (See note 19). In 1932 he wrote a book *Het scheppingsverbond met Adam* [The creation covenant with Adam], which received a prize for theology, and was commended by Dr. G C Berkouwer. A report of a lecture he gave to a study group of the Association for Calvinistic Philosophy, entitled “De Sabbat Gods en de sabbat mens,” is printed in *Correspondentie-Bladen* Vol 1 (1936) no. 3, p. 3-5.


13 J H Diemer, *Christ and modern natural science*, p. 3.

14 “Kuyper’s wetenschapsleer,” p. 225.
Some time in 1930 Diemer discussed the problems facing Christian biologists with Dr J P de Gaay Fortman, who gave him a paper by Vollenhoven which dealt with the theory of modal spheres. Through this Diemer first came into contact with the “Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee,” the reformational Christian philosophy developed by Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd. Diemer made use of this approach in his lecture to the Christian biology teacher’s group, which Dr de Gaay Fortman had invited him to present. Some time after this initial contact with the “Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee,” Diemer attended a series of lectures given at Leiden by Dooyeweerd, in which Diemer’s grasp of this philosophy was strengthened and deepened.

Diemer passed his “doctoraal examen” in July 1931, and began work on his thesis. This thesis deals with the taxonomy of a species of mosquito found in North Holland. In the last chapter Diemer discusses the philosophical problems involved in determining a species, and works this out in terms of the theory of individuality structures developed by Dooyeweerd. In the Foreword of this thesis Diemer

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15 “Philosophy of the Idea of Law,” the title of Dooyeweerd’s book, became the name under which the philosophical movement or school which it started was known. The school is usually known in English as the philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea. This is to avoid confusion with the use of “law” in a jural sense, a meaning not conveyed by the Dutch “wet,” which uses “recht” for that meaning. See Herman Dooyeweerd, A New Critique for Theoretical Thought, (the major statement of this philosophy in English) I, pp. 93-97 for a discussion of this terminology.

16 De beteekenis van Driesch voor de biologie. The paper by Vollenhoven referred to by Diemer is Iets over de logica van Driesch.

17 There is a letter in the Dooyeweerd archives in Amsterdam from Diemer to Dooyeweerd dated 2 June 1932 in which Diemer discusses the lectures and makes comments on the content, as well as on Dooyeweerd’s De crisis der humanistisch staats leer. In this letter he gives the details of his contact with the Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee and his response to it. (See the Appendix for a translation of this letter.) In his “Memorial” to Diemer Dooyeweerd recalls his first contact with Diemer through this course at Leiden. This was prior to the publication of De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee, while Diemer was still engaged on his doctoral research. Diemer also expresses his appreciation for these lectures by Dooyeweerd in the Introduction to his thesis.

18 See A New critique, III, pp. 76-98; especially p. 96 where Dooyeweerd comments on this work of Diemer’s. The original Dutch edition, De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee, stresses that Diemer was the first to apply this theory to biology (Vol 3, p. 61). This volume appeared in 1936, one year after Diemer’s thesis. Compare this with Dooyeweerd’s article in Nature and miracle, p. viii, where he says that Diemer’s thesis “was a first attempt to
expresses his “heartfelt thanks” equally to both Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd for their advice and criticism in his development of the last chapter. He expresses his conviction that the theories developed by both these thinkers have opened new perspectives for understanding how thought can be subject to the redeeming power of Christ. He explains his attempts to seek out the possibility of a genuine Christian study of science, but was unsatisfied with what he had discovered prior to encountering Vollenhoven and Dooyeweerd.

Dooyeweerd’s theory seemed to be exactly what he sought; a theory of science which was not separated “from its eternal root of truth and life, the Logos of God.” Thus even his appreciation for the philosophy of Dooyeweerd was expressed in terms derived from the Reformed scholasticism of Woltjer, his erstwhile mentor, even though at that stage Diemer had been familiar with Dooyeweerd’s thought for over four years. In that period he had read the first volume of De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee, as well as other material by Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven, some of which he lists in the bibliography of his thesis.

After this dissertation was completed with honours in 1935, Diemer found it difficult to obtain suitable employment because of his religious and philosophical convictions make this theory fruitful for theoretical investigation in biological science.” There is also a section in the Dutch edition of Dooyeweerd’s work which does not appear in the English translation, A New Critique of Theoretical thought, where Dooyeweerd discusses the conflict between neo-vitalism and holism in biology. For this section he is heavily indebted to Diemer (De Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee, Vol 3, p. 54). In the English translation this section is replaced by two sentences which do not mention Diemer (A New Critique, Vol 3, p. 77, last two sentences of the second paragraph).

19 Thesis Introduction, not paginated. Diemer also expresses thanks here to Dr J P de Gaay Fortman, who had put him in touch with the work of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven.

concerning the nature of science. The only employment he could find was teaching biology at a training school for women teachers, in Amsterdam. Diemer was at this time active in the “Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte,” and served as secretary of the Editorial board of its Journal, \textit{Philosophia Reformata}, from 1936 until 1945. During that time he continued to work on philosophical problems in science, and wrote a number of significant articles in this field, concentrating on problems relating to evolution and the concept of species. He also lectured on these topics and reviewed a considerable number of related books for \textit{Philosophia Reformata}.\footnote{A full bibliography of Diemer’s works appears at the end of the thesis.}

In 1938 Diemer became assistant in anatomy in the State University of Groningen under Prof. de Burlet, who espoused Nazi ideology. Diemer’s convictions led to increasing conflict with his superior, and eventually, influenced by Dooyeweerd, he resigned his position in 1943 in the midst of the German occupation of the Netherlands. Diemer wrote a strongly worded letter of resignation to Prof. de Burlet, stating his reasons for resigning. These included his protest on the basis of Christian conscience against the harsh treatment of fellow workers at the University and many other Dutchmen at the hands of the Nazis.\footnote{See the Appendix for a translation of this letter. This text was dated 17 January 1944, apparently some time after Diemer had resigned, since both Verbrugge and Dooyeweerd place his resignation in 1943. The text also has a summary of a conversation between Diemer and de Burlet.} From that time he became active in the underground resistance movement, arranging hiding places for refugees from the Nazis, and teaching anatomy in an underground “university” in Groningen for students in hiding. For this purpose he carried around with him a suitcase full of anatomical specimens.\footnote{Wilhelmina Diemer, the daughter of J H Diemer. Personal communication.}

In the winter of 1942-1943 he undertook a study of the problems of creation and miracle. Earlier in 1942 he had published an article on the meaning of the “days” of Genesis 1. He lectured on these topics at least twice. One of these lectures, given in

\footnote{“Association for Calvinistic Philosophy.” This organisation was founded in 1935 to encourage and support communal reflection on philosophical concerns from a Calvinist perspective. Its main periodical is \textit{Philosophia Reformata}.}
Utrecht on 20 May 1944, was reported with extensive notes of the ensuing discussion, a valuable resource for this study. This lecture had been presented previously to the Groningen branch of the “Vereniging voor Calvinistische Wijsbegeerte” on 18 February 1943, when it met with general approval.\textsuperscript{25}

The results of this research and lecturing were published in three major articles in 1943 and 1944. They deal with the Biblical material on miracles, a philosophical treatment, and a survey of the history of the concept of miracle from Augustine to the late 19th century. This survey remains incomplete since the concluding portion was seized when Diemer was arrested by the Nazis on January 24, 1945. After being held for a time in the prison in Groningen, he was taken to Germany on March 17. He was first held in the Neuengamme concentration camp, then in the middle of April taken to Sandborstel, a journey of a few hundred kilometres which took eight days. The last record of him notes his illness on May 10. He died in a British hospital after being liberated two months earlier, on April 29, 1945, although his death was not confirmed until 1948,\textsuperscript{26} and it was not until 1960 that his remains were discovered in a mass grave in Germany. They were reburied in Holland in the Cemetery of Honour at Loenen, on August 15, 1960.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{25} J Stellingwerff, Preface, \textit{Natuur en Wonder}. Cf. Lynn Boliek, “The integrity of faith,” p.62. “It was the particular contribution of J H Diemer to begin the study of the question of miracle in the light of the philosophy of the cosmonomic idea.” Boliek compares Diemer’s approach with that of Bultmann’s “demythologising” and shows that Diemer is able to avoid the humanistic nature-freedom polarity which leads Bultmann to his radical approach.


\textsuperscript{27} Wilhelmina Diemer, personal communication, and an anonymous Memorial article reprinted in \textit{Natuur en Wonder}.  

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Chapter Two

Creation

1. THE NATURE OF REALITY

Diemer’s concept of creation was built on the insights of Dooyeweerd and Vollenhoven. They saw that God had created things, with specific characteristics and individuality, subject to the laws established by God to govern the creation. The development of this insight led them to reject the scholastic concept of creation: the imposition of form by God onto formless matter. This form-matter dualism had plagued the work of Bavinck, Kuyper and Woltjer, and had blunted their biblically-reforming insights. This scholastic doctrine Diemer recognised as implicitly dualistic, both in the sense that matter or substance has a certain independence or eternal existence over against God; and in the sense that things in the world are composed of two radically different phenomena: an immaterial form and formless matter which has the form imposed upon it. The dominant theme in Diemer’s perspective on creation and miracle is his battle against the doctrine of substance with its implicit dualism.\textsuperscript{28}

Diemer admired greatly Augustine’s concept of creation, and saw him as a Christian thinker who strived for the truth, but who was always to a certain extent hindered by neo-Platonism. He especially critiques Augustine’s use of the idea of formless matter created by God, and identified by Augustine with the “formless and empty earth” of Genesis 1:2, which was later given form [Confessions 13:3].\textsuperscript{29}

In spite of this serious criticism, Diemer followed Augustine’s thought in developing his own view of creation, and although modifying it in many ways, he diverges very

\textsuperscript{29} J H Diemer, \textit{Wijsgerige biologie}, p. 61.
little from the framework established by Augustine. The major difference between them is this very doctrine of form and matter.

Diemer discusses the use of the word “matter” in a purely pre-theoretical sense, which he says is used in the Scriptures to mean any material which can be shaped into objects, such as clay, wood, marble, bronze and so on. These materials however all have their own specific structure; they are not simply variations of one basic “substance” or “matter.” In this pre-theoretical sense “matter” and “substance” refer to perceptible materials with specific analysable physico-chemical properties. These terms do not refer to the theological and philosophical concepts which have the same names. The use of these terms in a pre-theoretical sense to refer to actual things is acceptable, but their use in a theoretical or philosophical sense is a source of metaphysical speculation.30

Diemer interprets “matter” in this pre-theoretical sense to mean non-living material which is put in the service of higher powers. God did not create “matter” but individual things, including non-living material. In Genesis 2 when it refers to “matter” it means this non-living material from which God formed mankind.31 This idea of Diemer’s is assisted by an ambiguity in the Dutch Statenvertaling, in which Genesis 2:7 reads: “En de Here God had de mens geformeerd uit het stof der aarde en in zijn neusgaten geblazen den adem des levens, alzo werd de mens tot een levende ziel.” And in Genesis 3:19 we read: “In het zweet uws aanschijns zult gij brood eten, totdat gij tot de aarde wederkeert, dewijl gij daaruit genomen zijt: want gij zijt stof, en gij zult tot stof weder keren.” The use of the term “stof” to translate ‘aphar “dust,” is ambiguous. It is also used in theological and philosophical texts to mean “matter” in the sense of unformed substance. “Als de stof mede-eeuwige met God is, dan heeft God geen macht over haar; dan is de stof Hem heur aanzijn niet verschuldigd; dan staat ze naast Hem als evenknie…”32 It is not surprising that Diemer interprets the “stof” of Genesis 2-3 in this way, for Kuyper does the same.33

30 Ibid, p. 64.
32 A Kuyper, E Voto Dordraceno, I, p. 206. Translation: “If matter is co-eternal with God, then God has no power over it; then matter is not indebted to him for its existence; then it stands next to him as an equal…”
reject the term “matter” as it is used in science to mean the mass of concrete atoms each possessing an individuality structure. This he does because behind the theory of atoms he sees the philosophical atomism of Democritus, which understands the atoms to be quantities with mathematically-determined properties, lacking an internal structural principle. But from the end of the 19th century atoms were considered to be systems of electrically charged particles. Behind this view Diemer sees the idea of substance as the substrate for the phenomenon of atomic energy. This substrate is the concept of “power.”

From this basis Diemer critiques Woltjer’s view of created substance. He points out Woltjer’s inconsistency in speaking of God as the only true substance, and yet continuing to speak of “power-substance” in connection with atoms. Diemer rejects Woltjer’s “created substance” in favour of Dooyeweerd’s principle of individuality structures. God, says Diemer, did not create “matter” but “natural things.”

The correlate of matter in the doctrine of substance is the concept of form. It is the dynamic principle which realises the matter as a specific object. Bavinck and Kuyper both use the concept of form in their doctrines of creation. This form is identified with the reality of ideas, that is, ideas in the mind of God. Knowledge of the creation is then seen as “thinking God’s thoughts after him.” Diemer sees here an abolition of the principial difference between the Eternal Logos of God and the human temporal logos, and thus the boundary between Creator and creation is lost from sight. For Diemer the divine Logos is known only by God - it is his eternal wisdom through which all things are made. The created logos on the other hand is the order of creation.

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid, p. 64.
39 Ibid, p. 66.
Thinking must be predicated on belief in the objective existence of the truth and in man’s ability to come into possession of it. But this scientific truth cannot be the absolute truth, because the absolute truth, as Word-revelation, the incarnate Logos, is the foundation for scientific truth. The Christian who stands on a Calvinistic, that is, on a Biblical standpoint, and thus is mindful of the boundary between God and the creation, does not ask “What is truth?” - instead he asks “What is the truth about the creation?”

Using these ideas, which he calls a Christian world-view, Diemer develops what he calls the Calvinistic conception of totality structures. This refers to the structural principles of created things subject to the created temporal ordinances which determine their functioning. Analysis of these totality structures makes time known to us, as these structures do not remain outside of time but are created and then placed in time by God. Here Diemer makes a distinction between the human creation and the non-human creation. The latter is entirely within time and finds its unity in the created world-order. The human by implication finds its unity in eternity, in the uncreated logos.

The totality structures can be analysed in terms of a complex of functions or aspects. These aspects are irreducible and do not disappear when they come under the guidance of a higher aspect. This is possible because the lower aspects of things function also as objects with relation to higher aspects, and this object-function, in being taken up by the higher aspect for its own purposes, is not thereby itself destroyed. This is in direct opposition to Thomistic philosophy in which the “forms” of chemicals disappear when they are taken up by higher beings, and are absorbed into a “living form.” This reduces the chemical and other lower aspects to the biotic and frustrates analysis of the individuality structures and their coherence in the world-order.

Diemer stresses that the totality of created reality is a preformed order worked out through the subject. This subjective activity is directed to the completion of the divine

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world-order, although this subjectivity and order are to be distinguished.\textsuperscript{41} This totality structure is a system of ordinances which is the foundation for the temporal course of the world. This totality of ordinances is found in Christ.\textsuperscript{42}

For Diemer the creation is composed of things which have concrete structures and typical forms; a view developed as an alternative to the traditional dualism of form and matter. These things are subject to the laws of God for created reality. These laws are not the “scientific laws” but the decrees or ordinances of God which determine the structures and functions of things. The totality of these decrees comprises the created “world-order” which we call nature.\textsuperscript{43} But the ordinances are not separate from their subjects, although they may be distinguished. The laws are placed by the creator in his creatures. That is, individual creatures are a correlation of law and subject.\textsuperscript{44}

The objects of normative thinking are not immaterial ideas, but created natural things, which are subject to the laws established by God. These laws are not abstract ideas, which are divested of matter (Plato, Aristotle) but are concrete truths of God, eternal logical ideas which are worked out in creation by the Spirit in the wealth of individual diversities. All these truths are contained in the Logos; in Him the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily.\textsuperscript{45}

This then raises the problem of the nature and place of the Logos in Diemer’s thought, and to understand this complex concept we will need to assess the sources which influenced his thought in this respect.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{41} J H Diemer, \textit{Het totaliteitsbegrip in de biologie en de psychologie}, p. 28.
  \item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid, p. 29.
  \item \textsuperscript{43} J H Diemer, \textit{Nature and miracle}, II, p. 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{44} See H Dooyeweerd, \textit{A New Critique}, II, p. 8. This view of individuality structures in Dooyeweerd has been compared with Aristotle’s concept of immanent forms. Zigterman, \textit{Dooyeweerd’s theory of individuality structures}. Toronto: Institute for Christian Studies, 1970.
  \item \textsuperscript{45} J H Diemer, \textit{Christ and modern natural science}, p. 16.
\end{itemize}
2. THE LOGOS THEME

Diemer agrees with Augustine’s view of the laws of God for created things, namely that these laws are the concrete truths of God, eternal logical ideas which are worked out in the creation by the activity of the Spirit. These truths are contained in the Logos, Christ. 46 Thus the logical ideas which work themselves out in the things of creation are the eternal ideas in the mind of God; a conception Diemer arrived at, as did Bavinck and Kuyper, under the influence of Woltjer. Even after his study of Dooyeweerd’s Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee he still referred to the Logos as the Law to which all individuality structures are subject. 47 Creatures are created by God out of the inexhaustible richness of the Divine Logos and are subject to God’s law for their functioning in time. 48

The influence of Woltjer, who emphasised the unity of all things in the Logos, is evident in Diemer’s view of the order of creation as a logical order. Jan Woltjer, appointed in 1881 as Professor of philology (which included philosophy) at the Free University, is almost forgotten today in the Reformational movement. This neglect is largely because his thought, although reformational in spirit and seeking to be truly Biblical, was in fact still rigidly locked into the categories of Reformed scholasticism. 49

Woltjer saw the human logos as the image and likeness of the Divine Logos, whose ideas express themselves in the creation, and whose world-idea holds all things together and provides the basis of human knowing. For him, the study of the structure and mutual inter-relationships of creation (philosophy) was the study of the human

47 Ibid, p. 3.
49 However Woltjer’s influence should not be underestimated. His influence on Bavinck and Kuyper was profound and far-reaching, and their work cannot be fully understood without consideration of this influence. He has also exercised some influence on the next generation of Reformational thinkers, notably Diemer, as we shall see, and also Vollenhoven. Woltjer was Vollenhoven’s teacher both at the Amsterdam Christian Classical high school (Gymnasium) and at the Free University. Vollenhoven thought very highly of Woltjer, and may have taken up the study of the history of philosophy under his encouragement. Wolters, “Vollenhoven’s problem-historical method,” p. 233.
logos and its verbal expressions.\textsuperscript{50} It is then easy to see why Diemer quotes J Jeans approvingly when he says, “...the universe begins to look more like a great thought than a great machine.”\textsuperscript{51} For Diemer also the universe is a great thought - an idea planned in the mind of God, in Christ, the Logos. Diemer was also influenced by Woltjer’s logos-speculation indirectly through his study of the work of Bavinck and Kuyper, who were heavily indebted to Woltjer’s views.\textsuperscript{52}

BAVINCK

For Bavinck, the will of God is “the divine, immanent, eternal idea which spreads its fulness in the forms of space and time, and what is one for God is unfolded successively in length and breadth, for our limited eyes.”\textsuperscript{53} God gave shape to his eternal ideas, which were concentrated in the Logos, Christ the mediator of creation, through whom the ideas were concretised in creation. Bremmer points out Bavinck’s conscious affinity to Augustine’s Christianised Platonism,\textsuperscript{54} although Bavinck’s strong Trinitarian thought is more truly Biblical than Augustine’s Christianised doctrine of ideas.\textsuperscript{55}

These ideas can exist only in the mind of God, and do not have an objective, independent, metaphysical existence outside of God.\textsuperscript{56} Following Augustine’s neo-

\textsuperscript{52} Logos-speculation is the synthesis of the Biblical use of the “Logos” (word) for instance in John 1:1-3 and Revelation 19:13, which refer to Christ as the Word of God; the use of “logos” (among other terms) for the Word by which the creation was called into being, and by which it is constantly given order and structure; and the Stoic notion of a World Logos, the Platonic notion of an archetypal “idea,” and the Aristotelian notion of an immanent “form.” The end result is the identification of Christ with the world-order, which order is seen as a logical one. Therefore the deepest meaning of reality (and God’s being) is analytical in nature. A Wolters, “Theses on ‘Word of God’” \textit{Anakainosis} 6 (1984) no. 3, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{53} H Bavinck, \textit{Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing}, p. 54.
\textsuperscript{55} R H Bremmer, \textit{Bavinck als Dogmaticus}, p. 209.
Platonic thought, Bavinck sees the ideas as forms with aspects of both Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy. The forms are not only universal concepts which contain the types and shapes of things, but they are also the ideas of each individual thing which already exists or shall exist in time. Following Augustine, Bavinck says that things exist in rationes, in measure, number and weight. These things are foreknown by God (prognosis) and together form the manifestation (phanerosis) of His ideas. The universalia are in re because they existed ante rem in the divine consciousness.

We also recognise a unity, which connects and joins all the creation. But this unity does not lie for us in a cold, dead substance, but in the living God, the Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. It lies in his consciousness, in his will, in his decree. In the beginning there was not chaotic matter, unconscious power, irrational urge, but the conscious, spoken and even now speaking Word, that called all things into existence.

These concepts provide Bavinck with the foundation of his epistemology. The world exists, only because it has previously been conceived by God’s mind. Things exist because God has thought of them, and we can think of things, because they exist. Both being and knowing have their ratio in the Word by which God created all things.

KUYPER

Kuyper also emphasised the unity of creation and recreation in the eternal Word. Events find their unity in God’s eternal plan in which both creation and redemption

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57 H Bavinck, Christelijke Wereldbeschouwing, p. 54.
59 H Bavinck, Schepping of ontwikkeling, p. 28.
60 Ibid, p. 28. For more details concerning the thought of Kuyper and Bavinck concerning creation, see C Gousmett, “Bavinck and Kuyper on creation and miracle.”
are included.\textsuperscript{61} This emphasis remains in Diemer’s thought concerning the root of creation and re-creation, for instance in the idea of the unity of the diversity of the creation. This diversity, or abundance of temporal forms, finds its unity in the Word, in which is the fixed order of creation.\textsuperscript{62}

This eternal word is then revealed in time, and time only reflects what was decreed in eternity.\textsuperscript{63} Kuyper is also strongly Trinitarian in his emphasis on the involvement of each of the persons of the Trinity in the creation. Everything was planned by God the Father, which plan he then spoke forth by the Word, the Son, and after all things had been called into being through the Word, the Spirit leads them to their goal.\textsuperscript{64}

This work of the Spirit in developing created reality is associated with Kuyper’s emphasis on the organic character of creation. This organism contains the seeds of all things in potency and in an undifferentiated state.\textsuperscript{65}

Genesis 1:2 reveals first the creation of matter and its germs, then their quickening... [Through] the brooding [of the Holy Spirit] in Genesis 1:2, by which the formless took form, the hidden life emerged and the things created were led to their destiny.\textsuperscript{66}

The work of the Spirit is to develop these seeds into creatures, and is also the source of miracle: “the manifestation of a potency in creation leading to the completion and restoration of creation according to God’s purpose.”\textsuperscript{67} Kuyper sees each living creature as a combination of matter and organism. The organism develops in and gives form to matter, according to the counsel of the Father, by the activity of the Son,

\textsuperscript{61} P Steen, \textit{The structure of Herman Dooyeweerd’s thought}, p.40f.
\textsuperscript{65} P Steen, op. cit., p. 90.
\textsuperscript{67} A Kuyper, \textit{Dictaten Dogmatiek}, III, Locus de Providentia, p. 48.
the Word which contains the expression and the embodiment of the idea of God.\(^{68}\) The Word or Logos is the self-objectification of God’s consciousness.\(^{69}\) The divine thought is the expression of the divine essence. That is, God’s intellect is primary, so that his consciousness determines his being. Therefore Kuyper says that God can be said to exist logically, since his life is fully included in the Logos. The decree of God is the result of his wisdom, which is a result of his thought. This decree or divine counsel is then identical to the Logos. This knowledge of God encompasses all things that exist, and these therefore owe their existence to the fact that they are known by God.\(^{70}\) Therefore the existence of all things can be seen to be primarily logical, they owe their existence to their relationship to the divine Logos.

This relationship to the Word or Logos is seen by Kuyper as the logos within each thing which gives it its individuality. This individual form is manifest when the organism unfolds itself in matter. This matter is not eternal, but Kuyper has difficulty in explaining its relationship to the Creator.

**THE CREATOR-CREATION RELATIONSHIP**

As a result of his dependence on Woltjer’s views, both directly and indirectly through the thought of Bavinck and Kuyper, Diemer also has difficulty in explaining the relation of the creation to the Creator in a way which preserves the distinction between the two. The problem with logos-speculation is that it establishes an ontological link between God and the creation. The way in which this arises is clearly apparent in the way Woltjer develops his view of the world-order.

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68 In his article on the Sabbath, Rev N Diemer also stresses the organic bond between God and the creation as expressed through the Logos. The purpose of the creation is to glorify God. These two themes show the clear influence of Kuyper’s thought, which is not surprising since Rev Diemer studied theology under Kuyper at the Free University (See above, p. 14.) No doubt Harry Diemer learned much of his Kuyperian perspective from his father.


70 Ibid, p. 155.
Woltjer’s idea-realism (which appears also in Bavinck and Kuyper as a result of his influence)\textsuperscript{71} attempts to construct the temporal world-order through the “analogia entis.” This can only be done by means of human reason\textsuperscript{72} since the “analogia entis” assumes the legitimacy and primacy of a theoretical approach to its ontology, which encompasses both Creator and creation.\textsuperscript{73}

This neo-Platonic tradition is characterised by the idea of a “great chain of being,” the cosmic hierarchy of different grades of ousia. God is defined as the highest grade of “being” (summum ens) and “being” itself, as both “substance” and “essence,” and is defined as the objective correlate of rationality.\textsuperscript{74}

According to Vollenhoven, logos speculation constructs a close connection between human thought and Christ, the Word or Logos of God. This Logos of God is the same as the Word which was spoken in creation (Genesis 1) and after the fall came as the mediator, the redeemer of our life, all our life, and thus also of our analytical thought. Thus logical thought cannot take an exceptional position - it is both included in redemption, and on a par equally with all other aspects of thought and life. There is no special connection between the mediator and our thought, a connection which in

\textsuperscript{71} As Dooyeweerd and Klapwijk point out, Woltjer had a significant influence on Kuyper’s view of science with respect to the doctrine of the Logos. This was associated with idea-realism founded in Augustinian idea-realism. Woltjer was convinced that his Logos doctrine was completely in conformity with Calvinism, and sought his point of departure in Scripture and the thought of Calvin. Woltjer was much less antithetically inclined than Kuyper, (W Young, \textit{Towards a Reformed Philosophy}, p 94.) and thus his approach to both ancient and contemporary philosophy was more positive. He was optimistic that “philosophy and science nowadays converge to the conception of the Christian faith.” Klapwijk, op. cit., pp. 542-3. Cf. Dooyeweerd, “Kuypers wetenschapsleer,” p. 208. Jager sees the influence of idealism in Kuyper’s view of history as the revelation in time of what is eternal. \textit{Het Eeuwige Leven}, p. 202. Kuyper says that eternity is the root of time. \textit{Dictaten Dogmatiek}, II, \textit{Locus de creatione}, p. 25-26.

\textsuperscript{72} H Dooyeweerd, “Kuyper’s wetenschapsleer,” p. 207.

\textsuperscript{73} G Vandervelde, “Theses on Analogia Entis”, \textit{Anakainosis}, 1:2, January 1979, p.3.

logos-speculation is always more intimate than that between the mediator-redeemer and the other functions of human life.\textsuperscript{75}

The idea of the “degrees of reality” in the doctrine of the “analogia entis” means that something is more or less real in so far as it closely resembles the idea of the thing. This derives from Augustine’s doctrine of the “lex aeterna” which tried to accommodate the neo-Platonic idea of world-order to the Scriptural teaching about God’s creative will.\textsuperscript{76} As a result of making use of these ideas, Woltjer cannot do justice to either the goodness of creation or the radical character of sin and redemption.\textsuperscript{77} This reductionistic view distorts the biblical perspective on the order of creation. But this view is by no means unique to Diemer and Woltjer. It is one with a long history.

There is a classical tradition which regards order and system as predominantly logical in nature. In this tradition we do not use the word logical simply to mean “orderly” in a sense quite distinct from what the word logical means when it refers to properties of successful inference. Rather, what we have here is a logicistic view of order.\textsuperscript{78}

As a result, order viewed from a logical standpoint means that it must have the same properties as analytical procedure for it to be orderly. Order and the orderly way of discovering order are conflated. Thinking produces order where otherwise there would be no order, and the relations within the creation are seen as logical relations. Likewise, structure is seen as logical structure.\textsuperscript{79} Both logos-speculation and the analogia entis are seen by Dooyeweerd to be a logicising of the cosmos, looking at the

\textsuperscript{75} D H Th Vollenhoven, \textit{De Noodzakelijkheid eener Christelijke Logica}, p. 1-2. Cf. \textit{Christ and modern natural science}, p. 12, where Diemer says “...the Word, that the OT presents to us as creating, is the Logos, who comes to us in the NT as redeemer.”

\textsuperscript{76} H Dooyeweerd, “Kuypers wetenschapsleer,” p. 215; G Vandervelde, op. cit. Young goes as far as to say that Woltjer’s \textit{Ideal and real} “is to be numbered among the classics of Augustinian philosophy.” W Young, op. cit., p. 79.

\textsuperscript{77} G Vandervelde, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{78} H Hart, \textit{Understanding our world}, p. 28.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid, p. 29.
cosmos as if it were a concept, a unity within the diversity.\textsuperscript{80} The diversity of created things is a diversity within the Logos, and can only be of a logical nature.

Diemer denies that the creation order has an “eternal reality” and thus it is not an “idea of God,” and it cannot be grasped by human thought,\textsuperscript{81} which is oriented to the objectivity of this order, in the figure of Christ.\textsuperscript{82} God’s knowledge however is a unity above time, and his knowledge of the world is simultaneous and taken as a whole.\textsuperscript{83} Human knowledge on the other hand is temporal, and separates events into cause and effect, before and after. Because of this difference between divine and human knowledge, the creation is seen as a sequence of separate acts by us, whereas for God it is seen as a coherent whole or unity. This coherent whole is the “real” while the separation is only apparent. Likewise the decree of God is a whole; it is not, unlike human decision-making, separated into setting a goal and planning means to achieve that goal.\textsuperscript{84}

Human ideas are restricted to time. The logos of each creature is objectively within it, not as the actual forming principle, but as a passive potentiality which is activated by human analytical thought. Human ideas are thus a diversity, since they do not grasp everything at once. God however sees everything as a unity and is not restricted to time. God, then, according to Diemer, does not “think,” which is a temporal activity, but has eternal creative wisdom.\textsuperscript{85}

But even in his rejection of what he calls a “speculative metaphysics” Diemer uses that same metaphysical framework. An idea is a “possible event that a self-conscious being sees before itself.”\textsuperscript{86} God’s Idea is his world-plan, his inscrutable counsel. This

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\textsuperscript{80} P Steen, op. cit., p. 186. \\
\textsuperscript{81} J H Diemer, \textit{Wijsgerige biologie}, p. 66. \\
\textsuperscript{82} J H Diemer, \textit{Het Totaliteitsbegrip}, p. 29. Cf. \textit{Christ and modern natural science}, p. 20. “Not for a moment can the logical subject withdraw itself from the sovereignty of the norms without sinning. And these norms are all in the Logos, in Christ.” \\
\textsuperscript{83} J H Diemer, \textit{Nature and miracle}, p. 1. \\
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{85} J H Diemer, \textit{Wijsgerige biologie}, p. 67. \\
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid, p. 66-67.
\end{flushright}
counsel is a connected totality of Ideas, the world-event which God sees before himself in his Son, before he called the world into being. It is thus an eternal, uncreated idea. Since the revelation of the meaning of the cosmos and its relation to God is encompassed by the Logos, the image of God, then mankind, created in that image, can come to know reality by self-consciousness.

Steen points out that Dooyeweerd and S. G. De Graaf, as well as Diemer, have the same emphasis on Christ as the new root of creation, which seems to indicate that Christ is the ontic ground for creation, and the only possibility for its existence. That is, the structures of creation which come into being in time are first of all created in Christ, and then these created structures are manifest in the temporal order. In this way an ontological link, similar to that of logos-speculation, is forged between God and the cosmos. For both Dooyeweerd and Diemer, Christ is the new root not only of the human race (according to his human nature) but also the new root of the cosmos. This root is a root unity, the totality of meaning, the religious fullness of meaning, and the consummation of meaning.

For Dooyeweerd, as for Diemer, Christ, the new root of the cosmos, is the religious fullness of meaning. This religious fullness of meaning is a transcendent created foundation for reality embodied in Christ. It is a created foundation because it is not eternal, but formed in Christ “in the beginning.” However, since it is formed within God, it is difficult to maintain its created character, and the suspicion of “analogia entis” arises in connection with Diemer’s ideas, and possibly also with Dooyeweerd’s. The idea of a transcendent created foundation for reality is related to Dooyeweerd’s view that meaning is the being of what is, so that the meaning of creation in Christ as its religious root is therefore the “being” of creation in Christ as its divine origin.

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87 P Steen, op. cit., p. 205.
89 Ibid, I, p. 4; II, p. 25.

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Meaning...cannot exist by itself but presupposes an Arche, an origin which creates meaning. All meaning is from, through and to an origin, which can not itself be related to a higher Arche.  

It is important for Dooyeweerd that the Origin of meaning lies beyond time. Meaning is the convergence of all temporal aspects of existence into one supra-temporal focus, which is the religious root of creation, Christ. The religious fullness of meaning in Christ as the new root of creation is not an abstract “Idea” but a fullness of reality. Dooyeweerd sees reality converging in Christ as its supra-temporal root, as the reverse image of his idea of time as a refraction law, which splits up the fullness of meaning in the root into its temporal diversity.

Dooyeweerd seeks to defend his view from the charge of “meaning-idealism” by stressing that there is no created reality without meaning and that there is no meaning without created reality. Thus meaning and reality are not separable from each other. “Meaning” cannot exist in itself, neither can reality exist without meaning. This would be a variety of form-matter dualism, which Dooyeweerd rejects. “Meaning” for Dooyeweerd is only the creaturely mode of being under the law, consisting exclusively of the religious dependence on God.

Dooyeweerd’s view was that philosophy should be guided by the idea of the totality of meaning. The direction of philosophical thought to the totality of meaning is based on critical self-reflection. However the selfhood is also for Dooyeweerd the concentration point for all human functions; it is itself a subjective totality, one which transcends all philosophical concepts. So Dooyeweerd distinguishes between a concept which is amenable to analysis, and an idea, which is not open to exhaustive analysis.

93 Ibid, II, p. 31.
94 Ibid, I, p. 5.
95 Ibid, I, p. 8; II, p. 4.
An idea is a “limiting concept” which refers to a totality not able to be itself comprehended in the concept. This idea is without content unless a thinker chooses a standpoint in the totality of meaning of the temporal cosmos. In doing this, the selfhood participates in the totality of meaning so an idea of this totality is possible in theoretical thought. The standpoint chosen, which must transcend the specialty of meaning of the modal aspects, so as to be able to view the totality of the coherence of all aspects, is called the Archimedean point. In discovering this Archimedean point, the selfhood also discovers the Arche or origin of both the totality and the specialty of meaning. Therefore Dooyeweerd argues that the basic tendency of philosophic thought is to be directed towards the origin. Diemer, using Dooyeweerd’s distinction between idea and concept, argues that the totality idea is a Calvinist-philosophical thought. Diemer interprets this totality-idea as the origin of all things in the Word and their unity and integrality in the divine world-plan. All philosophical concepts are oriented to this Idea.

Steen sees the emphasis on the unity of creation and re-creation in Kuyper’s thought to be influenced by neo-Platonism, as well as his ideas on God’s eternity and the unity of events in God’s eternal plan. Prior to 1928 Dooyeweerd also found the unity of creation in the providential world-plan or eternal counsel of God. For Dooyeweerd, unity, totality, fullness and consummation are supra-temporal, not given within cosmic time, but rather they are found in the eternal mind and counsel of God. However the emphasis is now placed on a philosophic, theoretical unity. This same view of the unity, totality and fullness of creation is found in Diemer.

Steen calls this view of the oneness of all things in Christ a theo-ontological position, which attempts to include God, who calls reality into being, in an ontology or theoretical analysis of reality. In theo-ontological views, God becomes the sumnum

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97 Ibid.
99 J H Diemer, Het Totaliteitsbegrip, p. 29.
100 P Steen, op. cit., p. 40-1.
101 Ibid, p. 159.
ens or highest level of being. In this way the boundary between God and creation is lost from view, since there is a continuity between the nature of God and the nature of created reality. In a theo-ontological position nature and grace are one, common grace is rooted in Christ, and creation is consummated in redemption, the goal of creation according to the eternal counsel. The creation is integral and radical because Adam was the integral and radical root. Therefore, the fall was integral and radical, Christ is integral and radical, and Word-revelation is integral and radical. God deals directly and immediately with the integral and radical root because he is never subject to time or diversity of law. He created, directs and re-directs the whole temporal cosmos in all its diversity of laws and subjects, by creating, directing and redirecting immediately the created root unity of the created cosmos.103 The new root eclipses the old root which proved to be only temporary.104

In the first root, Adam, under the law of love, was comprehended the fullness, totality and unity of all reality which was to become, generate, differentiate, and unfold. God created the fullness, totality and unity of the creation “in the beginning.” This could not happen in time because God is not subjected to the diversity of laws and to time. In the root unity, totality and fullness of subject, under the root unity, totality and fullness of law, all that was created was present and finished. Time itself was comprehended in this totality of creation. Therefore, God’s creative act could not be in time since time itself presupposes the finished total creation of the root unity, fullness and totality of creation.105 For Diemer, then, creation of the root unity and totality was outside of time. It took place “in the beginning,” which Diemer identifies with Christ, the Word or Logos of God.

103 Ibid, p. 189. See for instance Nature and miracle, II, p. 44, where Diemer says “The human race is in origin a fundamental communion within which the order of nature is included. Before the fall this community was religiously rooted in the law of God; after the fall this communion is revealed anew in Christ in its original perfection. In Him lies the totality of natural reality which cannot be isolated from the human race. The antithesis of natural versus supernatural falls away for in Christ nature (fallen on its subjective side) is restored to its original state. Creation and recreation are one.”


3. CREATION IN THE WORD

Diemer sees creation as the act of God by which the entire temporal world-order is brought into being. Within this world-order are enclosed all the possibilities for realisation of various things in time. Everything has its origin in the act of creation: nothing new in principle appears in time which was not present in the act of creation as a possibility. These principles of order or structure cannot be reduced to earlier structures. That is, the appearance in time of something new in principle is the result of the subjective realisation of a previously unrealised created possibility, and not the modification of principles of order or structure which have previously been realised.  

Diemer stresses the need to distinguish the subjective realisation of the creation order from the order itself. This is the distinction between law and subject worked out in detail by Dooyeweerd in his philosophy. The “law” is the order for the creation, and a “subject” is an individual entity which is subjected to that law. The law governs the subject, and the subject cannot exist apart from the law, which provides the conditions for its existence. Both law and subject exist in constant correlation; they cannot exist apart from each other. They come into being concurrently.

However, Diemer talks of a pre-formed order in a way that Dooyeweerd would never do. He constantly refers to the creation “in the beginning,” and understands this to be a creation in the Word. This Word is identical with Christ, the Word who is God. God has his design for the world before him from eternity in this Word, in which the minutest detail of the creation is prescribed. From this prescription of all things in the Word comes the act of creation. This creation in the Word is then the root of all things. It is a created totality which contains every potential being within it, a preformed order which is worked out in time by the subjective activity of the whole creation, directed to the fulfilling of this world-order.

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109 J H Diemer, Het Totaliteitsbegrip, p. 28.
But God never works outside the root of nature. He created the orders by his Word and enclosed them in the Word as the root from which his Spirit brings forth the multiplicity of individual creatures in the course of time.¹¹⁰

Steen identifies the idea of a pre-formed order in Diemer as neo-realism, an ideal pre-existence of the created in God’s spirit. He traces it to Diemer’s dependence on Augustine’s view of creation.¹¹¹ For Diemer, Christ is the root of creation within which the all-embracing totality of heaven and earth lies hidden before the beginning of the six-day creation act.¹¹² This follows Augustine’s view of creation and is developed in the same way. From the created totality enclosed in the Word all things are driven forth by the action of the Word and the Spirit.¹¹³

Diemer uses the idea of the root of creation to demonstrate the unity, the integral character of the creation. It is opposed to the idea of a nature-grace dualism.¹¹⁴ Diemer sees the highest idea which a Christian thinker can attain to be “the idea of this unity, of this totality-integrality of the creation in the divine world-order. In this idea the unity of the being was considered to be in God.”¹¹⁵ Created reality is therefore bound together in the unity of the world order, and this unity expresses itself equally in all the aspects of reality.

In his review of a book by J Kalma, Diemer states his agreement with Kalma’s contention that “the beginning” of reality lies neither in a transcendental idea (idealism) nor in an eternal repetition (naturalism). Diemer sees this beginning in a different way to Kalma, however. The beginning for Diemer is the divine world-order in Christ. This order is not to be separated from the Creator, or from mankind, or from logical thought, or from the temporal becoming process. The order for temporal

¹¹¹ P Steen, op. cit., p. 101, also n. 86.
reality is a created whole.\textsuperscript{116} This created world order was how ever present in the
divine Word in the beginning as a fulness of ordinances, which are accomplished in
time by the Divine Will.\textsuperscript{117} The totality-structure of temporal reality is the system of
ordinances which provides the foundation for all that is.

But when we examine Diemer’s view of time, we again find the influence of
Augustine, as well as that of Bavinck and Kuyper. This influence is most noticeable in
his distinction between the creation of all things in the beginning, as a divine supra-
temporal world order in Christ, and the appearance of created things within time.

4. “IN THE BEGINNING”

When we turn to Diemer’s views on time, the most obvious and frequent feature we
are confronted with is his view of the beginning. Diemer has a complicated view of
the nature of this beginning. He follows the ideas of Augustine, who makes a
distinction between the creation “in the beginning,” and the appearance of things in
time. Augustine interprets the phrase “in the beginning” to mean that all things were
made by God through his Wisdom or Word, and says that this Word is called “the
beginning” in Scripture, referring to John 8:25. They (the Jews) said to him, “Who are
you ?” Jesus said to them, “Even what I have told you from the beginning.\textsuperscript{118} In
another place Augustine, referring to this same text, says “Therefore, when the Jews
asked him who he was, he answered that he was the Principle.”\textsuperscript{119} That is, he was the
Beginning, following the Vetus Latina translation of the LXX of Genesis 1:1 “In
principio.”

Augustine says that when we read in Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God made heaven
and earth, it means that the Father created the heavens and the earth in the Son.
Augustine also refers to Psalm 104:24 to demonstrate this, for it says “O Lord, how
manifold are thy works, in Wisdom thou hast made them all...” Augustine identifies

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{116} Philosophia Reformata 7 (1942) No. 2, p. 64.
  \item \textsuperscript{117} Letter to the Editor, De Standaard, 1939.
  \item \textsuperscript{118} Augustine, City of God, 11:32.
  \item \textsuperscript{119} Ibid, 11:24.
\end{itemize}
this Wisdom with the Word, who is Christ\textsuperscript{120} based on passages like 1 Cor 1:24,30, combined with Proverbs 8:22-31.\textsuperscript{121}

Diemer also identifies the “in the beginning” of Genesis 1:1 with Christ, and as a result, it becomes impossible to treat the beginning as a temporal reality. The act of creation is then in fact of a supra-temporal nature, outside of time, taking place “in the Word.” Therefore Diemer stresses that it is impossible to see the act of creation taking place in time. Following Augustine, he says that creation does not take place in time but with time.\textsuperscript{122}

For Diemer the “beginning” is the absolute beginning of time, but it is not itself a specific moment in time. This “beginning” encompasses the entire temporal duration and temporal order of the cosmos. The creation could not have taken any time to occur, that is, to occur within time, since the creation is the establishment of the temporal order. Therefore the creation in the “beginning” transcends both time and cosmos.\textsuperscript{123}

The distinction between duration and order is derived from Dooyeweerd, who saw order as the law side and duration as the subject side of time. The order of the law-side is the temporal order of succession or simultaneity, which is constant. The subject-side is the experience of duration which differs for various individuals, although the two sides are constant correlata and may not be separated. They cannot exist apart from each other.\textsuperscript{124}

If creation had occurred within time it would be subject to temporal duration, and thus the law-side would be subjected to the subject-side. However Diemer does not

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{120} Ibid, 11:32.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{121} On Christian Doctrine, 1:34:38; Confessions, 7:21:27; On Faith and the Creed, 4:6; On the Trinity, 1:4:10, 1:12:24. Cf. City of God 17:20. Diemer identifies the Word by which the heavens and the earth were created with Christ, the power and wisdom of God, the same way Augustine did. Nature and miracle, II, p. 1.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{122} J H Diemer, The “days” of the creation story, p. 3.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{123} J H Diemer, 20 Theses, p. 9.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{124} H Dooyeweerd, A New Critique, I, p. 28.}
indicate how a temporal order can be established outside of time but not correlated immediately with temporal duration. He seems to hold to a view of a law which lacks a subject, contrary to Dooyeweerd’s position.\textsuperscript{125} This then strengthens his view that the root of creation, in which are enclosed all the structures which will come into being in time, is independent of the creation. Here his neo-realist position exercises a powerful influence (See below, p. 69f).

Diemer’s views do not deal adequately with the biblical account of God’s creation acts during the six days. The identification of the origin of the cosmos in the beginning with the work of the six days means that all creation acts are subsumed under the “beginning,” which strictly speaking is only the origin of the unadorned cosmos. Those things created during the six days came into being as the result of the establishment of the law-order (law-side) for these things within time. It is only with the end of the six days that the creation acts of God cease. He was still creating new things within time prior to the end of the sixth day.

Diemer rejects the idea of a creatio continua understood as a continuously progressing deed of creation within cosmic time, as this involves a distension of the creation act “in the beginning” so that things even now are being created de novo. He sees creatio continua as the work of providence by which God maintains what he created on the six “days.” But this creatio continua can not be separated from the creatio de novo of all things “in the beginning” - both take place not in the subject side of time (duration) but in the law-side (order).\textsuperscript{126}

The unfolding of the work of creation in providence takes place in the temporal order, so that the appearance of created things in time is the subject side of developments on the law-side which transcend time.\textsuperscript{127} Thus providence and creation are both supra-temporal. The only way this paradox in Diemer’s thought can be explained is to see it in the light of his view of the root of creation in which all events take place.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid, II, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{126} J H Diemer, \textit{20 Theses}, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid, p. 10.
Diemer sees the human faith function as bound to time on the subject side, that is, to duration. It is unable to comprehend the law side, or temporal order, of the cosmos. This law-side has however been revealed to us in terms of our subject side in the Scriptures. Thus Diemer sees the days of creation, which establish the law order of the cosmos, to be outside our grasp, but revealed to us in a temporal framework so that we can attain to an understanding of this law-order in faith.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid, p. 9.
5. THE “DAYS” OF GENESIS 1

The days of creation in Genesis 1 are then not temporal but supra-temporal. Time according to Diemer, as with Augustine, commences with the completion of the creation act at the end of the sixth day, so that the first “day” of created time is the rest-day of God. Both Diemer and Augustine are forced to this position by their view of creation “in the beginning” as meaning a creation “in the Word.” Therefore the creation acts of the six days of Genesis 1 also take place “in the Word” and not within the temporal order.

The six days of creation remain with the creation continually. Since they were days of an other than temporal character, which took place in the root of creation in the beginning, they have not passed by in the course of history so as to be no longer present with us. The creation days are neither long nor short, since they are supra-temporal.129

Because they are not lengths of time which succeed one another sequentially in cosmic time they cannot be separated from one another. The days are absolute moments of beginning; that is, there was no created time prior to their existence. These absolute moments of beginning are each the beginning of a particular creation norm, and they reveal a facet of the first beginning which encompasses the whole creation. The “days” enclose everything that will come into being in the unfolding process of cosmic time.130

The order of the creation is revealed under the framework of six “days” which show us the temporal arrangements of the created world. This is so that we can see the relationship of the temporal arrangements of the world to the totality, the root in which the cosmos is enclosed, which came into being “at the beginning.” That is, the relation between individual temporal things and the supra-temporal totality in which they were enclosed is the same as the relation between the “days” which reveal the temporal arrangements of the world and the “beginning” in which the “days” are

129  J H Diemer, Nature and miracle, p. 3.
130  Ibid.
enclosed.\textsuperscript{131} This “beginning,” that is, the totality or all-embracing whole, is still with us, as are the “days,” the fundamental structures of the various realms, which are the unfolding of the totality. The “days” are spiritually discerned, they are the beginning of a new structure in the temporal order, and thereby give a new completeness to temporal duration.\textsuperscript{132}

Since he sees the days of creation not as moments of time but as principles of order, this order is not within time but eternal. Thus Diemer rejects the idea that the “days” can be temporal since they would then have passed by in the course of time, consequently the days would no longer be present, and neither would there be any order.

The completeness of the abiding creation order does not change, but its appearance in time is a changing phenomenon; it is the unfolding in time of what is present in the supra-temporal order. Therefore as soon as new creatures appear in time they are related to all other creatures which have come to be in the unfolding of time; their relationships were already established in the supra-temporal order of creation. The six days are then the placing in time of the creation order.\textsuperscript{133}

Therefore Diemer sees the development of individual creatures in the course of cosmic time as the appearance of the supra-temporal creation structure. The days are always present in this development of the specific creatures, as is the beginning always present in the totality and fullness of God’s plan.\textsuperscript{134} Thus development is the work of providence. It is the bringing to completion of the powers and possibilities of the creation which are enclosed in the created whole.\textsuperscript{135}

Diemer’s view of the creation of everything in the beginning as a totality, and the appearance of creatures in time as the development of their structures which are included in this totality, laid down in the six days, is worked out in detail in his view

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid, p. 3-4.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid, p. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid, p. 13.
of biological types. The beginning of a new phylum of plants or animals is an absolute beginning, since it is based in creation, the absolute beginning of all things. This beginning is then not an abstract dateable moment but the created typical fundamental structure with which the phylum appears in time.

This appearance of a new phylum is not the result of a supernatural intervention by God in an independent creation, but the driving out from the root of creation that which is enclosed in it by the act of creation. It is the manifestation in time of what lies enclosed in the supra-temporal root of creation; the disclosure, within constant created structures, of the potential established by God, by means of the subjective activity of individual creatures. The new structure has its place in the order of the whole, which was planned from the beginning. This plan covers the entire temporal order. Therefore the appearance of new things is simply the manifestation of what was already there in an undisclosed state.

The spontaneous appearance and disappearance of various groups of creatures in time is an argument against evolution for Diemer. There is a lack of transitional forms between the various groups of creatures, as well as of common progenital forms for related types. That is, the various groups cannot be reduced to a common source. He stresses that while there may be an apparent convergence of ancestral series backwards in time, this convergence never crosses certain boundaries. There is no common source; the series remain distinct from each other no matter how far back they are traced. Some species arise seemingly from nowhere, and then we see further development of the varieties in the type. This development works out the possibilities of the basic type while retaining the fundamental framework. The end result of this development is the exhausting of possibilities in the growth and maturity of the series of developments. After this individual forms become so variable that the typical boundaries of species are difficult to establish. In this stage of development many pathological symptoms become evident. The spontaneity of the appearance of

137 Ibid, p. 5.
139 Ibid.
new types of creatures is the miracle of creation. That is, what is new cannot be reduced to what came earlier.\textsuperscript{140}

The miracle of creation lies in the spontaneous appearance of the structural principles within which the generations of creatures pass and through which the existence of these creatures becomes possible. Every structure founded in creation is a new beginning and is always present as the constant order in the changing genetic relationships so long as the species continues to exist on earth. Consequently, the miracle of creation is present also.\textsuperscript{141}

Diemer denies the validity of evolution when this is considered to be the appearance of structures new in principle which have no foundation in the creation order established in the beginning. Evolution is only on the basis of creation; it cannot take place without it. Diemer’s emphasis on evolution as a possibility solely on the basis of creation was no doubt influenced by Bavinck, who developed the same idea in his \textit{Schepping of ontwikkeling}.\textsuperscript{142}

Far from development thus standing over against creation, there remains no choice between creation with the abundant development on the one hand, and mechanistic connection through the accident of a host of similar atoms on the other hand. Development thus stands in between origin and culmination; it leads them under God’s providence from the first to the last, and brings to unfolding all the richness of beings and living things, which God gave existence through creation.\textsuperscript{143}

Every new phylum of plants or animals has an absolute beginning, that is, one founded in the (supra-temporal) creation order. This “beginning” then is not the temporal moment when a new phylum appears, but the created typical fundamental

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{142} See especially pp. 39-42.
\textsuperscript{143} H Bavinck, \textit{Schepping of ontwikkeling}, p. 40-41.
structure. Without these typical structures no evolution can take place, since everything that appears in time does so within certain structures. That is, it is the appearance of certain possibilities within the potential and the limits set by these typical structures. The different structures of the law-order determine the characteristics of species. They are not reducible to each other. Diemer sees this as evidence for the works of God in creation; the appearance of new things in time is based on the original creation “in the beginning.”

Diemer describes the continuing presence of the days of creation as the continued speaking of the Word by which all things were made in the six days. It “was in no way silenced when this work was finished. The Word can be heard to the end of time as it supports all things by its power and wisdom.” This Word is the root in which all individual creatures are enclosed as structural principles. These structural principles are always present in creation as the constant order for the relationships which undergo change in time; and so the miracle of creation is continually present also.

In order to gain some insight into Diemer’s view, it is necessary to outline the way Augustine interpreted the “days.” Diemer explicitly follows Augustine’s interpretation in this regard, referring to Augustine almost every time he discusses the meaning of the “days.” Augustine understood the creation of the world to have taken place not over six days, or any other actual period of time, but instantaneously. This idea was characteristic of the Alexandrian school of theology (Basil, Origen, Clement). The “six days” of Genesis 1 were, according to Augustine, six simultaneous moments of revelation for the angels, in which God explained the

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145 Ibid, p. 4-5.
146 Ibid, p. 7.
147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
149 Ibid, p. 10.
creation to them.\textsuperscript{151} In these moments of revelation, the angels understand the eternal reasons of created things, that is, that which is spoken eternally in the Word by the Father; and the nature of each created thing as it is in itself. The angels also praise the Creator after they have understood these things in their moments of revelation.

These moments of revelation were simultaneous, as God created all things simultaneously. Augustine saw this view in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, 18:1, “He who lives in eternity created all things simultaneously.” That is, God who lives outside of time, created things simultaneously in time.\textsuperscript{152} The purpose of the six days is not to show the passing of time but to show that God maintained a certain order in creating, even if it was simultaneous. It is therefore correct to say, according to Augustine, that one creature is made before another, even though they were created simultaneously, because one creature is prior to another in order.\textsuperscript{153} The creation could not have taken time to occur since time is a characteristic of the development of creatures and not of their creation.

Creation, therefore, did not take place slowly in order that a slow development might be imparted in those things that are slow by nature, nor were ages established at the plodding pace at which they now pass. Time brings about the development of these creatures according to the law of their numbers, but there was no passage of time when they received these laws at creation. Otherwise, if we think that, when they were first created by the Word of God, there were processes of nature with the normal duration of days that we know, those creatures that shoot forth roots and clothe the earth would need not one day but many to germinate beneath the ground, and then a certain number of days, according to their natures, to come forth from the ground; and

\textsuperscript{151} M M Gorman, “The unknown Augustine,” p. 2.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid, p. 133. This Latin translation of Ecclesiasticus 18:1 reads “simul” for the LXX “koine,” which should however be understood as “commonly, without exception.” A more accurate translation would be: “He who lives for ever created the whole universe.” J H Taylor, \textit{The Literal Meaning}, Vol 1, p. 254, n.69.

\textsuperscript{153} Ibid, p. 133.
the creation of vegetation, which the Scripture places in one day, namely the third, would have been a gradual process.\textsuperscript{154}

Augustine’s idea of time is intrinsically related to his concept of created reality, which is basically motion from one state to another. Since motion or change of state must take place in time, then when creatures began to exist, time began.

With the motion of creatures, time began to run its course. It is idle to look for time before creation, as if time can be found before time. If there were no motion of either a spiritual or corporeal creature, by which the future moving through the present would succeed to the past, there would be no time at all. A creature could not move if it did not exist.\textsuperscript{155}

Since creation took place outside of time, then it was not a change from one state to another, such as from an unformed chaos of matter to an ordered world. It is on the contrary an order of causality.\textsuperscript{156}

But we must not suppose that unformed matter is prior in time to things that are formed; both the thing made and the matter from which it was made were created together.\textsuperscript{157}

However, Diemer critiques Augustine’s view that the order of creation has a realistic nature, since such a view can only be tied to a form-matter dualism. That is, the order of creation is seen to be real apart from the manifestation of that order in time. The ideas or laws which make up that order are considered to exist independently of the temporal order, in the decree of God. Thus creatures are a combination of both the eternal idea and the matter in which that idea comes to expression. It is this kind of dualism that Diemer constantly battles against, and which he largely overcame in the idea of individuality structures. This is the philosophical expression of the biblical

\textsuperscript{154} Augustine, \textit{The Literal Meaning}, 4:33:52.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid, 5:5:12.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid, 5:5:13.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid, 1:15:29.
idea that God creates things, not matter on which form is later imposed. The Augustinian conception was that the order of creation is comprehended in God’s Word. In neo-Platonic fashion Augustine saw the ideal forms of Plato as having an eternal existence in the mind of God.\footnote{M J McKeough, \textit{The meaning of the rationes seminales in Saint Augustine}, p. 23.} God, contemplating the ideas, created all things ex nihilo by an act of his will as seminal reasons (which bring material things into being out of formless matter) in the likeness of these eternal ideas.\footnote{T Buford, “The idea of creation in Plato, Augustine and Brunner,” p. 182.} These seminal reasons, (seeds or causes of the nature of created things) have form only in so far as they are dependent on the ideas in the mind of God. These eternal ideas are the Wisdom of God or the Word of God,\footnote{Ibid, p. 184.} and not simply ideas similar in nature to Platonic forms.

For Augustine God works through the seminal reasons, but the conception of seminal reasons as the real order of nature gives this order an autonomy, which has a certain independence over against God. As Diemer expressed this, nature is cut off from its root, Christ the Word. This realism is the origin of the scholastic nature-grace dualism, a Christianised version of the form-matter dualism of pagan thought, which perpetuated the influence of the unbiblical ideas of neo-Platonic philosophy.\footnote{J H Diemer, \textit{Nature and miracle}, II, p. 3.}

But in spite of his critique of Augustine on these point, Diemer does follow Augustine in arguing that the “beginning” is the commencement of time, although it does not itself fall within time, and so the days cannot be temporal periods. Because of this Diemer argues that creation is not accessible to scientific study, since this study is bound to the temporal order. Only in faith can we understand the meaning of the “days” of creation as they are revealed to us in Scripture. Here Diemer is following Dooyeweerd in explaining his views of the faith-time character of creation.\footnote{H Dooyeweerd, “Het probleem van het tijd in de Wijsbegeerte der Wetsidee.” J H Diemer, \textit{The “days” in the creation story}, p.2.}

However, Diemer’s view of the creation taking place over six “days” conflicts with that of Dooyeweerd, who sees the time of creation to begin after the seventh “day.”
Dooyeweerd holds that to speak of the seventh day as occurring within time is to speak blasphemously.\textsuperscript{163} God’s rest is not a temporal rest, and so Dooyeweerd sees time commencing after the seventh day. Yet Diemer’s conception is more consistent. If the creation took place over six “days” after which God rested from creating, then that cessation continues until now. Diemer constantly stresses that God’s work of creation is complete, and that now no more creatures new in principle will come into being. Thus the seventh day is still with us, in that God is no longer creating but resting from the work of creation, just as the six days are still with us in that we see the creatures which were created in the six days now appearing in time.\textsuperscript{164} Diemer’s conception of the nature of the seventh day is closer to that of Augustine than the views of Dooyeweerd.

Since Dooyeweerd also uses Augustine’s views of time with respect to the days of creation, this “new insight” Diemer adopts in fact strengthens his dependence on the Augustinian tradition. In this tradition, God does not do his work of creation within time but above time. Thus he did not need time in which to carry out the creation, and so the days of Genesis 1 are, like “the beginning,” not of a temporal order. They are days of “faith-time” and indicate sequence, order and hierarchy within the creation. They are not themselves temporal, but they found the temporal order. This temporal order comes into being with the creation - specifically, with the appearance in time of creatures called into being “in the beginning.” This creational order was then created outside of time, but comes into being in time, time in fact coming into being along with the creation. There is then a sharp distinction between “being” and “becoming.” Those things created “in the beginning” develop in time in a process of becoming, moving from potentiality to actuality.

Because we are bound to the temporal order, the revelation of the creation “in the beginning” also follows a temporal order, and thus the creation events are arranged in the form of a number of “days,” indicating sequence, order and other aspects of created reality. Thus our human faith-function can grasp the things of the supra-temporal even though this faith is bound to the temporal, because the supra-temporal is presented to us in temporal terms.

\textsuperscript{163} H Dooyeweerd, \textit{In the twilight of Western thought}, p. 150.

\textsuperscript{164} J H Diemer, \textit{Nature and miracle}, p. 4-5.
This view then is what Diemer sees to be completely Scriptural. He does critique the hidden dualism of the created causes of things, but does not see through to the heart of the problem with Augustine’s conception. This problem is intrinsically bound to Augustine’s view of the creation in the beginning as simultaneous when all things are created in principle. By adopting the concept of the creation of all things in principle in the supra-temporal sphere, Diemer falls into the same problem of a dualism in nature. He has both a concrete creation of individual things in temporal coherence, and the root of creation, outside of the temporal order, in which they are created and re-created. This causes a breach in the work of God between the supra-temporal creation and the temporal work of providence. There is an order in which creation, redemption and miracles take place which is above the order which we see around us. This breach means that what takes place in the supra-temporal order is of a higher level than the temporal order. It is in the supra-temporal order that re-creating grace is found, and this grace is later worked out in the temporal order. Therefore Diemer has not escaped the influences of supernaturalistic conceptions of the creation order.

However, Diemer does not want to say that God is only supra-temporal. He sees this as an unbiblical idea which should be avoided. His alternative is to say that God is both supra-temporal, or exalted above time, and has also entered into time. By this he means that God is above the creation but has also entered into it in the Word made flesh, in whom God is one with nature. Diemer derives this from Calvin’s comment that when it is spoken in a pious fashion, we can say that God and nature are one. But this does not negate the criticism that Diemer has a temporal supra-temporal dualism which comes to light in his view of creation.

The only solution to this is to abandon the distinction between creation above time in the supra-temporal root, where re-creation also takes place, and the appearance of the things thus created within the temporal order. It is crucial that a concept of creation within time be developed to avoid this dualism. An attempt to develop such a concept will be made in the fourth chapter.

6. DIEMER’S ONTOLOGICAL MODEL

Vollenhoven’s problem-historical method was developed as a means of analysis in philosophy, whereby the basic underlying structure of a thinker’s ideas could be compared and contrasted with those of others throughout history. This structure frequently comes to a concise expression with respect to their ontology, which can then be described in terms of a simple model.

Diemer’s thought is not sufficiently developed to allow a definitive identification of his ontological model, since his thought shows a marked development between 1933 and 1945. No doubt his ontological model would have been further refined and described in less trying circumstances. The most explicit expression of his views is found in his material concerning creation and miracle, written in the midst of the war. In light of this, it would be inappropriate to try and describe his model definitively. However his thought shows marked tendencies which probably would have continued, and also strong affinities with the particular thinkers who had influenced him the most, Augustine and Woltjer. But we must also take into account his association with Dooyeweerd, as well as his appreciation for Kuyper and Bavinck. The influence of these thinkers, whose onto logical models differ markedly from those of Woltjer and Augustine, mean that Diemer’s thought is not a consistent exemplar of any one model.

Throughout his writings Diemer concerns himself with the problems of the historical development process of the cosmos, the historical unfolding of creational structures from the simple to the complex. He is interested not only in how things came into being, but also with what became of them in their subsequent development. He wants to understand the relation between the appearance of new things in time and the creation of all things “in the beginning.” If everything without exception is founded in this original creation, if God ceased creating when the earth was complete at the end of the sixth day, whence the previously unknown? This matter was one of very practical concern for Diemer, who as a biologist had to grapple with the theory of evolution and the concept of speciation. This emphasis on historical development is clearly a “cosmogono-cosmological” approach. This view, one of the three basic patterns of thought concerning origins discovered by Vollenhoven, focuses on
development and diversification of the original structure as the explanation for the origins of particular things. 

This view of origins is most frequently found in monistic positions, and Diemer appears to be no exception. Diemer constantly rejects dualistic approaches to reality. This comes out most strongly in his view of creation, where he rejects the scholastic view of reality which sees this as a combination of matter and form. He constantly emphasises the original unity of all things in the Word; they are all the expression of the one Logos. Diemer’s emphasis on the unity of all things in the Word (Logos) should be seen in the context of Woltjer’s monistic thought. Woltjer saw mankind as the image of God in his whole being, while Kuyper on the other hand worked with a dualistic view, in which only a part of human nature was made in the image of God. Diemer does not hold to an anthropological dualism, any more than a cosmic ontological dualism, but follows the ideas of Woltjer. Diemer does not often mention the image of God, but when he does his view of the basic unity of the person, and the unity of the human person with the rest of creation, comes sharply to the fore.

In his Logos, that is, in his image, God reveals himself, the cosmos and man himself. This means that man exists cosmically, that all the cosmic functions are contained in the unity of his consciousness and that knowledge of the creation can therefore be obtained through deepened consciousness of self.

The other two models are the mythologising, which includes speculation about the origin of the gods in its view, and the “purely cosmological,” which reacted against this, rejecting all myth and focusing on structure, with development playing only a subsidiary role. For details of these models see C G Seerveld, “Biblical wisdom underneath Vollenhoven’s categories for philosophical historiography,” A Wolters, “Vollenhoven’s problem-historical method,” and B J van der Walt, “The consistent problem-historical method of philosophical historiography,” Anakainosis, 5 (1982) No. 2-3.

Vollenhoven identifies Woltjer’s ontological model as monist interaction theory, developed in a cosmogono-cosmological direction. “Historische achtergrond en toekomst,” p. 3.

Ibid.

The image is clearly a unity, one which contains all the functions of the human person. By self-knowledge the unity is revealed and also the unity of mankind with the cosmos. Knowledge is knowledge of the logos, and the logos is the principle of unity for all the creation. It is impossible to see Diemer as a dualist when such texts as these are taken into consideration.

Diemer’s idea of the unity of creation is expressed in his view of the creation order established by God. “The law-idea is the idea of the origin, deeper unity and mutual connection of all law-spheres in the cosmos.”\(^{170}\) The law-order is where the diversity of creaturely reality, revealed in the temporal world and expressed equally in all aspects, finds its unity.\(^{171}\) In the Word, the foundation of the whole of temporal reality, lie the laws or ordinances which the Creator has placed within his creatures.\(^{172}\) These laws cannot be separated from creatures, but can only be distinguished from their concrete subjectivity.

The two sides [of a creature] in one sphere: that of the individual being-subject and that of the law placed above it, can not be seen separated from each other, neither can both be eliminated.\(^{173}\)

Without acknowledgement of the divine Word, which orders all of reality, there can be no comprehension of the unity of creation; the unbeliever sees only a disorderly chaos instead of an orderly creation.\(^{174}\) Diemer makes use of the idea of the unity of creation to combat what he sees as pagan dualism, which cannot recognise this unity, but only the diversity of reality. The believer on the other hand recognises in the diversity of creation the revelation of the Word of God in time.

The individuality of the one, cosmic reality is the temporal revelation of the full Word of God, of the divine Logos in which it is rooted, while it finds its origin in God Himself.\textsuperscript{175}

This individuality of the cosmos is however not a disorderly chaos, but an order in which the diverse creatures have a specific task and function. In this order, the higher is built on the lower, and the lower is to serve the higher.\textsuperscript{176} The higher directs and controls the development of the lower aspects of the creation, which have a life of their own. They are self-activating, and without the control of the higher, they are self-directing, although in this case in a confused manner.\textsuperscript{177} The task of control over the lower aspects is given to mankind.

Mankind is the image-bearer of God. Created life has its fullest unfolding in him. He is equipped with gifts and has a calling to rule the rest of creation.\textsuperscript{178}

This task given to mankind is the guiding and directing of the development of the lower creation. He “must place the natural in the service of the spiritual.”\textsuperscript{179} Here his

\textsuperscript{175} J H Diemer, \textit{Een taxonomisch onderzoek}, p. 229.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid. See \textit{Nature and miracle}, pp. 29-30, where Diemer discusses the use made by animals of lower aspects, and pp. 34-35 where the same theme occurs in connection with plants.
\textsuperscript{177} J H Diemer, \textit{Nature and miracle}, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{178} J H Diemer, \textit{Christ and modern natural science}, p. 1. This rejection of anthropological dualism is consistent with his rejection of dualism of any kind. His stress on unity is a polemic against any dualistic conception, which he sees as pagan in nature. “Over against this heathen dualism [of form and matter] Christianity now posited the unity of the world. The world is not formed from passive matter by a geometrically inclined mind; rather, it is created from nothing by the Divine Word by the free will of God.” \textit{Christ and modern natural science}, p. 10. It is surprising that Diemer does not combat dualism more often by stressing the creation “ex nihilo” to deny the existence of matter (the traditional argument against pagan dualism) but instead stresses creation in the Word. This is in fact more effective for Diemer’s purpose since he thereby also denies any idea of created matter. Things were created “in the beginning” as a unity in the Word.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.
emphasize on the right direction of the lower in the service of the higher is apparent. The lower aspects of creation have as their task the service of the higher.

In keeping with God’s creation order, the lower aspects of the cosmos are attuned to the service of the higher aspects. The various cosmic functions do not exist closed in on themselves. They are open above for guidance from higher functions and set apart in the service of the whole... The possibility for the lower being directed by the higher functions exists in the mutual relationships of all functions in one and the same totality. This one totality expresses itself in many functions.\textsuperscript{180}

The true purpose of this service is the coming of the kingdom of God. This purpose is what gives meaning to these aspects. “Everything points beyond itself and is directed to a coming completion from which the processes receive their meaning and purpose.”\textsuperscript{181} Without this guidance these lower aspects develop in wild and disorderly fashions, departing from their true purpose.\textsuperscript{182} “New principles... occur again and again spontaneously and unexpectedly. They rise up out of dark depths and cannot be prevented from working their way to the fore.”\textsuperscript{183} Diemer speaks of new types of animals and plants which are driven out of the root of creation by the Spirit, which also directs all things to their appointed end.\textsuperscript{184} Without the exercise of control by mankind, the purpose for which he was created, this independently appearing life runs wild.\textsuperscript{185}

With respect to the place of the law in the cosmic order, Diemer seems to be a neo-\underline{realist}.\textsuperscript{186} Vollenhoven saw the realist position to stress both subject and object, both

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid, I, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{182} Ibid, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{183} Ibid, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{184} Ibid, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{185} Ibid, p. 30-1. Cf. also pp. 6-7, 11, 16.
\textsuperscript{186} P Steen, op. cit., p. 101, n. 86. It is important to take into account Vollenhoven’s theory of time-streams, so as not to arrive at results which ignore the historical development of ideas. See A Wolters, “Vollenhoven’s
of which are governed by law, in distinction from subjectivism and objectivism. In realism the law is placed in a world behind the temporal world.\textsuperscript{187} This is expressed quite clearly by Diemer.

Subject and object are both temporal; the subject stands under the law.

But the divine law itself does not belong to the creation; it stands between God and creature.\textsuperscript{188}

Immediately prior to this comment Diemer had castigated both objectivists and subjectivists, the former for elevating the mean to the timeless norm, the latter for fearing a norm which stands above the subject. Neither of these see a norm standing between a law-giving Creator and a creature which stands under the law. Diemer holds that both the subject and the object stand under the law. In his comment he emphasises that both subject and object are temporal, that is, both are under the eternal law of the Logos. He says directly only that “the subject stands under the law” but obviously holds that the object is likewise under the law. The objectivist believes in the norm above the creation; he simply misconstrues this by failure to accept Logos-revelation. Diemer stresses that the subject stands under the law, since it is the subjectivist who resists the idea of a norm which does not originate from the subject. Thus both subject and object are under the law, law which is behind the temporal world. It is in fact “between the Creator and the creature,” “the divine law itself does not belong to the creation.”

\textsuperscript{187} P Steen, op. cit., p. 96-7.
\textsuperscript{188} J H Diemer, \textit{Christ and modern natural science}, p. 5. Cf. p. 18 where Diemer expresses agreement with Calvin’s view that the creation is subject in every way to the ordinances or laws of a sovereign God, and these laws form the relation between God and the creation.
This then is clearly a realist position. But Steen stresses that it is a neo-realist position which is found in Diemer. By this he means a realism which is modified by a Christian standpoint. In this view, “there is a pre-existence of all the finished creation by virtue of God’s creative acts which are then the pre-supposita for all temporal manifestations and becoming.”\(^{189}\) Neo-realism is therefore not a neo-Platonic position which has a view of pre-existence as ideas in the divine mind, although there are many features in common between realism and neo-realism. Neo-realism also involves an emphasis on both the universal and the individual sides of the temporal cosmos, which is then distinguished from the universal in the supra-temporal, thus giving two types of universals.\(^{190}\) For Diemer’s view of the law in relation to individualism and universalism there is only one clear statement of his view on this subject.

From a purely Christian standpoint the concept is not a form, in which the universal is conceived as an idea on the basis of a great number of particular observations; rather, a concept is a concrete thing, a formed idea. In the concept a rich diversity of individual structures (the content of thought) was formed by means of one and the same considered law (the thought form). The universal of individuals is the being-subject to the unity of the Law.\(^{191}\)

Here he seems to be saying that both universalism (a concept of transcendent forms) and individualism (a concept of immanent forms) are incorrect. His emphasis on the universal as the being-subject to the law for various individuals of like character is a direction which runs counter to his realistic monist tendencies, although he appears to have interpreted the unity of the law in a monistic sense, emphasising that the law is the divine world-order found in the eternal Word. However this does not obviate the neo-realist cast to his thought. Neo-realism is evident in the idea that consciousness of eternity is actually consciousness of totality, fullness and unity.\(^{192}\) Diemer had critiqued Augustine’s realism, but failed to see that his own concept, while more

\(^{189}\) P Steen, op. cit., p. 98.  
\(^{190}\) Ibid, p. 97.  
\(^{191}\) J H Diemer, *Christ and modern natural science*, p. 16.  
\(^{192}\) P Steen, op. cit., p. 209.
closely Biblical than Augustine’s rather stark neo-Platonism, was in fact following the same basic framework. Steen thus sees Diemer’s neo-realist position to be dependent on Augustine.\textsuperscript{193} Both realism and neo-realism are to be rejected as unable to do justice to the Biblical revelation of the covenantal law of God for the creation.

As discussed above, by making Christ the ontic root of created reality, Diemer in fact blurs the distinction between God and the creation. This must always be the consequence of realist (and neo-realist) thought, as it makes the law-structures for reality part of the divine being. They are no longer laws established by God holding for the creation, but the ideas of God given ontological status. It is a variant of form-matter dualism, one which Diemer has failed to recognise, since the structures are in fact separate from the law-order which governs them.

Diemer’s thought appears to show the features of a monist mentalist priority model, in which the higher bifurcation includes the rational or spiritual aspects, while the psychic and physico-organic aspects form the lower side. Because the emphasis in this model is on the control of the lower, it is easy to see why Diemer closely links the fall with loss of control, and re-creation with restoration of the original order and control by mankind. If Diemer’s views can be correctly interpreted in terms of a monist mentalist priority theory, then this would help explain many of the rather complex features of his thought. It would be asking too much to definitively type his model as this particular one, although this is the model for which his thought shows the clearest affinity.

His model could then be diagrammed something like this.

\textsuperscript{193} Ibid, p. 101.
The basic origin and unity from which all things develop is the divine Logos. The eternal law order develops in correlation with temporal reality, and is to retain control over the lower bifurcation. In this are found also the spiritual aspects of human nature. In the lower bifurcation are several secondary bifurcations. The first, human nature, makes use of the lower bifurcations, but is itself controlled by the spiritual side of humanity. In Diemer’s view, as will be explained in the next chapter, Christ according to his divine nature is located in the higher bifurcation, whereas his human nature is located in the lower, which is subject to the higher.\textsuperscript{194} The lower side has a life of its own, it has both psychic and biotic aspects.\textsuperscript{195} Animals have control over the biotic and inorganic, while plants have control over the inorganic. The elementary physical and chemical aspects of reality are subject to higher creatures which control their development, although even in the chemical world there is activity and directedness.\textsuperscript{196}

The fall brings loss of control; the law of sin pulls the lower away from the direction of the higher.\textsuperscript{197} In the redemption of Christ the lower aspects (natural) are again subjected to the higher (spiritual).\textsuperscript{198} Without the control of the higher development runs wild, and eventually degenerates into a condition of meaninglessness. There are also hidden possibilities in the creation order which are waiting for disclosure under the control of higher aspects.\textsuperscript{199} (This point will become significant when we discuss Diemer’s view of miracle in the next chapter.) The exercise of some of these powers

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid, II, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{199} Ibid, I, p. 5.
and potentials lying hidden in creation is part of the process of redemption - the spirit leads the activity of the psyche to restore the biotic in various kinds of healing. Diemer approves of Lindeboom’s ideas on this topic.

Again and again the psyche suddenly comes forward with the ability to overcome illness...The spirit often works not only pathogenically but also therapeutically with great power. Both functional and purely organic abnormalities can submit to the power of the spirit.200

Just as the spirit of man (located in the higher bifurcation) guides the development of the lower aspects, so too in the higher we find the Spirit of God directing the development of the entire creation.201 The entire process of development unfolds out of the root, the Logos or eternal Word, the decree of God for the creation.

201 Ibid, p. 23.
7. CRITIQUE OF DIEMER’S VIEW OF CREATION

The exposition and analysis of Diemer’s view of creation has brought to light a number of truly Biblical insights as well as important points of weakness. We will return to his Biblical insights in the last chapter, where these will be developed more fully, along with a number of themes not touched on by Diemer. This present section will however draw together the weaknesses, so as to give an overview of the criticism applicable to Diemer’s approach.

Diemer’s rejection of the dualism of form and matter is commendable. His emphasis on reality as a rich diversity of created things, an idea he adopted from Dooyeweerd, is one of the most fruitful insights he has put to use in his work. By using this idea he has been able to completely overcome the dualism inherent in the scholastic idea of form and matter. He uses modal theory to stress that the lower aspects of things act as objects for the higher aspects, thus avoiding the Thomistic concept (derived from Aristotle) that the lower is the matter to be used by the higher, which then becomes the form for the lower, a concept which when applied to science leads to reductionism, and frustrates analysis of individuality structures. Yet for all that he has not been able to free himself from scholastic theories, as is evident in his dependence on the logos-theory. However it should be pointed out that his use of the logos-theme diminishes between 1935 and 1945. By the time Diemer came to write his major articles on creation in the 1940’s, the use of the logos theme has entirely disappeared. This is no doubt related to the debates of the late 1930’s between reformational thinkers and some of the Free University theologians (notably V Hepp and H Steen) when Dooyeweerd subjected the logos theory, as developed by Woltjer and used by Kuyper and Bavinck, to a detailed critique.202 At this time Diemer also wrote the only article in which he criticised Woltjer, as well as Kuyper and Bavinck.203 However even though Diemer stopped using the term logos, in many ways it was replaced by the term “Word” which continued to bear the same content as the scholastic term. The creation “in the Word” is a creation in God, a similar breach of the Creator-creature

202 “Wat de Wijsbegeerte der wetsidee aan Dr Kuyper te denken heeft,” De Reformatie (1937) 29 October, “Kuyper’s wetenschapsleer.”

203 Wijsgerige biologie.
distinction to that of logos speculation. In fact it could be said with justice that Diemer never managed to completely break out of the system of thought he absorbed from Wolter. Consequently he occasionally has difficulty with the conflict between the scholastic remnants in his thought and his struggle for a Biblical perspective on creation.

One result of this is his view that the law-order for the creation is found in Christ. The creation originally came into being as a “fullness of ordinances” in Christ, and then was manifested in time. These ordinances are the decrees or thoughts of God concerning the creation order, and as a result the creation order is a logical order. By implication then true knowledge of that order will be strictly logical. Knowledge is reduced from its rich grasp on the diversity of creation to a focus on one particular type of knowing - that which is purely analytical. As a result, true knowledge of the creation will be found primarily through philosophy, and since the creation order is an order found in Christ, philosophy inevitably becomes a means of revelation. It is not merely a form of human activity, it acquires a significance above all other activities. This view has been critiqued by Vollenhoven as was discussed above.

However, his view did break with the idea that the law-order was a scientifically determined analysis of reality. The law-order is not just a description of the order of creation, but is an order to which the creation is continually subject. His view of the law-order points towards a fruitful approach to the problem of universals. The unity of the diversity in creation is found in the subjection of the creation to the one law-order, encompassing all of created reality, established by God for the creation. However his realist cast to this view and his logicistic emphasis makes it less useful that it could otherwise have been.

Diemer’s view of the “beginning” effectively removes any possibility of seeing it as a temporal event. His identification of the “beginning” with Christ, and with a non-temporal origin of all things in the Divine Word, means that time is deprecated, it being a secondary product of creation (allowing the appearance of what was already perfectly created) and also that the eschatological aspect is lost sight of. As a result of his view of the “beginning” as a non-temporal event (following Augustine) he also

204 See also Dooyeweerd’s comment, *Nature and miracle*, p. vii.
denies any true temporal character to the “days” of Genesis 1, as Augustine also did, an approach forced on both him and Diemer by this view of the “beginning.”

As a result Diemer gets into difficulties in his exegesis of Genesis 1, in that he fails to see that creation of animals and plants subsequent to (and out of!) the earth is no less a creation than an originating of everything simultaneously by the Word. Diemer insists that the creation of everything takes place “in the beginning,” and then subsumes the “six days” under this beginning, making them all supra-temporal.

But the Scripture speaks only of the creation of the basic unadorned cosmos in the beginning. This cosmos was then given its adornment during the six days through the creative acts of God. It is only after the sixth day that the creation is said to be complete (Genesis 2:1). Diemer rejects the view that God’s creation could have taken place during a period of six days (whatever we take “day” to mean - it is on any solid exegetical basis a temporal reference) because God acts only supra-temporally in an eternal “now.”

There can be no doubt that the days of Genesis 1 are meant to be considered as temporal. On this basis it is impossible to see them as a supra-temporal framework which falls only within faith-time. Apart from that, both Diemer and Dooyeweerd neglect the fact that even faith-time is still time, and therefore the acts of creation take place over “days,” which are real days which occur within history.

However, his idea that the “days” reveal a certain order in creation, and that therefore these “days” are still present, as the order is present, is based on the insight that the Word which called all things into existence in the beginning is the same Word which even now sustains them. Therefore the “days” must be supra-temporal, as he sees this Word still being spoken, to uphold all things. But this valuable insight is blunted by his insistence on the non-temporal character of creation, and by his use of the distinction, following Augustine, between creation and providence. Had he seen that this distinction is unhelpful, then the Word which called all things into being in time (the six days) continues to be spoken forth in time. By not identifying the “order” with the “days” as Diemer does, we can maintain both the continual uninterrupted speaking
of the Word which gives that law-order and sustains it in being, and the temporal character of the days of Genesis 1.

His insistence that everything came into being “in the beginning” can also be maintained in this way, since the law-order has not been added to, and thus everything that is, is subject to the law-order for the creation as it was, is, and always will be (Psalm 119:89-91). His rejection, following Bavinck, of the contention that development is inconsistent with creation, points to some important features of his thought. All development is on the basis of creation. It is the unfolding of the potential contained in the law-order for creation. Development is not without direction or order, neither is creation static and unchanging. However Diemer goes astray in his view that this potential in creation is a real potential, one in which creatures already exist waiting to be given actuality. The potential contained within the law-order is just that - potential, not “potencies” or “seeds” (Augustine’s view) but possibilities of subjective realisation under the formative influence of higher subjects. Clay can be shaped into a vase, not because it has a “potential vase” hidden within its nature, but because God made it with properties which under the hand of a potter, permit it to be moulded into a vase. The difference is between a potential a priori (in which a vase is inherent in the clay) and a potential a posteriori (in which we recognise that the clay indeed had the requisite properties to allow a vase to be formed from it).205

Diemer’s use of Dooyeweerd’s “faith-time” theory does bring out the idea that the time of the creation is to be seen in terms of our faith confession, and not as a scientific concept of time. We cannot locate the creation within time, neither can we quantify the duration of the creation events. However Dooyeweerd and Diemer misconstrue the nature of faith-time, and fail to see that it is still time. They actually make it into only a temporal metaphor. By faith-time we mean that certain periods or moments of time are characterised by their significance for our faith, and that our faith has expressions which are of a temporal character. Thus creation took place along with (the beginning) and in (the days) time, that is, in time contiguous with our present history) but can be fully expressed only in a faith confession regarding that

205 See E Klaaren, The religious origins of modern science, p. 38, where he points out that this approach is inherent in a view of the contingent order (as opposed to necessary order) in creation.
time. Similarly, the time of creation is of major significance for our faith confession, which would be unthinkable without it. We may even in faith talk about “before the creation” and thus consider how creation came into being, in temporal terms which are significant for our faith, and yet also significant only in faith, since in scientific or other ways it becomes meaningless to talk about time before the creation of time. Yet we can for all that confess with Moses

Before the mountains were brought forth,
    or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.
Chapter Three

The Miracle of Re-creation

1. CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

For Diemer miracle is inseparable from the work of God in creation on which it is founded. He calls the creation itself a miracle, as the Scripture calls miracles not only the works of providence and recreation, but also creation, in fact all of God's incomprehensible works. The miracles of re-creation are those which re-assert control over a creation distorted by sin, and restores it to the kingdom of God.

Diemer maintains that creation and miracle are correlated doctrines; a particular philosophical concept of creation will give rise to a specific view of miracle. His survey of the history of these doctrines is for the purpose of establishing this point. He briefly describes the views held by a number of important philosophers and theologians, starting with Augustine, who was the first to formulate a philosophical concept of miracle.

Miracle for Augustine was the manifestation of the potential of the seminal reasons (rationes seminales) in the created order, bringing to light hitherto unknown effects. In some instances miracles were simply speeded up natural developments, such as the changing of Moses' staff into a serpent, or the appearance of lice from dust, although some miracles arise from unknown causes hidden in God, which could be activated only by God. For Augustine, miracles do not conflict with the creation-order, since both usual and unusual events in nature are the expression of God's will.


207 These ‘natural processes’ are taken by Augustine from the natural science of his day. Snakes were believed to generate spontaneously from rotting wood, while lice similarly arose from dust. Thus for Augustine these two miracles would seem to be special instances of a natural process.
However Augustine's neo-Platonic realist conception of nature, in which matter was given form by rational causes, resulted in the theory of an autonomous natural order. This dualistic tension in Augustine's thought would give rise to later unbiblical conceptions of creation and miracle.

The Aristotelian nature of medieval theology resulted in an interpretation of Augustine which misunderstood what he intended to say. The order of nature was understood as the totality of causes within things which determine their being. God, the highest cause, guides the development of the world through these causes. A miracle is not a disruption of natural law but the suspension of a cause to allow the activity of a higher cause. Only where there is a suspension of law, natural or supernatural, is there a miracle. Miracles have their cause in the supernatural order, but their effects are shown in nature.

The Reformation, according to Diemer, initially returned to the Scriptures for its concept of miracle. Luther and Calvin both emphasised the religious character of miracles. However Protestant theologians subsequently returned to the scholastic formulation of miracle; isolated acts of God intervening in the ordinary course of events. This Protestant scholasticism once again adopted the dualistic form-matter schema, and as a result denied the miraculous character of creation.

Rationalistic philosophers used this supernaturalistic view of miracle to deny it altogether. Nature was seen as a closed system of purely material causes, operating according to fixed laws. They held that since what happens in nature is a necessary result of God's will, which is identical with the order of nature, then a miracle, seen as a contravention of natural law, cannot occur, since God would be contravening his own will. A miracle is a feeling of awe at what we are unable to understand. Diemer critiques this rejection of miracle as such, because is only exposes the absurdity of a supernaturalist concept of miracle, not the Biblical concept of miracle. When miraculous signs are opposed to natural order and then identified with the Scriptural view it is impossible to gain any insight into the possibility of natural processes being directed to a higher goal; the essence of a miracle for Diemer.
Leibnitz does not reject miracles. In his deistic world-view a perfect creation was brought into being and then left to function mechanically according to natural law. An intervention by God would imply that the world was imperfect. However he wishes to retain miracle as a truth of faith which reason cannot acknowledge. Miracles supersede the laws of physical necessity or causality; they are part of God's plan, enclosed in the world-order at creation.  

Mechanistic natural philosophy banished the teleological view of nature in favour of a mechanistic causal explanation, in which motion was an automatic function of atomic matter. However God can be considered as a non-material cause which can intervene in nature to break mechanical causality. A miracle is not natural but supernatural, and sets aside the natural actions of things to allow for the otherwise impossible to happen. Nature is seen as an independent order into which God must intervene supernaturally to work miracles.  

Kant rejected the whole idea of a miracle since it is contrary to reason. We cannot, according to Kant, have any knowledge of the laws which permit a miracle, since only the usual order of nature is open to investigation. If we suppose that God allows nature to depart from natural law, then we can not have any certain knowledge of nature. Any phenomena which depart from known natural laws must be operating according to laws yet to be discovered. Following this same line, materialistic natural philosophy saw miracles as exemptions from natural law, and thus not amenable to reason, but are known only in faith. But faith is worthless and miracles impossible, because nothing can violate natural law or reason. Science has been able to explain the so-called miracles of earlier years. God was replaced by the sovereignty of natural law, and creation itself was discarded, to be replaced with the concept of eternal matter.  

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208 Here Diemer emphasises Leibnitz' dependence on Augustine. Ibid, p. 42.

209 At this point Diemer's historical survey ends. The final installment in the series of articles was seized by the Gestapo when he was arrested and consequently never published. See Chapter 1:4 for details. Diemer also discussed Schleiermacher and newer Lutheran theology in his ‘Twenty Theses’ and indicated there that these had not, due to dependence on Kant, been able to break through the super naturalistic framework. He ends with the enigmatic statement, ‘Only Kuyper, with his radically Christian point of departure, was able to do this.’ (Thesis 19).
Diemer's survey of the doctrine of miracle demonstrates his contention that a particular doctrine of creation will have a corresponding doctrine of miracle. Dualistic form-matter views will always see a miracle as an intervention by God in an autonomous material world, while monistic views will tend to emphasise that God's creative will cannot be contradicted by a later decision by God to perform miracles; the result of this is either to identify nature with the miraculous, or to deny the miraculous altogether. The rejection of the idea of miracle frequently hinges on the basic misunderstanding of an autonomous nature functioning according to laws which are violated by a miracle. But it is not recognised that this view is unbiblical, and thus does not compel rejection of the biblical view of miracles.

We find the rejection of dualism dominant in Diemer's view of miracle, just as it was dominant in his view of creation. This dualism is seen in the concept of miracle as a supernatural intervention by God. Diemer argues that supernatural intervention in the natural order arises only from conceiving of that order as independent from God, with an autonomous character which must be superseded if a miracle is to occur. This results in the dualism of nature and grace. But he goes on to say that the ‘grace’ so conceived is something totally different from the grace revealed in Christ Jesus. According to the Scriptures, this grace in Jesus Christ is the source of true miracle.\(^{210}\)

The miracle of creation is manifest in the appearance of new things - ‘new structures, which cannot be reduced to what came earlier.’\(^{211}\) Thus the creation in the beginning is the miracle **par excellence** - it is something totally new in every respect.

Consistent with his view of God's intimate relationship to the creation, the appearance of these new things is not the result of an intervention in autonomous nature, but the work of God in leading the unfolding of the hidden potential of the creation formed at the beginning. Thus the newness of these new things is not because something additional has been injected into the creation order, but because they are the realisation of previously unrealised potential. Everything that is, is rooted in the order of creation, the totality formed ‘in the beginning.’

\(^{210}\) Ibid, II, p. 45.

\(^{211}\) Ibid, I, p. 7.
Diemer quotes from Hugh Miller's book *The footprints of the Creator* where he points out that everything had a **beginning**, there is no ‘infinite series’ which did not have a beginning. Miller's conclusion is that everything began to be by the **miracle of creation**. However Diemer does not accept Miller's view that the creation took place over long periods of time (the ‘days’ of Genesis 1 seen as geological ages) and that new classes of creatures come into being by the intervention of God in the course of nature. This Diemer sees as a confusion between the creation ‘in the beginning’ (as a supra-temporal event) and the process of unfolding in time of what is hidden in the created order. This unfolding process is based on the structures put in place in the six day creation **act**; that is, a single event which was communicated to mankind in a form suited to human understanding.

According to Steen, a dynamic process in the higher contrast (the supra-temporal) is in constant correlation with development in the lower contrast (the temporal). Therefore the becoming process within time is correlated to a dynamic generation in the supra-temporal realm. What comes to pass in time is an expression of that event in the decree of God in eternity. Steen sees this as a monistic view of time.

Everything had a beginning, and that beginning is the central miracle of creation. The unfolding of the structures hidden in that central miracle is the work of God's providence.

The form-development of the individual organism and its relationships cannot be separated from the full temporal reality of the concrete organisms and of their relation ships. The result of both the initial and the six-day creation act contained in the root lies as an absolute world-order at the foundation of the natural opening-up processes. Whenever the opening-up process begins to take place before our eyes, the creative work is completed.

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214 P Steen, op. cit., p. 54-56. See the model on p. 75.
Diemer understands this to mean that the work of creation ‘in the beginning’ and in the six ‘days’ precedes the opening process and is its foundation in the religious root of nature. This foundation, Diemer says, belongs to the totality of temporal reality.\textsuperscript{216} The creation prepared as a totality ‘in the beginning’ then comes into being in time. At this point God's work of providence begins.

At creation all these concrete creatures were equipped with certain tasks for their passage through time. Then the moment came when the opening process in cosmic time began and God's providence began to function.\textsuperscript{217}

Thus Diemer, following Augustine, distinguishes creation outside of time from providence, which guides the coming into being of creatures within time. Since the relation of the higher to the lower within the creation is to lead and disclose, it is not surprising that Diemer sees God's relation to the creation in terms of leading and directing it.\textsuperscript{218}

The wisdom with which God guides the cosmos is called wonderful in the Bible...Nothing in time is outside this wise guidance whereby God - first in Adam and now in Christ - directs all events to the coming of the kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{219}

God works only through the root of nature and from the structures enclosed in that root brings forth new things in the course of time, and their appearance is possible only because their structural principles already exist. The appearance of these new things under God's providence is the miracle of creation, and so the miracle of creation is present as long as the creatures continues to exist.\textsuperscript{220}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{216} Ibid, p. 10.  \\
\textsuperscript{217} Ibid, II, p. 6.  \\
\textsuperscript{218} Ibid, p. 3.  \\
\textsuperscript{219} Ibid, p. 7.  \\
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid, I, p. 10. 
\end{flushright}
Since the beginning is Christ, it cannot be a temporal beginning as we saw above. Augustine developed his distinction between creation ‘in the beginning’ and God's providence in time to resolve this difficulty. This distinction derives both from Augustine's understanding of Scripture, and from Stoic influences on his thought, for instance Cicero's *De natura deorum*. He interpreted Genesis 1:31-2:3 as a description of the completed creation to which nothing new has subsequently been added. This passage in Genesis is the principal Biblical text for Augustine's doctrine of providence.

The other crucial text for Augustine which explained how God could still be working, even though the creation is complete and God is resting from his work of creation, is John 5:17. ‘But Jesus answered them, My Father is working still, and I am working.’ This comment was made in reference to the work of Jesus on the Sabbath, healing the man who had been paralysed for thirty-eight years. Gorman calls this doctrine of Augustine's ‘God's bi-partite work of providence.’ It is an attempt to reconcile the idea that God has finished his work of creation on the sixth day and rested on the seventh, (and is still resting from this work of creation) with the concept that God is still working to sustain and administer the creation which he had brought into being.

Augustine is opposed to the idea that God is still creating new things, since this would contradict the statement of Genesis that on the sixth day God completed all his work. All those things which appear new have their origin in the original act of creation.

So God rested from creating because he did not henceforth create any new kinds of creatures, and that even until now and beyond he works by governing the kinds that he then made. None the less, even on the seventh day his power ceased not from ruling the heaven and the earth,

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221 Augustine refers to Cicero's ‘nature’ as God (Gorman, ‘The unknown Augustine,’ p. 160) and there is a principal difference between the impersonal providence of neo-Platonism and the Stoics, and the personal providence of Augustine. Zuidema, ‘De orde-idee,’ p. 5.

222 M M Gorman, op. cit., p. 158.


and all that he had made, for otherwise they would have perished immediately. For the power and the might of the Creator, who rules and embraces all, makes every creature abide; and if this power ever ceased to govern creatures, their essences would all pass away and every creature would perish.\footnote{Ibid, 4:12:22.}

But not only is God resting, he is also working as this section of Augustine's commentary on Genesis indicates. To make this interpretation possible Augustine needs to specify his meaning with regard to John 5:17. ‘But a different meaning must be given to the words 'even until now,' because they indicate that God has worked from the moment in which he created everything.’\footnote{Ibid, 4:12:23.} And in the sense of providence, God has continued to work. Augustine can maintain this distinction only because of the distinction he has made between the original act of creation and God's subsequent activity.

Therefore we understand that God rested from all his works that he made in the sense that from then on he did not produce any other new nature, not that he ceased to hold and govern what he had made. Hence it is true that God rested on the seventh day, and it is also true that he works even until now.\footnote{Ibid.}

Augustine's definition of a miracle is that which is contrary to our usual experience of the course of nature.\footnote{Augustine, \textit{Reply to Faustus the Manichaean}, 26:3.} Similarly, Diemer argues that a miracle is the opening up of potential in conditions other than those which are ordinary, well-known to us. This can be done only when God gives permission.\footnote{J H Diemer, \textit{Nature and miracle}, p. 16.} Diemer sees miracles to be such only for us. For God a miracle is not a wondrous thing, it is only the working of his will in nature.
Scripture never asserts that a miracle is such for God, who knows and understands his work to the very depths. Nothing is impossible to him. But to man he reveals himself as the unsearchable, incomprehensible and inscrutable - in short, as the miraculous.\footnote{Ibid, II, p. 3-4.}

This is identical to Augustine's view on this point. He holds that a believer will recognise that from a human perspective miracles are extra-ordinary, but from God's perspective they appear to be a part of the natural order.\footnote{J Mourant, ‘Augustine on miracles,’ p. 111.} Through revelation, according to Augustine, we are given an insight into God's perspective, and we learn that everything that happens is through the will of God. If a miracle then is the result of the will of God, then for God it cannot be extra-ordinary. As our faith and understanding increases through reading Scripture, we will increasingly recognise the will of God, and consequently our wonder at miracles will diminish.\footnote{Ibid, p. 126.}

The reason we wonder at such extra-ordinary events is because we do not have the knowledge to perform them, whereas we do not wonder at those things which we know how to do.\footnote{Augustine, \textit{On the Trinity}, 3:10:20.} Miracles are not miraculous if we realise that they are God's doing.\footnote{Augustine, \textit{On Gospel of John}, 5:1-18; W Carroll, ‘St Augustine's preaching on miracles,’ p. 755.} They are not contrary to the order of nature, since what we know of the order of nature is merely our experience of that order. In the light of Scripture we realise that it is only a manner of speaking to say that God acts contrary to nature.

There is, however, no impropriety in saying that God does a thing contrary to nature, when it is contrary to what we know of nature. For we give the name nature to the usual common course of nature; and whatever God does contrary to this, we call a prodigy, or a miracle. But against the supreme law of nature, which is beyond the knowledge
both of the ungodly and of weak believers, God never acts, any more than he acts against himself.\textsuperscript{235}

The miracle does not occur contrary to nature since its germ or seed is laid in nature. The miracle is contrary only to our usual experience of nature, and thus it does not conflict with the true order of nature, the world-plan of God which determines the nature of each thing. God is at work developing the created principles hidden in the world. Nature is the result of God's will and so nothing in nature can occur contrary to God's will. What seems to us to be contrary to nature is a result of our lack of understanding of the will of God. Therefore everything in nature is miraculous since we can by no means give an ultimate explanation for anything.\textsuperscript{236}

Things were created not as actual entities but as potential enclosed within the order of creation. The disclosure of this potential is the work of providence, and as such is distinct from the original act of creation. There is also a second class of causes which is hidden in God. Their potencies are laid within natural things, but these things can, by virtue of these reserved causes, be made into something other than their usual manifestation when God activates these causes. Only God can activate these causes and this is the source of some of the special miracles of the Bible, such as the creation of Eve from Adam's rib.\textsuperscript{237}

\textsuperscript{235} Augustine, \textit{Reply to Faustus the Manichaeans}, 26:3.


\textsuperscript{237} Ibid, pp. 24-25.
2. SIGN AND MIRACLE

The extraordinary event is a *sign* to the believing Christian of God's providential world government.\(^{238}\) Answer to prayer is for the believer a sign of God's providence. Through the guidance of faith, events are led into channels they would not have taken without prayer and faith.\(^{239}\) The events spoken of have certain directions they take under normal circumstances. With prayer and faith however they are guided in *different* directions. There is no intrusion of a supernatural order, this is a purely naturalistic view of prayer. Thus prayers can in fact be answered on the basis of strong faith, regardless of the possibly idolatrous nature of that in which faith is placed. Diemer does say that prayers are answered only if they serve the coming of God's kingdom, but this does not either obviate this point or restrict answers to prayer to true faith, for even the prayers and the signs worked by unbelievers serve God's kingdom.\(^{240}\) In a theo-ontological fashion Diemer identifies God's power with the forces within creation which can be controlled and directed by human action. This leads to an over-emphasis on God's immanence to the neglect of his transcendence.

Thus Diemer's position prevents him from seeing that prayers and signs depend on a power *outside of* nature, namely the power of God, or else the perverted power of Satan. This power of God is not an intrusion into the creation order, in an interventionist fashion, since *all events* happen and are sustained by God's providential power. It means that the creation is *dependent* on God's redemptive power, which is not to be found within the creation order.

Diemer makes a distinction between a sign and a miracle based on his temporal/supratemporal distinction. However miracles are not to be *separated* from signs, since a 'sign is always a *miracle*-sign.'\(^{241}\) Diemer sees the character of a miracle to be an ontological work of God in the root of nature, and therefore supratemporal. Miracles are *absolute*, while a sign is always relative.

\(^{238}\) Ibid, p. 7.
\(^{239}\) Ibid, p. 8.
\(^{241}\) J H Diemer, *Twenty Theses*, p. 11.
Miracles are not open to dispute or refutation, but a sign is merely the temporal event which indicates to us that a miracle has taken place. Such signs are subject to the ordinances laid down for the creation; they are not supernatural or contrary to nature in any way. A miracle however is above the temporal order and in a sense determines that order.\textsuperscript{242}

Signs and miracles cannot be separated from each other. Signs and miracles are related as the peripheral and the central, as the outside and the inside of the one and the same reality of revelation.\textsuperscript{243}

Diemer is rejecting the basis on which various theologians distinguish between the laws of creation and a supernatural intervention by which miracles come about. The signs are the external revelation of the internal act of God, the relative indicator within time of an absolute supra-temporal reality. Signs reveal the presence of a miracle, in that they point to the miracle of creation, providence and recreation. They are not important in themselves, they have a purely epistemological character, and take place in specific times and locations.

Diemer refers to the ‘absolute character’ of the central miracles of creation, providence and recreation. They establish the order and possibility of every temporal event and therefore are not themselves temporal. These miracles include the structures of creation and the ‘beginning’ of the creation.

The ‘signs and wonders’ of Christ and the disciples are of a ‘relative’ character because they are temporal events subject to the absolute order placed above them. By ‘relative’ Diemer means that these signs and wonders are individual forms, structures and acts of various creatures and are thus of a temporary nature. Only that which abides can be called absolute. Thus the temporal-supra-temporal distinction is a distinction between the relative and the absolute.\textsuperscript{244}

\textsuperscript{242} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{244} J H Diemer, \textit{Twenty Theses}, p. 1.
Since the ‘absolute’ aspects of reality are above time and do not enter into time, they can be revealed only through the subjective realisations, are ‘relative’ because they are subject to the variations of time and place, and are transitory. They do however point to the absolute miracles which establish their possibility and thus are of importance since without them that order would remain unknown.\(^{245}\)

### 3. FAITH AND MIRACLE

Diemer argues that miracles can be performed only through faith. It is impossible to use any other kind of power to work a miracle, since he defines a miracle as the directing of creational possibilities by faith. ‘The possibility of the miracle and with it of the 'signs and wonders' lies in the dependence of the natural creation on the direction of faith.’\(^{246}\) Not only that; a miracle can only be seen through faith. This is based on his distinction between structure and direction. Because any event is a development of creational givens, it is not in the least an indication of special power. But by faith we recognise whether the power at work is that of God or of Satan.

In the original creation mankind was able to exercise dominion over nature and direct natural processes meaningfully to a higher goal, through faith in the Word and the law of God. Nature was working to serve mankind, and his dominion was exercised in the service of God's kingdom.

> In Paradise man fulfilled completely his original destination. His faith was perfect. He obeyed the Word of God and in him nature obeyed too, as it followed his leadership. All natural events were directed to the service of the kingdom of God.\(^{247}\)

After the fall this original ability, lost through disobedience, was restored in Christ. Through the renewal of faith in Christ the strong faith necessary to work miracles is again available to mankind.

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\(^{245}\) Ibid; *Nature and Miracle*, I, p. 5.


\(^{247}\) Ibid, p. 11.
The believing Christian, who knows that God's providence reaches out over all things and that nothing is outside his care, will see in signs and miracles the proof of God's promises that nothing shall be impossible to him who truly believes. Only faith can work signs and miracles and only faith can see them.\(^\text{248}\)

Since a miracle is a re-directing of an creation structure by faith, which takes place in the miracle of re-creation in the root, Christ, scientific analysis will not be able to find any traces of a miracle, just as it cannot find any traces of the miracle of the original creation ‘in the beginning.’ Scientific study can only accept the existence of unexplainable phenomena; it can never explain away those phenomena because they are not amenable to scientific research. They can be recognised only by faith.\(^\text{249}\)

Diemer is opposed to the idea of a ‘God of the gaps’ who is brought in as a ‘Deus ex machina’ to explain those things which we do not understand. On this basis, with advances in science the realm in which such a ‘God’ is needed as an explanation ever diminishes and eventually disappears entirely. Diemer holds that science can never take away the basis for faith, because God is the creator and sustainer of all things, not only those which we are unable to comprehend. Therefore faith is not an asylum ignorantiae which depends on a Deus ex machina to resolve the limitations and lacunae of our knowledge, and as a result we have nothing to fear from advances in science as it resolves more and more of the problematic nature of the world.

Diemer sees that science has undermined faith in ‘super natural’ miracles but this is something for which we should be grateful, as this kind of faith is ‘by no means Scriptural.’\(^\text{250}\) Science according to Diemer can never refute the centrally-worked miracles of creation, providence and re-creation. Diemer argues that science itself, and the use of medicine depends on faith. Medicine cannot work any cure where there is no faith in the central miracle of re-creation. However he is of the opinion that an idolatrous faith in the efficacy of medicine to heal in itself, or in the treatments of


\(^\text{249}\) Ibid, pp. 19-20, 28.

physicians, is also able to work cures since it is faith that cures and not medical science.\textsuperscript{251} Diemer stresses however that such faith is deceptive - often treatments and medicines are impotent in the face of disease.\textsuperscript{252}

But any cure, whether as a result of faith in medical means, or a faith in God which works miracles, or by faith that God will heal through the means of medical science, depends for its efficacy on the ‘activating of the Divine recreating power which exists in the root of humanity.’ In Diemer's view, a healing by means of medicine is as much a sign of God's recreating miracle power as one by the Spirit of God through the ‘word spoken with power.’\textsuperscript{253}

This can be so in Diemer's conception since he works with the view of created powers and abilities by which all events take place. In a miracle of healing only different powers come into action compared to a healing by medical means. They are both equally a part of the created order. Christ did not work some kind of magic, but ‘worked radical recreation in human organisms via the autonomous sympathetic nervous system that regulates and manages many important life-functions.’\textsuperscript{254}

Any explanation of miracles by means of natural laws must still acknowledge that such miracles are manifestations of God's power.

Should someone be raised from the dead some day - and I do not consider this impossible - then the researcher has no right to look for a supernatural explanation. He ceases to be a scientist when he does and becomes a metaphysician. And metaphysics is the greatest enemy of scientific research, indeed of all truth and of all true religion.\textsuperscript{255}

The limits to scientific study mean that an explanation of an event on the basis of a law does not \textbf{exhaust} the event. In fact, the discovery of the constancy of law is a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{251} Ibid, p. 9.
\item \textsuperscript{252} Ibid, p. 8.
\item \textsuperscript{253} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{254} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{255} J H Diemer, \textit{Nature and miracle}, p. 21.
\end{itemize}
proof of God's faithfulness to his creation: God never violates the law-order he has established, and a constant law is a proof of this. It is not a proof for a deistic worldview, which exiles God from his creation.256 The scientist cannot explain away miracles by seeing them simply as natural phenomena. They certainly are natural, in that they are based in the creation order; but they can be seen only in faith, since a miracle reveals spiritual direction and not creational structure.257

In faith, we are open to the recreating work of God's Spirit, which can unlock the abilities placed in human nature through the order of recreation in the root of human nature. The conversion of a sinner and his increasing sanctification will manifest the spiritual reality of God's kingdom by the sign of his new life, and by his redirecting the possibilities of creation under his control.258

Since Diemer sees the creation ‘in the beginning’ as the principal miracle, it is not surprising that he sees this also as knowable only through faith. Since this creation act took place outside of time, and since the human faith function is bound to time, then the time of the creation, as well as the fact of its occurrence, is bound to the temporal moment of faith. That is, the nature of creation and its six-day framework are made known to us by the revelation of God in Scripture, and can therefore be known only in faith. Here Diemer seems to work with Calvin's idea of the accommodation of revelation to human understanding.259

Diemer sees the Word of the creation-act in Genesis 1 to be continually present. This word can still be heard as it supports all things in power and wisdom.260 Of course only those who hear this word through faith will be aware of it.

It is not only Christians who are able to work miracles by faith, but all those who are able to exercise strong faith. All it requires is faith and trust that the actions they perform will indeed bring the results sought. To demonstrate his point that only faith

257 Ibid, p. 28.
259 Ibid, pp. 3, 8.
is necessary for those who wish to perform miracles, whether believer or unbeliever, Diemer quotes the words of Jesus: ‘To him who believes nothing is impossible.’

However, those who see signs happening through faith which is not directed towards God will not recognise the miracle of recreation and the operation of the hand of God. But even where faith is exercised in a false god, or a human being's ability to help, even there faith brings into operation the re-creating power of Christ. It is the working out in time of the central miracle of recreation in the root of creation.

4. THE FALL INTO SIN

Diemer's concern for a Biblical view of the creation does not fail to take into account the reality of sin. He treats this seriously, and has sought to develop the insights of the reformational movement with respect to the Biblical ground-motive of creation, fall and redemption in Jesus Christ. He is aware of the importance of an equable treatment of these three components. The significance of this is not minor.

The ground motive of divine Word-revelation, of creation, fall and redemption through Jesus Christ forms an inseparable unity. Whoever denies the radical character of the fall and redemption, has necessarily also an unscriptural conception of creation. And vice versa: whoever holds an unscriptural conception of creation, shall necessarily come to a conception of the fall and redemption which does injustice to the Word-revelation.

It is not surprising therefore to find that Diemer's view of the creation is developed consistently in the way he interprets the Fall. In Diemer's view, the world-order is in Christ, the root of creation, and so it is not affected by the Fall. It is preserved

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261 Mark 9:23 ? Diemer's Dutch reads 'Zo gij gelooft zal niets u onmogelijk zijn.’ In the Staten Vertaling this verse reads ‘..alle dingen zijn mogelijk voor dengene die gelooft.’


intact; that is, God's plan for creation remains constant in spite of the fall. However for fallen mankind this creation plan, and Christ its root, is obscured. It is only through the coming of Christ into history that the root is visible again.\textsuperscript{265} In a sinless world the recognition of God's power would be the normal way of life for human beings. But as a result of the fall, we do not recognise God's power in the ordinary events of daily life. The most that we do is acknowledge what we see to be the intervention of God in what are for us inexplicable events.\textsuperscript{266}

The fall originated with Adam. When he was created, Adam, and all mankind with him, was given a cultural task by God. He was given the commission to cultivate and investigate the earth. The fruit of this cultural task was to be placed in the service of the Kingdom of God; it was to glorify God by bringing to light the richness of the creation plan.

Through faith in the word and law of God, man was originally able to exercise dominion over nature and to direct the natural processes meaningfully toward a higher goal. Nature was obedient to Adam. It served him, and he opened up its powers and possibilities in the service of fulfilling God's kingdom on earth.\textsuperscript{267}

But, Diemer goes on, Adam was not satisfied with his divine gifts and high calling. He aspired to be like God himself, thereby failing to respect the Law which was placed above him.\textsuperscript{268} It is a falling away from the religious root of man's being - the Word and the Law of God. The Fall is the origin of sin, from which all single concrete sins flow. The Fall is a rebellion against the Law of God, a change from being governed to being ungoverned.

\textsuperscript{265} Ibid, p. 8.
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid, I, p. 16.
Through the fall however all of nature fell from God in its religious root and the creatures broke the foundational law for the created: the law of service to God.\(^{269}\)

As a result the Law of God is lost sight of, and mankind no longer concentrates on serving the creator.\(^{270}\) As a result Adam lost his inner bond with God and the original harmony of the creation was destroyed. The estrangement from God of fallen human nature in Adam is also an estrangement from its religious root in Christ. As a result the development of creation - a condition for human existence - is directed away from God, and not towards him in obedience.\(^{271}\) Man fallen in Adam must now continually struggle against the power of sin.\(^{272}\) The identifying characteristic of a sinful act is that it is not centrally directed by the Word of God.\(^{273}\) As a result of this estrangement from God, the development and opening up of the creation is misdirected, and as a result the creation as a whole suffers from the effects of sin. The various powers in creation, and especially in the human body, were no longer directed towards the service of the Creator. The processes of life in the body were no longer directed by the law of life, but by the law of death which brings dissolution, disharmony and disunity.\(^{274}\) Diemer sees that the various powers in creation can not themselves be called sinful, because they are operating in terms of their own laws. However the principle of sin means that these powers are not directed by the Word of God. They are no longer instruments of the Spirit.\(^{275}\)

Through the Fall brokenness entered the world, bringing sickness, disharmony and death,\(^{276}\) as well as various genetic disorders, such as deformities in fetuses. This disorder shows the meaninglessness which has entered into the creation as a result of the disrupting activity of sin. Scientists cannot give an explanation of the meaning of


\(^{270}\) Ibid, I, p. 11.

\(^{271}\) Ibid, II, p. 9.

\(^{272}\) Ibid, II, p. 13.

\(^{273}\) Ibid, II, p. 10.

\(^{274}\) Ibid, I, p. 11.

\(^{275}\) Ibid.

\(^{276}\) Ibid.
these deformities and diseases, since they can only be seen as the outworking of the law of sin; something which is not open to analysis.\textsuperscript{277} Diemer points out that the historical factuality of the fall has important consequences for our understanding.

The fundamental error of humanism traditionally lies in the identification of the objective order with the normative order of things. Christianity however - and here lies the special significance of Calvin for Christian thought - steadfastly maintains the distinction between these two. It maintains that the objective order finds its fullness in the normative order and that this latter is in the bodily Logos, in Christ Jesus.\textsuperscript{278}

Only in recognising the fallen-ness of nature can we truly understand our present situation. The world is now transformed into a world of illusion, since the true reality has been lost sight of; that is, mankind no longer knows the Word as the religious root by which he must be directed in all things.\textsuperscript{279}

No single event in nature can be free from the effect of the fall - the disintegrating power of sin. Under the guidance of Adam all of nature fell, as Adam was the original root of creation. The law of sin is the violation of the law for the creation - obedient service to God;\textsuperscript{280} it works itself out in everything in nature and rules nature in rebellion against the law of God. As a result the effects of sin become predominant in the creation.

The functions of the creation withdrew from the highest guidance of faith directed to the Word of God. They made themselves autonomous and struggled amongst themselves for the hegemony. Instead of putting themselves in the service of building and maintaining the kingdom of God they put themselves in the service of the kingdom of darkness, and began to lay waste, run wild and to disintegrate the

\textsuperscript{277} Ibid, I, p. 30-31.
\textsuperscript{280} Ibid, II, p. 11.
kingdom of God and deceive it. This is the curse which came upon the earth through sin.\textsuperscript{281}

However, this rebellion against the law of God does not go unhindered. The preserving power of Christ prevails against it and thereby the structures of creation are kept intact.\textsuperscript{282} The subject-side of creation has fallen, although not its law side.\textsuperscript{283} This is illustrated by the fact that we now see disintegration, purposelessness and disorder alongside of integration, purpose and order. The two kingdoms are here seen in conflict.\textsuperscript{284}

In Diemer's thought, God's plan for the creation can remain intact after the fall, since Diemer holds to a supra-lapsarian view in which the fall is included in God's design as a fundamental and foreseen possibility.

In God's design the fall is a foreseen possibility of man's falling away from the religious root of his being, from the Word and from the Law of God. Should man realise this possibility, he would lose his authority over the lower creation and therefore also over his own body. Then sickness, pain and dissolution would enter into the course of history.\textsuperscript{285}

The possibility of the fall included, in God's plan, the use of the power of Satan. In unleashing his opposition to the Kingdom of God and attempting to destroy it, Satan brings into the world division, negativity and unbelief. However God's plan uses this destructive activity of Satan since it causes the recreating grace of God to come into operation. The Fall is in fact the opportunity for God to fully reveal his unlimited love and greatness.\textsuperscript{286}

\begin{itemize}
\item[] \textsuperscript{281} Ibid, II, P. 11-12.
\item[] \textsuperscript{282} Ibid, I, p. 13.
\item[] \textsuperscript{283} Ibid, II, p. 45.
\item[] \textsuperscript{284} Ibid, II p. 13.
\item[] \textsuperscript{285} Ibid, I, p. 11.
\item[] \textsuperscript{286} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
Diemer's views tend to make the goal and unity of God's plan the glory of God as a result of redemption. This supralapsarian tendency stresses the oneness of God's acts, and is present in Dooyeweerd as well as Diemer. It sees all of creation and its history as a unified totality. Re-creation is given the primary emphasis over that of creation and fall. Christ, the new root, becomes the standpoint from which all things are seen in the light of redemptive grace.

Diemer's view of the fall is consistent with a monistic priority-theory, as was mentioned above (section 2:6). In this theory the lower aspects of the creation are directed by the higher. When Adam fell into sin, he brought about two fateful consequences. He lost control over the lower aspects of creation, so that they developed in a chaotic fashion, lacking guidance to their proper goal. Secondly, in so far as Adam did retain control over the creation, because he was alienated from the Word of God he directed the opening process of the lower aspects in an apostate fashion. ‘In Adam human nature fell into sin. It was estranged from its life's root with the result that the development of creation was now directed away from God.’

Diemer sees miracle to be contrary not to nature but to sin and its results. It is the destruction of the negative consequences of a sinful process. But if a miracle is a possibility in the root of nature opened up under the leading of faith, then, since a miracle is contrary to sin and its results, Diemer is unable to break out of the conclusion that the fall is inevitable. Not only is the fall included in the decree of God as a possibility, there are also powers, hidden within the root of creation to combat this fall, which were placed there before the fall had ever happened, to counter the consequences of the fall foreseen in God's eternal decree.

The powers that after the fall would be used to combat Satan to the end of time and finally destroy him were already enclosed in this root before the fall.

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In a supra-lapsarian view the decree of God in predestination has a certain independence, and is not fully related to creation, fall and redemption, so that there is the danger that creation and fall may be seen merely as means by which God's primary decree is realised, thereby virtually making God the cause of evil. Kuyper has such a supra-lapsarian view in which redemption becomes the purpose of God's creation, so as to display his glory in redeeming grace.²⁹²

The nature of the Fall as a spiritual possibility in God's design does not distort the created powers or potentials in the root of nature, since these are governed by the Law of God. But under the influence of sin these powers are led astray and no longer serve as instruments of the Spirit but as tools of Satan.²⁹³ Diemer is working here with the distinction developed by Vollenhoven between structure (created possibilities which are unaffected by sin) and spiritual direction (the development of those possibilities in the service of either God or an idol.) Diemer also uses the distinction between law-side and subject-side when talking about the creation order, as mentioned above. This also ensures that created powers and potentials, while able to be used to build the kingdom of Satan, are not themselves distorted by sin.

This view of the Fall as a possibility included in God's creation plan does not for Diemer make God the author of sin. Only the possibility of sin is there; it took the rebellion of mankind to actualise it. Diemer makes this distinction on the basis of his temporal/supra-temporal dualism. The possibility of the fall is included in the fixed order of creation above cosmic time; in the original religious root of nature. However the Fall as an event within time is founded on this fixed order and takes place as a result of withdrawing from obedience to the Law of God.²⁹⁴

But it is difficult to maintain this position consistently. The order of creation, within which the possibility of the fall lies enclosed, is a fixed order in Christ, the root of creation. The Fall however is actualised as a false spiritual direction under the dominion of the kingdom of darkness. Diemer cannot consistently maintain his

²⁹² P Steen, op. cit., p. 206.
²⁹⁴ Ibid, p. 11-12.
distinction between structure and direction if the structure is the possibility of only an apostate direction, that is, it cannot be realised in an obedient direction.

Steen argues\textsuperscript{295} that for Diemer all things are present to God in an eternal now. This means that there is no distinction between creation and redemption. They are one in Christ, the root. Thus the historical reality of creation and fall prior to Christ's advent cannot receive full justice. This Steen sees to be the result of the nature-grace notion of God's eternity as it was developed especially by Boethius.\textsuperscript{296} The idea of God's eternity as an eternal present thus demands a concept of a created eternity (or \textit{aevum}).\textsuperscript{297}

The idea of God's eternity as an eternal present... serves as a perspective from which man views created eternity both in heaven after death and where time is not present, and heaven as eternity after time ceases in the future. [This] view of eternity in relationship to man and cosmos wipes out the cosmic character, i.e. including heaven and earth, of created time and the cosmic law-order, and conceives of a new world law-order and existence to which the eternity of God is applied by the principle of analogy of being, to man and cosmos. The eternity of cosmos and man is therefore seen in the pagan perspective of a creaturely eternal present. In this way the law-boundary between Creator and creature is broken by this theo-ontological thinking.\textsuperscript{298}

Again we find the subtle influence of scholastic thought present in Diemer in a way which conflicts with his Biblically-reforming intent. Through the idea of the eternal present, as Steen makes clear, the full impact and significance of the redemption of Christ is prevented from coming to the fore. However Diemer did not thereby neglect the doctrine of the redemption of all things in Christ; on the contrary, it is an

\textsuperscript{296} Ibid, p. 193.
\textsuperscript{297} Ibid, p. 212. See also P Steen, ‘The problem of time and eternity in its relation to the Nature-Grace ground-motive.’
\textsuperscript{298} Ibid, p. 123.
important aspect of his thought, although as we shall see it is implicit rather than explicit, and was not able to find its true place in his thought.

5. REDEMPTION : THE MIRACLE OF RECREATION

Diemer does not deal extensively with redemption in the sense of a doctrine of substitutionary atonement. He does discuss the way in which people are redeemed but not in great detail. His ideas are straightforward and Biblical. He sees personal redemption as a total identification with Christ in his death, requiring a belief in the divinity of Christ as the incarnate Son of God. The redemption of Christ applies to the total person, in all areas of life, and so the identification with Christ must likewise be total. Through this means sinful mankind is reconciled to God and is thereby being restored to the condition of perfection as manifested in Christ. There is no redemption apart from this identification with Christ. 

The redeemed person is one whose life is unconditionally placed in the service of God, taking up the cross to follow Christ.

The principal concept in Diemer's understanding of redemption is the recreation of humanity in Christ, the new root, and redemption is subsumed under the concept of re-creation. Therefore the discussion of the nature of this new root of creation will occupy the rest of this section on redemption.

Because of the view of sin and the effects of the fall described in the previous section, Diemer stresses that redemption in Christ is a redirecting of the powers of creation to the service of God. Redemption is the correlation of the fall: misdirection and loss of control is countered by redirection and recovery of control.

Because the root of creation is Christ, the root of re-creation is also Christ. Therefore miracles are worked in Christ, the root, since miracles are always tied to re-creation, in that they make manifest the new root of creation. The recreation of the cosmos by God in Christ as the new religious root restores the original order of the kingdom of

\[\text{299} \quad \text{J H Diemer, } \text{Christ and modern natural science}, \text{ p. 1.}\]

\[\text{300} \quad \text{Ibid, p. 10.}\]

\[\text{301} \quad \text{J H Diemer, } \text{Nature and miracle}, \text{ p. 12.}\]
God and once more makes it visible to mankind, through Christ the new root becoming flesh.

The principle of direction of the lower by the higher means that Diemer sees the kingdom of darkness in terms of the misdirection of the creation to serve the law of sin. Creation powers are thereby directed against the kingdom of God.

In this world two fundamental principles give direction: the spirit of darkness and the spirit of light; death and life; man in sin and man in grace; the lie and the truth; Satan and Christ.

The nature of spiritual warfare is a struggle to gain control over the powers inherent in the creation. In Christ control over these powers is regained, and they are thereby directed towards the service of the kingdom of God. This kingdom is realised however in the process of a continual struggle against sin and its results. Through the coming of this kingdom the opening up of the potential of all the powers and possibilities of the creation is once again restored to the service of God. This kingdom comes however only where there is faith in Christ. Where there is unbelief the results of sin cannot be taken away.

For Diemer miracle is inseparable from both the central miracle of creation, and the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. On these two primary aspects of miracle he bases the details of his entire theory. This distinction between the two aspects of miracle is explained in his ‘Twenty theses’ as a distinction between ontological miracles and epistemological miracles. The ontological miracles are those of the creation order and reveal the central miracle of creation.

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304 Ibid.
By ontological miracles we understand the fundamental miracle of creation, providence and re-creation, through which nature has gained its existence, is kept in existence, is freed from sin and carried to completion. These miracles are worked by God above the natural and above the temporal in the root of nature, and are of an absolute character. They are inscrutable to human understanding and can only be understood in the temporal order of faith.  

The epistemological miracles on the other hand are the means by which the ontological miracles are made known. The distinction between these two classes of miracles is not an absolute separation for Diemer. They find their unity in the root of nature.

According to Diemer, Jesus performed his signs and wonders in the power of his divine nature as Creator. But he stresses that Christ's nature, God and man in one, is the root from which all his miraculous deeds come. Christ, as a man subject to the law of God in perfect faith, ‘allows himself to be directed in all his works by the Word.’ This means that Christ's human nature is the lower bifurcation of the monistic model, which is directed by the higher, in this case the Eternal Word, or Christ's divine nature, to which he is subject as man. This is what Diemer means when he says that as man Christ is subject to the Law of God. While he has life of his own, it is always directed by the higher.

As man Christ possesses a perfect faith in the Word of God... In keeping with this he is master of nature in all its expressions and he is able to guide natural events in a direction that is of service to the maintenance of God's kingdom. His ‘signs and wonders’ allow us to see the original power man had over nature.

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311 Ibid.
312 Ibid. Cf. C Gousmett, ‘Bavinck and Kuyper on creation and miracle’ for discussion of this theme in Bavinck (p. 9) and Kuyper (p. 14).
Diemer says that Christ worked his miracles as a man subject to the Law. This appears to contradict his statement that he worked them in the power of his divine nature, but is in fact in harmony with what was said above. If it is the Divine Word which directs Christ in his miracles, then he is performing them as a man, subject to the Word. But he is also in his divine nature directing his human nature, and so for Diemer both are true. This can be possible only in a monistic model, where each aspect of Christ's nature arises from the one root, thus obscuring the historical nature of Christ's incarnation.

But the miracles of restoration are not merely epistemological. They witness to the restoration of the whole of creation at the end. But they are more than merely signs of this future event; they are signs that this restoration has already begun! The miracles of healing are not only signs of the eschatological healing of all things, but are the present healing of those who are ill.

Diemer's view does not develop the full eschatological extent of the restoration of the creation. In his later works he does not make any explicit mention of an eschatology which gives significance to creation; his concept of restoration is one of a restoration ‘in principle,’ that is, in Christ the new root of creation. But the restoration of the creation has an eschatological focus. That is, there will be a time when the restoration of the creation will be complete and it will then be returned to the Father. However in an early article Diemer includes eschatology as part of the philosophy of history.

...the Christian religion finds its beginning in an historical fact, and the consideration of Biblical history as the history of salvation is philosophy of history. Eschatology, which borrows the concepts time, end-time, judgement and re-creation of all things in God, is also philosophy of history.

314 J H Diemer, Dynamisch pluralisme (1932) p. 106.
This view is no longer present ten years later. The Eschaton has by then become a part of the supra-temporal; it is no longer historical. According to R M Grant ‘discussions of the relation of God to nature are most frequently found in Christian writers when they are discussing creation or the possibility of resurrection.’315 This being the case, it is remarkable that Diemer never once discusses the possibility of resurrection. However, this can be explained as a consequence of his temporal/supra-temporal scheme. By emphasising the supra-temporal the way he does, the significance of bodily resurrection in the eschaton is obscured.

If the ‘beginning’ is not a temporal moment, then the ‘ending’ will not be either. Both beginning and end seen as Christ will mean that a true temporal beginning and ending become impossible. Thus Diemer has neither a temporal ‘beginning’ at the beginning (it is in Christ and appears later in time, so the temporal beginning commences after the creation) nor discusses a temporal ending or ‘culmination.’ He does not have an eschatology but a continuing growth and development.

[The creation] took place ‘in the beginning,’ that is, in God's Word, in Christ who can only be acknowledged in faith. Jesus Christ stands not only at the end of time but also at the beginning of all things. He is the absolute fulfillment of time and also the absolute beginning.316

This should be compared to Bavinck's views, which are very similar. For instance, he says,

He [the Son] is not only the causa exemplaris but also the causa finalis of the creation; the world has its foundation and example in the Son and therefore it also has its goal in Him.317

Diemer does however have an implicit eschatology in his view of the unfolding of the creation. Since only the potential enclosed in the root of creation can be disclosed (that is, all disclosure is disclosure of the root), then eventually the potential will all

315 R M Grant, Miracle and natural law, p. 106.
316 J H Diemer, Nature and miracle, p. 3.
317 H Bavinck, Gereformeerde Dogmatiek, 4, p. 667.
be realised, and the creation will have been brought to completion: this is the task of the Holy Spirit in the providence of God. This completion is the goal to which the whole creation is being carried. ‘Everything points beyond itself and is directed to a coming completion from which the processes receive their meaning and purpose.’ The kingdom of darkness which resists the unfolding of the creation into a kingdom of God will be destroyed ‘at the end of time.’ This view that time comes to an end indicates that Diemer sees the eschaton as a non-temporal state; one in which the present order has passed away and has been replaced with a totally new order. Again, if the ‘beginning’ is outside of time rather than the commencement of time, then time will cease when the ‘end’ is attained. The non-temporal beginning, that is, Christ, is also the end, and the end will therefore also be non-temporal.

God's creative work does not have its beginning and end in cosmic time but calls into being this very temporal duration with its order... It encompasses the whole of time - past, present and future.

However, both the Scriptures and the early church Fathers spoke of resurrection in terms of creation - a new creation as wonderful, indeed more wonderful, than the present creation. (1 Cor 15. The new creation of the resurrection body is described in terms of the creation of Adam from the dust, just as the body will be raised from the dust to resurrection life.)

6. TRUE AND FALSE MIRACLES

Miracles, like all other events in the creation order, share both a creational structure and a spiritual direction in Diemer's view. A miracle is the subjective realisation of a possibility laid down in the order of creation (its structure), the opening up of the various powers and possibilities hidden in creation through the exercise of faith. As a

318 J H Diemer, Nature and miracle, p. 13. Diemer also says that ‘Christ is the goal and the driving force of historical development.’ Christ and modern natural science, p. 3.
319 Ibid, p. 17.
result, it is possible not only for Christ and his servants to work miracles, but also for those who are the enemies of the coming of the kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{321}

In fact, Diemer goes so far as to say that even Christ used supernormal powers in working his miracles; powers such as telepathy, hypnosis, clairvoyance and so on. However, Christ used these abilities free from the contamination of sin, which usually accompanies them. This is closely tied to his view that Christ performed his miracles as a man subject to the Law. Since Christ was in all things directed by the creation order, being perfectly obedient to God, then his actions were all indeed using creation abilities. As a consequence of his views on this subject, Diemer stresses the need for distinguishing creational structure and spiritual direction. ‘What is true of all natural abilities is true here: nothing is unclean of itself and for believers all things work together for good.’\textsuperscript{322} After the fall into sin, these powers and possibilities in the creation can be opened up either in obedience to God or in rebellion against him and his good order for life (spiritual direction.)\textsuperscript{323} The miracles of Christ redirect the opening up of the creation possibilities to the service of the kingdom of God, whereas the miracles of the Antichrist continue the apostate direction established by the fall.\textsuperscript{324}

Those miracles which are not centrally directed by the Word of God are the ‘signs and wonders’ of the Antichrist.\textsuperscript{325} These ‘signs and wonders’ however arise from Satan's power and are signs of the fall. They lie under the curse.\textsuperscript{326} Those who work false miracles by the power of Satan are serving the kingdom of darkness and are consciously making themselves a tool of sin.\textsuperscript{327} By this means demonic powers are able to invade the bodies of those who place themselves as tools of sin, thereby bringing destructive results for their own health.\textsuperscript{328}

\begin{thebibliography}{999}
\item[321] Ibid, II, p. 16.
\item[322] Ibid, I, p. 32.
\item[323] Ibid, p. 15.
\item[324] Ibid, I, p. 25.
\item[325] Ibid, II, p. 9.
\item[326] Ibid, p. 15.
\item[327] Ibid, I, p. 31.
\item[328] Ibid, p. 32.
\end{thebibliography}
However, Diemer is careful to stress that nothing lies outside the rule of Christ. Christ is withdrawing these powers from the grip of Satan and thereby destroying Satan's apostate kingdom.\textsuperscript{329} Even the signs and wonders of the Antichrist are based on the creation order, indeed dependent on it, just as they are dependent on the miracle of recreation worked by Christ.\textsuperscript{330} They too serve the coming of the kingdom of God,\textsuperscript{331} although unconsciously.\textsuperscript{332} However, this dependence is of a parasitical nature. Satan can not create or originate new things, he can only corrupt and distort the good creation for his own nefarious ends.\textsuperscript{333}

Through the working of the law of sin in the service of the kingdom of darkness we see increasing disorder and meaninglessness in creation.

...the negative working of the law of sin...pulls the parts away from the order of the whole and leads to ever greater degrees of disorganisation. From the outset the spirit of darkness strives to turn the miracle of creation into a disorderly rubbish heap.\textsuperscript{334}

Such works of sin and of Satan hinder the coming of the Kingdom of God but cannot ultimately prevent it. The order of creation is restored in Christ and its outworking is destroying the kingdom of darkness.\textsuperscript{335}

\textsuperscript{329} Ibid, p. 24-25.
\textsuperscript{330} Ibid, II, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{331} Ibid, p. 21.
\textsuperscript{332} Ibid, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{333} Ibid, I, p. 32.
\textsuperscript{334} Ibid, p. 31.
\textsuperscript{335} Ibid, pp. 30-1. Molenaar points out (De doop met de Heilige Geest, p. 78, n. 12) that Dooyeweerd has the same view of miracle as Diemer, since he says ‘The miracles which were described in the Holy Scripture are not magical, purely subjective phenomena. They are not in conflict, but rather in full agreement with God's creation order, meaning that they are not counter-natural but natural. However sin has deformed human nature on its subject side. The grace of faith is the restoration and perfecting of this nature, on its historical analogy, but it is not in a scholastic sense supra-natural.’ H Dooyeweerd, ‘De verhouding tussen wijsbegeerte en theologie,’ p. 65. This is the only reference to miracles by Dooyeweerd that I have been able to find, apart from a passing comment that miracles were rejected by the Enlightenment. (A New Critique, II, p. 352.)
7. CRITIQUE OF DIEMER'S VIEW OF MIRACLE

Having analysed Diemer's view of miracle, we will now draw together the threads of our argument, and examine the various points of strength and weakness we have found, and the fruitful insights which can be used to develop an alternative position. This alternative will be developed in greater detail in the final chapter.

Diemer's survey of the doctrine of miracle and creation as it has been developed throughout history has demonstrated his point that there is a constant correlation between the ways these doctrines are formulated. This survey also served to show the dominance that dualistic approaches have had. These dualistic views of creation always result in a view of miracle as a super natural intervention into the course of nature, which is considered virtually independent of God. The monistic position emphasises the primacy of God's will, and on this basis either denies miracle altogether, or else makes everything a miracle. The latter position is the one adopted by Diemer, following the lead of Augustine. In this way he develops the view that every thing, including creation itself, is a miraculous work of God. The special miracles of grace are part of the order of creation, and participate in God's work of providence in unfolding the potential hidden in creation. This providence is distinct from the work of creation, as the one is temporal while the other takes place outside of time. The problems which arise from this view of creation and providence were also discussed in Chapter 2. It means that there is a radical distinction between creation and providence, rather than the continuity of the creating Word, which sustains all things in being. The Stoic background to the separation of creation and providence has been discussed elsewhere. It results in forced exegesis of Scripture, as is evident from Augustine's treatment of John 5:17 (see above).

Because miracles are the usual acts of God in providence, they appear miraculous only to us. This would not be so if it had not been for the fall. Because of our sinfulness we do not see (or refuse to acknowledge) the miracles of creation around us. These miracles are signs to the believer to awaken faith in God, and to restore our awareness of the miracle of creation. By faith creation potential is led into specific
directions it would not have otherwise taken. Because of this view, Diemer is able to see miracles as the work not only of believing Christians, but of anyone who has faith strong enough to direct the powers of creation. Diemer thus identifies the power of God with the forces within creation which can be directed by faith. This is a result of his monist viewpoint, in which miracle arises from the order of creation. Diemer's emphasis on this point has prevented him from seeing that true miracles are worked only through the power of the Spirit. Diemer's view that miracle is the opening up of created potential under the guidance of faith does not permit insight into the fact that a true miracle is worked by a power other than that which is available to us within the creation order. By separating creation from providence in an Augustinian manner he perceives miracle as part of providence, that is, something other than creation, but fails to see that the otherness is part of the work of redemption. Diemer does recognise that miracle is based on creation - it is not an intervention which disrupts the creation order. But because he fails to see that miracles are redemptive, he must replace the ‘old root’ of creation (Adam) with the ‘new root’ (Christ) so as to maintain the relation of miracle to the (new) creation order, while recognising its redemptive significance.

Diemer's view of faith is not entirely Scriptural. It is more intellectualistic, in that faith to open up the hidden powers of creation is based on knowledge of the order of creation. This knowledge has a somewhat scientistic bent to it, so that the advance of science in discovering more of the secrets of creation can not disqualify faith, but in fact strengthens faith by enabling more of the powers of creation to be unfolded. Faith is seen as a conviction of the truth or efficacy of a particular mode of action, as is seen in his view that medicine cannot cure where there is no faith in its curative properties. This derives from the monist priority approach - the body will respond positively only to the leading of the spirit, the higher bifurcation - so taking medicine (a bodily act) is if itself ineffective. The spirit must direct the body to respond to the curative powers of the medicine. However medicine and miracle- faith both depend on the recreating power of God in the creation order for their efficacy. His view of faith applies equally to Christian and non-Christian, and so does not permit him to adequately distinguish between true and false miracles, even though he makes a valiant attempt. Diemer's view sees miracle as a development from creation, rather than from the work of
redemption, even though he struggles to see it in the light of the latter. His attempt is not successful.

Diemer's view of the fall suffers from his supra-lapsarian approach, which sees the fall as a pre-ordained event in God's plan for creation, so that creation and fall are for the purpose of showing God's glory in redemption. He sees redemption as the creation of the new root of creation, Christ. In this new root all the disharmony and brokenness of creation resulting from the fall is destroyed.

His insight that miracle is contrary to sin and its results is helpful, although its significance in the context of his thought is obscured, since both the fall and the miracle of re-creation were pre-ordained by God. Thus both sin and miracle were inevitable, and both the fall and miracle were included in the order of creation as possibilities which would inevitably be realised. Thus redemption is not seen as a plan of recovery for a creation gone astray, but the primary intention of God in creating. This view has developed from Diemer's emphasis on creation as the root from which all things come, and this root, being supra-temporal, is an ‘eternal now’ which contains past, present and future as actualities. Thus his view of redemption as the restoration of creation takes second place to the emphasis on the original creation in which all things are contained.

His view of the miracle power of Christ has not been sufficiently developed either as a result of his basic perspective. However it is clear that the emphasis on the miracles of Christ as a manifestation of his human nature is the Biblical one. Christ did not perform miracles as God, since this would lead directly to a docetic Christology in which Christ only appears (dokeo) to act as a man, but is in fact God in disguise, and his promise to the disciples that they would work the same miracles (John 14:12-14) would be empty words, unless they too were somehow to become semi-divine. Christ worked his miracles as a man full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38) and this same Spirit through whose power Christ did his mighty works has been given also to us (1 Cor 12:4-11).

Diemer's approach to the cosmic redemption of Christ does not permit him insight into the eschatological renewal of all things except as a supra-temporal event. His
view effectively cuts off any appreciation for the ‘this-worldly’ character of the new creation; he never discusses or even mentions the new heavens and new earth (Revelation 21-22). His view obscures the significance of the resurrection of the believers. The supra-temporal eschaton he anticipates effectively deprecates a bodily presence in the new earth.

Having analysed Diemer's views on both creation and miracle, in the next chapter we will attempt to develop alternative views while drawing on his positive insights.
Chapter Four

Continuing Reflections

1. CREATION

To continue the renewal of the doctrines of creation and miracle is not easy. Many attempts to do so have to some extent suffered from the influence of a nature-grace dualism. However, there are fruitful insights in the work of Diemer which will assist the development of these doctrines in ways more faithful to Scripture. The initial necessity is to re-examine the doctrine of creation, and in particular the interpretation of Genesis 1.

Christian thought about creation from the time of Augustine until the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was explicitly ontological in focus. The nature of reality was expressed in terms of the hierarchy of being from prime matter to divine being through various stages of gradually more refined being.\textsuperscript{336} However, in late Mediaeval theology the priority traditionally ascribed to the divine Reason or Logos was shifted to the primacy of God’s law, which presupposed the transcendent sovereign will of God.\textsuperscript{337}

The advent of late medieval voluntarist theology marked the beginning of an orientation to creation which, partly derived from a nominalist rejection of universals, refocused the work of the Creator in terms of His supreme will rather than the divine intellect. In relation to the Creator’s will, the contingency of creation was emphasised in contrast to more rational relations of participation.\textsuperscript{338}

\textsuperscript{337} Ibid., p. 140.
\textsuperscript{338} Ibid., p. 33.
This emphasis in late Medieval theology and philosophy (such as that of Ockham) on the freedom of God’s will led to the distinction between the **potentia absoluta** (God’s omnipotence considered in isolation) and the **potentia ordinata** (or that which God, by virtue of his will, is doing or has done) and from this the **potentia absoluta** became the power of God to reverse the order of nature, as in miracles. The established order of creation was not considered a necessary eternal order, but was seen as equally contingent as creation itself. This was a sound insight into the contingency of creation (that is, creation is not a **necessary** act of God) but was blunted by its correlation with a dialectical view of the will of God.\(^{339}\) The **potentia absoluta** can suspend the effects of the **potentia ordinata**, to produce an unusual effect or miracle.\(^{340}\)

In this dialectical orientation the order of creation was conceived in terms of law and entities subject to law, rather than degrees of participation in the divine logos. In this view law was dependent on God’s will rather than on his reason (logos). Since there could be no transitional forms between God’s power and the created order (unlike the emphasis on degrees of participation) the idea of the creator was developed to that of the transcendent law-giver. The voluntarist view sees God distinct from his creation which he orders by law.\(^{341}\) E Klaaren points out that this view of the law is closer to that of the Old Testament than the concept of the Stoics, which saw natural law as the expression of the divine reason immanent throughout the universe.\(^{342}\)

This voluntarist approach to creation found a significant advocate in John Calvin. While he revised it in many points, he adopted many of the insights developed by late Medieval voluntarist theologians, particularly the contingency of creation on God’s will, its order as an order subject to the law established by God, and the emphasis on obedience as man’s appropriate response to God. Because creation was dependent in every way on God’s power, it was open at every point to God. It was not a rationally ordered, closed system subject only to natural law. The lawfulness of creation was an expression of the providence and sovereignty of God, not of Stoic necessity. Calvin

\(^{339}\) Ibid., p. 35.

\(^{340}\) Ibid., p. 36.

\(^{341}\) Ibid.

\(^{342}\) Ibid., p. 201, n. 20.
also emphasised the boundary between God and creation, as much as the bond between them.\footnote{343}{Ibid., pp. 39-45.}

The influence of this approach to creation, providence and miracle is evident in the way in which Diemer (and also Kuyper, Bavinck and Dooyeweerd) expresses his views on these subjects, even though in Diemer, Kuyper and Bavinck we still find a strong emphasis on the divine reason rather than on the primacy of the divine will. However, in our further reflections on the theme of creation and miracle, we will pay more attention to the latter than was done by Diemer. In this way we will be able to pick up some of the aspects of the doctrine of creation which he missed.

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” What was the nature of this beginning, and how does it relate to our view of time? Firstly, it is clear that to avoid the temporal/super-temporal dichotomy found in Diemer and Dooyeweerd, the creation must take place along with time, and after the “beginning” further acts of creation take place \textit{in} time. That is, time is a characteristic of created reality, and this reality has not existence apart from or outside of time. The “beginning,” then, is not an event outside of time, but the commencement of time concurrent with the creation. That is, there is no creation apart from time, and no time apart from creatures.

There can be nothing created which is not temporal and nothing temporal which is not created… Time itself is a creature. This means that time, like the creation, has a beginning. There is no way, of course, to express this fact other than in terms of time itself, but that does not take away from the fact that time must be said to have a beginning.\footnote{344}{P Steen. \textit{The Structure of Herman Dooyeweerd’s Thought}, pp. 285-286.}

Thus the “in the beginning” of Genesis 1:1 is the commencement of all creaturely things, among which is time. But since the recital of the creation story takes place in the context of covenant \textit{history}, it is necessary to emphasise the temporal aspects of the original act of creation - it was the beginning of that covenant history - and was therefore recited in \textit{temporal} terms.
The days of Genesis 1 then are also temporal. Whether these days are to be understood as days of twenty-four hours or as some other period of time is of little consequence in this respect, for in both instances they are temporal moments within historical time. It does seem, however, that by using the term “day” the Scripture does not necessarily mean a particular length of time, but simply to identify the time at which a particular event took place. Thus when we read that on the first day God created the light, we are to understand that there was a time when God created light, and not how long it took him to do so. Attempts to quantify the time involved will always be fruitless, because the Bible does not give is the kind of information that would enable us to do this.

The creation of the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1) was the establishment of the entire order of creation. The record of the days of creation recites the development of the earth to prepare it for living creatures, and the forming of the living creatures which were to inhabit the earth. When this work of creation had been done, the creative activity of God was completed and thus we read that the creation was completed (Genesis 2:1).

In this sense Diemer is correct when he stresses that all things were created in principle in the beginning and on the six days, and that after this nothing new in principle comes into being. However, his view that these days, along with the “beginning,” were of a supra-temporal character is rejected. On the seventh day God rested and blessed that day, and the subsequent appearance of new things is the unfolding of created potential. While it is true that time is a characteristic of creation and was brought into being by God, God is not subject to the temporal order, since God imposes that order in creatures. The only thing we can say in this respect without getting involved in unbiblical speculation is that God is not subject to time, while everything that is not God (i.e. the creation) is characterised by time.

The beginning of the creation falls together with the beginning of time. If we hold that the creation, as the work of God, does not fall within the framework, the measure and the duration of time, then that is correct only in this sense, that God was not bound to a temporal order...
or temporal duration in his work of creation, but he created these and that the becoming-process in time is not a setting-forth, but an outworking of the creation.\textsuperscript{345}

Since the creation is bound to time, it cannot exist apart from time. Only God is eternal, that is, not subject to the temporal order. Any view which sees the creation (in part or as a whole) to be outside of the temporal order has already begun to blur the distinction between God and creation.

Since there can be no creation without time and no time without creation, this means that any notion that time ceases, immediately brings with it the notion that creation ceases… This position always implies a breaking of the Creator-creation relationship, since if time is said to cease and man and the cosmos are then said to become eternal, be it now in a created or creaturely mode, there can no longer be a clear distinction between God and man, Creator and creation.\textsuperscript{346}

This applies equally to the beginning of creation and the “end” of creation. The Biblical emphasis on the renewal of the heavens and the earth (while not a repristination is certainly a restoration to a condition unaffected by sin) means that the creation remains within time. The eschaton is not a-temporal, neither was the beginning. Both fall within the temporal order. However, there is a sense in which we can talk about the new creation as “eternal,” as long as this is not seen as an eternity outside of the temporal order to which creation is always subjected.

The phrase “man is eternal” or “the cosmos is eternal” is not wrong if one intends by this that it lasts forever, i.e. is subject to the endless time order, and therefore has endless succession and duration. As long as there is not involved in these phrases the idea that time ceases and eternity begins. Involved in the word “eternity” is the idea of the quality of temporal existence, that is, the incorruptibility of the life

\textsuperscript{345} O Jager. \textit{Het Eeuwige Leven}, p. 480.

\textsuperscript{346} P Steen, op. Cit., p. 286.
lived endlessly, the power over time which comes through being in Christ.\(^{347}\)

Turning then to Genesis 1, we will see how these insights are worked out in exegesis. Genesis 1:1 records the origin of the cosmos. In the beginning God created all that is, the heavens and the earth. The phrase “the heavens and the earth” refers not to the universe in the sense of a theoretically conceived system, but to the ordered creation which enfolds all that is. The universe is not an integrated totality-structure, a cosmic whole which includes all other structures as its component parts. It is an interwoven coherence of numerous individuality structures.\(^{348}\) The significance this has for Genesis 1:1 is that the phrase “the heavens and the earth” refers neither to a dualism of dissimilar orders, nor to a monistic separation within one primary order. Rather, it refers to a created order which enfolds all the creatures God has made, which is the order subject to the law given by God for the creation. When we examine Genesis 1:2, the significance of this is apparent. The earth was in a condition of emptiness and was uninhabited by any living thing. It was the scene of watery turmoil; no land, no life, no suitable place for living things. It was not a disorderly chaos, since it was the world which God had made, and therefore had been given order and structure by the Word of God. The term הָוָה וָבוֹהוּ "tohu wa-bohu” refers simply to a condition of unsuitability for habitation by living things, as is clearly shown by Isaiah 45:18, where “tohu” is contrasted with מְשֵׁבָה, "lesheveth, to be inhabited.” Throughout the OT “tohu” is used to refer to that which is empty, both literally (Deut. 32:10, Job 6:18, 12:24, 26:7; Psalm 107:40; Isaiah 24:10, 34:11) and figuratively (1 Sam 12:21, Isaiah 29:21, 41:29, 44:9, 45:19, 49:4). The references in the first group all refer to uninhabitable places, while those in the second group refer to idols, prayers, work, or appeals in court which are “empty,” that is, have no effect.

The idea of a “chaos” is not a biblical one. This chaos must be understood either dualistically, as confused formless matter which must be given form, or monistically, as an undifferentiated condition out of which everything would develop. The biblical confession that God created the heavens and the earth is incompatible with the idea of a “chaos.” Everything which God creates is subject to his law-order. God does not

\(^{347}\) Ibid., pp. 286-287, n. 8.

bring confusion into existence, but order and structure. This significant idea negates two dominant ideas in current biblical scholarship: firstly, that the Israelites were fearful that the order which prevails in creation would collapse, and the world would then revert to the primeval condition of chaos; and secondly, that God did battle with the primeval monsters, overcoming them, and thus able to create freely without resistance. The first idea derives from a monistic perception of creation, and the second from a dualistic one. In both cases a world-view derived from unbiblical sources, namely Greek pagan philosophy, has been imposed on Scripture. God has brought the orderly creation into existence, and faithfully sustains it by his Word. The creation cannot collapse into an undifferentiated “primeval” chaos, both for that reason, and because it did not arise from such a chaos. Neither did God have to do battle with forces of wickedness which resisted his creating. There is no power over against God; all creatures are made by him, and there is no independent power which together with God forms a dualism of good and evil.

Some find that the idea of a “chaos” in Genesis 1 is incompatible with the presence of the Spirit of God. If it were indeed a chaos, this would certainly be the case. Because the presence of the Spirit in chaos is unthinkable (cf. 1 Cor 14:33), the phrase “רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים” is translated “a mighty wind,” which comports better with the idea of chaotic conditions. However, the use of this phrase to mean “mighty wind” is not incontestable. Neither is it necessary, if, as we have shown, the idea of chaos is not intended by Genesis 1:1-2. There is no reason not to continue with the traditional translation “Spirit of God.”

The creation story of Genesis continues by describing the preparation of the earth as a habitation for living things. The world is in a very real sense our home, and one purpose of the story of Genesis is to make that known to us. The tragedy of the Fall is that we are alienated from the world in which we live. Because of the curse, it brings forth thistles and thorns, we are endangered by storm and flood, afflicted by wild beasts and disease. We are no longer at home in the world which was made to be our home. The imagery of creation frequently recalls this idea. The creation is made as a

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349 This view is predominant not only in the exegesis of Genesis 1, but also in the flood narrative. This event was supposedly a return of creation to the condition of almost primeval chaos, after which creation was again formed from the disorderly state. Such a view is patently at odds with the text.
“tent” (Psalm 19:4, 104:2, Isaiah 40:22), the Scriptures speak of its “door-posts, pillars, foundations, cornerstone” and many other expressions taken from domestic architecture in describing the creation.350

Having then brought the cosmos into being, God commenced the preparation of the earth as a home for living things by creating light. Prior to this, the creation was enveloped in darkness. This darkness had come into being with the creation; it is simply the absence of light. Prior to creation, there was neither light nor darkness, since this is a creational distinction. Darkness is often seen as an aspect of the evil primeval chaos which has not been entirely banished from the creation, and returns each night to menace us. Yet if darkness came into being with the creation, it cannot be an evil phenomenon. To presuppose that there was darkness prior to the creation is to postulate the existence of something independent from God, and were that the case it certainly could be seen as a threat to creation. However, this is an unscriptural dualism which is to be rejected. If darkness is simply the absence of light then it cannot be an evil “power” which threatens the creation. The image of darkness is used in Scripture for evil and wickedness, not because it is evil in itself, but because it is a cover for evil deeds (John 3:19, Romans 13:11-14, Ephesians 5:7-15, 1 John 5:11). Both day and night are created by God and he rules over them (Genesis 8:22, Psalm 74:16).

God differentiated the light from the darkness, just as he had then differentiated the waters from the dry land. He formed the space between the earth and the clouds bearing rainwater. He clothed the earth with plants and trees, providing food for the animals. He created the birds of the air, the fish of the seas, and the creatures which would live on the land. He created the stars, the sun and moon. He ordered the passing of day and night, the months, seasons and years. Finally God created Adam and Eve, and placed them in the garden of Eden, with the command and blessing to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth and to develop and care for it. The animals, birds and fish were also blessed with fruitfulness, given their food, and placed under the dominion of Adam and Eve and their descendants. It was a condition of peace and blessing. However, it was not to last. The fall soon interrupted the plan of God for creation.

350 T Boman, Hebrew Thought compared with Greek, p. 181.
2. THE FALL INTO SIN

The fall into sin is an event of crucial significance for Christian thought. In this one event all the misery of mankind had its origin. Thus if we are to correctly understand the nature of the fallen situation in which we find ourselves, and thus correctly interpret the nature of Christ’s cosmic redemption, then we need to reconsider what we believe the fall to involve.

When Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden of Eden to cultivate and care for it, they were given one restriction: they were not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. This act would result in death for the man and his wife. This command was not given to them to test their obedience, but to warn them that God retained for himself the prerogative to determine the parameters for human life, illustrated by this one restriction.

The serpent had enticed Eve by denying God’s explanation for not touching the fruit - that knowledge like God’s would be the result, not death. Eve saw that the fruit was to be desired, and enticed by her desire she sinned (Genesis 3:6, James 1:14). The serpent had not only denied God’s explanation for the prohibition regarding this fruit, but denied it emphatically. God had said “You will surely die,” but the serpent said “you will surely not die.” He did not simply say, “you will not die,” but directly reversed what God had said. The Hebrew reads: תָמוֹת “moth tamoth” (Gen 2:17) and וְתָמוֹתָהּ לְאֹ֫לֶּךָ “lo moth tamuthun” (Gen 3:4). This indicates not simply death, but certain death, death as a consequence of the violation of God’s command (cf. 1 Kings 2:36-46). Because of sin Adam was placed under a curse and death would be a bitter enemy against which Adam had no power. Had he remained faithful to God, he would have had no fear of death.

Because of their sin, a curse came on the rest of creation. That is, by means of this sin the man and his wife were estranged from God, which meant loss of blessing on their labours, and henceforth they would struggle for their food. Adam lost his dominion
over the creation, and would henceforth carry out his cultural task in caring for the creation with great difficulty.

We see from the text of Scripture that the sin of Adam and Eve is attributed not to the exercise of free will in making a wrong choice, but to the fact that they were deceived. Adam said to God that Eve had given him the fruit, and so he ate it. Eve told God “The serpent beguiled me, and I ate.” Adam was blamed by God for listening to his wife and thereby disobeying God’s command not to touch the fruit of that tree. That is, as a result of his wife being deceived, Adam acted contrary to God’s command (1 Tim 2:14).

God does not tempt anyone to sin (James 1:13) but Adam followed Eve in succumbing to the serpent’s wiles, and enticed by their desire, which had been awakened by the serpent in an unlawful manner, they violated God’s command and sinned (James 1:14). As a result of this sin they fell under the curse of death (James 1:15). James states in this context that God does not change; he is constant in his relationship to us. Therefore God was not tempting Adam and Eve to test their obedience in forbidding them the fruit of that tree. Seen in the light of James’ comments, for the command of God, or the tree itself, to provide the occasion for sin requires that a tendency to sin be already present. But Adam and Eve were created “good” by God, just as all the creatures of God were good, and therefore they had no tendency to sin which could be enticed by temptation.

James states that sin is a result of deception, and warns us not to be deceived (James 1:16). The serpent is the father of lies (John 8:44; Revelation 12:9; 13:4; 20:3). Jesus warned many times against allowing ourselves to be deceived (e.g. Matt 24:4, 24), as did the writers of the Epistles (1 Corinthians 3:18; 6:9; 15:33; Galatians 6:7; Ephesians 5:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 1 John 3:7). Through the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13) we would suffer the punishment of death (Romans 7:11).

Since Adam had rejected God’s wisdom, he was now left to his own resources to face the conflict and struggle of a world which was turned against him. Eventually it would overpower him and he would return to the dust from which he had been made. Because of his sin he was excluded from the garden so he would not be able to
partake of the tree of life. Only after atonement had been made would people be able to receive eternal life, which is found only in Christ and available only through faith in him.

Kuyper suggests that the “knowledge of good and evil” which would be imparted by the forbidden tree is not an intellectual knowledge of the nature of good and evil, but a deciding for oneself what good and evil are. The temptation was one to autonomy, not one to knowledge by experiential involvement in good and evil. Kuyper rejects this latter idea for the reason that God also possesses this knowledge (Genesis 3:22). Thus in contrast to accepting the law of God, mankind took upon himself the prerogative to decide what is good and evil. Berkouwer points out the confusion which results from this revolt against God and preference for autonomy. (Isaiah 5:20)

This approach to the Fall rejects the concept of a “probationary commandment” in which God left Adam free to choose good or evil, which is not far from making God the author of evil and sin. The idea of a “probationary commandment” sees humans as autonomous, not truly dependent upon God but in some way independent, so as to be able to make choices for themselves on the basis of their “freedom.” That this is clearly a non-biblical concept cannot be denied. The correlate of the idea of a probationary commandment, in which Adam was left to choose between good and evil, is the idea that by such a choice, independently made, he could by his own efforts attain to righteousness. In his own power he could be virtuous. This is in fact the temptation of the serpent - that Adam could be like God, that is, self-sufficient in virtue.

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351 G C Berkouwer. Sin, p. 271. See also S G De Graaf, Het Ware Geloof, p. 53, for the same view.

352 This is the error of dispensationalism. In that view of Scripture there are a number of “dispensations” or stages in God’s relationship with mankind, in each of which different tests are given by which humans can attain to favour with God through obedience, namely, fulfilling the conditions of the various tests. “These periods are marked off in Scripture by some change in God’s method of dealing with mankind, or a portion of mankind, in respect of the two questions of sin and of man’s responsibility. Each of the dispensations may be regarded as a new test of the natural man, and each ends in judgement - marking his utter failure.” C I Scofield. Rightly dividing the Word of Truth. Philadelphia: Philadelphia School of the Bible. 3rd edition, 1925, p. 20. That this is the very approach we criticise in this section is obvious. For further critique of dispensationalism see Daniel P Fuller. Gospel and Law: Contrast or Continuum? Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980.
The command given to Adam was not to test him or give him an occasion by which to sin if he so chose, but to teach him that he was dependent on obedience to God for life. He was not autonomous; he was to be restricted by God’s prerogatives which were not to be usurped by creatures.

God did not make Adam with “free will” with which to choose obedience or disobedience. The idea of a “free will” necessitates that for the exercise of that free will to be genuine, the options must be left morally neutral. That is, it is not a genuine granting of free will if there are only two options, one of which carries the penalty of death. For God to say “Choose A or B, but if you choose B you will die” means that Adam was constrained against exercising his will freely. He was threatened with a penalty if he did not exercise his “free will” to choose what another desired him to choose. This makes a mockery of the idea of free will.

Does this command not imply that God placed man at the crossroads of good and evil, with a free will, before a choice of two paths, a choice presupposed and pointed out by God himself?\textsuperscript{353}

But denial of “free will” does not mean then that Adam was \textit{determined}, unable to choose at all. He was not \textit{compelled} to sin by not having a will free to choose obedience. Only within the framework of a “free will” doctrine does this conclusion make sense, namely, that the will must be either free or determined. Both approaches are based on an unbiblical anthropology and must therefore be rejected.

However, when we look at the Scripture, we do not see Adam being given a number of options by God; no, he was told \textbf{not} to touch the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. “We must first of all note that Genesis does not say that man was placed before a neutral and indifferent choice. We read of a command that was given man.”\textsuperscript{354} He was not free to disobey this command, in the sense that God had \textbf{prohibited} his disobedience, and strengthened the prohibition with the threat of the penalty of death. By giving this command, God was prescribing for Adam his limits and indicating the prerogatives retained by God. The fall into sin came as a result not

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{353} G C Berkouwer. \textit{Man: The Image of God}, p. 345.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{354} Ibid.}
of the exercise of “free will” but by being deceived. Adam and Eve were induced to doubt God’s trustworthiness and veracity, and thereby believed a lie and were thereby led astray. As a result they violated the command given them.

We are not free to break the law of God. As creatures of God, made to serve him faithfully, in obedience to his law for our lives, violation of that law is a violation of our very nature. In no sense can it be maintained that the freedom to sin was an option given to mankind by God. We are responsible beings; that is, not self-sufficient, but made to respond to the law of God. We cannot determine our own law, we can only accept the law that God has given us, or else in a violation of our true natures reject that law and live in rebellion.

God does not, however, compel us to keep that law. We are able, as history tragically reveals, to violate it constantly. This violation however is not without penalty; the law is the way of life, rejection of the law leads only to death. This indicates that the command given to Adam was not to test how he would exercise his free will; it was to point him to the path of life through obedience.

We are made to live and not to die. But if a free exercise of the will in choosing disobedience leads only to death, then that exercise of the will is not natural but counter-natural. It destroys the life we were meant to possess in obedience and dependence on God. Thus we do not possess a free will by which we can choose from a number of options: we can only respect or violate our God-given calling.

Wolfson has argued that the problem of free will was developed first by Philo Judaeus. The Greek philosophers had all (apart from the Epicureans) seen the human will as determined by the laws of nature which govern the universe, including human beings. Therefore no human act was free in the sense that it could be otherwise. A “voluntary act” was only one based on knowledge without external compulsion.\textsuperscript{355} A choice made by someone will be based on the relative strengths of the forces of reason and emotion. The will is not independent of these forces; it is merely the description of the choice which these forces determine. Human acts must follow the dictates of reason, not that we are free to choose between reason and emotions; but

because we must cultivate reason by the acquisition of knowledge so that it will dominate the emotions and so determine that choice will be rational rather than emotional.  

Philo however asserted that just as God may infringe on the laws of nature in order to perform miracles, so humans can infringe on the laws of nature, and by the exercise of free will they can act contrary to the laws of nature. The laws of nature are unchangeable, because God, who set them in nature, is himself unchangeable. However God has retained for himself the right of free agency to change these laws of his own making. As a corollary to the concept of God’s freedom, humanity possesses freedom by which to violate the laws of nature. That means that someone faced with a choice can, when faced with the determining forces of his own nature, act contrary to all those forces by the free exercise of the will. The only hindrance to free will is external constraint, not internal determination.

Philo stresses that human freedom is a gift of God miraculously inserted into human nature, that is, in the soul, as a result of God’s free will. In itself the possession of free will is a violation of the laws of nature. Philo’s anthropology was built on a microcosm-macrocosm view. Mankind was a small version of God - possessing the same faculties, abilities and nature. God, then, was seen as having a will free to choose without any constraint from reason or emotions. Thus his election of those who would be saved cannot be understood as a reasoned or emotional act - it has no cause whatsoever except God’s free will. This is in conflict with the Biblical revelation of God’s election in grace and love. True, it does not pay regard to human worthiness or virtue, but is based on God’s free choice. God is not constrained by human expectations but follows only his own loving and merciful nature.

The whole thrust of Wolfson’s argument is that Philo developed the theory of free will in order to overcome some of the difficulties in his synthesis of Greek philosophy

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359 Ibid., p. 453.
with Biblical revelation.\textsuperscript{361} It is based on a view of anthropology which cannot be reconciled with the Biblical view. The idea of an immaterial soul implanted in the body to rule it and govern its more or less autonomous physical processes, is the counterpart of the idea of God ruling over the material world and controlling it. The will is part of the soul which is above the material world. Both God and the soul are placed on the same side of the boundary, and the body and the world on the other. It is a divinisation of part of human nature, and a deprecation of creation.

But when Philo says that God gave to the human mind a portion “of that free will which is His most peculiar possession and most worthy of His majesty,” and that by this gift of free will the human mind “in this respect has been made to resemble Him,” it is quite evident that by man’s free will Philo means an absolutely undetermined freedom like that enjoyed by God, who by his power to work miracles can upset the laws of nature and the laws of causality which He himself has established.\textsuperscript{362}

This then is the root of the paradigm of the doctrines of free will and determinism; humans are either endowed with sovereignty equal in nature (although not in extent) to that of God, a sovereignty which moreover is arbitrary for both God and mankind; or else mankind is utterly subservient to the laws of nature, and responsibility for sin is obscured. Likewise, for both the free-will and the determinist views salvation is escaping from the confines of the laws of nature; that is, transcending the matter which confines the spirit. The reformational perspective of human life as one governed by the pre-functional religiously-committed heart is one which precludes any notion of a free will, uninfluenced by the person as a whole.\textsuperscript{363}

\textsuperscript{361} Incidentally, Wolfson argues that the period of Medieval synthesis began with Philo, who first made the attempt at synthesis between Greek philosophy and Biblical religion, and ended with Spinoza, who was the first to reject the ideal of such a synthesis, and who attempted to formulate a philosophy based on reason alone. For a critique of this suggestion see D T Runia. “History of philosophy in the grand manner: The achievement of H A Wolfson.” \textit{Philosophia Reformata} 49 (1984) p. 112.


\textsuperscript{363} One of the implications of this view of freewill and determinism is that Dooyeweerd’s “nature-freedom” ground motif is actually not a Renaissance humanist view (although it comes into a predominant position in humanist thought) but a theme which has its origin in Philo in his conflict with theories of deterministic natural law.
Calvin rejects the view that the freedom of the will means the ability to choose freely the path to follow, the direction of life, in complete autonomy. This implies that the person who wills is not a fallen sinful human being, whose life’s direction is already decided by the fall. Mankind was, according to Calvin, free before the fall, but now is a slave to sin (John 8:34) and only in the Spirit of the Lord is he able to find liberty (2 Cor 3:17). The difficulty in trying to understand the meaning of freedom in a fallen situation arises from the fact that freedom comes to mean autonomy and arbitrary choice, a view totally opposed to Scripture. Christian freedom has nothing to do with autonomy and arbitrariness, but is found only in submission to God. 

It is the believer who is in union with Christ and fully submitted to him who is truly free (John 8:32-36. Cf. Romans 6:6,19,22; Galatians 5:1).

Placing Divine power and human freedom over against each other is actually using a secularised view of freedom which emphasises autonomy. It cannot but see God as begrudging mankind true freedom - the very sin with which the serpent accused God to Eve (Genesis 3:4-5). The idea that God respects human freedom in the choice for good or evil in the Garden of Eden is ultimately based on an opposition between freedom and compulsion, even if it is stressed that God wants this kind of freedom and not enforced obedience. Berkouwer points out that the concept of true freedom is lost when it is perverted to arbitrary choice which it must when it is reduced to choice between equal options, instead of between obedience to the command of God, or rebellion against him. Neither are the commands of God arbitrary: they are the path to life. Augustine placed an emphasis on the will of God which caused him to believe that any command would have been as appropriate to God for a test as the prohibition of the tree. The tree in his view was not harmful in itself but would become so only if through disobedience concerning it Adam and Eve would suffer the penalty of death. But the command was not arbitrary, it was the path of life. Neither was the

365 Ibid., p. 320.
366 Ibid., p. 322.
367 Ibid., p. 323.
368 Ibid., p. 333.
369 Ibid., p. 335.
concern a test of the obedience of Adam and Eve, as we have already shown. Rather, it was to guide them into obedience, thereby establishing them in the path of life.

This emphasis on the primacy of the will of God, arbitrarily decreeing restrictions to Adam and Eve, has led to other important consequences, both positive and negative, in the doctrine of creation. Negative, when the will of God is placed in opposition to the “natural laws” which govern creation, leading to a dualistic interventionist concept of miracle. It is based on the view that a “free will” is a faculty exempt from the control of external forces. In human anthropology it is seen as part of the transcendent, above the “laws of nature” which determine the other aspects of the person. On the other hand a deterministic position, in which everything is pre-ordained by God for his glory, denies the existence of a “free will” which is outside of natural law. The problem of free-will versus determinism is a false dilemma which must not be accepted as Biblical.

The positive consequences are that the will of God for creation is seen to be the same will which brings about miracles. It is correctly recognised that the will of God for miracle does not contradict the will of God for creation. Both are the work of God. This positive result leads to the view that miracles are not opposed to the creation order. However, this can be misinterpreted in two ways. Diemer falls into one error by equating miracles with aspects of the creation order, while the humanistic thinkers he criticises in his study on the history of the doctrine of creation and miracle view the creation as the work of God, but deny miracle, since they see this as a change in the will of God for creation, which they consider impossible. Only by abandoning the unbiblical psychology of the primacy of the will can the problem be resolved. God brings the creation order into being, but also works miracles, which counter the effects of the fall in creation. Miracle is opposed to the law of sin and death, and it is this dissolution of the creation structures which is counter to the will of God. Thus it is readily apparent that reforming our concept of the will is crucial for understanding the Biblical view of creation and miracle.

God does not compel us to keep the Law; however he requires it of us. We are created to be obedient. We are not compelled to be obedient because God respects what he has made: every creature has conditions and limits for its existence. We were made...
responsible; therefore God expects us to be responsible and obedient. Lawlessness is a violation of limits sovereignly imposed. It is a compulsion of others to bow to our desires, a failure to respect the limits for our relationship with others, and failure to respect the calling of other to be obedient without constraint or restraint. Sphere sovereignty is the classic example of a theory which demonstrates how God has established limits in his creation order for creaturely life; by this theory we are able to discern the limits for many corporate actions, so as not to violate the ordinances of creation, the law of God. The understanding of these limits unfolds within time so that God’s revelation to us in the creation ordinances is covenantal and developmental.

God acts in covenant relationship with his people. He responds to our obedience or disobedience, so as to bless or chasten us. He does not pre-determine everything from before the creation, but has declared his purpose to bring the creation to its completion, consummating all things so as to reveal his glory. He has declared his goal, but has not determined every step of the way towards that goal. The concept of God’s sovereignty in history does not mean that he has pre-determined every event, but that no matter how we respond to his law, he still guides events towards their goal. God therefore is said to “repent” or change his mind, not that the goal becomes different, but because human responses require different responses from God so as to keep things moving towards their appointed end.

In rejecting the idea that creation and Creator are opposed in the sense of temporal change and decay contrasted with an eternal unchanging God it becomes obvious that God does in fact change. By “temporal” we mean merely created, dependent, and by “eternal” uncreated, self-sufficient. The creation is subject to time, while God is the giver of the law for temporality. He is not subject to the law but establishes the law. God is not therefore removed from time, but in covenantal relationship with his creation.

By saying that God changes, we do not mean that he is subject to temporal change (since God is not subject to time), that is, becoming different, deviating, or decaying, but that God is responding to the world that he has made. God does not change his nature, e.g. from righteousness to unrighteousness, but he does change his mind, that is, he repents, he acts in response to human sin and obedience. God has therefore not
predetermined everything, he has given the law which we are obliged to obey, and he acts in blessing or judgement according to human responsibility or irresponsibility according to the terms of the covenant.\textsuperscript{371}

3. THE COSMIC REDEMPTION OF CHRIST

Christ, the Son of God through whom the world was made (Hebrews 1:2) came to bring redemption, the restoration of righteousness and God’s kingly rule, wherever the effects of sin had touched the creation. Not only does he uphold the entire creation (Hebrews 1:3), he also restores it to its condition of wholeness (Colossians 1:20).

Since the redemption wrought by Christ is cosmic in scope, eradicating sin wherever it is found, then no effects of the fall lie outside the possibility of redemption. The extent of redemption is as broad as the extent of sin, and so any evil can be dealt with in Christ. There is no separation between a “spiritual” realm where redemption is applicable, and a “natural” realm which is beyond his all-encompassing power. Creation is all of one piece; it is therefore affected by sin in every part, and redeemed by Christ in every part.\textsuperscript{372} The redemption of Christ focuses on the source of the fall and its continuing effects and consequences, namely disobedience, brokenness and death. It is unhelpful to talk of “breaking” the law, whether it be moral law or physical laws such as gravity. Instead it would be more appropriate to speak of rebellion against the law. The law cannot be broken, in the sense that it loses its effect. Failure to respect the law of gravity can lead to injury or death. Failure to respect laws for ethical or juridical behaviour likewise result in damage to moral and legal wholeness. These laws hold for creation regardless of our response to them; it is us who are broken by disobedience, not the laws ordained by God.

\textsuperscript{371} This covenantal relationship means that it is possible to talk about God’s election without falling into either a voluntaristic view in which election is based on an arbitrary and capricious will which is not bound by any normativity, or to an ontic view which sees election as a necessary consequence of God’s being. God’s election is a \textit{religious} relationship with his creation, not one of ontic continuity. It belongs to revelation, and is anchored in his covenantal Word, to which God is continually faithful, not in his eternal nature. Only by distinguishing between God and his covenanting Word can we avoid the conflict between supralapsarian and infralapsarian views. By stressing the covenantal relationship of revelation and response we can avoid some of the traditional problematics. See G Spykman, “A new look at election and reprobation.”

\textsuperscript{372} Cf. H Ridderbos. \textit{The Coming of the Kingdom}, p. 67.
Thus Christ, through his obedience to God’s law for the creation in its manifold aspects, has regained wholeness and life for the creation. The emphasis in Scripture on Christ’s obedience to the law is another indication of the nature of the fall. It was not a wrong choice, the consequences of the exercise of free will, which resulted in the fall, it was disobedience to the law. Christ did not come to redeem us by making right choices, as would be the case if wrong choice were the root of our faults, but to live in obedience and this redeem us from our disobedience. He is the incarnation of the truth, and as such can redeem us from the deception and lies of the devil. The law is a law of life; it is only disobedience which results in death. Paul confesses that the law brought death only because of sin; had there been no sin, the law would not have caused death as the penalty for disobeying the law. However, in a fallen situation, the law became a law of sin and death (Romans 7:7-8). Where rebellion is a way of life (as a result of Adam’s rejection of the path of life) then the presence of the law arouses rebellion and results in sin (Romans 8:7-8). Where there is no law there is no sin. Christ came to set us free from the bondage of the law of sin and death. We have been shown the way of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

But not only are we as human beings to be renewed, and to receive the redemption of our bodies in the eschaton; the entire creation is to be restored. The heavens and the earth are to be recreated. The purpose of this renewal and restoration of the creation, the fulfillment of which is the new earth, is to restore to us the home which was made for us, and in which we are aliens because of the fall and the curse. The new earth on the other hand will be our home forever. It will be a place of righteousness, from which the dangers and sorrow of the fall and the curse will be removed (Isaiah 65:17-25; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-22:5).

4. MIRACLE: SIGN OF REDEMPTION

Having then analysed Diemer’s views on miracle, and the views of the reformational thinkers who influenced him, we now need to see what we can say about the nature of miracle. The problem with Diemer’s view is that it makes every action of God in sustaining his creation into a miracle. A miracle then becomes indistinguishable from
any other event; and if everything is a miracle then nothing is a miracle. What we need is a means of distinguishing miracles from the work of God in providential care for his creation. For it seems clear that the work of God in bringing creation into being and continually sustaining that creation should be placed under one rubric not two. God’s providence is his constant covenantal relationship with his creation.

Miracles on the other hand are clearly related to the work of redemption. That is, they are the restoration and renewal of a fallen creation as signs of the coming kingdom; not the natural development of creational structures as Diemer suggests. However they are not contrary to nature, as is commonly thought, and which was combatted so fiercely by Diemer and Augustine, but they are contrary to the distortions the fall has wrought in God’s good creation.

The difficulty inherent in the view of miracles which sees them to be contrary to nature is that it sees the present order of nature to be normative; therefore a miracle breaks into the normal course of nature. In fact such intervention in the world leaves the autonomous natural order unaffected; these miracles are only “supernatural,” that is, extrinsic to the world - and therefore in a very real sense superfluous. If on the other hand a miracle goes contrary to the effects of the fall, then what appears to be contrary to nature is in fact a restoration of a distorted creation to normativity. The miracles of Christ make visible the fulfillment of the promised redemption: the coming of the kingdom of God. They make visible the restoration of the creation, and thus the all-embracing and redemptive significance of the kingdom.373

We must make a distinction between the so-called “nature- miracles” and the miracles of healing and similar deeds. For example, the feeding of the five thousand is not a restoration to normativity, but a demonstration which makes known God’s power over his creation. Jesus did not however work his miracles through his divine nature, but as a man full of the power of the Spirit and faith. This provides us with another aspect of the true miracle: it is a manifestation of God’s power. It is not the manifestation of some power or potential hidden within the creation order - it is a spiritual power not found within the creation: the breakthrough of the Kingdom of heaven.374

373 Ibid., pp. 65, 117.
374 Ibid., p. 66.
This does not imply however that a miracle is the result of divine intervention. God’s power is not intruding into an otherwise independent and self-sufficient creation; it is a manifestation of the power of God, which constantly sustains and governs all things, to deliver the creation from the effects of sin. The power of God which makes the winds blow (Psalms 147:18; 148:8) is the same power which parts the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21) so as to deliver the Israelites from their oppressors.

A miracle is a work of redemption, restoring brokenness and delivering from distress, building the faith of believers and confounding the wicked, who when confronted with the power of God reject it in unbelief (Luke 11:14-16). It is the work of the Spirit in our midst building the Kingdom of God, leading it to its fulfillment and strengthening it in its conflict against the demonic powers of darkness (Acts 4:23-31). The Kingdom of God in our midst will have its fullest expression when the power of God to restore and make new is expressed in every area of our lives, not just in physical healing, but in delivering us from bondage to the evil spirits of the age, which have the ascendency in academic activity, politics, economics, ethics, aesthetics, physical, biological and human sciences, in our work and in our leisure.

If we are to understand a miracle to be the work of God in relationship to his creation, redirecting and restoring what he has made contrary to the effects of the fall, then it is impossible to postulate that miracles came to an end with the Apostles (or in any other period) without necessitating a radical change in the nature of God’s relationship to the entire creation - something which has absolutely no warrant in Scripture. Thus we can still expect to see miracles worked by the Spirit today by those who are in faith-communion with Christ. Miracle will be evident wherever the redemption of Christ is found.

While it is true that there will be miracles evident wherever the Spirit moves in power, in response to the believing prayer of the people of God, it is necessary to distinguish this from the many well-publicised claims to miracle power which are made today. As in the days of Christ and the Apostles, true miracles are usually worked unobtrusively, within a Christian fellowship, and not as a public spectacle.
Christ’s miracles have no purpose in themselves. They are signs of the truth of his proclamation that the kingdom of heaven has come. They are not more predominant than his teaching, because they are there to support the teaching, not supplant it. That is why there is a close correlation between the miracles performed by Christ and the faith of the people. A miracle strengthens faith and recognition of the authority of Jesus, but must be expected in faith. This does not mean that there was a dependence on the disposition of the people for Christ’s ability to work signs, but that a miracle performed in circumstances where there is no faith would only be a display of power. It could not display the true significance of Christ’s mission in proclaiming the coming of the kingdom. This is why Christ refused to give a sign to his opponents. A true miracle can be discerned only in faith, since the true purpose of Christ’s mission was to preach the kingdom, seeking the believing repentant response of the people, not simply recognition of his power. A miracle has importance only for the preaching of the Gospel; it has no independent significance.

Signs are not self evident meaning. The resurrection of a man from the dead would be subject to endless speculation. What made Jesus’ restoral so unique was that it came against the background of a messianic preparation and as fulfillment. Receiving or performing a miracle is not a sign of participation in the kingdom which is to come (Matt 7:22, Luke 10:20, 17:17-19), since even unbelievers can work false miracles by the power of Satan (“lying wonders” which deceive. Matt 24:24, 2 Thess 2:9, Rev 13:15). Only responding in obedience to the call to repent and believing in Christ as the Messiah results in belonging to the Kingdom.

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375 A miracle will be recognised as an extraordinary event where there is no faith, but its provenance and witness-bearing character will be denied. “It is… faith giving evidence rather than evidence demanding faith.” Morris Inch. “The apologetic use of ‘sign’ in the Fourth Gospel,” p. 37. Diemer’s suggestion that a miracle will not even be recognisable where there is no faith cannot be sustained by the Biblical evidence. Cf. John 9, 10:31-39, Acts 4:16-21.

376 H Ridderbos, op. cit., pp. 117ff.

377 Morris Inch, op. cit., p. 35.

5. CREATION AND MIRACLE IN CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANITY

The doctrine of creation and its relation to miracle is of more than academic significance. It has implications and formative influence on our whole worldview and way of life. Every worldview presupposes some conception of origins, and this shapes perspectives on development and history as well as future goals. In this section we will briefly discuss, as only one possible example, the way in which various views of creation and miracle shape political perspectives.

Views of creation held by Christians will be correlate with their social vision. A God who is distant from the world, a world autonomously functioning independently of God, who intervenes only on infrequent occasions (usually restricted in this view to Biblical history) leads to the view that any involvement by Christians in society is likewise to be limited to infrequent intervention to ameliorate blatant immorality and evil (such as abortion.) In fact such intervention still leaves an autonomous world unaffected: these miracles are only “supernatural,” that is, extrinsic to the world - and therefore in a very real sense superfluous. Christian action to ameliorate the excesses of an immoral society without God still leaves society as such unaltered. This intervention is not an integral involvement with society, but an external reaction to events in which Christians otherwise play no explicit role. However everyone is involved in society merely by virtue of living within it; non-involvement is as much a political view as active campaigning for change. Non-involvement is an explicit preference for the status quo. Such external reaction to societal change is rightly resented by others because it is a critique from a position of supposed detachment and implicit superiority.

A miracle is seen as a special event which lets the world know that God is still there, even though he is basically unconcerned. Likewise external critique from Christians brings the church before the attention of society but also indicates its intention to stay removed from the taintedness of social action. It is a criticism of those working for social change with no constructive or informed assistance to offer.
The interventionist spirit of the church is indeed a conservative spirit; it postulates a society which is independent of God, functioning according to natural laws, which must be superseded only when they conflict with the “higher” spiritual laws, that is, ethics. A Christian perspective on social engagement can only develop consistently on a Biblical perspective of a world which is dependent constantly on God. Christian action with integrity will be involvement in God’s world, not intervention in an independent society to tinker with its workings.

Similarly such a view of society will support a conservative view of government which supervises a self-regulating economy and industry; it will seek to permit “natural” developments (market forces) to take their course rather than guide economic and industrial development in the path of justice. Again such a view postulates the normativity of the world which however in reality is in the grip of the law of sin and death. Thus a Christian perspective which supports a non-committed interventionist relationship to society will not have a truly biblical view of sin and redemption. It will attempt to correct or at least minimise the evil in the world by means of relatively minor external action, rather than recognise the spiritual mis-direction which goes to the very heart of social and political structures, requiring equally radical redemption. Strangely, such a view could also eventually abandon the world and its contamination to destruction and look for a new earth, radically discontinuous with this one, instead of confessing the Biblical hope of the renewal of all things, and neglecting the command to be the light for a world lost in darkness.

It is no coincidence that the most powerful perspective on Christian involvement in political and social life in obedience to the Lord was developed by Kuyper and his colleagues and spiritual heirs in the reformational movement, who all radically reject any notion of a world independent and autonomous over against God. Likewise, they saw the reality of sin as an all-pervading corruption of human life which has turned away from God, and thus they were able to recognise the full significance of the cosmic redemption of Jesus Christ, and his call to obedience arising from the renewal of the heart to serve God in every area of life.

Dooyeweerd argues that Augustine’s Christian idea of personality predominates in his world-view, expressed clearly in his doctrine of the primacy of the will. God was the
absolutely free will, and correlated with that was the predominant place in Augustine’s thought concerning the “contingent.”\textsuperscript{379} Both the human legal order and the ethic of grace were seen by Augustine to be rooted in the lex aeterna. The Christianised idea of the state was a reflection of the divine idea of justice, and so the state had its goal in the eternal order, not in the temporal.\textsuperscript{380}

Doooyeweerd argued that from before the time of Augustine there was a conflict between the Greek thought pattern which attempted to construe the universe in terms of an ultimately rational basic principle, which assumed the primacy of the intellect; and what Doooyeweerd sees to be more specifically Christian, an emphasis on the primacy of the will in both God and humanity. Human reason was required to submit to the sovereign will of God.\textsuperscript{381}

Doooyeweerd sees a “reforming direction” in the work of John Duns Scotus, which countered some of the degeneration of the Augustinian ideal of the lex aeterna. In conjunction with his critical realism, his emphasis on the primacy of the will prepared for the transformation of the Thomistic wetsidee to a Christian idea of cosmic order.\textsuperscript{382} This critical realism saved Scotus from the speculations of Augustine’s uncritical realism, which led to fantasies dissociated from experience.\textsuperscript{383} This critical realism and primacy of the will led Scotus, in Doooyeweerd’s opinion, to the insight that God is Will and has revealed the purposes of his will as well as the way in which he is to be served. This then enabled a true insight into the nature of religion. Therefore it cuts off at the root unfruitful speculations, since religion is contingent, and does not concern necessary rational acts of God.\textsuperscript{384} From this Scotus realised that the cosmic law-order is not grounded in the rational essence of God but in his creative will. There is no necessity here for God to will any particular thing, it is a totally free will. This arbitrary will is not however divorced from God’s righteousness, wisdom and

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., pp. 43-44.
\item Ibid., pp. 70-71.
\item Ibid., pp. 73-74.
\item Ibid., p. 74.
\item Ibid., p. 75.
\end{enumerate}
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goodness, as William of Ockham held in a nominalistic fashion, according to Dooyeweerd.\textsuperscript{385}

God’s arbitrary will is bound to his holy being and so he cannot deviate from what he wills.\textsuperscript{386} Scotus was trying to see God’s sovereign contingent will as free from necessity of natural causality or natural laws. This was the first occasion, Dooyeweerd says, on which the sovereignty of God and the boundary-character of his law-order was so clearly expressed. Scotus’ distinction between God’s absolute power and his ordinances must lead to the conclusion that the cosmic order or law, grounded in God’s sovereignty, is the boundary between God and his creation.\textsuperscript{387}

Where the cosmic order begins, there lies the boundary limit of human reason, of human possibility, of human willing. Where the cosmic order ends, there begins the divine will and the divine reason.\textsuperscript{388}

As a result, various spheres of life, state, church, art, science, philosophy, etc. are dependent on God’s will alone, not on a rational cosmic order such as a universal entelechy. There is a specific law for each sphere, according to the sovereign ordinances of God.\textsuperscript{389} Thus the political principles derived from Scotus’ position were according to Dooyeweerd closer to a biblical view of the creation law-order.

However, Ockham saw God’s will as completely arbitrary. It was severed from God’s righteousness, and was not rooted in the lex aeterna. God’s will then became capricious and untrustworthy, and his sovereign power was seen as tyranny.\textsuperscript{390} Ockham’s principles for the creation order resulted in a separation of “nature” and “grace,” which were seen as opposed in an irreconcilable dualism. “Nature” no longer led to “grace,” and a Christian lived in two distinct and unrelated spheres: the church and the state. As a result Ockham saw the state as autonomous, determining its own

\textsuperscript{385} Ibid., p. 76. See pages 78-84 for a survey of Dooyeweerd’s critique of Ockham.

\textsuperscript{386} Ibid., pp. 76-77.

\textsuperscript{387} Ibid., p. 77.

\textsuperscript{388} H Dooyeweerd. “In den strijd om een christelijke staatkunde.” Antirevolutionaire Staatkunde 1 (1924-1925) p. 117. Quoted from the translation in Skillen, op. cit., p. 77.

\textsuperscript{389} J W Skillen, op. cit., p. 78.

\textsuperscript{390} Ibid., p. 80.
laws, sovereign over both common and positive law.\textsuperscript{391} All authority was traced back to the individual, and so government was based on a social compact made between autonomous individuals.\textsuperscript{392} This ultimately leads to the destruction of legal and moral consciousness, as concepts such as “good” or bad,” “just” or “unjust” have no reality apart from human will.\textsuperscript{393}

Dooyeweerd discusses the development of this line of thought in Marsilius of Padua, who saw the original point of departure for the state as the anti-social individual in a state of nature where there is no form of law. A state is then constructed by mankind for the general welfare, and the task of the state is to promote individual well-being while suppressing the anti-social will.\textsuperscript{394} The state is thereby deprived of its moral character and natural law is virtually identified with positive law; it has no connection with any lex aeterna.\textsuperscript{395} This is the fruit of the unbiblical notion of the arbitrary sovereign will of God, divorced from righteousness and holiness, which created a world based not on a lex aeterna but on caprice. The results of both the absolutisation of the will of Philo’s theory, opposed to natural law, and of rejection of a cosmic law-order, are abhorrent views of the state and politics. Machiavelli, unlike Scotus, absolutised the natural law idea of the Stoics. His political “ethic” was based on the determination of cause and effect, or natural necessity. Thus we must follow our natural inclinations which are given to us by nature. We will never change, and so to understand human nature we need merely examine the fruits of past human action.\textsuperscript{396} This universal natural law of necessity is the foundation for politics. Political necessity can therefore justify any action.\textsuperscript{397}

The obvious consequences of this view of the will and its opposition to determining natural laws is the unbiblical dialectic which Dooyeweerd calls the “nature-freedom” dialectic. Absolutisation of the freedom pole (Philo’s “free will”) gives total human autonomy, which results in a desire to dominate nature. But this leads to an

\textsuperscript{391} Ibid., p. 82.
\textsuperscript{392} Ibid., p. 83.
\textsuperscript{393} Ibid., pp. 79-80.
\textsuperscript{394} Ibid., p. 86.
\textsuperscript{395} Ibid., p. 87.
\textsuperscript{396} Ibid., p. 96.
\textsuperscript{397} Ibid., pp. 97-98.
autonomous objective science in which there is no room for the human personality. The roots of the nature-freedom dialectic and its theoretical expression in the free-will/determinism polarity are to be found in unbiblical views of the creation, the law-order of creation, and their relation to God. Only a biblical view of these themes will be able to liberate us from the humanistic perspectives in politics which are (falsely) presented as the only alternatives. Only on the basis of a biblical view of creation and its relation to God will we be able to develop a truly Christian political alternative. Thus the doctrine of creation is not merely of academic or theological importance; it touches on matters of everyday life in ways which we are only beginning to realise. This survey of the impact of the doctrine of creation on political thought is presented merely as an example of this.

6. CONCLUSION

The needs of the church today are two-fold: an informed and incisive analysis of its faith formulations, and a renewal of the power and life of the community of believers by Holy Spirit. One of these without the other will never bring renewal to the church. As Richard Russell has pointed out the most dynamic growing points in the church today are the reformational movement and the charismatic movement. Both are moving away from inadequate traditional responses to Scripture, seeking truly Scriptural alternatives which demonstrate the Lordship of Christ in daily life, and yet both suffer from the weaknesses of the traditions from which they have come: intellectualising of the Gospel and neglect of the power of the Spirit in the Kingdom; and an anti-intellectual privatisation of the Gospel, with weakness in Biblical exposition and theology, and a dependence on dualistic concepts of creation and miracle.

Only as these movements discover the strengths and weaknesses of their own positions, and the complementary strengths of the other, will we see a renewal of Christian faith and thought which will both challenge the dominant spirits of the age in every area of life, and provide a powerful and vibrant alternative, rooted in both


deep insight and miracle working faith. Central to this renewal is the recovery of a Biblical perspective on creation and its relation to the Creator, especially as this is expressed in miracle. It is my hope that this study will contribute to the renewal of Christian faith and thought in our day.

_Do not quench the Spirit,_
_do not despise prophesying,_
_but test everything,_
_hold fast to what is good,_
_abstain from every form of evil._

1 Thessalonians 4:19-22.
LETTER FROM J H DIEMER TO PROFESSOR HERMAN DOOYEWERD

J H Diemer,                                  2 June 1932
Lagemorschweg 51,
Leiden.

Professor Dooyeweerd,

As arranged I have sent you with this the articles written by me for the SSR magazine about “Dynamic pluralism.” The fifth article must still be printed, the magazine is in financial difficulties and for that reason it may be some time before another issue appears. Therefore I have sent you a copy of this last article.

I also enclose an issue of the Orgaan der Chr. Leerarenvereniging. It contains a summary of a lecture which I recently gave. Dr de Gaay Fortman, with whom I spoke several times about the serious difficulties with which the Christian biologist must wrestle, asked me to speak about Driesch to the biology group. I presented among others the ideas of Prof. Vollenhoven; Dr de Gaay Fortman had provided me with an article written by Prof. Vollenhoven in which the direction was given for a solution. This fascinated me; it was then that I first came into contact with the theory of spheres, and this has not ceased to fascinate me since. I can however no longer agree with various things in my resume.

The lectures which you have given in Leiden have strengthened and clarified my insight into the theory of spheres, I will here yet again offer you all my heartfelt thanks for that. For the Christian biologist the theory of evolution is a great stumbling block, over which already several reformed people have fallen. The state of affairs today is very painful; there is a threat of a breach between theologians and scientific researchers. At the last meeting of our organisation in Utrecht, where Prof. Hepp spoke, that became very obvious. I consider it my calling to work to avoid this. By continuing to hold the Word of God before me I have been able to break away totally from the theory of evolution. In the enclosed series of articles you will find the account of this.

Your book - in so far as I have been able to read it - has also fascinated me greatly. I have read pages 84-97 with enthusiasm and with delight agreed with the last page, 185. Here I found written what I had already suspected for years. When I said this two years ago at the philosophical gathering, I was fiercely attacked for it. Now, after your lectures, people have reconsidered this.

Your comments on my articles I will value greatly. Still I will give here the following explanation. In your lectures you remarked that the spheres can not be reduced to one.

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I believe that this is possible; all spheres are still one in the Word. I can not see it in any other way, that all the functions work together in all knowledge. Science is for me knowledge of the Word; whenever I remove myself from the centre, I feel myself totally helpless.

As we agreed I will come to speak with you this month about various matters. The dates I will let you decide. On the 6th of June I am going to visit my parents and from the 11th to 19th of June I am on vacation.

In expectation, with the highest esteem,

Yours faithfully,

J H Diemer
LETTER OF J H DIEMER TO PROFESSOR DE BURLET

17 January 1944

Professor: Returning for the last time to the question of assisting students in their microscopic-anatomical laboratory work, I feel compelled to bring forward the following.

You say you find it “dogmatic” on my part that I am willing to assist in the topographical and other anatomical work, but not in the microscopic-anatomical work. You claim that by separating histology from microscopic anatomy you have tried to make it easier for us to accept the assignment. But that does not address the question squarely. It is not a matter of feeling but of conscience. For me the matter stands thus: in no single respect can I cooperate with your plan to take over Prof. de Haan’s class work. By this refusal I am not criticising your conduct - this would not be fitting for me as a subordinate – but I protest in the name of Christian righteousness and love for my neighbour against the unjust treatment of Prof de Haan, who was summarily discharged and sent to a concentration camp. And at the same time I am also protesting against the grievous treatment to which numbers of other innocent Dutchmen have been subjected by the National Socialists. My criticism and protest - whether they have any effect or not is irrelevant - concerns the manner in which particularly members of the personnel of Higher Education were treated by National-Socialist Germany. In this respect I stand totally on the side of the Dutchmen dismissed and placed under arrest.

If you wish to call this sabotage, it is fine with me. I can not do otherwise than refuse your assignment on the basis of my Christian conscience. This conscience comes first for me and not the emotional question of how much trouble I cause for you or for myself.

That you speak of a “grievous treatment” is understandable, for you can not see my position as a consequence of my Christian conscience, but view it as a result of a certain fear of being condemned by others if I co-operate. If this were the case, my position could rightly be branded as cowardly. The case however is totally different. It is a question of conscience for me and my position implies a principial criticism of the measures taken by the Germans with respect to numerous innocent Dutchmen; measures which conflict with Christian ethics and against which I strongly protest by my stand in the name of the Christian church. It would be immoral not to protest against these measures which accepting your assignment would mean.

I will never violate my conscience, even if this might have serious consequences for me. And certainly I cannot let those who do not accept the ethics of the Christian church determine for me what is and what is not in conflict with Christian conscience.

Only those who belong to the Christian church can determine this; outsiders can not. It has become virtually impossible for us to protest in public, but where it is still
possible to do so privately, we may not and will not desist. Freedom of conscience is the greatest good of Christian culture.

You said that it is clear from my attitude what the Christian faith is really worth to me now it comes to putting it into action. And you made this statement: “He speaks of Christianity... and leaves me in the lurch.” My response to this is that from these words it appears that you have grasped nothing of Christianity nor wish to. For precisely that refusal to obey where it concerns a question of conscience is the highest duty for the Christian. You said those things, which are painful to me, precisely because you do not know the Christian conscience. Apparently the only standard by which you are able to judge my position is that of common courtesy. But this standard can not be applied here, because you should have known that what you expect of me I cannot do. My standpoint has been known to you for years but apparently you are completely ignoring it with respect to the current issue. Therefore I say here once more emphatically, that for me nothing, absolutely nothing, of my doings is exempt from critique by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When you say, that you have received official instruction to temporarily take over the work of Prof. de Haan, and that you have the right to expect my help in doing so, then I answer that I can not recognise the authority which has issued you this instruction - on your own request - as the legitimate government. I am convinced in my conscience that the Dutch Government in England would never approve of this instruction. And even if you do not recognise that government as the lawful authority, I certainly do, again on the strength of my Christian conscience.

As for “leaving you in the lurch,” let me say this. Professor, Had you not given me this new assignment, I would never have left you in the manner in which I did, but would have carried on with my work as I had this far, which also brought with it difficulties for me and would continue to do so. Unless I would have accepted another position offered me, about which I would have informed you well in advance - I would have remained with you to the end of the war, even if I knew with certainty that I would have made myself unacceptable to many people and would forfeit their good opinion. I base this on the defeat of National Socialist Germany, of which I am not doubtful. Nevertheless I would have remained with you in spite of the threats of people, for I would not “leave you in the lurch,” precisely because of my conscience. You know how I have tried to convince you in these last few days of the unfairness of your demand, but you are impervious to reasoning.

You have said to me “Can you not control yourself for once ?” Professor, it certainly takes more self-control not to help you with your work. And I have on many occasions controlled myself over the last few months by helping the students. But violating my conscience means committing treason against Jesus Christ and treason I find the most reprehensible and detestable of all vices. And therefore I refuse to even try to impose upon myself the self-control you are now asking for.

Your view of this whole question is the necessary consequence of your National Socialist philosophy of life and of your siding with Germany, which is hostile to the Netherlands. I am critical not of your leadership, but of the principle from which that
leadership proceeds. I can respect the openness and consistency with which you profess your convictions and try to carry them out in your life - which is why I have always defended your character against attackers and shall continue to defend it - and nevertheless I detest and hate the National Socialist principle from which you live and act. For I can not see it as anything other than a principle which necessarily results in injustice, violence and violation of the conscience by the weak.

From your standpoint you can not think and act differently than you have done and you accept the full consequences of that for yourself. For me it is exactly the same. I also accept the consequences of my refusal and can expect nothing from you except my discharge, with all the resultant consequences for me and my family- But even were these consequences, humanly speaking, of the most serious nature, I shall face them calmly in the confidence of Christian faith and wait for what God has for me.

* * *

Prof. de Burlet answered to this, “that he can only say that he finds it pathetic.” I sit “ensnared in a miserable superstition.” My character is “good by nature, but has been completely distorted by my Christian dogmas.” My standpoint is “pitiful” and therefore Prof. de Burlet “feels sorry for me.” I am “completely committed” and therefore can not see reality. Further, I do not judge National Socialism fairly, for mistakes made by the SS and SD can not be held against National Socialism. Professor disapproves of numerous deeds done by these organisations. Finally, I must “seriously consider” that I can “no longer be taken under the protection of the Professor.”

My answer to this is: In effect, there is nothing more to be said. I had no need of pity and I in no way do I want Prof’s protection. Prof’s view of “right” was totally different from mine. On the wall of Prof’s office hang the portraits of Nietzsche and Hitler. These are his spiritual guides. They are of the opinion that “might is right,” a motto which is written above the entrance of the new German Academy of Germanic law.

In my opinion it would be better to close the university. Prof is totally committed to whatever the Germans want with it. What would Prof do if his colleague Prof de Haan perished while in prison ? Prof. answers “Go on with his work, which I have taken upon myself. As rector I shall try to keep things going to the very end.” My answer: “Exactly, you must continue this way and even if you would protest, you would not refuse to continue to work with the Germans. A protest however only has significance it is backed by a deed, an act of refusing to cooperate with those who subscribe to the false principle from which injustice comes.”

Prof said still: “Bear in mind that I can no longer give you protection.”
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