THE CENTRAL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY OF MANKIND IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE COSMONOMIC IDEA

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Recent studies and criticisms suggest that certain ambiguities in Dooyeweerd’s idea of the central religious community of mankind are to be seen as an after-effect of Kuypers’ notions which are of a highly problematic nature. M. E. Botha even concludes that there is no such a “thing” as the supra-temporal religious root-community.

Let us first of all consider the ambivalence of Dooyeweerd’s pronouncements concerning the central religious community of mankind.

Dooyeweerd states at several places that the whole of mankind is spiritually (religiously) one in root in its (creation, fall and) redemption, and sometimes that only the new humanity is one in root in its redemption. Dooyeweerd often writes that Christ is the Head and Root of humanity, and often that Christ is the Root of new humanity. Another version of this ambivalence is Dooyeweerd’s words that Christ is the new Root of humanity, or that Christ is the Root of new humanity.

This ambivalence becomes even more complicated when we consider the body of Christ (the “corpus Christi”, “the ecclesia invisiblis”), i.e. the new humanity in Christ as Redeemer, viewed by Dooyeweerd as the common religious root of all societal relationships. This formulation gives rise to the question whether the reborn mankind (new humanity) in Christ is not much rather to be seen as the religious root of all Christian societal forms, instead of all possible (Christian and non-Christian) societal relationships? But can we view the dead (non-elected) members of mankind apart from the new humanity in Christ as Redeemer? If this is not possible, does it not imply, on the other hand, that the whole of mankind shares in Christ’s redemptive work? Or can we solve these problems with the distinction between particular and common grace?

By analysing Dooyeweerd’s views more closely, we might perhaps get a clearer perspective on the mentioned ambivalences. In the first volume of A New Critique (N.C.I, p. 60) Dooyeweerd writes that the individual human selfhood points beyond itself toward “that which makes the whole of mankind spiritually one in root in the creation, fall and redemption”, and five lines further: “In Jesus Christ, the entire new humanity is one in root, as the members of one body”. The first sentence gives the impression that the “whole of mankind” partakes in Christ’s redemption. The second sentence, on the contrary, states explicitly that members of the new humanity are members of the body of Christ. In the same volume Dooyeweerd states that the “Archimedean point of philosophy is chosen in the new root (the lilies are mine) of mankind in Christ, in which by regeneration we have part in our reborn selfhood” (N.C.I, p. 99). He proceeds on the same page by saying that the “totality of meaning or our whole temporal cosmos is to be found in Christ, with respect to His human nature, as the root of the reborn human race”. In the first statement Christ is denoted as the “new root of mankind”, and in the second as “the root of the reborn human race” (i.e. of the new humanity). Christ, as the new religious root of our cosmos (cf. N.C.I, p. 137) gives regenerate mankind its spiritual life (cf. N.C.I, p. 506). We read in the second volume that Christ is the new root of creation (N.C.II, p. 30), and two pages further that Christ, as regards his human nature, is the root of reborn creation. (Cf. also N.C.II, p. 158 where we read about “the new religious root of creation in Christ as the concentration-point and the fulness of all the temporal meaning-aspects”).

The word-combination: “reborn creation”, is possibly not meant by Dooyeweerd to indicate that the whole of creation (including those members of fallen mankind which are not reborn in Christ) is reborn in Christ, although his following words may have this implication: “As the Redeemer, Christ is the regenerator of the entire fallen cosmos” (N.C.III, p. 507). Notwithstanding this implication, it is clear that Dooyeweerd here clearly distinguishes between the conserving and regenerating effect of Christ’s work: “Already in the present dispensation this radical change of direction in the root of life must necessarily reveal itself in temporal reality, in its conserving effect as well as in its regenerative operation” (N.C.III, p. 524).

In this context, we must mention another problem. Already in N.C.I (p. 174) Dooyeweerd explains that in “the religious solidarity of mankind . . . was integrally concentrated the entire meaning of the temporal cosmos” N.C.III, p. 524, proceeds on the same bearing: Gratia specialis or gratia particularis “really refer to the radical change brought about by Christ in the apostate root of the whole temporal cosmos, which is concentrated in mankind”. The religious (root-) community of mankind, one in creation and fall (cf. Verkenningen, Amsterdam 1962, p. 47), is the integral root-unity of our temporal cosmos, which in Christ is subjected to a radical change of root — the reason why Dooyeweerd talks about the radical change of the apostate root of the cosmos in Christ. The question to be asked is, however, whether Christ changes the apostate root of our cosmos, or whether reborn mankind receives in Christ, the second Adam, a new religious root? Consider the following words of Dooyeweerd: “On a Biblical Christian standpoint there is no other Archimedean point possible than the religious root-community of mankind, which fell from God in Adam as the first head of the covenant, but was re-established in community with God by Christ as its second Head. Our individual l-I-ness is implanted in this religious root-community of mankind. In it the meaning of our entire temporal cosmos is concentrated. Both the fall and the redemption in Christ Jesus are not of mere individual, but of cosmic significance, since the religious root of our entire temporal cosmos was deprived by the former, and in the latter a new religious root was set over against the old one” (De Transcendentale Critiek van het Wijsgerig Denken en de Grondslagen van de Wijsgerige Denkgemeenschap van het Avondland, Philosophia Reformata, 1941, p. 11).

Let us enumerate the alternative possible interpretations: (i) The apostate
religious community as the fallen religious root of our cosmos is radically changed by Christ (and redirected toward God)? This interpretation implies that the whole of fallen mankind is completely redirected toward God; and the Bible teaches explicitly that many are called, but few are elected. (ii) The re-established (elected) new humanity is the new religious root of mankind in Christ. (iii) Christ Jesus is the new religious root of the cosmos (the totality of meaning or the fulness of meaning of the cosmos), in which by regeneration we participate in our returned selfhood as branches of the true Vine. With these alternatives as a background, we proceed now to examine a few more statements of Dooyeweerd.

"From the Christian transcendence-standpoint the radical unity and meaning-totality of all temporal societal structures of individuality is only to be found in the central religious community of mankind in its creation, fall and redemption by Jesus Christ" (N.C.III, p. 169). Compare the problem of alternatives (i) and (ii) above, concerning the question whether the whole of mankind, or only the re-established (elected) mankind shares in the redemption by Christ. The third alternative contains a further complication. Throughout the N.C. Dooyeweerd calls Christ the fulness of meaning or the totality of meaning of our cosmos (cf. N.C.I, pp. 99, 506, N.C.II, pp. 30, 32, 158). In the mentioned statement of Dooyeweerd in N.C.III (p. 169), the root-unity and meaning-totality is only to be found in the central religious community of mankind in its creation, fall and its redemption by Jesus Christ. In another context Dooyeweerd distinguishes between the law-side and the subject-side of the meaning-totality: "With respect to its fulness and meaning-totality the law of God is one and indivisible: the demand of the service of God with all one's heart. With respect to the subject-side of the religious fulness and meaning-totality of our temporal creation, the cosmos has been completely concentrated in the religious root-community of the re-established mankind in Christ Jesus since the fall" (Het Tijdsprobleem in de Wijzegeertse der Westidee, 1940, p. 197). To the second transcendental question, with respect to its cosmic-nomic side: what is the totality of meaning of all the modal aspects of the cosmic order, their supra-temporal unity beyond all modal diversity of meaning? the Christian cosmonic Idea answers: "the requirement grounded in God's sovereignty, of the love and service of God and our fellowcreatures with our whole heart. To the same question with respect to its subject-side, it answers: the new religious root of the human race in Christ (in which, indeed, nothing of our created universe can be lost) in subjection to the fulness of meaning of the divine law' (N.C.I, p. 101). The "new religious root of human race" is here meant as the "religious root-community of the re-established mankind" of 1940 (Phil. Ref. p. 197). (Compare alternatives (ii) and (iii) above). In his summary of the basic structure of the Christian transcendental ground-Idea, Dooyeweerd writes about the Idea of the meaning-totality: "The direction of philosophical thought toward Christ as the root and fulness of meaning of the cosmos; Christ fulfilled the law and in Him all subjective individuality is concentrated in its fulness of meaning; nothing in our temporal cosmos is withdrawn from Him, there is no sphere of indifferent things" (N.C.I, p. 507). Dooyeweerd accentuates here that Christ is the root and fulness of meaning of the cosmos (compare alternative (iii) above).

The last ambivalence which needs to be illustrated by statements of Dooyeweerd, is that concerning the interchange of humanity and new humanity. Dooyeweerd writes about the Christian view of the body of Christ: "Behind all the temporal societal relationships it revealed the religious root of the human race. It disclosed the transcendental religious bond of unity of the latter (i.e., the human race – D.F.M.S.) in the creation, the fall into sin, and the redemption by Jesus Christ, the Head of the re-born human race (the italics are mine)" (N.C.III, p. 214). "In its normative meaning-structure the family bond points above time to the religious community of mankind in Christ (I am italicising). In Him all re-born human beings (the italics are mine) find the religious fulfillment of their temporal kinship ties as members of the human race (the italics are mine) on the basis of palingenesis" (N.C.III, p. 345).

To clear up these ambivalences we must do justice to the Biblical revelation about Christ, by Whom, through Whom and to Whom everything was created (cf. Col. 1:15–20). This revelation is centrally connected with the radical and integral Biblical meaning of creation, fall and redemption. For by Christ all things were created. And by Him and in Him all things consist, (i.e. including the non-elected members of fallen mankind). This central Biblical revelation inspired Dooyeweerd from the very start to oppose the conviction of restored scholasticism, namely that the so-called common grace is rooted in God's providence outside Christ. With the fall into sin, Christ immediately acts as mediator for the whole fallen cosmos. God does not gracefully conserve the fallen creation outside Christ. Only in Christ are all things conserved, and only through Him the true meaning-structure of creation (in its dependent non-self-sufficient nature) is saved (maintained). (This conservation of the creatonal order encloses the non-elected members of fallen mankind, as well as the new humanity, re-born in Christ). For this reason it is fully Biblical to state that also the conserving (common) grace of God is rooted in Christ. This conserving effect of Christ's mediatorial, however, does not imply that everything that consists in Christ, is also saved (redeemed) by Christ. Notwithstanding the fact that God has re-conquered the fallen cosmos in Christ with Himself (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19, Col. 1:20 and 1 John 2:2), only the new (elected) humanity partsakes in the redemption by Christ. In Christ both the conservation and the redemption receive their religious fulness of meaning. Stated in another way: All things were not only created by the Word of God, which has been incarnated in Christ Jesus, for He is simultaneously the Mediator of conservation and the Mediator of redemption. Christ as the fulness of the Word-revelation reveals the true meaning of creation, fall and redemption.

The distinctive meaning of Christ's conserving Mediatiorship and of His redemptive Mediatorship uncovers many falsely stated problems. Also in reformed theology one is often confronted with the strong after-effect of scholasticism. This is to be seen in the enclosure of Christ in the sphere of particular grace exclusive of that of common grace, and in the identification of the former with the (supra-natural) "spiritual-ethical" character of the Church-sector of life. In this narrowing, no appreciation is found of the indeed cosmic perspective of the Biblical revelation concerning Christ as the fulness of meaning of creation, by Whom, through Whom and to Whom all things were created.

One version of a falsely stated problem reads as follows: Has Christ died for the whole of mankind, or only for the elected? Both alternatives of the question cannot do justice to the fulness of Christ and the question cannot therefore not be accepted as legitimate. As conserving Mediator, Christ's mediation holds for the entire creation which consists in Him, the non-elected members of fallen mankind included. Due to this conserving mediation of Christ, the spirit of apostasy can still strengthen its powers in this dispensation, standing antithetically over against
the kingdom of God, until Christ as the final Conqueror will triumph over the powers of darkness. As redemptive Mediator, however, Christ acts mediating only for the elected (reborn) mankind. Both moments are equally rooted in Christ and do not exclude each other in this dispensation. Strictly Biblically, Dooyeweerd indeed holds that the conserving (common) grace is rooted in Christ, because only in Him God can look in grace upon the fallen mankind.

The ambivalence between humanity and new humanity, however, may be avoided in the following formulation: In Christ as the fulness of meaning of creation exists both the fallen mankind (guaranteed by His conserving Mediation), and the new (elected) mankind (guaranteed by His redemptive Mediation). This formulation upholds the truth that the meaning-diversity is concentrated in the religious dimension of creation, a dimension (structurally preserved in Christ’s conserving Mediation), out of which fallen mankind lives under the force of Satan’s spirit, and wherein reborn mankind (as the body of Christ), notwithstanding their radical depravity (corruption), lives by the Spirit of God in the daily fight against the flesh, in its Biblical sense, i.e. against man’s apostate ego, which absolves the temporal and withdraws it from God (cf. also N.C.I, p. 506). By virtue of the structure of creation, human societal relationships are structurally rooted in this (central) religious dimension, regardless of the subjective religious direction manifesting itself concretely therein. This religious root-structure (wortel-structuur) of creation (including all human societal forms), whether subjectively realized in a directedness toward God or not, is constantly preserved in Christ’s conserving Mediation.

From this follows an important consequence concerning the corpus Christi (the body of Christ). Neither the fallen (non-elected) mankind, nor the reborn (elected) mankind (the “corpus Christi”), may be considered as a condition for the universally valid structures of individuality of the various human societal relationships. Only the universally valid structure of the transcendent religious dimension itself, rooted in the conserving grace of God in Christ, may be seen as the structural condition in demand. The societal structures of the temporal human world are concentrated in the religious structural dimension of creation, conserved in Christ as the fulness of meaning of creation. Subjected to this universally valid structure (in its religious root and temporal diversity), human society may receive concrete embodiment in the service of God or in the service of an idol. Reborn mankind is in subjection to this structure subjugated by Christ. For this reason, the subjective religious unity of reborn mankind may not be identified with the cosmonomic structure of the religious dimension of creation. Viewed to their law-side (cosmonomic side), all temporal societal structures are equally religiously rooted. In the religious fulness of the law, namely in the service of God in Christ with all one’s heart, there consequently exists no axiological hierarchy, because all societal structures are equal in rank in their common root: the religious root-structure of creation. (In a Christian view of human societal relationships, no Christian human societal act could be withdrawn from the service of God). Only in a subjective sense, however, can reborn mankind (fused in Christ from the slavery of sin, and freed unto the service of God with all one’s heart) be brought to pay obedience to God’s creational law, in its religious unity and modal and typical diversity.

In the light of these perspectives, the conviction of Dooyeweerd, namely that the “ecclesia invisibilis” (reborn mankind, the body of Christ) may be seen as a structural condition for the temporal structures of human society, must be considered unacceptable. Consider his following statement: “Consequently, the radically Christian idea of societal relationships can only consider the temporal societal structures as equal in rank in their common root: the ecclesia invisibilis” (N.C.III, p. 535). Reformulated in terms of our analysis above, this statement must read like this: “Consequently, the radically Christian idea of (Christian and non-Christian) societal relationships can only consider the subjectively realized temporal (Christian and non-Christian) societal forms as equal in rank in their (respectively Christian and non-Christian) common root: the ecclesia invisibilis and the fallen religious root-community of (the non-elected) mankind”. This formulation makes it at once clear that the ecclesia invisibilis is only a subjective (reborn in Christ) condition for the positing of Christian societal relationships, and that the fallen (non-elected) mankind is also only a subjective (apostate) condition for the positing of non-Christian societal forms. In the same sense, the human heart (as the religious root of his temporal existence) is subjected to the religious concentration-law, i.e. subjected to the central unity and fulness of God’s law, which is fulfilled in Christ. Reborn in Christ, the human heart is in principle the source of all the Christian issues of life; and sharing in the spirit of apostasy the non-regenerate heart is in principle the source of the non-Christian issues of life. The subjective directedness of the human heart toward God in Christ or in the service of sin; living in obedience to the central commandment of Love or in disobedience to it, is not itself the (cosmonomic) structural condition for the religiously rooted issues of man’s life, but only its subjective correlate.

We may now return to the three alternative interpretations formulated above. I consider the first alternative as essentially wrong. The second alternative stresses the importance of the new humanity as the new religious root of the cosmos. Although it is pointed out that the new humanity is re-established in Christ, the emphasis on reborn mankind overlooks the fact that Christ Himself, as the fulness of meaning of creation, is the new religious root of our cosmos. Therefore, the formulation of the third alternative must be considered as the correct one: Christ Jesus, by, through and to whom all things are created, is the new religious root of the cosmos (the totality of meaning or the fulness of meaning), in which the integral meaning-structure of our cosmos is conserved (including the non-elected fallen mankind), and in which by regeneration we have part in our reborn selfhood as branches of the true Vine. This Biblical perspective is undoubtedly present in Dooyeweerd’s thought, not-withstanding the fact that he formulates it sometimes in an ambivalent way. (Just compare the following, correct formulation: “True humanity is rooted in Christ and in Him the whole temporal world in its true meaning-structure is saved”, N.C.III, p. 507). Both the fallen and the true humanity live in this dispensation in subjection to the true meaning-structure of the cosmos as maintained in the conserving Mediation of Christ – Christ, the fulness of meaning and new religious Root of our creation. Dooyeweerd explains in this context that the conserving common grace of God in Christ also embraces the apostate, dead members of mankind for the sake of the full and true human race, included in the “corpus Christi” (compare Jesus’ parable of the tares and the wheat which must grow up together till Judgment Day, that the wheat may not be pulled out together with the tares). (N.C.III, p. 525).

The bearing of conserving grace on the entire creation in all its dimensions, the transcendent religious dimension included, renders Dooyeweerd’s restriction of
common grace to the maintenance of the temporal world-order problematic: "Common grace in the first place consists in the maintenance of the temporal world-order in all its structures against the disintegration by sin. In this sense common grace embraces 'the evil and the good together' and is restricted to temporal life" (N.C.III, p. 506). According to Dooyeweerd, the religious dimension transcends the temporal meaning-diversity. Therefore, if it is true that the fallen (non-elected) mankind has in this dispensation constantly its apostate religious root in the religious dimension, upheld by the conserving grace in Christ, then Dooyeweerd's restriction of common grace to temporal life must be seen as incorrect.

In her recent dissertation, M. E. Botha concludes that Dooyeweerd's distinction between temporal and supra-temporal reveals a fundamental dualism, manifesting itself in his anthropology and in his handling of the basic problems of sociology (Sosio-kulturele metavrae, Amsterdam, 1971, pp. 81 ff., 109-167). According to Botha (quoting H. G. Geertsema uncritically), Dooyeweerd's conception of the supra-temporal is rooted in an un-Biblical philosophical tradition (in which time is connected with multiplicity and eternity with unity). I have analyzed the invalidity of this criticism in Phil., Ref., 1971, pp. 69-78. The crucial point to be stated in this context, is that Dooyeweerd realized that the central religious sphere of our cosmos is supra-modal and supra-structural (i.e., transcending the modalities and the structures of individuality) before his time-philosophy had ripened. And in developing his time-philosophy, Dooyeweerd was first of all confronted with inter-modal problems (the problem of a basic denominator for the meaning-diversity; the fact that time cannot be considered as a separate modal aspect; the state of affairs that every special science handles its own modally directed time-concept and that it is impossible to explain the coherence between the various modal aspects in terms of one of them). Having solved these inter-modal problems, and having introduced time as a transcendentally bottom layer embracing as to its law-side (time-order) and factual subject-side (time-duration) the modal and plastic dimensions of the transcendent horizon of human experience, it stands to reason that Dooyeweerd had to conclude that the central religious dimension, transcending the modal, the plastic and the time-dimension (embracing the first two transcendental dimensions), must be viewed as supra-temporal.

The distinction between modal and supra-modal in Dooyeweerd's systematics is completely equivalent to that of temporal and supra-temporal (resp. supra-structural). Since Botha has not proven that the distinction between modal and supra-modal (resp. supra-structural) is dualistic, her rejection of Dooyeweerd's distinction between temporal and supra-temporal is logically to be seen as untenable and therefore unacceptable. (If one wants, on cosmological grounds, to introduce the notion of time as embracing also the transcendent religious dimension, the distinction between modal and supra-modal will maintain its non-dualistic validity. Therefore, Van Riessen's remark that the problem of the supra-temporal will vanish if we restrict time to the physical aspect of reality, is also unjustifiable (Wijzekeert, Kampen, 1970, pp. 122-123). The physical aspect is one of the modalities of meaning, implying that the central religious dimension will still transcend (in a supra-temporal sense) the restriction of time to the physical modality, since the religious dimension is of a supra-modal nature.)

If in our present analysis we briefly put aside the question whether or not the religious dimension is to be regarded as supra-temporal, we may justifiably uphold that the religious dimension of creation is of a supra-modal (resp. supra-structural) nature. It is clear, however, that Dooyeweerd cannot be accused of a dualistic anthropology and of a dichotomist view on the sociological basic problem (cf. Botha, op. cit., pp. 154-155) on account of the above philosophy of time (right or wrong).

The central position of the religious root-community of reborn mankind in Christ, whether seen as supra-temporal, supra-modal and supra-structural, or only as supra-modal and supra-structural, may thus maintain its meaning, just as the root-community of the fallen (non-elected) mankind may (in subjection to the law-side of the religious dimension) maintain its (apostate) meaning.

Whenever one tries to identify the body of Christ (in its central religious meaning) with the Church institute as an authoritative community of faith, the only way to uphold the idea of a Christian state, Christian university, Christian family, etc. is in terms of the reformed Scholastic view of the church (identified with the corpus Christi) as a supra-natural institute of grace, spreading the light of Christian religion only indirectly over the natural societal relationships. In its original Scholastic version, the Church is transformed into a hierarchical sacramental institution of grace which, in a universalistic sense, was united with Aristotle's metaphysical universalistic view of society (compare the conception of the Corpus Christianum in Scholastic thought).

Dooyeweerd emphasises from the very start that the radical Biblical idea of the Corpus Christi did not place a new community parallel with, or if need be, above all temporal relationships, as a merely higher level in the development of human perfection (cf. N.C.III, p. 215). Neither can one accuse the Biblical view of the body of Christ of universalism in its sociological sense. This appears convincingly from the fact that the membership of the "corpus Christi" is completely independent of all temporal communal relationships, so that the latter are never to be viewed as "organic parts" of this transcendent spiritual community in Christ – for in Christ there is no difference between Jew and Greek, master and servant, fellow-countryman and foreigner, kin and outsiders (cf. N.C.III, p. 196 and N.C.II, p. 158).

The view of Van Riessen that the church stands in a threefold relation to both the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of this world (completely taken over by M. E. Botha, op. cit., p. 162), namely as the outpost (frontier) of God's Kingdom in this world, as the stronghold of God's Kingdom in this world and as the fifth column (vijfde kolomne) of this world in the domain of God's Kingdom (Mondheid en de Macht, Amsterdam 1967, p. 165) is, according to A. Troost, also to be found in our present day Lutheran dogmatics (amongst others in Elert, W. Künne and H. Thielicke). (Cf. Betering ovon Koninkrijk Gods, in Mededeelingen, September 1971, p. 14). Manifestly, itself in every sphere of creation, the Kingdom of God embraces every Christian societal form, concentrated in reborn mankind as the body of Christ. In the domain of our faith life, the Church as an institution (a Christian authoritative community of faith) may indeed be seen as an outpost (not the outpost) of God's Kingdom in this world. But with the same right, a Christian state (as a Christian political authoritative community) may be seen as an outpost of God's Kingdom in the political sphere of this world; and the same applies to a Christian family, school, university, etc. (Note that the Church-institution is not an outpost of God's Kingdom in the political sphere, or any
other sphere of life outside its own domain of competence as an authoritative community of faith). The Kingdom of God has indeed just as many societal frontiers (outposts) as there are typically differentiated (i.e. differently qualified) Christian societal relationships!

It is rather astonishing that M. E. Botha appreciates her own (reformed Scholastic) identification of the body of Christ (the Corpus Christi) with the Church-institution as truly Biblical, while rejecting Dooyeweerd's Biblical view of the body of Christ as reformed Scholastic! (Cf. op. cit., pp. 152 ff., 155, 156 ff., 163 ff.).

The acknowledgement of the Church-institution as a Christian community of faith within the Kingdom of God, is not at all a devaluation of the Church. Our obedience to God's creational laws in every sector of life may function as a strengthening of our membership of God's Kingdom in Christ unto Whom was given all the power in heaven and on earth. We must realize that we are not reborn by the Church-institution, but only through the redemptive Mediatorship of Christ. Therefore, our Christian action in the family, the state, the university, etc., is not due to our membership of the Church as a Christian community of faith, but to our reborn state in Christ as branches of the true Vine (i.e. by sharing in the body of Christ). Although engaged in a daily fight against the "flesh" (our apostate ego) we are as born members of the body of Christ in principle enabled to serve God with our whole heart, whether we eat or drink, visit the Church-institution or glorify God in our scientific research.

To clarify the previous analysis still further, we must reconsider that tradition in reformed theology which calls the Church an institution of particular grace. This tradition easily results in the reformed Scholastic "two domains" doctrine, merely by viewing all the other societal forms of Christian life as an outcome of God's common grace (outside Christ!).

If it is indeed true that in Christ nothing of our temporal creation can be lost, notwithstanding the effects of sin, it is also clear that the redemption by Christ cannot add anything to the creational order (like our faith-function as a donum superadditum). Man, whether still living in sin, or whether reborn in Christ cannot escape the possibilities laid down in God's creational order. In this dispensation, the full effect of sin is constantly (in Christ's conserving Mediatorship) limited by the structure of God's cosmic law (in its religious unity and temporal diversity). For this reason, Dooyeweerd correctly points out that the transcendental modal character of the normative aspects of our cosmos may be seen in the fact that contraries like logical — illogical, polite — impolite, lawful — unlawful, moral — immoral, belief — unbelief, and so on, present themselves always within the same modal aspect of meaning (i.e., they are all of an intra-modal nature, bound up to and limited by the normative structure of the aspect concerned). (Cf. N.C.II, p. 37). (The fact that it is intramodally possible to distinguish between belief and unbelief, confirms on transcendental empirical grounds that the modal aspect of faith possesses a universally valid creational structure which can subjectively be realized either in the service of apostasy, or in directedness toward God. This transcendental empirical analysis of Dooyeweerd does not pretend to be a deduction from the New Testamentic view of pistis. For that reason, Dooyeweerd reformulated his argument in N.C. (to do away with misunderstandings which had arisen) by stating that he doubted whether the text of Hebr. 11:1 could be used to substantiate this view on the general modal character of the function of faith. Cf. W.d.W. II, p. 298 and N.C.II, p. 298-299).

Just as the creational order contains in a transcendental sense the modal aspect of faith, it contains the structure of individuality of a community of faith. That is the reason why man, on account of his given creational possibilities, is capable of concretising the structural principle of a community of faith in a positive form notwithstanding the fact that after the fall various apostate positivations resulted. It is impossible for apostate faith to transgress the limits of the universally valid modal structure of the faith aspect of God's creation. In the same sense a mosque or a synagogue can be nothing but a (non Christian) community of faith. Every differentiated religious community necessarily has its qualifying radical function in the modal law sphere of faith (cf. N.C.III, pp. 521-522). The expression: community of faith designates, therefore, a universally valid structural condition of God's creation, underlying every Christian or non-Christian postivation. (In the same way the fundamental normative individuality-structure of the state, as a political community, underlies all positive state-formations).

It must be clear that the creational structure of a community of faith, a political community, etc., is constantly maintained in Christ's conserving Mediatorship (i.e., in common grace rooted in Christ). The realization of intrinsically Christian societal relationships, on the other hand, must be seen as an outcome of Christ's redemptive Mediatorship (i.e., particular grace rooted in Christ). Viewed from this side, we must uphold that the institutional Church (as an institute of particular grace) has been instituted by Christ within the modal and radical typical structures of temporal reality given already at the creation (cf. N.C.III, p. 526). In this sense it is contradictory to speak of a non-Christian Church, since the Church is by its very institutional character a Christian community of faith. Dooyeweerd points out that it is just as self-contradictory as the notion of a "non-Christian Christian community of faith" (N.C.III, p. 523).

These perspectives are indeed Biblical and are therefore not (via Kuyper) of a Scholastic (un-Biblical) origin.