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## **The Distinction between Church and State: the Ideological Roots of a Category-Mistake**

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### ABSTRACT

Against the background of the rise of the classical Greek ideal of the life-encompassing *polis* (city state) and the absorption of this classical state ideology within the medieval ecclesiastically unified culture (the ideal of the “Corpus Christianum” as the “societas perfecta” – incorporating a brief assessment of the ideas of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas) attention is given to the emergence, since the Renaissance, of the state and church through a process of *historical differentiation*. This process experienced the mixed influence both of modern Humanism and Protestantism, while the latter continued to struggle with the after-effects of the *dualistic* world view of Scholasticism. The implications of the Biblical creation motive for an understanding of the unity and goodness of life is then articulated with the aim to highlight the distinctness of *structure* and *direction*. The state as a legal community and the nature of a faith community ought to be understood in terms of the typical structural principles (type-laws) making these different societal entities possible in the first place. Only when attention is given to the application or “positivization” of the type-law of a faith community is it possible to speak about the church as something that is Christian *by definition*. However, the practice to distinguish between *church* and state in the final analysis turns out to be a subtle after-effect of an ideological “two terrain” distortion of the unity and goodness of God’s creation – leading to the category-mistake that compares apples with pears.

### HISTORICAL ROOTS

Initially the idea of the state emerged within the context of *empires* and eventually the legacy of *monarchies* gave shelter to it. Philosophically speaking Plato’s theory of the *Politeia* stands out as a landmark in reflections on the nature of the “good” life. Yet the quality of life as envisaged by Plato can only manifest itself within his ideal state – a condition that encompasses all of life and therefore it leaves no room for any *sphere of law* truly *distinct* from that of the state.

Keeping in mind that *justice* was still seen as an *ethical virtue* by Plato, it is remarkable that in spite of the inherent *totalitarian trait* present in his understanding, his theory actually does pay attention to the two *structural* properties of a genuine state: the first one relates to the leading role of *justice* and the second one is seen in the *foundational role* of the *guardians* (soldiers). Plato did not allow for interlinkages between the domains of public law and private law because the two public classes (*governors* and *guardians*) are *excluded* from the private sphere, whereas the third class in turn has no function within the public sphere.

According to Aristotle the human being as “political animal” (*zoon politikon*) inherently disposes over a rational-ethical essential form. He believes that this essential form can come to fulfillment

only *within* the state for the only power capable of taking the individual from desire to the good, is the *state*.<sup>1</sup>

On the whole one can therefore state that Greek political theory developed a totalitarian and absolutistic understanding of the *polis*, the bearer of the societal ideals of Greek culture.

The mere fact that the early Christians had to find their way within the context of the (pagan) Roman *imperium* already provides a starting point for a *negative* appreciation of the “state” (the *imperium*). The rapid growth of the first Christian groups did not escape the attention of the Roman Empire for soon the increasing number of Christians contained a threat for the status of the emperor (and, with it, for the *empire*). The persecution of Christians during the reign of Nero in AD 64 (he reigned from ad 54-68) assumed a brutal and cruel shape also found in the actions taken by Emperor Domitian (AD 81-96).

Yet, given these agonizing experiences, one of the earliest known prayers (from the year AD 96) for the *office of government* is all the more remarkable – keeping in mind that those who formulated it suffered from the said persecution of Christians. At the same time this prayer demonstrates a solid biblical understanding of the relationship between *creation* and *fall*, for it honours the power vested in the *office* of governing in spite of excessive instances of an *abuse of power*:<sup>2</sup>

Give, o Lord, agreement and peace to all of us inhabiting the earth, as You have given it to our ancestors, so that those with a holy inclination may worship You in faith and truth. Allow those governing and guiding us to obey Your almighty and hallowed Name. O Lord, You have given them the authority to rule, by virtue of your exalted unspeakable Power, and you have ordained us to be subjects, in no way contradicting your will. Give to them, o Lord, health and peace, unanimity and steadfastness; so that they, without lacking in virtue, can lead the people you have given to them. For You, o Lord, heavenly King of eternity, bequeathed humankind status and honor and power over the things of the earth. Direct their will, o Lord, towards that which is good and acceptable in front of you, so that they may carry the power you gave them with a God-fearing peace and prudence and thus participate in your gracious goodness. You alone are capable to bestow these and still better beneficial deeds upon us. We praise you through the High Priest and Ruler of our souls, Jesus Christ. Through Him you deserve the honor and glory now and from generation to generation, for ever and ever, Amen (Rahner, 1961: 40-41).

This prayer clearly shows that the early Christians already had the insight that in spite of the sinful abuse of power, the office of government remains a divine institution. Unfortunately the convergence of circumstances eventually generated a view *inherently* depreciating the state as societal institution. The theme of being *sojourners* (cf. 1 Peter 1:1) was reinterpreted in terms of a (an unbiblical) “terrain” dualism, expressing the supposed “distance” between Christians and the pagan Roman Empire. This *two-realm* sentiment found a negative support in the dualistic view dominating Greek anthropology in respect of the relationship between body and soul. This view now served to explain the relationship between Christians and the “world”.

By the beginning of the fourth century the ever growing number of Christians caused Constantine to come to an alternative approach. In AD 303, just before Constantine succeeded him, Diocletian issued three further decrees for the persecution of Christians. However, on May 1, AD 305, Constantine succeeded in taking over the reign of the western and eastern parts of the

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<sup>1</sup> The social drive of the human person is realised in a hierarchy that stretches from the nuclear family (the so-called germ-cell of society), via the village community, up to the *polis* as the highest *whole* encompassing all other communities as mere *parts*. In it, the *form-perfection* of the individual is given at once. See Chapter I of Book I of his work on Politics.

<sup>2</sup> Schippers points out that the Christians who prayed this prayer knew the ruling emperor Domitian as a person persecuting Christians and that they certainly also knew about the persecution that took place during the reign of Nero (see Schippers, 1941:85).

empire (respectively, from Chlorus and Galerius). In 313, Christianity was put on equal footing next to heathendom. Yet it was only during the reign of Theodosius – through the edict “De fide catholica” issued in 380 – that the Christian church acquired the status of *imperial church*.

Initially, the totalitarian power claims of the Roman emperor were confronted with demands for equal treatment. In the eastern part of the Empire, statements emerged not merely claiming the independence of the church, but indeed ascribing an *elevated* position to it. John Chrysostom once again uses the *body-soul simile* to accomplish this. The influence of neo-Platonic philosophy, according to which the spirit (church) naturally enjoys priority over the state, is recognisable in this course of events (see Stüttler, 1969:22).

#### MEDIEVAL VIEWS ON CHURCH AND STATE

In the thought of Plotinus the legacy of Plato and Aristotle was integrated. The second level, emanating from the “One,” is occupied by the *Nous (Reason)*; the third by the *Soul (Psychè)*; the fourth by *matter*.<sup>3</sup> The Platonic world of ideas is accommodated in the second *hypostasis*, *Reason*, designated by Plotinus as the one-many (*hen-polla*).

Although Augustine, on the one hand, sincerely gave expression to the biblical creation motive, by proclaiming God’s sovereignty over everything created *from nothing (ex nihilo)*, he also combined these two and thus transposed the Platonic ideas into the Divine Mind. Prior to creation, these ideas are present within the Divine Mind (*divina intelligentia – De diversis questionibus*, 83,46).

In his famous work, *Civitas Dei (The City of God)*, Augustine does observe the biblical distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness, but owing to the neo-Platonic influence on his thought, he gives it an unbiblical (dualistic) twist. The earthly world is interpreted as the temporal and changeful, which, as such, already displays an inherent *defect* in relation to God. The earthly state is understood in the sense of the classical Greek *totalitarian* state. In this dispensation, both are related and mixed. Yet, the earthly state is merely a *copy* of the City of God – their relationship is conceived according to the Platonic scheme of ideal form and its copy. This copy is inherently *bad* – explaining why it is also designated as *Babylon* and why its monarch is called *Diabolus*. It should also be kept in mind that the *City of God* does not coincide with the temporal church institution, for as sacramental institute of grace, the *Corpus Christi* (Body of Christ) is elevated above all societal institutions and is intended to encompass the entire life of the Christian. The fact that Augustine confused *creation* and *fall* not only resulted in this misrepresentation of the antithesis between sin and redemption by focusing the latter on two totalitarian spheres of life (the *City of Babylon* versus the *City of God*), but also exerted a significant influence on the subsequent struggle between church and state partially described above.

By viewing the church as a *perfect society* superior to the state, Augustine laid the foundation for the scholastic ground-motive of *nature* and *grace*. This motive was brought to a unique synthesis in the thought of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).

#### THOMAS AQUINAS

The invasion of the Germanic tribes eventually caused the final collapse of the western part of the Roman Empire in AD 476 – although the Eastern part lasted until 1453. To the latter part we

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<sup>3</sup> The original Greek form-matter dualism acquires an ambiguous form in the thought of Plotinus. On the one hand, he claims that through the process of emanation the One turns into its opposite: matter. At the same time, he holds that the diminishing radiation coming from the One finds in matter its *last form* (εἶδος τι ἔχατον, En. V,8,7,22-23).

owe the phenomenal codification of classical Roman law by Justinian – accomplished between 528 and 534 (the *Corpus Juris Civilis*) – a jural legacy that largely disintegrated in the western part. The initial Roman idea of a holy empire (*sacrum imperium*) was continued in the Byzantine Empire, and since Charlemagne (800) and his successors, it returned in the shape of the idea of the *Corpus Christianum* as the *perfect society (societas perfecta)*.

While conquering many countries, the Frankish king laid claim to unoccupied land and then started to hand it out to servants and the nobility as a reward for their support during the wars. This developed into the *feudal system* where the owners of large pieces of land acquired within their own domain an exclusive military, judicial, and political power. With governmental authority viewed as a *private entity*, it was not possible to come to a *territorial monopolisation* of this power – cities, guilds, market communities, and so on – all these disposed over pieces of governmental authority. The Frankish empire of Charlemagne viewed itself as the successor of the Roman Empire, but its division in 843 paved the way for the powerful counts and dukes – in combination with the church – to develop into the real bearers of governmental authority during the subsequent medieval period.

The increasing political power claims of the church were based on its relatively *differentiated* position, which enabled it to integrate the relatively *undifferentiated* substructures of medieval society under its umbrella. In this capacity, the church gave shelter to the *sciences* – the learned people and the jurists of the medieval era are *clergymen*; the academic chairs at the newly developing universities of Paris, Montpellier, Bologna, and so on are occupied by the *clergy*; the free arts (*artes liberales*) – subdivided in the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, and dialectics) and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy) were practised as preamble (*prolegomena*) to a study in *theology*. Within the confines of the church, medieval *art* developed, and in *Latin*, the church disposed over a *developed language* (see Hommes, 1981:41).

When Thomas Aquinas entered the scene in the thirteenth century, his account of medieval society was based on an attempted synthesis between Aristotle's philosophy and biblical Christianity. He accepted the dual teleological order of Aristotle with its hierarchy of substantial forms arranged in an order of lower and higher. It was designated as the *lex naturalis* (natural law), which is related to the transcendent *lex aeterna* (eternal law) as contained within the Divine intellect. By virtue of its substantial form, the human being depends on the community for the satisfaction of its needs.

The state (both the *polis* and the *Holy Roman Empire*) is viewed, in line with the conception of Aristotle, as *the* all-encompassing, self-sufficient community (*societas perfecta*). The provision is that Thomas Aquinas applies this only to the natural terrain. As the highest community within the domain of nature, the state embraces all other temporal relationships. These lower communities do possess a *relative* autonomy, subsumed under what is known as the *principle of subsidiarity*. However, this principle does not eliminate the universalistic starting point operative in St Thomas's view of society, since the so-called *relative autonomy* of these lower communities remains connected to the nature of the state as *parts* of a larger *whole*. What is part of a whole shares in the same structural principle as the whole. As a result, the view of St Thomas does not allow for the acknowledgment of societal collectivities that are *structurally different*. In line with the conception of Aristotle, the family for Thomas also remains the *germ-cell* of society. The hierarchical ordering of these communities coheres with each other according to the mutual relationship of a *means* to an *end*, of *matter* to *form*.

As the encompassing community within the natural domain, the state actually only forms the *natural foundation* for the church as overarching *superstructure*, as the *supernatural* institute of *grace*. The state carries human beings to their highest *natural* aim in life, namely, *goodness*, whereas the church elevates them to their supertemporal perfection, *eternal bliss*.

Similar to Aristotle, the view of society found in the thought of Thomas Aquinas finds its correlate in his view of the human being. According to him, the essential rational nature of the human person is not radically affected by the fall into sin, that is, the fall does not touch the *root* (radix) of human existence. The fall into sin only caused the *loss of faith*. Redemption, therefore, means that through the church faith is given back to the human person as a *supernatural gift of grace*. Within the natural domain, human reason is *autonomous* – it can even provide natural proofs for the existence of God (cf. *Summa Theologica*, 1, 2, 3). Yet, the supernatural *revealed truths* have to supplement and *perfect* these insights.

#### THE CULMINATION OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IDEOLOGY

During the era of Pope Innocent III at the beginning of the thirteenth century, the papal power to a certain extent reached its climax – co-determined by the exceptional personality of this pope. He was well-trained both as a theologian and as a jurist. In his letter, *Sicut universitatis*, the relationship between the “spiritual” and the “temporal” is explained by using the image of the *sun* and the *moon*.

Just as God, founder of the universe, has constituted two large luminaries in the firmament of Heaven, a major one to dominate the day and a minor one to dominate the night, so he has established in the firmament of the Universal Church, which is signified by the name of Heaven, two great dignities, a major one to preside – so to speak – over the days of the souls, and a minor one to preside over the nights of the bodies .... Both these powers / leaderships have their seat established in Italy. Consequently this country obtained precedence over all provinces by Divine disposition (Ehler, 1954:73).

Note that these two “powers” are now portrayed within the space of the “universal church.” Soon this conception would resound within the “earthly power,” for in 1232 Emperor Frederik II wrote in a letter to Pope Gregory IX that the clergy and the emperorship are only separated in respect of the word designating them – in their operation they are united: “In truth there exist two swords, but one and the same mother church, the generator of our faith, is the sheath for both” (Borst, 1966:41).

According to Pope Boniface VIII King Philip of France taxed the French clergy without an antecedent agreement with Rome and this act violated the freedom of the church from “worldly” control. From the perspective of the emperor, it demonstrated the fact that the “worldly power” continued to find it unacceptable to be subjected to the Pope with regard to secular affairs. However, Boniface unites the theory of the “two swords” in a manner that ascribed more power to the church, since, according to him, God – as the Origin of all spiritual and temporal power – gave *both* swords to the church:

If therefore, the earthly power errs, it shall be judged by the spiritual power; if the lesser spiritual power errs, it shall be judged by the higher, competent spiritual power; but if the supreme spiritual power errs, it could be judged solely by God, not by man (Ehler, 1954:92).

Not only does Boniface herewith proclaim a *decisive power* of the church regarding all “earthly” matters, since he even holds the conviction that *outside* the Roman papacy *no salvation could be acquired*:

Consequently we declare, state, define and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman Pontiff (Ehler, 1954:92).

This claim is in harmony with the supernatural status assigned to the Church in the thought of Augustine and St. Thomas. This view of the function of the church as a supernatural institution

of grace continued to exert a strong influence on the official position taken on by the Roman Catholic Church. For example, in the papal encyclical, *Quadragesimo anno* (15 May 1931), it is still explicitly stated:

Surely the church does not only have the task to bring the human person merely to a transient and deficient happiness, for it must carry a person to eternal bliss (cf. Schnatz, 1973:403).

#### THE DIFFERENTIATION OF STATE AND CHURCH

The upshot of the historical development of church and state during the period of ancient Greece and during the subsequent developments of the Middle Ages is given in a double totalitarian claim reaffirmed by the ensuing intellectual endeavours, since both of these societal institutions were considered to be life-encompassing.

From the preceding brief overview, the following is clear:

- 1) The historical development of the relation between “church” and “state”, in spite of the vague indications regarding the peculiar competence of both during the early period of Christianity and during the later feudal medieval period, did not succeed in coming to a satisfactory reconciliation of the conflicting power claims of emperors and church leaders.
- 2) Amid mutual incidents of an abuse of power, a continual appeal to relevant biblical texts also did not succeed in bringing the controversies to rest.
- 3) Particularly under the influence of Greek and neo-Platonic thought legacies, the nature of governmental authority is sometimes degraded into something inherently *demonic*. In general, according to a dualistic view – for example, analogous to the relationship of soul and body, or as an analogy of the relation between sun and moon – the state is denatured and put in a position of subordination to the power of the church. This approach reached its peak in the emergence of the theory of two swords, which were both assigned to the church. This boiled down to an attempt to subdue the imperial government completely to the power and control of the pope.

By the end of the medieval period the artificial synthesis between Greek culture and biblical Christianity collapsed particularly through the so-called late-Scholastic movement of *nominalism*. John the Scott and William of Ockham initiated the challenge to the dominant (realistic) mode of thought by negating any form of universality outside the human mind. The contest between King Louis of Bavaria and Pope John II, in an ironic way, highlights the starting point of a stream of thought that – alongside the rise of the new era – eventually contributed to the total subversion of the priority claims of the Roman Catholic Church. Together, Jean of Jandun and Marsilius of Padua completed their book, *Defensor Pacis* (in *Defense of Peace*). In 1326, they presented it to the emperor. The new perspective emphasised in this work is that all forms of authority derive from the people, from which it follows that *law* could only be an expression of the *will of the majority*. Only the majority can make a law, change it, withdraw it, or interpret it (Kates, 1928:37).

By now, the familiar medieval perspective had been turned upside down – the *Defensor Pacis* now introduced a state that does not acknowledge any limits to its power! This nominalistic movement provided the starting point for modern philosophy and modern political thought. It succeeded in emancipating the modern person from the authority of church belief (and the pope). In the transition to the Renaissance and modernity, the dominance of society by the pope and the Roman Catholic Church started to fade. This historical process paved the way for various *individualistic* theories of human society and the state, that is, for theories denying the reality of

supra-individual communities in their attempt to explain society fully in terms of the actions of individual human beings. Initially, as in the case of Machiavelli (1469-1527), Bodin (1530-1596), and Hobbes (1588-1679), the result of this transformation was explicit *totalitarian* theories. However, gradually various thinkers attempted to develop a theory of the state in which it was supposed to be possible to guarantee various (civil) rights, that is, theories of the “just state” (“regstaatsteorieë”).

During the Renaissance and the post-Renaissance era the disintegration of the medieval synthesis enabled a more pronounced *differentiation* between state and church. Unfortunately the spirit of the modern age blurred this development in various respects.

#### THE SPIRIT OF THE MODERN AGE

The Renaissance era sought to explore the unlimited possibilities of reality in a *rational* way – thoroughly impressed by the successes of the rising *natural sciences*. Liberated from the ties of the Roman Catholic Church (with its doctrine of *sin*) and from the Greek idea of *fate*, the modern person came into its own, enthroning the human being as such, and in doing that, it at once elevated the newly developing natural sciences to become a means in service of proclaiming the *majesty* and *dignity* of human beings who emerged as a law unto themselves. Dooyeweerd aptly speaks about the new *humanistic* basic motive of *nature* and *freedom* (1996-I:190 ff.). The nature motive is embodied in the ideal of an all-encompassing natural science capable of explaining whatever there is in natural scientific categories (such as cause and effect: causality), while the freedom motive manifested itself in the ideal of the autonomous human personality.

Although the personality ideal gave birth to the science ideal, the latter turned into a *Frankenstein*, challenging its maker. If reality in its entirety is understood as being subjected to exact natural laws of cause and effect, then the human being is also reduced to becoming merely an atom among atoms, a cause among causes, and an effect among effects – fully causally determined, without any freedom!

#### THE CONTRASTING THRUST OF THE REFORMATION

The basic thrust of the Reformation also challenged the medieval Roman synthesis. It realized that the ecclesiastically unified culture confined the Christian life within the walls of the church institute – in stead of exploring all walks of life and all terrains of God’s kingdom in the service of God. When Kuyper, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in his well-known “Stone Lectures”, articulated his idea of “Calvinism” it was indeed meant to continue the biblical starting-point of the Reformation. He clearly understood that the Reformation launched a radical biblical life and world view and therefore he explained the Calvinistic world and life view in opposition to Roman Catholicism and Humanism.

God’s rule over all of creation entails that God’s kingdom cannot be limited to the church as an institute. Kuyper emphasized that there is not a “thumb-width” of life about which Christ does not proclaim: “It is Mine!”<sup>4</sup> In stead of “churchifying” life, the biblical appeal is to effectuate a radical Christian transformation of the life and world of the Christian – the “Christianization” of all of life.

In the footsteps of the Reformation the Protestant tradition thus came to understand the church as an institute in a positive Christian way – it should conform to the condition of preaching the Word of God correctly, administering the sacraments properly and maintain discipline.

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<sup>4</sup> “Geen duimbreed is er op heel ’t erf van ons menselijk leven, waarvan de Christus, die àller Souverein is, niet roept: ‘Mijn!’” (Veenhof, 1939:43).

Yet since the Reformation something strange happened in respect of the Protestant understanding of the kingdom of God. Whereas the scope of God's kingdom was expanded – contra Rome – to encompass all of creation, the correlate of God's kingdom rule over creation (the "citizens" of God's kingdom), was (were) still merely enclosed within the confines of the *institutional church*. This caused a fundamental problem, because then the *response* to God's rule cannot be *co-extensive* with the "creation-wide" scope of the kingdom. In stead of living out the full meaning of the loving service to God in all walks of life, this response is supposed to reside merely within one sector of God's creation: ecclesiastical life.

Alongside the church institution not only the modern state but also other societal collectivities emerged since the Reformation. The differentiation between church and state was accompanied and followed by a differentiation between church and university, a differentiation between family and business enterprise, the nuclear family and the school, and so on.

This significant historical process of differentiation, however, was accompanied by various ideological *distortions*. The Enlightenment era gave birth to an optimistic ideal of *progress*, the 19<sup>th</sup> century introduced a new appreciation of history (even degenerating into a severe *historicism*), the 20<sup>th</sup> century experienced a shift towards language as new "horizon" (particularly exemplified in "postmodernity" – "everything is interpretation"). The inherent dynamics of Western culture with its technocratic infection in numberless ways also posed a challenge to the calling of being a Christian in this world.

#### THE EMERGENCE OF THE STATE PRESUPPOSES THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIETAL COLLECTIVITIES DISTINCT FROM THE STATE (INCLUDING THE CHURCH)

In order to understand the relationship between state and church we therefore have to expand our analysis of the integral meaning of creational normativity. We have seen that through an on-going process of differentiation Western civilization witnessed the emergence of the modern state.

During its initial development modern Humanism, after the Renaissance, only produced an absolutist and totalitarian theory of the state – Machiavelli and Hobbes. The basic question of humanist political theory at this preliminary stage was the following: who possesses the highest power or competence within the state. The French thinker, Jean Bodin, was the first to introduce the term "*sovereignty*" in order to capture the governmental authority present within the state. In opposition to Machiavelli, Bodin accepted that the government was bound both to natural and divine law. He, therefore, supported the classical principle of *natural law*, *pacta sunt servanda*, which states that contracts should be respected and kept. Yet, the weak point of his theory is found in his conviction that the state, as such, disposes of an absolute and original competence to the formation of law within the boundaries of its territory (see Bodin, 1576).

This view must, of course, be assessed against the background of the relatively *undifferentiated* medieval society, dominated by the Roman Catholic Church as superstructure. The medieval guilds – artificially constructed with the old Germanic *sib* as example – and the feudal manorial communities, which acquired various relations of super- and subordination (*villae, domaines*), displayed a marked undifferentiated character. In none of the societal forms of organisation is a centralised *monopoly* of the power of the sword found. Against this background, it is understandable why Bodin would have interpreted every original claim to the formation of law as a claim to original sword power that would amount to a threat to the idea of the state as a *res publica* (cf. Dooyeweerd, 1951:87 ff.).

Within the undifferentiated structure of the late medieval "substructure" of society, governmental authority was still a commercial item, a *res in commercio*. The sovereign lord



disposed over it freely. When private persons or corporations took hold of it, it formed part of their inviolable rights. Governmental authority was in no way as yet seen as a *public office*, called to serve the interests of the public (the *res publica*). It was particularly the all-encompassing nature of the guild system that precluded the realisation of a genuine state organisation.

However, the aim of Bodin's theory of sovereignty was to create an absolute monarchical power through the monopolisation of the power of the sword. This central form of governmental authority would have had an exclusive competence to the formation of positive law. What he did not realise was that such an integration of governmental authority in practice contributed to an enhancement of the process of societal differentiation that at once gave birth to distinct and independent non-political societal collectivities. But this process of differentiation, with an inner necessity, gave rise to original spheres of competence distinct from that of the state – each of them evincing an original juridical competence to form law within its own domain! In other words, the *way* in which Bodin envisaged that his aim could be realised – namely, the differentiation of different spheres of law – in fact displayed an inherent tension with the aim itself – namely, identifying every competence to the formation of law with the state sovereign!

Two options emerged:

- (i) The *monarch* disposes over the sovereignty.
- (ii) The *people* dispose over the sovereignty.

*Popular sovereignty* versus *royal sovereignty*. These two options provide the basis for the distinction between a *republic* and a *monarchy*, for in the former the *people* are sovereign and in the latter the *monarch* is the sovereign.

**Remark:** Paul Kruger

This view still influenced Paul Kruger in the republic of Transvaal in the nineteenth century. On the one hand, he affirmed that the voice of the people is the voice of the King,<sup>5</sup> and particularly on the occasions where he was elected president, he claimed that the voice of the people is the voice of God.<sup>6</sup> Wypkema thought that Paul Kruger never combined these two statements, though occasionally he did do that: "A truly republican principle was that the people are the voice of the king and a free voice is the voice of God" (cf. Smith, 1951:18).

Although humanistic thought does know examples of thinkers who aimed at developing a theory of a *just state* ("regstaat"),<sup>7</sup> such as Rousseau, this starting point, which places sovereignty either in the people or the monarch, constantly hampered it. As a consequence, these theories in a *material* sense never really exceeded the limitations of a *power-state* theory.

Without a dynamic process of differentiation neither the state as a public legal institution nor the multiplicity of non-political societal spheres (including communities of faith) could appear.

#### THE IDEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF A DUALISTIC WORLD VIEW

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<sup>5</sup> "Die volkstern is koningstem".

<sup>6</sup> "Die volkstern is Gods stem".

<sup>7</sup> A constitutional state under the rule of law.

In our preceding analysis we have “uncritically” accepted the legacy to speak about “church” and “state” without explicitly paying attention to the nature of an *ideology*. A provisional approach to the issue may designate an overestimation of any specific societal collectivity as *ideological*. For example, when the state or the church is considered to encompass human life fully such a view excessively expands the power of these societal collectivities beyond the boundaries of their inherent spheres of competence.

In terms of this definition the historical shape of the empires of Greek antiquity and the ecclesiastically unified medieval culture exemplify such an ideological overestimation. The same applies to the totalitarian theories of state and church during the corresponding periods.

The social life-form concerned is ideologically elevated in such a way that all other societal ties are derived from this overestimated one. However, the Roman Catholic dualism between “nature” and “grace” added a different dimension to our understanding of an *ideology*. The after-effect of the Greek dualism between form and matter – where the former was considered to be *good* and the latter *bad* – caused Augustine to interpret the antithesis between good and evil in terms of the opposition between the “Civitas Dei” and the “Civitas Terrena.” This legacy opened the path for a truly *dualistic* understanding of human society – in terms of a “good” part and a “bad” part. Thus the integral and radical meaning of creation, fall and redemption is torn apart. The unity of creation is denied and the directional antithesis between *good* and *evil* is understood in *structural* terms.

As soon as the *directional antithesis* is understood in *structural terms* one ends up with a *dualistic* world view where some domain within creation is elevated above and opposed to another depreciated domain. With an inner necessity every “golden calf” (“holy cow”) calls forth its counter pole, a “scape-goat” (a “black sheep”). Although the Reformation opened up a new understanding of the full scope of the biblical kingdom perspective, the after-effect of the Scholastic dualism between nature and grace negatively influenced the position assigned to the church as an institution. It resulted in a restriction of the radical and integral meaning of redemption merely to the domain of the church as an institution. As soon as this is done, the non-ecclesiastical areas of life are implicitly degraded as belonging to the “sinful world.” The biblical antithesis between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness – which is co-extensive in terms of the -of-life-encompassing scope of these spheres – is then deformed into an un-biblical understanding of “church” and “world.”

In the testimony of the Reformed Ecumenical Synod about human rights from the year 1983 we read the following correction to dualist world views: “Dualist world-views always misconstrue the biblical idea of antithesis. The antithesis gets defined, not in terms of a spiritual warfare which is being waged in every sector of life, but along structural lines. It places one set of societal structures off against another – for example, church against state, a mission station against a political party. Christians then end up fighting the wrong battles” (RES, 1983:76).

Within the context of such a view the meaning of the jural (law) as well as the nature of the state are depreciated in comparison to the church.

Luther was convinced that law and legal stipulations belong to the earthly domain as opposed to the evangelical freedom which the Christian experiences within the church. As a result he holds the opinion that one should leave it to the civil government to handle ecclesiastical law. (Calvin thought that it cannot be left to the state!) In his two volume work “Krichenrecht” R. Sohm continues this line of thought by proceeding from the assumption that the *spiritual* nature of the church reveals a tension with every legal stipulation which can only be an external human institute (see Sohm 1923, 1930).

The confusion of “structure” and “direction” provides another criterion for the identification of an ideological stance, for as soon as we surrender to it a part of creation exhausts the meaning of redemption while automatically depreciating the rest of God’s good creation into the corner of the “sinful world.”

Such an approach can never do justice to the gospel of the kingdom since the latter presupposes the unity and goodness of God’s creation. A proper biblical understanding of the nature of the state and the “church” therefore needs to take into account what *creational normativity* entails. This emphasis does not stand in the way of an eschatological perspective. Olthuis correctly observes,

The current eschatological orientation in theology which tends to seek even the beginning in the end will need revision. The Bible begins with Genesis and Genesis begins with creation. The Scriptures see the Gospel as the link connecting creation and consummation. And this link between past and future is revealed as the Word which connects the end with the beginning, the consummation with the creation. ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end’ (Rev. 22:12). A proper vision of the consummation requires a proper appreciation of the beginning. Without this understanding, the fulfillment lacks substantial content and tends to evaporate into pious words about hope. A non-robust view of creation emasculates the gospel, for it is the creation which is brought to fulfillment in Jesus Christ even as it began in him (1988: point 2).

#### THE MEANING OF HUMAN LIFE – EMBEDDED WITHIN CREATION

Humans are created as *normed* beings. They are called to respond to the *normativity* of human life either by conforming to or by rejecting the creational norms guiding human endeavours. Humans are able to discern *truth* from *falseness* and what is *logically sound* from what is *illogical*, just as they are able to know the difference between what is *beautiful* and what is *ugly*. This normative fiber of our shared humanity naturally spans across multiple dimensions of normativity, exemplified in the following considerations: Humans are extremely sensitive to the difference between *justice* and *injustice*; they are aware of the benefits of *frugality* as opposed to the sorrows of *wastefulness*. Their experience of lingual *ambiguities* is filled with examples of correct and wrong *interpretations*. They know what the worth of *courtesy* is and what the effects of *impoliteness* may be. Similarly, humankind has heroic and heartbreaking stories to tell about what is norm-conformative in a *historical* sense and what is historically antinormative or *un-historical* (for example: what is *reactionary* or what is *revolutionary*). Every inter-human encounter brings to expression this *normative dimension* and takes place under its “supervision”; is played out within this cosmic theatre of human beings as norm-observing agents. Although individuals may often have *diverging understandings* of what *truth*, *logicity*, *justice*, *love*, *frugality*, *interpretation*, *courtesy* and norm-conformative *historical* actions are, they cannot side-step this “norm-determinedness” of human life. For that reason even in every *antinormative action* the human being is constantly haunted by the underlying and presupposed normative awareness of what “ought to be” – aptly captured by an age-old legacy which designates it as the uniquely human *conscience*.

But precisely for this reason it belongs to the very *constitution of human life* and to the intricate *fabric of human society* to have a vital concern and interest in the *normative orientation* of human beings. Human beings, in their actions and societal institutions, are therefore guided by *norms* and they constantly give shape to basic *principles*. This at once also explains why humans functioning in diverse societal relations do not *cease* to be *norm-oriented* – for in these instances

they have to observe *collective norms*. When a *just state* acts in the pursuit of *public justice* it has to observe collective norms. The same applies to the church.

#### THE IDEOLOGICAL BIAS PRESENT IN THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN STATE AND CHURCH

Although modern humanism did not succeed in presenting us with a theoretical account of the just state (*regstaat*) in a material sense, it did contribute significantly in a *historical* sense to the rise of modern constitutional states under the rule of law. Yet, what the 19<sup>th</sup> century produced in terms of the formation of new unified states ought to be understood from the perspective of the underlying *structural principle* of the state. Given its *republican* character, as a *res publica*, the government of a *just state* is called to establish a balance and harmony within the multiplicity of legal interests present on its territory. Monopolising the “sword power” on its territory serves the public legal task of the government that is always directed by an idea of *public justice*. This *structural principle* shares in the ontic (creational) normativity alluded to above. It is only the concrete form or shape which is given to this principle within concrete historical circumstances that can account for more or less norm-conformative applications of it.

But what is the connection between creation and the “church”? Is it not true that whereas the state is rooted in creation, the church is a fruit of grace, flowing from a “supernatural” source? This is indeed the position taken by Kuyper (see Kuyper, 1932:110). On the same page we read: “The opposition is and remains thus that the starting-point of the state is to be found in creation, in nature and in common grace, whereas the starting-point of the church lies in the recreation, in the miracle and in particular grace.” This view explains why Kuyper eliminates Christ within the domain of “common grace” and why he holds that Christ as Head of particular grace and the ‘church’ cannot exert a *direct* but only a ‘*sideways*’ (‘*zijdelingse*’) influence on the sphere of common grace. “Notwithstanding burning only within the walls of the institutional church, the Christian religion spreads its light through the windows of the church widely outside it, illuminating all differentiations and ties of life, expressing themselves in diverse manifestations of human activity” (Kuyper, 1932:272). For this reason the congregation of Christ, with its ‘influence on state and civil society’, aims at nothing more ‘than a moral triumph’, not applying confessional ties nor exercising authoritarian rule (1932:279).<sup>8</sup>

An integral understanding of creation precludes any “supra-natural additions” to the order of creation. Sin did not take away anything structural from creation, and therefore redemption cannot add anything structural to creation. Sin can only give a negative, apostate, *direction* to the possibilities contained in God’s good creation – and redemption once again redirects humankind towards obedience to God’s original intention.

Viewed from a biblical perspective creation is *good*. The mystery of the fall is given in the question how the possibility to be disobedient to God’s creational norms became a reality. The opposition (antithesis) of sin and salvation/redemption (evil and good) manifests a *direction distinction* within the good order of God’s creation. Sin merely gives an idolatrous direction to the possibilities of creation. This insight elucidates a new perspective when we think about illogical thoughts, wasteful activities, unjust actions, unbelief, etc. The counterpart of disobedience comes in sight when we realize that redemption in Christ in principle liberates being human from the creation-wide rule of sin since it entails the calling to turn away from evil and, out of fear of the Lord in all terrains of life, live in obedience to His will (cf. Job 28:28; Eccl.6:16 and Rom.12:21).

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<sup>8</sup>

His distinction between the church as ‘institute’ and ‘organism’ actually assigns a role to the church as an institute functions as second “Mediator.”

Therefore Christians and non-Christians are not living in two different worlds (terrains) but in one and the same creation. Christians and non-Christians are not *separated* by the creation in which they (communally) live, but by the *opposed directional choices* out of which they live. Christians and non-Christians do the same (kinds of) things – but they do them *differently*, i.e., from their different directional orientations. Christians and non-Christians think, love, buy and socialize, but within these shared dimensions of creation they live out their respective life orientations springing from different directional choices (ultimate commitments). Perhaps the most radical implication of the good news of God’s (creation-wide) kingdom rule is that it calls us *not* to deify anything *within creation*. We have argued that as soon as this happens, creation itself is divided into a good part and an inherently evil part.

Yet, the Bible does not localize evil in a terrain, in any specific domain of creation, but in the *apostate direction of the human heart*, the central reference point of all human action. Similarly, *salvation* is equally a directional matter (first seek the Kingdom of God – on every terrain). Sensitive for acknowledging the direction-giving role of a world and life view help us to understand that we are constantly confronted by what one might call a *surrogate salvific appeal*. For example, we are sometimes confronted with what is presented as a *way of liberation*, with a call to *move away from one terrain* of creation to a different one, a terrain appreciated as constituting “the kingdom of freedom,” of *virtue*, of *self-perfection*, of *moral purity*, of *autonomy* etc. That means that the directional antithesis between good and evil is turned into a structural juxta-positioning. Good and evil are then identified with specific opposed terrains of creation. For Greek philosophers, evil is found in the material world; for the existential philosopher of the 20th century, it is found in societal structures which threaten the individual freedom of a person; for the neo-Marxist and the social conflict theorists (cf. Hegel, Simmel and Dahrendorf) it is found in the authority structure of social collectivities; for other thinkers in the supposed inevitability of natural causality, and for yet others in the appearance of freedom which an individual is supposed to possess. This apostate inclination informs the movement towards what is considered to be the *morally good life*, towards the *meaning of life*, and to *freedom*. In short, this dualism searches after the path to salvation – understood as the escape from one terrain of creation by moving to another terrain of creation: for example, by moving from emotionality to rationality, from lack of control to formative power, from the loneliness of the individual to the collective whole (of the “volk,” the “state” or the “church”), from the bondage to tradition to progressive freedom, etc. etc.

Each of these envisaged ways to salvation rests on a *misplaced* evaluation of a well-created part of creation which, with an inner necessity, as we have seen, results in a *depreciation* of something else within creation. This was already a fundamental characteristic of the ancient heresy known as Gnosticism. At the same time its effect is seen in the idolization (absolutization) of something within creation or some aspect of creation. Such a point of departure, typical of an idolatrous inclination, results in bringing honour, meant for the Creator, to a creature.

All such dualistic orientations are victims of the ideological identification of “structure” and “direction.” Within the broader Christian tradition (both Roman Catholic and Protestant) this ideological stance is seen in the following two convictions: (i) identifying the new humanity in Christ (the “body of Christ”) in its central and radical meaning with one sector of God’s kingdom, the ecclesiastical domain of the church as an institution; (ii) identifying the antithesis between sin and redemption with the distinction between church and world – both understood in terms of terrains of creation.

The untenability of (i) is amply demonstrated in a SABC television conversation (June 1987) between prof. Johan Heyns and dr. Willie Lubbe on the status of the newly established “Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk” (APK). Heyns does acknowledge the full scope of God’s

kingdom as well as the implied response by the “citizens of the kingdom”. However, all the radical and central designations of these “citizens of the kingdom” found in the Bible are reserved for the church as an institution. Consequently, in the said conversation, Heyns expressed his concern with the fact that the “APK” has decided to split off from the “body of Christ.” Lubbe immediately reacted by saying that the APK did not leave the *body of Christ*, but only the Dutch Reformed Church!

Just as incorrect as it is to identify the human selfhood, the “heart,” with any function of human existence, or the central commandment of love to God and one’s neighbour with any specific (differentiated) societal norms (such as logical principles guiding analytical distinguishing or economic norms directing frugal conduct), is it to identify the radical (root-touching) and integral (life-encompassing) meaning of the “body of Christ” with any specific societal sphere (such as the church as an institute).

The same applies to the different ways in which the Bible employs key words, such as *faith* and *love*. It cannot be denied that the word “faith” is sometimes used to indicate the *total* and *all-encompassing* heart relationship of the reborn Christians with God, entailing that the term *Christian* refers to the entire existence of the Christian. Yet, this word is also used to indicate one of the many rays in the colour spectrum of our lives. The same is true for the word *love*.

The heart, as the religious centre of human existence, lies indeed at the root of all the expressions of life (see Prov. 4:23). For this reason Christ requires a *reborn* heart – the wellspring of life. When *faith* or *love* is used in this *radical* sense, it cannot refer to merely *one aspect* of our experience of reality, for then it refers to the fullness of our covenant relationship with God in Christ. This is evident when we speak of the central commandment of love or of faith as a heart commitment to God.

These *radical* usages are not in conflict with those texts where the words *love* and *faith* are used in a *differentiated* sense next to each other, since these references are not to the *root*, but the divergent *expressions* of life.

Compare for instance Gal. 5:22 where a reference is found to love as a fruit of the Spirit, alongside other virtues such as *faithfulness*, *joy* and *self-control*; or I Tim 6:11 where a God-pleasing person is asked to pursue *righteousness*, *faith* and *love*, among others.

The heart is the root of faith, the reborn heart determines the direction (towards God) of our faith, the creational order founds the normative structure of faith – thus no unbeliever can escape from it since even atheism is a form of (apostate) faith – and the Bible (as the genuine and trustworthy inscripturated Word of God) determines the content of our Christian faith.

These in principle opens up the significance of a well-known but an important distinction:

#### PRINCIPLE AND APPLICATION

By virtue of God’s creation the human being has to give positive form and shape to the possibilities enclosed within the order of creation. Giving form to underlying principles acquired the technical designation known as *positivization*. Drawing the distinction between (a universal and constant) principle and its varying positivizations only has meaning if one adheres to the integral biblical creation motive. The fall, as we have remarked, accounts for the instances of *antinormative* positivization.

In terms of this approach it must be clear that being human entails having the capacity to believe and thus being able to erect a *community of faith*. This trait of the human being is not restricted to Christians, since it cuts across humankind. Similarly, the God given possibility to erect a state – as a public legal community – could be accomplished in a norm-conformative or in an

antinormative way. A Christian state is not subject only to its function in the aspect of faith, since only when the activities of government and subjects are in Christ committed to be obedient to the many-sided typical structural principle of the state as a social collectivity can there be a God-oriented positive expression of these principles – resulting in a Christian state.<sup>9</sup> Yet, christianity does not ever mean sinlessness or perfection – a Christian political understanding and practice can therefore never fall back on the Roman Catholic teaching of the “societas perfecta” (the perfect society).<sup>10</sup>

#### THE CATEGORY-MISTAKE PRESENT IN THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN STATE AND CHURCH

Distinguishing between different societal entities can pursue two options: (i) it can compare and distinguish such entities on the level of underlying structural principles or (ii) it can look at God-directed or apostate ways in which positive form is given to those underlying principles.

At the first level the correct distinction ought to be that between a *jural community* and a *faith community*. This level merely takes into account *creational possibilities*, without entering into an assessment of the nature of the positivizations that actually took place.

However, within the reformational tradition the church as social entity is normally understood as that particular form of a faith community in which a proper preaching of the gospel, an administering of the sacraments and an application of discipline is found. This makes it clear that according to this understanding the church *by definition* is Christian. The moment one employs the term “church” in this sense, one actually speaks about a “Christian community of faith.” Of course this mode of speech leaves open the possibility of non-Christian faith communities, such as a Mosque or a Synagogue.

In a similar way one can distinguish between a Christian state and a non-Christian state. Yet, the accepted practice to juxtapose *state* and *church* mixes up the two different levels mentioned above. In order to compare apples with apples and pears with pears one should stick to the same level: it is correct to compare a (Christian) legal community with a (Christian) faith community, but it is *incorrect* to compare a *legal community* with a *Christian community of faith*, for then one stepped down from the level of structural principles to that of positivizations!<sup>11</sup>

#### A PITFALL FOR THE “UNITY” OF THE CHURCH

The distinction between the “root-unity” of the new humanity, the body of Christ, the branches of the True Vine on the one hand and the “structural unity” of a (Christian) community of faith on the other entails important implications for theological reflections on the nature of “church

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<sup>9</sup> Brunner does acknowledge a calling for Christians within the realm of the state, but on the basis of his two-realm distinction between the “Lebensgesetz” (“Law-for-Life”) of the church (Divine love revealed in Christ) and the “Law-for-Life” for the state (impersonal retributive justice) he denies the possibility of a Christian state. Although Christian politicians and citizens do have a specific view of the nature and task of the state, one must keep in mind that the state cannot constitute a Christian order: “Wir fragen, ob christliche Staatsmänner und Bürger eine besondere Auffassung vom Wesen des Staates haben sollten und diese auch wirklich haben, wenn sie rechte Christen sind? Diese Frage ist nun allerdings zu bejahen, trotzdem, wie gesagt, der Staat nie eine Christliche Ordnung sein kann” (Brunner, 1944:11).

<sup>10</sup> A discussion of the peculiar traditional public legal status of the church in Germany exceeds the limits of this article. See Campenhausen (1973) and Friesenhahn, & Scheuner (1974) for a treatment of German “Staatskirchenrecht.”

<sup>11</sup> It should be observed that the remark that the church can only be Christian is either tautological or contradictory. If the word “church” actually means “Christian community of faith” then the statement that the “church is always Christian” amounts to the tautology that a Christian community of faith is always Christian. Conversely, anyone saying that there is something as a non-Christian church would be making the contradictory assertion that there is a community of faith that can be Christian and non-Christian *at once!*

unity.” The unity in Christ indeed transcends all the differentiated societal roles in which human beings are functioning (see Gal. 3:28). Though the church as an institute (in the sense of a Christian faith community) is rooted in the “body of Christ” (understood in its radical, central, and total sense), its *unity* is qualified by its societal structural principle, i.e., its unity is a *faith unity* and not the *central root-unity* of the new humanity in Christ. In its confession of faith the church as an institute is fully justified in making an appeal to this central unity, but at the same time (as demonstrated in the remarks about the conversation between Heyns and Lubbe made earlier) it is incorrect to identify *branch* and *root*. When the term “religious” is reserved for the radical and central root-dimension of reality, an ideology may also be described as confusing some or other *branch* of life with its *religious root*.

Paul Schrotenboer writes:<sup>12</sup>

We must distinguish between the people of God, the Body of Christ, the new Nation, the holy people, the pillar and ground of the truth and the institutional church today. This is a necessary distinction. However the new Testament did not make this distinction for there was yet no such thing as the ‘institutional’ church, as distinct from God’s people’s activity in labour, commerce, education, and the state. To an extent they were busy as Christians in all their ways if living (more consistently than Christian people are today). But these differences were not institutionalized. These ‘areas’ did not yet exist as distinct societal zones. The lines between church and school were not yet visible. Church and home were also much more closely related, judging from the fact that the people of God were sometimes identified as the church that met in a certain person’s house. The people of God was then [there] at a very early stage. Right from the start they were organized, but they did not have a distinct organization for worship, for their cultic activity (1971:110).

The well-known distinction between the “essence” (“wese”) of the church and the “well-being” (“welwese”) of the church (the latter is supposed to relate to the *organisational form* of the church)<sup>13</sup> incorrectly assumes that the central religious unity of life could be manifested in one branch of creation only, namely within the church institution. It is striking that pope Pius XII emphasizes in his Encyclical “Mystici Corporis Christi” that the supernatural, invisible and mystical quality of the church ought not to be absorbed in its visible (organizational juridical) shape (cf. Berkouwer, 1964:218). This Encyclical still continues the above-mentioned position of “Unam Sanctum” for it explicitly claims that the body of Christ and the Roman Catholic Church is identical (see Berkouwer, 1964:220).

Kuyper already realised that the so-called “ecclesia invisibilis” ought to come to expression in *all* walks of life (and not merely within the church as an institution – Kuyper, 1909:192). The expression “visible church” therefore designated for Kuyper more than merely the institutional church.<sup>14</sup>

The unity in Christ transcends the differentiated multiplicity of social ties a person can have – without *eliminating* them. Therefore the way in which this central religious unity ought to come to expression cannot side-step the structural principles guiding human action in different societal entities – and each one of these societal entities has its own typical requirement of “unity.” Bound together by a shared confession of faith the unity of the church-institute is a *fiduciary* unity, to be distinguished from the unity of a public *legal* order maintained by the state, or the

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<sup>12</sup> See also the remarks of Bosch (1979:1).

<sup>13</sup> See Nicol, 1979:17.

<sup>14</sup> In addition to the institutionalized churches the *ekklesia invisibilis* ought to come to expression in diverse ways (it must come to expression “op allerlei wijs in de verschillende energieën van het menselijk leven”).



marital unity of *love* between a husband and spouse, and so on. When someone argues for the organisational unity of various denominations with the same confession (such as it is solidly argued by Durand – 1979:73-77), then the issue at hand is the differentiated structural unity of a societal collectivity alongside other social entities and *not* the supposedly exclusive expression of our “unity in Christ.”

Olthuis captures this distinction between the life-encompassing scope of the central religious dimension of the body of Christ and the differentiated and uniquely fiduciary function of the church as a faith community by capitalizing the word “church” when the radical and central perspective is at stake.

The contours which the Church takes on differ as she moves from ‘room’ to ‘room’ in God’s creation. The Church is Church as (Christian) family, as (Christian) marriage, as (Christian) state, as (Christian) business, etc. She is also Church when she is in the church-‘room’ of the creation. Wherever believers find themselves, that is, in every area of life, there will be the Church, and there will be the beginnings of the Kingdom of God. To live as Church in the world means that the Body of Christ obeys the will of God as laid down in the creation-order. And as the Law of the Lord is a unity-in-diversity, the obedient, integral, response of the Church takes on various forms geared to the diverse rooms of the creation.

This Church-church distinction is not a devaluation of the institutional church. Rather, released from the impossible burden of making its own witness the total Biblical witness in society, the institutional church can concentrate on its specific calling: nurturing of faith through a central preaching of the Word in communal worship. The only point of the distinction is to emphasize that the institutional church does not of itself exhaust the Kingdom of God.

Membership in the institutional church (important as it is) does not fulfil the responsibilities of one who is a member of the Church as Body of Christ. The institutional church is the Church, but it is not the only disclosure of the Church. It is one (most important) way in which the Church is in the world. The Church as the Citizens of the Kingdom embraces the total life and witness of the People of God in the world-wide all-encompassing Kingdom of Jesus Christ (Olthuis, 1970:115).

## IN CONCLUSION

The final question to be answered is naturally the question: what caused the “category-mistake” evident in the distinction between church and state? Why has it become *second nature* for Western people to speak about *church* and state?

In the light of our fore-going considerations the only answer to this question is that the *dual nature* of a church ideology has to take the blame for it.

The first form of this ideology exchanged a branch for the root of life – it made the church as institution the radical, central and total tie in the life of Christians and in doing that by implication considered (one line in Kuyper’s thought) the rest of human life to be branches of this *pseudo-root*.

With an inner necessity this ideological stance then identifies the *root-meaning* of *redemption* with *one sector* of God’s kingdom, namely the ecclesiastical domain that actually (without being

realised as such) results from the positivization of the structural principle (type-law)<sup>15</sup> of the church as an institution. In stead of speaking about a faith community as the equivalent of the state (as a legal community), the directional orientation of a faith community is then substituted for the structural principle. The result is a subtle confusion of “structure” and “direction” which neglects the clear biblical understanding of the *distinctness* of *structural principles* and the *directional antithesis* (between good and bad) within reality.

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Whereas aspectual laws (modal laws) – such as physical laws, logical principles or arithmetical laws, hold for all possible (kinds of) entities, type-laws only hold for a limited class of entities. For example, the law for atoms has a specified universality: it is universal insofar as it holds for *all* atoms, this universality is *specified* because it applies only to atoms (and not to everything else – such as states and churches).

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