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CHRISTENDOM AT THE CAPE

A Critical Examination of the Early Formation of the Dutch Reformed Church

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ABSTRACT

The primary research question of this dissertation is: What was the particular form that Christendom took on at the Cape during the formative period of the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) rule and how did it shape the Dutch Reformed Church as established church in this locale? This question was prompted by my hunch that the Dutch Reformed Church at the Cape and in the later South Africa has since VOC rule displayed signs of regarding itself as an important ecclesiastical partner in a Christian establishment. This was evidenced in the development of the Church into a quasi-established position (during British rule and thereafter), and the Volkskerk of the Afrikaner people and nationalism. In post-VOC times Christendom at the Cape Colony and in South Africa has also undergone various transformations. The answer to the primary research question can therefore contribute to our understanding of the contemporary character of Christendom in South Africa and the Church. A secondary research question is how the development of Christendom at the Cape can help us understand the phenomenon of Christendom itself.

In order to answer these questions I embarked on a critical and comparative study of the concept of Christendom in various contexts and the position of the church within them – post-Christian Europe, post-Vatican II Latin America, and post-1960’s North America.

In the light of this study an archival and theologically critical analysis was made of Christendom at the Cape, mainly from the vantage point of the Dutch Reformed Church. The findings were categorised under three headings: Church privilege; the control of state and culture over Church and gospel; and, the freedom of the Church.

The primary research question yielded a picture of the Church as inheritor of, and involuntary partner in a Christendom that was the result of a colonial venture of capitalist upper middle class Dutch Reformed merchants. The Church imbied the habit of being co-opted by the powers that be for the sake of material and social benefit and for the sake of promoting its evangelistic, diaconal, and educational charges. In the process it grew accustomed to compromise the integrity of its own faith and order and ultimately its public witness.

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1 The “Cape” refers to the expanding colony at the Cape of Good Hope which was started by the VOC as a replenishment station in 1652.

2 The capitalised “Church” refers to the Dutch Reformed Church, whether in the Netherlands or in the domain of the VOC, such as at the Cape of Good Hope.
The secondary research question has led to Christendom being defined as the intricate, dynamic network of power relationships between the gospel, church, political society, civil society and culture. The question is always: which aspect(s) of Christendom wield(s) power over which other aspect(s). Which bestow(s) privilege on which other(s), which control(s) which other(s), and which aspect(s) struggle(s) to be free from which other(s). It belongs to the nature of Christendom that these power relations can and indeed do change over time – as the form and content of the respective constitutive elements also change. Employing the concept of Christendom is therefore not simply a matter of understanding the elements of Christendom and the ways in which they interrelate, but indeed of understanding the metamorphosis of both elements and the relationships between them.
INTRODUCTION

RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary research question of this dissertation is: What was the particular form that Christendom took on at the Cape during the formative period of the Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) rule and how did it shape the Dutch Reformed Church as established church in this locale? This question was prompted by my hunch that the Dutch Reformed Church at the Cape\(^1\) and in the later South Africa has since VOC rule displayed signs of regarding itself as an important ecclesiastical partner in a Christian establishment. This was evidenced in the development of the Church\(^2\) into a quasi-established position (during British rule and thereafter), and the Volkskerk of the Afrikaner people and nationalism. In post-VOC times Christendom at the Cape Colony and in South Africa has also undergone various transformations. Answering the primary research question can contribute to our understanding of the historical trajectory of the character of Christendom in South Africa and the Church. A secondary research question is how the development of Christendom at the Cape can help us understand the phenomenon of Christendom theologically.

In order to answer these questions I have embarked on a critical and comparative study of the concept of Christendom in various contexts and the position of the church within them. In the process I have endeavoured to identify the theological tools that enable us to critically evaluate the character and significance of Christendom at different times and in various localities. This comprises Part One of the dissertation. My methodology is both historical/archival and theological.

CHRISTENDOM

Christendom comprises the intricate mutual relations between political society, church, gospel, culture and civil society. From an ecclesiastical perspective, it entails the establishment of the reign of Christ in public life through the use of the coercive power of the state as well as non-coercive cultural and societal powers. Understanding Christendom and the processes of its transformation, as well as the implications thereof for church and society are important theological tasks. To these

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ends theological and social scientific tools are employed. A fuller definition of Christendom will be given in Chapter 8.

**FORMING PRESUPPOSITIONS, TOOLS AND QUESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING MY RESEARCH QUESTION**

*Choosing my conversation partners*

My reading of some of the works of the Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) in North America has convinced me that the legacy of Christendom plays a cardinal role in the present position of the churches and the challenges they are faced with in that part of the world. It is especially Craig Van Gelder who develops the story of the church in the US and Canada in terms of its chequered Christendom heritage. This heritage originated in Europe, was transferred to the New England and French colonies and went through different phases of establishment and disestablishment in the US and Canada respectively. This story of establishment and disestablishment has many obvious parallels and differences in South Africa and specifically regarding the “Cape Church”.

The GOCN in North America received its impetus in the person and writings of Lesslie Newbigin and the network with the same name in Britain which came about under his inspiration. Newbigin likewise viewed the understanding of Christendom in Europe and its colonial export, as well as its reduction and demise inside and outside of Europe, as important factors for the discernment of present missions of the churches in these diverse contexts.²

Douglas John Hall is an important conversation partner of the GOCN in North America. He also argues that the Christendom heritage of the once mainline churches in North America is a crucial element for understanding these churches and their context. Hence he takes trouble to describe this heritage and how its sets the agenda for developing his contextual theology for these churches.

Hall states that Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s theology is to be understood within the context of one of the greatest perversions of Christendom. Bonhoeffer was also a continental peer of the Anglo-Saxon Newbigin. Both dealt with the Christendom legacy of Europe from their particular perspectives. Bonhoeffer also wrote about the

² Philip Jenkins’ *The next Christendom: The coming of global Christianity*, Oxford Press, Oxford (2002) could have been an interesting interlocutor. Unfortunately this book only appeared after the study had commenced.
church in North America. Subsequently, I chose to consider Bonhoeffer in a supplementary manner to Newbigin and the North American partners.

Hall also refers to liberation theology amongst other theologies that have parted with an ecclesiology and an understanding of the gospel shaped by Christendom. Hence, my attention was drawn to Pablo Richard and Enrique Dussel as theologians that specifically work with the concept of Christendom to understand the Latin American context and the present mission of the church on that continent. Their reading of Christendom from the perspective of a southern hemisphere, post-colonial context where a struggle for liberation from oppressive systems has been raging for centuries, provides valuable comparative material to my own context. There are many obvious similarities between the Cape Colony and present day South Africa on the one hand and Latin America on the other. This correspondence is also reflected in the degree of acceptance that liberation theology has received among those categories of South Africans that experience oppression.

The particularity of my conversation partners regarding locale and time in their respective dealings with the legacy of Christendom appealed to me and compelled me to ask the following questions: what is the Christendom inheritance of my own ecclesial, cultural and social context; how has it shaped the character of the church of which I am a member and in which I serve as a minister of the Word? How does this inheritance affect the position of this church and the relationship to our present society? Moreover, what is the present calling of this church in the light of the answers to the foregoing questions?

The above mentioned theologians represent a sufficiently wide scope of historical and present contexts to provide me with the necessary formative presuppositions and tools to ask pertinent questions regarding my own context. Hence, I commenced my study by doing an analysis of their respective understanding of Christendom in their particular milieus and how they subsequently assess the church and its mission. The intention of this analysis is to shape my own presuppositions and to provide me with the necessary tools and questions to research my own context in terms of its Christendom legacy. In conclusion I suggest a model of Christendom and discuss those pertinent issues in Cape-Dutch Christendom and how they relate to my partners’ contexts. The subsequent trajectories of these issues after the termination of Cape-Dutch Christendom and how they challenge gospel and church in the present bring this study to a close.
"Excavation" of an Historical Text

Presuppositions

In order to understand the present and the current challenges encountered, it is important to understand and deal with the legacy of the past. This presupposition underlies the approach of my conversation partners to their respective contexts. They argue compellingly that the rise and demise of Christendom are processes that are historically specific and are crucially linked to their present contexts. Likewise I assumed that the history of Christendom is important to understand the "Cape Church" and to envisage its mission in our day.

It goes without saying that it would be more prudent to study Christendom at the Cape and the whole story of the "Cape Church" up to the present to be able to make the most compelling deductions for the present state and mission of the Church. Such research, however, goes beyond the limited scope of the present study. The VOC period is, however, crucial for understanding the heritage of Christendom in South Africa and its erstwhile established church.

This brings us to the issue of periodisation, which serves as a key tool in all my conversation partners' assessments of Christendom in their respective contexts. Periodisation highlights the structural relations that constitute Christendom and how these relations change. In this respect the VOC era at the Cape was unique for the history of Christendom and the "Cape Church". Although a modicum of continuity existed under ensuing British and Batavian regimes, there were fundamental structural changes. The specific nature of government, namely that of a Dutch mercantile company having been granted the patronage of the "Cape Church", was discontinued with the first British rule of the Cape, never to be resumed again. This includes the second Dutch rule under the Batavian Republic. Church-state relations would never be exactly the same again.

The period 1652 - 1795 of VOC rule at the Cape of Good Hope (1652 – 1795) was the formative era for Christendom at the Cape and the character of the "Cape Church", and for that matter Christendom in South Africa and Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk. It spanned close to half of their entire history.

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4 The term "Cape Church" is used for the Church at the Cape after the constitutive synod of 1824. The "Cape Church" currently refers to Die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika, which is the regional (particular) synod of western and southern Cape of Die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK). The latter consists of ten regional synods across Southern Africa.
Cape-Dutch Christendom is a key interpretive tool to understanding the Cape Colony, South Africa, the “Cape Church” and *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*.

There have been numerous studies of this period dealing with different aspects of the history, culture, church, and government during the VOC period at the Cape. The relationship between church and government has also been dealt with in general church historiography and those focussing on church polity. In the latter instance I especially think of the research of JD (Koot) Vorster. However much these studies may overlap with mine, they nevertheless have different conceptual groundings, aims and agendas. Presumably they approach the primary sources with their own presuppositions and questions. Hence I could not simply rely on consulting secondary sources, but had to do my own close reading of my above mentioned primary sources.

Further research on Christendom and the Church at the Cape and South Africa that goes beyond the VOC era, could follow a similar methodology to the one I employ for the VOC period, or it could opt for identification and research of certain crucial events during the history of the church and the Cape in terms of the issues discerned thus far. One could, for instance, focus on the British annexations of the Cape and the arrival and accommodation of another established church, as well as an array of free churches and missionary organisations. Concerning the “Cape Church”, it would be fruitful to scrutinize certain events during those periods such its first synod; the Shand case; the position of the “Cape Church” regarding the “Great Trek”; Ordinance 7 of 1842; the struggle surrounding the Voluntary Principle of 1875 and its eventual implementation that constituted a definite phase of disestablishment of the Church; and the resistance to liberal theology in the Netherlands leading to the establishment of the seminary at Stellenbosch. The second Dutch occupation under Batavian Republican rule, however short, would prove to be an important phase in this story. Other important events and developments would probably be the rise of Afrikaner nationalism and the part of the “Cape Church” in it; the Du Plessis case; the rise of the apartheid state; the Cottesloe consultation; the anti-Apartheid struggle and the response of the NGK; and finally, the birth of a new democratic South Africa and the crisis it constitutes for Christendom and the Church at present.

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5 Since the Church existed of unconnected or informally connected congregations at the Cape during the VOC era and subsequently until 1824, I refer to it as the “Church at the Cape”.  

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As far as my sources for developing a picture of Christendom and its established church at the Cape are concerned, I am fortunate that a consistent body of primary texts exists which spans almost this entire period. Correspondence between the Church at the Cape – chaplains and eventually consistories – and the Classis of Amsterdam started in 1655 and continued on an unbroken basis to 1695 and even thereafter. Not only does it reflect the voice of the “Cape Church”, but it also provides the responses of the Dutch ecclesial “mother” body. The latter offer complementary material, as there is a remarkable similarity in language between these two correspondence partners. Minutes of consistories and the Combined Council that have been preserved since 1665 contribute towards presenting a coherent body of primary source material. The VOC’s 1617 and 1695 instructions for predicants and sick-comforters and church orders drafted under the auspices of the VOC authorities in Batavia in 1624 and 1643, fill in the picture. These documents were compiled by C Spoelstra and published in the two volumes of “Bouwstoffen voor de Geschiedenis der Nederduitsch-Gereformeerde Kerken in Zuid-Afrika”, which apart from the said documents, also contain extracts from government resolutions and documents pertaining to the emigration of the French Huguenots. A scrutiny of non-ecclesiastical texts would surely have contributed to a better understanding of Christendom at the Cape. Choosing, however, to do a close read of the primary texts instead of relying on the results of other researchers, necessitated the limitation to these ecclesiastical texts. The picture of Christendom at the Cape is therefore mainly that of the Church. Being mainly church correspondence, one can also assume some inherent limitations and biases. Church correspondence from a dependent church for instance tends to portray a picture of itself that matches the expectations of those in power. As church assemblies in the Dutch Reformed tradition are expected to only deal with ecclesiastical matters and then in an ecclesiastical manner, it can be assumed that the correspondence also reflects this limitation.

Appended to my bibliography I supply a list of documents to which I refer in these volumes.

The documents I used were written in high Dutch. Although I am not formally a scholar of high Dutch, I could draw upon my knowledge of modern Dutch and my native Afrikaans. Both these languages have their origin in high
Dutch. Since the spelling varies widely at any specific time and also changed during the course of the period under consideration, it is no small task to look up words in a dictionary. Words that are recognizable from my vantage point may also have shifted their semantic fields along the way. It is, however, not simply words that constitute the biggest challenge in reading these texts. In some cases, long and compound sentences proved to be difficult to understand. These difficulties have been confirmed by my consultation of experts of early Dutch texts. Despite these exegetical problems, to the best of my ability, I have scrutinized the texts for all indicators of Christendom as I have come to understand this phenomenon. Some aspects were exposed by the tools supplied by my conversation partners or other authors. Others appeared novel and in an original way to my mind as I was doing a close read of over a thousand pages of these high Dutch texts. Things that I would not immediately recognize as pertaining to Christendom, somehow eventually started to stand out in stronger relief as they kept recurring within the picture of Cape-Dutch Christendom⁶ that was slowly taking shape in my mind as I laboriously worked my way through a body of texts spanning the greater part of the 17th and 18th centuries. Quotations of the text are my own translation.

Qualitative research methods were used to analyse the texts. The goal of qualitative research, namely to arrive at some general, overall understanding of a phenomenon – highlighting interesting aspects and generating specific hypotheses, fit the aim of my research. The main qualitative method was obviously that of content analysis of archival documents consisting mostly of formal correspondence and minutes. Discourse analysis was used to establish meaning and to uncover the complexities of social interaction in the generation of worldviews and the constructed nature of social reality. Semiotics as the study of signs and the process of creating meaning and producing a meaningful world were also employed. Semiotics helped to describe and analyse the articulation of signs in the discourse practices and strategies in the contexts of the Cape-Dutch Christendom and Dutch Christendom. Key images, ideas, metaphors and symbols through which objects and identities are created could be identified and analysed through this method.

It is important that the subjective involvement of the researcher is acknowledged in qualitative research. Not only did the general experience and

⁶ I chose the adjective “Cape-Dutch” for Christendom at the Cape under the regime of the VOC since this adjective is well known for describing other aspects of that period, viz., Cape-Dutch architecture.
context of this researcher play an important role, but specifically my exposure to the contexts and interpretations of my conversation partners. My own context is that of being a marginalized minister in a local Dutch Reformed congregation (Vredelust) of which the rulers are responding to the post-apartheid era by aligning the congregation to North American evangelicalism and its affinity to new-liberal globalised capitalism.

A few remarks concerning terminology need to be made. I chose to stay as close to ecclesiastical terminology as used in the Dutch Reformed Church of the time such as consistory and classis for church councils and predicant for the Dutch “predikant”, which refers to a minister of religion. “Ds” (plural: “di”) as the abbreviation for “dominee” is used throughout as title for predicants.

Over and above these texts, I also made use of other primary and secondary texts that shaped the Christendom arrangement at the Cape. Apart from Calvin, I explored all the Dutch Reformed church orders preceding the era of Cape-Dutch Christendom. Secondary sources were also consulted to fill in the picture of Christendom in the Netherlands and the VOC’s domain.

**Forging a dialogue between my analysis of Cape-Dutch Christendom and the contemporary questions as set out by my conversation partners**

My conversation partners interpret their respective Christendom heritages with a view to understanding and dealing with their contemporary contexts in a fruitful manner. This is ultimately also my intention, namely to understand the current state of the “Cape Church” in its relations to the gospel, the state, other churches, culture and society.

Hence I intend to take the dialogue between my conversation partners and my primary text a step further. Although I have not dealt with the whole story of Christendom regarding the “Cape Church”, I nevertheless intend to extend the dialogue between my partners and the result of my analysis of the “Cape Church” texts to the present with a view to suggesting some interpretative points regarding the current state of the “Cape Church”, the legacy of Christendom and the challenges facing this church in order to be a faithful witness to the gospel of the reign of God in Jesus Christ. The understanding of this formative period in the “Cape Church” and Christendom will hopefully contribute towards a cogent vision for the present calling of this church both locally and elsewhere. Hence, in the final
chapter I highlight a number of pertinent issues that have emerged from this study. In each case I indicate the historical trajectory it has taken since the termination of Cape-Dutch Christendom and the challenge it poses to the Church’s faithful witness to the gospel.

In the process I also hope that my study will contribute to a wider discourse which utilises the theological concept of Christendom. For that purpose I suggest a universal model for Christendom in chapter 8, which can be used to analyse and assess different Christendom contexts.
CHAPTER ONE

CHRISTENDOM IN THE CONTEXT OF 20TH CENTURY
PROTESTANT EUROPE AND ITS COLONIES: LESSLIE
NEWBIGIN

(WITH AN EXCURSUS ON DIETRICH BONHOEFFER)

CHRISTENDOM AS INTERPRETATIVE TOOL

Newbigin grew up in a milieu where the relationship between church and society, gospel and culture, were viewed as a unity.1 The synthesis between these entities was understood in a particular way in post-revolutionary Protestant Europe and its colonies, reaching its height at the beginning of the 20th century. Neither the political break-up of Christendom due to the Reformation, nor the philosophical break of the Enlightenment with the Christendom synthesis of gospel and culture could end the self-perception of the churches and Post-Enlightenment missionary societies as being part of “Christian civilization” and that they had the vocation of expanding and exporting it in conjunction with colonial powers.2

This view came under ever increasing pressure as the experience of the “Third World” churches, which were formed as a result of Western missions, necessitated a new assessment of the relationship between gospel and culture, church and society. It was impossible for them to assume the Christendom posture that missionaries and European churches had done regarding their own societies and cultures. Unlike their European counterparts, they were critically aware of the

1 He initially uncritically shared the general conviction that Western civilisation was such a true reflection of Christianity that mission mainly meant the propagation of Western culture. Francis S. Martin's book titled The Living Past: A Sketch of Western Progress (1920) led him to believe that the West was leading humanity along the path toward freedom, happiness and enlightenment that would be accomplished through science, technology and social organisation. J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, Unfinished Agenda: An Autobiography (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1993), 6. During the period following the First World War, the words of Jesus in John 10:10, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” were very popularly used in missionary discourse. “[A]bundant life’ was interpreted as the abundance of the good things that modern education, healing and agriculture would provide for the deprived peoples of the world.” Christendom, as a way of conceiving the West, had taken on this form ( J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, The Open Secret: Sketches for a Missionary Theology (London: SPCK, 1978), 103.)

tension between their new world view shaped by their faith in Jesus Christ and that of their host culture. Christians had to understand themselves as communities distinct from the rest of society. As missionary, Newbigin had first hand experience of this necessary shift in self-perception.

Meanwhile the tension between the worldview of the Enlightenment and that of Christianity grew to a point where faith in the gospel had become increasingly difficult – something Newbigin had experienced as a teenager. The rise of paganisms and anti-Christian forces within Europe further militated against Europe’s lingering self-image of being a Christian continent. The First World War and the rise of totalitarian ideologies such as National Socialism, Fascism and Marxism acted to diminish the self-image of Europe as a Christian continent. At the Edinburgh quadrennial mission conference of January 1933, he heard Hanns Lilje, a German Lutheran (confessing) Church leader and theologian, spoke of the “falsification of Christianity which had made it a ‘mere appendage of bourgeois thought’”. The 1938 Tambaran conference IMC “saw the great danger not in secularism but in the new totalitarian ideologies that were sweeping Europe. (3) The Second World War

3 At a young age he already experienced the tension between the popular view of Europe as a Christian civilisation and the current operative cultural forces. During his formation as scholar and student in Britain he imbied so much of the assumptions of modernity that, had it not been for some Christian authors, he would have abandoned the religious assumptions in which he was reared. Fortunately his home background also prepared him for an exploration of what it meant to be a community witnessing to the gospel in a cultural context that harbours injustice, hardship, and a loss of faith. Michael W. Goheen, "As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You": J. E. Lesslie Newbigin’s Missionary Ecclesiology (Zoetermeer, Netherlands: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 2000), 12; Geoffrey Wainwright, Lesslie Newbigin: A Theological Life (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2000), 3.

4 Newbigin, Unfinished Agenda, 25. This reminds of Bonhoeffer’s section in his Ethics entitled “Heritage and Decay”, which speaks of Christendom (Corpus Christianum) as the valuable heritage that constituted Europe as a united Christian society, but also interprets the tragic history of its demise. The context in which he wrote this essay is evident from Rumscheidt’s remark: “On the one hand, he needed to convince his fellow conspirators about the powerful component of Christian faith that led him to join the conspiracy without abandoning that faith. It was the ‘faith’ of Western Christendom, of the ‘Constantinian Church’ that the fellow conspirators believed was not worthy of them and they had rejected it. Bonhoeffer needed to show them a different faith (he called it ‘non-religious’ Christianity), one that made ‘righteous action’ central and therefore, worthy of the co-conspirators and worthy of being embraced. Hitler was squandering all the values which the faith presented by Bonhoeffer held up as truly at the core of discipleship. That destruction of both worldly and faith values needed to be opposed and the conspiracy was the only way Bonhoeffer and his fellow conspirators saw as having a chance to remove Hitler. On the other hand, Bonhoeffer wanted to provide direction for the necessary future reconstruction of Germany after Hitler.” (Martin Rumscheidt, mb.rumscheid@ns.sympatico.ca, (8 June 2003), 1). Gerhard Leibholz, Bonhoeffer’s brother in law who was partly of Jewish descent, comments: “Western civilization ... has been falling steadily and with increasing rapidity into ruin and desolation. The good message of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s life and death is that Western civilization must not die.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, 1937, translated by R.H. Fuller, Sixth (complete) (Alva,
drove home this realisation even stronger. No longer could the church glibly be viewed as an integral part of a ‘Christian West’’.5 J.H. Oldham’s address at the above mentioned 1933 conference made a great impact on Newbigin as he challenged the students to regard the Western world as a mission field since Europe had radically departed from the Christian faith in its following of Descartes and the pioneers of the Enlightenment.6 The assumption of a Christian cultural context for Europe had to be abandoned. Not only had Constantinian Christendom legally come to an end with the Reformation, Newbigin later reasserted, but also later philosophically with the Enlightenment. The Christendom frame of mind has, however, persisted although the popular notion that post-Enlightenment culture is Christian is false. This culture harbours presuppositions that are in such conflict with the gospel that the church and its message has been reduced and banished to the private sphere. This false settlement between current dominant Western culture and the gospel is essentially syncretistic.

As missionary in India during and after World War II, Newbigin was in the advantaged position not only to experience the cultural dislocation of young churches, but also to accompany them towards acquiring a missionary stance.7 Moreover, he could mediate these insights to the churches in old Christendom that were, themselves, in need of parting with their Christendom ecclesiology and adopting a missionary understanding of being church. The ecumenical movement – both in the earlier formation of the International Missionary Council and later the World Council of Churches, provided the forum for the development of these new insights. Here Newbigin played a leading role.

It was at the missionary conferences of the International Missionary Council (IMC) between Tambaran (1938) and Ghana (1958) that the shift from a colonial, Christendom understanding of mission and church8 to a missionary ecclesiology

6 Newbigin, Unfinished Agenda, 25.
7 After World War II he played a leading role to help four Protestant “mission” churches in South India to come to grips with their missionary context and assume a missionary posture through unification. This new self-understanding of the new churches in the colonies challenged the sending churches in Europe to reassess their own context and ultimately their own identity and mission. The international missionary conferences, which culminated in the ecumenical movement, acted as catalyst for this new realisation.
8 Within Christendom thinking, “mission was a specialized agency organized in the [Christian] West
started to take shape. This development continued within the World Council of Churches after the merge with the IMC.\footnote{Goheen, As the Father, 47.}

At the first IMC conference after World War II held at Whitby in 1947, the dichotomy between the Christian West and the non-Christian rest of the world was now much more clearly seen to be outdated in the light of the catastrophe of the war and the advent of the post-colonial era. Even though this distinction was then abandoned in principle, colonial patterns of thought and practice, in essence belonging to Christendom, lingered on. Even the slogan “partnership in mission,” coined at this conference, was only regarded to have relevance for missions in third world countries. The West still stayed outside the vision of missionary concern. A missionary ecclesiology still could not emerge in the West despite the insights that had been evolving towards a missionary church. This was due to the lack of a theological framework that could help effect this shift with respect to the West and the church there.\footnote{Goheen, As the Father, 48.}

The 1952 IMC conference at Willingen, where Newbigin played an important role, provided such a framework. As Newbigin noted, this meeting “was widely thought at the time to have failed in its major task. But subsequent history has shown that it was in fact one of the most significant in the series of world missionary conferences”.\footnote{Goheen, As the Father, 47.} It grappled with new developments in biblical and theological studies that had not sufficiently been brought to bear on an understanding of the missionary calling of the Church – the “already–not yet” nature of the for missionary purposes in the non-Western [non-Christian rest of the] world”, which was done with the support of Western churches. Missions and church were regarded as two separate entities. Mission(s) and missionaries and their local accomplices were the agents of transfer of Western Christendom to other parts of the world. For the church to be understood as essentially missionary, it was of primary importance that the hitherto fundamental dichotomy between a sending church in the Christian West and missionary work in the non-Christian, non-Western world be overcome. Up until the 20th century, ecclesiological thinking in the West and its colonial areas was dominated by the context of the Corpus Christianum – whether Catholic or Protestant (Goheen, As the Father, 47.).

\footnote{Goheen, As the Father, 47.} The ecumenical movement is a by-product of the missionary movement, arising out of the missionary experience of the churches outside of Western Christendom. It helped the churches in the former Western Christendom to respond meaningfully to its breakdown and to the emergence of new paganism. The temptation, however, remained to view the ecumenical movement as a salvaging of the Christendom ideal on a worldwide scale. Newbigin, realising how strong Christendom habits were, warned against the digression of the ecumenical movement into a vision of “a new and wider Christendom” through an “attempt to find consolation amid the wreckage of the old Christendom”. Hence, he expressed his hope that the merge of the WCC and the IMC would rather signify a breakthrough of a thoroughly missionary concept of the nature of the church (Newbigin, Household of God, 10.).
Kingdom; the relationship between salvation history and world history; and the work of the Spirit. The most important legacy of Willingen to a missionary ecclesiology was the concept of the missio Dei. God Triune is the source of mission. The Father in his love sent his Son to reconcile all things unto Himself. Christ came to inaugurate the reign of God, which already arrived with his first coming, yet is still coming in its fullness with his second advent. Ours is the “already—not yet” time between the first and second advent of Christ – the time of mission for which God sent the Spirit as first-fruit of the parousia. The church, reconciled by Christ, sharing his Spirit, and being heirs of the hope of God’s coming Kingdom, is chosen and committed to full participation in his redeeming mission.

A Trinitarian foundation for mission instead of one based on the assumption of Western Christendom allowed the paradigmatic shift needed for the church in both the West and the Third World to face the realities of a post-Christian world.

Insights already gained in IMC discourse could now find more consistent expression: the discarding of the untenable dichotomy between older and younger churches, home base and mission field, domestic and foreign missions; the relation between church and mission; the West as a mission field; the integral relationship between evangelism and social involvement; and, church unity and mission.

The consistent formulation of these convictions in a new framework played a major role in dealing a death blow to the colonial framework for mission. Finally, many ecclesiological insights, such as a pilgrim church,... new, more flexible forms of ministry,... and the importance of the laity... could be placed more consistently in the context of a missionary church. Willingen had provided a new framework for mission. The missio Dei had replaced the more obsolete Christendom understanding.

At this stage Newbigin was asked to present the Kerr lectures at Trinity College, Glasgow in 1952. It gave him the opportunity to develop the insights gained from his missionary experience, especially his ecumenical involvement and participation in the struggle for the reunion of the Church in South India. Here he brought together

11 Fey quoted in Goheen, As the Father, 49.
12 Karl Barth, interacting with the international missionary movement, laid the foundation for the concept of the missio Dei as theological tool to reconceive the church as participating in the inter-Trinitarian relations of sending. He addressed the missionary conference at Brandenburg in 1932 (Darrell L. Guder, Henry Winters Luce Professor of Missional and Ecumenical Theology, “From Mission and Theology to Missional Theology” (Inaugural Lecture) (Princeton Seminary, December 4 2002), 7.). Barth’s ecclesiology has hence been described by David Bosch as a “magnificent and consistent missionary ecclesiology.” (Bosch, Transforming Mission, 373, 390.).
13 Goodall quoted in Goheen, As the Father, 49/50.
14 Goheen, As the Father, 50.
the Christological, eschatological, and pneumatological insights of 20th century theology as a foundation for a missionary church. The missionary understanding of the church, recovered by the missionary conferences, was not accompanied by an adequate theological reflection on the nature of the church. Newbigin notes the deficiency: "the Ecumenical movement was not being under girded by an adequate doctrine of the Church".\textsuperscript{15} Hence, it is the very nature of the church that concerns Newbigin in these lectures – an issue that had been receiving growing attention in the ecumenical tradition due to three factors: firstly, the demise of the \textit{corpus Christianum} caused a crisis for Reformation ecclesiologies that were all built upon its assumptions: “These ecclesiologies formulated their understanding of the church over against one another rather than in the context of their calling in a non-Christian environment.” Secondly, a rethinking of the nature of the church was compelled by Christian mission and the emergence of non-Western churches. Thirdly, the ecumenical movement placed ecclesiology at the centre of the theological agenda.\textsuperscript{16} The reason for this, Newbigin explains, was the fact that “the WCC was born in the death throes of ‘Christendom.’”\textsuperscript{17}

These lectures were published in 1953 under the title \textit{The Household of God}\textsuperscript{18} where he starts by drawing attention to the central stage ecclesiology has come to occupy in the 20th century. This important development, he states, is \textit{inter alia} due to the dissolution – at first gradual, but later more and more rapidly – of “the synthesis between the Gospel and the culture of the Western part of the European peninsula of Asia, by which Christianity had become almost the folk-religion of Western Europe.” Christendom, however justifiable at a time, was over, since the West had become dechristianised, secularised, post-Christian and even anti-Christian. Concomitant to this is the missionary experience of the 19th and 20th centuries and the growth of third world churches. These factors necessitate new attention for the church.\textsuperscript{19}

He then continues to summarise and interact with the two Christendom

\textsuperscript{15} in Goheen, \textit{As the Father}, 53.
\textsuperscript{16} Goheen, \textit{As the Father}, 54.
\textsuperscript{17} Newbigin, \textit{A Word in Season}, 191.
\textsuperscript{18} Geoffrey Wainwright deems this book the best ecumenical ecclesiology written in the latter part of the 20th century. It forms part of what Jürgen Moltmann calls the paradigmatic rethinking of church and mission during the 20th century, which he asserts is greatly indebted to the theology of mission. Quoted in Goheen, \textit{As the Father}, 47.
ecclesiologies that shaped the ecumenical discussion, viz., that of the Reformation and that of the Counter-Reformation. He creatively draws into the discussion a “Pentecostal” ecclesiology which emphasises the active experience of the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. He weaves its insights into a tapestry that draws on the two older traditions and consolidates their insights with the newly discovered eschatological and missionary nature of the church. Hence, *The Household of God* saw the fruition of the fundamental shift in Newbigin’s ecclesiology from a Christendom to a missionary understanding of church. Church could simply no longer be understood within the paradigm of Western Christendom. This compelled theologians to question the whole traditional doctrine of the church from a missionary perspective. The new relationship that the church was set in vis-à-vis society made it necessary to rethink ecclesiology. This led to the “beginnings of a recovery of a biblical doctrine of the Church as a missionary community.”

The realisation among churches in the West that they now also share their Third World counterparts’ experience of being in a missionary situation, took a longer time to dawn upon the common self-consciousness, as the Christendom frame of mind persisted tenaciously. As late as 1985 Newbigin remarked that missionary thinking in Europe and North America had not yet met the challenge issued by the 1933 ecumenical missionary conference held in Edinburgh to develop a genuine missionary encounter with post-Enlightenment European civilization, and become a definitive mission field. It was towards meeting this challenge that he dedicated the latter two decades of his life.

The relevance of this challenge to the Cape Church with its lingering self-perception and praxis will be dealt with in the final chapter. We now turn our attention to Newbigin’s interpretation of the story of Christendom in Europe (or established Christianity as he also called it) and the demise thereof.

**The Interpretation and Assessment of Christendom and the Demise Thereof**

Newbigin interprets the history of Christendom in terms of the pre-Constantinian,
Constantinian and the post-Enlightenment eras. The lingering mind set of Christendom in the post-Enlightenment era and its detrimental effect on the understanding of church and mission calls for a re-assessment of medieval Christendom (Constantinianism) and the pre-Constantinian era in order to ascertain which elements and motives of these periods are to be retained. That which can be salvaged from both the early and medieval church is its hold on the universal claim of the gospel. The church has sadly given up this central motive since the Enlightenment in a bid to retain Christendom’s close alliance between church and society – gospel and culture.

**The Pre-Constantinian period**

During its first three centuries the church saw itself as a missionary community with a missionary task regarding society.\(^{24}\) They were, however, persecuted minorities in constant conflict with political society. In our current post-Christendom era some envisage that this situation be emulated. We, however, have to maintain the tension of the “already–not yet” of the reign of God. Therefore the end of “Christian culture” and “Christian civilization” in the West should not tempt us to entertain the “romantic nonsense to pretend that we could go back to a pre-Constantinian innocence” like those “Christians who want to live in a state of perpetual protest, if not of persecution”.\(^{25}\)

That which can be taken from the pre-Christendom era is the self-designation of the church as *ecclesia* (public assembly) as opposed to the array of other private cultic communities that existed with the blessing of the Roman Empire and understood themselves to be *thiasos* or *heranos* (private religious communities). They were not in competition with the Caesar cult. The church was, however, not part of the spectre of private religious societies competing with one another to present personal salvation to their members. It viewed itself “as a movement launched into the public life of the world, challenging the *cultus publicus* of the Empire, claiming the allegiance of all without exception”.\(^{26}\) This confession was

\(^{23}\) Newbigin, *A Word in Season*, 78.

\(^{24}\) cf. Goheen, *As the Father*, 192.


based on the good news of the incarnation that provides the clue to all of history. For claiming universal significance, the early church paid a high price in terms of persecution and suffering as it collided with the established powers, especially the emperor cult.27

The church in the West has to realise the similarity between its own cultural dislocation and that of the early church. It has to shed its acquiescence regarding the claims of modern culture and its subsequent false humility of withdrawal into the private sphere and thereby denying the gospel’s claim to public truth.

**The Constantinian period**

The situation and self-consciousness of the church has changed rapidly since the 4th century when Constantine first awarded Christianity legal status and Theodosius subsequently declared the church to be the official cultus of the Empire. However, the legal establishment of the church and the synthesis between the gospel and classical thought that marked Christendom had its roots in the courageous insistence of the pre-Constantinian church that the incarnation was the clue to all of history and that Jesus is Lord of all. Hence, Christianity could not be a privatised cult, but the church served as proclaimer of Christ’s universal rule. This essential continuity between the early church and that of the Middle Ages is important for assessing our post-Enlightenment relationship between church and society – gospel and culture, which denies gospel and church its warranted relation to public life, but rather reduces them to the private sphere. The essentially new element of the Middle Ages was that political society accepted this claim of the church and its confession and offered patronage to it.

With regard to the 4th century, Newbigin asks the rhetorical question: Did the church have much of a choice when the ancient classical world became spiritually bankrupt and turned to the church to provide it with a centre?28 Being faithful to its origins in Israel and the ministry of Jesus, it simply had to assume responsibility for the political order.29 In hindsight it is easy to criticise the church in Christendom for

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28 This is strongly reminiscent of Bonhoeffer’s dictum of Jesus Christ being the centre.
29 This is a reminder of Bonhoeffer’s assertion that Jews in Europe serve the purpose of reminding Europe of the fact that it had through God’s free mercy become part of reality and history through Jesus Christ as Jew. The Jews are also reminded of God’s repudiating wrath. Cf Dietrich
the alliance with power in a way that contradicts the picture portrayed of Jesus in the Gospels and how this corrupted the church. Yet, it remains a difficult question to answer whether God's purposes would have been better served if there had never been a "Christian" Europe and all churches had lived as persecuted minorities.  

When the classical vision faded and the pagan empire disintegrated, it was right that those who had been given a new vision of the eternal order through the Incarnation of the Son of God should accept the responsibility of seeking to shape public life in the power of that vision. The attempt to create a Christian civilization to shape laws consonant with the biblical teaching, to place kings and emperors under the explicit obligation of Christian discipleship — none of this was wrong. On the contrary, to have declined these immense responsibilities would have been an act of apostasy. It would have been an abandonment of the faith of the gospel.  

The Constantinian settlement was therefore "the first great attempt to translate the universal claim of Christ into political terms", an attempt which resulted in "the Gospel [being] wrought into the very stuff of [Western Europe's] social and personal life". This implies that we, who belong to the Western world live in societies that have been shaped by more than a thousand years during which the barbarous and savage tribes of Europe were brought, slowly and with many setbacks, into a community conceived as the corpus Christianum, a single society in which the whole of public and private life was to be controlled by the Christian revelation. Much of what we take for granted about normal human behavior is the fruit of that long schooling. However much we rebel against it, we are its products.  

Newbigin holds up Augustine's casting of a vision for public life in the Empire as an example of what it takes to meet the challenges facing the church today as post-Enlightenment culture finds itself in a crisis. Comparable to the current crisis of the West, Western Christendom was in dire straights within the first hundred years after Constantine. Inwardly and spiritually the classical world-view had disintegrated.

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30 Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 100f.

31 Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 129.

32 Newbigin in Goheen, *As the Father*, 196.


34 Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 101. In *Heritage and Decay* Bonhoeffer probably had his fellow conspirators in mind of whom many would likely also have "rebelled" against the Christendom legacy of which Germany was part. He wished to convince them about the value of the inheritance of Western Christendom which Hitler was squandering. It was this very inheritance that formed the unity of the West. As the title suggests, he intended his readers to discern between the profound value bequeathed by Western Christendom in respect of Germany and all of the West, and the degeneration this inheritance had suffered in Germany. This essay was meant to strengthen the motivation for Hitler's assassination in order to relieve Germans of their oath of loyalty to him and set them free to save whatever could be saved of Christendom's inheritance in a post-war Germany. Also see Victoria Barnett, *For the Soul of the People: Protestant Protest Against Hitler* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 184.
outwardly matched by Alaric’s pillage of the Eternal City. As an old man, Augustine
set himself his greatest task, namely to interpret secular history in the light of the
gospel. He painted a picture of the relationship between church and world that
shaped thought and practice in Western Christendom for a thousand years. Not only
did he provide an approach to knowledge that related science and revelation in a
synthesis that enabled a common understanding of reality, but also related the city of
God to the earthly city in a vision that was to control the relationship of church and
society for another millennium in the Western part of Europe. This vision
acknowledged the co-existence at all levels of public life of pagans and Christians,
the latter as “resident aliens”. Even though the church was no longer persecuted and
enjoyed established status, the kingdom of God had definitely not arrived in its
fullness. Two commonwealths with two internal logics lived side by side, the one
ruled by the love of self, the other by love of God. Yet, Augustine insisted that the
basis of society is love of God and love of one’s neighbour. “It is love that creates
justice. (...) Faith working through love is the foundation of justice, and without
justice there is no commonwealth”. This love is the motive power of order, which is
the prerequisite for peace. Order depends on proper government. The qualification
for proper government is that the one who governs does it for the sake of those he

35 In this respect Bonhoeffer took pains to point out to the “cultured despisers of the faith” to
understand that the very classical culture they cherished, had taken its particular shape in Europe
due to its “bonding and assimilation into Christianity.” Therefore Rumscheidt’s assertion that
Bonhoeffer had to convince them that the “destruction of both worldly and faith values needed to be
opposed...” (italics mine) (Rumscheidt.). Antiquity only became an historical heritage to the West
after having been encountered by the gospel. It is not on the same par as Jesus Christ, but in relation
to him it came to share in the fruit of the incarnation, namely by becoming part of historical reality.
The Roman part of this heritage became the form of life of Western Christendom, especially
regarding education and politics – the content being Christian. Western humanists in Italy, France,
England and Holland worked on a reconciliation of antiquity with Christianity. The Reformation,
especially in Germany, in its ecclesial and political break with Rome, chose to realign itself with
the Greek heritage. The latter is metaphorical for that part of antiquity that resists the reconciliation
between the gospel and Roman culture on the ground of a stark contradiction between nature and
grace. Outside of this relation to Jesus Christ, antiquity holds no historical heritage for the West. In
itself it is unhistorical and timeless and therefore not part of reality and fit for a museum. The same
is applicable to the revival of the German pre-Christian ethnic past (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Ethics,
Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 6, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005, 106-9). This Teeling
ascribes to WW I’s legacy of loss of identity resulting from the dissolution of the Wilhelmine
Empire, which stimulated a hankering after pre-Christian cultural and religious symbols. During the
1920s there was therefore a revival of “folk religions” combined with a random use of scripture, and
emphasis on nature—blood and soil. Where the retrieval of Germanic tradition left gaps, classical
Greek symbols had to complement it. These symbols suited their ideology better than those of
Christianity. Ancient Greece and Athens was hailed, although modern-day Greece was criticized for
having lost its association with the great days of Athens (William Teeling, Crisis for Christianity
(London: The Religious Book Club, 1939), 204.).
governs — as their servant. Christians, on the other hand, as resident aliens in the earthly city, must nevertheless seek its good order and when called to responsibility as rulers, must accept it in the spirit of servants of the common good. This is required by obedience to the law of God, which is love. Thus the citizens of the heavenly city will actively seek the peace and good order of the earthly city, not seeking to forestall, but patiently awaiting, the final judgment when the two will be visibly be separated and the heavenly city will appear in all its beauty. Meanwhile the monastic communities, such as the one to which Augustine belonged, are visible signs and preliminary realizations of a world ruled solely by the love of God in the midst of a world ruled by the love of self.  

This vision controlled the relationship between church and society throughout the Middle Ages. Without losing the realism concerning the reality of sin that threatens this order, public life in all spheres "was to be shaped as far as possible by the vision of an order in which love is expressed through the relations proper to a hierarchical order of which God, who is the source of all love, is the head." This vision and order was challenged by millenarian movements throughout the ages. Their vision was "of the total disappearance of the existing political, economic, and ecclesiastical order and its replacement by some sort of theocracy — whether of a semidivine emperor or of the elect saints." In modernity, the popular vision of a secular utopia has replaced these millenarian currents.

The tension of the eschatological nature of the reign of God which cannot be humanly instituted in this sinful age, yet can already influence public life, was evident in the monastic orders. They reflected the reality of God's future rule that broke into the present in Christ, in order to promote as much as possible of its placement in the world. Newbigin fosters a similar vision for faith communities in our day reflecting the reign of God as "sign and foretaste," while as "instrument" of the kingdom they are working actively towards realising some of it in society. Goheen explains this dialectic tension in Newbigin's (and Bosch's) theology as a holding on to both Anabaptist and Reformed understandings of the church.

We see him maintaining this tension when he warns that the end of

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37 Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 105.
38 Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks*, 106.
39 Goheen, *As the Father*, 426.
“Christian culture” and “Christian civilization” in the West should neither tempt us to entertain the romantic ideas of returning to pre-Constantinian innocence or Constantinian Christendom, however much these shaped the West in many a positive respect. But it broke down, and we cannot try to reconstruct it. We should face our new political context and play our role as Christians in responsible citizenship.40

Newbigin, similar to Bonhoeffer, was particularly interested in the role played by Christian theology in shaping the understanding of reality of Christendom Europe. Christendom was much more than a new alliance between political society and Christianity, state and church. The establishment of the Christian church in the Roman Empire coincided with the malaise of the classical world view. Theology had to do with the relationship between the Christian understanding of reality and the reigning classical world view of the Empire. It meant more than a new ethic. It entailed an alternative ontology and epistemology to the floundering ones of the Roman Empire. Not that it meant discarding Roman antiquity. The theologians of the first century of Christendom provided the Empire and Europe with a new way of understanding by providing a new archē, a new starting point for the logos of the classical world, namely the Christ event, as so vividly narrated in the first chapter of the gospel of John. Ultimate reality was no longer unknowable, but revealed in the person of Jesus Christ in the text of the New Testament and the preaching of the church. This was captured in Augustine’s famous slogan credo ut intelligam (I believe in order to know). In his Confessions he narrates how he had to give up the classical prerogative of being the subject in his failed quest for truth as he became the object of the Other who sought and found him through “the Word made flesh in the actual history of Jesus Christ”. This would “henceforth be the foundation for all the great intellectual and spiritual striving which filled the remaining years of his life”. Hence, “a worldview which sees ultimate reality as in some sense personal” now replaced the classical world view that regarded “ultimate reality as impersonal”.41 By faithfulness to the reality of Jesus Christ, we would be led by the

40 Newbigin, Truth to Tell, 68. This is reminiscent of Bonhoeffer’s plea for a reappraisal of the heritage of Western Christendom especially in Nazi Germany where two divergent categories turned their backs on the heritage of Christendom. On the one hand there were “German Christians” and new pagans that despised the Roman heritage of Western Christendom. On the other hand there were the “cultured despisers” of the faith who cherished Roman antiquity, yet scorned Christianity.
41 Bonhoeffer also picked up the theme of reality being ultimately personal – im-personated in Jesus
Spirit to full knowledge of the Father — *in via* at present, but in its fullness at the end. This overcame the paralysing dualisms of the classical world and liberated classical thought to advance in the scientific way it did. This synthesis, mainly ascribed to Augustine, sustained Europe for a thousand years. Although it did not end the tension between the classical and the biblical ways of understanding reality, the Christian story did, however, play the greater part in shaping Europe as a coherent political, cultural and spiritual entity. Whilst Roman civilisation and the church had been confined to the cities mainly populated by Roman citizens, the Christian faith and this new mental framework was extended into rural, tribal society by the Benedictine order, through its balanced rule of prayer, manual work, and study — all based on Scripture.42

In Augustine Newbigin thus found a precursor of Michael Polanyi whose proposal of “personal knowledge” attempts to stem the malaise of modern Western epistemology. He followed Polanyi in his contrasting of John Locke (one of the seminal Enlightenment philosophers) and Augustine. The priority of doubt over faith, as espoused by the Enlightenment architects, was a revival of the critical age of Greek philosophy. Augustine brought this to an end by inaugurating a post-critical philosophy as “classical reason is understood in the context of the fiduciary structure of the Christian faith”.43 Newbigin proposes a similar epistemic shift for our time as

Christ. This crucial understanding of reality was transposed upon antiquity to form the basis of the Christian West. Any break with this — whether represented by ancient Greek thinking or the modern revival of the pre-Christian European worldview — was merely mythology.

42 J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, *Proper Confidence: Faith, Doubt and Certainty in Christian Discipleship* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1995), 7 - 14. Newbigin approvingly refers to Christopher Kaiser’s work on the dialogue between Christian theologians and science. The Cappadocian theologians at the end of the fourth century developed four fundamental principles based upon the creation of God and the incarnation of Christ that were to shape the development of science throughout the ages up to the present. In this way the biblical revelation redeemed and rescued classical thought from its *cul de sacs* and provided the basis for the subsequent development of science in Europe. It was this Christian basis that caused Europe to advance scientifically well ahead of the “far more brilliant thinking of India, China, and the Arab world.... They were part of the whole reconstitution of thought necessitated by the new fact, the action of God, the incarnation of the Word in Jesus Christ.”

43 Goheen, *As the Father*, 379. Goheen is, however, critical of Newbigin’s notion that the early church fathers faithfully followed the principle of *credo ut intelligam* and that Augustine and the early church consistently followed what Newbigin calls the subversive fulfilment of the gospel regarding the classical world view. Goheen points out that Augustine and the early church fathers were heavily dependent upon Platonic categories—something Newbigin is well aware of. Newbigin is however so intent on highlighting the positive side of Augustine’s synthesis that he loses sight of the way in which this synthesis of the gospel and neo-Platonic rationalism paved the way for Aquinas’ appropriation of Aristotle. Newbigin marks the latter development as the beginning of the turning point towards the eventual separation between revelation and rational knowledge in Western culture. Newbigin therefore underplays the pagan humanistic rationalist stream in medieval
the Enlightenment project is rapidly losing credibility.

The Augustinian settlement and its crisis play an important role in my analysis of Cape-Dutch Christendom, its historical trajectory and the present challenge.

Bonhoeffer, like Bosch,\textsuperscript{44} describes medieval Christendom in terms of the symbiotic relationship between pope and emperor, struggling together and against one another for the unity of church and empire. Jesus Christ, being the undisputed master of both, was the basis of the unity. The pope, as spiritual representative of Christ, also claimed the supreme political power as establisher of the reign of Christ on earth, whereas the emperor, as supreme political authority also claimed to have supreme spiritual power.\textsuperscript{45}

\textit{Post-Christendom}

\textbf{The gradual demise and reduction of Christendom}

Philosophically, the breakdown of Christendom started with European exposure to peoples of other faith, viz. influential Muslim theologians that introduced Aristotle’s philosophy to the West in the late Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{46} The breakthrough that this philosophy had in the West meant the dissolution of the medieval synthesis of revelation and classical rationality. Thomas Aquinas proposed a synthesis between Aristotelian philosophy and theology, which placed the burden of proof for the certainty of God and revelation on philosophical reasoning. Scepticism grew due to the findings of the new science as developed by Galileo, Copernicus and Kepler.\textsuperscript{47}

Politically, Christendom was severed as the Constantinian arrangement of church-state relations disintegrated due to the Protestant Reformation. The religious wars of the seventeenth century in Europe “marked the final destruction of Christendom’s synthesis of church and society”. Christianity had become a highly divisive and volatile issue and therefore Europe turned away from its unifying vision of humanity and the world and embraced the alternative vision of the

\textsuperscript{44} Bosch, \textit{Transforming Mission}, 274.
\textsuperscript{45} Bonhoeffer, \textit{Ethics}, 110.
\textsuperscript{46} Newbigin, \textit{Proper Confidence}, 17.
\textsuperscript{47} Newbigin, \textit{Truth to Tell}, 16-20.
Enlightenment, which interprets the human story in terms of nationhood as a secular entity instead of interpreting it in terms of the sacred. Hence, the Christian vision was relegated “to the status of a permitted option for the private sphere.”

The successive onslaughts of the Renaissance, the Reformation, the ensuing religious wars, and finally the Enlightenment produced a set of dichotomies so powerful that ever since it has been exerting ever increasing pressure on the legacy of the corpus Christianum, its epistemology and its ecclesiology.

Not all the great thinkers of the Enlightenment were intent on banning the Christian story from the public life of Europe though. Descartes for instance, had the backing of Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle to counter the incipient scepticism and outright atheism, and “to employ his philosophical method to prove, beyond doubt, the existence of God.”

Likewise, Immanuel Kant, “the product of a devout Christian home where the commandments of God were the basis of the moral law” argued “from the fact of moral obligation to the existence of God”. His argument that human moral experience compels us to acknowledge the reality of God, of judgement and of immortality, led to the popular conclusion that “the existence of God is beyond the reach of human reason”. Nietzsche finally drew the inescapable conclusion from Descartes’ method of rational criticism that all certain knowledge is impossible, whether “true” or “false,” “right” or “wrong.” The driving force behind history was all a matter of the drive for power.

Even so, the success of the modern project is to be ascribed to the critical role that the Christian heritage played in it. The Enlightenment’s “incandescence has fed on the combustion of the Christian heritage in the oxygen of Greek rationalism, and when the fuel was exhausted the critical framework burned away”.

Christendom’s prevailing mind set

The presupposition of Christendom of a synthesis between gospel and Western culture and an alliance between church and political society did not end that easily though. It first survived the religio-political schism caused by the Reformation as the

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48 Newbigin, Foolishness to the Greeks, 101ff.
49 Newbigin, A Word in Season, 172.
50 cf. Newbigin, Proper Confidence, 30-40.
51 Newbigin, Proper Confidence, 20.
52 Newbigin, Proper Confidence, 25-26.
53 Polanyi in Newbigin, Proper Confidence, 48.
new nations and national churches of post-Reformation and modern Europe conceived themselves as the heirs of Christendom. The relevance of this statement for Cape-Dutch Christendom will become apparent later.

Not even the paradigmatic cultural shift of the Enlightenment could terminate the conviction of Western churches that Christendom had come to an end. Two hundred years later the Christendom mindset still maintained itself in churches of the West. This tenacity of the Christendom frame of mind within Western churches is central to Newbigin’s use of the concept of Christendom and its demise. This mindset prevents Western Christians of coming to grips with the chasm that has developed between modern European culture and the gospel. The habits of more than a millennium of Christendom do not die easily. These habits have survived the paradigmatic shift brought about by the Enlightenment as churches accommodated the hegemony of modernity. Protestant churches, whether liberal, fundamentalist or pietistic, have for such a long period lived in a symbiotic relationship with culture as “domestic chaplains to the nation” that they have all regressed to an “advanced case of syncretism. Instead of confronting our culture with the gospel, we are perpetually trying to fit the gospel into our culture”. The confinement of the church to the private sphere in Western culture is a consequence of its Christendom legacy of negotiating a place for itself within the constellation of cultural powers. Although this place is seriously reduced in modernity, the establishment frame of mind remains the same.

This, to some extent, is also applicable to the former colonies of the West where a Christendom mindset established itself subsequent to the export of the West’s supposed Christian culture via the colonial projects and the accompanying missions of Western churches during the 19th and 20th centuries. The Church at the Cape will later be assessed in terms of this indictment of being a “domestic chaplain to the nation... perpetually trying to fit the gospel into our culture”.

Secularisation was even welcomed in the 1960s as a form of liberation made possible by the Christian gospel, creating a space free of all ideological or religious

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54 Goheen, *As the Father*, 196.
control. All of this was based on the false premise that human societies can flourish without any shared beliefs. European society still clung to the shared belief that a body of sure knowledge available through the methods of science is needed for life together. In such a context ultimate questions concerning purpose cannot be answered and led to the proliferation of new gods.\textsuperscript{59}

The challenge of the Christendom mindset by the modern missionary experience

In a similar way that Europe’s exposure to the non-Christian world had led to the initial philosophical break in Christendom in the late Middle Ages, so the direct contact of Europe with the non-Christian world contributed to the disintegration of the remaining Christendom mindset in the 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries.

The mission of the Western Church, controlled by the old Christendom vision of extending the frontiers of Christendom and transmitting the benefits of Europe’s Christian civilisation to the rest of the peoples of the world,\textsuperscript{60} resulted in the rise of churches outside Western Christendom. The first Christian converts on the mission field identified with this vision and happily accepted Western culture as part and parcel of the gospel, frequently living their newly adopted lifestyle in a mission compound. With the growth of the church outside the West, it outgrew the mission compound as native Christians were scattered among their pagan compatriots. This compelled these young Christian communities to live within their cultures and find new ways of drawing the line between faith in Christ and unbelief. At first, this often resulted in a radical break with their cultures as a whole. Later a more nuanced stance developed. Subsequently questions concerning the relationships of church and world, and hence concerning the very nature of the church, have presented themselves in missionary thinking since the 1930’s. These developments did not find immediate application in the West and its church as the latter had become accustomed to living in a Christian culture.\textsuperscript{61} With dechristianisation in Europe and the resurgence of paganism, churches there slowly started to recognise that the West had also turned into a mission field. The

\textsuperscript{58} Goheen, \textit{As the Father}, 198.
\textsuperscript{59} Newbigin, \textit{A Word in Season}, 150.
\textsuperscript{60} Newbigin, \textit{A Word in Season}, 133.
\textsuperscript{61} Newbigin, \textit{Household of God}, 2,3,5.
experience of missionaries and the young churches outside the West became powerful instruments in breaking down a Christendom understanding of church – first in the “Third World”, but subsequently also in the West. The issue of the effect of contact with non-Western Christians on the Cape Church will be scrutinised in a later chapter.

While the modern missionary movement has led to Christianity’s spread around the globe, Western Christians are currently apologetic about the colonial ways in which it was carried out. Furthermore churches in the old Christendom are on the decline while their young counterparts elsewhere are growing. These new churches find it amazing and shocking that Christians of the old Christendom are so apologetic about their faith and so overly wary of not imposing the faith on anybody else.

Cultural and religious pluralism and the disintegration of community

The end of colonialism witnessed the migration of once colonised peoples of non-Christian religious convictions to the countries of their former colonial masters. This made it increasingly difficult in the West to continue to accept the Christian belief system as public truth. Christendom in England was replaced by the modern scientific world view and pluralism, advanced by the newcomers who, apart from holding on to their respective traditional religions, also embraced the modern scientific world view.

Whereas post-Enlightenment culture’s rationality and romanticism put Christendom’s legacy of faith in Christ under pressure as the starting point for science, the epistemologies of both Christendom and the post-Enlightenment culture have been challenged by the self-assertion of non-Christian religions and world views in the post-colonial era. This has led to pluralism of both religion and rationality and gone hand in glove with the atomisation and individualisation that has been taking place as a consequence of industrialisation and urbanisation. These

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62 Quoted in Goheen, *As the Father*, 197.
65 Goheen, *As the Father*, 106-08.
66 Newbigin, *Proper Confidence*, 31,32.
again resulted in the breakdown of traditional community life.\textsuperscript{67}

Concomitant with this is the modern concept of church as voluntary association of individual believers which “freely join themselves to develop and express their faith”. It has destroyed the Christendom understanding of church and state as two organs of one body. This new understanding is evidenced by “the fragmentation of Christian bodies and the multiplication of groups gathered around strong personalities who are able to appeal to the religious feelings of individuals.”\textsuperscript{68}

The relevance of the above paragraphs regarding the legacy of Cape-Dutch Christendom will be probed later.

\textbf{Dietrich Bonhoeffer and post-Christendom: A brief excursus}

It is illuminating to compare Newbigin’s rendition of the story of the decay of Christendom with that of his near contemporary, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. At about the same time that Newbigin presented his lectures \textit{The Kingdom of God and the Idea of Progress} (1941), in which he critiqued Christendom’s cultural optimism, Bonhoeffer presented his interpretation of the decay of Western Christendom’s heritage. Bonhoeffer employs the concept of secularisation to describe the autonomy that was ascribed to “the natural” in the wake of the Reformation.\textsuperscript{69}

Bonhoeffer views the role of the Reformation as much more pertinent to the decay of Christendom’s heritage than Newbigin. The latter sketches the decay of Christendom as a drawn out process of philosophical developments before and after the Reformation and the latter merely meaning the formal termination of Roman Christendom. It was actually the resultant religious wars which convinced Europe that Christianity had failed to provide a religious-cultural centre for the commonwealth. Hence the Enlightenment’s vision was turned to in order to provide an alternative world view. Bonhoeffer, however, draws a markedly different picture. First, he asserts, the theology of the Reformation was misrepresented and linked to Catholic heresies. This led to the expulsion of Jesus Christ from the centre of Europe

\textsuperscript{67} Newbigin, \textit{Household of God}, 3, 4.
\textsuperscript{68} Newbigin, \textit{Truth to Tell}, 69.
\textsuperscript{69} See his essay “Heritage and Decay”. Bonhoeffer’s use of the concept of secularisation is noteworthy in the light of Newbigin’s above statement that 1928’s concern about “secularism” was replaced by distress about new paganism in the 1930s and 1940s. However, Bonhoeffer, in the early 1940s, employed “secularisation” as the central motive from which all the forces of decay originated. Newbigin is correct when he states that the 1960’s positive assessment of secularisation cannot rightfully be attributed to Bonhoeffer.
resulting in nihilism, which is tantamount to annihilation of everything as unrestrained powers, opposed to God. 

The very question concerning an historical heritage that is to be owned afresh, implemented in the present and passed on to future generations, falls prey to nihilism as an a-historical mindset sets in. Responsibility for the past realities is exchanged for a romantic view of earlier times. The future becomes a matter of chance. Hence: purpose, dignity, hard work, responsibility, endurance, sacrifice and suffering are disregarded whereas expediency, chance, propaganda and mistrust flourish.

This happened as secularisation, set off by the Reformation, took hold on both sides of the religious divide caused by the Reformation, albeit in different shapes. This is evidenced in a comparison of German, Protestant secularisation with French, Catholic secularisation.

On the Protestant side, the schism in Christendom followed a particular route regarding the relations between emperor, pope, landed princes and the two main Protestant confessions in Germany. In this way "the great process of secularization" also took on its own character.

Luther's doctrine of two kingdoms was misinterpreted as implying that the world and the natural order is totally free and holy of its own accord. It was completely forgotten that human holiness is not to be found in either the sacred or the profane, "but only through the gracious sin-forgiving word of God". Hence, government, reason, economy and culture (including education and aesthetics) all claimed the right to autonomy. This was not at all seen as being in conflict with Christianity. The Reformation was cherished as the emancipation of the human being in all respects – conscience, reason and culture. Even the worldly [weltlich] – that which had always been viewed as sinful – was justified. This led towards a disenchanted world view as the "Reformation biblical faith in God had radically

70 Nazism's ideologues were not Christian. There were rather definitive anti-Christian elements in the regime, like Hitler's bodyguard (and police) who were obliged to resign from church. Yet, Hitler used Christian language and rituals that have a religious background to venerate his martyrs. "New Faith Movements," designating new-paganist movements were to receive protection along with those churches that had enjoyed state patronage. Rosenberg advocated a religion for those not (already) satisfied with Catholicism or Protestantism (Teeling, Crisis for Christianity, 209.).

71 Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 127-31.

72 Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 113. It is of interest that legally and politically "secularisation" means the "transfer of church property to secular control." In "context of intellectual history" however, secularisation refers to the severing of politics, science, culture and the natural order from their connection with the corpus Christianum (Footnote 47, Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 113.).
desacralized [entgoettert] the world”. The rational and empirical sciences blossomed, but contrary to the scientists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who still believed in Christ, faith in God was lost then, leaving us with a “rationalized and mechanized world”.\(^{73}\) This reached its apex in “cultural Protestantism”, with the church withdrawing into the “sacred” sphere and falling prey to “unnaturalness, irrationality, triumphalism, and arbitrariness”, and finally, “a sinful surrender to the world”.\(^{74}\)

On the Roman Catholic side secularisation also took hold in Catholic France as a result of the Reformation and came to fruition during the Revolution from where it was exported to the rest of the West. It was revolutionary, anti-church and even anti-Christian. It spawned a whole new culture in the West characterised by an array of mutually conflicting powers: the cult of reason, the deification of nature, faith in progress and a critical approach toward civilisation and culture, the revolt of the bourgeoisie and of the masses, nationalism, anti-clericalism, human rights and dictatorial terror. The French Revolution bequeathed three great forces to the West, viz., ratio/technology, mass movements and nationalism. This created a new philosophical centre for the West, viz., liberty based upon reason, the mass and the nation.\(^{75}\)

Emancipated reason produced technology and the latter is a symbol of the former. On the negative side, technology stands for rationalism, the veneration of nature, belief in perpetual progress and a critical disposition to civilization. Technology became something fundamentally different from what it had always been in various cultures. No longer was it bound to art, religion, and merely satisfying the daily needs of people. By contrast, the technical science of the modern

\(^{73}\) Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 114. In this atmosphere the German churches could silently and uncritically support the powers that be. At an earlier stage Bonhoeffer held the traditional Lutheran view of drawing a sharp distinction between politics and religion. He came to realise that the political authority in Germany had become totally corrupt and immoral and that their false faith was wreaking havoc, that Hitler was the Antichrist and arch-destroyer of the world and its basic values. Hence he concluded that “this side” must be completely “related to, and permeated by, Christian love and that the Christian must be prepared, if necessary, to offer his life for this.” Although the Barmen Declaration committed the church to action in both political and religious sphere, Bonhoeffer did not commit the Confessing Church by his actions, but took sole responsibility for it. This did not mean that he was not deeply disappointed with the unwillingness of the Confessing Church to actively link her life with the life of the people, but rather to focus on her own existence and inherited rights (Memoir by G. Leibholz in Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 19, 24-25.).

\(^{74}\) Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 60/1.

\(^{75}\) Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 122.
Western world has as main function that its places thinking and experimenting humans in a position of mastery over nature as an end in itself and with a soul of its own. The machine is the symbol of the power of human beings to violate and exploit nature. The conquest of time and space by technical science sees an undertaking which sets God's will at defiance. The benefits of technology pale into insignificance beside its demoniacal properties. This is unlike the place technology has come to take in other cultures like Islam, where it continues to be used for the service of God. Emancipated reason leading to the triumph of technical science with its disadvantages probably outweigh its advantages, is now irrevocably part of the West's heritage with which we have to come to grips. The functionaries of this power are engineers and entrepreneurs.

The mass and mass movements resulted from the discovery of eternal human rights by emancipated reason. Freedom was claimed as being the birthright of every human being. Equality before the law and common solidarity among all people mark this liberty. Human beings are entitled to dignity, free cultural development, recognition of achievements and liberation from all oppressive forces, ecclesiastical or secular, political or economic. Despotism and tyranny of all kinds had to yield before the masses claiming their rights. The church, in its claims to power, also bore the brunt of this force. It stirred the underprivileged classes, whether it be the bourgeoisie that claimed equal rights with the nobility on the grounds of their intellectual capacity, or whether it is the poor and needy masses whose only claim is their misery.

Nationalism as a revolutionary idea arose in opposition to excessive dynastic absolutism. No longer would people identify themselves in terms of their ruler, but rather in terms of themselves. They claimed maturity for themselves and hence insisted on a government authorised by themselves.

Secularisation, supposed to present a new basis of unity to the West in the absence of a unity in faith, harbours within it these three mutually opposing forces, whose inherent tensions are destructive as they turn upon one another once liberty is achieved. The collaboration between technology and the masses is in tension with

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77 Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 121.
79 Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 120.
nationalism as “they have an irresistible tendency to break down the frontiers of nationalism.” Nationalism, like the masses, is hostile to reason. Nationalism and technology are hostile to the masses. In themselves these forces are deadly, as technology leads to slavery, the emancipation of the masses to the reign of terror of the guillotine and nationalism to war. “The liberation of man as an absolute ideal leads only to man’s self-destruction. At the end of the path which was first trodden in the French Revolution there is nihilism.”

The French Revolution’s new unity of the West is Western godlessness, which is not atheism but itself a religion of hostility to God. This is nothing other than Western godlessness and it landed the Western world in a crisis. This is especially found in Germany and Anglo-Saxon countries and it always turns against the living God of the Bible, against Christ. In this it reflects its Western Christendom roots.

The New Man is its god – even in the form of Christ. Luther’s freedom of the Christian and the Catholic heresy of the essential goodness of humanity merged to affect the deification of humanity, which is essentially nihilism. When God is done away with, the destruction of biblical faith in God and divine commands and ordinances follow and subsequently self-destruction is the lot of humanity.

From the above we can see that Bonhoeffer was critically aware of the close link between government and cultural forces. Although he was convinced that it was necessary to assassinate Hitler to save Germany and the West, he knew full well that removing Hitler was only a first step in addressing the crisis. It was not simply a matter of a change of political agency, but a cultural crisis that lay below the surface. Hence, in his Heritage and Decay, written with his fellow conspirators in mind, he focused not on tyrannicide but on coming to grips with the cultural crisis of Germany and the West. Not only were Hitler and National Socialism intimately connected. The latter was related to the larger decay of the cultural heritage of Christendom, of which Hitler and National-Socialism were but one occurrence. The cultural forces set loose by the Reformation could not operate on their own, but of necessity attracted political agency like the exorcised demon of Luke 11:24.

80 Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 101-02.
81 Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 101/2.
82 Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 102/3.
83 Bonhoeffer, Ethics, 103.
NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF CHRISTENDOM

According to Newbigin, the Christendom arrangement had several negative effects on the church. These effects do not only pertain to pre-Reformation Western Europe, but also to the churches of the Reformation and Contra-Reformation that kept on defining themselves in Christendom terms.

Self-understanding of church

Firstly, Christendom affected the self-understanding of the church and the resulting theological reflection thereon. Despite the fact that the Reformation meant the end of Christendom as political dispensation of a united Europe, nearly all churches of the Reformation assumed that Christendom should continue. The reigning mind set of one established church within a political domain caused established churches to view themselves as “the religious department of European society” and to define themselves in contrast to one another instead of in contrast to a pagan world. Reformation theologies thus lack the sense of being church in a missionary situation.\(^8^4\) When all of European society was baptised, the church no longer envisioned a mission for itself in Europe. Neither did it concern itself with the rest of the world, as that was out of Europe’s sight and reach.\(^8^5\) Christendom became a self-contained world that lost “the sense that the Church is a body sent into all the world, a body on the move and existing for the sake of those beyond its borders”.\(^8^6\) Hence, the marks of the true church, as found in confessional statements, make no reference to the missionary identity of the church.\(^8^7\) Theology became an encounter between rival interpretations of the gospel and church history reflected on that encounter instead of the encounter between the gospel and non-Christian culture.

Since the Reformation, the disunity of the church has been accepted as a fact in the West. In a Christendom setting, denominationalism is not much of a problem, as church is not that important. In a missionary situation, this situation changes when the church finds itself in a minority position in a pagan setting. The issue of church unity then becomes an inescapable shibboleth for the integrity of the gospel. Christendom presumes the prevalence of a Christian culture and hence churches do

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84 Newbigin, *Household of God*, 1, 2.
85 Quoted in Goheen, *As the Father*, 193.
86 Quoted in Goheen, *As the Father*, 193.
not have to take an antithetical stance against the powers. Instead of unified opposition against a culture that challenges the gospel, the churches of Christendom could spend their energies on rival interpretations of the Christian faith. This practice which is acceptable in Christendom becomes a scandal in a missionary situation.  

The division of the Church into rival and hostile bodies is something incompatible with the central verities of the Gospel.... When the Church faces out toward the world it knows that it only exists as the first-fruits and the instrument of that reconciling work of Christ, and that division within its own life is a violent contradiction of its own fundamental nature.

Patterns of church and churchmanship

Secondly, Christendom also deeply influenced patterns of church and church leadership. The tenacity of Christendom habits makes it difficult for church leadership and churches to deal with its demise. While there are signs in ecumenical circles of a struggle to regain a missionary understanding of church and a missionary relationship between church and its cultural context, conventional congregations and their leadership are still not oriented towards a post-Christendom, neo-pagan environment.

Ministry came to be viewed mainly in terms of pastoral care for church members in established faith communities rather than leadership in mission. Congregations became self-absorbed places of gathering for edification and sanctification of the faithful rather than “a staging post for witness and service to the world outside”; baptism became a cultural rite of passage instead of a commissioning for witness; the Eucharist became a spiritual feeding of the flock instead of recommitment for mission.

Congregational structures still reflect medieval undifferentiated society that are neither relevant to the differentiated nature of secular Western society, nor faithful to the picture of the church as missionary communities as reflected in Scripture.

88 Goheen, As the Father, 195.
89 Newbigin, Household of God, 9.
90 Goheen, As the Father, 197.
91 Newbigin, Honest Religion for Secular Man, 102; Newbigin in Goheen, As the Father, 193.
92 Newbigin in Goheen, As the Father, 194.
Church-state relations

Thirdly, Christendom spawned a relation between church and state that does not reflect the critical and prophetic edge of the gospel. The power of the state could, and often did, compel the church to be subservient to worldly interests. National churches became the “protected and well decorated chaplaincy in the camp of the dominant power”.95

In general, missionaries have favoured any political dispensation that created a stable society free from violence and civil war in which they could carry out the work of evangelism, while refraining from any action that could offend the powers that be. Proclamation would invariably be accompanied by ministries of mercy. Education, health services and development would often count among them. However, to their credit, missionaries have also often challenged the given order and had to bear the brunt of suppression by the authorities. Some colonial governments regarded the work of missionaries as an embarrassment because they interfered with the purely commercial interests of the Europeans. Hence, the East India Company did not allow missionaries in areas under their control.96

Likewise, the church in the West has uncritically accepted a syncretistic relation between the gospel and modern Western culture.

Loss of eschatology

Fourthly, Christendom caused a loss of eschatology, and therefore, the missionary perspective. Instead of understanding the church to be a sign, first-fruit and instrument of the reign of God that came and is coming in Jesus Christ, this loss easily translates into an understanding of church and ministry as primarily pastoral

94 Newbigin, Truth to Tell, 69.
95 Newbigin in Goheen, As the Father, 194. An example of this is the position of the Protestant churches in Germany in the 19th century. Although there had been some growth in the independence of the church since the emergence of synods in 1852, there were at least two factors that kept the church loyal to the ruling classes. The church tax system and the Protestant clergy that hailed from the middle or upper middle classes and identifying with the cultural attitudes of those with governing interests, viz. the upper classes and the German monarchy. The clergy’s “apolitical stance” only served to hide their political patriotism. It was very much part of German culture to view the church as a pious niche. Although pastors were highly regarded and the church building occupied the central stage in German towns, there was a total break between the Christian message and social life and the rest of reality (cf. Barnett, Soul of the People, 12.).
care for its own members, while those outside are neglected. This view of pastoral care views the individual believer primarily as a passive recipient of the means of grace which is the business of the Church to administer. “The Church,” then, comes to mean the paid ministry – and this may and does happen in Churches which claim to repudiate sacerdotalism.” Evangelism becomes the rescue of individuals one by one out of this present evil age and their preservation unharmed for the world to come.97

This privatised, other-worldly eschatology has its counterpart in a social, this-worldly eschatology which can be realised by people – including the participation of the church. The reigning idea of progress in the West spawned the social gospel as a Christianised form of the idea of progress.98 In 1942 Newbigin and presumably his listeners, already clearly rejected the idea that human efforts can bring about the Kingdom of God.

We all rightly shrink from the phrase ‘building the Kingdom of God’ not because the Kingdom does not call for our labor, but because we know that the best work of our hands and brains is too much marred by egotism and pride and impure ambition to be itself fit for the Kingdom. All our social institutions, even the very best that have been produced under Christian influence, have still the taint of sin about them. (...) There is no straight line of development from here to the Kingdom.99

Even Jesus did not bring about the Kingdom, but knew that it was in his Father’s hands, on the other side of death and defeat. Therefore, the “earthly ministry of Jesus is not the launching of a movement which will gradually transform the world into the Kingdom of God. It is, rather, a showing forth, within the confines of the present age, of the reality which constitutes the age to come – the reality of God’s reign”. The church therefore, as “the company which is entrusted with the commission to embody and to announce the presence of the Kingdom cannot take the form of a political movement”. Politics makes use of coercion besides its interest in ideas about human welfare, justice and freedom. The church also shares an interest in these areas, but if it becomes party to the use of coercion, it betrays its calling. It has a different and unique role in politics as it embodies and announces the reign of God.

97 Newbigin, Household of God, 166-67; Goheen, As the Father, 195.
99 Newbigin, “Kingdom and Progress,” 46/7.
under the sign of the cross and the power of the resurrection.\textsuperscript{100} “The church is not to be identified with the Kingdom but is properly the sign and foretaste of the kingdom”.\textsuperscript{101}

These negative effects of Christendom’s mind set on the Church will be considered with regard to the Church at the Cape in later chapters.

**FREEDOM OF GOSPEL AND CHURCH**

Influenced by the notion of “subversive fulfilment” of Kraemer and Visser’t Hooft, Newbigin espoused a relationship between church and state as well as between church and culture that maintains a critical tension, which he prefers to characterise as one of “challenging relevance”.\textsuperscript{102} During Christendom this antithetical role was left to monks, radical sectarian groups and millenarian movements on the fringes of the church.\textsuperscript{103}

However, during the Reformation, it was Calvin and the Genevan Reformation more than any other that emphasised the freedom of the church from the state concerning spiritual matters. It is, however, important to note that spiritual matters are not confined to the private sphere, but include public matters. The church has the prerogative to speak to the state and every human institution in the name of God concerning the reign of God over everything. This became a key element in the Reformed tradition.

Unfortunately, as the Enlightenment view of the autonomous individual and the resultant liberal society won ground, the church once again accommodated the dictates of the authorities, governments and states. Post-Enlightenment culture with its presuppositions have been uncritically accepted by Western churches as being integrally part of Christendom. Freedom now came to mean that “the church is simply seen as a voluntary society made up of those individuals who have decided to accept the Christian faith and to join themselves together for its nourishment and exercise....” The ethical implication of the gospel is now reduced to merely “the house rules for the church” and Christian behaviour, instead of “the law of the

\textsuperscript{100} Newbigin, “Church, World, Kingdom,” 102.
\textsuperscript{101} Newbigin, “Church, World, Kingdom,” 106.
\textsuperscript{102} Goheen, *As the Father*, 368.
\textsuperscript{103} Goheen, *As the Father*, 194.
creator with jurisdiction over the entire human family.\textsuperscript{104} This is due to a syncretistic accommodation of one of modernity’s central dichotomies, namely the one that exists between publicly accepted facts and privately held values,\textsuperscript{105} which issues from the assumption of the ascendancy of autonomous reason and its monopoly of objective truth and facts. This accommodation has seen the church playing far less of a public role. It settled for the relegation of the gospel to the backwaters of the private sphere of subjective opinions, beliefs, values and personal preferences. The development of post-Enlightenment critical thought made statements from an apriori of faith simply intolerable. Nietzsche’s ideas that found their way via Max Weber gave rise to the language of values. “Values” are a matter of will – a matter of what you desire for yourself and others. This exertion of one’s will is a matter of power – the will to power. This diminishment of public role is reflected in evangelism that has become member recruitment and mission that has become tokenism with respect to the poor. While some of the churches of the West still focus on culture, others react against society in an unhealthy way by withdrawing from the world and absolving themselves from all cultural and social responsibility.

Contrary to this syncretistic accommodation, Newbigin points out, it was Bonhoeffer, as part of the German church struggle who understood the freedom of the church in terms of faithfulness to the gospel, notwithstanding the price it had to pay by means of suffering. Liberal Anglo-Saxon Christians that supported the church struggle, misunderstood this freedom due to this very syncretism. To them freedom of the church meant something fundamentally different. It was not so much obedience to the word of God, but rather absence of limitation – of not being controlled by the state. The freedom of the Confessing Church was to obey Christ in the face of the idolised, corrupted power of nation, race and blood. Barmen did it by affirming the truth of the gospel in the light of the anathemas that it declared.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{104} Newbigin, \textit{Truth to Tell}, 70.
\textsuperscript{105} Bosch argues that this dichotomy has not survived the post-modern condition ( Bosch, \textit{Transforming Mission}, 349ff.). Newbigin joins early post-modern voices that question this dichotomy. Instead of relativism, Newbigin, with Polanyi, opts for a faith commitment.
\textsuperscript{106} Newbigin, \textit{Truth to Tell}, 71-75. Goheen, \textit{As the Father}, 376. Here Newbigin echoes Bonhoeffer’s dictum that there is only one reality, namely God’s reality revealed in Jesus Christ in the reality of the world. Hence, there is only one realm, namely that of the Christ-reality. It upon this reality that Bonhoeffer’s ethics are based on and not upon the supposed reality of one’s own self, that of the world, or that of norms and values ( Bonhoeffer, \textit{Ethics}, 49, 58.).
Secularism, so central as a missionary challenge at the 1928 Jerusalem meeting, but overshadowed by the rise of new Western paganisms during the 1930s and 1940s, came back into focus during the 1960s, when it came to be viewed as fruit of the gospel. Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s dictum that a Christian was to live as if there were no God in a world in which humanity has come of age, was widely misunderstood. He did not mean a lack of prayerful faith in God, but was describing the nature of the witness he was compelled to give in prison.107

The age old assumption of European Christendom, namely that it is an acceptable settlement between the gospel and European culture, held sway in the post-Enlightenment church. The culture of modernity has further been warranted by being the bearer of the gospel in cross-cultural mission from Europe over the past 400 years. Currently, this culture forms the basis of the proliferating, vendor type, seeker sensitive churches.

However, the syncretistic settlement between gospel and culture, with its accommodation of an epistemology that violates the gospel, has to be challenged in a missionary manner by scrutinising it from the standpoint of the gospel.108 Marxist analysis of the human situation, so widely used by Latin American liberation theologians, is also another form of post-Enlightenment thought which needs to be subjugated to this scrutiny.109

Another cultural power that is to be challenged by the gospel is that of individualism, seen in the easy dissolution of marriage, the break-up of families, in the massive development of consumerism and the ideology of the free market. This should take place through the affirmation of human relatedness in Christ.110 The centrality of Jesus Christ for the unity of all of humanity needs to be confessed anew.111

The important missionary agenda therefore for churches in the West is to instil confidence in commending the gospel as public truth to people in a pluralist

107 Newbigin, A Word in Season, 139.
108 Fundamental to the mission of the church within modern culture is the reassertion of the authority of Scripture after having been seriously questioned by James Barr and Ernst Käsemann (Cf. Goheen, As the Father, 110).
110 Newbigin, Truth to Tell, 76.
111 Newbigin, A Word in Season, 136.
Between the two positions of, on the one hand, accommodating culture and on the other withdrawal from the world, the missionary church avoids both being domesticated and irrelevant. It is both “separated from” and “set in” the culture of a pagan context. As in a missionary context where the new faith community is compelled to understand itself as a distinct body that takes responsibility for its members that are uprooted from their former social positions by providing a new frame of discipline within which their common life is ordered, the church in the West can no longer tolerate the division between those that think along the lines of a national church that takes responsibility for all of society, and those who view themselves as a separate entity from both the world and nominal Christianity without taking any responsibility for those of its members who fail to fulfil its conditions for membership.

This agenda should not be seen as an attempt to re-establish the Corpus Christianum in Europe. The church should, however, work towards Europe as a Christian society, no longer in the sense of being ruled by the church, or assume that everybody is a Christian or view evangelism as a programme to reach this goal, or assume that modern Western culture is Christian. Neither should there be a return to a situation where the church was placed in a supreme position of power and influence by employing the powers of the state.

This agenda should rather be characterised by the church understanding itself as being under the central metaphor of the cross as antithesis of political power. The church should hold on to the reign of God that is disguised in the weakness and foolishness of his Church – a reign which can only become apparent through divine revelation. Freedom of thought should be a value that is not based upon the assumptions of the Enlightenment, but on the gospel, which does not employ coercion. It should espouse a “committed and truth seeking pluralism” instead of “agnostic, anarchic pluralism”, which implies that the church participates in society with equal respect for its own traditions as do scientists with theirs.

This agenda assumes that modern Europe still harbours many residues of its

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114 As essential part of Christendom, Bonhoeffer views the position of the pope as supreme Christian authority who also claimed the highest political power in the empire with a view to establishing Christ’s rule on earth (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, 110).
Christian past, although its current ethos confines the church to the sphere of "religious" concerns. Christian ideas espoused by individual Christians in public life, therefore still have enormous influence. This agenda asks for a body of believers that has thought through the consequences of the Enlightenment, both good and bad. People are needed who achieve the highest standards of excellence in all fields of public life by being shaped by the story of the Bible – a large number of people who form groups to think through the implications of the gospel for their respective public spheres and set the tone in them. For this the church as a whole needs a recovery of nerve, in order to take the risk to proclaim truth from a position of faith, despite the fact that modernity disapproves thereof and the reaction of the "Third World" that calls it cultural imperialism.115

The changed relationship between church and society has compelled theologians to rethink the traditional doctrine of the church in missionary terms, leading to the "beginnings of a recovery of a biblical doctrine of the Church as a missionary community" and the painful struggle back to the truth that mission is the task of the Church and that a Church which is not a mission is not a Church.116 The Church has been under increasing pressure to define itself in theory and practice as a body that is distinct from the community as a whole.117 The assumption of a basic dichotomy between rational public facts and private faith values, as well as individualism challenge the faithful embodiment of the gospel in the church.

The congregation that worships in spirit and truth, praising God and caring for one another and others, is the primary hermeneutic of the gospel. Evidence shows that such congregations have the power to draw those that are caught in the web of secular unbelief towards faith in Christ. Actions will flow from such a congregation, of which the primary ones are those of their members in their daily work. These will be attested to by a congregation where the story of the gospel is told, and where the public truth thereof is lived.118

Patterns of ministerial leadership in both Anglican and Reformed traditions, having been developed in a Christendom era and not in a missionary context, should be transformed to reflect the new reality of the church's missionary context.

116 Quoted in Goheen, As the Father, 197.
117 Newbigin, Household of God, 3.4.
118 Newbigin, A Word in Season, 146, 153-56.
Newbigin led the way in this respect when he, at the age of seventy, ministered to a small inner city congregation of the United Reformed Church in Winson Green, Birmingham from 1980-1988.

The whole matter of the freedom of the Church is one of my main categories for assessing Cape-Dutch Christendom in a later chapter.
CHAPTER TWO
CHRISTENDOM AND THE NEW WORLD: NORTH AMERICA:
DOUGLAS JOHN HALL AND THE AUTHORS OF MISSIONAL
CHURCH

CHRISTENDOM AND THE PRACTICE OF THEOLOGY

My conversation partners in North America are Douglas J Hall and the authors of Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America. They are Darrell Guder (project co-ordinator and editor), Lois Barrett, Inagrace T Dietterich, George R. Hunsberger, Alan J. Roxburgh and Craig Van Gelder. They also belong to the Gospel and Our Culture Network (GOCN) which is the North American organisation that peruses Lesslie Newbigin’s missionary agenda with regard to the gospel and Western culture. Hall is also associated with this network. He was, for instance, consulted by the authors of Missional Church during the course of the project which resulted in the publication of this book. His work was especially helpful in addressing the issues identified by our GOCN partners: “the missional challenge of North American culture; the crisis of the churches within that context, and a possible missional ecclesiology”.

All the above mentioned dialogue partners intentionally write contextual theology for North America – more particularly the social category associated with liberal and moderate, once mainline Protestant churches of that continent. This category represents people who are closely associated with the dominant cultural dynamics of North America. Hall says that people within this particular category feel the changes currently sweeping over Christendom most profoundly. They have been displaced from their former positions of power, influence, ecclesiastical grandiosity and theological triumphalism after centuries of European Christendom that was transplanted to America. This approach of focusing on a particular category of North Americans and their churches serves as a model for my study of Christendom in South Africa. I have confined myself to Cape Afrikaners and the Cape Dutch Reformed Church as the category of people that are currently displaced from their former positions of power, influence, ecclesiastical grandiosity and

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theological triumphalism after centuries of Cape-Dutch Christendom and the legacy thereof.

Hall is convinced that, despite the metamorphosis of Christendom which seems to have had more to do with history and sociology, the church can only endure the effects of the final breakdown of an age old synthesis between Christianity and the cultural and political centre of the West by a sustained theological reflection on it – by living through it theologically. A critical assessment of the metamorphosis of Christendom should form a basic building block for a relevant contextual theology and ecclesiology for America. This necessitates serious reinterpretation of the traditions of the once mainline churches in North America, especially their ecclesiology, which have been shaped by Christendom.² This position is also basically shared by our GOCN partners³ and it echoes that of Newbiggen and Bonhoeffer.

Hall asserts that currently every systematic theology has to try and come to terms with this very complex metamorphosis – all the more so if it claims to be contextual, “for there is no more salient factor in our ecclesiastical context than this vast transition”. It necessitates theological reflection in “a sustained and thoughtful way – as, almost, a thing in itself”. Understanding and dealing with Christendom and its metamorphosis is going to engage the Christian community for the next few generations. It constitutes a “theological-historical puzzle” which “affects every aspect of Christian doctrine” – not only ecclesiology, but reason and revelation; theology, Christology, soteriology, and creaturely being. Moreover, as systematic theologian, Hall intends to contribute to the development of a critical and constructive ecclesiology.⁴

After having established his basic theological premises and tools in Part I of his Confessing the Faith, Hall analyses and assesses Christendom and its metamorphosis as the context in which the church finds itself in Part II. His central theological motive for dealing with this vast transformation is that of the cross. Luther’s theologia crucis should be reclaimed as basis for an ecclesiology that fits

³ Guder, Missional Church, 3.
⁴ Hall, Confessing Faith, 203.
the new Diaspora experience of the church in North America. According to Hall, a Christian movement that no longer pretends or desires to be imperialistic will find new ways of defining its message and life in a theology of the cross rather than in the theology of Christendom characterised by its triumphalistic *theoria*. Furthermore, the cross signifies the freedom of the church from alliance with political power. Scriptural metaphors, which biblical scholarship have put forward and portray this state of the church, are to be considered, viz., the “church as minority”; “the Christian minority that exists for the worldly majority”; and “the tentativeness of the church”. All relations of the church, whether with the state, culture or with people of other faiths that used to be characterised by the former triumphalism, but have recently been affected by the current humiliation of Christendom, will be reconsidered.

While Hall approaches the North American context from the angle of systematic theology, our GOCN partners do it from a missiological perspective. Their missional theology builds on Newbigin’s theology of cultural plurality in which the interaction between gospel, culture and church is basic. They position themselves within the global Christological discussion which emerged during the 1990s with its current focus on issues of gospel and culture. Analysing and assessing Christendom fits into this discourse as western Christendom was *inter alia* a project of synthesising the gospel and the culture of the Roman Empire. Guder traces the roots of this theology to Karl Barth’s ecclesiology, which closely interacts with his soteriology, which implies that the Church is part of God’s mission of salvation. Mission must be understood within the context of the Trinity and God’s choice of the church to serve the *missio Dei*. As the Father sent the Son, and Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit, so God sends the church to proclaim salvation through all that it is and does. Hence, mission is central to *the being* of the church and is not to be reduced to an (optional) activity thereof. This theme was forcibly taken up by Newbigin.

Barth’s theological thinking in post-Christian Europe, together with the

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7 Hall, *Confessing Faith*, 116-42.
mediation role played by the modern missionary movement, the influence of new churches outside the West and the effect of the ecumenical movement, led to the theological developments with which our GOCN partners associate. These developments challenged Western churches not only to come to grips with the end of Christendom and its ecclesiology, but to reconsider all the traditional loci of theology. Guder specifically points out Barth’s assertion that we have to assess the legacy of Christendom both in a critical and a positive way. Christendom is both a series of accommodations to the world for the sake of the approval and survival of the church on the negative side, as well as a hopeful indication of the incarnation – an expectation of a world totally subject to the reign of God in Christ. Guder asserts that the problem of accommodation relates to what Bonhoeffer defined as cheap grace. In the light of this, missional theologians in the West need to focus on the Christendom project and its disintegration in order to critically assess and determine the impact thereof on the missional vocation of the church. They need to answer questions like: How has “this fascinating and complex corpus Christianum” shaped the way in which the western church has understood the gospel? How has it influenced their interpretation of the Bible? Which “compromises and reductionisms” have we made in our theologies, as a result of our accession to hegemonic power and privilege in western civilization”? The deep historical roots in our early accommodations need scrutiny:

the reduction of salvation to individual savedness, the separation of the message of the kingdom of God from the proclamation of the gospel of salvation, the reduction of the church’s mission to the maintenance of individuals’ salvation, the reduction of general vocation to clericalism, the reduction of the sacraments to individual salvific rites.

Closer attention must also be paid to the ways in which the church in the West lost its sense of missional vocation that the early church reflected in their life as distinctive communities.

13 Cf the argument in Missional Church about the effect of the Christendom heritage of power and privilege on the meaning of the term “the reign of God”. Speaking about “building” and “extending” the reign of God is a departure from the biblical use of the term. It reflects a triumphalist attitude of the church being the subject of the reign of God, the latter being a sales or construction project. “The church attempts to provide an expanded place where the reign of God may reside”. It is the conversation of missional theology with biblical scholarship that has pointed out this discrepancy (Guder, Missional Church, 93.).
14 Guder, "Missional Theology," 16.
Missional theologians, in their quest to keep the missional vision of the church clear, need to draw on biblical scholarship in order to engage all the classical loci of theology. The complex interactions between soteriology and ecclesiology and Christological issues, for instance, motivate synergy between missional theologians and systematicians, historians of doctrine as well as social ethicists. Missional theology, in its practice of the discipline of contextual theology, forges interaction between various theological disciplines as well as critical engagement with historical and sociological perspectives. The Missional Church project, which aimed at establishing the context of the church in a quest to envisage the shape and message of the church as faithful witness to the gospel, is a vivid example of this venture.

My theological analysis and assessment of Cape-Dutch Christendom that follow later ask questions pertaining to the metamorphosis of Christendom and the ways in which it either faithfully embodied the gospel or fell victim to the pitfalls of reductionism – both during and after VOC rule.

**CHRISTENDOM DEFINED**

By “Christendom” Hall denotes the dominion or sovereignty of the Christian religion. Like Newbigin, Bonhoeffer and our GOCN partners, he points out how political privilege resulted in cultural privilege and power for the church. He is more critical than Newbigin and Bonhoeffer of the bestowal of power and privilege on religion during the fourth century by imperial masters Constantine and Theodosius the Great and the subsequent promotion of a popularly acceptable philosophical synthesis of Christian religion and the dominant culture of the Empire by theologians such as Augustine. He points out that the total establishment of the Christian religion was exported through the colonial expansions of Western powers to become a global phenomenon. Legal establishment, however, failed in North America, resulting in a purely cultural establishment.

Likewise, our GOCN partners speak of Christian establishment in both political and cultural terms. They call it “the system of church-state partnership and

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cultural hegemony in which the Christian religion was the protected and privileged religion of society and the church its legally established institutional form”. Hence, they propose that the term Christendom be distinguished from Constantinianism. Whereas the latter is used to indicate the legal and political establishment of the Christian church since Emperor Constantine (in the fourth century), the former is employed to denote the resulting influence of the Christian church on the predominant culture of the empire, which subsequently formed the West. This distinction renders the term Christendom serviceable for the North American situation where the export of the corpus Christianum eventually developed into a purely cultural establishment of Christianity. In doing so they follow a broader trend in North America to apply the term “Christendom” to the type of relationship that has developed between the church and broader culture – a relationship that has prevailed despite the loss of legal entrenchment after the North American colonial era. The North American trajectory of Christendom is the pattern of dominant habits, mind-set and social structures that have prevailed despite the termination of legal entrenchment, as “functional Christendom” or alternatively, as “Christian culture” or “churched culture”.

The dominant North American culture is dealt with in chapter 2 of Missional Church under the denominator of “modernity”. The implication is that the North American version of the culture of modernity is deemed to be “churched culture” – Christian culture.

Although my North American partners in dialogue point out that establishment has become purely cultural on that continent, they make it clear that it nevertheless has political and societal implications. As already indicated, they all realise that the North American cultural establishment has served the (political) interests of particular segments of society and that likewise, its demise is affecting their privilege. All these aspects of Christendom: social, political and cultural will receive attention in my consideration of Cape-Dutch Christendom. The different aspects will form part of my proposed general definition of Christendom.

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20 Guder, Missional Church, 4, 47-49.
21 Cf Guder, Missional Church, 6, 48. The term “Christendom” is however used in North America to designate this functional sediment of Christendom.
THE METAMORPHOSIS AND DECLINE OF CHRISTENDOM

Europe

The position of power and privilege which the Christian religion and the church has enjoyed in ever greater parts of the world since it was promulgated as official cultus of the Roman Empire, is now coming to an end – also in North America. Similar to Newbigin, Hall describes the breakdown of the Middle Ages and its philosophical synthesis as a result of the impact of the new Aristotelianism, revived by Jewish and Muslim philosophers. The new synthesis of Thomas Aquinas left faith and reason as separate and separable sources of truth. Therefore this “is not a synthesis at all but a kind of willed mutuality that can endure only as long as there is a general willingness to have it so”. The willingness of the political establishment to form an alliance with the Christian religion is not enough to sustain Christendom. With the advent of the age of Enlightenment and the ensuing modern era, this willingness was stretched to breaking point. Since Christendom fundamentally depends upon the willingness of society at large, starting with the intellectual elite, to tolerate religion as beneficial if not true, the demise of Christendom was already latent in the breakdown of the Middle Ages.

At the very stage that implicit doubt was afforded an opportunity to enter the realm of theology, the behaviour of the political leadership of the church provided more than enough proof to reinforce doubt. The resultant Franciscan clash with the papacy became a powerful forerunner of the Reformation. Although the Reformation did not intend to unsettle Christendom, it nevertheless served as a landmark of its demise. Firstly, it introduced a plurality of establishments in the place of the unity principle of Constantine and all his successors – the implications thereof with regard to Cape-Dutch Christendom I shall consider at a later stage. In this respect Hall concurs with Newbigin and Bonhoeffer. Secondly, its theology harbours assumptions that are inherently incommensurate with Christianity as an official religion – especially the main reformational artery of a theologia crucis, which implies the theoretical impossibility of a Christian establishment. The cross as symbol of disestablishment and the theological justification of establishment are also issues that will feature in my consideration of Cape-Dutch Christendom.

22 Cf Guder, Missional Church, 7.
23 Hall, Confessing Faith, 205.
24 Hall, Confessing Faith, 206.
25 Hall, Confessing Faith, 207.
From this premise, Hall develops a theology of the cross and calls for intentional disestablishment of Christianity and its concomitant theology marked by triumphalism. The emphasis of the cross as sign of powerlessness and suffering due to sin, yet also of judgement and reconciliation, also echoes the theological stance of Newbigin and Bonhoeffer regarding Christendom and its association with power.

The Enlightenment only accelerated the gradual divorce of faith and reason introduced by the *via moderna* and the Renaissance. This separation, says Hall, forms the interior rationale of the breakdown of Christendom. “Had the West remained satisfied with the Augustinian, or even the Thomistic synthesis of these two sources of religious belief and piety, no amount of turmoil on the surface of Christendom could have brought about its decline”. The deposition of Christianity from the centre of western civilization is due to its inability to satisfactorily overcome the doubt about whether it answers and satisfies all human questions and anxieties. This failure as established religion, Hall contends, is unavoidable since the Christian religion is at least one of faith and not reason. Reading the treatises of Enlightenment philosophers such as Hobbes, Hume, Descartes, and Locke show that the days of Christendom were already numbered by the seventeenth century. This fate was sealed long before Kierkegaard’s famous “Attack” on Christendom; long before Overbeck’s assertion that the whole Christian establishment was a gross misunderstanding; long before the new apologists like Schleiermacher; and long before 1963 when the Fox Theatre in Greenville, South Carolina opened for business on Sundays was deemed by Hauerwas and Willimon as signalling the end of Christendom. The end of the *Corpus Christianum* had been well prepared by centuries of ever increasing self-confident, autonomous thought based on reason. No longer was the need felt for the Word incarnate, nor the notion of divine being. While the imperial status of Christianity might in some places in the world still seem to be intact, its period of Western dominance is something of the past. The tension between faith and reason in the Netherlands during the age of Enlightenment and the competition between the Augustinian and Thomistic syntheses to resolve this tension, are themes that I consider in my study of Cape-Dutch Christendom.

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26 Bonhoeffer, on the other hand, argues that secularisation and its concomitant triumphalism issued forth from the Reformation itself as Luther’s two kingdoms doctrine was misinterpreted.


North America

The particular form that establishment and disestablishment took on in North America led to a cultural form of establishment, which rests upon the common assumption that the church has significant influence in public life. The current demise of this kind of cultural Christendom is not generally understood nor accepted. This results in churches, Christian organisations, networks and coalitions either continuing in their expectation of influencing national issues and policy by following an activist agenda, or retreating into the sphere of private spirituality.30

The story of the formation and decay of this cultural form of Christendom in North America, which our GOCN partners refer to as “functional Christendom” or “churched culture”, is told in two versions – that of the U.S. and that of Canada. Let us first briefly look at the U.S. version.

During the formative seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a specific relationship evolved between the churches and the social order. All church formations saw a special role for themselves in the shaping thereof.31 Initially there were attempts towards legal establishment in the New England colonies during the seventeenth century – a time when immense changes were sweeping over western European Christendom with regard to state churches and persecuted churches. The effects of these spilt over into the American colonies. English Puritans, for instance, who were persecuted in England for their militant agenda in reforming the Church of England, played an important role in influencing the U.S. story as they brought with them radically Reformational views about the church. They officially established the Congregational Church in the northern colonies and developed a church-centred society based on scriptural principles and a theocratic understanding of society. In a similar fashion, the shape of the southern colonies was influenced by the Anglican Church, which functioned in an established manner and reflected the English way of life.32 In the middle colonies there was a smorgasbord of once-established and persecuted churches from different European countries that had to learn to live side by side without any one of them enjoying established status. The established Congregational and Anglican churches in the northern and southern

30 Guder, Missional Church, 48.
32 Guder, Missional Church, 49.
colonies also eventually had to learn to share the same turf with many other churches. However, it was especially in the middle colonies that the issue of a plurality of churches had to be dealt with. This led to the formation of a new organisational structure that had to cope with this dilemma – the denomination. All denominations, however, fostered the vision of shaping the social order and here the Puritan congregations had the greatest public impact. This legacy survived despite the plurality of church formations and the subsequent legal disestablishment of them all.\footnote{Guder, \textit{Missional Church}, 49-50.}

The initial attempts at legal and political establishment were brought to an end by the Revolution which signalled the formal separation of church and state as enshrined in the Constitution. The climate had been prepared for this by currents of Enlightenment theories promoting freedom \textit{from} religion and free-church theories seeking the freedom \textit{of} religion. State-church traditions also continued to exert an influence in this debate. Hence, Jefferson proposed a compromise solution of a separation between church and state as defined in the U.S. Constitution. This left the churches and individuals to practice their religion without state interference. Yet, the churches still enjoyed a privileged position as they were expected by the founders of the republic to play a primary role in shaping the social order, despite not being officially established. Although free from state interference, the churches retained their expectation to have a major say in public policy, morality and institutions.\footnote{According to Bonhoeffer, secularisation is also in evidence in America and the churches there for two reasons: First, and contrary to Europe where secularisation resulted from a complete separation between the two offices of church and state, there was a lack of distinction between these two realms in America. The church claimed to build the world with Christian principles by assuming that it had universal influence over it. This resulted in an identification of church and world and ended with the complete surrender of the church to the world. This resulted in a godlessness which differs from that of Europe only in that it is more concealed. Whereas Europe has to rethink the doctrine of the two offices, the American denominations need to learn to make this necessary distinction, lest they too irrevocably fall prey to secularisation by simply indulging in political debate in a worldly fashion. Second, the danger of secularisation was also brought about by the American understanding of the freedom of the church, which it essentially views as \textit{the possibility which the world grants the church} to go unhindered about its business. This misses the point about the real freedom of the church, which is not a gift from the world, but the freedom of the gospel to make room for itself and gain a hearing in the world – on behalf of the world and not itself – whether or not being granted the opportunity by the world. When the church is dependent upon the world regarding its freedom, it surrenders the freedom of the Word of God and hence suffers secularisation. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, \textit{Ethics}, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, vol. 6 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 64, 127; De Gruchy, \textit{Bonhoeffer}, 205-06, 208-09.}

The plurality of denominations vying for public influence contributed to mutual competition for adherents and hence to the development of a religious economy comparable in function to the emerging free market of capitalism. The
U.S. pattern of a functional Christendom and a churched culture grew out of this competition and the expectation of privilege for the winners in a religious economy. In this culture, the churches played a central role in public life, attempting to influence policy, morals and institutions, while establishing numerous institutions under their direct control. The fact that all churches were by and large Protestant made it easier for the formation of coalitions to pursue these ends.

The issue of slavery, however, severely tested the ability of the churches to guide society in such a way that the church did not become co-opted by neither the state nor the power of a particular cultural practice. This tension coincided with the rapid social change brought about by urbanisation during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The emphasis hitherto placed on personal morality no longer yielded the necessary results for creating a moral social order.

With the influx of Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish immigrants from southern and eastern Europe at the turn of the 19th century, the scene was set for a second disestablishment. The plurality of Protestant traditions now gave way to a Judeo-Christian heritage – to a pluralism of diverse religious traditions. In the light of the challenges of urbanisation, even Protestant churches followed different strategies regarding their public witness. Some focused on temperance and in 1920 achieved the enactment of the Prohibition Law. The repeal thereof in 1933 signalled the waning influence of the Protestant establishment. Other groups, both Protestant and Catholic, targeted the growing cities and urban problems as the focus of their attention. The intricate nature of urban life led some to think about the gospel in

35 Guder, Missional Church, 50. De Gruchy, in conversation with Bonhoeffer, states that there was a fundamental continuation despite the disestablishment caused by the Revolution. American churches and denominations were not legally disestablished in order to strip them of their public witness, but rather to quell the competition among different denominations for official privilege. The religionlessness of the state, however, did not diminish the influence of the churches. Quite to the contrary, it rather limited the power of the state to any unbounded claim to authority. The drafters of the federal constitution were indeed people who were "conscious of original sin and of the wickedness of the human heart. Earthly wielders of authority, and also the people, are directed onto their proper bounds, in due consideration of man’s innate longing for power and of the fact that power pertains only to God". There exists a fundamental difference between the legacy of the American Revolution and the French Revolution, however much they concur time wise and were politically connected. Quite contrary to the French Revolution’s Declaration of the Rights of Man, American democracy as formalised in their Constitution, is not founded upon liberated men and women and their dignity, but rather upon the reign of God and the subsequent limitations of all human power by God’s sovereign. The religionlessness of the state was therefore not so much the ousting of the churches and their message from the public domain, but rather a recognition of the churches’ claim of being interpreters of the gospel as public truth that sets the agenda which the state has to put into effect. This is clearly "the victory of the church over any unbounded claim by the state." (De Gruchy, Bonhoeffer, 206-07.)

36 Guder, Missional Church, 52.
37 Guder, Missional Church, 54.
social, structural and institutional terms along the lines carved out by the social
gospel movement. Some churches of more liberal persuasion became neo-orthodox
after the humbling effect of World War I on what they came to perceive as naïve
optimism of the social gospel movement. The relationship between the churches and
social order was further complicated by the effect of theological debates regarding
the authority of Scripture which resulted in the fragmentation of some
denominations. On the other hand, conservatives known as fundamentalists, turned
inward and focused on faith as a private affair. Personal morality became privatised
morality. Add religious pluralism to this and it becomes clear that the relationship
between church and society grew very complex.\(^3^8\)

After World War II, all these centrifugal forces where overridden by the
emergence of a civil religion that built on earlier notions of divine destiny and
providence. God, country and democracy blended into a single faith exemplified by
the words “under God” in the pledge of allegiance and “in God we trust” as the
national motto. Although churches differed in their approach to the public sector,
you were all in agreement that society as a whole should be brought in line with
God’s will.\(^3^9\)

The tumultuous 1960s brought an end to this version of churched culture and
signalled a third disestablishment. Diverse movements agitating for civil rights;
women’s rights; black economic empowerment; a youth counter-culture; an end to
the Vietnam war; and ecological justice caused considerable damage to the churched
culture built up over two hundred years. Public morals and interest gave way to the
effects of the individualisation of society – personal decisions of expediency,
pleasure and private judgement. Churches lost the popular mandate to be socially
relevant. They were confined to matters of personal faith. Consequently, public
policy and morality became secularised and democratised, depending upon the
majority feeling of personalised and privatised values, causing the U.S. to
increasingly become a post-Christian society with a post-churched culture.\(^4^0\)

The Canadian story followed a somewhat different trajectory, though similar
enough to produce its own version of a functional Christendom as churched culture.
During English and French colonisation the Anglican and Catholic churches, as
established churches of the colonising nations, respectively assumed establishment

\(^3^8\) Guder, Missional Church, 54.
\(^3^9\) Guder, Missional Church, 54.
\(^4^0\) Guder, Missional Church, 55.
in their colonial territories. Both traditions were hostile towards adherents of the other in their respective territories. Following the pattern in England, the rights of other Protestants were protected in the English colonies. English control over Quebec since 1763 did not change this situation. It, nevertheless, compelled the major traditions to work out ways of protecting the rights of adherents of the other tradition in their area. Public schools and universities became the battlefields where these principles had to be worked out. Aggravating the situation was the influx of Tory sympathisers fleeing north after the Revolutionary War, coupled with immigration from all over Europe, all bringing their diverse ecclesial traditions, and forging denominational ties with their counterparts in the U.S. The Anglicans subsequently lost their hegemony of the English speaking provinces and had to relinquish their privileged position to a more general Protestantism.41

A situation of “quasi-establishment” developed as an array of Protestant churches now claimed a form of state recognition and assistance as well as the prospect of participating in the shaping of the public, moral behaviour of citizens. This position was formally enacted in 1875 – eight years after confederation. This gave both the Protestant denominational and Catholic churches in Canada a more formal responsibility than their counterparts in the U.S. Although the Canadian denominations also functioned on the voluntary principle, they set themselves the task of being the champions of English civility and biblical morals in Canadian society. Four areas of moral concern received attention in a concerted, nation-wide effort: abstinence from alcohol; and the prohibition of gambling, dancing and smoking. The shallow foundations for the promotion and enforcement of shared moral norms became obscured with the result that many church members became inactive and nominalism became pervasive.42

Around the turn of the twentieth century, Canada, like the U.S., experienced new waves of immigrants and urbanisation. One response to this, viz., the social gospel movement made the churches aware of the broader structural realities the church had to address. Even so, the churches kept focussing primarily on the formation of Canadian society based on scriptural norms and English civility. This basic drive laid the foundation for the merger of the Congregationalists, Methodists, and Presbyterians. It afforded them rival status to the Anglican Church. Size and

41 Guder, Missional Church, 55-57.
42 Guder, Missional Church, 57-58.
prestige, which offered them more influence in shaping a moral society, were more important factors for institutional formation and commitments than maintaining theological consistency. “This implicit priority” Guder and company assert,

...reflects a key element of the functional Christendom of Canada's churched culture. By the time of the tumultuous 1960s, this churched culture had little defense against the tide toward declining participation, or nominalism, among many members. (.) Whereas 50-60 percent of Protestant members had been active in weekly attendance up to that time, participation rates dropped by almost two-thirds within twenty years. The decline of Catholic participation in Quebec was even more pronounced given the high rates that had been the rule.43

The reason for this rapid deterioration in member participation and the resultant growth of nominalism, are ascribed to the fact that

...the compelling logic that once supported regular church participation no longer held sway. While people still maintained their membership in the institutional church of their heritage, they simply stopped regular participation. Canadians have worn their church identities lightly for some time, however, because the church's formation was deeply rooted in establishment traditions. Even though a voluntary principle was eventually developed, this establishment heritage weakened the loyalty of church members to specific religious traditions. The historical development of Canadian institutions from the top down meant that individuals felt less obligated to participate actively once the value of such institutions no longer seemed relevant to their personal lives.44

Subsequently, the churches find themselves in a position where their public voice is not heard in North America although the reigning mindset still prescribes the responsibility of the Church as that of a guide for the broader society – to address national issues and policy. In the U.S. this has to do with their choice to reduce their relevance to affect merely the private sphere, while in Canada the public voice of the churches has become unavailing due to declining member participation or nominalisation of membership.45

The particularities of the story of Christendom in North America raise questions regarding the distinct shape of establishment and disestablishment in Cape-Dutch Christendom, viz.: What are the implications of the fact that English Puritanism influenced Calvinism in the Netherlands of the 17th century – did it imply a similar drive towards the establishment of theocracy at the Cape as was in evidence in New-England colonies under Puritan rule? Does the shape that Christendom took on in the U.S. under this Puritan influence, have a parallel in South Africa? Nominalisation, characteristic of the Canadian disestablishment will

43 Guder, Missional Church, 58-59.
44 Guder, Missional Church, 60.
45 Guder, Missional Church, 60.
receive attention with regard to the current heirs of Cape-Dutch Christendom.

**Theological and Ecclesiastical Responses to the End of Christendom**

*The West and its former colonies*

The churches assumed a purely cultural establishment after having lost their political and legal establishment that were once transplanted from Europe to the North American context – a nebulous arrangement that functions more as a support system of "general values, hopes and moralities", of a whole way of life. The cultural shape of establishment in North America is harder to detect than the European model of a single legally established church for a particular state. The New World variety of Christendom is so tenacious because it is inextricably linked up with the whole system of meaning on that continent. This system combines Judeo-Christian, Enlightenment, Romantic-idealist and recently nationalistic elements in such an indiscriminate fashion that even learned persons have difficulty to distinguish them. Since they find it hard to understand their history in this manner, envisioning a future fundamentally discontinuous with an idealised past becomes even more inconceivable. In places such as eastern Europe, the demise of Christendom was experienced dramatically as political regimes hostile to the church terminated its privileged status overnight — a situation that endured for much of the twentieth century. The advantage thereof was that it forced once established churches to acknowledge their changed position and become theologically inventive. They simply had to be able to motivate their very raison d'être in a position of being stripped of the role of official cultus of the political and cultural regime. In similar fashion, western European churches have by and large also responded more gracefully to secularisation and ecclesiastical reduction. Like their eastern counterparts, western European Christians have accepted the new minority status of believing Christianity and come to value it as both a release from an historical burden of chaplaincy to authority and an opportunity towards more faithful, uncurbed service to God and creation. Even though a residue of legal establishment is still present in some western European countries, it does not detract serious Christians from identifying the church as being *de facto* disestablished, both legally

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46 Hall, "Metamorphosis," 71.
47 Hall, *End of Christendom*, 31,32.
48 Hall, "Metamorphosis," 70.
and culturally.\textsuperscript{49} In North America it is different though, since the shape that establishment took on is less easily recognised and addressed.

The twentieth century has seen a 180 degree turn in the way theologians view the world and the place of the church therein. At the dawn of the century there were high expectations of Christianity exerting its hegemony over ever greater parts of the world, however by mid-century, influential theologians throughout the West had already pointed out the folly of such hopes. Amongst these Hall mentions that Dietrich Bonhoeffer may in some ways be regarded as the model theologian of the end of Christendom as he had to face some of the most absurd reduced vestiges of \textit{Corpus Christianum}. Many others, such as Karl Barth, Hans Küng, Karl Rahner, Jacques Ellul, Jürgen Moltmann, Rosemary Ruether, Dorothee Sölle and Gustavo Gutiérrez joined the call to acknowledge and deal with the end of Constantinianism in the Western world. New theological movements that arose in solidarity with dispossessed or marginalised groups, viz., Black theology, liberation theology and Christian feminism have been operating from the assumption that Christian civilisation is a misnomer. Likewise theologians behind the Iron Curtain had to deal with expressly atheistic regimes.\textsuperscript{50}

Other post-Christendom theological postures centred around the challenges of the ecological crisis; the concern for global justice; the plight of ethnic, sexual, racial, aboriginal, economic and other minorities. The programme for “Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation” of the World Council of Churches is an example of post-Christendom agendas finding their way into the life of the churches. Among the many influences that have brought about this historiographic change are the weakening of Christianity in the West, the decay of the West in general, the dimming of the modern vision, the affirmation of non-Western peoples of their own cultural worth, which has brought about an awareness of religious plurality on the side of Westerners, the disillusionment with technological society and the self-criticism of serious Christianity concerning its own coalition with triumphalism, patriarchalism and Western imperialism.\textsuperscript{51}

Even though there are indications of post-Christendom theologies finding acceptance in church life, the criticism they meet also mark how far Christians are from taking up the vocation of resistance and life on the edge of empire. By and

\textsuperscript{49} Hall, \textit{End of Christendom}, 30,31.
\textsuperscript{50} Hall, \textit{Confessing Faith}, 213.
large, post-Christendom theologians simply assume the reduction of Christendom in their theologies. Professional theology has on the whole not been very helpful to the rank and file clerical and lay members of the body of Christ to grasp what is happening to an age old civilisation calling itself Christian. Neither are they helped to understand the effects on them individually and corporately, nor are they guided to enter into death with hope of life thereafter. 52

**North America**

It is towards the filling of this gap that Hall intends to contribute. As summarily described above, he takes pains to explain the history of Christendom and its demise in the West and particularly in North America. He then develops a post-Christendom theology that intends to bring hope by instilling a vision for the church through making peace with its Diaspora status and accepting the vocation of a missionary encounter with North American culture. Within such a vision he spells out the consequences for those Christians that dare to fashion their lives according to this realisation and vocation. 53

Ironically, while the North American way of life, the American Dream, along with its "paler Canadian version," has been floundering in recent times, an ecclesiastical movement intending to counter this malaise has developed. With the crisis of modernity in North America, churches are now expected to help repress the social doubt and identity crisis associated with this condition. Churches have to maintain the social vision of success, happiness, progress and positive thinking long after this vision has been lost by other institutions of society, including government. 54 With churches willingly assuming this role, North American Christians are not encouraged to honestly assess the widening gap between the Christian religion and their dominant culture. Such honest assessment is prerequisite to any genuine church renewal which will be open to alternative ways of being church that are more realistic and faithful. Conversely, due to the conditioning of many centuries of great expectations fostered by ecclesiastical triumphalism—expectations compounded by the pressures of the market place - churches find themselves locked into the culturally determined logic of a dispensation in decline. The kind of Christian religion identified with the aspirations of modernity feeds the

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54 Hall, "Metamorphosis," 71.
attraction of church growth and the mega-church and makes Karl Rahner’s vision of a church as a Diaspora of little flocks here and there completely unacceptable, even though the latter vision might represent a more realistic and faithful alternative.  

Paradoxically, those churches that have of late been promoting culture religion in their own lives and are exerting ever increasing public influence are those that used to pride themselves in their strict separation from the world. On the other hand, those liberal and moderate churches that used to occupy centre stage in the public sphere are now all but ignored by the centres of power. This situation is potentially to their advantage, however. If only these once-mainline churches could embrace their new dislocation from being guardians of culture and stop “dreaming Christendom dreams” (Karl Rahner), they would be able to claim the cultural and ecclesiastical metamorphosis they are experiencing at present as a God-given opportunity for fundamental renewal and consequently for renewed public witness—as an opportunity for confessing the faith. Unfortunately, in most formerly prominent Christian bodies awareness and acceptance of their changed relation to power have been lacking.

The metamorphosis caused by the disestablishment of the church in North America presents Christians with three options as to how they should respond to this new challenge. Firstly, they could resist this change and try to reverse the trend. This option is manifested in the myriad of endeavours to revitalise the church as a popular institution of culture religion. Recent times have witnessed the evolution of a whole industry aimed at recapturing of the “religious market” through the use of method and technique. Church growth is the operative assumption of the Christendom paradigm which marks the ecclesiology of not only the new religious right, conservatives and fundamentalists, but also the rank and file of the once mainline churches. Even though this quest for regaining the lost ground of Christendom might seem successful, it is both short-sighted in practical terms and theologically disputable. Yet, in the light of the tenacity of North American cultural establishment of the Christian religion, the pervasiveness of this quest is understandable. Secondly, they may abdicate in the light of the inevitability of this metamorphosis and passively accept whatever it holds for the church. Thirdly, they may view this as an opportunity for reformation of the shape and mission of the

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55 Hall, "Metamorphosis," 70.
56 Hall, "Metamorphosis," 71/2.
church. The latter option is the direction that Hall prefers for Christians in present
day North America.\(^\text{57}\) Hence, he poses his basic thesis: the future of the Christian
movement can be significant if North American Christians are willing to part with
the Christendom model.\(^\text{58}\)

The above mentioned challenges, which the demise of Christendom have
forced theologians and the church elsewhere in the West to face, pose the critical
question as to how they affect the “Cape Church” and its theology – issues which I
shall touch on later in this thesis.

**A Vision for a Post-Christendom Church**

Participating in the transformation of the church is consistent with the heritage of the
Reformation. Protestant traditions of theology insist that God’s grace calls us to take
part in God’s action in history – action that starts with regard to the church itself.
The *semper reformanda* slogan of the Reformation assumes that God permits and
commands the church to be involved in self-assessment and change in order to
ensure greater faithfulness to God’s mission. For the churches in Canada and the
United States at present this is a call to disestablish themselves intentionally, to

relinquish the social status that belongs to our past: the comfortable relations with
governments and ruling classes; the continuous confirmation of accepted social
values and mores by means of which we sustain those relationships: the espousal
of ‘charities’ that ease our guilty consciences while allowing us to maintain neutrality
with respect to the social structures that make such ‘charities’ necessary; the silent
acceptance of racial, sexual, gender, and economic injustices, or their trivialization
through tokenism; the failure to probe the depths of human and creaturely pathos by
confining sin to petty immorality or doctrinal refinements drawn from the past, and
so on.\(^\text{59}\)

Intentionality the process of disestablishment aims at recovering the good of the past
for the sake of the future of the church.\(^\text{60}\)

The task of intentional disestablishment facing the churches is essentially
teological in nature. Yet, this charge seems to be a daunting one if one considers
the dearth of biblical and theological knowledge and reflection in the once-mainline
liberal and moderate North American churches which adds to the entrenched
character of Constantinianism.\(^\text{61}\) However, circumventing this responsibility will
only give rise to these churches being relegated even further to the margins of public

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\(^{58}\) Hall, *End of Christendom*, 19.

\(^{59}\) Hall, *End of Christendom*, 40-41.

\(^{60}\) Hall, *End of Christendom*, 43.

discourse. In order to be in a position to engage North American society meaningfully, these churches have to disengage themselves from the dominant culture of that continent. They have to boldly face the fact of the reduction of their position of power, influence and privilege. They have to accept it as a divine opportunity to rethink the real nature and mission of being church and to re-form accordingly. This is essentially a work of theology, a work that starts with a reassessment of ecclesiology.

Theology is crucial for disestablishment in North America precisely because Christendom in that context was of a theological nature—the consequence of bad theology, for

[w]e allowed the gospel of Jesus Christ and him crucified to become the unlikely bearer of a Promethean anthropology, a progressive view of history, and a theology of glory. We allowed the idea of church to mean a gathering of like-minded, middle-class people, meeting to celebrate their own way of life... as an act of symbolic and real exclusion of those with whom they do not wish to be associated.62

Disengagement from the world views, ways of life, moral codes, social values and dreams of happiness does not mean distancing oneself from the social stratum associated with these. Neither does it intend the singling out of particular contemporary issues of personal social ethics. Disengagement in order to re-engage this culture with a view to serving it more faithfully, compels Christians to go deeper, viz., to start with the basics of the fundamental teachings of the Christian traditions. This is called for in order to distinguish between the Judeo-Christian tradition and the “amalgam of religious sentimentalism and ‘bourgeois transcendence’ (Käsemann) by which both church and culture are saturated”. A far greater number of North American Christians need to become more articulate about the faith in order for the churches to “stand back from their sociological moorings far enough to detach what Christians profess from the mishmash of modernism, postmodernism, secularism, pietism and free-enterprise democracy with which Christianity in our context is so fantastically interwoven”.63

Hall states that his dialectic call to “disengage to re-engage” presupposes an embrace of what George Lindbeck called the “awkward position” that North American Christians find themselves in as a result of the process of cultural disestablishment, although this process has not yet run its full course. The churches should resist resolution of this (creative) tension by, on the one hand, yielding to the

62 Hall, "Metamorphosis," 69.
63 Hall, End of Christendom, 45-48.
liberal theological inclination of engagement in an apologetic that will reinforce the ties of trust and co-operation between the church and the sociological segments with which, traditionally, they have been so closely associated. On the other hand, the “post liberal” route that proposes a simple counter-cultural stance, should also be avoided. Hall contends that Lindbeck’s “awkwardness of the church” should not merely be viewed as a temporary position of the churches finding themselves betwixt and between a history of cultural establishment and the reduction thereof. This state should rather be embraced as a modern application of the scriptural dialectic of being “in,” yet not “of” the world. It is with the pressure on the one hand, of the instinct to revert to culture bashing, and on the other hand, an uncritical accommodation thereof that Christians will have to learn staunch confession of the faith for the benefit of the dominant culture.64

It is noteworthy that Hall addresses Christendom in the third volume of his trilogy, “Confessing the Faith” and not in “Thinking the Faith” or “Professing the Faith.” The confession of the church is the exposure of a specific, historical threat to life and the subsequent declaration of the church of the good news of Jesus Christ for such a particular time and place. Whereas thinking the faith and professing the faith are important for reflection, forethought, planning and communal debate in the context of the Christian faith, confession means having arrived at the place where all of these have to give way to “the thing that must be done; where words and deeds - words that are deeds; deeds that are words! - must and can be undertaken”. It is at this point where theology and ethics become one as convictions have to be put into practice in public life. It is not that the whole corpus of Christian thought (profession) has to be brought into the market place, but the one thought, word or deed that needs to be said at a specific time and place. This is the gospel, the good news for the bad news of a specific moment and place. The disciple community is obliged to address its worldly setting in a way that discards the heart of the matter and not peripheral issues. Luther spoke of the “little point where the battle rages”.65 The Barmen declaration is Hall’s favourite example. Here the “little point where the battle rages” was the Germany of the “German Christians” as the most absurd reduced vestiges of Corpus Christianum” - the ideologisation of all of life using an heretic theology to justify it. In a similar way, Hall argues, the vestiges of the

64 Hall, End of Christendom, 52-56.
65 Hall, Confessing Faith, 10-11.
Corpus Christianum in liberal Protestantism in North America not only threaten the church, but life as such. Confessing the faith is not about the self assertion of the church as a powerful and respected institution through alliance with the principalities and powers, but willingness to be weak and despised while challenging the authorities with the gospel.  

The major issue here is to engage the Christendom phenomenon which from start to finish is one of stance - positioning, identity through association, being known by the company one keeps, power through proximity to power, and so on. In comparison to this, confession as stance is called for apart from confession by word and deed. Confession as stance entails "an ecclesiastical body language" of behaviour and ordering of institutional life that does not perpetuate Christendom's pattern of...

...reflecting in its own internal posture the posture of its host culture and sustaining its life and work through the closest possible association with secular authority. When this becomes the fundamental assumption of the religion, little can be done, even by those who see the dilemma clearly, to alter the manner in which the Christian confession will always be used to legitimate the status quo. (sic)  

In the process we need to be reminded that even those who prophetically oppose the stance of Christendom can be used by the system as it tolerates them in order to legitimise itself as being moral and humane. Those that cannot be domesticated in this way can summarily be excommunicated by the pact between the sacred and the secular, as seen in individual heresies and whole movements such as the Anabaptists. Hence, as the liberal churches are driven out of the Constantinian arrangement, it is necessary to re-examine the scriptural testimony to Jesus and his disciple community on the question of stance vis-à-vis power and to pay attention to the witness of those individuals and groups that have been branded as heretics by Christendom.

Running like a golden thread through Hall’s trilogy is the motif that, with the winding down of Christendom, a new time of opportunity opens up for Christian faith and life in North America. Now, “with fear and trembling” (Kierkegaard), once-mainline Christians will have opportunities to confess their faith in a way that was not afforded within Christendom when these churches were compromised by

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66 Hall, Confessing Faith, 397-404.
67 Hall, Confessing Faith, 395.
68 Hall, Confessing Faith, 398.
69 Hall, Confessing Faith, 399.
70 Hall, Confessing Faith, 399.
their “majority status, ...proximity to power, and ...virtual monopoly on the souls of men and women”.\textsuperscript{71} The Reformation heritage of the centrality of the cross is a valuable building block for this re-engagement. A theology of the cross has to replace the prevalent theology of glory.\textsuperscript{72}

New possibilities opening up on account of our altered posture \textit{vis-à-vis} power have to do with ethics.\textsuperscript{73} Ethics will have to be \textit{confessional} ethics, undertaken by the disciple community with full cognisance of the worldly context and in the light of the ongoing struggle and dialogue with the “meditative core” of its \textit{profession} of the faith. It will have to discern the “little point where the [moral] battle rages” and not emulate successive Christendom moralities that have pretended to encompass all moral issues in a single world view and offer a body of ethics with categories and classification from which analyses of, and answers to all moral questions—past, present and future—can be drawn. This pertains equally to the medieval, Victorian and the liberal bourgeois moralities that all assume that there is nothing new under the sun and therefore all problems can be anticipated and all possible answers given. This is not unlike these theologies of these epochs that presume universal application. This is typical of the theology of glory of Christendom, which fails to face the unpredictable and the unanswered. Contrary to this, the ethic that belongs to a theology of the cross accepts the contingency of global upheaval. Assuming a linear view of time, it expects and wrestles with the unexpected and even irresolvable nature of social questions.\textsuperscript{74}

The specificity of contextual and confessional ethics does not mean a single-issue approach. Hall lays heavy emphasis on the importance of an holistic approach to understand in depth the ethical \textit{problematique} of his context. The disintegration of the “Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation” process of the WCC signifies the same theological deficit that American liberal churches suffer from, where a shared confession of the faith has stranded due to the fragmentary effect of ideological

\textsuperscript{71} Hall, \textit{Confessing Faith}, 402.
\textsuperscript{72} This break with a theology of glory, the renunciation of glorification if not deification of human beings and their abilities, is prevalent in the theology of all our conversation partners thus far as they critique a ground motive in modern Western culture – a motive which has found its way into the ethos of the church. Luther, to whose theology of the cross Hall refers, found inspiration from Augustine, who, in his \textit{De Civitas Dei}, fostered an encounter between Roman antiquity and the gospel. Here he critiqued the Roman value of \textit{dignitas} and its cognate \textit{superbia} as pride, which is incommensurable with the gospel’s message of \textit{humilitas} (Lambertus J Elferink, \textit{Het Oordeel Van Den Kerkvader Augustinus Over de Romeinsche Oudheid} (Pretoria: J L van Schaik Bpk, 1942), 36/7, 111-13.).
\textsuperscript{73} Hall, \textit{Confessing Faith}, 405.
\textsuperscript{74} Hall, \textit{Confessing Faith}, 444.
expediency.\textsuperscript{75}

This does not mean that churches in North America have not paid enough attention to ethics. On the contrary, they tend to reduce everything to ethics. Therefore, Hall contends that Bonhoeffer’s appraisal of North American Christianity is still valid in as far as the “criticism” of God’s Word “touches even religion, the Christianity of the churches and the sanctification of Christians, and that God has founded his church beyond religion and beyond ethics”.\textsuperscript{76} The young Bonhoeffer intuitively recognised that morality, and at that, a non-“critical” morality replicating the morality of the social strata (liberal or conservative) with which the churches identified, has been typical of North American Christianity. It is that which has been professed to be Christian ethics in the North American cultural establishment of the church that “parents, teachers, law courts and other structures of authority could pass on as ‘Christianity’”. However much the churches enjoy freedom of religion, they have not explored the Christian faith adequately, but confined themselves to ethical “issues.” This is due to the “intrinsic power of our type of establishment that even though, legally and socially speaking, the churches of this continent have been remarkably ‘free,’ they have seldom ventured outside the regnant norms and expectations of the society but have faithfully performed the services of culture religion”. However, with the effective disestablishment of the churches in North America, the opportunity presents itself to go beyond ethics by becoming a disciple community, “a people engaged in original theological thinking as it attempts to follow its Lord into the far country of a complex an unpredictable future”.\textsuperscript{77}

It is precisely towards the formation of the church as local disciple communities that the GOCN in North America attempted to contribute in their \textit{Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America} and other of their works.

The question pertaining to a vision for a post-Christendom Church and its shape in South Africa, will be considered as we venture into a study of the Cape-Dutch Christendom, its established Church, and the historical trajectories at the Cape and in South Africa.

\textsuperscript{75} Hall, \textit{Confessing Faith}, 446-46.
\textsuperscript{77} Hall, \textit{Confessing Faith}, 447-49.
CHAPTER THREE
CHRISTENDOM AND THE NEW WORLD: LATIN AMERICA:
PABLO RICHARD AND ENRIQUE DUSSEL

CHRISTENDOM AS INTERPRETATIVE TOOL

My conversation partners in Latin America are Pablo Richard and Enrique Dussel. Richard's *Death of Christendoms, Birth of the Church* was originally published in French and Spanish in 1978 and Dussel's *A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation*, originally published in Spanish in 1964. One has to bear in mind that liberation theology has in the last quarter of a century undergone many developments. Richard largely owes his development as liberation theologian to the Lebret Center, Paris. At this school, the critical question was whether a Church is faithful in announcing the good news to the poor or whether it succumbs to the inertia that turns it into "Christendom". Dussel was singled out by Richard as the prime theologian who developed a Church history from the perspective of liberation theology. This he did in collaboration with CEHILA (Study Commission for Latin American Church History).

Similar to my other conversation partners, Richard and Dussel utilise the concept of Christendom to clarify and critique the predicament of specifically Latin America and the Catholic Church. They analyse the specific shapes that Christendom has taken in Latin America as it passed through clearly distinguishable stages. Hence, they prefer to speak of Christendoms in the plural, periods characterised by the paradigmatic rearrangement of the relations between the elements that constitute Christendom.

Employing the presuppositions of liberation theology, of which God's preferential option for the poor is paramount, they utilise models from the social sciences that are liberational. Their aim is an historico-structural analyses of Latin American Christendom and its Church characterised by political, economic, cultural

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oppression and poverty. Structural changes in the mutual relations among Church, political society and civil society mark different periods of Christendom, and ultimately, the end of Christendom.

Defining and employing the notion of Christendom and the termination thereof, enable them to critique the role of the Church in Latin America as it historically evolved.\(^3\) This concept also provides a key for the clarification of the contextual crisis of Latin American society – both internally and in relation to the rest of the world, however different this situation is from the other contexts considered thus far and despite the emphasis placed by Latin American liberation theologians on the fundamental difference between their theology and that of our other conversation partners.\(^4\) Contextual analysis on the one hand and assessment of the role of the Church on the other, are the first two foundation elements in the hermeneutical spiral of liberation theology. This is reminiscent of the contextual theology of our GOCN partners as attested in the two introductory chapters of Missional Church that deal with the social and ecclesiastical context.

Christendom(s) and the relation of the Church thereto are the initial tools for practising liberative theology in Latin America. This is followed by a re-reading of the gospel from the perspective of liberation. Finally, a reassessment of the praxis of the Church is done in order to bear witness to this construal of the gospel.

These authors pose many questions to Cape-Dutch Christendom regarding the relation between Church, magistrates and society; colonialism, mercantile capitalism, patronage, slavery, the indigenous population and culture. For instance, was Cape-

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\(^3\) Cf. Vincent Cosmao in forward of Richard, *Death of Christendom*, ix.

\(^4\) When Cosmao asserts that Richard distinguishes his work clearly from recent “theologies” of secularisation or the death of God (Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, ix.) it becomes clear that Richard’s theology of the liberation of Latin America addresses a situation that is fundamentally different from the way that similar situations are experienced in Europe or the USA. Being on the periphery in a system of trans-national economic dependence brings a dimension which differentiates liberation theology clearly from European theologies that allege to address the same situation, viz., political theology and the theology of hope. (Enrique Dussel, *A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation*, translated by Alan Neely, Translation of Third Edition of: Historia de la iglesia en America Latina. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981), 327.). The theology of liberation, according to Dussel, is “a new moment in the history of theology, an analogical moment which emerged after European, Russian, and North American modernity, and which appeared first in Latin American, then in African and Asian theology”. This theology of the liberation of universal humankind, is not appreciated by the proud European “univocal universality”. Yet, theologians of liberation know that they are doing theology while “situated beyond the modern, dominating, European Totality and that we are struggling for the liberation of the poor toward a future, postmodern, liberated universal humanity”. (Dussel, *History of Church in Latin America*, 20.).
Dutch Christendom also characterised by a relationship between Church and state in which the former used the latter to mediate its hegemony over society?

**Clarification of the Present Context and Its Roots**

Christendom provides a framework for understanding the agony of a continent suffering injustice inflicted from within and without. Within the contradiction between oppression and poverty the Catholic Church has either aligned itself with the oppressor by establishing a Christendom arrangement or it has resisted this arrangement for the sake of the liberation of the poor.

Their focus is on New Christendom, which since 1960 has moved into an irreversible structural crisis, implying a crisis for the specific form of Church that has been an integral part of the Christendom project. This crisis has caused the majority of the hierarchical Church to embark on the irreversible process of dismantling New Christendom. The crisis of New Christendom and the rise of a “popular Church” in Latin America can, however, not be properly understood, formulated and verified without analysing its historical roots in colonial Christendom, then comparing it to the crisis of colonial Christendom, which in turn has led to the development of New Christendom. A historico-structural analysis of Christendom provides the comparative and analytical tools to interpret the crisis New Christendom has found itself in since 1960. This latter crisis is important because it holds the potential for the formation of a new type of Church, faithful only to the gospel as good news to the poor and not to the interests of those in positions of power.

While Hall denounces Christendom on the basis that gospel and Church should not align themselves with power, Richard and Dussel are against a Church that aligns itself with the ruling classes. It has to stand for Christ on the side of the marginalized and the poor. They do not share Bonhoeffer’s critique of the masses, but rather see this power as liberative.

**Christendom Defined**

Richard defines Christendom as “a particular kind of relationship between the Church and civil society, a relationship in which the Church-state relationship is the primary mediation. Where Christendom is in place, the Church seeks to safeguard its

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6 Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 186.
presence and expand its power in civil society, particularly by making use of the state”. The notion of “Christendom”, offers the analytical tool to understand a situation whereby the Church (ecclesial structures) in Latin America has been in alliance with “political society” since the beginning of the colonial project in order to wield power in Latin American over civil society. Therefore, “[t]he vast and complex concept that best serves to mark off the object of this inquiry is that of ‘Christendom’”\(^7\).

Unlike others who focus on the Church or the Church-state relationship in isolation, Richard emphasises that the latter relationship is only rightfully understood within the tri-polar relationship of Church (ecclesial structures), state (political society) and civil society. This distinction takes us beyond the usual bipolar state-Church relationship or the Church-civil society relationship. The tri-polar relationship that constitutes Christendom is that of Church – political society – civil society.\(^8\)

Richard uses the term “civil society” in two senses. In the broader sense it represents a synopsis of the social totality, i.e. the totality of the economic, political, cultural (educational) and religious structures of a nation as well as the prevailing consciousness thereof. In the narrow sense it refers to the perspective of power and dominance in society, viz., those structures that create consensus through which “the dominant classes exercise their domination on the level of civil society by imposing hegemony of a moral, intellectual, cultural, political, and religious nature and not through coercion”.\(^9\)

“Political society”, on the other hand, refers to the state and its legislative, juridical, administrative, police, or military structures, through which the dominant classes exercise their domination by coercion.

By the term “Church” Richard specifically and only refers to “ecclesial structures” of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. These include the institutional hierarchical structures of this Church, as well as base communities. It is important to note that in dealing with Christendom in Latin America, Richard only deals with the position of the Catholic Church. The situation of mainline Protestant and Evangelical Churches in Latin America with regard to Christendom calls for a


\(^{8}\) Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 1.
specific kind of analysis that goes beyond the limits of his research.\(^9\)

"Ecclesial structures" are to be distinguished from "ecclesiastical structures", the latter which comprise of structures that imply a relationship between ecclesial structures and other structures of an economic, political, social, or cultural type. Examples of ecclesiastico-political structures refer to agreements between Church and state—the so-called concordats, ecclesiastical tribunals, military chaplaincies, etc. Ecclesiastico-social structures include Catholic welfare work, Church social organizations, etc. Ecclesiastico-cultural structures are, for instance, Catholic schools and universities, Church media, research centres, etc. Richard regards these structures as structures of Christendom.\(^11\)

Apart from these there are also "Christian structures" that are neither identified with the Church nor with Christendom. They comprise organisations, movements, groups and the like that are specifically confessional or religious, but are neither dependent on ecclesial nor Christendom structures.\(^12\)

Richard and Dussel do not merely think in terms of Christendom in the singular, but of Christendoms in the plural. Not only are there different Christendoms in different regions, but different Christendoms are also found in the same region. They distinguish between two Christendoms in Latin America, viz., colonial Christendom and New Christendom.

Although Richard's focus is on Christendom while Dussel's is on the Church, they have a similar aim, viz., to promote the birth of a Church that is free from the bondage of alliance with political society, liberated to be faithful to the gospel by serving the poor instead of the exploitive interests of the dominant classes. This is a Church of the poor – distinct from structures inherited from the West – a Church that evolved alongside the official system, adapting to changes in economic, political, social and cultural systems. Hence, an analysis of the Church in Latin America in economic, sociological and political terms, forms part of this study with a view to understanding the role of the Church in the development and liberation of people. Richard, at the time, believed that a new Church was emerging – a Church of the poor – born in faith in the gospel as good news to the poor instead of submissiveness.

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\(^10\) Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 5.
\(^12\) Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 4.
to Law and Caesar. This development caused a crisis in an oppressive political system that could only maintain its power when “divinized”. This Church refused to accept responsibility for the “civil religion” of a society that had considered itself Christian. It parted with the “Christendom” project as it rejected any kind of alliance between the Church and political society whereby the latter acted as a mediating factor between Church and civil society.\(^\text{13}\)

Another difference between Richard and Dussel is the focus of the latter on the cultural and spiritual crisis of Latin America. This, however, is not contradictory to Richard’s approach, but rather complementary.

**THEOREGICAL TOOLS FOR ASSESSING CHRISTENDOMS**

**Historiography of Church and context**

Dussel claims to be engaged with *Church* history,\(^\text{14}\) while Richard calls his study a history of *Christendom(s)*. The main common denominator between them is that they both work with the method of liberation theology, which takes its starting point of reflection in the Latin American situation of subservience.\(^\text{15}\) Both interpret the history of the Church in its relation to the general history of Latin America and the rest of the world.\(^\text{16}\) This is done in a quest to discover the function and the meaning of Latin America and its Catholic Church in the light of God’s revelation in Jesus Christ (“reality”) as uncovered by interpretative norms revealed by God in Scripture.\(^\text{17}\)

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\(^{12}\) Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, ix.

\(^{14}\) Church history, as understood within the theology of liberation, is “one indivisible moment or segment” in the theology of the history of salvation as expounded by the Tübingen School. Existential events (Geschehen) as the history of salvation is more than a mere locus in Christian Theology. Existential history is the unique locus of all Christian theology on which all Christian theology rests. “Other areas of theological reflection such as the Scriptures rest as it were on history as their foundation”. (Dussel, *History of Church in Latin America*, 17.).

\(^{15}\) Dussel, *History of Church in Latin America*, xiii.

\(^{16}\) For Dussel the vexing question is to describe the unique “meaning” or “place” of Latin American culture within universal history and hence also the unique “meaning” or “place” of the Latin American Church in the history of the universal Church. Many historians simply leave Latin America and its Church “outside of history”. Interpretation of the historical events to discern these “meanings” is the work of the Church historian (Dussel, *History of Church in Latin America*, 301.).

\(^{17}\) Dussel, *History of Church in Latin America*, 298. An example of the employment of such an interpretative category that has a bearing on our present study is the following: “flesh” (or “totality”) and “Spirit” (or “Otherness”) are categories that explain the story of the “flesh” killing Abel and transforming Cain into Adam the sinner, because Abel was the Other, the brother; and when Cain killed him, he was left alone. In his solitude he sinned by declaring himself to be God and became a fetish worshipper. “When the history of the Church is totalized—and it was totalized in the time of Christendom as a culture—then Christianity is confused with that culture. When the Church identifies itself with a culture it is unable to hear the voice of the poor (the Other) by which the Spirit speaks, and therefore in these eras it falls into sin. These times are when Christians become closed as
According to Dussel, culture and its relation to the Church, is an important category in historiography. Hence he describes his study as “centering on a limited area between the *philosophy of culture* and *history*, but it is basically *theology*.” He employs the categories of “civilisation” (technology, economic and political systems) and “culture and the ethico-mythical nucleus”.

As Church historian, Dussel employs the critical method of historiography as opposed to the ingenuous way of approaching the past, viz., objectifying in the past a present meaning of events. The critical approach on the other hand attempts “to recreate the conditions that made possible the past historical event”. It implies a reconstruction of the horizon of understanding of a world in which an event was assessed. When interpreting these events, the historian should be mindful of his own “horizon of comprehension” and that the meaning ascribed to an event always lies within a certain horizon – whether that of the “world” of the past event or that of the historian. If this is not borne in mind, the historian is likely to recede into ingenuousness, believing that he can give an objective and scientific interpretation for all times and therefore only objectify the biases he has always held and continually holds. Pure objectivity is non-existent – only situated objectivity is. On the other hand non-subjectivity is also impossible. There is a subjectivity that is scientifically justifiable in that it transcends more common, opinionated subjectivity, viz., methodological subjectivity, which Ricoeur calls “transendental subjectivity”. This, however, remains a view from a specifically committed vantage point. In the case of the Church historian this commitment will intrinsically be of a theological nature. Not only the interpretation of an event will reflect this commitment, but the very choice and description of an event will already be indicative thereof. Having said this, it has to be added that various Church historians employ different interpretative norms. History can be written from different perspectives, viz., that of the elite culture, which is culturally dependent in the case of Latin America. This commonly happens at universities and seminaries that are under European influence. This kind

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an earthly institution and are unable to observe clearly the presence of God in the poor who reveal injustice. The Church can even play at being the Church, and by not serving the poor it can be a part of those who dominate the poor”. (Dussel, *History of Church in Latin America*, 299.).

20 Dussel, *History of Church in Latin America*, 301.
of interpretation might be “scientific,” but is nonetheless “terribly defective.”

In this respect liberation theology follows the tradition of the missionary, critico-prophetic, non-academic and pre-university theology of Bartholomé Las Casas “formed men of action, clarified the rules, and uncovered structural and personal sins”. It was the operative theology of hundreds of missionaries in the first phase of the Latin American Church before the organisation of a Christendom of the Indies and preceded by four hundred years “the present experience of creative theology in Latin America”. Sadly, the advent of the university in Latin America gave impetus to the alienation of theology from the lived realities of Latin America. This was almost overcome when theological reflection took as point of departure a faith commitment to a process of liberation and not an ideology. Hence, an “explicitly Christian critical approach” is necessary to recover and utilise those values that are appropriate for an encounter with traditional positions of historiography, namely the apologetic or Hispanic position of the colonial period; of the liberals; and of the indigenous people. The essential norm for such an approach remains the plight of the poor and

21 Dussel, *History of Church in Latin America*, 302-03. Dussel maintains that ideological conditioning by a theology of the “centre” is a peril that falls in the same category as the above. It threatens the integrity of the gospel in a specific context. Examples would be the apologist Fathers that, by utilising Hellenistic categories, accepted certain ideology-concealing elements. Contrary to them there were those Christians who still remain models to generations to come by lodging de-ideologising attacks on the values of the Empire. Persecution often befell them as they challenged the fundamentals of the system, its values and gods. With the advent of Byzantine and Latin Christendom, ideological conditioning became the norm rather than the exception (311). Moreover, “the dialectical theology of the ‘center,’ that is, the meaning of theology in Europe, changes dialectically when applied to the ‘periphery’. The theology which in Europe is radically critical of its own structures is nothing more than reformist and even counter-revolutionary in the ‘periphery,’ for it proposes to change things only in Europe”. What is called for is a critique of the “externalization of the culture of the ‘periphery’ and of popular groups”. A cultural revolution, more than only a technical revolution, whereby the values of the people and the oppressed classes are affirmed, is called for in Latin America (330).


24 Richard strongly contests the “liberal” interpretation of Latin American society and history, which claims that the Church and colonial Christendom in Latin America used to be marginal entities, feudal in character, conservative and divisive in social function and incompatible with the normative capitalist development of the Latin American social system. Contrary to this he claims that the situation was exactly the opposite. Colonial Christendom formed part and parcel of the capitalist nature that Latin American society took on right from the outset within the context of European mercantile capitalism. Whereas in Europe the capitalist system emerged and grew outside of feudal Christendom, in Latin America colonial Christendom has since its inception already been integrally part of the expansion of the mercantile capitalist system. In this respect the Latin American situation is fundamentally different from Feudal Christendom of medieval Europe. The fundamental contradiction is not backwardness – modernity as the liberal interpretation would have it, but rather oppression – liberation. Instead of viewing the Church as not integrated into the colonial system, as the liberal position proposes, a liberative reading of history maintains exactly the opposite, viz., that the Church was all too well integrated into the colonial system (Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 19,
defenceless, since “the poor are Jesus”. The poor are those who are not merely alienated by the system, but “are in reality exterior to the system and aware that they are not a part of ‘this world’”, – in a real, economic and cultural sense.\textsuperscript{25}

Thus, Dussel and Richard clarify and critically assess the story of Christendom and the Church from their basic theological premise of God’s preferential option for the poor and the oppressed. Eschatology forms the wider theological frame.\textsuperscript{26} Thus, Dussel describes the Holy Roman Empire as a prophetic attempt of the Church to embody its faith by moving “history forward from the poor toward Christ” at a time when the culture of the Roman Empire turned in upon itself – “when the ‘flesh’ turns in upon itself as a totality of sin”. However, no historical kingdom (including medieval Christendom) is the ultimate destiny of humanity. Therefore the Church perpetually has to criticise “culture and all of totality in order to move history toward the Parousia”.\textsuperscript{27} In the case of Latin America, the fate of Amerindians, blacks and mulattos calls for an assessment of Christendom.

Like our other conversation partners, Richard and Dussel challenge us to be clear about our own theological and church historiographical premises when doing historic analysis and evaluation of a particular Christendom context.

\textit{Economic, sociological, political, cultural and religious analysis of context and Church}

Their praxis approach, in which social science models are employed, safeguards against another theological approach, viz., “the kind of orthodoxy whose ‘normative’ discourse is always in danger of replacing the kind of truth that is ‘done’ in the ecclesial practice of faith”.\textsuperscript{28} Utilizing economic, sociological and political analyses has led him to question theologically the identity and the historical meaning of the Church of which he is both a critical observer and an active, believing member. He differs in his approach from the defenders of a kind of orthodoxy that denies that

\textsuperscript{25} Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 304-05, cf. Richard, Death of Christendoms, 23.
\textsuperscript{26} In the only history – secular history for those pre-Christians and the history of salvation for the Christians in the light of faith, the Church signifies a distinct reality. For this reason the history of the Church is an interpretative account of the messianic function fulfilled by the institution founded in the only history, the history of the world in the light of faith. To discover the messianic function of the Church in the world is theology, the only theology, in its moment of historical and progressive description. (Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 305.)
\textsuperscript{27} Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 300.
\textsuperscript{28} Richard, Death of Christendoms, x.
truth is to be found in the praxis of the Church.\textsuperscript{29}

They clearly employ Marxist societal analysis to clarify their context. Class conflict regarding the control of resources and the means of production; the role of established religion in upholding the interests of the ruling elite; ideology as sets of beliefs that justify certain social arrangements; and class consciousness are but some of Marx's categories that feature prominently in their analyses of Christendoms and the liberation struggle.\textsuperscript{30}

Richard also stresses that his work is more than an historical and sociological study. It is contextual theology, which provides the framework for the utilization of other disciplines. It is Church history taking as its context the economic, social, political and ideological reality of Latin America, vis-à-vis the method of taking ecclesiastical institutions like bishops, dioceses, parishes, etc. as reference point.\textsuperscript{31} This analysis led Richard to question the identity and historical significance of the Catholic Church in theological terms. It is his theological commitment that freed him from the reductive discourse of observers practising interdisciplinary scholarship that try to stay objective and uncommitted.\textsuperscript{32}

Richard's theoretical approach to the study of colonial Christendom and Church history is the understanding thereof within the overall analysis of Latin America. Consideration is given to the categories of social formation, modes of production and production relationships within the context of economic, social, political and ideological realities of Latin America.\textsuperscript{33} Analysis of the social totality and the functioning thereof is important for understanding a specific situation.\textsuperscript{34}

Colonial discourse therefore serves as a vital tool for dealing with the perennial state of dependence of the continent. This is combined with Christendom discourse, which serves to deal with the role that the Church plays in maintaining colonial relations, whether classical colonialism or new-colonialism. The Latin American colonial context differs from early colonialism in North America in more than one respect. Firstly, the latter had to deal with ecclesial plurality, and secondly, independence and federation did not result in a new-colonial dependence like in Latin

\textsuperscript{29} Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, x.
\textsuperscript{31} Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, 23.
\textsuperscript{32} Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, x.
\textsuperscript{33} Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, 23.
\textsuperscript{34} Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, 6-8.
America. Newbigin also employs colonial discourse to describe attempts to export Western Christendom to colonies such as India. The conquest and evangelisation of India, for instance, could not be compared to Latin America. Acculturation and conversion was not accompanied with the same extent of coercion associated with the Latin American conquest and accompanying missionary enterprise. Added to that, nineteenth century Western colonialism was accompanied by the modern missionary movement, which witnessed an array of mission organisations and Churches working in the same political domain.

Not only is the theology of Europe inappropriate for the Latin American situation, but so are the social science models as well. Therefore, the theology of liberation primarily employs the analytic agency of the social critical sciences, viz., the tools of the social sciences of liberation. Hence, the philosophical relation between the social sciences and theology has increasingly been highlighted, necessitating a philosophy of liberation as hermeneutic.\(^35\)

This reminds one of Newbigin's critique of social science models used by liberation theologians for reflection on the reductionisms of the Enlightenment – a critique simultaneously aimed at liberalist scholarship. Richard shares this critique of liberalist scholars with Newbigin, but for a different reason. Richard's concern is not the public-private dichotomy that Newbigin challenged, but the basic oppression-liberation dichotomy which liberalist scholarship failed to recognize. As much as they may disagree on their assessment of social science models, they nevertheless share an awareness of the reductionist potential of such models and the necessity of a vigorous dialectic hermeneutic between social science tools and faith traditions.\(^36\)

Another point of similarity between Dussel and Newbigin is that both emphasise cultural plurality.

Whereas Dussel and Richard basically share the same approach, the categories of culture and religion play a more significant role in Dussel's analysis. He is not only interested in the economic dependency of Latin America, but more specifically in its cultural, philosophical, theological alienation and dependency and how that has led to a spiritual crisis.

This emphasis of Dussel forms an important bridge between Richard’s more political and economic analysis of Christendom on the one hand and the way in which Bonhoeffer, Newbigin and Hall on the other hand use cultural categories to describe and critically assess Christendom. We, for instance, hear echoes of Newbigin’s protest against cultural colonialism in the name of Christendom in Dussel’s argument. Dussel and Richard, read together, therefore help us to gain a comprehensive understanding of Latin American Christendoms.

Richard’s approach, however, helps us understand how philosophical systems are translated into political power when the ruling elite employ them as means of ideological control of society. Hence, he poses the critical question: On which side does the Church position itself in these power relations?

The power of political institutions (magistrates, governors, the state) is an integral part of all the renditions of Christendom as told by all conversation partners. Culture as systems of belief, ontology, epistemology and ideology has also featured throughout. Richard and Dussel most clearly develop the relationship between systems of thought and belief on the one hand and rulers on the other. It is, however, also implicit in Bonhoeffer and Newbigin’s work. Hall unfortunately does not pay specific attention to the relationship between state and society – government and culture – political power and ideology. Yet it is implicit in his statement: “Christendom at base depends not only upon the readiness of the political establishment to befriend the Christian religion, but upon the willingness of society at large, beginning with the intellectual ‘cutting edge,’ to tolerate (at least tolerate!) this religion as beneficial if not true”. We shall return to this matter once we have considered Christendom at the VOC’s Cape colony.

**Periodisation as method**

Although Richard and Dussel view the current crisis of Latin America in different terms, they both regard periodisation as an important tool to clarify the development and character of this crisis.

Richard’s theological presuppositions, historiography and his critical use of the social sciences all converge in his method, viz., historico-structural analysis. This

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2001), 97.

method presupposes periodisation. It implies placing the three basic elements of Christendom, viz., Church, state and civil society within the widest possible historical and structural framework.\(^{38}\) Certain structural relations between the Church, political society and civil society historically run into different crises, causing new relations to develop. Periodising the history of these relations reveals the factors that underlie the change brought about by the current crisis in focus, viz. that of New Christendom.\(^{39}\)

Dussel also employs periodisation as a method to uncover the current crisis, which he not only frames in economic and political terms, but also in cultural and religious terms. What interests Dussel in respect of the different periods is the process and levels of evangelisation - the state of the Christian faith - of the different population groups in Latin America.

Despite the differences in their analytical foci, there is a remarkable degree of correspondence in their periodisation. Both categorise Latin American history into three main epochs viz., the period of colonial Christendom (1492-1808); the crisis or agony of colonial Christendom which culminated in attempts to establish a new Christendom (1808-1960/2); and finally, a new beginning of liberation in and of Latin America amidst the crisis of New Christendom and the birth of a Church unencumbered by the trappings of an establishment operating outside the paradigm of Christendom.

Their respective subdivisions of these three epochs differ however and reflect their somehow different hermeneutic approaches to Latin American history.\(^{40}\)

**Proto-history of Latin American colonial Christendom**

Dussel distinguishes four different stages in the proto-history of Latin America. First,\(^{38}\) Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 5.\(^{39}\) Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 17.\(^{40}\) While Richard distinguishes five stages overall, Dussel demarcates ten. Whereas Richard treats colonial Christendom in Latin America as a whole, Dussel subdivides it into five stages. He subdivides the period of colonial Christendom into different eras on the basis of the evangelisation of Amerindians by Hispanic colonists operating largely within the mindset of Hispanic Christendom. The effect of this is that, to a large degree, evangelisation and conquest went hand in hand. This is the result of the crusade mentality of the Spanish after eight centuries of conflict with Muslims in Spain, eventually leading to their expulsion. This was accompanied by the simultaneous institution of the *patronato* system intended to warrant the extension of Christendom to areas once Muslim or under the sway of any other religions. His first stage is that of discovery, conquest, initial efforts of evangelisation and exploitation of the indigenous peoples (1492-1519); the second is that of Christian missions in New Spain and Peru (1519-1551); the third is the strengthening and organisation of the Church (1551-1620); the fourth is the conflict between the Missionary Church...
there are the great Neolithic civilisations made up by the Maya-Aztec and Inca. The second stage would be that of the Indo-European invasions of southern Europe and their prehistory. A third stage concerns the “Semitisation” of the Neolithic cultic world through “Christianisation” which had earlier been “Indo-Europeanised.” From this process two great Christendoms evolved: Latin and Byzantine-Russian. “Islamisation” was the other Semitic movement that had far reaching influence on world history. Spain, essentially a part of Latin Christendom, was also affected thereby. Hispanic Christendom, which constituted the major force in the formation of Latin American colonial Christendom, was the confluence of two cultures: on the one hand, medieval Constantinianism with its Semitic-Christian values, and on the other, the Muslim understanding of a theocracy. In Spain this produced something akin to a “temporal messianism”, which unified the aims and purposes of the state as well as that of the Church. Medieval Hispanic messianism took on a new form during the Renaissance. Hispanic Christianity was believed to be God’s elected instrument for the salvation of the world. The system of *patronato regio* served this vision well.41

Latin America emerged as the first of these peripheral cultures and is unique in the sense of being the only dependent area in Christendom, the only colonial Christendom.42 Within this colonial periphery domination is perpetuated as provinces are exploited by their capital cities, the working classes by the oligarchies and the masses by the bureaucrats. Church history is developed from this political level.43 Latin-Germanic Christianity and its equally dominating theology is an integral part of this level of political domination. The dependence of the periphery is of a theological, economic and cultural nature.44

It is within this interpretative framework that Dussel proceeds to identify and describe the meaning of Latin American culture within universal history and the meaning of the Latin American Church within a global context.45

Whereas the colonial era bears witness to the superficial evangelisation of the

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41 Dussel, *History of Church in Latin America*, 29, 38, 296. Dussel here seems to use Constantinianism and Christendom as synonyms, while Guder et al make a distinction—the one being the legal arrangement of Medieval Europe, and the other the cultural formation of a people.

42 Dussel, *History of Church in Latin America*, 296-97. South Africa was another, although of a Protestant kind.


native masses, the post-colonial era with its positivism and urbanisation witnessed an onslaught on the faith of the Creole, mestizo and foreigner population. Even though they still nominally identified with the Church, they were so influenced by secularisation and pluralism that since then, one has had to distinguish between the Christian minority and the masses who could be described in terms of neo-paganism. This calls for re-evangelisation of both Amerindians, Creoles, Mestizos and foreigners, albeit it that they find themselves in different positions in respect to the faith.

Richard subdivides the second main period (crisis of colonial Christendom and the establishment of New Christendom) into firstly, the crisis in colonial Christendom (1808-1870); secondly, the Church under the liberal oligarchical state (1870-1930); and thirdly, the Church and populist, nationalist and developmental movements (1930-1960). Dussel differs from Richard by distinguishing two sub-periods during the period 1808 to 1870. He also differs by taking 1850 as the start of “the final rupture” under the liberal state, vis-à-vis Richard’s date of 1870.

Dussel describes the final main period (1962-1979) in terms of the popular revolution, Latin American integration and the discovery of cultural autonomy of Latin Americans as a socio-cultural group. The transition experienced by Christians since 1961 has caused some to resist change and others to embrace it. Yet, few have a comprehensive sense of what the meaning of the transition and change would be. The lengthy description of the history of Latin America serves the quest to find the meaning of the present situation in Latin America. The crucial issue is the why of the present. There are parallels to be found in the sixteenth century for the events of the present epoch. “The most exemplary of that period was the indefatigable combatant, the expelled Bishop of Chiapas, Bartholomé de Las Casas, defender and universal procurator of the Indian, who prefigures certain bishops of the twentieth century ....”

“From A.D. 330, the year that Constantinople was founded, until the day that Columbus sailed for America – the same year that the Spanish were able to reconquer Granada and expel the Arab Moors – the history of the two Christendoms [Roman and Byzantine] was completed”. The year of the final expulsion of Muslims from

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Iberia also saw the beginning of the conquest of the West Indies and the Americas.\textsuperscript{48}

This conquest represents the successful expansion of the West across the Atlantic which took place directly after the failure of the crusades to conquer the East. Noteworthy though, is the fact that this introduced a new phase in history. Whereas eight different civilisations (Byzantium, Russia, Latin Europe, the Arabs, the Hindus, the Chinese, the Aztecs and the Incas) managed to exist apart from each other as separate worlds (ecumenes) before this time, this was not to be the case any longer. From then on world history would be one of Western civilisation conquering all the others and forming the centre of power in a new world structure as single macroculture\textsuperscript{49} amid a dependent and oppressed colonial and marginalised periphery. The “centre” of this ecumene was first Europe, then the United States and Russia, after which could be added Japan, Canada, and Australia.\textsuperscript{50}

\textbf{A colonial Christendom within a capitalist society or the expansion of a feudal Christian kingdom?}

To understand Columbus, the missionary movement and conquest of America, the patronato has to be comprehended.\textsuperscript{51}

Patronato regio was a crucial aspect of Latin American colonial Christendom. The integration of the Church into the colonial system was mediated by patronato – an agreement whereby the papacy granted Hispanic monarchs patronage over the evangelisation of America, the setting up of ecclesiastical foundations and the selection of candidates for the episcopacy as well as other ecclesiastical honours. Richard asserts that nowhere else in Catholic Europe or its colonies was such a system implemented. Dussel reminds us that the patronato over Africa was given to the Portuguese crown. In the rest of Catholic Europe, the papacy retained authority in respect of the Church. Richard explains the deviation of Latin America from the norm to be a result of the weakness of the Roman Church because of the diversion of energy to the Protestant Reformation and ensuing religious wars.\textsuperscript{52}

For Richard the essence is that the colonial exploitation of Latin America by European mercantile capitalism should not be concealed by the explanation that Latin

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\item[\textsuperscript{48}] Dussel, \textit{History of Church in Latin America}, 37.
\item[\textsuperscript{49}] It is this dominant macroculture that is the focus of attention of the GOCN movement.
\item[\textsuperscript{50}] Dussel, \textit{History of Church in Latin America}, 296-97.
\item[\textsuperscript{51}] Dussel, \textit{History of Church in Latin America}, 296.
\item[\textsuperscript{52}] Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, 29. Dussel however points out that this system had come into place
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American underdevelopment is the result of Iberian colonialism as a feudal Catholic transplant. This type of explanation would have it that North America benefited from the export of the institutions of progressive, English Protestant-capitalism. Contrary to this, Richard maintains that the economic, political and social structures of colonial exploitation have to be reckoned with in order to understand Latin American underdevelopment. Richard also refutes the argument that poor resources in Latin America can be blamed for the underdevelopment. Contrary to this argument again, he asserts that it is precisely due to its wealth of natural and human resources that it was condemned to a dependent export economy. This resulted in a class society, which caused the dire poverty and underdevelopment associated with Latin America. 53

The “modern” capitalist and dependant condition of Latin America has been an inherent attribute ever since its colonial foundation. Evangelisation and the building up of the Church has always taken place within the dialectic dichotomy of oppression/liberation, justice/injustice, death/life, development/underdevelopment, and so forth. These contradictions become the yardstick for assessing whether or not the Church betrays the gospel. This dialectic tension is exactly what makes Latin American Christendom specific and different from other Christendoms, both in Europe and elsewhere. 54 Richard endorses Dussel’s assertion that “The Christendom of the West Indies is the first peripheral and dependent social formation introduced by modern Europe, prior to those of Africa and Asia”. 55

The original formation of centres of capitalism in Europe were specifically made possible by the exploitation of Latin American natural resources and this again was based on the production relationships based on slavery and forced labour of Amerindians. Exploitation of Latin American resources coupled with the production relationships based on slave and other forced labour, form the broad contours of the integration of Latin America into the emerging capitalist European centre. Production relationships, being based upon slave labour and colonial forced labour of Amerindians, created an exploited class much more harshly exposed to oppression than the disguised slavery of wage workers in Europe. These categories of people

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constituted the bulk of the population of a peripheral, "colonianized" and dependent society whose peripheral economy was integrated into the capitalist development taking place in the European centre. 56

A structural relationship in Latin America existed between dependence on the global capitalist system as an external factor and slave and Amerindian domination, which was an internal factor. These two factors led to underdevelopment and poverty. It is from the perspective of this situation that the deep historical meaning of Christendom should be viewed. This perspective constitutes the real challenge of liberative evangelism in Latin America. 57

As much as an oppressive system has been the fate of Latin America since colonisation, the liberation process has also been in evidence ever since the Hispanic discovery, evangelisation and colonisation of the new world. As early as the sixteenth century despite the risk of facing the brunt of colonial masters certain sectors of the Church defended the Amerindians. This affirms the fundamental contradiction which characterised Latin American society as a Christendom project that was simultaneously capitalist, colonial, dependent and slave-based. 58 Hence, liberation theology is also not a new phenomenon. It is as old as colonised Latin America.

The assertion that the fundamental dialectic of Latin American society is that of oppression/liberation, justice/injustice, death/life, development/underdevelopment, does not completely negate the liberal argument that colonial Christendom had certain feudal traits. As much as that was true, it was however, a secondary contradiction. The primary characteristic of colonial Christendom was that it was "integrated into the colonial capitalist system with its slave-based production relationships". 59

The Church in Latin America, shaped by colonial Christendom, shared the

56 Richard, Death of Christendoms, 26.
57 Richard, Death of Christendoms, 27.
58 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 76.
59 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 45-46. Even so, Dussel affirms Richard's dictum that the greatest mistake of the Spanish was the organisation of a mercantile system in the sixteenth century by which American gold and silver was bought at low prices with the products of raw or manufactured products from Europe. Elsewhere he says that this system consisted of buying American precious metals with agricultural produce of Latin America. (Richard, Death of Christendoms, 27.) This system impeded industrialisation and even agricultural development of its colonies. In all of this the Church of Latin America was a close ally. Contrary to this, eighteenth century England based its colonial system on the industrialisation of the mother country. It soon "surpassed Spain as modern industrial capitalism displaced the agrarian Medieval mercantilism." (Richard, Death of Christendoms, 27, 30.)
impact of three basic flaws of this society, viz., dependence, slavery and underdevelopment. As much as it did not meet the challenge of the situation by opposing the oppression of Amerindians and African slaves, it shared the responsibility for these flaws. Where it did engage the liberation of the oppressed, it was faithful to its evangelistic charge.\textsuperscript{60}

When liberation of the oppressed becomes the \textit{shibboleth} of faithfulness of the Church to its mission in Latin America, the dialectic that liberal scholars set for assessing the faithfulness of the Church proves to be false. Some of their maligned "conservatives" might prove to have been faithful in terms of a liberative reading of history, whilst the opposite is true of some "liberals" that were really "oppressors." An example of this would be the ecclesial properties that in some cases underwent a development in an independent, autonomous way, pointing the way towards a liberative, national type of development. In this respect, their independence from the dominant system was not a conservative, feudal hindrance to the development of capitalism, but rather heralded a break with an oppressive mercantile capitalism that was dependent on Europe.\textsuperscript{61}

The missionary institutions of self-sufficient settlements of Amerindians (\textit{reducciones} in Spanish) were administered by religious orders, mainly the Jesuits. They flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and were liberative in the context of the contradiction between a Church faithful to the gospel as good news to the poor and colonial Christendom. The latter was epitomized by the \textit{encomienda} - a system of colonial agricultural exploitation whereby a Spanish \textit{conquistador} or colonist was entrusted with a group of Amerindians that had to render their services to him in return for protection and religious instruction - a system that lent itself to abuse and near slavery. The expulsion of the Jesuits was a victory for colonial Christendom as it removed the protection of the \textit{reducciones} and virtually had them annexed as \textit{encomienda}.\textsuperscript{62} Moreover, the Jesuit order was the only one that resisted

\textsuperscript{60} Dussel, \textit{History of Church in Latin America}, 44.
\textsuperscript{61} Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, 30-31. Notwithstanding this onslaught, the Amerindian ethico-mythical nucleus survived as Amerindians easily consented to baptism without having engaged the gospel on the level of their world view. Hence, Amerindian "ethico-mythical nucleus" has been exerting an influence over Latin American popular thought by being syncretized with Hispanic culture. The result of this is much more of a cultural unity regarding language and religion within Latin American states than for instance in South Africa (Dussel, \textit{History of Church in Latin America}, 343.).
integration into the Latin American Church which functioned under the *patronato regio*. The Jesuits managed to exempt themselves from the *patronato* by appealing to their fourth vow. This allowed them to function outside of the ecclesial patronage of the Hispanic monarchs and their viceroys in Latin America. Their expulsion thus meant that henceforth the *patronato regio* encompassed all ecclesial and ecclesiastical structures, wielding colonial Christendom clearly as the dominant system over all aspects of Latin American society.  

The classic liberal analytical framework, pitting “conservatives” against “liberals” has been unable to appreciate the importance of liberative powers from within the Church in a context dominated by colonial Christendom. This resistance on the part of liberative powers signalled a basic contradiction between oppression and liberation that ran right through civil society and the Church, giving the Latin American Church its own original character - different from the Church in Europe ever since colonisation.  

While Richard portrays the colonial project as an essentially capitalist one, Dussel warns that such an assessment should not be applied too generally. Despite the Spanish monarchs’ investment of large sums of money in America, their objectives were not merely economic. It was essentially political in nature. Hence, “…to criticize them as capitalists is an unfounded anachronism”. Political expansion to them essentially meant promoting the aims of Spain as a Christian kingdom.  

Dussel, with his added concern for cultural and religious liberation construes colonial Christendom as an entity that is neither Iberian nor Amerindian in its culture, but something completely distinct. The culture of Hispanic Christendom clashed with native American cultures. Hispanic civilisation virtually annihilated Amerindian civilisations, turning Amerindians into “an inferior social class which the Spanish attempted to isolate and prevent from becoming a part of the controlling elite in any sense”. Their cosmology was virtually destroyed and replaced by an essentially Hispanic world view. The missionary enterprise was party to this as the Church became the primary organism of promoting Hispanic culture among all people, including the conquered. This was done in the faith that Hispanic culture incorporated the Christian faith and tradition so completely in its “ethico-mythical  

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63 Dussel, *History of Church in Latin America*, 44.  
nucleus” that evangelisation and acculturation were essentially the same thing. Only a minority of missionaries realised the necessity to distinguish between “Hispanism” and “Christianity”.

Notwithstanding this onslaught, the Amerindian ethico-mythical nucleus survived as Amerindians easily consented to baptism without having engaged the gospel on the level of their world view. Hence, Amerindian “ethico-mythical nucleus” has exerted an influence over Latin American popular thought due to synchronisation with Hispanic culture. The result of this is much more of a cultural unity regarding language and religion within Latin American states than for instance in South Africa.

On the one hand the missionaries did not regard the cosmology of the native peoples as substantial enough to foster a definitive engagement between it and the gospel. Their general understanding of the gospel within the terms of Hispanic Christendom made it difficult for most missionaries and colonists to separate the gospel from its cultural captivity. Only a small minority had a clear understanding of the distinction of the gospel. Indians, therefore, generally converted to Christianity in its colonial Christendom form without really grasping the great truths of the gospel. Furthermore, Indians perceived the “gods” of the conquerors as superior to theirs, which compelled them to “believe” in them in order to appease them and thus benefit from them. Their attraction to Christianity was therefore based on their reasoning within the framework of their pagan world view. Their adoption of Christianity did not necessarily mean a departure from their world view and religions, but merely an accommodation of Christianity within their “primitive and mythical cosmovision”, leading to a mixed religion, or worse, a continuation of ancient cults in the form of Americanised Christianity. On the other hand, authentic conversion/evangelisation/Christianisation was indeed taking place in many instances. It is within this wide spectrum on the one hand, of paganism in Christian garb and, on the other, of authentic inculturated Christianity that Amerindian religiosity should be classified.

The early colonists, however, were also prone to paganism due to the hold on

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65 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 27-29, 43.
66 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 69.
67 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 67.
68 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 70.
Hispanic culture by pre-Christian paganism at that time. Added to this was the influence of Islam mixing with said paganism, fostered by the general propensity of human nature towards paganism and thus it could be expected that growing up in the midst of a majority of Amerindians had to have had a substantial influence in releasing the “pent-up paganism in the Hispanic population”. With imperial support of the faith diminishing due to geographical isolation, eventually a “Latin American Christianity” developed amongst the Spanish, Creole and mestizo urban society. These categories constituted the elite in Latin American society. Despite this pagan onslaught on the orthodox faith, Dussel asserts that for most part, these categories of people remained essentially Christian (Catholic) until the eighteenth century. Together with sixteenth and eighteenth century English and French philosophies, the Tribunal and Inquisition guarded against the influences of the Reformation.  

The crisis of colonial Christendom in Latin America and the attempt at establishing a new Christendom, 1808-1960/2

The Napoleonic invasion of Iberia changed the constitutive relations of colonial Christendom. The Iberian monarchies lost their power. The so-called liberal Creole middle-class, used liberal ideology from England, the American Revolution, the Enlightenment and the French Revolution to suit their own interests. They led wars of independence from Iberia, established neo-colonial relations with England and continued the process of dependence and underdevelopment.  

During the wars of independence the Church was torn between the Pope who proscribed support for the wars and liberal ideology on the one hand and on the other the reality that the Church was completely integrated into the fabric of and dependent upon a capitalist society. Making a choice within this conflict was simply not easy as the Church and Christendom had traditionally associated with both poles in this conflict.  

The fact of the matter is that both colonial Christendom and the Church experienced a crisis of major proportions, a crisis that deepened after independence, despite efforts of the Church to rebuild its structures and redefine its role in the new society. 

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69 Richard, Death of Christendoms, 38-40.
70 Richard, Death of Christendoms, 48.
71 Richard, Death of Christendoms, 52.
72 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 73.
73 Richard, Death of Christendoms, 59.
The period 1816 to 1824 was one where young communities had to face successive crises of the failure of federalist ideology; the subsequent formation of a number of new independent nation-states amidst growing nationalism; secularisation; the injustices of the new-colonial system imposed by the great industrialised powers; and the development of a pluralistic society.\textsuperscript{74}

The painful process of the \textit{patronato} assumed by the new national governments that managed to gain control over the Church was experienced as “institutional secularization” by the Church. All governments insisted on inheriting the \textit{patronato}, including the abuses associated with it, viz., that the Church had to continue to be instrumental in legitimising these governments and to indoctrinate the people.\textsuperscript{75}

Weakened by the effects of the independence struggles and the lack of leadership and support by the Vatican, and conditioned by three centuries of \textit{patronato}, the Church did not manage to redefine itself, build itself up accordingly, and independently find its own role in society vis-à-vis the new states. Reform without the mediation of the state was simply unthinkable. Without state mediation the Church failed to see any role for itself in society.\textsuperscript{76}

The period before 1850 was deemed the “universalisation of the culture of Latin America”. Wave upon wave of competing philosophical and political ideas from Europe mixed with those of Latin America. 1850 marks the beginning of the ideological hegemony of positivism.\textsuperscript{77} This way of thinking constituted a whole culture with a worldview, political ideology and at times a secularised and enlightened religion. It sought to be completely “scientific” in the sense that the methods of natural science were applied to other areas of knowledge, including the humanities. It was translated into economics, politics and civil society as a whole, especially education. It embraced the general way of thinking that was typical of the West during the period under discussion, which some authors refer to as “scientism”. The course and effect of these currents of thought in Latin America were very different from Europe. Positivism in Europe followed the scientific revolution of capitalism in order to gain control over that revolution through the use of reason. In

\textsuperscript{74} Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, 60.
\textsuperscript{75} Dussel, \textit{History of Church in Latin America}, 79.
\textsuperscript{76} Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, 64.
\textsuperscript{77} Dussel, \textit{History of Church in Latin America}, 79.
developed western countries it represented a philosophical current associated with progress and modernisation without any significant political consequences. In Latin America which had not experienced the same scientific revolution, it translated into the practice of exploitation by the “liberal” Creole oligarchies and their western masters. Positivist discourse was expedient for both these dominant categories to disguise colonial dependence and internal class domination. This neo-colonial dependence was not only economic and political in nature, but also cultural, philosophical, ideological and spiritual.\(^{78}\)

Opposition against the Church and its institutions escalated dramatically.\(^{79}\) The liberal polemics against ‘conservatism’ and ‘clericalism’ on behalf of ‘freedom’ and ‘progress’ naturally made use of this ‘ideological guise’ to mask and justify the merciless exploitation of the poor majorities in Latin America.\(^{80}\) The Church suffered polarisation during this period as it was held captive by liberal reforms, opted for different stances vis-à-vis the state: it either chose to fight for its own institutional rights by forming an alliance with the conservative Catholic oligarchy with a view of establishing a conservative, anti-liberal Christendom or to withdraw into a privatised Catholicism, or Europeanise and Romanise the Church.\(^{81}\) Under these circumstances it forgot the plight of the poor and oppressed who also happened to call themselves Catholics.\(^{82}\)

After the crisis of capitalism between the 1870 and 1880 Latin America was drawn into close association with the new monopoly capitalism associated with modern imperialism. This not only affected Latin America, but also other Third World regions.\(^{83}\) The rise of the dependent liberal oligarchical state is a function of the advent of monopoly capitalism and modern imperialism.\(^{84}\)

Categorising the development of the Church-state-civil society relationship during the period of the liberal state as a process of secularisation, would unlike Europe, be completely inappropriate for Latin America. Despite some secondary secularising effects, it was in essence not a clash of secular society with the Church as religious power as was the case in Europe where the industrial bourgeoisie claimed

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\(^{78}\) Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 62-63.
\(^{79}\) Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 70, 71.
\(^{80}\) Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 63.
\(^{81}\) Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 61.
\(^{82}\) Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 62.
\(^{83}\) Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 70.
economic and political liberty against a feudal system in which the Church played a hegemonic role. Industrial, political, cultural and scientific change could aptly be described in terms of a process of secularisation. Latin America lacked a feudal history. It was rather the result of the expansion of mercantile capitalism. The agent for modernisation and secularisation was not an industrial bourgeoisie, but the liberal oligarchy serving their own oppressive interests by establishing a bond of dependence and subordination to European monopoly capitalism.  

Positivism eventually gave way by the beginning of the twentieth century to a whole array of ideologies: neo-spiritualism, socialism and Marxism. Protestantism also left its mark. Dussel calls this interaction between Latin American thought and that of universal currents “a secular revolution ‘from within’”.  

Separation between Church and state came much later – between 1925 and 1961. Meanwhile the state disowned most of the land and many properties of the Church. Financially it became completely dependant upon the contributions of the faithful. Clerics no longer received state salaries. However painful this transition, the change made the Church much freer than it had been under colonial rule. The Church progressively lost political and legal power and influence as a result of the revolution. This also paradoxically benefited the Church as “the Christian conscience has to manifest a confidence in the new ‘mode of being’”.  

From 1930-1960 the Church found itself between laicist-positivist liberalism and atheistic, materialistic socialism as it opted for populist, nationalist and developmentalist movements in a new Christendom.  

The structural crisis of the US centred capitalist system started in 1914, peaked in 1929 and stretched into the 1940s. This afforded Latin America the opportunity to reformulate the relationships of dependence with this external centre as well as an “internal reformulation of economic and class structures”. The hegemony of the liberal oligarchy with its dependence on the global centre of capitalism was replaced by a “national-developmentalist” industrial bourgeoisie in alliance with the working class.  

The Church, however, by choosing to support the forces of nationalism,  

84 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 80, 101.  
85 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 80-81.  
86 Richard, Death of Christendoms, 73.  
87 Richard, Death of Christendoms, 87.
Latin-americanisation and development steered clear of the rival powers of the
laicist-positivist liberalism of the previous period as well as the atheistic and
materialistic socialist tendencies of the organised labour movement. New
Christendom underwent such change during this period that the Church could now
support it in its populist, nationalist, Latin American, culturalist and developmentalist
shape as it explicitly made reference to Christian social thought.\(^8\) At the same time
the Church also escaped the albatross of polarisation between conservatism and
liberalism of the preceding period -a polarisation that falsely set up the Church
against “progress”, “science” and “modernity”. The new polarisation between
national, Latin American liberation (with which the Church now sided) versus
foreign domination and dependence broke the stranglehold of the indictment of
positivist liberalism that Church was conservative. Moreover the Church escaped its
romanised and europanised orientation. It also moved out of the preceding mode of
privatisation. Furthermore, it could broaden its base of alliance. Whereas it had to
align itself narrowly to the oligarchical elites in the preceding period, it could now
expand its social base to the “middle strata” and the broad masses without having to
break with the state.\(^9\)

Yet, despite the changes of this period, the Church still found itself squarely
embedded within the structure of New Christendom, which never provided an
adequate response to the crisis of colonial Christendom. What was called for was a
clean break with the very structure of Christendom as such, viz., the dispensation
whereby “the Church sought to extend its influence and power in society by taking
advantage of the mediation of the state” implying that the Church of necessity enter
into an “alliance with the system and with the ruling classes”\(^9\) – hegemony in
economic, political, social, cultural and ideological life in a country. With the
allegiance of such influential elite, the Church could guarantee its own missionary
presence in society. Moreover, the very survival of the Church depended on their
goodwill and state protection. The survival of Catholic institutions of all sorts
ultimately also safeguards the position of the Church.\(^2\) In a quest to stem the tide of
institutional secularisation, the Church dreamed of restoring the Catholic religion as

\(^8\) Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, 76-77.
\(^9\) Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, 78.
\(^2\) Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, 86.
\(^1\) Dussel, \textit{History of Church in Latin America}, 323.
the predominant and official faith. Militant lay persons had to regain the power of the Church. A theology of New Christendom came to the fore that advocated that state and Church act in its own sphere in a non-conflictual way.93

The crisis for the Catholic faith and the Church during the post-colonial Christendom period can be summarised in the following manner:

Secular teaching was introduced in schools and other institutions of learning. The Church had to learn how to exist and work in a pluralist society.94 The crisis was also felt on the level of “popular Catholicism”. Folk Catholicism, as authentic enculturation of the faith in the context of Christendom, provided a homogeneous context, reflected in a uniformity of piety, liturgy and rites. “With the disappearance of Christendom, piety of this cultural form no longer has the freedom to function and also disappears. New Christendom (1930-1962) attempted to regain some of it, but had to make way to a painful adaptation to a type of piety that can only be exercised in a pluralistic, secular society”. This crisis called for a new understanding and practice on the level of spirituality, pastoral theology, of ecclesiastical institutions, the mission of the laity, priests and bishops. The secular city of the twentieth century has seen a progressive division between “values merely cultural and profane” and religious values. Whereas New Christendom still attempted to stem this tide, its downfall since 1960 intensified this process. Authentic folk Catholicism has degenerated into popular or folk religiosity that is syncretistic and can even be considered as pagan substitutes for religion. While remnants of folk Catholicism still linger among certain city dwellers that have been less influenced by the secular city, an increasing number of urbanised Latin Americans live in a new era of unresolved contradictions. “The solitary individual in the cities, a product of secularized and universal civilization, feels uprooted, devoid of any foundation. Existence appears absurd and without meaning. The modern urban dweller has left behind the security of Christendom. Under the influence of the scientific spirit, this person has cast aside all superficial piety, and is subsequently unable to confront resolutely the ‘absence of meaning’. Thus recurred the functional substitutes for religion. Underlying the belief that one’s destiny is somehow predetermined and revealed by the horoscope, there is an “antihistorical, mythical attitude that attempts to free one from all commitments

92 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 82.
93 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 82-85.
and that sets forth a secure prototype of physical-natural necessity of primitive man".95

During the post-colonial period domination was always exercised by Creole oligarchs—whether the landholder living in the city, or the industrial, neocolonial bourgeoisie, whether conservative or liberal, or the conservative military class as a political force strenuously defending Latin American Christendom under the guise of “Western Christian Civilization”. This formula “approximately expressed the ideal of Byzantine Christendom in which Caesar was over the Church, and to the Church in turn there was attributed a cultural function”.96

The “agony of colonial Christendom” in the final phase of an attempt to institute a “new Christendom” was brought to an end by Vatican Council II, which Dussel describes as the greatest fact in the history of salvation. It signalled the death of Christendoms and a new existential way of living Christianity as it was before the advent of Christendom.97

The crisis of New Christendom, the Church and Latin American liberation, 1960-1979/85

This dramatic new period was ushered in by the convergence of two quite disparate factors viz., the “profound cultural phenomenon ...[of] the popular anti-oligarchical and anti-imperialistic revolution” and an ecclesial event that signified the surpassing of Latin and Hellenistic Christendom which had extended itself not only across the Roman Empire, but also its colonies. This “eschatological” event was the Second Vatican Council, which “in a real cultural sense, allow[ed] the Church to engage universally in the evangelization of all cultures and of all people”. In terms of theological developments the “slow but irreversible conversion” of the Church expressed by Vatican II between 1962 and 1965 had already been preceded by CELAM in 1955 (the first General Conference of Latin American Bishops) and followed by the second one at Medellín in 1968 which even more rigorously spelt out its conclusions and implications.98

Vatican II was construed very differently in Latin America as compared to

94 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 198.
95 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 123.
96 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 125-26.
97 Richard, Death of Christendoms, 144.
98 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 198
Europe. For the Catholic Church in Europe, Vatican II mainly meant a coming to terms with post-Enlightenment culture and the legacy of the modern bourgeois revolution as signified by the French revolution. Having come of age economically, politically, culturally and humanly, Europe pressured the Church to engage its own past of resistance to these changes. The European Church wanted to be reconciled with its context. In Latin America the context was one of under-development due to exploitation by this same modern bourgeoisie and resistance to it as exemplified by the Cuban revolution. Here, by contrast, the Church felt too closely identified with modernity and needed to break away from it. In Europe the question was the relation between “faith and science”, which invoked the processes of secularisation, de clericalisation and demythologisation. In Latin America it was a matter of “faith and revolution” calling for a process of liberation. While the Church in Europe faced the problem of the “death of God”, the Church in Latin America was faced with the “death of the human being”.99

Ironically, while an increase in industrial production gave rise to the growth of the proletariat class and the concomitant loss of power of the oligarchy, it also led to widespread and profound social instability as a result of accelerated inflation which promoted industrialisation. This led to the overthrow of what had become oligarchical dictatorships.100 Subversion became enemy number one and law and order the highest values of these dictatorships. The main contradiction was portrayed as that of the democratic Christian West and the Communist and materialistic East. Little did the military regimes understand that the real enemy was “domination and economic, political, and cultural imperialism and the suppression of all human potential of the Latin American that impede development” and that Christianity was not to be confused with Christendom and Western culture. This confusion elevated the military to a messianic level in its claim to defend the Kingdom of God. Meanwhile it was merely defending the domination of national and international oligarchies under the cloak of religious talk.101

Novel in this situation is not simply the upsurge of insurrections. These had been present throughout the centuries. They had, however, never managed to involve the social base of Christendom. This changed now as the very social base of New

100 Richard, *Death of Christendoms*, 89, 79.
Christendom yielded significant numbers that consciously participated in the social and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Both Christian intelligentsia, clerics and theologians joined the popular movement. This caused a split within the ranks of the social base of Christendom, including the Church. That part of the Church that rejected the Christendom scheme (the popular Church or the Church of the poor), was built up anew especially from the ranks of the popular classes and liberation forces. For the first time in Latin American history there was a direct contradiction between Christendom and Church, a conflict which made the survival of the one a threat to the survival of the other.\textsuperscript{102}

The recovery of European and US centres of capitalism witnessed a new model of imperialist domination. Production, capital and finance was transnationalised and the international market restructured. This led to a fresh polarisation between the rich Creole bourgeois capitalists and the exploited classes of the Latin American periphery. The latter once again found themselves on a downward spiral of poverty.\textsuperscript{103} This had resulted in a revolutionary, class-based and socialist situation by the 1960s and 1970s.\textsuperscript{104}

According to Dussel cultural colonialism became an ever bigger threat during this time. The legacy of a dependent, Europeanised and positivist generation marginalized Latin America. Instead of engaging Latin American reality in a creative way, acknowledging and appreciating its own cultural originality as evidenced in its way of life and art, efforts continued to keep up with cultural developments in Europe. Latin Americans are to be made aware of their cultural dependency and the lack of authenticity in their philosophy. They should be transformed into new, liberated and independent shapers of an autonomous way of life. This is especially urgent in the light of globalisation taking place at the level of contemporary technology. A new wave of imperial oppression is threatening where the oppressed “are simply and directly taught the science and the culture of the oppressors without this knowledge passing through the filter of a self-conscious awareness of the domination that is being exercised by means of the same imported cultural

\textsuperscript{101} Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, 83-86.
\textsuperscript{102} Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, 74-75.
\textsuperscript{103} Dussel, \textit{History of Church in Latin America}, 135-36.
\textsuperscript{104} Richard, \textit{Death of Christendoms}, 157.
structures".  

It is noteworthy that Richard does not view cultural contradictions as the prime focus of liberation theology in Latin America as in the case of Africa whereas Dussel views the discovery of cultural autonomy in Latin America as equally important as economic and political liberation.

Hence, liberation theology focusing on the concept of “practice,” went through three stages. First, there was a reflection on the contradictory forms of pastoral practice associated with respectively Christendom, New Christendom and finally maturity of faith culminating in prophetic pastoral practice. Second, the focus shifted to political practice of Christians. Finally, the focal point became political practice where the subject was not necessarily Christians, but simply the masses, the popular classes. From now on the theological method would be such that the political practice would be the “first act” of theological reflection and not the object thereof. Liberation theology would situate itself within the economic and political process and the popular movement. In this respect it would be clearly distinguishable from theologies of human rights and redemocratisation which are situated beyond the economic and political process and outside the popular movement.

There has been a shift regarding social position and role of clerics and laity in a post-Christendom Latin America since 1962. While priests were part of the clerical class under Christendom, the new situation was reflected in the disappearance of this class in society. The office of priesthood now adapted to function within the Christian community as pastor and priest and outside the Christian community as prophet. This reflects the rift between Church and those in power.

Despite new attention to the role of priests by the Medellín Conference, the latter still ascribed an indirect role to priests as would be the case under Christendom and new Christendom. Priests were expected to educate and encourage the laity to participate in social transformation without becoming involved in a direct manner. This went against the spirit of both this Conference and Vatican II, reverting to the mindset of Christendom where the priest is a “man of the Church”, a “social class”. Instead of this, priests are called by “the facts as they are now revealed to us in the

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105 Richard, Death of Christendoms, 147.
106 Richard, Death of Christendoms, 153.
107 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 193.
108 Dussel, History of Church in Latin America, 194.
history of salvation as concrete events of the people of God...to intervene prophetically in a direct way in history”. Likewise monks and nuns are called to "penetrate into the real world with greater daring today than ever before: he cannot consider himself a stranger to social problems, to democratic awareness, or to the pluralistic mentality of the society in which he lives...." The social place and role ascribed to priests within Christendom needs probing in our assessment of Cape-Colonial Christendom.

Regarding the laity Dussel still sees a long road ahead before integration into the “executive organisms of the Church”. There had been some progress since Vatican I when the laity were in effect represented by nobility and government officials. Political influence thus characterised the Church of Christendom. Although that is no longer the case, the laity still has virtually no say in matters theological, philosophical, sociological or even the interpretation of daily life in the light of the faith.

This passivity of the contemporary Christian has been overcome in some areas due to the influence of basic Christian communities. They offer the possibility of mediation between the impersonal, anonymous parish community and the individual believer. Paulo Freire’s Basic Education Movement, which also is a development in the direction of authentic Church-being, has been incorporated in the basic Christian communities in Brazil since Freire’s exile to Chile. Basic communities, whether focused on liberation, evangelisation or liturgy, should receive the attention and support of the ecclesial structures for “it is at this level that the Church will make the transition from Christendom to religious communities in a pluralistic society where existential faith will prepare the Christian for daily, practical living, and where the catechumenate will recover its full meaning as in the primitive Christian communities of the Roman Empire prior to Constantine”. Christian leadership, (lay or clerical), would have to emerge from a life that develops from below, from the Church of the people which rid themselves of all triumphalist attitudes of Christendom.

Their leadership should extend to secular life where the population of Latin

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America should exercise their power lest the oligarchs of the past be replaced by “the technocrats of our modern, universal civilization”.  

The disappearance of “folk Catholicism” and “the distorted, insufficient and underdeveloped faith and charity of the masses” that are ineffective participants in the Church pose a major challenge. They do not participate in evangelisation as they are partially evangelised or de-Christianised to the point of neo-paganism. They are also not favourably disposed to being regarded as missionary objects. The minority that are authentically Christian, anti-conservative and even revolutionary and who attempt to overcome the colonial past should read the signs of the times and begin to evangelise these masses.

With the rapid rate of de-Christianisation among the masses, the pastorate of the Church should be reconsidered. Priests cannot continue as if working in Christendom. Their functions should be defined in terms of the essentials like in the primitive Church. Their work should be augmented with the introduction of catechists and other lay people from this minority who can “mediate” Christianity to the masses. The hierarchy should decide how active Christian minorities should be involved in terms of authentic Christian and missionary communities for the re-evangelisation of the masses instead of the hierarchical missionary structures occupied exclusively by celibate priests. Evangelistic work will not aim at reviving a new Christendom where Christianity becomes an exclusive and excluding faith—legally, intellectually and sociologically. At present Latin America is a secular civilisation of pluralist societies. It is within this context that the religious community should exist autonomously from political community. In making this shift, the Church in Latin America will pave the way for Catholics who still live within Christendom structures in many countries in Europe as well as in the United States.

A shift in Christian political and social commitment is evident in this period. The popular support of the Christian democracy of New Christendom is waning after the ecumenical resistance to the atheism of Communist countries. This was made possible by the legacy of colonial Christendom and the nascent force of a middle

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class resulting from the incipient industrial development of the 1930s, the Second World War, European thinkers such as Maritain, Lebret and Mounier as well as the example of European Christian Democrats. Christian Democracy was founded on a type of "abstract, international, and technocratic natural law....". Since 1960, however, circumstances have allowed a dialogue between Christians and Marxists. Meanwhile Latin Americans have found that the development programme was unsuccessful "and has moved to a new level of sociopolitical understanding derived from an economic analysis that reveals the dialectic of imperialism and colonialism at all levels". This led to the formation of "a new kind of populism: revolutionary, nationalistic, but with a primary and international sense of vocation" that affirms the struggle for economic, cultural and human independence of the whole of Latin America. It is intended to fulfil the eschatological promise of a united humanity (Eph. 2:14) "in order that the Kingdom will become more real, present, and historical".  

The Christian university student and intellectual are contributing towards the painful transition of universities from "developmentalist" to "critico-liberating". This implies the liberation of culture by studying and promoting popular culture. This has as objective "the construction of an historically new person who overcomes the alienation of oppressive colonialism".  

In conclusion Dussel states that the Latin American Church has been both systematically impoverished and weakened, as well as purified by the "colonial structure of ...[Latin American] culture, the Bourbon stagnation, the chaotic decadence of the nineteenth century, the systematic persecution by the Liberals...." This rules out the possibility for the Church to continue to function as a Church of Christendom. "It must now assume the attitude of a missionary Church". While Latin America was the only continent in the position of colonial Christendom, suffering under successive North Atlantic colonial powers, its Church now "leaves behind Christendom, modernity, and colonial servitude, and at least the unawareness of its dependency". It also leads the dialectical movement of countries suffering from neo-colonial oppression.  

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Dussel, \textit{History of Church in Latin America}, 255.}
\footnote{Dussel, \textit{History of Church in Latin America}, 221-22.}
\footnote{Dussel, \textit{History of Church in Latin America}, 255.}
\end{footnotes}
PART TWO
THE PLANTING OF CHRISTENDOM AT THE CAPE

INTRODUCTION

**Tools and issues emanating from the foregoing conversation with my partners**

Apart from the issues and tools already identified in the critical conversation with my partners in Part One, I wish to mention others gleaned from this research that I have utilised in my ensuing study of Cape-Dutch Christendom.

The tenacity of the habits of mind and practice instilled by ages of Christendom is affirmed by all my partners. The habits of Christendom tend to find new forms in various contexts as pressure is exerted on them by new philosophical currents and social realities brought about by exposure to peoples of other religions and cultures. Structural changes in Christendom usher in new periods thereof. This assertion informs one of the basic presuppositions of my approach to Cape-Dutch Christendom.

The post-Reformation fragmentation of Christendom and the subsequent pitting of churches against one another instead of seeking their shared identity in contrast to a pagan world have proved to be a useful tool in assessing Cape-Dutch Christendom and its established church. Bonhoeffer’s dictum of the Reformation as root of the cultural forces of technology, the masses and nationalism, which found fruition in the secularisation of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, have contributed to my subsequent study of the Cape. The associated individualism and privatisation of the faith are also relevant tools.

Newbigin’s rhetorical question of whether the 4th century church had much of a choice but to accept establishment status in order to play a public role in the Empire begs for scrutiny regarding the role of the Church at the Cape, especially concerning public education and welfare. Education at the Cape and its relation to the Augustinian world view justifies our attention, as does the Augustinian vision of citizens of “the heavenly city” living as distinctive communities in “the earthly city”. On the other hand Newbigin’s critical question of whether the establishment of church meant the assumption of a Christian culture and an uncritical approach to culture and the state, while taking on the comfortable stance of a “domestic chaplain to the nation...perpetually trying to fit the gospel into our culture”, begs our scrutiny.
concerning the Church at the Cape. In this respect cognisance is taken of the preference of Christendom churches and missions to operate within a context of political and social peace and stability, notwithstanding whether it stood the test of justice. Control by the state and cultural powers pose questions pertaining to the freedom of the church.

Colonial discourse, together with its concomitant socio-economic critique, as well as its bearing on the mission of the church and the formation of young churches, play a prominent role in most of my partners’ assessment of current Christendom. Newbigin even used “colonial” and “Christendom” as interchangeable adjectives for a certain type of ecclesiology. This discourse and associated matters also proved to be basic tools in my quest to understand Cape-Dutch Christendom as well as the form and role of the Church in that and ensuing periods. The impact of colonialism on indigenous peoples (whether enslaved or not) is an important issue.

Christendom’s triumphal which has led the church to speak in terms of bringing about the reign of God and to utilise state coercion in the process, needs scrutiny. In this respect the public role of the Church at the Cape also needs to be critically compared to that of the North American churches that followed the lead of the Puritans in the colonies and the Latin American colonial Church.

I am reminded by my partners that there is a scientifically justifiable subjectivity in a study like the one that follows. My premises also affect the way in which theories and models from the social sciences are utilised. This has necessitated clarification of my theological presuppositions.

**Structure**

My study of the planting of Christendom at the Cape yielded three distinct themes, viz., church privilege; patronage and control of Company and culture; and finally, Church freedom. These themes and their sub-themes are developed by referring to the corresponding backgrounds of Calvin and Geneva; the Dutch reformation and the Dutch East Indies Company in general.

*The term “Christendom” in the correspondence*

Although my study focuses on Christendom at the Cape, I have scrutinized my primary sources in vain for a technical term that denotes Christendom in the sense of *corpus Christianum*. Even the current popular term for Christendom in Dutch Reformed theology, viz., “theocracy”, is nowhere to be found. One can only deduce
from this that Christendom was such a given in the Netherlands, the VOC and the Cape Colony that it was hardly necessary to name it.

The Dutch term "Christendom" is, however, used in the correspondence, but denotes a variety of things. It is used to signify "being a Christian",1 the Christian faith,2 Christianity,3 church4 and the opposite of heathendom.5 Ds Le Boucq, for instance, warns in 1708 that the sorry state of church and education at the Cape would inevitably lead towards the decay of "Africaanders" into "Hottentotdom". "Africaanders" refers to colonial settlers in contrast to heathen, which Le Boucq called "Hottentotdom".6 Colonial settlers therefore represented "Christendom" as opposed to the Khoi who belonged to heathendom.

**Dutch Christendom**

The first half of the 16th century witnessed the emergence of civil society in the developing mercantile and industrial cities in the Netherlands. Coupled with the independence that these developments brought about, the investiture struggle weakened the power of the German emperor as well as that of the Archbishops of Cologne and Reims over these territories. Religious life was characterised by flourishing modern devotion, which emphasised the personal following of Jesus and biblical humanism, which emphasised the sanctification of personal life and that of the church.7

Due to persecution, the Reformation did not immediately take root in the Netherlands. Lutherans, Zwinglians and Anabaptists suffered a great deal as did French Calvinist ministers who ministered among the French speaking population of the Netherlands. Congregations "under the cross" survived due to Calvinism's strong presbyterial organisation of the church. The spirit of resistance that was built

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2 Missives 13, 14, 59, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstof I, 35, 37, 196*.


5 Church Order of Batavia, 1624, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstof I, 570*; appendix to missive 19, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstof I, 103*.

6 Missive 19, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstof I, 66*.

up in the Netherlands against the rule of Philip II concurred with the Calvinist movement. When a government delegation inquired into demonstrations marked by vigorous Psalm singing, Guido de Brès had the Belgic Confession together with a petition thrown over the castle wall where the royal delegation was lodging. This confession had been drawn up especially for the Netherlands in 1561 based on the example of a French confession written in 1559. More than the French confession, this one spelt out the calling of government\(^8\) to promote public order by curbing licentiousness and punishing criminals through the use of the sword, protection of the pious, protection of the holy service of the Word and therefore fend off all idolatry and false religion, destroy the kingdom of the antichrist and promote and allow the preaching of the kingdom of Jesus Christ everywhere. The purpose thereof was to ensure that God was honoured and served by all, as commanded in His Word. Everybody was to submit to and obey the government in so far as it did not clash with the Word of God; pray for divine guidance for the government so that the redeemed could live in peace and tranquillity with piety and dignity. This was confessed contra to the Anabaptists who did not acknowledge government and preached and practiced community of property (Article 36).

As the resistance grew, the cause of Calvinists and anti-Spanish political forces concurred. Calvinist Church Councils became centres of revolt. A pact among the nobility was paralleled by one among merchants. When a joint petition by consistories and nobility to procure the use of certain church buildings was issued, a more radical group started a spate of iconoclasm that raged from city to city. The insurrection was repressed and Guido de Brès hanged. Phillip II sent General Alva to persecute the insurrectionists. Calvinists fled into exile, but proceeded to develop their church order based on the example of the French. The resistance won popular support and a foothold in Den Briel in 1572. Prince William of Orange, who had been of Lutheran persuasion, was convinced by Calvinists of the right of lower governments to revolt. Orange became the leader of the revolt but failed to establish religious freedom due to resistance from both the Reformed north and Catholic south. In Holland and Zeeland the Reformed Church became the only officially recognised church. However, government did not grant the Reformed Church freedom of independence from governmental control. Many church buildings were given to the Reformed Church and government funding was provided. The price for

this, however, was that government demanded a say in the calling of Ministers of the Word and elders. Where deacons were in charge of charity for a whole community, the government also controlled them. Political commissioners were sent to assist and supervise synods. When freedom from Spanish oppression was secured, a conflict of political and ecclesiastical interests resulted. The church wished to be free from government interference and government did not wish to be criticised by the church. The Reformed Church had to settle for state patronage - this implied both privilege and control. The power of church councils had become clear during the foregoing freedom struggle. Government had to control this power in order to secure its own hegemony.

By 1600 the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands had become the centre of Reformed Protestantism and a haven for those persecuted elsewhere. Religious tolerance made it possible that not only other refugee Calvinists from inter alia England, but also independent Christian groups and even Jews persecuted in Spain, Portugal and eastern Europe were given asylum. Dutch tolerance was acknowledged throughout Europe. However, this was continually debated. 1651 (a year before the colonisation of the Cape) marked a turn in this debate. An orthodox Calvinist faction used the first meeting of the Great Assembly since 1579, called together to address the problem of the death of the stadtholder Willem II, to press for less tolerance of public vices. This sentiment soon spread and turned into intolerance towards particularly Catholics, Lutherans and Jews. Nonetheless, the general tolerance for which the Dutch were renowned contributed towards plurality in society.

The Reformed faith itself also displayed a chequered picture as there was no single church order. The legacy of biblical humanism lingered in the North and fostered a moralistic-undogmatic approach to life which suited the Catholics. Erasmanian humanism emphasised a kind of practical Christianity that superseded ecclesiastical disunity. No national synod was allowed to be held after that of Leicester and this made it difficult to guarantee faithfulness to dogma. Due to the conflict between Arminius and Gomarus over the dogma of divine election the States General conceded to the request of the various states to call the Fifth National Synod. In 1618 delegates from Reformed churches within and outside of the

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10 Berkhof, Geschiedenis der Kerk, 204-5.
11 Russell Short, The Island a/the Center a/the West (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 274-5.
Netherlands gathered at Dordrecht. A number of remonstrant professors had to
defend their case, but were expelled from synod when they argued against the
agenda and the authority of synod. Their teachings were subsequently discussed and
condemned in their absence.\textsuperscript{12}

All predicants of the established church henceforth had to comply by
underwriting the Canons of Dordrecht or face defrocking. The abovementioned
dogmatic issue was settled and culminated in the adoption of the Canons of
Dordrecht. The Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession were also adopted
as creeds. Furthermore, a national church order was drafted and accepted. This
espoused a clear distinction between church and state, which contradicted the
control the state had assumed over the Church. Subsequently the States General
withheld ratification thereof as law of the Republic. The proposed National Church
Order of Dordrecht was simply added to an array of existing church orders from
which regional synods could choose. This limited the power of the Church in public
life. To add to this, no further national synods were held in the following two
centuries. Even though the Synod of Dordrecht had produced unity of faith and
order for the Church, the Calvinist theocratic ideal was thwarted as rulers held the
reigns very tightly of its privileged church. Neither the Prince of Orange nor
Oldenbarnevelt allowed the Church freedom from state control. The Church
however benefited in several ways from its bond with magistrates of kindred spirit.
The Church was allowed to control most of the church buildings and granted some
funds. Universities for the training of ministers, schools and organists were provided
by the state. The state also contributed generously to the translation of the Bible. The
\textit{statenvertaling} – the official Dutch translation of the Bible – was mandated by the
National Synod of Dordrecht and the work was done with state funding. This
contributed towards the standardisation of written Dutch. It was mostly a literal
translation of the original text, but the interpretation nevertheless reflected the
orthodox Calvinist persuasions of the translators. This translation deeply influenced
Reformed Protestantism in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{13}

The price for church privilege was high. It cost the Church its integrity as it
had to compromise its freedom. State control, which ran contrary to the convictions
of faith and order as set out by the National Synod of Dordrecht, developed into

\textsuperscript{12} Berkhof, \textit{Geschiedenis der Kerk}, 204-5.
\textsuperscript{13} Berkhof, \textit{Geschiedenis der Kerk}, 206.
prescription of ministers regarding what they could preach and for whom they could pray. Government demanded control of the calling of predicants and choice of elders. Where Government expected the deaconate to take responsibility for a whole local community, it kept control over thereof. Political commissioners had to assist and supervise synods. Little opportunity was afforded the Church for missions abroad. The VOC was given this mandate, yet commercial interests prevailed.\footnote{Berkhof, \textit{Geschiedenis der Kerk}, 201-08.}

This kind of situation led churches of the Calvinist reformation to protest against their reduction to state churches. They were nevertheless willing to accept privileged status. Furthermore, religious freedom was to be maintained as acknowledgement of the fact that the gospel could not be denigrated to a law enforced by government.\footnote{Berkhof, \textit{Geschiedenis der Kerk}, 180.}

Hence, the United Netherlands heralded a new world order – a nation state functioning as a republic and maintaining freedom through mercantile capitalism against the wrath of former regal and ecclesiastical masters of Latin Christendom. The Dutch Reformed Church viewed the Netherlands as a Christian republic where government and Church took hands to the honour of God. A new kind of Christendom came into being. This new kind of national and republican Christendom depended on mercantile capitalism for survival against the wrath of the Spanish inquisition. This Christendom mutated even further as the Dutch Republican Government chartered the VOC (as capitalist mercantile venture) to be patron thereof in its maritime and colonial domains.

The establishment of the VOC and its relationship with the Classis of Amsterdam took place at the height of the political and ecclesial resistance to and victory over the forces of Catholic Spain. It launched the golden age of mercantile and industrial capitalism in the Netherlands. The VOC (\textit{Vereenigd Oost-Indisch Companie} – United East-Indies Company) emerged in 1602 as the end result of a series of agreements among the chambers of commerce of various Dutch cities. It resulted in the most formidable mercantile company of the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Mercantile capitalism was central to securing Dutch national liberty. This liberty was important to commerce, the Church and government. Hence, an agreement between these three parties was readily reached.

The VOC followed the pattern of the seventeenth century where colonisation
and the establishment of the church were seen as two sides of the same coin. In the second octroi granted to the VOC in 1622, the States General determined that the Company had to take responsibility for the maintenance of the public faith. This implied that the Company was to render patronage to the Reformed faith and the Dutch Reformed Church as established church within its maritime and colonial domain. Subsequently this commercial company took responsibility for both secular and religious interests of its subjects. In less than 200 years approximately 900 ministers of religion and many more sick comforters were employed. They were sent to minister at sea and in the colonies.

By the time the refreshment post was established at the Cape, the VOC had already employed preachers and sick comforters as chaplains and adopted its own instructions for them. These instructions also predated the formative Synod of Dordrecht and church order. The latter was subsequently used by the Classis of Amsterdam and favoured by the Church at the Cape. The Classis of Amsterdam and the Synod of North Holland, however, had to reckon with an established chaplaincy service, which set the tone for the subsequent formation of the Church at the Cape.

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CHAPTER FOUR
CHURCH PRIVILEGE

INTRODUCTION
The Church at the Cape (confession [faith] and institutional life [order]) was exceptionally privileged by the secular authorities on all the tiers of VOC management. The VOC was the patron of the Reformed faith and order within its domain. Senior public positions in the Company hierarchy were reserved for Reformed believers. The Church at the Cape instituted, enjoyed the strongest form of patronage and in due course became an extension of the chaplaincy of the VOC.

The Reformed faith was the only faith publicly preached and the Reformed church the only institutionalised church allowed to form congregations and worship publicly until 1781. Reformed predicants, sick comforters and teachers were on the pay roll of the Company and also incorporated into the ranks of officers. The Company provided land and buildings for church and educational amenities. The orders of chaplains as well as church orders were enshrined by legislation. The Company’s Cape Council of Justice directly enforced church discipline. The Church at the Cape was also privileged to be entrusted with two public spheres, that of education and welfare. As collaborative ventures they were supported by the Company. The Church itself was not involved in public matters apart from education and welfare and government administration through posts occupied by its members.

It concentrated its efforts on the establishment and maintenance of a peaceable church of dedicated members who lived holy lives. The aim was to win as many souls as possible to the faith from the pluralist population whether from other Christian persuasions or from "heathendom". The premise was that the Church viewed itself as the only true established church of the Cape Colony. Therefore it was intolerant of other Christian persuasions and opposed all efforts by their adherents and the Company to have their rights broadened.

RELIGIOUS PLURALITY, PRIVILEGE AND INTOLERANCE
The medieval theocratic outlook led Calvin to profess that society outside of the institutional church and the whole of creation falls within the ambit of the reign of God. This is achieved through God’s Word. Although they have different tasks both church and government are subject to the reign of God through His Word. Luther,
on the other hand, professed God’s rule over the church through the office of the Word and over the world through the office of government. Ironically, Luther (and Zwingli) took for granted the patronage of government over the external organisation and well-being of the church. Calvin, however, based on the church’s radical bond with her Lord demanded complete freedom of the church from government. Since both church and state are under the reign of God, the two can therefore relate closely. The church should proclaim God’s will to the state without controlling the state and the state should protect the church and promote a humane life for all in every sphere of society. This is achieved by governing according to the will of God and defending justice. It took Calvinists a long time to realise that the reign of God implies a preferential option for the outcasts of the world.\footnote{Hendrikus Berkhof, Otto J. de Jong, Geschiedenis der Kerk (Nijkerk: Uitgeverij G.F. Callenbach B.V., 1975), 179/80.}

This, however, meant that governors were given a divine duty to establish and protect the faith and order of the true church of the Reformation in their domains. The established and protected privilege of the true church by the state is clear in Calvin’s letter to the protector Somerset. Calvin likened the role of royal leaders to that of King Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 32) who re-established true religion and promoted true worship of God in his realm, reformed the state of God’s people, abolished superstitions and banished idolatry throughout all Judea – in short, to strive “with all his might to set up the reign of God”. Therefore Calvin implored protector Somerset to

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\text{advance His honour, until you have established His kingdom in as great perfection as is to be looked for in the world.}
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Calvin concluded that

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\text{[i]t would be well were all the nobility and those who administer justice, to submit themselves, in uprightness and all humility, to this great King, Jesus Christ, paying Him sincere homage, and with faith unfeigned, in body, soul, and spirit, so that He may correct and beat down the arrogance and rashness of those who would rise up against them. Thus ought earthly princes to rule and govern, serving Jesus Christ, and taking order that He may have His own sovereign authority over all, both small and great. ...apply your chief care and watchfulness to this end, that the doctrine of God may be proclaimed with efficacy and power, so as to produce its fruit, and never to grow weary, whatsoever may happen, in following out fully an open and complete reformation of the Church.\footnote{John Calvin, Letters of John Calvin: Selected from the Bonnet Edition with an Introductory Biographical Sketch (Carlisle, PA: USA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), 87-94.}}
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The Reformed Church in the United Netherlands advocated the medieval theocratic ideal, which meant that it did not merely deem itself entitled to be the privileged
church, but to be the only church in the Netherlands – an ideal, as we shall see, that was all but realised at the Cape until 1781 when the Lutherans won their long struggle to form a congregation.³

The presence of other faiths raised the issue of religious tolerance. Tolerance towards other Christian faiths and religions varied from time to time and from one province to the other in the United Netherlands. In general it was the established Reformed Church that propagated intolerance while the state tended to be more tolerant.

Remonstrants suffered severe restrictions and even persecution until Orange intervened on their behalf. In the north Lutherans also experienced intolerance, but the interference of North-German and Nordic commercial relations eased their position.

Catholics also suffered restrictions and injustices. The Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands, as part of its privileged status, successfully appealed to the States General to terminate public worship services of the Catholic Church and subsequently to have them replaced by Reformed services in the very same church buildings. The Government was requested by the 1618-19 synod of Dordrecht to curb “papal idolatry and superstitions” by promulgating legislation. The formularies for taking the oath should be cleared of all “papal idolatry”.

Judaism was also opposed. The Dordrecht Synod resolved that government should restrain the “blasphemies of the Jews that live among us and those that are misled by them to apostatise from the Christian religion to Judaism”.⁴

On the other hand the state became increasingly tolerant towards other confessional groups. This resulted in religious plurality alongside privileged religion and its ecclesiastical institution. Apart from an array of Protestant beliefs that continued to exist in the Netherlands, well a third of the population remained Catholic.⁵

To appreciate the way in which the issue of religious plurality, privilege and intolerance played itself out at the Cape, we have to compare not only the Cape with Calvin’s Geneva and the fatherland (United Netherlands), but also the situation in another parallel setting, i.e. that of the 17th century, Manhattan-based, North

³ Berkhof, Geschiedenis der Kerk, 202, 206.
⁵ Berkhof, Geschiedenis der Kerk, 202-06.
American Dutch colony, under the auspices of the Dutch West Indies Company. Religious bigotry was similar to the New England colonies to the north. The Dutch director-general, Peter Stuyvesant, not only disregarded the humanity of black slaves, but also despised all Europeans who were not of Dutch Reformed persuasion: Catholics, Quakers, Lutherans and especially Jews.

With regard to religious bigotry, Stuyvesant portrayed a typical mid-seventeenth century European sentiment. Diversity was generally believed to weaken a nation. Therefore Stuyvesant, on request of Dutch Reformed ministers, enthusiastically took action against other religious groups in the colony. Lutherans were forbidden to worship publicly on the grounds that it “would pave the way for other sects”, which would subsequently cause the colony to become a “receptacle for all sorts of heretics and fanatics”. Jewish asylum seekers were turned away as Jews were “a deceitful race” which would “infect” the colony if he were to accommodate them. Due to political and economic pressure applied by the Jewish leaders of the colony and supported by the Jewish community in Amsterdam, they succeeded in their appeal for protection by the Dutch Republic. Subsequently Stuyvesant’s principals reminded him of the stipulation that “each person shall remain free in his religion” and that some prominent Jews had invested a “large amount of capital” in the West Indies Company. Stuyvesant’s disdain was, however, driven to the extreme by English Quakers. He was convinced that they posed a threat to peace and stability in the colony.6

This brings us back to the situation at the Cape. At the time, the Company employed people of different religious persuasions and from different domains. This reflected the diversity of persuasions prevalent in the fatherland.

At the Cape the Church was not only the established church, but it was also the only one allowed to exist institutionally under VOC rule. This continued until the last decade and a half of VOC rule, when the Lutherans managed to obtain permission to constitute as a congregation and subsequently procured the right for their members to serve in senior public positions. The Church at the Cape, with the advocacy of the Classis, fought hard to retain this privilege. In this sense, the Cape came much closer to reaching the Reformed theocratic ideal than the fatherland as toleration of other confessions came much later at the Cape than in the Netherlands.7

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Pursuing this theocratic ideal in a religiously pluralist colonial society inevitably meant the withholding of rights of other faiths and religions.

Lutherans were the most frequently mentioned in the correspondence. Although they were fellow Protestants who shared much in terms of their faith with the Reformed, they were barely tolerated by the Church. The government, however, was prepared to broaden their rights.

While the Church at the Cape explicitly sought to proselytise Lutherans, it was inconceivable that Lutherans could attempt to do the same to Reformed members. The following attests to this situation: In 1733 Classis learnt from Drakensteyn about the presence of a booklet defending Lutheran teaching as the truth as opposed to the Reformed faith. Classis called upon the Cape Town consistory to ensure that it did not disturb the peace between Reformed and Lutheran members, as many Lutherans had been accepted as communicants. Classis advised that the importation of such literature was to be censured, although this was not really possible and even wise as it could affect good relations between the Reformed and Lutherans. Classis appreciated the alertness of Drakensteyn and encouraged the Cape congregations to meet with one another in order to face such challenges more effectively. The Cape Town consistory declared itself willing to take steps to have the government prevent this bad influence. It would rather have catechismal instruction of a high standard so that members could discern heresy. Consistory’s argument was that gentle persuasion of the truth was better than conflict. However, the problem with this booklet was that it was slanderous of the Reformed faith.

If the Council of Seventeen decided to allow the establishment of a Lutheran Church at the Cape, the Church would, for the sake of preventing more irregularities, unrest and deterioration of the Reformed churches, find it necessary to warn that nobody but the truly Reformed should ever be appointed by government as head of the military or as member of council. This would ensure that, as in the case of the fatherland, the distinction between dominant and other churches would be maintained and the former would be guaranteed that it would not be persecuted.

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9 Missive 188, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 55.
would prevent any disorder and ensure the well-being of the Reformed churches. Two churches could furthermore cause a crisis regarding diaconal work among free slaves and those who did not belong to any church, as the Reformed churches would not be able to manage on their own without the voluntary contributions of Lutherans. If a Lutheran congregation were established, Classis had to ensure that a good Dutchman be appointed as pastor and rather than a Dane or any other foreigner.\footnote{Missives 58, 63, 65, 66, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoden I}, 194/5, 206, 209, 211; missive 202, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoden II}, 81.}

The Lutherans at the Cape knew that the Cape government would not support the establishment of a Lutheran church, since the government viewed such a development as harmful to the common good. However, the Lutherans organised voluntary fund raising and other activities to erect a church building. Again Classis was requested to forbid such a development as it would adversely affect civil society. Since the Church supported both Reformed and Lutheran poor, government had also opposed the establishment of a Lutheran congregation. Therefore, it would have not been advisable for the Council of Seventeen to approve it. The Lutherans were not discriminated against in civil life and they could worship in a house when an itinerant pastor visited the Cape, but it would ruin the peace and rest if they organised themselves in a congregation.\footnote{Missives 101, 102, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoden I}, 307-10, 311-12.}

Classis promised to attempt to stop the Lutherans from establishing a congregation by exerting pressure on the Council of Seventeen and the prince (erfstadhouder) of Amsterdam in order to ensure that Protestants from both persuasions would continue to coexist in peace. A positive response was received from those in power indicating that the Lutheran plans would be flouted.\footnote{Missives 234, 240, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoden II}, 141/2, 151.}

Cape Town consistory informed Classis that the Lutherans had built a place of worship without governmental permission. The government reassured consistory that it would be used by itinerant pastors and the government would ensure that this building was not abused and the harmony of this land would not be jeopardised. Classis was requested to help in this respect and take care to prevent this objective of “our Protestant Brothers, with whom we otherwise seek to show our humbleness and brotherly affection”.\footnote{Missive 116, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoden I}, 404/5.}

The High Indian Government regulated the freedom of religion with regard
to Lutherans and according to those orders the Lutherans at the Cape had unlawfully baptised a child. If they were not required to obey the Batavian orders, it would be detrimental to the Reformed church as they would loose members annually and the Lutherans would reap where the Reformed had sown. Classis was petitioned to advocate a return to the legal situation where government favoured the Reformed.\textsuperscript{15} Sons should only be baptised in the church of their fathers and daughters in that of their mothers, with the exception that all could be baptised in the Reformed church if both parents consented. This advice was accepted and government promulgated an order to this effect.\textsuperscript{16} The Lutherans protested that they had less freedom at the Cape than Catholics and Lutherans in the fatherland where women were allowed to voluntarily change their confessional affiliation.\textsuperscript{17} Recourse would have to be taken to the judiciary to protect the Reformed Church from regression. The Lutherans might have denied that civil strife was not promoted by the legalisation, but the Reformed were aware of the contrary.\textsuperscript{18}

While the Church at the Cape called upon Lutherans to obey the orders of their lawful government,\textsuperscript{19} Lutherans appealed to government to guarantee the free practice of religion.\textsuperscript{20}

Subsequently Lutherans were given even more privileges through decisions of the “High Indian Government” (Batavian government) which allowed children from any marriage to profess their faith once they had reached the age of eighteen.\textsuperscript{21} Commenting on this, Ds HR van Lier said that it would probably lead to the irreparable decay of the Reformed religion and therefore he prayed that God in his mercy might lead Classis “through this desert”.\textsuperscript{22}

The Cape Town Consistory held a secret meeting with government officials to counter Lutheran efforts to gain more privileges and to preserve the privileges of “our dominant religion”. If these efforts failed, the ranks of Reformed ministers as officials of the VOC could be jeopardised at the Cape.\textsuperscript{23} As a result thereof, the “rightful privileges” of the Reformed church were advocated by Classis once again

\textsuperscript{15} Missive 143, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 488.
\textsuperscript{16} Appendix A, missive 143, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 490.
\textsuperscript{17} Appendix B to missive 143, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 496.
\textsuperscript{18} Appendix C to missive 143, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 498-504.
\textsuperscript{19} Missive 147, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 513.
\textsuperscript{20} Appendix B, missive 147, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 515.
\textsuperscript{21} Missive 155, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 542.
\textsuperscript{22} Missive 156, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 545.
\textsuperscript{23} Missives 157, 158 and appendix, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 547-54.
at the Council of Seventeen. Lutherans responded by handing a petition to Council. Classis and Synod vowed to take the issue further and consequently appealed to the prince and the States General (Heere Prins Erfstadhouder and the Staten Generael).24

When it became clear that privilege could not be maintained against the Lutheran demand for more rights, unification was considered as an alternative. As the Church at the Cape was losing the struggle to thwart the Lutheran demand to institutionalise, Classis expressed an ecumenical sentiment regarding the Protestant division as it wrote: “Oh, that Ephraim does not envy Judah, and Judah not fear Ephraim, and that God’s church may become one over all the earth”25

When the Company finally gave in to the pressure of the Lutherans and allowed them to form a congregation, the Church at the Cape still could not accept it. The high premium that the Church at the Cape placed upon unity of faith for the “rest and peace” of society is evidenced by a letter which reported that the increase in “deep rest...perfect peace, in the knowledge of the truth”, which had caused the theocratic vision of Psalm 133 to come true at the Cape, was endangered by the prospect of the Lutheran establishment of a congregation.26 The ideal of Constantinian peace of one government, one religion, and one church is clearly in evidence here.

Moravian missionaries were confronted by the very same resistance against any other faith or order than that of the Dutch Reformed Church. This becomes apparent in the first report of the Combined Assembly in 1742. An account is given of George Schmidt who came to the Cape in 1737 from the fatherland with prior knowledge of the Assembly of XVII to allegedly convert the Hottentots. He baptised five of them on the grounds that they had progressed far enough in Christianity (het Christendom). Schmidt claimed that he had informed governor Swellengrebel of his intentions and authorisation had been received to administer the sacrament to converted Hottentots from Count Von Zinzendorf. Governor Swellengrebel subsequently tabled the issue in the council of policy. Before barring Schmidt from continuing his baptising of Hottentots, Council considered it prudent to refer the matter to the three Reformed ministers. Hence, these predicants praised the governor

24 Missive 274, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 237.
25 Missives 234, 240, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 141/2, 151. It is noteworthy that this vision has recently become reality after more than two centuries due to the unification of the major Reformed and Lutheran churches in the Netherlands to form the Dutch Protestant Church.
26 Missive 58, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 193.
and his council for their fatherly care of the churches in this land. They advised that the Hottentots baptised by Schmidt were not to be regarded as baptised.27

Classis confirmed this advice but was unable to speak to the Assembly of XVII on the matter. Since Classis could not find a person in the Netherlands to counter Schmidt, the Cape Town consistory was advised to find somebody in the Cape colony who could minister to both Hottentots and colonists in the Over Berg. Furthermore, consistory was advised to enter into discussion with Schmidt to discover the real motivation for his conduct.28

When, under the pressure of the Church at the Cape Schmidt eventually left, ds Le Sueur reported that he had done so of his own accord as he had had no success in ministry. His specific reason for leaving was unknown, but according to Le Sueur, he probably had other motives for which his missionary work was an alibi.29

Le Sueur was not in a position to comment on motives for clergy being at the Cape. He had to request demission from ministry due to his purchase of a farm from his father-in-law – something which Company employees were not allowed to do. The motives of many other predicants of the VOC were questionable, i.e. financial problems, discontentment with doctrinal discipline in the Netherlands and escape from troublesome wives.30 Among the ranks of sick-comforters, there were some of ill repute and little knowledge.31 Le Sueur’s sinister indictment therefore rather portrays a general suspicion of the motives of religious workers who came to the Cape rather than proving anything concerning Schmidt’s motives, which were, according to all indications, above reproach.

Le Sueur’s explanation for Schmidt’s departure, viz., that he had no success in ministry was equally sinister. His work among the Khoi was indeed well received by the latter. If there were a lack of “success in ministry” it was rather due to the opposition of the Church at the Cape, which rallied the antagonism of both Classis and the Cape government.32 The only reasons officially given for his

28 Missive 199, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 76.
29 Missive 63, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 204.
extradition relate to his non-compliance with Dutch Reformed faith and order.  

Moravian missionaries were only allowed to continue their work towards the end of VOC rule when the attitude of some influential Cape predicants towards the Moravian mission had changed.

The Catholics were never mentioned positively in the correspondence. Catholic worship was so stringently restricted that Catholics hardly featured in correspondence, except for negative references. Catholics were severely repressed, although we read about a governmental appointment of a Catholic which led to protest from the established church.

At the Cape the threat of French Catholic occupation once again brought to the fore feelings of animosity against this foreign power. Referring to the arrival and docking of a large French fleet, the Combined Assembly reported with relief that it had left in peace. No company officers, including ministers of the Word, could leave Cape Town due to fear of an attack. God was to be praised, the report says, that they could still enjoy the “precious rights of the pledge of freedom and religion. God be with us further and keep us like the black of his eyeballs, that we may never become subservient to an anti-Christian papal Babel”.  

The Khoina, contrary to peoples of other religions in Batavia, did not experience opposition from the Cape-Dutch establishment against their religion. The reason for this was that the Church did not regard them as having a religion at all. The first sick comforter, Willem Barentz Wylant, reported in 1655 that the indigenous (Khoina) people were “a really poor and wretched people in body and soul: bereft of all knowledge of God; living like livestock, so that we could not perceive that they possess any manner of religion or that there is anything that they venerate or serve, but, as far as religion is concerned, they do not seem to differ in any way from unintelligent livestock, as they live like beasts, the latter for which they have no use, neither do they sow or plant, ....”

SENIOR PUBLIC POSITIONS

As the Reformed Church in the Netherlands could count upon rulers being of kindred spirit, so the Church at the Cape could also assume that the managerial corps of the Company consisted of loyal Reformed members.

33 Wiersinga, Geschiedenis Van de Zending, 138.
34 Missive 90, 91, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 277,278.
35 Missive 1, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 4.
The established church was privileged in the sense that key political and judicial posts were reserved for its members as they occupied important public positions which enabled the church to exert great influence on civil society. The Church at the Cape expected the government to use its power to safeguard the hegemony of the Reformed faith in Cape society. This meant that the church used government power to ensure that Church members held key public offices and kept others out, and even managed to have an ordinance promulgated to enforce this privilege. In this way, the established church ensured that it retained decisive public influence via the public vocations of its members. Note in this regard, the objections against Lutherans and those professing another faith, occupying positions of power in the council of policy and the council of justice.

As already indicated above, chaplaincy posts (sick comforters and predicants) were reserved for people of undisputed Reformed persuasion. This was also the case regarding schoolmasters. Other senior posts in the Company administration that had no ecclesial or ecclesiastical connotation were also reserved for Reformed membership.

The first commander of the Cape refreshment station, Jan van Riebeek, was an example of this principle. Although he had been in ill standing with the VOC he only faithfully followed the religious policy of the VOC. Hofmeyr regards him as a "responsible and idealistic representative of the VOC". As part of his establishment of a refreshment post which developed into a Dutch colonial settlement, he was the official pioneer and founder of the Reformed faith at the Cape as he acted as representative of the patron. Apart from being loyal to the VOC as patron of the Reformed faith, Hofmeyr asserts that Van Riebeek and his wife were devout Reformed Christians. This view is supported by his regular public declaration of dependence upon God's almighty and compassionate sustenance regarding his fleet and the Cape Colony. He candidly gave God the honour for their

38 George Hofmeyr, "1652. Die Eerste 'Sieckentroosters' of 'Kranckenbesoekers'," 31, views Van Riebeek as the "unofficial" pioneer and founder of the Protestant faith in South Africa. As mandated commander of the VOC, which in turn was the mandated patron of the Reformed faith and church in the Dutch offshore domain of trade, Van Riebeek, in my view, was the official founder patron of the Reformed faith and church at the Cape.
safety and success of the venture. It has to be born in mind that his wife, Maria de la Quellerie, also was the daughter of a Reformed predicant. One will never know whether people like Van Riebeek were favourably disposed towards the Reformed faith and order from inner conviction. The charter of the VOC, however, bound them to play the role of patron.

It was of utmost importance to the Church at the Cape to ensure that the position of political commissioner was filled by one of its flock. These government officials were ex officio members of church councils. Their function was to supervise and assist ecclesiastical bodies to stay in line with the expectations of government. It is in this light that one has to interpret Ds Le Boucq’s objection to the appointment of a political commissioner whom he suspected of harbouring Lutheran sentiments. Hence he lamented such a “scandalous contravention by allowing such people to the consistory of Stellenbosch”. In his struggle for the retention of Reformed privilege regarding senior public appointments, Le Boucq appealed to a number of existing church decrees. He pointed out that they all specified that a political commissioner had to be a person who publicly professed the Reformed faith and not of Lutheran or any other persuasion.

In 1741 when the Cape government issued an order that all Lutherans had to identify themselves for notification of the Assembly of XVII, the Cape Town consistory immediately reacted with suspicion. Classis was requested to establish the reason for such action.

In 1751 by acclamation of the regente (government commissioners) Classis showed support for maintenance of the privilege of the Church to secure membership in senior positions. As Reformed members, Classis said, they chose to reveal and punish injustices while commanding the necessary respect and submission.

Later the Church successfully petitioned to have a government ordinance passed whereby senior government and judicial positions were reserved for

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39 H J M Van der Merwe, Scheepsjournael Ende Dagregister (Pretoria: J L van Schaik, 1958), 58 (lines 1549 & 1555), 50 (line 1569-70), 54 (lines 1711-15), 56 (lines 1772-73), 76 (line 2467), 92 (line 3000), 98 (lines 3157-94), 131 (line 4216).
41 Appendix (a) to missive 19, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 69.
42 Appendix (b) to missive 19, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 69. Compare p.72 pp for the background of this case.
43 Missive 57, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 191.
44 Missive 211, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 97; also see 98.
members of the established church. The Church complained when Lutherans and a Catholic were appointed in such positions. When the Company made concessions for those professing the Lutheran faith, the Church at the Cape insisted that they be restricted with regard to the holding of senior public positions. Cape Town consistory argued that it did not constitute discrimination against Lutherans. They were at least allowed to worship in a house when an itinerant pastor visited the Cape, which was about as much as Reformed Christians could expect under Lutheran rule.45

After 1781, when the Lutherans had finally been allowed to institute a congregation, the Cape Town consistory exerted pressure on the Assembly of Seventeen to adopt a policy whereby only members of the Dutch Reformed Church could qualify for senior public positions.46 Classis and the Synod of North Holland also campaigned at the Holland Chamber of Commerce and the Council of Seventeen on behalf of the Church at the Cape to ensure the protection of the privileged position of the Reformed faith. Hence Classis could report to Consistory that Lutheran attempts to have their people appointed to statutory bodies were thwarted as the appointment of three Lutherans in high official positions had been retracted. Hence, Classis pointed out to the Chamber that the recognition and legalization of a Lutheran congregation at the Cape was causing disunity and unrest as in the case of Batavia. Therefore, Classis warned that if the VOC did not take action, the Lutheran religion would soon “triumph over the otherwise reigning church” at the Cape.47

In 1786 the consistory of the Cape Town congregation reported to Classis that the Lutherans had contravened those orders. Classis then requested consistory to keep a watchful eye to ensure that this prerogative of the Church at the Cape was not violated by the Cape Lutherans. The Cape government, acting on the insistence of Classis, then took a decision to maintain the privileged status of the Reformed religion. This meant the exclusion of Lutherans from the Council of Policy or Council of Justice, except for those who had already occupied such office before the passing of the new ordinance. Although the Church at the Cape campaigned for the retention of its privileges, it did not want the Lutherans to realise that it was the driving force behind the move. Even when the Lutherans had already been excluded

46 See Appendix to missive 273, in Spoelstra, Bouwstofien II, 232.
from serving on the civil council (burgerraad), the Cape Town consistory attempted to convince them that their exclusion was not due to action from the side of the Cape Town consistory, but to an ordinance of the Council of Seventeen! Although Lutherans were allowed in minor councils, their numbers were not to exceed half the total number. Consistory further reported that a vacancy on the Council of Policy was filled by a certain Ronnenkamp, a prominent and influential Lutheran elder who had become secretary of the chamber of orphans (weeskamer) and who advocated the authorisation of a Lutheran congregation. Another Lutheran, a certain Neethling, also held a prominent public position due to certain exceptions made by government. At the same time, a Catholic was appointed as master of equipment, while Reformed members were overlooked despite the fact that qualified people were available. From these instances, Consistory reports, it is clear what “our church” can expect in future unless this development is intentionally opposed. Consistory requested the help of Classis towards achieving this goal. The report concluded with a heartfelt prayer that God may grant the Church at the Cape the rest experienced in the past in order that it function joyfully once again.48 Six months later Consistory reported with misgiving that a second Lutheran had been appointed to the Judicial Council, thus bringing their number to two.49

Classis responded by taking this matter up in the Synod of North Holland and also presenting a memorandum to the Assembly of Seventeen imploring them to rectify this situation as it was causing the unrest as had been foreseen. Furthermore, Classis accused the Cape government of contravening the orders of the Assembly of Seventeen by appointing the Lutherans in the highest councils of policy and justice in the Cape government. Proof of this was that some Consistory members who held public positions at the Cape feared that they would lose their jobs if Consistory criticised government. Cape Town predicants even preferred to move to other congregations to avoid the pending conflict between church and state. Under these circumstances, Classis contended, the Lutheran religion would soon gain the upper hand at the Cape.50

In 1786 Classis advised the consistory of Cape Town regarding the position of the Lutherans. Classis wanted to be informed whenever Lutherans contravened their rights which resulted in prosecution by the Cape government. This would

48 Missive 153, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 536/7.
49 Missive 154, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 538.
50 Appendix, missive 273, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 231-4.
enable Classis to assist in the matter. Classis pointed out that Lutherans were subject to the standing orders of the government in Batavia. Cape Town consistory acted on this advice when it requested Classis to ensure that the limited rights of the Lutherans were not to be extended to the detriment of the Reformed confession.

By the time the VOC was close to its demise (1794), Cape Town Consistory still reported with dismay that the Heeren XVII had retracted the limitations on Lutherans and that a Lutheran served on both the Council of Justice and the Council of Policy. This is clear evidence that the Church at the Cape was still intent on retaining its privileged status and totally unprepared for the dawn of a new dispensation where it was to be stripped of the privileges of only established church.

**Religious Services under Company Patronage**

The Company, as will be seen below, not only controlled the Church, but through the Church religiously controlled all its employees and free burghers at the Cape. In this way the Church was used by the Company to contribute towards a stable and orderly society. This arrangement, however, suited the Church. The theocratic vision of the Church was that all people within the political domain of the Company be converted to “the true religion” and Church. Company control of attendance of church services placed the Church in a privileged position as no other confessional persuasion was allowed to hold public worship services – not even to mention being sponsored by the Company to do so.

Preachers and sick comforters were expected to minister to all Company employees, whether or not they were confessing members of the Dutch Reformed Church. Chaplains seemingly took advantage of the long journeys at sea and catechised many VOC employees, afforded them the opportunity to profess the Reformed faith and hence become members of the Church. The instructions for preachers and sick comforters stipulated that on Sunday mornings and afternoons “admonitions/lessons” (*vermaninge*), other “Christian exercises” (*Christelycke oeffeninge*) and prayers were to be conducted. Public prayers were also to be said in the mornings and the evenings and had to be attended by everybody, especially

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53 Missive 166, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 582.
those in charge of others unless they were ill or had another good excuse.\textsuperscript{55}

The sick comforter Willem Wylant, who arrived at the Cape with Van Riebeek, reported on his departure (20 April 1655) on the manner of propagation and maintenance of "the true religion". God is to be thanked, he wrote, because matters are still "in good order" as the people (\textit{volck}) are being held to the religion as ordered by the commander, so that nobody may exclude him or herself – notwithstanding his or her religious convictions (\textit{gevoelen}) – without consent or they would be punished.\textsuperscript{56} The importance of regular "religious exercises" was underscored by the strict way in which first commander of the Cape station, Jan van Riebeek, dealt with those who were absent from Sunday services. During the first spring when some people were not present at "religious exercises", the commander issued an order regulating church attendance. Hence, nobody could absent him or herself from services "without consent or punishment". Punishment was harsh: for a first transgression wine rations were forfeited for a week; a months salary was lost in the case of a second absenteeism; and for a third consecutive absenteeism the culprit could be punished by having to work "in the chain" of public works for a year without any salary.\textsuperscript{57}

The way in which the Heidelberg Catechism functioned is clear proof of the way in which the Reformed faith was privileged. The Genevan Psalter was also inherently part of this Church and its tradition. Hence, Wylant reported that every evening after supper he led the evening prayer followed by the singing of a verse or two from the Genevan Psalter. On Sundays he publicly read a sermon – alternately based on a gospel reading and a commentary from Ursinus or Lansberghius on the Heidelberg Catechism. In the latter case he let the young people recite answers to the questions of the Catechism and provide some scriptural references to prove the answers.\textsuperscript{58} It can be assumed that all young people were included, whether or not they were Reformed by virtue of infant baptism.

From early on the Dutch Reformed Church was also privileged concerning the administering of the sacraments. Even before ordained predicants were placed at the Cape by the Company, itinerant predicants aboard Company ships\textsuperscript{59} and in

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{55} Instruction no. 3 for predicants and sick-comforters, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 546&547.
\textsuperscript{56} Missive 1, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 3.
\textsuperscript{57} Hofmeyr, "1652. Met Preekbundel en Plakkaat," 31.
\textsuperscript{58} Missive 1, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 3.
\textsuperscript{59} There was a predicant on the ship on which Van Riebeek's relief, commander Zacharyas Wagenaer, arrived. (Missive 8, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 24.)
\end{footnotesize}
Company employ regularly visited the Cape. They conducted worship services, preached and administered the sacraments. In the Wylant report we read that his son was the first Christian born in the Fort to be baptised by an itinerant preacher.\textsuperscript{60} Wylant also reported that Van Riebeek requested itinerant ds Venderius to serve Holy Communion.\textsuperscript{61}

The Free Burgers and their slaves automatically became objects of the ministry of the chaplaincy when the Company allowed the Free Burghers to settle at the Cape. This is attested to by sick comforter Pieter van der Stael’s report of 9 April 1658 on the marriages of two colonists (\textit{vrijburgers}).\textsuperscript{62} The chaplaincy was also extended to civil society outside of the direct employ of the Company, since the Company had the sovereignty of a state and the Church had the privilege of a state-church.

**Employment of Chaplains and Provision of Church Facilities**

The Church at the Cape held the Company responsible for the appointment of chaplains and teachers and provision of church and educational facilities. Government had to ensure that the chronic demand for ministers was met and Classis had to recruit ministers who were competent and of good conduct.\textsuperscript{63}

However, this is not unlike the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands that glibly accepted state patronage and related privileges once the Netherlands had claimed their independence from the Spanish crown. These included the privilege of the use of most church buildings and some funding.\textsuperscript{64}

The Church in the Netherlands had, however, always affirmed the responsibility of local congregations to sustain their preachers. The Synod of Emden held in 1571 affirmed the importance of church members to support church ministers according to their need.\textsuperscript{65} This principle was reiterated by the first national synod held at Dordrecht in 1578\textsuperscript{66}; the second national synod held at Middelburg in 1581\textsuperscript{67} and the third held at 'S Hage in 1591. The congregations were held

\textsuperscript{60} Missive 1, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 5.
\textsuperscript{61} Missive 2, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 9.
\textsuperscript{62} Missive 3, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 11.
\textsuperscript{63} Missive 76, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 239; missive 177, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 31.
\textsuperscript{64} Berkhof, \textit{Geschiedenis der Kerk}, 201.
\textsuperscript{65} Biesterveld, \textit{Kerkelijk Handboekje}, 43.
\textsuperscript{66} Biesterveld, \textit{Kerkelijk Handboekje}, 98.
\textsuperscript{67} Biesterveld, \textit{Kerkelijk Handboekje}, 144.
responsible for proper maintenance\textsuperscript{68}. A definitive fourth synod held at Dordrecht in 1618-9 held consistory, as representative of the congregation, responsible for ministers by providing them with proper maintenance.\textsuperscript{69} The Church expected the States General, as patron of the church, to ensure that the churches in the different provinces remunerated their ministers of religion properly.\textsuperscript{70}

Ds Le Boucq, who ironically, later appealed to the Church Order of Dordrecht to defend his case\textsuperscript{71}, was appointed by the Company as minister of the Drakensteyn congregation. He never queried the fact that he was remunerated as Company official, but also requested the governor and Council (if not setting them an ultimatum) to provide a parsonage, church building and school before he would comply with the Company order to serve at Drakensteyn in “the maintenance of the Reformed religion”.\textsuperscript{72} Le Boucq affirmed the privileged status of the Church at the Cape when he later went so far as to lodge a complaint with government regarding the lack of church and school amenities, the absence of a proper manse, a graveyard and sustenance for the “honorary preachers”. He stressed that it was general knowledge that it was “the custom of well ordered peoples and nations like that of the honorary Lords Major [Council of Seventeen]” to supply the same. He stated that the “honorary Company” also complied with this rule in all of its other territories.\textsuperscript{73} When he failed to achieve the necessary results with the Cape government, Le Boucq appealed to the “Honorary Lords Governors” (Ed. Heeren Bewindhebberen – the Council of Seventeen) to consider the circumstances of the congregation where they controlled the placement, remuneration and other privileges of predicants.\textsuperscript{74}

Classis, in agreement with Le Boucq that governmental patronage implied all these obligations, wrote to him that it had reported its dissatisfaction regarding the absence of amenities at Drakensteyn to the Directors of the Company.\textsuperscript{75}

On 17 December 1713 Classis reported that it had appealed to the Assembly of Seventeen and that through the grace of God, they had granted Drakensteyn a minister who could speak both French and Dutch. Classis had, however, not been

\textsuperscript{68} Biesterveld, \textit{Kerklijk Handboekje}, 194.
\textsuperscript{69} Biesterveld, \textit{Kerklijk Handboekje}, 229.
\textsuperscript{70} Biesterveld, \textit{Kerklijk Handboekje}, 289-90.
\textsuperscript{71} Appendix to missive 19, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 109.
\textsuperscript{72} Missive 15, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 39-41.
\textsuperscript{73} Appendix to missive 19, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 68.
\textsuperscript{74} Appendix to missive 19, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 109.
\textsuperscript{75} Missives 172, 173, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 17,18.
notified with regard to the manse and church building. They hoped that these things, which they conceded were the divine right of the congregation, would also be granted.  

**CHURCH, STATE AND PUBLIC SERVICES**

Before considering education and welfare as joint public services of state and the Church, the underlying general rationale behind church involvement in the public sphere as developed by Calvin and practiced in Geneva must be explored.

Calvin taught that although the spheres of church and government should not be confused, they ultimately served the same purpose. Hence the relationship between church and state in Geneva was an intimate one where, on the one hand, the church expected the state to co-operate in carrying out its resolutions, and on the other, the church undertook to assist the state in performing its tasks. This led to church-state relations that were so intimate that the distinction between the two was often difficult to tell.  

Calvinism, more so than Lutheranism, dealt with social issues of the time. These included the upliftment of the proletariat – the so-called third estate – and poverty. This stemmed from Calvin’s emphasis on predestination and sanctification which was associated with his deep awareness of the glory and honour of God. God, according to Calvin, is glorified when God’s grace is accepted in faith. God is to be glorified as both grace and faith are gifts of God. God’s glory is also served in sanctification as people of faith serve God in their respective vocations and in all other spheres of life according to God’s holy will as reflected in God’s law.

In the Netherlands and at the Cape, education and social welfare were singled out as the public terrains in which the Church had an inalienable right to be directly involved with. Hence, we consider these two public terrains next.

**Education**

According to Calvin the role of the church in public life included the responsibility

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76 Missives 177, 179, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 31, 34, 35.
of taking care of the education of young people.80

His own life was an example of learning.81 Learning, education and science were an integral part of Calvin’s life and played a major role in his theology. The basic motivation for the emphasis on literacy stemmed from Calvin’s insistence that believers should, on a daily basis, be able to read the Bible in their own language. The father, as priest of his house, was obliged to read from the Bible after each meal. This emphasis on the right of all believers to read the Bible was shared by other reformers and resulted in a drive towards the promotion of literacy in Protestant domains.82

In 1536 he was accepted in Geneva and put his theocratic ideal for the city into practise. Elevating education to the necessary level was part of this vision.83 Catechism formed an integral part of education.84

In the Netherlands the emphasis on education as a responsibility shared by church and government formed part of early church orders.85

The 1574 “particular” (as distinguished from the “national”) synod of Dordrecht bears evidence that education was viewed as part and parcel of the life and work of the church in the Netherlands. This responsibility was shared with the

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81 He received his first education children of nobility. In his training as priest he learned Latin from the famed classicist Cordier. Shortly afterwards John was transferred to the notorious college of Montaigu in Paris, where after five years at age nineteen he received his doctorate in divinity. Not only did Erasmus also study at Montaigu, but Calvin also became a great admirer of this famous humanist. After this he studied law at the university of Orleans where the famous jurist Pierre d’Etoile formed Calvin’s logical reasoning ability. It is here that he was exposed to the teachings of Luther and where he initially used all his power of persuasion to defend Catholic teaching against Luther’s ideas. At age 22 his first book was published. It was a dissertation on the first century philosopher Seneca. After his sudden conversion to Protestantism, Calvin in 1533 helped his friend, Nicholas Cop, to write his inaugural speech as rector of this new university college, which was started under the patronage of Protestant Margaret of Valois, sister of King France I. In this speech it was stressed that all sciences of the world, however useful they may be, are bound to recede into oblivion when they are not based on a biblical philosophy of life. Such a philosophy rests on the truth of Scripture which in essence declares that only those who trust God’s grace and not meritorious works can be assured of being children of God (Berkhof, Geschiedenis der Kerk, 173-74.).
82 De Groot, Johannes Calvyn: Getuie Vir Jesus Teen Wil en Dank (1509-1564), 49&50.
83 His academy formed the link between gymnasium and faculty of theology and was meant to become the instrument to cultivate a pious, yet active generation. Humanist forms were filled with a strict theocratic content. This school gained international reputation and produced leaders of the Calvinist reformation across Europe and in the Netherlands (Berkhof, Geschiedenis der Kerk, 175.).
84 Berkhof, Geschiedenis der Kerk, 168. Calvin and Farel’s church order, which they proposed, to the city council of Geneva, also included legislation on a prescribed catechism.
85 As early as the 1568 articles of Wezel, it becomes clear that the schoolmaster is viewed as one of the “public offices” like that of the Minister or Pastor, the Preacher (Leeraar), the Elder and the Deacon. Like the others, the schoolmaster is also permanently in service of the church and may not leave it without the consent of Classis or Synod (Biesterveld, Kerkelijk Handboekje, 23.).
magistrates.  

At the 1578 national synod of Dordrecht the section on schools was placed between the different councils/assemblies of the church and teachings regarding the sacraments and ceremonies. Schools were to be established everywhere and children were not only to be taught speech and art, but especially the Christian catechism and “being led towards sermons”. Congregations were required to identify prospective preachers and find government or private persons to sponsor education in one of the larger schools.

From the aforementioned, it is clear that schools in the Netherlands focused on the teaching of the confession and preparation to listen to sermons or preach.

In the church order of the ensuing national synod of ’S Hage in 1586 and that of the authoritative synod of Dordrecht held from 1618-9 it is significant that schoolmasters were given a standing between professors of theology and elders! Dordrecht made the signing of the creeds compulsory for schoolmasters. These church orders stipulated that consistories were to take responsibility for the appointment of good schoolmasters who could teach children to read, write, speak and be versed in the liberal arts, as well as be trained in godliness and the catechism. Synod further requested the States General to adopt an order for both high (hoghe) as well as “trivial” (triviale) schools to root out the unwholesome influences and abuses that proliferated in church and country in the absence of a proper general school order. With the advice of learned men from the Institution of the Youth, the government was to rectify and standardise the shortcomings in education. This was especially with regard to the instruction of grammar, language and rhetoric.

Apart from the abovementioned paragraph in the church order the synod of ’S Hage also adopted other school orders. Of interest are the paragraphs stating that

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86 It is interesting to note that the subsection dealing with schools is placed right in the centre of the larger section that deals with the offices of the church. It stipulates that classes were to ascertain where schools had to be established. A stipend was to be paid by the magistrate. Teachers were to underwrite confessions and submit themselves to church discipline. They were to teach the Catechism and “other things that were of use to the youth.” If local government was not willing to co-operate, the ministers of the church would have to appeal to the “high government” (Biesterveld, *Kerklijk Handboekje*, 68-9.)

87 This church order continues with the role of congregations to prepare theological students for ministry. It also sets the qualifications for professors of theology and asserts their right to sit on classes and synods when these assemble close to the universities where these professors are teaching (Biesterveld, *Kerklijk Handboekje*, 110-1.)


"[n]obody will establish any school by himself except with the prior discernment of consistory or classis, and with consent of the local magistrate". The purpose of schools and study served to benefit "the churches and republic".\textsuperscript{90}

Developments in Batavia, the main centre of the VOC in the East Indies, mainly reflected those of the fatherland.

School masters, although not regarded as ecclesiastical officers, are dealt with in the same way as ecclesiastical officers. The church order of Batavia (1624) had a first section on the "ministries" of which there were four: ministers of the Word, the Doctors, the Elders and the Deacons. However, after having dealt with the ministers of the Word, it dedicated a paragraph to the schoolmasters before returning to the ecclesiastical offices of elders and deacons.\textsuperscript{91}

School masters, like ministers of the Word and sick comforters, were expected to underwrite the three formularies of faith as endorsed by the synod of Dordrecht in 1619. If they did not comply, they were to be summarily dismissed.\textsuperscript{92} One has to bear in mind that they performed the task of catechism, which should resort under the tasks of predicant and elder.

Consistories had to ensure that good schoolmasters were appointed who did not only teach the children to read, write and calculate, but also teach them piety and good morals – "to be well behaved and honest in habit" – and the Catechism. The Catechism, a later explanatory note adds, is not only to be taught from the outside. Schoolmasters are to "catechise" the children in such a way that they are made aware, as far as possible, of the right meaning of the five chapters of the Christian religion (Canons of Dordrecht). Moreover, they had to teach children to sing psalms and say the common prayers.\textsuperscript{93}

In order of importance, school masters primarily had to impress the fear of the Lord upon "the immature youth"; teach them the fundamentals of the Christian religion; teach them to pray and sing; attend church with them and catechise them.

\textsuperscript{90} Schools will also be under the joint supervision of both minor ecclesial assemblies and magistrates. Further on it describes how schoolmasters are to start the religious instruction of the little children by treating the main articles of our salvation, which include the Ten Commandments, the articles of the Christian faith, the "Our Father" and other prayers. Later on children should learn to memorise the Catechism for reciting it in school and church, as well as the singing of various psalms for certain times of the day and week. Lastly, those young ones that have advanced in "intellect and science" should be taught to read a gospel or an epistle of the apostles. Concerning other books, the schoolmasters are to apply censure to ensure that children do not read any superstitious or scandalous books, but only those that are edifying (Biesterveld, \textit{Kerklijk Handboekje}, 221-4.).

\textsuperscript{91} Article 11, Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstof en II, 563}.

\textsuperscript{92} Church Order of Batavia, 1643, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstof en II}, 589.

\textsuperscript{93} Church Order of Batavia, 1624, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstof en II}, 563, 568, 572-3.
Secondly, school masters were to teach children, amongst others virtues, to obey their parents, governments and masters. Thirdly, school masters were to teach children to read, write and calculate. Fourthly, school masters were to teach them all kinds of good morals and manners and see to it that Dutch was the only language used at school.94

Families with children had to ensure that their children attended school in order to learn to read and write and be taught Christian virtues.95

With regard to heathen children, the 1624 church order ruled that school masters, not only had to teach Dutch children, but Malay children as well. The latter were taught to memorise the Catechism and prayers in their native language even though they were taught to read Dutch and instructed through medium of Dutch. Dutch children, however, were only instructed in Dutch as they learned enough Malay during their daily social contacts.96

In the “inland” schools, Christian religion was to be taught together with reading and writing. Bible reading and Psalm singing were done in Portuguese. In the Bandanese quarter, it was done in Malay. In the Malabar quarter, it was taught in Portuguese, Bengal or Malabar, depending on the need. After religious education of the healthy, the school master had to visit sick slaves and teach them according to their ability. Other slaves “were also to be taught diligently”.97

The funding of schools was also dealt with. Qualified people were required to contribute financially for education. It was suggested that a lottery be instituted for this purpose! The church and government commissioned a person to collect money from qualified people. The church and rulers in the Netherlands were requested to approach particular rich people to contribute towards the establishment

94 Church Order of Batavia, 1643, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 595. The 1624 church order also deals with the matter of an office that oversees education in Batavia. The assembly later approved the General’s motion that a certain D. Michiel Seroyen be appointed as paramount regent (opperregents) over the schools and the women’s quarters (vrouwenhuys) (Church Order of Batavia, 1643, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 570.). From both the side of the church and political society there should be appointed curators that supervise the governance of the paramount regent and his subordinates ( Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 572.). The 1643 church order of Batavia states that schoolmasters could only allow for more playtime with the consent of the chairman of consistory. All the schools in the churches are moreover to come together every six months to be examined in the presence of the deputy of the High Government and the consistory, during which those that can write will show their writing (Church Order of Batavia, 1643, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 595.).
95 Church Order of Batavia, 1624, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 575. Parents that complain about their children having to collect wood in the bush, should be encouraged to rather send their children to school regularly by punishing those children who do not attend regularly by withholding their ration of rice.
96 Church Order of Batavia, 1624, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 573.
97 Church Order of Batavia, 1643, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 596.
of church and school.\textsuperscript{98}

The terrains of education and diaconate converged in the case of poor children. The 1624 church order of Batavia stipulated that amongst others things, the \textit{praeses} (chairman) had to remind consistory to ensure that there were schools for the poor.\textsuperscript{99} The 1643 version has a whole section on school masters in the orphanage.\textsuperscript{100}

Education at the Cape followed the broad contours of that in the fatherland and Batavia. Hence, the Church at the Cape also assumed co-responsibility for education with the state for all people of the colony, albeit that there was only one recorded attempt to extend education to the Khoena, and that by Willem Wylant, the first sick comforter. A school for slaves of all ages was started in 1658. The sick comforter Pieter van der Stael was the first teacher.\textsuperscript{101} As in the fatherland and Batavia, education and poverty relief went hand in hand. At the Cape, children of the poor, slaves and orphans who were unable to pay for school had to be assisted. It is noteworthy that as late as 1775 the Cape Town congregational resolution book mentions “the school of this diaconate”.\textsuperscript{102} Prayers were said at schools for slaves.\textsuperscript{103}

The first “public school” at the Cape, which mainly educated the children of colonists, was started in 1663. Sick-comforter Ernestus Back was the first teacher. A permanent schoolmaster succeeded him.\textsuperscript{104}

Religious instruction and general literacy were priorities in the educational programme. Religious education was unabashedly confessional in nature as took the form of the Heidelberg Catechism.\textsuperscript{105}

The close connections between secular and religious education, Church, state and schools are reflected in many reports. In the report of the Cape Town Consistory (9 April 1703) “the state of the church in this extreme corner of Africa” was discussed which indicated a confirmation of the commitment of the Church at the Cape to general education and in particular to ensure that catechism formed an integral part thereof. The general and religious education of slaves took place at

\textsuperscript{98} Church Order of Batavia, 1624, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 573.
\textsuperscript{99} Church Order of Batavia, 1624, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 564.
\textsuperscript{100} Church Order of Batavia, 1643, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 595.
\textsuperscript{101} Hofmeyr, "1652. Die Eerste 'Sieckentroosters' of 'Kranckenbesoekers'," 42.
\textsuperscript{102} Extracts from minute books: Cape Town consistory, 4 September 1775, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 312.
\textsuperscript{103} Missive 13, 14, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 35,37.
\textsuperscript{104} Hofmeyr, "1652. Die Eerste 'Sieckentroosters' of 'Kranckenbesoekers'," 42.
schools for Company slaves. Professing the faith formed part of this commitment.\textsuperscript{106}

Ds Kalden reported in April 1706 on the institution of “public catechism” alongside “private catechism” in Cape Town. This meant that on Wednesdays, when the church bell rang, school masters had to bring all their school children to church for prayer, hymn singing and to be taught the principles of the “teachings of truth”. These sessions were even attended by elderly people. This prompted ds Kalden to start special catechism for the elderly.\textsuperscript{107}

Church and school, sick comforter and school master, were also classified together in the 1708 report of Cape Town consistory. The suggestion was made that sick comforter Hendrik Bosman of Stellenbosch be appointed as Dutch reader and schoolmaster, as he was of irreproachable character and conduct. As motivation for this proposal the axiom “well run schools form the basis of a good republic” was invoked. Bosman had to be relieved of his secretarial duties of the country court (\textit{heemraad}) since that was a civil duty incompatible with his ecclesiastical (read: educational) duties. However, being relieved of a “civil duty” to perform an “ecclesiastical duty” did not mean that he left the employ of the Company. Hence, Bosman was prohibited from earning income for himself by providing lodging for passers-by as that was not what he had been appointed for by the Company.\textsuperscript{108}

In 1714 Governor De Chavonne issued an “ordinance of school ordering” to direct school masters in running schools.\textsuperscript{109} The official control of Government over education was again asserted when the Council of Policy promulgated new standing orders for \textit{scholarches} (school masters) in 1782. The responsibilities, remuneration and the way in which schoolmasters were to organise schools were stipulated.\textsuperscript{110} These government actions, however, did not diminish church involvement in education. The request by Cape Town consistory to the Classis in 1734 to recruit a sick comforter who could minister in both church and school is evidence thereof.\textsuperscript{111} Subsequently, Classis proposed a sick comforter to the governors for approval and appointment.\textsuperscript{112} Consistory later acknowledged the incumbent’s growth “in the school of Christ”.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{106} Missives 13, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 35.
\textsuperscript{107} Missive 14, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 37,38.
\textsuperscript{108} Appendix to missive 19, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 69.
\textsuperscript{109} Hofmeyr, “1652. Die Eerste ‘Sieckentroosters’ of ‘Kranckenbesoekers’,” 42.
\textsuperscript{110} Hofmeyr, “1652. Die Eerste ‘Sieckentroosters’ of ‘Kranckenbesoekers’,” 42.
\textsuperscript{111} Missive 48, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 175.
\textsuperscript{112} Missive 190, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 58.
\textsuperscript{113} Missive 49, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 177.
An inseparable relationship between education and faith, schools and Church was acknowledged by visiting VOC governor, General Gustaf von Imhoff in 1743. He reported on the deplorable church and school situation in the interior. This led to the institution by the state of the congregations of Roodezand and Zwartland as well as the appointment of sick comforters and school masters.\textsuperscript{114}

The permission which the VOC rulers granted Moravian missionary George Schmidt to work as school master among the Khoina and his subsequent expulsion even more dramatically demonstrated how closely education was related to church, state and civil society – both colonial and indigenous.

Books and the availability thereof formed an important part of education. As a result the Church made its opinion on this matter known. The 1618-19 synod of Dordrecht requested the States General to set in place an order for the publication of books in order to censure harmful “impertinent” books which had done much harm and created unrest in the Netherlands and the churches there.\textsuperscript{115} The availability of church approved books was also an important matter for the Church at the Cape. In 1764 Cape Town Consistory was involved in the establishment of a public library. One of the Cape Town preachers was designated to act as librarian. Consistory requested the Company to help with the transport of the books from the Netherlands to the Cape,\textsuperscript{116} indicating the co-responsibility of government for education.

In 1769 Classis commended the desire and love for education at Drakensteyn. Classis expressed its heartfelt desire that the Lord enhance this virtue in order that both knowledge and true sanctification may abound.\textsuperscript{117} Four years later, however, four members of that congregation, when censured for objecting to the instalment of an elder of questionable conduct, lamented the shocking lack of knowledge in their “colony”. They described it as worse than anywhere else. This situation, they argued, justified the establishment of a proper school. By “knowledge” they referred to knowledge of the principles of church polity and church order.\textsuperscript{118}

The responsibility that the Church at the Cape took for education in

\textsuperscript{114} Hofmeyr, "1652. Die Eerste ‘Sieckentroosters’ of ‘Kranckenbesockers’," 42.
\textsuperscript{115} Biesterveld, Kerkelijk Handboekje, 287.
\textsuperscript{116} Extracts from minute books: Cape Town consistory, 7 January 1765, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 306.
\textsuperscript{117} Missive 238, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 147; Great Britain’s declared war in 1781 against “our Republic” and caused many women and children to flee into the interior (— telling of things to come) (Missive 139, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 474.)
\textsuperscript{118} Missive 114, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 400.
conjunction with the Classis was again reflected in 1790 when the Cape Town consistory requested Classis to send both a minister of the Word and teachers to Graaff Reinet. It also reveals that the Church regarded education as inherently religious. The following remark underscores the fact that teaching and religious instruction were seen to be two sides of the same coin: "...however, teachers that can properly lead them in the fear of the Lord are lacking". Classis responded to this by promising to recruit teachers who would promote the Reformed religion.

The Cape Town Consistory praised Classis for its concern regarding education, especially in the light of the neglect thereof at the Cape. Consistory affirmed that for children to be useful to country and church it was necessary that they were taught basic principles. Hence, Consistory expressed the wish that education in the Cape would serve to identify and distinguish children by their Christian names and knowledge of the basic truths from the neighbouring heathen.

The Cape Town Consistory report of 1791 gives an indication of the constitution of a supervisory body of schools for the whole Cape Colony. The co-responsibility of state and Church was clear. This body consisted of the second in command of government, three preachers and a civilian elder appointed by government. This body, it is reported, yielded to a petition by influential Capetonians to promote a school in which Latin and French would be taught and which would prepare the young for secondary education in the Netherlands. Classis was requested to promote this plan. The main aim was to prepare the young for ecclesiastical ministry. Classis gladly complied with this request. It is noteworthy that neither the supervising body, Consistory nor Classis anticipated the British annexation of the Cape four years later nor that English was an important language to teach at the Cape.

In short: Although schools were "state schools", the Church influenced the curriculum and the selection of teachers. Schools in the interior were led by private school masters that were supervised by consistories. In general, the Church was a major sponsor of education.

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119 Missive 162, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen 1, 569.
121 Missive 163, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen 1, 571.
123 Missive 277, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 244.
125 Hofmeyr, "1652. Die Eerste 'Sieckentroosters' of 'Kranckenbesoekers'," 42.
126 Anne-Marie Bergh, "Jacobus Abraham de Mist and Marc-Antoine Jullien: a comparison of
Diaconate as public welfare

Poverty relief

According to Calvin the church had a diaconal responsibility towards the poor and needy, the old and infirm, widows and orphans, exiles and refugees. They were to be cared for by the church. The state, however, also had a responsibility in this regard. It had to ensure that the rights of the poor and afflicted were taken care of. It had to ensure that wealth was distributed justly within a system where there was scope both for individual initiative as well as state intervention and control through taxation that favoured social victims and the poor. 127

Calvin re-introduced the office of deacon as a permanent and public office in church.128 Hence the Belgic Confession professed that the spiritual governance of the church included deacons who would help and console the poor according to their needs. Together with ministers of the Word and the elders, they formed the consistory through which the congregation was governed.129 The diaconate therefore received the status of belonging to the core of a congregation.130

The 1568 Dutch Reformed Articles of Wezel emulated the example of Calvin in his special concern for the poor and their cause. The Articles distinguished between the advocacy and charity of deacons for the poor on the one hand and those who cared for the sick, injured, incarcerated, sojourners, immigrants and aliens who shared the faith. Hospitality had to be shown to the latter. Deacons were to serve the cause of social justice by informing consistory about widows and orphans who were treated violently or unjustly. Consistory in turn has to champion their cause with government, who in turn had to defend their rights and ensure that justice was done.131

The 1574 church order of Dordrecht took the relationship between the diaconate and the role of the state a step further. It dealt with a situation where the magistrate was involved in the care of the needy. In such a case, consistory chose double the needed number of deacons needed and after approval by the congregation educational ideas at the beginning of the nineteenth century” (English), Educare (Pretoria, South Africa) 27, no. 1 & 2 (1998): 42.
128 Institutes Book IV, Chap III, par 9
129 Institutes Book IV, Chap III
131 Biesterveld, Kerklijk Handboekje, 21-2.
the names were submitted to government for final selection.\textsuperscript{132}

Although the 1624 church order of Batavia dealt with deacons and their work in purely ecclesiastical fashion,\textsuperscript{133} care of the poor was another important area of cooperation between the Church at the Cape and the Cape Government. One of the first things that Reformed believers did on arrival at the Cape was to collect and pay their financial contributions for diaconal services to the Assembly of Seventeen and the Classis of Amsterdam. The latter returned the payment with the instruction to keep it in trust for local application. Hence, a fund was started for the poor to and the public could voluntarily contribute during church services, by bequests or placement in offertory boxes located in different public places.\textsuperscript{134} From the correspondence, we learn that Commander Wagenaer bequeathed an amount to the diaconate to take care of needy free burghers.\textsuperscript{135}

The diaconate fulfilled the function of both ministry of public welfare and juvenile courts.\textsuperscript{136} In the correspondence, we have the example of the consistory acting as a family court when a resolution was taken in 1669 that the children of Eva, Khoina wife of colonist Pieter van Meerhof, were placed under the legal care of the diaconate due to the impious and licentious life of Eva. Another Khoina child was freed from the sand as he was about to be buried alive with his mother and entrusted to a colonist who had voluntarily requested to care for the child. Consistory set the conditions under which this child was to be raised, i.e. to the best of his ability, in a Christian and virtuous manner and that responsibility had to be taken for the education of the child and marriage at a later stage. In the event of the adoptive parents failing to meet these requirements, the child would be placed under the care of the diaconate.\textsuperscript{137}

At a meeting held in 1710 under the guidance of governor Joan van Hoorn and in consultation with Di J Marens and J G D'Ailly, the following was reported: the three congregations in existence at the time had collected money for “these Reformed churches and the poor”. This fund was administrated by ordinance of the governor. In due time the governor and his council, as heads of the citizenry at the

\textsuperscript{132} Biesterveld, \textit{Kerklijk Handboekje}, 71.
\textsuperscript{133} Church Order of Batavia, 1624, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 563.
\textsuperscript{134} Nieuwoudt, "Diakonie en Diakonaat," 36.
\textsuperscript{135} Extracts from minute books: Cape Town consistory, 18 July 1669, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 259.
\textsuperscript{136} Nieuwoudt, "Diakonie en Diakonaat," 36.
\textsuperscript{137} Extracts from minute books: Cape Town consistory, 1 March 1669, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 259.
Cape “by virtue of the ever wise authority of our Lords Master” (*Heeren Meesters* – referring to the Council of Seventeen) were to spend and distribute these funds. The governor and his council had also contributed to these funds. “The expectation is that these funds, collected in the fatherland, as well as by the ministers and citizenry of the Cape, as a charity and work of God (*charitaat en Godswerk*) will, with God’s blessing, serve towards the building up and the welfare of this expanded colony”.

It was because of the diaconate that the Church at the Cape argued most strongly against allowing the Lutherans to institute a congregation. Another state recognised church would jeopardise the access of the Church at the Cape to charity money. The Cape congregations would not manage to meet obligations towards freed slaves and others without the voluntary contributions of Lutherans. If Lutheran husbands were allowed to transfer the membership of their wives and children to the Lutheran church, it would harm the Reformed churches and weaken the offerings available for helping the poor.

Soon after the Lutherans were granted permission to institutionalise, they expressed the wish to participate as a congregation in the existing diaconal work. This was, however, strongly opposed by the Church at the Cape. They were displeased that they had to care for all the poor and needy, including Lutherans, while the Lutherans were earning interest on their offerings. The establishment of a Lutheran congregation was viewed as a schism and therefore the Church at the Cape was negatively inclined towards them. Furthermore, the Church at the Cape argued that the amount spent on helping needy Lutherans was much more than that donated by Lutherans. Cape-Dutch Christendom could not accommodate more than one church as that would mean the disintegration of public welfare.

However, the Church at the Cape was left without much of an option other than to adapt to the fact that Lutherans were allowed to institutionalise a congregation. This is reflected in an agreement that was reached with the Lutherans allowing them to take care of their own poor. This agreement was subsequently ratified by the government.

As has been stated, diaconal work was an ecclesiastical structure par

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excellence in the sense that it was a joint venture between church and state. Therefore, the reaction against Lutheran insistence to institutionalise and participate in diaconal work is understandable. Apart from the practical reasons given, it would mean that the Lutherans were, in effect, also granted established status, which jeopardised the Dutch Reformed theocratic ideal that had hitherto been attained in many respects.

Family life and a healthy society

The church order that Calvin and Farel proposed for a Reformed Geneva prescribed new marriage legislation.\(^{143}\)

In the Netherlands, the state church took co-responsibility with the state for the promotion of family life. The 1586 synod of 'S Hage dealt with a specific question concerning a woman and her child who were taken away from her husband by Anabaptists. The Synod resolved that the matter had to be reported to the magistrates to prevent further problems.\(^{144}\) The 1618-19 synod of Dordrecht requested the States General, with the help of church representatives, to draw up a general marriage ordinance for the whole of the United Netherlands.\(^{145}\)

At the Cape, the permission granted by the VOC to Lutherans to institute a congregation raised another concern for the Church. It was perceived that more than one church would have a detrimental effect on marriage and family life at the Cape. Hitherto the status of privileged and only instituted church at the Cape had contributed to the stability of marriage and family life as Lutherans used to join the Reformed church when marrying a Reformed member. Official status granted to the Lutherans was expected to cause Lutheran spouses to opt for the retention of their confessional status. To aggravate the situation, it was pointed out that the majority of people in the Cape congregations were married couples of which the husband was formerly of Lutheran persuasion. Hence, the Cape Town consistory requested Classis to advocate their opposition to the Lutheran quest for state recognition. If Classis failed, consistory argued, it would cause turmoil in many a household.\(^{146}\) The prevailing rest and peace would subsequently yield to hatred, envy and bitterness, as families would be divided along ecclesiastical lines.\(^{147}\)

\(^{143}\) Berkhof, *Geschiedenis der Kerk*, 168.  
\(^{144}\) Biesterveld, *Kerkelijk Handboekje*, 219.  
\(^{145}\) Biesterveld, *Kerkelijk Handboekje*, 287.  
\(^{146}\) Missives 87, 91, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 271, 278.  
Shortly before the Cape Lutherans received their first pastor, the Cape Town consistory requested Classis to obtain all information concerning the rights Lutherans had been granted in Batavia. Consistory needed this in its quest to prevent the “unpleasantness and great deal of conflict in families” which was expected on the lifting of restrictions on Lutherans. Consistory made it clear that it had warned the Dutch government about this danger and absolved itself from the pending social conflict.\textsuperscript{148} Classis subsequently undertook to advocate Consistory’s cause with the VOC government.\textsuperscript{149}

Once the Lutherans had received permission to institute a congregation, they championed the matter of civil liberties with special reference to the right of people to voluntarily join the Lutherans. They wanted Reformed wives to be granted the right to join the church of their Lutheran husbands. Moreover, the Lutheran pastor baptised the daughters of Reformed women married to Lutheran men. This contravention of what the Cape Reformed perceived as the mutual agreement with the Lutherans was glibly justified by the latter on the grounds of the patriarchal values of the time. They also argued that it was correct for wives and daughters to join the fold of their husbands and fathers and that the Reformed were of a different religious persuasion. It was not that they had parted with patriarchy, but simply because nubile Lutheran men outnumbered the Reformed and would thus siphon away most Reformed women and their children. The Reformed insisted that Lutherans should be grateful for the degree of freedom they enjoyed under the VOC government, since the Reformed were not in the same favourable position under Lutheran governments.\textsuperscript{150}

\textbf{Identity and Mission of a Privileged Church}

Privilege as established church was not merely a matter of expediency to the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands and at the Cape. Calvin and his followers expected state patronage as a divine right of the true church. Therefore, Reformed churches established themselves according to political domains. This was essentially a continuation of the medieval theocratic ideal, fragmented according to political divisions. Instead of the Holy Roman Empire, a “holy” (read: Reformed) Dutch Empire was envisaged. This theocratic ideal was based on deep confessional

\textsuperscript{148} Missive 136, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 468.

\textsuperscript{149} Missive 262, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 201.

\textsuperscript{150} Appendix to missive 143, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 503.
convictions regarding the identity and mission of the church. The state was expected to protect the faith and order of the one true church and to promote the reign of God in its political domain. That was the implication in the presentation of the Belgic Confession to the military delegation of King Philip II of Spain.

At the Cape, the theocratic vision was translated into the mission of the church to be an institution marked by internal harmony within a peaceable political domain. Such a state was conducive for winning as many people as possible into its fold. This is reflected in the language the Church used to identify itself, evaluate its own state and report on its mission.

The recurring terms in the correspondence of “Zion/Jerusalem”, “rest and peace”, “entering/receiving the kingdom of God”, “strengthening the faith”, “extending the kingdom of God” and “growing Christendom”, characterise the self-image of the Church at the Cape. They are metaphors for the identity, restoration and mission of the Church.

The following is an exposition of how these metaphors function in my primary sources:

**Zion**

The Old Testament metaphor of “Zion” refers to God’s peaceable city, Jerusalem. Zion was where God revealed Himself in the temple. It was also the seat of God’s anointed king. Temple and palace formed the centre of theocracy in Israel. Moreover, it was the centre for all humanity and drew God’s people together in worship. It also drew the nations to join God’s people in praise of God. After the exile “the building of the walls of Zion” became the metaphor for the restoration of God’s saving presence as God gathered together his scattered people and nations.

Likening the Church to Zion therefore conjures up an image of the Church as the seat of God’s peaceable kingly rule amidst His people and the nations. It is in this light of the identification of the Church at the Cape with Zion that one has to consider the examples in our primary texts.

The Cape Town congregation (1732) referred to itself as “this Jerusalem” to which it hoped that “the Lord will add many Zionists”. This happened at a time when both young and old “attempt to commit themselves with passion and zeal”, causing a marked increase in membership.\(^\text{151}\)

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\(^{151}\) Missive 46, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 171.
Despite the spiritual malaise in the Cape Town congregation, consistory reported that it would be to blame if it failed to acknowledge God’s free grace shown in the continuous presence of the Spirit, which is manifested by the occasional birth of people in Zion, and people being awakened to seriously desire salvation. Hence it beseeched the Lord to use the brothers of Classis as suitable instruments to build up the fallen walls of Jerusalem,\textsuperscript{152} for the joy of the real citizens of Zion.\textsuperscript{153}

The classes of South Holland hoped that not only European colonists, but that the heathen would also join the church. These classes viewed the Church at the Cape as an extension of themselves as temple of the Lord, as Jerusalem unto which the nations would come for salvation: “…from the house of the Lord, with wishes of the good Jerusalem over them and their congregations; that the Moor in Zion be born”.\textsuperscript{154} The Classis of Amsterdam also spoke of the “African churches” as an “outpost” of “God’s Zion”.\textsuperscript{155}

Likewise, the consistory of Batavia called itself “India’s Zion”. It was during the nadir of spiritual decay, which coincided with an international political crisis (1782) that the consistory of Batavia exhorted the Cape Town consistory to pray earnestly that “India’s Zion be set as praise on earth so that men may see all manner of things being born in it”.\textsuperscript{156}

From these examples, it becomes clear that the term Zion was used to denote the church and not a theocratic society. While the biblical term Zion is laden with political overtones, the Church did not regard itself as the centre from which

\textsuperscript{152} Classis, as ecclesial patron of the Cape Church, assisted it in its struggle against the spiritual malaise of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, to maintain the faithfulness of its own membership and to win proselytes from other Christian persuasions and converts from heathendom. This quest is described in terms of the building of Zion’s walls. This is well reflected in Cape Town consistory’s wish for Classis: “May Zion’s great King keep and bless you and his holy ministry through which Jerusalem’s walls are continually built up” (Missive 116, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 404/5.); and, “May the great King of the church give that his word, the gospel of the crucified Christ, be found to be the power of God and the wisdom of God. May God use the Classis as builders of Zion’s walls.” (Missive 109, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 324.).

\textsuperscript{153} Missive 100, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 305/6; cf. missive 233, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 139/140; missive 101, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 307.

\textsuperscript{154} Missive 220, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 113.

\textsuperscript{155} Missive 7, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 29.

\textsuperscript{156} Missive 265, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 208-10. Two paragraphs later “Zion” is however employed to indicate God’s overarching sovereign rule over both Dutch and British Christendom as the hope is expressed that “the salvation of East-India and the Netherlands may come from Zion to restore the pitiable ruptured ties between Ephraim and Judah” – signifying Britain and the Netherlands. The French Catholic kingdom was however viewed as the very antithesis of Zion and referred to as “an anti-Christian papal Babel.” (Missives 90, 91, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 277,278.).
political direction emanated. The term Zion was stripped of its political connotations and therefore was only applicable to the ecclesiastical sphere.

While designating itself by this term the Church did, however, assert itself as the true church and only church at the Cape. It also served to justify the mission of the Church to proselytise and evangelise all those of other (false) Christian persuasions as well as heathens and incorporate them into the fold. This justified the privileged status of the Church and its quest to ecclesiastically unite all people of the Cape. One established church at the Cape signified a state of “rest and peace” – a term to which we now turn our attention.

**Rest and Peace** (See Appendix A.)

“Rest and peace”, a phrase so often used to describe the state of the Church at the Cape, had its precursors in the Netherlands. The reason the 1618-19 synod of Dordrecht requested the States General to approve and authorise the church order, was to ensure that it acquired the same authority as public law. This would secure the edification and establishment (stichting) of the Dutch churches so that they would enjoy rest and peace.157

The phrase “rest and peace” was often used to gauge the state of the Church at the Cape. A state of “rest and peace” was commendable, while the lack thereof was lamentable. In the correspondence, references to “rest and peace”158 or the lack thereof in the congregations are so frequent that the impression is created that it functioned as a leitmotiv for the self image of the Church. Internal “rest and peace” were the main standards for a church to identify itself with Zion and its mission of “extending the kingdom of God” by winning souls.

The gospel of peace was seen to flow freely from a church in a state of rest and peace. Internal “rest and peace” were regarded as being of cardinal importance to the mission of the Church, namely to serve the honour of God and the growth of the Church (spiritually and numerically). In 1771, shortly before internal strife broke out, it was still reported that God in his providence granted rest and peace in Drakensteyn. (See Appendix C) The report said that the congregation was in a state of good order and discipline. Many members grew in love and grace and knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, so that in that part of God’s vineyard songs of

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158 It reminds of the prophesy in Isaiah 14:7 (NEB): “The whole world has rest and is at peace; ...”
praise could be heard in honour of Zion’s great King.\footnote{159 Missive 109, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 324.} It was hoped that through His spirit and grace, God would provide more joy, desire, and love so that the hearts of the congregation would be blessed. More people would be born in Zion, established in the house of the Lord and cherish the way of grace in order that they could bear witness to God’s free grace which would lead to growth and fruit in the forecourts of the Lord. \footnote{160 Missive 110, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 327.}

Unrest, whether on global or local scale, jeopardised the proclamation and reception of the gospel. Therefore Classis expressed the hope that the Lord might protect the Church at the Cape against the enemies of the Dutch empire (Britain) and that the gospel of peace would proceed freely despite the unrest in the world and at Drakensteyn and that the King of the church would reveal Himself graciously in the Cape congregations and through the ministry of the Word. This would lead to increased enjoyment of peace and blessings for all. As a result the name of God and the Lord Christ would be glorified at the Cape.\footnote{161 Missive 266, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 321.}

On the other hand, the internal strife in the Drakensteyn congregation during the drawn out conflict between the Roos and Theron parties in the early 1770’s, signified the very antithesis of rest and peace.\footnote{162 Missive 130, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 435.} (See Appendix C) Schisms and disunity were denounced as detrimental to the interests of the church of God.\footnote{163 Missive 132, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 458.} Hence, this case became a major test for the rest and peace model of the church in Cape-Dutch Christendom. To restore the required rest and peace, reconciliation was sought at all costs. Unwillingness to reconcile and restore the rest, peace and unity of the congregation was branded as a sin worthy of censure, whether or not the complainants saw justice done. If the ideal of a reconciled congregation (community) was not, Classis still hoped that individuals would prosper in the faith.\footnote{164 Missive 261, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 199-200.} If the congregation faltered in its calling to “extend the kingdom” by being in a state of “rest and peace”, the hope remained that God would grant that the faith of individuals would still grow despite the unfavourable situation.

The Roos party in the Drakensteyn case, although condemned by Classis as agitators and destroyers of rest and peace, shared the sentiments of Classis regarding the importance of “rest and peace”. As proof of this, they went all the way to
Amsterdam in their own time and at their own expense in a bid to have Classis resolve their problem and restore peace and unity.\(^{165}\) Rest and peace, they maintained with the rest of the Cape and Dutch Church, were necessary for the sake of the kingdom of Jesus.\(^{166}\) (See Appendix C)

The state also had a stake in a church being in a state of “rest and peace”. The Company expected its chaplaincy to assist in the maintenance of a peaceable colony. This aspect will receive more attention below.

**Extending the kingdom of God by harvesting souls** (See Appendix B)

The phrase “extending the kingdom of God” (and the once used “building the kingdom of Zion”\(^ {167}\), was commonly employed to denote the work of the Church (especially the predicants) in making new converts either from the ranks of other than Reformed persuasions or from “heathendom”.\(^ {168}\) There was only one exception where it could be interpreted as denoting the secular vocation of a believer.\(^ {169}\)

“Extending the Kingdom of God” and “a great harvest of souls” are phrases that complement each other in our primary texts. The phrase “extending the kingdom of

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\(^{165}\) Missive 123, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 433.

\(^{166}\) Missive 127, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 443.


\(^{168}\) The first sick-comforter Wylant, remarks in 1655 regarding the Khoina and their plight that “God Almighty is able to draw them to the light of His Son, Jesus Christ and out of the reign of darkness and the hands and bonds of Satan and to bring them into the reign of His Son.” (Missive 1, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 4.) Here God is the subject of bringing people into His reign. This language, used by somebody with relatively low theological training, is exceptionally faithful to the biblical use of the metaphor “the kingdom of God” when used in connection with the conversion of people. It is also true to Reformed soteriology. Calvin framed salvation of the individual within the glory of God, which is actualised by God’s sovereign election and the sanctification of the saved that spills over to all spheres of life as the elect glorify God in lives of obedience to his law. Government was also held responsible to obedience to the law of God, to protect the true faith and the true church. The latter needed this protection in order to proclaim the glory of God that becomes manifest in God’s sovereign grace over all of individual and communal life. By contrast the term “extending the kingdom” is commonly used in the correspondence to denote the conversion of individuals in which predicants are the subjects.

\(^{169}\) During 1776, secunde (second in command) Hemmy, a member of the Lutheran church, happened to convert to the Reformed faith. Subsequently, Cape Town Consistory expressed the hope that the Lord may use a “Reformed” Hemmy towards “the building of Zion’s kingdom here on earth amid various vices that emerged as Cape Town grew larger.” (Missive 124, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 436.). As indicated, “kingdom” language normally referred to evangelistic work – to the winning of souls for eternity, whereas “Zion” referred to the Church. The latter might well be what Consistory actually referred to. There is however the possibility that Consistory meant that Hemmy’s secular work was “kingdom” work – that “building the kingdom of Zion” indeed had public significance by promoting public morality. Although the latter construal of this phrase might sound like an obvious interpretation in any Reformed setting, it could be taken for granted in Cape-Dutch Christendom. Nowhere else in my primary sources were the terms “kingdom” or “Zion” directly associated with secular work. It would therefore be very exceptional if this language (“building Zion’s kingdom here on earth”) was directly associated with discharge of secular duty. It would correspond with the expectations that Calvin had of the city council of Geneva and also with the role that the Dutch government played regarding the ordering of a society in line with the law of God.
God”, was used when referring to the numerical growth of the Church through its ministry.

Similar to the mother church in the Netherlands, the Church at the Cape was faced with diverse Christian persuasions. Moreover, it was confronted with a religious plurality that was unknown in the Netherlands, as a large majority were not Dutch Reformed Church members. It was quite different from the consolidated Reformed Christendom assumed by Calvin in Geneva.

In correspondence “extending the kingdom” was a term used for what the Church viewed as one of its main tasks, namely that of the conversion of people to Christ and His church – which happened to be the Reformed Church. This was done in a quest to achieve the Dutch theocratic ideal at the Cape i.e. of one church under one government.

The Dutch Reformed Church had the sole privilege of publicly proclaiming its version of the gospel. This gospel focused on the winning and maintenance of souls for the one true faith and church – to keep the faithful and evangelise and proselytise those of other confessions in order to reunite the fragments of Western Christendom which had been broken apart by the Reformation. This was acutely in

170 Apart from the obvious absence of any strong presence of Catholics or Anabaptists, the Cape also differed from the fatherland in another important respect. The presence of non-Christians – an indigenous population who were regarded as not having any religion at all, slaves from all over Africa and Asia, as well as political exiles from East India – constituted another kind of religious plurality at the Cape compared to that of the fatherland. Muslim slaves and political exiles were not permitted to practice their religion. Nevertheless Islam found wide acceptance among the slave population. Very little mention of Islam is however made in my primary texts, which suggests that it was meanly ignored by the Church.

171 Hesselink maintains that Calvin’s teaching regarding the state being a guarantor and supporter of the “public manifestation of religion [publica religionis facies] among Christians…” (IV.20.3), implies that all members of the republic were regarded as being Christians. The city had to consist of consciously professing Christians. As a matter of fact, if Calvin had his way each inhabitant would have to sign a confession of faith (Berkhof, Geschiedenis der Kerk, 168.).

Berkhof and De Jong describe the early stages of the established Reformed church in the Netherlands as one where it did not have the majority of the populace within its fold. The realities of post-Reformation Europe were such that among the subjects of a specific landlord there would be found adherents of different professions of faith – both Catholic and a variety of Protestant professions. A particular profession of faith and its institutional church would then often be privileged as the established church. Being privileged by the state usually contributed towards the numerical growth of such a church. The Reformed church in the Netherlands was no exception to this. Nonetheless it remained a confessional church, meaning that membership depended upon voluntary accord with the dogma and order of the church. Hence, the untiring preaching, teaching and pastoral care of the church had to win over the majority of the population of the Netherlands (Berkhof, Geschiedenis der Kerk, 202.).

In 1781 Cape Town consistory reported that of 101 new members, 77 had to profess the faith, which means that they came from other persuasions. Only 24 joined with attestation from other Reformed congregations. The ratio of outsiders being converted was therefore three to one. The bulk of these were from Lutheran persuasion, to whom we now turn our attention (Missive 138, in Spoelstra, Bouwstofen I, 473.).
evident at the Cape with its conglomeration of employees of the Company. In a quest to reunite Christendom, the Church integrated other Reformed believers into its fold (French Huguenots); assimilated Lutherans and even Catholics and Anabaptists, while denying those who resisted being proselytised a separate foothold at the Cape.\textsuperscript{173}

Congregations at the Cape integrated diverse people into the fold of “the true Dutch church”. Numerical growth had to be accompanied by growth in knowledge and sanctification as congregations were strengthened against the “misleading of Satan”. “Rest and peace”\textsuperscript{174}, love and unity had to prevail to the honour of God and to promote “the building up of his dearly bought congregations”\textsuperscript{175} and “the expansion of Christ’s kingdom”.\textsuperscript{176}

Predicants were seen to be the prime subjects of “extending the kingdom” and “winning souls”. Classis supported this mission by recruiting and ordaining predicants for the Cape congregations and through ecclesiastical support.\textsuperscript{177}

Converting those of other religions like the slaves, and those who were thought to have no religion such as the Khoïna, was also believed to form part of the evangelistic calling of the Church.\textsuperscript{178}

Slavery was accepted as part of Cape-Dutch Christendom. The correspondence reflects an awareness of the difference between the Cape and the fatherland regarding slavery. Being in a state of slavery was, however, regarded as placing slaves in a more fortunate position than it was to be free in “heathendom”.

\textsuperscript{174} See Appendix A at the end of this work.
\textsuperscript{175} Missive 49, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 177.
\textsuperscript{176} Missive 191, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 61.
\textsuperscript{177} A good example of this is when Classis expressed its wish that Rev. Overney may continue to work in such a manner and under such a state of mind that he “may be more competent to expand the kingdom of Christ among the Christians and the heathen.” They wish him “the blessing of the Lord of the harvest on his labour which will yield much fruit and the winning of many souls, all to the glory of His great name.” (Missive 169, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 9-11.). Classis expressed its wish that the Cape Church be blessed by the King of the Church(es) to increasingly promote the expansion of Christ’s kingdom (Missive 191, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 61.).; prayed that God may grant young gifted ministers with courage to go to the Cape to expand the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus that “the new cultivations of Christendom may multiply and increase powerfully…” (Missive 196, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 71.); and, declared its willingness to “contribute to the matters of God and his Kingdom” and expressed its hope that the Lord will equip the combined council’s ministry “to perfect the saints, convert sinners and extend his kingdom among the heathen, among whom his name should be exalted to the ends of the earth.” (Missive 207, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 89/90.). The Cape Church acknowledged the ministry of Classis as “ventures and efforts towards extending the Kingdom of our Lord Saviour Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{177} Classis, on the other hand, understood its responsibility as one of helping the Cape congregations to “extend and fertilise Jesus’ kingdom.” (Missive 52, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 182.).
\textsuperscript{178} See Appendix B at end of this thesis.
They were eligible for diaconal support. They were evangelised and incorporated into the Church on profession of faith or by way of infant baptism. Becoming Christian did not in most cases mean that they were freed, although they were regarded to have “freedom” in the sense that they were free from being sold to non-Christian masters – in the unlikely event of the existence of such prospective slave owners at the Cape. Slavery as an institution, however, was never critiqued and uncritically accepted as part and parcel of Christendom at the Cape. The only issue was whether and on which conditions slave children sired by European colonists were to be baptised. There was no discrimination regarding baptism, whether they were converted slaves, free people or born in or out of wedlock.

Khoina, on the other hand, were not regarded as part of Cape-Dutch Christendom in the same way as slaves. Their presence was tolerated on condition that it was beneficial to the interests of the colony. There was awareness amongst chaplains that they needed to be evangelised. The few-recorded Khoina who converted to Christianity during this period were incorporated into Cape-Dutch Christendom. Instances of diaconal help were also recorded.

In conclusion it is worthwhile to reflect on the construction and representation of identities in Cape-Dutch Christendom. Ecclesiastical qualifications were the norm. Being Dutch Reformed conferred establishment status to colonists. Being of other protestant persuasions placed one in a second best position, while being Catholic was a serious disqualification for civil privileges. The latter categories were however all part of old Western Christendom and hence “conversion” to being Dutch Reformed secured the right of entry into the ranks of Cape Dutch establishment.

By contrast, being part of “heathendom” excluded people from the privileged classes of Cape-Dutch Christendom. People from heathendom could be enslaved. Indigenous people were viewed as lacking culture and religion and therefore inferior to European colonists. Muslims, on the other hand, were seen to adhere to a false religion that was regarded as a threat to Christianity and therefore they had to forfeit the privileges of a Christian establishment. Apart from a few incidental remarks concerning individual Muslims, my primary sources are quiet about Muslims and Islam. Regarding slaves, conversion to the Dutch Reformed faith secured them the dubious exemption of being sold to masters other than those that were Dutch Reformed. It did not, however, imply release. The latter was a monetary matter as
freedom was achieved mainly through financial redemption. Some released Christian slaves, however, managed to join the privileged ranks of the colonial elite.

**The interconnection of “Zion”, “kingdom” and “peace” language**

The above-mentioned metaphors and notions – “Zion”, “rest and peace” and “extending the kingdom” – are closely related to one another in the correspondence. This suggests that the identity, restoration and the mission of the Church were interconnected. The following are examples that illustrate this interconnection:

The Drakensteyn Consistory expressed the wish in 1783 that God use Classis to build up the kingdom here and in the fatherland, so that the kingdom of Jesus could stretch from sea to sea and from river to world’s end. To this it added: “May the Babylon in our congregation become a spiritual Jerusalem”.179 This heartfelt desire had already been expressed amid the unrest experienced at Drakensteyn since the early 1770s. During this drawn out struggle all parties affirmed the necessity of a return to “rest and peace”. This was illustrated by the response of Classis: The “African Churches” of “this outpost” were part of “God’s Zion” where “rest and peace” among the ministers and congregations had contributed to “the growth of Christendom [read: church] and the strengthening of that faith which had once been passed on to the saints.” (italics mine).180 (See Appendix C)

“Zion” (the Church) was regarded as the peaceable city of God that had to rid itself of “Babylon” (disunity, strife and indifference) in its own midst by “receiving and entering the kingdom of God”. In order to accomplish its mission to grow (“extend the kingdom of God”), all the fragments of Western Christendom that were found within the Dutch empire were to be converted to the Reformed faith and incorporated into its fellowship. Catholics, other Protestants and “sects”, as well as “heathen” were to know and believe in God according to the Reformed confession and become part of the Reformed faith communities within a Dutch Reformed colony. The very antithesis of such a Reformed Christendom was the feared French “anti-Christian papal Babel”.181

For the first century at the Cape, “rest and peace”, accompanied by numerical growth and attendance of public worship services, practically served as marks of the true church in an ideal state.

181 Missives 90, 91, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 277, 278.
The picture that Renwick and Harman painted of the general situation in the West during the eighteenth century was indicative of the situation at the Cape: "Wearied to death by the wars and struggles of the previous century, men were now glad to 'sit at ease in Zion' (Amos vi. 1) and this inactivity bred stagnation in the Church".182 When the spiritual malaise of the 18th century was felt at the Cape, “rest and peace” as absence of internal strife, was no longer viewed as aptly characteristic of the Church. There was a growing awareness that “rest and peace” had to be accompanied by heartfelt participation in public worship, whereby the means of grace, namely the Word and the sacraments, were received. This in turn had to result in virtuous living within the faith community and in public life. Therefore the lack of “rest and peace” was associated with a lack of genuine participation in and acceptance of the means of grace. This manifested in apathy, lack of zeal, carnal confidence, carelessness and spiritual indifference. It was seen to result in an increase in personal and public vices, moral decay and corruption - such as love of the world, pride, pomp and circumstance, transgression of civil and divine law, licentiousness and lust.

The extent of spiritual and moral decay during the latter half of the 18th century, however, evoked the call for the “restoration of the broken walls of Zion” - the spiritual and moral restoration of the Church. Apart from using the language of the restoration of “rest and peace” and “healing the breach in Zion” we also find the phrases “seeking the kingdom of God” and “entering the kingdom of God” used to designate the improvement of the state of the Church.

The restoration of Zion as the peaceable and exemplary city of God (also reminiscent of the New Testament metaphor of a city on a mountain) through continual sanctification (seeking and entering the kingdom of God) was seen to serve the “extension of the kingdom of God” - the growth of the Church. Growth in holiness served the evangelistic purposes of the Church and brought honour to the name of God. When unrest and conflict was experienced in the Church, it was believed that the Church had lost its ability to attract outsiders and hence the honour of God was at stake.

Thus on the death of Rev Croeser of Zwartland in 1771, Cape Town consistory requested Classis to send a competent, pious and energetic minister to

heal the breach in Zion so that the fallen state of affairs could be healed and repaired. Classis responded by expressing the hope that the Lord provide a dynamic, able and faithful minister for the Zwartland to restore the fallen cause of the Lord and to extend the Kingdom among “the heathen” and that Drakensteyn might grow in the grace and knowledge of our lord and saviour Jesus Christ. The Almighty would confirm this through grace and give visible signs of His miraculous power. Those assigned for salvation would be added to the congregation every day and His Name would be glorified among “the heathen”. It went on to say that it should be an encouragement to the ministers of the Word at the Cape to continue the work when signs of the blessing of the gospel were still in evidence amongst a corrupt people. There were people who were prepared to travel the narrow road that led to the kingdom of God. People at the Cape should therefore repent and bring glory to God so that by the good reputation of the congregation it may be a blessing among “the heathen”, causing many of the latter to join the congregation and to glory in “the Principal of the heathen”.  

CHAPTER FIVE

CONTROL OF COMPANY, CLASSIS AND CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

Favoured as the “dominant religion” by the Company and enjoying all the privileges described above, came at a cost to Company chaplains and the Church at the Cape. They had to sacrifice their integrity and ecclesiastical freedom to Company control.

To a considerable extent, the Company determined church order and directly ruled the church. Ecclesiastical offices, church councils, ecclesiastical connectivity and church discipline were all strictly controlled. This control ensured that the Church served the interests of the Company by promoting a peaceable refreshment post and colony. Chaplains and church councils did this by admonishing employees and colonists to be law abiding subjects while uniting them into a religiously homogeneous and harmonious society. They also officiated at ceremonies of a civil religious nature.

In the Netherlands, the Church had established itself as a distinctive force alongside the political powers during the Dutch liberation struggle and managed to earn the right to considerable freedom and privilege. The Dutch rulers, however, claimed a considerable degree of control over the Church in return for privileges of establishment. Even so, the Church enjoyed more freedom under Dutch republican rule than under the patronage of the VOC. In the latter instance, it was a matter of “state” control from the outset. Contrary to its history of origin in the Netherlands where the Church was a people’s movement, it emerged as an initiative of the VOC and they hired chaplains before any agreement had been reached with the Dutch government or the mother Church regarding patronage of religion and church. Chaplains were under Company orders. By the time the second octroi officially granted the VOC patronage over the Reformed faith and Church, Company control had already been established to such a degree that during the VOC patronage the Church never again managed to recover the level of freedom it enjoyed under the patronage of the Dutch government.
**Church Governance and Sustenance**

*Church order, internal discipline and public influence*

Calvin claimed that the church had to proclaim the will of God to the state without controlling the state. Conversely, the state had to protect the church, including its privilege – if not its right – to enjoy state support of internal order and discipline of the church. The state was expected to endorse church order through public legislation. The state was also required to rule according to God’s will – defend justice and promote a humane life for everybody regardless of his/her social status. The vocation of the church was to interpret the Word of God with regard to public life. It had to discern God’s will for a moral society. Government was subsequently expected to rule accordingly – by legislation and administration of justice.¹

The role of state and church, where both served the reign of God according to the Word, without one controlling the other, was no simple ideal to accomplish. This is evident from the perennial power struggles between state and church which had already commenced in Calvin’s Geneva. The distinction between the role of state and church was further blurred by the assumption that all citizens were Christians and therefore had to submit to the Word of God.²

Not only was the church free to proclaim God’s will with regard to all of society, but moreover it was supposed to be free to govern itself and practice discipline according to its own order. This order was granted public validity by being governmental endorsement.³

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¹ Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 414.
³ Calvin and Farel submitted a church order to the city council of Geneva for adoption in 1536. This they did because they were convinced that government had to be the patron of public religion. The intention was that church discipline would keep a watchful eye on matters ecclesial, yet enjoy the backing of state power to support it with legislation. It proposed a monthly celebration of the Lord’s Supper accompanied by strict discipline of members of the congregation regarding their faith and conduct. The magistrates were, however, first and foremost expected to take care of matters political. How the two spheres of church and state were to be distinguished was not clear, resulting in the city council of Geneva not granting the church the freedom to exercise ecclesial discipline as proposed in the church order. The city council held on to discipline as its sole mandate. This resulted in a type of policing where the church’s regulations for a pious life were ruthlessly enforced by the magistrates. Civil resistance was the result and Calvin’s opponents gained hegemony in the city council. They watered down Calvin’s ideas to match those ideas applicable in the city of Bern. This Calvin viewed as an infringement of the privilege of the church to order a Christian society with state support. This resulted in so much conflict between Calvin and his supporters on the one hand and the new city council on the other that Calvin and his supporters were expelled from the city in 1538. After his return in 1541, Calvin once again attempted to transform the frivolous Geneva into a congregation dedicated to God. Hence he took issue with immorality such as dancing, card playing, adultery, fornication, blasphemy, disobedience to parents, absenteeism from church services, etc. Policing and punishment in all severity according to
In the Netherlands Calvin’s position on state patronage of the church and its proclamation was reflected in Article 36 of the Belgic Confession. This article also dealt with the role of church and state concerning public life. Subsequently, various Dutch church orders echoed the persuasion that the Church could prescribe to the state regarding matters of public morality.4

State authorisation of church order and other resolutions of synod were highly valued. This ensured established status not only for the Church and its internal organisation, but also legalized pronouncements regarding public life. Therefore, the 1618/19 National Synod of Dordrecht reiterated the request of two previous synods5 to the States General for approval and authorisation of the church order. This would ensure that it carried the same authority as all national public laws.6

While the Church sought to control public life, the state control of the Church. Hence, the state twice attempted in 1576 and 1591 to draft church orders on its own. It even defined “church ministry” as part of “state ministry”. Fortunately for the Church, these attempts were unsuccessful. The state did, however, interfere in the internal affairs of the Church by fixing the stipends of predicants; setting conditions for the synod assembly and reserving the right of approbation of all late medieval penal law became the order of the day. (Berkhof, Geschiedenis der Kerk, 120.).

4 The fourteenth of the 1568 Articles of Wezel – an early church order. It refers to sins such as public blasphemy, falsification, theft, perjury, adultery, drunkenness, violence and the like that would also have to be punished by civil law. The 1578 synod of Dordrecht went further. Not only did it expect government to endorse ecclesiastical pronouncements on public morality, but it also expected state endorsement of those synodical resolutions that specifically dealt with the conduct of government, stating that the latter also needed ecclesiastical guidance regarding exercise of political power (Biesterveld, Kerkelijke Handboekje, 147.). Article 27 of the 1618-19 church order of Dordrecht asserts that it is the duty of Christian governments to promote the Holy Church service in all possible ways; to lead all subjects by example; to assist the special offices whenever they need help from government; and to protect the church’s good order. From their side the special offices are to edify all church members that they owe the magistrates obedience, love and respect. In the latter regard the holders of special offices are also expected to lead by example. They are also to endeavour to maintain good relations with government which in return is expected to serve the church’s interests. The States General also had to prohibit and stop all “profanation of the Sabbath” through the holding of bazaars, meals of guilds, weddings, drunkenness, comedy shows, target-shooting, hunting, flying, fishing, delivering unnecessary services, etc., which cause great shame and obstacles to the Reformed religion. These vices were on the increase. Dance productions and schools of dancing, taverns, gambling and the like should be abolished in the Netherlands. For swearing and the “terrible defamation of God’s Holy Name” a “political punishment” had to be instituted. (Berkhof, Geschiedenis der Kerk, 133.).

5 Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 455.

6 Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 33. As reason for its request synod stated that state endorsement “would enhance the Dutch churches edification and establishment (stichting)”, securing their rest and peace. This request was indirectly declined by the government commissioners at the synod by announcing that the provincial church orders would not be replaced by this proposed national church order (Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 38.).
resolutions of church councils. In a desperate attempt to have the church order of the national synod invested with public authority, the Church voluntarily made a number of vital concessions: It granted the state right of approbation for the nomination of predicants; it sanctioned state patronage of the Church; and allowed magisterial representation on church councils.7

Sadly, notwithstanding these concessions, the state still denied the Church the recognition it sought and held on to the control it had gained over the Church’s internal organisation.8 The State even denied the Church the right to convene a further national synod for two centuries after the 1618/19 Synod of Dordrecht. In this way, government did not simply obstruct the internal governance of the Church, but practically limited the Church’s privileged position and authority regarding public life.9

Under VOC rule, “state” domination of the Church could run its full course. Unlike the situation in the Netherlands, where government accepted patronage of a church that had already independently established its faith and order, the Company simply hired Reformed sick comforters and predicants and deployed them as chaplains on ships and at its posts. The Church became a mere instrument of VOC authority10 - a “state” department.11

The VOC simply adopted its own “Instructions for predicants and sick comforters” instead of allowing a church order to be drawn up by an ecclesiastical body. Although the Dutch Church had reservations acknowledging the VOC as “government of a state”, it had no other choice than to be instrumental in recruiting, ordaining and sending out chaplains and schoolmasters in the employ of the VOC.

When the Company initially placed a predicant in East India on a permanent basis in 1609, it took for granted that he was simply an employee and that the Company could regulate all ecclesiastical and religious matters. This despite the

7 Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 150, 160.
8 Cf. Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 156.
9 J D Vorster, Die Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Van die Kaapse Kerk Onder die Kompanjie 1652-1792 (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege - Pers Beperk, 1956), 24. At the end of this marathon synod the political commissioners, however, assured the churches that the States General would not desist from doing everything necessary to maintain and promote the Reformed religion and the peace and edification of the churches. His majesty exhorted the churches to henceforth maintain and protect the rightful truth in brotherly love, peace, unity and harmony, to the honour of God, the edification of the churches and their peacefulness (P Biesterveld, and H.H. Kuyper, Kerkelijk Handboekje Bevattende de Bepalingen der Nederlandsche Synoden en Andere Stukken Van Beteekenis Voor de Regeering der Kerken (Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1905), 294.).
10 Vorster, Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk, 31.
letters of calling of chaplains that explicitly stated that they were to follow the church order of their sending *classes*. Hence it was reported in 1624 that no written church order was followed as the Company simply issued its own orders and instructions.\(^\text{12}\)

Attempts by the Church in the East Indies (of which the Church at the Cape was formally part) to draw up a church order that would uphold the integrity of the Church - not only to manage its own affairs, but also to fulfil its public role – were thwarted by the Company.\(^\text{13}\)

With the second octroï, however, the Dutch government granted the VOC formal patronage of the Reformed faith and church. This prevented total control of the Company over the Church, as it afforded the Church right of appeal to the States General.

The institution of congregations after two decades of VOC chaplaincy in the East Indies and the drafting of a church order for Batavia in 1624, based on The Church Order of Dordrecht, were optimistic developments in the restoration of the integrity of the Church. General Pieter de Carpentier, governor of Batavia, ordered that “a Christian order regarding establishment (*ene Christelijke ordre ter stichtinge*) and gathering the heathen into the lap of the congregation of God” be drawn up to counter the abuses that had crept into the church and ministries.\(^\text{14}\) The formation of connecting structures between congregations was proposed\(^\text{15}\) and the article in the Church Order of Dordrecht that stipulated that government had the right to be represented on church councils was omitted. The dubious approbation of this draft and the ensuing shameful contravention thereof by the Company, unfortunately nullified these victories for Church freedom. After 1630 blatant Company control of the Church increased. The remonstrations of the Dutch were not heeded and the oppressive church order of Diemen was drafted and implemented,


\(^{13}\) Vorster, *Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk*, 32-33. The 1624 church orders of Batavia based on the Church Order of Dordrecht intended to strengthen the integrity of the Church. This did not happen as the *Heeren XVII* refused to approve them and by so doing retained its control of the Church. The 1643 church order of Batavia reflected a new drive to reduce the freedom of the Church. Although the *Classis* of Amsterdam managed to dissuade the Company directors to approve them, they however set the tone for future relations between Company and Church – especially in Batavia (Vorster, *Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk*, 34.).


\(^{15}\) Articles 15 & 16 of Church Order of Batavia, 1624, in Spoolstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 564.
despite the fact that Classis managed to dissuade the Heeren XVII from approving it.16

Despite its precarious legal status, the Church at the Cape was in a better position than the Church in the East Indies. Due to the fact that the Netherlands was closer to the Cape than East India, the Church at the Cape did not feel the stranglehold of the “High Government of India” so stringently.17

Although the Church at the Cape was not privileged to draw up its own orders, it enjoyed other privileges which strengthened its position with regard to VOC rule. Firstly, the Classis of Amsterdam (and the Synod of Holland), was not under VOC patronage, but under the Dutch government and was the ecclesiastical patron of the Church at the Cape. Secondly, the Church at the Cape managed to give preference to the Church Order of Dordrecht, which was not commissioned by the VOC like the church orders of Batavia. These privileges enabled the Church at the Cape to counter the control of the Cape government and the VOC principals. These privileges were reflected in frequent requests to Classis to intercede on behalf of the Church with the Heeren XVII or in extreme cases, the States General, when the Church was discontented with the Cape government’s execution of patronage.18

Fortunately, the VOC tolerated contact with and intervention by the Classis of Amsterdam more readily in the case of the Church at the Cape than with its East Indian counterpart. This coincided with an increase in contact of the Cape government with Amsterdam instead of with East India, under whose direct jurisdiction it formally resorted.19 Moreover, the execution of VOC patronage at the Cape, although strict and dominating, was carried out wisely, tactfully, and

17 The governors and the political councillors at the Cape, as well as the commissioners from India, were generally more sympathetic toward the Church at the Cape than in East India. These commissioners took their place in church councils “with proper modesty” as Commissioner Simons himself expressed it. His warning that government was not to use tyranny to limit the freedom of ecclesiastical councils seems to have had some effect on the way patronage was executed. Had it not been for the Heeren XVII foiling the effort, Commissioner Van Hoon had helped the Cape Church to draft its own church order that could have paved the way towards the establishment of a local ecclesiastical connecting structure. Commissioner Count Van Imhoff also promoted the integrity of the Church by instituting more congregations (*Vorster, Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk*, 36.). The authorities at the Cape continually vowed to protect the Church as will become clear from some instances listed below. Commissioners were always welcomed at church councils. The authorities were requested more than once to send a commissioner because they often helped the church by advocating their cause with government (*Vorster, Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk*, 43.).
18 According to the second octroi, the Church could appeal to the Dutch government as final authority over the Church.
benevolently, unlike the patronage of the authorities in East India.  

Ds Franciscus Le Boucq, however, did not view the ambiguous legal status of the Church at the Cape in a positive light. He agitated for a church order especially drafted for the Cape which would secure the indisputable established status for the church. He echoed the theocratic ideal of a state church that enjoyed the privilege of a state endorsed church order and a patron that provided for its every need.  

A church order that had not been approved by government not only impeded the Church's public role, but also placed the Church in a weak position regarding its own internal discipline. The Church was subjected to Company approval even during the period of the so-called Combined Council, which, under normal circumstances, would have had jurisdiction over ecclesiastical matters.

Ds Cloppenburg's case in 1748 attests to this. Firstly, the Combined Council needed governmental sanction to investigate the allegations against him. Secondly, having found him guilty, the Combined Council (under the auspices of a political commissioner) requested government to suspend him temporarily.

The case of Ds Haike van der Veen (1751), who appealed to the Council of Justice against a decision of the consistory of Swartland, served as an example of the Cape judiciary performing the function of body of appeal.


21 In the light of what he considered to be "irregularities" regarding government's responsibility as patron of the privileged Church at the Cape, he requested the political authorities to fulfil their role as patron by taking responsibility for the institution of proper church (and educational) orders and to secure strict adherence to them. He maintained that such orders should emulate those of India and the fatherland by being approved by the VOC (Appendix to missive 19, in C Spoelstra, *Brieven Van die Kaapse Kerken Aan die Classis Amsterdam 1655-1804*, Bouwstoffen Voor de Geschiedenis der Nederduitsch-Gereformeerde Kerken in Zuid-Afrika, vol. I (Amsterdam-Kaapstad: Hollandsch Afrikaanse Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1906), 69. Compare p. 72 pp for the background to this case.) In his appeal to three different church orders Le Boucq stressed that they had all been authorised by particular governments: the church order set by the national synod of the Netherlands was ordered by the States General (*Hoogh Moog. de Heeren Staaten Generaal*); the church order of the Assembly of Seventeen, and the church order of the governor of The East Indies (*de Ed. Hr Generaal van Kremen in Indien*) (Appendix to missive 19, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 78. As will be indicated below, none of these church orders were actually approved by the authorities.) Note that Le Boucq mentions the Church Order of Dordrecht in one breath with the church orders drawn up under the patronage of the VOC. This indicates that for him there was no essential contradiction between the patronage of the States General and that of the VOC. The only important point to him was that the VOC had to maintain the privileged status of the Reformed Church and membership in all of its domain, including the Cape. This evidence gainsays the assertion of Vorster and Kleyhans that the church order of Dordrecht was the preferred one at the Cape.

22 Appendix to missive 70, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 220, 221.

23 Swartland Consistory had not permitted itinerant Ds Van der Veen to preach without the consent of its predicant who happened to be absent at the time attending the inauguration of a new governor in Cape Town. Swartland Consistory judged that Van der Veen had contravened both the resolutions.
Ten years later (1761), the Cape Government managed to contort Reformed church polity even further. The Council of Justice again heard an appeal against a decision of the Swartland consistory. This time, Council revoked the excommunication of Hendrina van der Westhuizen that had been imposed by the Consistory. While a case could still be made for government interference in the case of predicants as they were VOC officials, it is noteworthy that this happened to a church member who was not employed by the Company. Moreover, Council went so far as to order the Cape Town Consistory to rebuke the predicant and elders of Swartland and reinstate Van der Westhuizen. The Cape Town Consistory was convinced that this was purely an ecclesiastical matter which should be dealt with by a classical council. According to Dutch Reformed church polity, one congregation could not rule over another. Nonetheless, Consistory conceded to the governmental order.

Unfortunately, the drawn out Theron case in the Drakensteyn congregation ended in victory for Company control of church governance and specifically church discipline. This case vividly portrayed the contradiction between church polity under state control a la Cape-Dutch Christendom and church polity as understood by a community of which a significant number were offspring of the French Huguenots who had not enjoyed state patronage in France. Moreover, both theologically and in practice, they had to learn to resist an unjust state. In doing so, their forebears had gone beyond Calvin's theology which came about in response to a historical situation of political tyranny.

Apart from the relatively weak legal position and constraints regarding internal discipline according to Church order, the Church at the Cape also lacked

of the Combined Council and civil regulations by defying this refusal. He was further charged with the forming of “conventicals” and claiming “a special working of the Holy Spirit” through him. Consistory’s verdict was very mild though, ordering Van der Veen to “conserve the good order and to edify the congregation in love and peace.” Van der Veen, however, appealed to government against this finding and admonition. Fortunately for Consistory the Council of Justice upheld the verdict of Consistory and ordered Van der Veen’s expulsion. The latter however defied government ruling. Cape Town Consistory, in support of government’s administration of ecclesial justice, pronounced Van der Veen guilty of implicating Cape government as being “heretic” or “a papal inquisition that had to be resisted”. He was also pronounced guilty of “slander government, consistory and other brave people” (Missive 77 and appendix, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 242-6.) .

24 cf. par 102 of the Acts of the 1578 synod of Dordrecht, and article 84 of the church order of Dordrecht in Biesterfeld, Kerkelijk Handboeke, 126, 249.
25 Extracts from resolution books, Cape Town consistory, 17 August 1761, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 295, 297.
public influence. The only signs of church involvement in public legislation found in our primary sources, involved Church support for government regulations to curb pomp and circumstance\textsuperscript{27} and a resolution taken by the Church to request government to renew the law on declaring the day of the Lord holy.\textsuperscript{28}

**The offices**

**From predicaat to chaplain**

The special ecclesiastical office of predicaat (minister of the divine Word) was reduced to that of a religious officer or chaplain in the employ and under the control of the Company. Sick comforters, who did not hold an ecclesiastical office, were categorised with predicants, but at a lower rank.\textsuperscript{29} Together with sick comforters, predicants were compelled to follow instructions drawn up by the Company in 1617. However big the difference between the position of predicants and sick comforters was in terms of church order, they were treated as a single category by the Company as they were subjected to the same “Instructions”. By so doing, the Company created a new Christendom category of functionaries that one may refer to as “Company chaplains”.

Instructions to chaplains were given in such a way that Company interests were secured. Although they were formally bound to the instructions of their sending classes, they were for all practical purposes controlled by senior Company officers and institutions. The Company represented the patronage of the lawful Christian government in the form of the States General and although congregations were instituted with their special offices and consistories, predicants (together with sick comforters) were still regarded as sent out by Classis.\textsuperscript{30} As Classis was far

\textsuperscript{27} Cf. missive 124, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 436.
\textsuperscript{28} Extracts from minute books: Cape Town consistory, 3 December 1787, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 328/9.
\textsuperscript{29} Vorster, *Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk*, 29. Sick-comforters on the other hand, were not considered to hold any special office. They were people who were employed by the church as auxiliary services, filling the gap where licensed ministers of the Word were in short supply and where elders could not perform these services, for instance in “churches under the cross.” They were not allowed to preach or administer the sacraments but were expected to read out “a good sermon” from an acknowledged volume of sermons twice on a Sunday and to do public admonition and prayers in the mornings and evenings. They also functioned as catechists and school teachers. Hofmeyr ascribes the fact that the VOC employed so many sick-comforters to the fact that the profit motive was of primary importance and hence it was economically advantageous to employ sick-comforters rather than predicants (cf. George Hofmeyr, "1652. Die Eerste 'Sieckentroosters' of 'Kranckenbesoeckers,'" in *NG Kerk* 350, ed. George Hofmeyr (Wellington: Lux Verbi.BM, 2002), 32.)
\textsuperscript{30} In its practice of employing predicants, Company and Classis practically applied article IV of the Church Order of Dordrecht, which deals with the sending of predicants to “churches under the
away, the local Council of Policy of the Company simply acted on behalf of Classis in the placement of predicants.

This practice fundamentally distorted the ecclesiastical office of predicant. The Company resolution to maintain control over the Church by treating predicants as Company officers instead of acknowledging their ecclesiastical identity was substantiated by the fact that Company issued updated instructions for predicants and sick comforters in 1695. Despite the fact that congregations had been instituted in the meanwhile, the changes to the new instructions were negligible in comparison to those issued eighty years earlier. By controlling chaplains, the Company was in command of the ministry and ultimately of its employees and others in the colonial domains.

The formation of consistories, which should have heralded freedom and integrity for the Church, also fell victim to the control of the Company. The deformation of predicant to chaplain paved the way for the development of a chaplaincy church whose consistories were in effect controlled by the Company.

**Ranked among Company officials**

Chaplains were incorporated into the ranks of Company officers. Article 13 of their cross — congregations without political patrons. Sea faring and colonial church members were treated in a similar way. The employment of sick-comforters to perform the duties of the special offices, as well as the sending out of predicants by Classis and having to report directly to Classis, instead of being accountable to a consistory, are reminiscent of that context. In this respect chaplains differed from predicants sent out to minister in congregations under the cross, as they would be connected to a congregation in Dutch Reformed Christendom (Church Order of Dordrecht article VII). Hence, the latter enjoyed all the ecclesial rights of a predicant in the fatherland. This was, however, not the case with VOC chaplains. Their ecclesial rights were in effect ceded to the Company as patron. They were without a bond with a local congregation in the fatherland and the authority of the sending classis was reduced to moral support before the second octroi and afterwards to advocacy with the Heeren XVII, and in case that did not yield the desired effect, appeal to the stadhouder (prince) or the States General.

31 To appreciate this fundamental shift that Company control brought about with regard to the understanding of ecclesial offices, one has to give some background of the Reformed teaching regarding the offices in the church. Besides the general office of the priesthood of all believers, the church order of Dordrecht acknowledges four special offices, namely that of predicant (minister of the Word), doctor or professor, elder and deacon. (The schoolmaster or catechist is also treated under the offices [dienste] in article XXI, which creates the impression that it could also be viewed as a special office.) Consistory, consisting of one or more predicants and the elders, assemble with the deacons to elect and call a predicant for the congregation. The nomination is then presented to the congregation, the classis and the Christian magistrate of that place for approbation. A new predicant is predicated in the presence of his new congregation. He joins consistory as a member and usually presides over it. The local congregation also sustains its minister of religion. When a predicant is, however, sent to “churches under the cross” (which do not enjoy the patronage of a Christian [read Reformed] government) he is predicated in an existing congregation (art VII) and sent out by the assembly of the classis to such churches (art IV). Classis’ assertion that it was commissioned to take care of the “outside churches” (buitenkerken) supports the interpretation that it regarded the Cape congregations as falling into that category (Missive 203, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 83.).
Instructions not only set the conditions for Company remuneration and support of "chaplains" but also specified their ranking within the hierarchy of Company officers. This was reflected in the ranking of cabins. There were placed only one rank lower than that of merchant and skipper – i.e. second merchant. Sick comforters were a rank lower and therefore subordinate to predicants.

The incorporation of predicants and sick comforters into the authority structure of the Company is illustrated by the fact that itinerant predicants to the Cape fort resorted under direct authority of the commander. The way in which conflict between chaplains and other Company officers was dealt with also illustrates the point. The conflict between Ds Brockbron and the captain of the ship he was travelling on serves as an example. Ds Brockbron appealed to Commander Van Riebeek and his council at the Cape fort and they granted his request to stay at the Cape and wait for another ship before continuing his journey to Batavia. Van Riebeek had the prerogative to decide the ship he would resume his journey on.

Indicative of the social integration of chaplains within the ranks of the ruling elite of Company officers was the fact that Jan van Riebeek was the brother-in-law of sick comforter Pieter van der Stael who was married to his sister, Geertruidt.

**Under Company orders and jurisdiction**

The "Instructions for Predicants and Sick comforters in service of the VOC" stipulated that chaplains had to obey all the regulations of the Company, whether promulgated in the Netherlands or in the East Indies as well as the orders and instructions of the classes that sent them out. Chaplains, like all other officers of the VOC, had to abide by these instructions at sea and in the territories under the rule of the VOC. Despite the letter of calling (*beroepsbrief*) and instructions of the sending classes, chaplains were for all practical purposes, completely under the authority of

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35 Missive 2, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 9,10.
37 Article 1 of the "Instructions" bound ministers and sick-comforters to civil obedience. During their travel overseas and on land they, like all other officers, were to submit themselves to the legal government (Council of XVII, captain of their ship, their Governor General, and the Council of India) with regard to "civil conversation and civil obedience". (Instructions for predicants and sick-comforters, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 544.)
38 Instructions for predicants and sick-comforters, Article 1, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 544-45.
the Governor-General and the Council of Policy.\textsuperscript{39} As in East India, chaplains at the Cape had to take an oath of allegiance to every new governor.\textsuperscript{40}

Regulations that applied to Company officials were also valid for chaplains. Like other Company officials, they were not allowed to operate their own businesses for personal gain. Hence, Ds Le Sueur had to request demission as Company chaplain because he bought the farm of his deceased father-in-law. As a company employee he was not permitted to do so.\textsuperscript{41}

Since the Reformed tradition recognised the authority of the magistrates (state) over the church – it can be argued that it was normal to expect chaplains to stay within the law laid down by the VOC as legal government. However, Reformed church polity assumed that the church should be free to govern its internal affairs in an ecclesiastical manner – to “manage church affairs in a churchly fashion”. This line became completely blurred in the case of the VOC government and the Church at the Cape.\textsuperscript{42}

Even though the Cape Government sanctioned the formal institution of congregations at the Cape with their own consistories as governing bodies, the Governor and Council of Policy continued to employ and place sick comforters and predicans.\textsuperscript{43} The autocratic manner in which the government appointed Ds le Boucq in the place of Ds Beck at Drakensteyn and the transfer of Ds Beck to Stellenbosch

\textsuperscript{39} Vorster, \textit{Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk}, 31/2.
\textsuperscript{40} Vorster, \textit{Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk}, 40.
\textsuperscript{41} Missives 62, 63, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 203, 205, 206. Subsequently both Company and Classis had to make special concessions to him to continue in ministry until his relief arrived. He was willing to do so for the time being if Classis could convince Company management to allow him to continue with ministry despite the fact that he owned his own farm.
\textsuperscript{42} The case of Ds Petrus Kalden serves as an example. In 1706 Kalden was implicated in the case of Governor Willem Adriaan van der Stel and the insurrection led by Adam Tas. A document signed by Tas alleged that Kalden was guilty of all kinds of offences. Being ordered by “his Lords and Masters” (governor and council of policy) to defend himself in the fatherland, one would assume that the accusations against Ds Kalden were of secular nature. Cape Town Consistory was, however, requested by government to attest to Ds Kalden’s “doctrine, life, conduct, walk and behaviour”. Hence Consistory attested to Kalden’s “sincere, pious and godly life and conduct; [as being] somebody that loved and devoted himself to the study and preaching of God’s holy and redeeming Word; in his conduct and social behaviour morally sound, comforting and pious; diligent in the execution of the catechesis; [and] with regard to his preaching, excellent and irreproachable...” (Missive 17 and appendix, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 57&59.). Although Tas’ charge against Kalden is not clear from the correspondence, one can deduce from this testimonial of Consistory and from a letter by Kalden himself, that the charge against him questioned his ministry, doctrine and life as preacher and that these were deemed to be political of nature. It was against such a charge – which in Reformed church polity clearly resorts under ecclesiastical jurisdiction – that Kalden had to defend himself at a VOC hearing. Later Classis took notice with acclamation that Ds Kalden had won his case at the “high government at the Cape” (Missive 173, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 17,18.).
\textsuperscript{43} Missives 43, 44, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 165, 168.
illustrates the point. While Le Boucq had complained about such irregular
governmental interference, the Cape Town Consistory reported with approval (1730)
that di Beck and Le Sueur were willing to follow governmental orders and serve
other vacant congregations according to their ability. Hence, Le Boucq was
isolated in his protest against governmental domination of the Church.

The Cape Town Consistory also uncritically accepted the practice of
Company jurisdiction over chaplains. In 1745 when itinerant sick comforter Willem
Raasssel caused a stir by his slanderous statements, Cape Town Consistory lodged a
complaint with the Governor. Raasssel, in turn, appealed to the Admiral of the return
fleet. The latter subsequently handed Raasssel over to the Fiscal.

The Church had so little jurisdiction over chaplains that in 1750 the Council
of Seventeen even declined the request of both Classis and Synod that Ds
Cloppenburg’s appeal be heard in the Netherlands rather than in Batavia. The
political masters simply ruled that would take place in the Company Council of
Appeal in Batavia.

Recruited by Classis; approved, appointed, paid and placed by
the Company

Like the Dutch government, the VOC also insisted on approving the calling of
ministers and even paying their sustenance. This was out of line with the Church
Order of Dordrecht which the Classis of Amsterdam had adopted as canonical and
which assigned the Church the freedom to conduct its own internal affairs and take
responsibility for its own material sustenance.

The Cape congregations were not in a position to call their own predicants as
per Reformed church order. The Classis of Amsterdam recruited and inducted sick
comforters and predicants, received their reports and exchanged correspondence
with them. The Company, however, reserved the right to approve their nomination,
appoint and place them as paid Company employees. This is illustrated by the
report of Classis that the Assembly of Seventeen had “through the grace of God

48 Articles XI & XXX. However, the Dutch Church had already compromised itself when the 1578
synod took a resolution sanctioning state approbation of nominations of predicants.
49 This condition was also reflected in the proposed 1643 church order of Batavia which required the
“approval of the Christian government of this city” (Church Order of Batavia, 1643, in Spoelstra,
*Bouwstoffen II*, 583.).
granted Drakensteyn a minister”. On occasion the Cape Government even went so far as to appoint an itinerant chaplain at the Cape in event of a vacancy occurring and the Classis being unable to procure a suitable candidate.

The dependence of the Church at the Cape on Classis and Company is a recurring theme in the correspondence regarding the chronic shortage of ministers of the Word. Company approval sometimes delayed or even thwarted the placement of predicants at the Cape. Not only did the Company appoint predicants, but it also granted them demission and subsequently paid their pension as was illustrated by the example of Ds Kroonen in 1777.

**Election of elders and deacons - subject to government approbation**

According to the Church Order of Dordrecht, elders and deacons were elected by the Consistory – which consisted of elders and predicant. Deacons could also be elected if there were too few elders (Art XXXVIII). The congregation either had to approve this election or alternatively elect someone from the uncensored members of the congregation (Art XXII, XXIV).

As in the case of predicants, the Cape government, however, also controlled the election of elders and deacons. Consistory could at most provide government with a short list of two possible candidates from which the Government made the final choice and appointment. In 1690 Government voluntarily conceded that

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53 Cape Town Consistory reported that Ds Meyerink was at long last approved by the Governor General and the Council of Policy to minister in Roode Zant (Spoelstra, *Bouwstof Jen* I, 200.) and Classis responded by expressing its sadness about the delays that government sometimes cause in this respect (Missive 214, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstof Jen* I, 103.).
54 In 1749 a situation arose where there were vacancies for preachers at Cape Town, Stellenbosch and Swartland. Retired Ds Le Sueur offered to continue to work alongside Ds Van der Spuy to minister in these vacant congregations while Classis was recruiting new incumbents – provided the Lords Major (political masters) and Classis would allow that (Missive 73, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstof Jen* I, 232.). Classis replied that it had been able to recruit more than one suitable candidate for the vacancies in the Cape congregations. Classis, however, only succeeded to have one of them approved by the “Lords Major”. The latter did not give any reason for rejecting the other candidate(s). Classis speculated that the reason for their disapproval would be that the other candidate(s) had no experience of ministering the Word in the fatherland. Hence, Classis apologised to the Cape Town Consistory saying that it was difficult to recruit experienced ministers that were both competent and willing but that it would nevertheless continue the search. Classis reported on 5 October 1750 that it had recruited a suitable minister but that the political masters would not allow a candidate minister to be sent to the Cape (Missive 209, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstof Jen* I, 93.).
consistory could elect elders, but it reserved the right of approbation.\textsuperscript{56} However, Government retained the right to elect deacons from a shortlist provided by Consistory. This situation continued until the end of Company rule.\textsuperscript{57}

Control of consistories was important to the political powers because the former had proved to be effective structures of resistance during the struggle for independence in the Netherlands. The unwillingness of the Dutch National Government to grant too much public authority to the Church was clear when it refrained from endorsement of the church order of the National Synod of Dordrecht and the subsequent withholding of permission to convene another national synod for two centuries thereafter.

Interference by the government with members of consistory evoked fierce resistance at the Cape. In 1707 when Ds Le Boucq unilaterally deposed two church councillors by appealing to Scripture and the Church Order of Dordrecht,\textsuperscript{58} first merchant (and \textit{secunde}) D'Ablijn and the Political Council condemned his action in the strongest terms. Ironically, as Le Boucq had previously reminded government, it was governmental prerogative to approve, install, and depose church councillors. Le Boucq's action was regarded to be such a severe violation of governmental patronage that the political masters refused to remunerate him and forbade him from preaching. Subsequently he was sent by Government Batavia to be tried.\textsuperscript{59}

The Theron case at Drakensteyn illustrated how government approbation and the instalment of elders and deacons led to the secularisation of church polity. In the absence of public status for Reformed church polity, civil law was applied in a dispute regarding the election of an elder. When Thomas A Theron was nominated by consistory as elder in 1772, a number of congregation members objected. In Reformed church polity this was regarded as a normal right of membership. Such an objection would normally warrant an investigation into the life and doctrine of the person. Theron, however, had been installed by government. Hence, the Drakensteyn Consistory maintained that since Theron had received government approbation, the objection against his instalment was not ecclesiastical but rather of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} Vorster, \textit{Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk}, 38.
\item \textsuperscript{57} Extracts from minute books: Cape Town Consistory, 5 November 1792, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen} II, 347.
\item \textsuperscript{58} Ironically he had at a previous occasion, when still at Drakensteyn, laid a charge against the Cape government, reminding the Council of Seventeen that it was the prerogative of government to approve the church councillors nominated by consistory (Appendix to missive 19, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen} I, 109.).
\item \textsuperscript{59} Appendix to missive 19, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen} I, 110, 111.
\end{itemize}
civil nature. This was further underscored when Theron consulted a lawyer. The full weight of the implications of governmental control became clear when church members opposed to his investiture as elder were accused of defying the lawful government that had installed Theron – a sin that warranted their censure. (See Appendix C)

**Church Councils under Company control**

Apart from controlling matters pertaining to church order, the Company also kept tight reigns on the day to day ecclesiastical decision making and management of the Church. The Company insisted on approval of the assemblies of consistories as well as that of the short lived Combined Church Council. Political commissioners who represented the Company had to ratify all resolutions of assemblies. Thus the Cape Town Consistory had to procure permission to move the pulpit and to use a new version of the Psalter.

In the following section it will become clear how the Company also controlled the attempted connecting structure between the Cape congregations.

**The Control of Ecclesiastical Connections**

**Classical connectivity**

The VOC made good use of classes in the Netherlands – in the case of the Cape only

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60 Appendix to missive 113, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 342.
61 Missive 117, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 406-08; cf. Appendix C at the end of this work.
62 At a meeting under the direction of Governor-General Joan van Hoorn, in consultation with Di Mares and D'Ailly, proposals pertaining to church management were made by government officials, such as the frequency of church council meetings, the way in which minutes were to be kept, the venue of such meetings; the administration of charity funds; upkeep of church property by the political commissioner that was called the “church master”; the mutual relations (or rather the lack thereof despite the fact that they “belong under one government and reign”) between the three respective congregations at the Cape (Government missives and extract resolutions, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 608-11.).
63 The 1762 proposal to move the pulpit to create more space for worshippers had to be presented to the political commissioner during an assembly of consistory, who in turn had to present it to the governor for consideration. The governor did not only consent, but was so obliging that he even provided some wood for the necessary alterations (Extracts from minute books: Cape Town Consistory, 6 September 1762, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 305.).
64 When in 1775 a new rhymed version of the Psalter became available from the Netherlands, the Cape Town Consistory first had to “request the Well Honourable Austere Lord Governor and the Honourable Political Council most respectfully” to be permitted to use this new Psalter. The reply came in writing “through the Honourable Political Commissioner in the name of the Well Honourable Austere Lord Governor and the Honourable Political Council in this place that it will behave his Honourable and the Honourables if this church congregation will sing somewhat faster…”! The assembly resolved to request the Honourable Political Commissioner to assure the Honourable ... and Honourables ... “in the most respectable manner that the congregation would be given the necessary notice.” (Extracts from minute books: Cape Town Consistory, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 311.).
the Classis of Amsterdam could recruit, ordain and commission chaplains (and teachers).\textsuperscript{65}

Although chaplains were formally under the orders of Classis, corresponded with Classis personally or on behalf of the consistory that were eventually formed and Classis advocated their cause with the political patrons, the authority of Classis was minimised due to the distance between the Cape and Amsterdam and the Company resolve to control “its” Church.\textsuperscript{66}

In a sense, the relationship between the Church at the Cape and Classis was similar to the relationship between the latter and churches (congregations) outside of (Dutch Reformed) Christendom. These were called “churches under the cross”. Classis provided ecclesiastical patronage to them.\textsuperscript{67} This service was also rendered to the “foreign churches” (buitenkerken) at the Cape.\textsuperscript{68} The major difference between the “foreign churches” and “churches under the cross” was that the latter had no political patronage, while the Church at the Cape had the VOC as patron – indeed one that controlled the Church to the extent that it was almost completely incorporated into Company organisation.

The ecclesiastical patronage of the Classis had a double sided effect on the integrity of the Church at the Cape. On the positive side, it served as a buffer against unrestrained control by the Company. Through correspondence, the Church at the Cape could appeal to Classis to advocate its cause within the Council of Seventeen. The latter was mindful that Classis had access to the Prince and States General which had final jurisdiction over Church and the Company. On the other hand, the relationship between Classis and Church strengthened the domination of the Company. The very fact that the correspondence of chaplains with Classis was

\textsuperscript{65} Originally the respective chambers of commerce took the initiative to recruit and employ chaplains. The provincial synod at Amsterdam of 1601 then adopted the motion of the Consistory and Classis of Amsterdam that the classes and not the (Company) rulers had to take responsibility for predicants for East-India (Vorster, Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk, 26.). In 1642 all ecclesial authority over chaplains was transferred to the Classis of Amsterdam (P. B. Van der Watt, Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1652-1824 (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1976), 11, 43.). This happened as a result of ecclesiastical provincialism and Company self-interest (cf. C W Th van Boetzelaer van Dubbeldam in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 186; Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 70; Vorster, Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk, 28.).

\textsuperscript{66} Cf. Vorster, Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk, 31. “Instructions for Predicants and Sick-comforters in the employ of the VOC” stipulated that they should obey the instructions and orders of the classes from which they were sent out, the VOC in effect wielded all power over its chaplains. Company instructions and orders of commanders, governor-generals and councils of policy finally determined the fate of chaplains and the Church in The East Indies.

\textsuperscript{67} See the Church Order of Dordrecht article X; Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 289-90; Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 119.

\textsuperscript{68} Missive 203, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 83.
automatically perpetuated by consistories has an important implication. Congregations, in effect, became extensions of the chaplains. Instead of forming their own classis – something so basic to Dutch Reformed church polity\(^9\) – they virtually became dependent chaplaincy agencies of the Company. They could not form their own local classis, nor participate as member congregations of the Classis of Amsterdam.

The need for the normalisation of ecclesiastical connectivity among them was, however, felt – not only on the side of the Cape congregations, but also from the Company. In 1710 Commissioner Joan van Hoorn of the High Government in India raised the possibility of a classis at the Cape.\(^9\) His motivation was that they "resorted under one government and reign."\(^7\) This wording creates the suspicion that the formation of a classis at the Cape would consolidate the control of patronage of the Company as it would weaken the above mentioned advocacy role of the Classis of Amsterdam.

In 1746 the Cape congregations attempted to fill the need for connectivity by initiating the formation of such a structure. The fact that it procured permission from the Cape Government to form a classis (Classicale Vergaderinge)\(^7\) reinforced the suspicion that such a development would strengthen the dominance of local VOC rule. In Amsterdam neither Company nor Classis were, however, comfortable with the idea.

Classis did not want to discard the role of ecclesiastic patron. It advised the Church at the Cape that such a general church council should rather be called a coetus or conventus instead of a classis. The motivation was that Synod had given classes the privilege of the preparatory and peremptory examination, the appointment and induction of preachers – especially in "foreign churches" (buitenkerken). A coetus or conventus, Classis pointed out, referred to a less formal body that would not jeopardise the authority of Classis. Hence, the insistence of Classis that the Combined Council (as this conventus became known) report meticulously on the general and particular state of the congregations at the Cape.

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\(^9\) The Church Order of Dordrecht, articles XLI and XLII, endorsed by the Classis of Amsterdam, stipulated that all predicants and an elder of each congregations would have sitting on classis.

\(^9\) It emerged as he and local government officials consulted the Cape Town predicants in connection with a number of proposals he had pertaining to church order. One of the points on the agenda was the relation among the three congregations at the Cape.

\(^7\) Government missives and extract resolutions, 10 March 1710, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 610.

\(^7\) Missive 67, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 212.
Classis, however, offered its assistance and council to the Combined Council for the general establishment (de algemene stigting) of the Church at the Cape.\textsuperscript{73} Classis chose to maintain its role of ecclesiastical patron and advocate within the precarious settlement between the various ecclesiastical modalities and a range of layers of state.\textsuperscript{74}

The discomfort of both the Company (with the possible establishment of another centre of power at the Cape\textsuperscript{75}) and Classis (with the possibility of losing its sole ecclesiastical patronage of the Church at the Cape), came to a head when the Combined Council made representations to the classes of Delft and Schieland, the classes of the Synod of South Holland and the Classis of Amsterdam in a quest to exert pressure on the Council of Seventeen to prevent the establishment of a Lutheran congregation in Cape Town.\textsuperscript{76} The result was that the Council of Seventeen summarily terminated the Combined Council in 1758. Classis simply responded by reprimanding the Combined Council and saying that it had brought

\textsuperscript{73} Missive 203, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 83.

\textsuperscript{74} Examples abound in the correspondence of the dependent position of the Church at the Cape and Classis’ precarious role amid a maze of VOC authority structures. Whereas the Church at the Cape could liaise directly with the Cape Government to obtain its approval for the retirement of preachers, it needed Classis to obtain the Assembly of Seventeen’s final permission. Examples of this is the retirement of ds Beck in 1731 (missive 42, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 164; missive 184, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 45, 46.; ds Cock in 1739 (missive 54, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 186; missive 195, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 70.); and, ds Harders in 1775 (missive 120, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 414, missive 250, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 174.). Classis’ authority in this regard was even sidestepped by the Company. Ds Van Echten for instance was given demission by government without Classis’ consent. Classis was only informed accordingly (missive 79, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 248.). Classis also mediated on behalf of widows of ministers to secure a pension for them that was equal to that of widows of other Company employees (missive 222, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 115.). Classis’ precarious position is evident from the following incidence. When Ds Le Boucq complained about the lack of church and school amenities and personnel at Drakensteyn, the VOC board of directors simply informed Classis that Le Boucq’s predecessors had accepted that situation without complaint and that he had to resign himself to that state of affairs. Classis did not have much of an option but to inform Le Boucq about the response of the “Lords Major” and to remind him that he had been appointed as predicant at Drakensteyn by “Her Honourable Rulers” (missive 172, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 16-17.). Classis was also quick to condemn Le Boucq’s subsequent criticism of Ds Kalden’s alleged complacency with regard to that which in Le Boucq’s view amounted to government irregularities. Although Classis admitted that it had not studied Le Boucq’s extensive documents, which he had submitted, Classis nevertheless approved of the fact that Kalden “had triumphed at the High Government at the Cape.” (missive 173, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 18.). Bearing in mind that Le Boucq seemingly sided with the Adam Tas party (J.I Marais, Author, Geschiedenis der Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika, Tot Op de Grote Trek, De Christelijke Huis-Bibliotheek: Geschiedenis der N.G. Kerk in Zuid-Afrika, vol. IV (Stellenbosch: Het Administratie-Bureau, 1919), 62.) and had also directly challenged the Company more than once, one cannot but suspect Classis of exerting itself to stay on a good footing with the Company.

\textsuperscript{75} Vorster, Kerkregelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk, 42. This is evidenced by the fact that even the Combined Council resolution to institute mutual visitation of congregations first had to be ratified by government.

\textsuperscript{76} Missive 87, 91, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 271, 278.
this situation upon itself and simply had to bear the consequences.\textsuperscript{77}

**Synodical connectivity**

In its quest to retain its rightful connectivity with the synod of Holland, the Church at the Cape continuously requested Classis to provide it with the acts of synod.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{77} Missive 224, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 119. Not even the fact that the Combined Council had only responded to correspondence was mitigative. To Classis it was simply inconceivable that the Combined Council had ventured to do this without first consulting Classis or the Council of Seventeen. Subsequently Classis informed the Combined Council that it would hear directly from the VOC government regarding the latter’s misgivings about their conduct (missive 222, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 116.). Hence the Council of Seventeen wrote to the Governor and the Council of Polity of the Cape, who in turn passed it on to the Cape Town Consistory. It reads that government emphatically ordered that in future correspondence would only be allowed with the Classis of Amsterdam. Moreover, the Council of Seventeen summarily terminated the Combined Council and the mutual visitation of congregations at the Cape, claiming that the Combined Council was of little use and that the cost was too high for churches that were in debt. The Cape Town Consistory apologetically explained to Classis that they merely politely responded to correspondence from South Holland and that they did not at all foresee this harsh response from the Classis of Amsterdam, the Heeren XVII, nor the Cape Governor and his council. Consistory also denied the indictment that the congregation was in debt. Such a charge, consistory defended, was foul (abusief) since the small amounts claimed for expenses of the Combined Assembly were for the account of Cape Town and Drakensteyn congregations: Both of these were financially sound and could carry the meagre expenses procured by the Combined Council. In conclusion Consistory diplomatically requested Classis to judge for itself whether the Combined Council was of any use (missive 93, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 289-90.). This clearly was a rhetorical question. Being too dependent and submissive to its ecclesiastical and political masters the Cape Church had to rest its case in this manner. Classis, on the other hand, simply uncritically accepted the order of the VOC without answering the specific arguments and counter arguments put forward by the Cape Church. It was either so submissive to the VOC or so jealous of its sole ecclesiastical influence over the Cape Church that it simply sided with government and criticised the Cape Church for its “transgression.” The correspondence with South Holland, it wrote, had led to estrangement between (the Classis of) Amsterdam and the Cape, and to the displeasure of the Council of Seventeen and the local governor, resulting in the termination of the Combined Council “upon high orders.” (missive 224, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 119.). Government, Classis replied, would not consider reinstatement of the Combined Council as it had caused its own termination by taking up contact with South Holland without government permission (missive 224, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 120.). And so the case was closed. Later on we read that the Classis of Amsterdam applauded the Cape Town Consistory for reporting that it had “resisted the temptation to return correspondence from the Classis of Walcheren” (missive 238, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 147.).

\textsuperscript{78} Cape Town Consistory requested Classis from early on (1714) to mediate on their behalf to secure permission from the VOC masters to acquire a copy of the acts of the Synod of North Holland, which was the particular synod under which the Classis of Amsterdam resorted. As reason for its request Consistory stated that it was isolated from the rest of the Dutch Reformed Church and was therefore deprived of ecclesiastical council. Being in possession of the acts of Synod would compensate for its deprivation of mutual ecclesiastical council when dealing with difficult cases and issues (missive 28, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 133.). The acts would provide guidance for its life and work (cf. missive 130, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 455.). Classis initially responded positively to the request (missive 178, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 33.). The following year it however wrote back saying that it had not yet been able to procure permission from the Heeren XVII to send them the requested synodical acts (missive 181, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 38.). Seven years later Consistory repeated its appeal to Classis to mediate their request that “government honour them with a copy of the Acts of Synod” – a request that was repeated in 1724 and 1730 (missives 35, 39, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 150, 160.). Drakensteyn Consistory repeated this request in 1729 and motivated that synodical acts would “help ministers to know how church affairs are handled in the fatherland.” (missive 37, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 156.). Cape Town Consistory thanked Classis in 1731 for having sent them the acts, which they had read attentively and had afterwards sent to the other
From the 1736 letter of Classis it becomes clear, however, that the highest level of VOC ratification first had to be procured before complying with the request.\textsuperscript{70}

On receipt of the acts of Synod in 1737, the Cape Town Consistory conceded that they were merely “concept articles” as far as the Church at the Cape was concerned and expressed the hope that the hearts of the Heeren Majores (Assembly of XVII) would be moved to grant their request.\textsuperscript{80}

**THE INTERESTS OF THE PATRON AS CONTROLLING FACTOR**

* **A peaceable colony and a profitable company**

The Reformed tradition respected the calling of government to promote peace and stability through its legislative, judiciary and penal organs. Calvin, unlike the Anabaptists, honoured the “magistrates” and hence dedicated the final chapter of the fourth book of his Institutes to the theological rationale for civil government. However, he and his followers confronted rulers concerning their abuse of power. They also confronted the immorality and injustice of the snug middle class merchants who governed Geneva. The church took on a prophetic role towards government – not to govern, but to exercise moral authority with regard to government.\textsuperscript{81}

Government had to reign according to the law of God’s kingdom and protect the church. When government promulgated laws that were in conflict with the will of God, people were not obliged to obey them. Despite his justified fear of anarchy and subsequent strong insistence that even tyrannical rulers be obeyed, Calvin cautiously opened the way for resistance and rejection of tyrannical rulers.\textsuperscript{82}

It was this door that Calvin left open for resistance of minor rulers that convinced Prince William of Orange\textsuperscript{83} to rally the support of members of the Dutch Reformed Church to resist and reject the rule of King Philip II of Spain in 1568.\textsuperscript{84}

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\textsuperscript{70} Missive 191, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 61.

\textsuperscript{80} Missive 53, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 183.


\textsuperscript{84} De Groot, *Johannes Calvyn: Getuie Vir Jesus Teen Wil en Dank (1509-1564)*, 48.
The dual forces of the Calvinist Reformation and political liberation were joined by a third force to form a close alliance to secure a free Dutch republic — mercantile capitalism, which guaranteed economic viability of the state.

After having led a successful revolt against Spanish hegemony, William was faced with internal conflict and potential unrest due to conflicting confessional positions. He had to gain control of religion and Church to guarantee a stable and peaceable political situation, especially during an age when religious wars were tearing Europe apart.

Hence government convened the important fifth national synod of Dordrecht (1618-9) in a quest to resolve the conflict between Remonstrants and contra-Remonstrants in the province of Holland. The political leaders of the remonstration were eliminated as they were charged with treason and sentenced either to death or to life imprisonment. City armies were disbanded and the composition of the magistrates modified.

This strengthened the privileged position of the Church as it could from thereon count on the magistrates to be of kindred spirit. The trade-off of privilege was, however, state control of the Church, which reached its zenith between 1650 to 1672. In 1651 the States General declared that “the true Christian Reformed Religion” would henceforth be maintained by “the force of the country”. This resulted in the formation of a Reformed commonwealth by the Dutch provinces. Although this greatly bolstered the position and confession of the Church, state hegemony over the Church increased to the point where the “high government established itself as synod of God Almighty”. The consequence thereof was state refusal to endorse the church order of Dordrecht as well as the refusal to allow the convention of another national synod for two centuries. The extent of state control was reflected in a measure taken by the authorities in Utrecht, which compelled predicants to declare that they would refrain from criticising the government. As a result the theocratic ideal of the Church was thwarted.

Calvinism in the Netherlands “worked fairly well as a theology of politics as it combatted [the] political power” of Spain — but unfortunately fell prey to Dutch
imperialism and an uncritical quietism. 91

Article XXX of the Church Order of Dordrecht stated that “in consistory none other than ecclesiastical matters would be dealt with, and only in an ecclesiastical manner”. 92 It could be interpreted as a measure to guard against the Church overstepping its calling by governing the state or prescribing to government and thus getting involved in the arena of actual power. This article was, however, not meant to silence the prophetic voice of the church as the church was such an integral part of Calvin’s theology.

The church as an extension of the VOC’s chaplaincy – was under instruction to refrain from open discourse on Company matters. The church was required to follow the principle of “only ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner” which effectively muffled the Church’s prophetic voice. This suited the Company, even more than the States General, as a church of Reformed persuasion could threaten the political and economic interests of the rulers. A church where the encompassing scope of the gospel of the reign of God was professed and preaching was meant to address all spheres of life and where consistories had proven themselves as potential centres of community organisation and revolt, indeed spelt danger to the ruling elite. Such a church had to be controlled to ensure that it contributed towards the much needed political and social stability of a maritime, mercantile and colonial venture. As a result of the Reformation international trade took place amid the religious and military conflicts of Europe. Apart from being a replenishment station, the Cape fort was also a military post that had to guard the interests of Dutch trade against the rival Catholic Portugal and other European powers.

In 1782, when British animosity started to threaten the peace with the Netherlands, Classis called for prayers for God’s safeguarding of “our Dutch Indian properties and the Dutch state in general” and for “divine protection of the Cape coast against the danger and the threat of the enemy”. 93 Divine intervention was called for to maintain a society where civil and religious privileges were enjoyed and “the good of East India was still enjoyed unhindered”, as stated by the Batavian Consistory. Moreover, it expressed the yearning for peace for Dutch imperial

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91 De Gruchy, Liberating Reformed Theology: A South African Contribution to an Ecumenical Debate, 257.
92 Church Order of Batavia, 1624, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 564.
93 Missive 263, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 204.
Christendom within a wider peaceable Protestant Christendom: “O, that the salvation of India and the Netherlands may come from Zion, that the severed ties between Judah and Ephraim [presumably referring to the Netherlands and Great Britain] may be healed, so that peace and truth may come about and prevail in our time”. Cape Town consistory confirmed this sentiment as it replied: “We are locked in warfare with our hitherto allies”.

While the Church in the fatherland had been a major partner in the formation of the Dutch state with an identity and voice of its own, albeit under constant threat of state domination, the Church in the VOC domain was born and bred under strict control. The quietist stance which the Dutch state attempted to impose upon the mother church, was imposed on the chaplains by the Company from the outset. Sadly, in this way, predicants were willing to compromise the prophetic integrity of ecclesiastical offices and the Church as institution.

Another factor that compelled the Company to control the prophetic voice of its chaplaincy was the fact that it employed a diverse range of Europeans who needed to be managed amid non-Western heathen people. For this purpose chaplains come in handy. Hence, the first governor-general in the East Indies received an order in 1606 to appoint chaplains where they would be in the most favourable position to admonish employees of the Company and to promote conversion of the heathen. Ministry to employees and conversion of the heathen both served the much desired ideal of peace of the VOC’s mercantile empire.

The Company hoped that its chaplains would help create a religiously homogeneous society where the Word was preached in such a manner that it promoted “rest and peace”. Article 16 of the Instructions for Preachers and Sick comforters stated that they were employed to serve the Company as well as “the rest and edification” (rust en stichting) of the churches in East India. The same instructions reserved the right of the Company to terminate their services without stating any reasons. Chaplains, in order to serve the “pax Companium” were not to become involved in public matters, except education and welfare. Art 5 of the said

94 Missive 265, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 208-10.
95 Missive 144, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 505.
96 Vorster, Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk, 29, 32.
97 Ministry, however, had to yield to economic interests. Indicative of this is the report of first sick-comforter, Willem Wylant, that the Commander convinced him that it was advisable that the intended catechismal teaching be halved in the light of the tiring work week of the Company employees (missive 1, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen 1, 4.).
98 Instructions for predicants and sick-comforters, article 16, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 552-53.
Instructions proscribed chaplains from getting involved in the governance of ships, Comptoiren, forts or other places that directly or indirectly concerned the Company. It restricted chaplains to their vocation, viz., religion. 99

Chaplains were restricted regarding critique of Company management. Office bearers of the Company could not be admonished in public – for instance in sermons – lest it diminished the dignity of office bearers and their authority. Shortcomings and mistakes of government could be addressed in sermons, yet had to be treated in a general way without naming people and stirring up disorder and contempt for authority (art 10). It was, however, important that such admonitions were done lest chaplains condoned wrong public behaviour through their silence (art 11). 100

Although these articles may create the impression that chaplains were free to preach prophetically with regard to public life, the Instructions continued and specified that chaplains were only to communicate with Classis on matters concerning church, education and poverty relief. No communication of a political, military or commercial nature was allowed to be sent to Classis or any other person, only to the VOC government. 101 In that way, protest from within its own ranks as well as pressure from the Dutch government via the remonstrations of classes and synods due to information from chaplains, were nipped in the bud.

This leaves us with the question of whether chaplains were actually free to address public issues and whether they actually did so while abstaining from communicating with Classis. The silence in our primary sources on political and economic matters, suggests that chaplains either played it safe and seldom if ever addressed any public issues – especially if it concerned the Company and its institutions – or simply refrained from communicating such issues to Classis as stipulated in their instructions.

The Church at the Cape, as extension of the VOC chaplaincy, did not have much of a choice but to follow suit and view its calling as purely religious and ecclesiastical. The lack of correspondence regarding matters political and commercial serves to strengthen this impression. Government is only mentioned in the correspondence when matters concerning its patronage 102 of the Church

99 Instructions for predicants and sick-comforters, article 5, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 546-47.
100 Instructions for predicants and sick-comforters, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 551.
101 Instructions for predicants and sick-comforters, article 6, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 546-47.
102 Missive 50, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 179.
(including education and diaconate\textsuperscript{103}) were raised. These seem to be the only aspects of VOC government that the Church was free to remark on – apart from commending the commander and his government in general.\textsuperscript{104}

Knowing that the institutionalisation of congregations with their consistories could challenge Company governance, it was not surprising that two decades of VOC chaplaincy passed before the formation of the first congregation in the East Indies was allowed. This did not lessen the control over ecclesiastical officers and consistories.

Just as it seemed that the Church was gaining some freedom in the East Indies with the drafting of the 1624 church order, the Heeren XVII withheld approbation thereof and the relationship became even more strained. The Church was ruled ruthlessly and forced to serve Company interests. The situation deteriorated even further under Governor-General Speex. All correspondence to the Netherlands subsequently had to go via the governor-general; political commissioners had to attend consistory meetings; announcements in church and church discipline were interfered with; and predicants were removed at random. Speex declared rightly that he did not acknowledge church order. When, in response, ds Heurnius preached on the key authority (sleutelmag) that according to Scripture was given to the church, Speex had him arrested. Not long after this, all ecclesiastical resistance in the East Indies was broken and Governor-General Van Diemen drafted a church order that kept the Church completely in check. The Classis of Amsterdam protested against this order and accused the Batavian authorities that this church order was merely concerned about the “authority of politicians”; that it bereft the Church of its freedom and that it subdued predicants to slavery. The result was that the Heeren XVII once again withheld approbation. The Batavian authorities nevertheless kept on acting in the spirit of that church order. It was only during the course of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century that the Company gradually loosened its stranglehold on the Church in the East Indies.\textsuperscript{105}

At the Cape, Jan van Riebeek set the tone for the relationship between the Reformed religion, the Company and its commercial interests. He was regarded as the author of the so-called Van Riebeek prayer, which was a local adaptation of the

\textsuperscript{103} Instructions for predicants and sick-comforters, articles 5 and 6, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 546-47.

\textsuperscript{104} Missive 10, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 28.

\textsuperscript{105} Vorster, \textit{Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk}, 33-34.
standard prayer of the VOC. This prayer had been branded as the “shop prayer” since it so clearly reflected the profit motive of the VOC. This prayer was said at regular meetings of the Council of Policy at the Cape. This body was the highest decision making and executive authority from 1652 to 1795. It reads as follows (my translation):

O merciful, gracious God and Heavenly Father, it be hoy thy Divine Majesty to call us to manage the affairs of the General United Dutch Chartered East Indies Company here at the Cape of Good Hope, and as we are gathered with our Council in thy Holy Name for the purpose of taking decisions with their advice that will serve the said Company to the best, to maintain justice, and ... to continue to procreate and extend thy true Reformed Christian teaching to the glory and honour of thy Holy Name, and to the benefit of our lords and masters. This we are not able of without thy gracious help.

Hence, we beseech thee, o most gracious Father, that thee will assist us with thy fatherly wisdom and lead us during this meeting, to enlighten our hearts in such a way that all wrong passions, misunderstandings and other similar shortcomings will be removed from us, in order to cleanse our hearts from all human passions, and that we will be attuned in our hearts/minds in such a manner that we shall not resolve or decide anything in our deliberations that are not to the glorification and honour of thy most holy Name or to the maximum service of our lords and masters, without any consideration of our own benefit or profit.

We yearn for this and whatever more may be needed for the execution of the duties that we are commissioned to do and for our salvation. We pray and request this in the Name of thy beloved Son, our Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray...

As conclusion the Lord’s Prayer was said. The honour and glorification of God’s most holy Name, which was highly revered in Reformed thinking, as well as the best interests of the Company lords and masters, were glibly put on a par in this prayer. “The benefit of our lords and masters” was not strictly qualified by “the honour and glorification of God’s most holy Name” but seen as two entities that were given equal status which was evidence of an uncritical baptising of global mercantile capitalism with its concomitant colonialism and slavery.

The above mentioned meeting in 1710 under the guidance of Commissioner Joan van Hoorn also had to decide on which church order was to be used to serve the best interests, peace and quiet of the Church at the Cape.

Not only did the Company value a church that was peaceful and united, but the church also appreciated a peaceable society. This was attested to by Ds Overney’s report some time after his arrival at the Cape in 1678. He thanked God

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for bringing him to the Cape because there was “a sizable congregation, a civil society, a winsome man holding the paramount chieftaincy and an indisputably decent government”.¹⁰⁹

As will be indicated below, rest and peace that served unity in the church and a peaceable society in general were important virtues in Dutch Reformed Christendom - both in the fatherland and at the Cape. Few missives between the Church at the Cape and Classis did not allude to the matter of “rest and peace”. Let us consider a few examples:

Classis accused the protestors in Drakensteyn of completely denying the power of Christendom (Christianity) under the guise of piety. They were to be censured for resisting reconciliation and peace. If people in the fatherland were as troublesome as those complaining about the placement of Ds Kuys, they would be liable for ecclesiastical and civil censure. Hence, they should be punished in an exemplary manner “as disturbers of the common rest and therefore as anarchists.”¹¹⁰ (See Appendix C) A state of disharmony in the church was a threat to a peaceable society and therefore, according to Classis, the magistrates had to interfere.

The advice to sick comforter Raassel in 1746 during his re-appointment also reflected the emphasis of Classis on a peaceable church. Raassel was admonished to be careful, humble and respectful and to act in a spirit of meekness in order not to cause division, but rather promote unity in faith and action to the advancement of the gospel.¹¹¹

While the Church was expected to withhold critique on matters political and commercial, the rulers on the other hand, did not hesitate to interfere in ecclesiastical matters and even controlled them. The case of Ds Le Boucq illustrates this.

Ds F le Boucq exerted himself in holding the government accountable for its duties as patron. Firstly, he demanded proper amenities for Drakensteyn. Later, he complained that the political commissioner was of dubious religious persuasion, which not only disqualified him for appointment as a senior government official, but also as political commissioner who represented government in the Stellenbosch consistory. Finally, Le Boucq delivered a sermon that discredited W A van der Stel who had previously been discharged as governor of the Cape colony. After the

¹⁰⁹ ("een tamelijke gemeente, een burgerlijk volk, en hier is een fraai man die het opperhoofdschap beceeldt, en een seer ordentelijke regeringe"), Missive 10, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 28.
¹¹¹ Missive 201, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 80.
sermon he summarily discharged two new members of consistory from office because one of them was a government official and the other had succumbed to government pressure. One has to bear in mind though that this happened shortly after the VOC terminated the corrupt reign of Governor W A van der Stel after the protest of Adam Tas and his followers. Le Boucq seemingly also had the latter on his side as Tas’ sister was called to testify on his behalf. This close association with protestors was seemingly too much of a threat to political stability and resulted in both political and ecclesiastical patrons of the Church at the Cape taking a strong stand against Le Boucq.\textsuperscript{112} The government’s case against Ds Le Boucq and the retraction of his wage is also to be understood in this light. Even though some of his actions were intended to restore basic Christendom structures, it brought him into conflict with government Stellenbosch consistory, with both members deposed by him also signing, reported to Classis that Le Boucq had “during his short stay here, acted [in such a manner that he] alarmed and disturbed church and politics.”\textsuperscript{113}

Hence, the rights of being the privileged church had to be claimed prudently by promoting “rest and peace”, lest the goodwill of the Company was endangered. Demanding Church privileges could be a threat to “rest and peace”. By so doing he not only exceeded the limits of his power as predicant, but in effect challenged government. The VOC had been following the example of the States General in the Netherlands by becoming more tolerant towards other confessions. To challenge this development was seen to be endangering the fragile church-state relations at the Cape.

\textit{Classis}, prudent in dealing with the issue of VOC patronage, agreed with consistory that the departure of Le Boucq and the appointment of “peace loving Ds D’Ailly” had made the heartfelt wish of \textit{Classis} come true. These events, it asserted, held the prospect for the restoration of “rest and peace” in the church and would cause “the hearts and minds, brought into motion by strife and disunity, to be brought to rest and quiet”. Hence \textit{Classis} concluded with a benediction: “Blessed are the peace makers! Those that love Jerusalem have to prosper! May the God of peace affirm the peace amongst you that we may never again hear about alienation”.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{112} Marais, \textit{Geschiedenis der N.G. Kerk}, 62-63.
\textsuperscript{113} Missive 21, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 117.
\textsuperscript{114} Missive 177, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 31.
Officiating at public days of prayer

In a bid to soften the government to accept the Church Order of Dordrecht, the Dutch Church yielded to the wish of the government by adding New Years Day and Ascension Day to the list of public holidays.\footnote{Vorster, Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk, 24.}

At the Cape, Van Riebeek went much further. Without needing ecclesiastical sanction to commemorate his arrival and the commencement of building operations of the fort, he simply issued an order \textit{(last ende bevel)} that a day of fasting and prayer was to be observed to pray for God’s blessing on the venture. Likewise he ordered a day of fasting and prayer on account of illness among the people.\footnote{Missive 2, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 8.}

The toleration and bestowal of privileges on other confessions

While the Church had availed itself to retain the sole right as privileged and established church, the Cape Town Consistory reported with sadness in 1779 that the Lutherans had acquired freedom of religion and the right to obtain a pastor.\footnote{Missive 130, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 453.} \textit{Classis} responded in an apologetic fashion and stated that approval had been obtained from the Heeren XVII despite all ecclesiastical efforts to prevent it.\footnote{Missive 259, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 196.} In defiance of the Church’s wishes in this respect, the Company was ultimately in control of the religious and ecclesiastical situation within its domain. When economic interests dictated more religious tolerance, the VOC simply limited the privileges of the established Church.

The Control of Cultural Powers

Dutch and Dutchness

The eighty year old religious war against Spanish hegemony played a crucial role in uniting the Netherlands and developing a sense of Dutch nationality. It resulted in the unification of the Netherlands and the establishment of the Reformed Church. The Reformed Church authorised the official translation of the Bible into Dutch which in turn contributed the standardisation of written Dutch.\footnote{Berkhof, Geschiedenis der Kerk, 206.} The 1618-19 National Synod of Dordrecht requested government to endorse and help fund the translation of the Bible into Dutch. Similar developments were prevalent in other
nations with established Reformed churches.\textsuperscript{120}

The use of the vernacular in church was considered so fundamental that the Church Order of Dordrecht, article 51, not only allowed for separate Dutch and French speaking congregations in the Netherlands, but even separate connecting structures between them. The only exception was the National Synod.

The importance of the vernacular and sense of identity which it created is reflected in the fact that the Cape-Amsterdam correspondence was all in Dutch (and initially French as far as the Huguenots were concerned), while for centuries Latin had been the official language in all of western Christendom.

The premium placed on the use of the vernacular was also reflected in the 1643 Church Order of Batavia, which specified that schoolmasters had to ensure that only Dutch should be used in schools for the children of colonists.\textsuperscript{121} This can be compared with the 1624 Church Order that provided for a situation where children of colonists and Malay people learned together. Malay children learnt the Catechism in their native tongue, but had to learn everything else through the medium of Dutch.\textsuperscript{122} This reflected the above-mentioned premise of Dordrecht that language was an essential component of church formation.

After the Napoleonic wars and the new republican dispensation in the Netherlands, there was a return to the ancient name for the Netherlands, namely Batavia. The fact that the VOC had used this name for its colonial capital in the East Indies in the previous two centuries should be seen as an indication of the extent to which this colonial venture cherished its Dutch identity.

From the Cape-Amsterdam correspondence there are indications that the VOC also valued the Dutch language and promoted it at the Cape. Huguenots were located in such a manner that they would mix and subsequently integrate with Dutch colonists. Bearing in mind how the French Reformed were accommodated in the Netherlands and the historical importance of the French reformation, one can appreciate that the Assembly of Seventeen, “through the grace of God”, granted the

\textsuperscript{120} Biesterveld, \textit{Kerkelijk Handboekje}, 285-6. One has to bear in mind that the Dutch language had at that stage merely been standardised with the State Translation for which a choice was made for the northern dialect. The southern and eastern dialects could even be described in terms of being German dialects. Hitherto the Dutch language (as the English term “Dutch” still portrays) was referred to in the correspondence as “\textit{Duyts}” (which eventually denoted the German language), while the “\textit{Nederduits}” for Dutch in the name of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (\textit{Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk}) still reflects the close cultural connection to the Germanic language and culture.

\textsuperscript{121} Church Order of Batavia, 1643, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 595.

\textsuperscript{122} Church Order of Batavia, 1624, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 573.
request of Drakensteyn for a minister who could speak French (as well as Dutch). 

*Classis*, who negotiated this concession, reminded the Drakensteyn Consistory that it should strive towards the mastering of Dutch by the congregation as it would not always be possible to find a bilingual minister. The Drakensteyn Consistory immediately began to teach their people Dutch.

A close read of the Cape-Amsterdam correspondence reveals that it was not simply a matter of language, but of culture as well. Being Dutch was not only regarded as being culturally different, but indeed superior to other north western Germanic peoples. This was reflected in the plea of the Church at the Cape to have a Dutch Lutheran pastor instead of one of foreign origin. Cape Town Consistory insisted that *Classis* ensured that “a good Dutchman and not a Dane or any other foreigner” be appointed because it feared that most respected Lutherans were from Hamburg, Denmark and Sweden and hence a pastor from one of those places could easily be appointed. Those people, however, lacked the greatest value that the Dutch cherished, namely that of gentleness/meekness and moderation/temperance.

When ds Le Boucq (who happened to be of French extraction) autocratically deposed two members of Consistory without the permission of consistory, there was an outcry because these Dutch values had been transgressed. Despite the threat it posed to Company hegemony it was also viewed as abuse of power by the Church. A consistory or *classis* would normally conduct disciplinary inquiries and take action.

The value ascribed to gentleness/meekness and moderation/temperateness goes hand in glove with the ever-recurring theme of “rest and peace”. In 1709 *Classis* expressed the hope that the conflict and disunity would be overcome through

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123 Missives 177, 179, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 31, 34, 35.
125 Commissioner General J A de Mist’s comment on the condition of Dutch civility at the Cape during the second Dutch occupation is illuminating. Judging by his report, there was moral decay, unruly and rebellious behaviour and lack of civility in respect of the Cape’s “semi wild” Europeans. This decay he ascribed to their geographical isolation and resultant lack of interaction with “civilised” people”. Hence he dedicated himself towards turning the Cape Colonists into proper Dutch again, rekindling the national spirit and fostering pride in national morals, customs, dress and the like (De Mist in Anne-Marie Bergh, “Jacobus Abraham de Mist and Marc-Antoine Jullien: a comparison of educational ideas at the beginning of the nineteenth century” (English), *Educare* (Pretoria, South Africa) 27, no. 1 & 2 (1998): 29 - 45.).
127 Missives 101, 102, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 307-10, 311-12. To this the *classes* of South Holland responded by commending the Church at the Cape for its effort to resist the Lutheran quest for legal recognition, but comforted them that the situation would not change too much for the dominant religion if the Lutherans were to get a foothold, whether ministered to by a Dutch or an alien pastor (Missive 221, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 112.).
the prudence of peace-loving ds d’Ailly and the amiability of consistory. *Classis* quoted from the Psalms to underscore their sentiment: “How sweet and lovely is it that brothers can reside together in unity! That is where God commands his blessing”.  

When the Company eventually granted the Lutherans permission to institutionalise, the Church at the Cape viewed it as a great defeat for its quest to establish a Christendom consisting of only one religion and one institutional church. *Classis* admonished the Church at the Cape to continue upholding the virtues of “rest and peace” - regarding their relation with the Lutherans. This sentiment was echoed by the Company government, which also wanted rest and peace between the Reformed and the Lutherans. Rest and peace could not be jeopardised, as it was more important than the privileged position of the Church at the Cape as the only ecclesiastical institution.

While the Church at the Cape viewed rest and peace as dependent on its sole right to institutional life, it had to learn to live these virtues in a situation where it had lost its monopoly. In a situation where there was to be more than one faith and one church, the Church at the Cape had to learn a new virtue, namely religious tolerance. The Cape Government, and therefore also the Church at the Cape, finally had to relinquish the Cape-Dutch Christendom theocratic ideal of only having one instituted church. It had to yield to the consequences of the fragmented nature of the churches of the Reformation. This was not easy for the privileged Church at the Cape as is reflected in a report by the Cape Town Consistory. It said that growth in membership had declined drastically due to the establishment of the Lutheran congregation. The “rest and peace” of tolerance did not accompany numerical growth as did the “rest and peace” of being the only institutional church.

**Women and their position in society**

As indicated above, the social status of women was directly bound to that of their husbands. The case of Ds Cloppenburg provides a picture not only of the relationship between government and church, church law and natural law, but also how these related to the values of the time concerning women and gender relations.

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130 Appendix D to missive 147, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 517.
131 Missive 142, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 484.
Ds Cloppenburg was, amongst other things, charged for maltreating his second wife. He pleaded innocent and alleged that he had only reminded her of her nuptial obligations by upholding the good example set by his deceased first wife concerning the respectful way in which a minister’s wife should act towards her husband. This resulted in her vilifying him. Apart from that, she had continuously been drunk and had not taught his children how to behave with decorum. She disturbed him while preparing for services by swearing at him. She had caused him to be hated at the Cape and elsewhere. Therefore he beat her and justified his conduct by appealing to Paul’s teaching that a man should be able to govern his household. It is significant that Cloppenburg did not manage to convince either Consistory or the Cape Council of Justice of his innocence.

In defence, ds Cloppenburg accused his complainants of playing cards, a “sin” for which they would be found guilty in the fatherland!

**Class consciousness and the display of opulence**

Seventeenth and eighteenth century Cape Town was notorious for the social class awareness and the pompous lifestyle of Company officials. Worship services and funeral processions reflected social status. The habit of reserving pews, dating back to the 14th century in Dutch churches, developed into a full blast ranking of chairs according to social status during the 17th century – a custom that was exported to the colonies. Women were especially aware of their ranking according to their husbands’ positions in the Company. Husbands demanded that their wives be afforded correctly ranked chairs in church. The Assembly of Seventeen attempted to curb this development through legislation in its colonies. In 1755 governor Tulbagh adapted this legislation to address the situation at the Cape.

The Church echoed the norm set by its patron. The church could also draw on the tradition of the Dutch reformation and its break with Catholic pomp and circumstance. Here Church and state co-operated to uphold this value of Dutch Christendom.

Theal mentions that colonists at the Cape Colony were not class conscious in their mutual relations. This leaves one with a question as to whether a clear

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distinction existed between Free Colonists and Company employees regarding class consciousness. The fact that the Stellenbosch Congregation, which consisted of many free colonists, also experienced tension regarding the ranking of wives' chairs\textsuperscript{135} does not contribute towards finding a definitive answer to this question. Was this social consciousness especially prevalent among the wives of civil servants? The question is how this class consciousness or the lack thereof was carried over into subsequent eras. Pietism helped to bring an end to the ranking of chairs in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, but contributed to enshrining class distinctions along racial lines in the structure of public worship as believers of colour eventually had to worship apart from colonists and forfeited participation in church governance. This aberration of Christianity was approved and formalised by the Synod of 1857.

\textit{View of the Khoina, their humanity, culture and religion}

The afore-mentioned report of sick comforter Wylant reflected a view of “the other” that is purely Eurocentric. Religion was to such an extent understood in terms of Western Christendom that the Khoina were simply deemed to have no religion whatsoever.\textsuperscript{136}

Ds Le Sueur’s evaluation of George Schmidt’s missionary work reflects the same bias – not only towards the Khoina religion but also towards their culture as a whole. This became clear when he dismissed the Khoina baptised by Schmidt as remaining “thoroughly Hottentot in culture”. He continued to report that when questioned about the faith of his converts, Schmidt could merely answer “they felt Jesus inside of them”.\textsuperscript{137} It was obvious that in Le Sueur’s mind conversion also meant adoption of Western culture. It is noteworthy that Prof J I Marais, who also held this position, described Schmidt’s Genadendal mission station in terms of an acculturation project.\textsuperscript{138}

Ds Le Boucq warned in 1708 that the sorry state of the Church and education at the Cape would inevitably lead towards the decay of “Africaanders” into “Hottentotdom”\textsuperscript{139}, the latter signified the very antithesis of Cape-Dutch Reformed Christendom.

\textsuperscript{136} Missive 1, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 4.
\textsuperscript{137} Missive 63, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 204.
\textsuperscript{139} Missive 19, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 66.
Slaves and slavery

Slavery as an institution was practised by Europeans at the time when the VOC was established. Western nations kept some prisoners of war as slaves. With the advent of global trade and colonization, however, slaves especially from Africa were progressively imported to Europe. This coincided in the 17th century with Calvinists branding all people of colour as cursed descendants of Ham.

There was not much, if any opposition to slavery from the Church. In Batavia, a certain ds Valentyn acquired a serf some time before 1700. In practice serfdom – an old Eastern custom – did not differ much from slavery, apart from costing the master less. Before 1801, ds Smijtegeld of Vlissingen in the Netherlands was a lone voice in his condemnation of the slave trade from the pulpit. Slavery had generally not constituted a moral dilemma in the Netherlands and hence the authorities turned a blind eye to it.

At the Cape there was a need for cheap labour. The nomadic Khoi did not provide a solution. Slaves were therefore imported legally and illegally from different locations in Africa, Madagascar and the East. Slaves were Company or private property. It was uncommon for slaves to be resold. A few slaves changed owners due to maltreatment. The biggest importers of slaves were high officers of passing VOC ships and other VOC officers who traded slaves illegally at the Cape. There also was the possibility of slaves being set free.

Commissioner Goske’s indignation about slave women bearing the children of European men and the fact that these children were retained in slavery as well as his view that “heathen Africans understood [nothing of] the obligations of marriage or respected fidelity between man and wife”, is not reflected in the Cape-Amsterdam correspondence of the Church. Would this be indicative that race played a bigger role in political than in ecclesiastical thought? As indicated before, the Church correspondence did not initially reflect a link between slaves accepting the faith and their being set free. In addition to this, there is no indication that it was a

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144 Theal, History of South Africa, III, 184.
particular issue to the Church that slave children sired by colonists were retained in slavery.

The commentary of Ds Overney on the baptism customs at the Cape provides us with some idea of the way in which the enslaved “other” was viewed. Slaves were viewed as people and slavery was cast within the Christendom code of morality. Hence his statement that slaves were “also human and should through their slavery be made more happy rather than not” and that every father of a house should take care of those in his home.145 The considerations with respect to baptism of children were theological (whether one or both of the parents were Christian and would take responsibility for the baptismal vows) and neither race nor social class. This is reflected in sick comforter Van der Stael’s non-discriminatory report on the baptism of various categories of people. Whether children were those of a VOC officer, a slave man or born out of wedlock of a daughter of a vrijburger, did not affect their membership of the Church.146 Baptised slaves and their children were, however, “alienated” by being kept in a state of slavery. Ds Le Boucq pointed this out as “an abuse...that contradicted Christian freedom” – a “cancer not limited to the Cape, but prevalent throughout India”.147 The separate mention of the baptism of slave children toward the end of the VOC era could point to a growing discrimination along social lines in church thought and practice.148

**Science and reason versus revelation and faith**

The Church at the Cape emerged during the “age of Enlightenment” from a tradition that had broken with “superstition”, yet held on to the Augustinian settlement between science and revelation.

On the one hand, the Calvinist reformation reacted strongly against what it called the superstition of the Catholic Church. The 1574 Church Order of Dordrecht ruled against the laying on of hands during the ordination of the special offices as the “youthfulness of the churches made them prone to superstition”.149 The playing of the organ during or after religious services was also abolished for the same reason.150

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146 Missives 6, 8, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 17,24.
150 Biesterveld, *Kerkelijk Handboekje*, 76.
On the other hand, the religious outlook of the eighteenth century "was profoundly affected by the rise of Deism. (.) Observation and experimentation suggested that the universe was ruled by natural law. It was common to believe that this law was immutable. Thus, God began to be regarded by some thinkers as an absentee deity who had set the universe in motion and then left it to itself under inflexible natural laws. Thus there was no place for the supernatural in this world."\textsuperscript{151}

This was preceded by the philosophy of Frenchman René Descartes (1596-1650), which was felt in the Netherlands. Descartes even lived in the Netherlands for twenty years (1629-1649). Prominent Dutch Reformed theologian Gisbertus Voetius opposed his ideas. This resistance is reflected in the Articles adopted by the Classis of Walcheren in 1693 and which had to be underwritten by ministers of the Word. The very first article dealt with the corruption of human reason and its inability to prove "the divinity of Holy Scripture." \textsuperscript{152}

Descartes influenced a certain ds Balthasar Bekker who wrote a book in 1691 in which he argued against the belief in witches and witchcraft. One would think that this was in line with the opposition of the Reformed movement to superstition. Ironically this led to the defrocking of Bekker. \textsuperscript{153} Although the church opposed Catholic rituals as superstition because they were popularly viewed as human capabilities to manipulate God, the Church was not ready to break with a magical world view. This world view was reflected in the witch hunt of the Church and state that followed the outbreak of plague in Calvin’s Geneva in 1545. \textsuperscript{154}

Human calamities were not only ascribed to witchcraft, but also to divine intervention. In 1769 Classis ascribed the plague which afflicted the health of children and caused many deaths in Cape Town and Amsterdam to severe divine judgement. Pest among livestock in the Netherlands was viewed in a similar manner and subsequently the "High Government" in the Netherlands ordered the Church to pray for the situation. \textsuperscript{155}

In the greater part of the Cape-Amsterdam correspondence there is no reference at all to rationality, let alone the conflict between reason and faith. Two new elements became apparent during the two final decades of Cape-Dutch

\textsuperscript{152} Biesterveld, Kerkelijk Handboekje, 320.
\textsuperscript{153} Berkhof, Geschiedenis der Kerk, 211.
\textsuperscript{154} Berkhof, Geschiedenis der Kerk, 171.
\textsuperscript{155} Missive 238, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 147.
Christendom: Firstly, there were indications of tension between “science” and “reason” on the one hand, and revelation and faith on the other. This tension was dealt with by portraying the Christian faith as rational and its ministers as people of science. Secondly, there were indications of a pervasive spiritual and moral relapse.

The mounting tension between science and revelation was reflected in the Stellenbosch Consistory (1769) that dealt with a schoolmaster who “undermined the divinity and truth of Holy Scripture” by questioning the deluge, Noah’s ark, miracles in Egypt and Saul’s consultation of the witch of Endor. By so doing, schoolmaster De Beer “defamed two important servants of God by claiming Moses to be a murderer and David a bandit”.\textsuperscript{156}

A letter (1764) from a German congregation that had received financial assistance from the Cape Town Congregation, summarised the spirit of the time and attested to the attempt of the Church to accommodate rationalism and its faith in a bid to counter the negative effects which rationalism was having on faith and morality. The Cape Town Congregation was commended for its “rational religion” in this letter. The hope was expressed that this congregation would be “found to be the mother church of many nations, that God would bless its ventures and efforts towards building and extending the Kingdom with visible progress amid a time awash with unbelief and godlessness”.\textsuperscript{157}

The spiritual malaise was accompanied by moral decay. Little fruit was seen of the work of the ministry as love of the world, pride, pomp and circumstance, licentiousness, impiety and lust, transgression of civil and divine law had escalated. The Cape Town Consistory reported in 1776 on the increase of all kinds of vices associated with the growth of the town and the moral downfall of a respected church member. It was especially in town that the gospel had reportedly become “a smell of death unto death to many”. Not even the international political tension that followed the French revolution and signified “God’s judgement and long tried wrath” could sway people from their sinful ways.\textsuperscript{158}

The Cape Town Consistory responded (1774) to the carelessness, indifference and vices by following “the path of reason” in the hope that it would

\textsuperscript{156} Extracts from resolution book of Stellenbosch consistory, 6 August 1769, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstenen II}, 398.
\textsuperscript{157} Missive 231, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstenen II}, 135.
bring people over from “darkness to God’s wondrous light”.159

The wish that God would provide a man after His own heart to pastor Zwartland congregation “with science and reason” (weetenschap ende met verstand), as expressed in 1783 is another example thereof.160 However, this might rather have been indicative of the synthesis of medieval Christendom classical culture and Christian faith as reflected in the training of predicants at Calvinist universities, rather than the break of Enlightenment with this holistic world view. That old synthesis was reflected by the way in which ds Schlichter was recommended not only for “his knowledge of divine truths”, but also for “experience in the sciences that adorn (vercieren) the ministry of preaching”. Moreover, philosophy (wijsbegeerte) and knowledge of classical languages, as well as a godly life under God’s blessing, qualified him as an instrument for “the expansion of the kingdom of Jesus”.161 He was also fit to be appointed as rector of the school by the Commander of the Cape. The report said that if the Company could not hire him as preacher, it would help if he were appointed as vice-merchant in India.162 Theology, ministry, education and commerce were all mastered by one and the same person and received recognition by Church and Company.

In 1785 Classis undertook to recruit an able, learned, pious and peace-loving minister.163 When H R Van Lier was eventually recruited, his titles, “A.L.M., Philos. Doctor” were given to underscore the fact that he was a man of “science and reason” as requested by the Church at the Cape.164

Van Lier’s inauguration sermon was based on I Corinthians 2:2: “I have undertaken to proclaim Christ alone and him as crucified among you”165 reflects his Pascal-like “conversion” from his entrapment in rationalism and deism. This conversion, however, failed to find a new synthesis between reason and revelation.166

Bearing in mind that the period under discussion is called the Age of the Enlightenment, with rational explanation of natural phenomena winning the day against those based on faith, it is remarkable how consistently the Cape-Amsterdam

159 Missives 116, 119, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 404, 412.
160 Missives 146, 149, 150, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 510, 524, 527.
161 Appendix A to missive 30, missives 31, 36, 37, 38, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 142, cf.148, 149, 152, 154, 158.
162 Missives 30, 31, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 137-40.
163 Missive 269, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 221.
164 Missive 271, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 225.
165 Missive 154, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 538.
correspondence portrayed natural disasters as the result of divine intervention. The following are examples of traditional faith withstanding modernity:

In 1781 Classis lamented the deteriorating spiritual state at the Cape and in the Netherlands and feared an even greater divine judgement than the smallpox epidemic, because that had not resulted in the critically needed conversion in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{167} In response, Cape Town Consistory gratefully informed Classis that spiritual life had flourished since the outbreak of the same epidemic and prayed that God would use this scourge to teach people His righteousness.\textsuperscript{168} This might be an indication of a significant difference in world view between the Cape and Amsterdam at that stage, where “the finger of God” was still discerned in natural disasters at the Cape, but no longer in Amsterdam.

Likewise, international political strife was seen to be an instrument of God to bring about spiritual restoration. In 1783 Cape Town Consistory remarked that the war against “our old allies and faith companions”\textsuperscript{169} – an allusion to Britain - had caused fear at the Cape. The Consistory expressed the wish that God might cause that calamity to lead many to a change of heart and that His grace might lead them to mend their ways so that light would shine forth from the present darkness.\textsuperscript{170} The Batavian Consistory echoed the same sentiment. On the one hand, it hoped the conflict with England would be solved, but on the other hand, that the crisis would contribute to the spiritual well being of the church and the restoration of its witness.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{167} Missive 241, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 152/3.
\textsuperscript{168} Missive 104, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 316.
\textsuperscript{169} Missive 144, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 505.
\textsuperscript{170} Missive 142, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 484.
\textsuperscript{171} Missive 265, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 208-10.
CHAPTER SIX
CHURCH FREEDOM

CHURCH ATTEMPTS AT DEFINITION, ORDER AND SELF-GOVERNANCE

The relationship between the Church and the VOC Government in the East Indies was marked by tension. There were some courageous attempts to free the Church from state control. The situation at the Cape was markedly different. The Church at the Cape largely escaped the repressive rule which its sister Church in the East Indies experienced and was granted noticeably more freedom to govern itself amidst a cordial relationship. Both government and Church took the initiative to promote this kind of freedom.

Although the Cape Governor General and Council of Policy exercised direct control of the chaplains during the first thirteen years of the refreshment post at the Cape, there was praise rather than protest from the chaplains. Despite extensive governmental control, the institution of the first congregation and consistory signified a considerable advance in terms of the freedom of the church.

A contributing factor to the preponderant contentment with VOC control at the Cape, was the fact that “the High Indian Government” of Batavia, under whose governance the Cape officially resorted, found it difficult to rule the Cape. The commissioners, who were supposed to represent the VOC spent very short periods at the Cape and the incumbents changed so frequently that they had a limited effect on the Cape Government and Church. However, the effect they did have was surprisingly positive. Commissioner Simons warned that the state should not rule the Church in an authoritarian or despotic manner. This laid the foundation for a benevolent exercise of state patronage at the Cape. Had it not been that the Heeren XVII vetoed the proposal of Commissioner Van Hoorn the Church at the Cape would have had its own church order and classis. Commissioner, Baron Van Imhoff initiated the institution of other congregations besides Cape Town, which in time led to the formation of the Combined Council.\(^1\)

As mentioned, the distance between the Cape and East India, coupled with the relative proximity of the Cape to the fatherland, resulted in far more direct

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control by the Heeren XVIF and intervention by Classis. Moreover, commercial interests played less of a role as the Cape was not a trading, but a refreshment post. Colonial settlement was also more in evidence at the Cape. More colonists meant increased insistence on the freedom of the Church to manage its own affairs.\(^3\) The Theron case at Drakensteyn demonstrated how colonists exerted pressure for ecclesiastical integrity. (See Appendix C)

The Church at the Cape was very dependent on the government and generally content with the way in which government performed its rightful patronage according to Belgic Confession article 36. As a result there were very few efforts to free itself from state control. When government took it upon itself to elect deacons and elders contrary to the Church Order of Dordrecht, the Cape Town Consistory did not protest. When the 1674 government concession stipulating that consistory could elect its own elders (provided that they were approved by) was extended to the election of deacons in 1690, the Church turned down the offer and simply allowed government to continue to elect deacons from double the number of names proposed by consistory.\(^4\) There are numerous examples when the Church at the Cape actually requested governmental involvement in internal Church affairs.\(^5\)

On the other hand, the Council of Policy did not withhold approbation for decisions of consistories without good reason. So lenient was the Council, that not even the nomination of J van der Heiden, a supporter of protestor, Adam Tas, as elder was rejected. When the magistrate later objected, he was not supported by Council.\(^6\)

In summary, Vorster stated that the relationship between state and Church at the Cape was characterised by strict application of government patronage. In contrast to India it was done in a wise, tactful and benevolent manner.\(^7\)

**The right to remain a professing church**

Despite VOC control of the Church at the Cape, there remained a self-understanding of belonging to Jesus Christ as its church\(^8\) and bride.\(^9\)

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\(^3\) Vorster, *Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk*, 35.
\(^6\) Vorster, *Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk*, 43.
\(^7\) Vorster, *Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk*, 45.
\(^8\) Missive 64, in C Spoelstra, *Brieven Van die Kaapsche Kerken Aan die Classis Amsterdam 1655-1804*, Bouwstoffen Voor de Geschiedenis der Nederduitsch-Gereformeerde Kerken in Zuid-Afrika.
Chaplains, for instance, maintained a high ecclesiology by only allowing confessing members to partake of the sacraments. Hence, sick comforter Pieter van der Stael reported that the ecclesiastical attestation of an employee was needed from his congregation back home in order to provide him with the right to partake of the Lord’s Table. In 1657, in his communication to Classis, he made a list of existing church communicants at the Cape as well as people who had professed their faith on two ships. It is important to note that church membership was not taken for granted, but that profession of faith after catechesis was a prerequisite. Participation in public religious services was compulsory for all Company employees, nevertheless chaplains and consistories maintained the integrity of a confessional church by guarding over administration of the sacraments.

When an itinerant minister baptised the son of a gardener, Van Riebeek and his wife acted as official witnesses. Baptism was not an end in itself, but it had to be accompanied by faith and obedience, to the honour of God.

There was awareness that the established status of the Church could lead to nominalism. Hence we often read that “fruit” was wished upon the ministry and the hope expressed that the congregations would grow with true members of the body of which Christ is the Head.

**Church governance**

**Church Order of Dordrecht**

Chaplains in Batavia who were commissioned to draft a church order for East India based their proposal on the Church Order of Dordrecht. They even went further than the Church Order of Dordrecht by omitting government representation at consistory meetings. By so doing they attempted to free the Church from Company control. Likewise, predicants and church councillors at the Cape appealed to the Church Order of Dordrecht, which suggests that, as far as possible, they also attempted to retain ecclesiastical integrity despite Company control. The following stories illustrate this point:

During 1707 a combined church council of Stellenbosch and Drakensteyn appealed to the Church Order of Dordrecht regarding the refusal to bless the

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marriage of a certain Guilliam Loree. In his response to certain proposals by the governor in 1710, ds d’Ailly remarked, “the Church Order is sufficiently founded in the Acts and Post Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht, yet in specific cases one could consult the honoured foreign brothers for council”. It is worth noting that “peace-loving” ds D’Ailly, who succeeded ds Le Boucq, took the liberty of referring to the church order of Dordrecht rather than that of Batavia in his advisory to the Cape Government. Le Boucq, in justification of his autocratic dismissal of two members of the Stellenbosch consistory, also appealed to the Church Order of Dordrecht and those of East India.

There was a growing realisation on the part of the Church that it should be in a position to elect its own deacons. In 1752, during the short existence of the Combined Council, the Cape Town Consistory appealed to the commissioners-general to repeal the custom whereby the Church presented two candidates for the post of deacon from which government elected the incumbent. Consistory argued that this clashed with two articles of the Church Order of Dordrecht, which explicitly ruled that deacons were chosen independently by consistory.

The appeal to the Church Order of Dordrecht was clearly controversial in the case of Ds J F Bode. He protested his unilateral transfer by government from the Cape Town congregation to Tulbagh in 1760. He appealed to the Word of God and “the Order of the Dutch churches” (obviously referring to that of Dordrecht) in a bid to counter the random management of his ministry by the Company. It is noteworthy that the Cape Government was willing to heed Bode’s complaint and reinstated him in Cape Town.

These appeals to the Church order of Dordrecht instead of those of East India (of which the Church at the Cape was formally a part) showed a preference for association with the mother church. This supports Kleynhans’ argument that the

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12 Appendix C to missive 16, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 54, 55.
14 Appendix to missive 19, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 69, 72-78. Le Boucq claimed that Dordrecht enshrined his right to act according to Scripture, which he allegedly did. He also maintained that the Cape should have its own church order endorsed by the VOC authorities.
15 Extracts from minute books: Cape Town Consistory, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen II*, 347. Consistory further argued that although the article 86 of the said church order stipulated that it can only be amended by another National Synod (which the States General would not allow until 1816). Moreover, consistory claimed that this church order was endorsed by the States General – which was incorrect.
Church Order of Dordrecht served as the main authority for the Church at the Cape. 18

Resisting Company culture

Nine months after Ds Lambertus Slicher’s appointment as the second minister of the Cape Town congregation in March 1723, Ds d’Ailly again appealed to the “Dutch church practice”. His advice that “where two or more ministers serve in one place, each of them in turn presides over consistory”, 19 was in accordance with a number of articles of the Church Order of Dordrecht. Article 17 ruled that equality was to be maintained among ministers of the Word; article 37 declared that the presidency of consistories should be performed by “the minister of the Word (or ministers, in case there were more [than one])”; and article 84 said, “...no minister would rule over another”.

The matter of equality of power and authority of office bearers in the church had already been debated by Calvin. He asserted that power “is to be confined within certain limits, so as not to be drawn hither and thither at the caprice of men. (. For if we concede unreservedly to men all the power which they think proper to assume, it is easy to see how soon it will degenerate into a tyranny which is altogether alien from the Church of Christ”. 20 The Belgic Confession professes the equality of all ministers of the Word (art 31). This principle was already established in the 1568 articles of Wezel where “the apparent seeking of supremacy over the church and his fellow office bearers” is counted under those vices that were not to be tolerated amongst the ministers of the Word. 21

Bearing in mind that, as chaplain, Ds D’Ailly was a high ranking officer of a hierarchically organised company and that he enjoyed seniority in terms of service at the Cape, he could easily have succumbed to the temptation of retaining the presidency of the consistory as well as the accompanying power and influence it afforded him. The Company had already set the precedent by ranking its chaplains (and even ranking congregations). 22 As indicated above, preachers were of a higher

17 Extracts from minute books: Cape Town Consistory, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 275, 276.
20 Calvin Institutes, Book IV, Chapter VIII
22 Note that ds Bode refers to the Council of Policy having called and appointed ds Noordbeek as
rank than sick comforters (and Cape Town consistory was summoned to repeal the
censure of Swartland). So strong was the Reformed principle underlying the practice
of rotation of the presidency of consistory, that the hierarchical logic of the
Company which was superimposed on ecclesiastical offices (and congregations), did
not manage to seduce predicants to abandon the Reformed principle of equal power
and authority for all special office bearers. As the senior predicant in terms of
service at the Cape and having presided over consistory for the first nine months
after the arrival of his fellow predicant, D’Ailly could probably have held on to the
presidency without much opposition. He could easily have argued the case that this
made sense in a church that functioned as the religious department of the global
mercantile corporation of the time. It would not have been too difficult to justify that
a “senior pastor” (as executive officer of a Church) had a formidable public co-
responsibility (education and welfare) with a clearly hierarchically organised
government. While a strict hierarchical structure enabled the VOC to control a
diverse labour force and populace of its colonies and fleets, to do business in a
competitive world market, a similar structure would have been feasible for the
Church in order to be more efficient in the proselytisation and unification of western
Christendom as well as gathering the heathen into the bosom of the Church and
management of public education and welfare. It is to the credit of the orthodoxy of
ds D’Ailly that he resisted this temptation and apparently voluntarily proposed the
interchange of the presidency of consistory. This, however, stands in stark contrast
to his predecessor, Le Boucq, who dictatorially deposed church councillors. This
incident evoked strong reaction from the Church.

Correspondence with classes and the receipt of synodical acts

The regular correspondence of the chaplains and Church at the Cape with the Classis
of Amsterdam is indicative of the high premium they placed on the maintenance of
ecclesiastical bonds with the Dutch Church. Bear in mind that initially there was not
much encouragement from the latter. While the Cape chaplains and consistories had
faithfully corresponded since the establishment of the replenishment station and fort,

“second permanent minister” (missive 92, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 280.). This could well be an
indication of the Company imposing a hierarchy on predicants. This language of “first” and
“second” predicant, with its hierarchical implications, became customary in the Cape Church. By
1945 the untenability of this custom was realised and set right—at least in the congregation of
Van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Gemeente Wellington: 1840-1990 (Paarl: Kerkraad,
Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, Wellington-gemeente, 1990), 68.).
there is only evidence of two letters in return from Classis during the first fifty years. The resolve of the Church at the Cape to maintain this bond was, however, not dampened by this initial scant response from Classis.

Not only did the Cape consistories appeal to the Church Order of Dordrecht, but also continually requested the synodical acts of the Synod of North-Holland and indeed appealed to them. This was illustrated by the report of ds Overney in 1678 about disagreement around the issue of the baptism of Company slave children when an itinerant predicant claimed that this was not allowed in East India. The Cape Government had earlier deemed it proper to write to Batavia about the matter. The "honorary General and his honorary Council of India" subsequently sent a resolution concerning the matter. Neither this resolution nor the Cape "church book" could, however, resolve the matter. Hence, Overney wrote to Classis, stating that he was aware of the Synod resolution in that regard and requested Classis to advise him on the matter.

**Conducting ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner**

However much control Company and Classis wielded over the Church and its predicants, there remained some recognition from the side of government regarding the freedom of a predicant to discern for himself the calling of God concerning his placement. Ds Overney, for instance, reported in 1678 that as the Cape Town Congregation was without a pastor at the time, the Council of Policy had requested him to stay at the Cape instead of going to India. The implication is that he was given a choice in the matter according to his sense of calling by Christ. As indicated above, this was not always the case.

In 1760 Ds Bode lodged a complaint with the Combined Council regarding his unilateral transfer by the Council of Policy. This clearly indicated that there was some resistance to the excesses of Company patronage. He argued that this would not have happened in the Netherlands and that it went against the Word and church orders. He conceded that government had the right regarding initial placement, but not of transferral to another congregation. The outcome of this case, Bode argued, would impact on the well being of the church at the Cape as other predicants would be apprehensive about coming to the Cape. Furthermore, it would cause the congregation and outsiders to have a low opinion of predicants, as there were so

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many wrong motives on which nominal Christians based their salvation. Bode requested to be reinstated in his position and be paid his salary by the government. The precarious position of the Church regarding the government was indicated in the report to Classis which emphasised that Bode had not criticised government, nor had the Combined Council taken a stand on the matter which could lead to the termination of the Council by the Government. The Church realised the pursuit of greater freedom had to be approached with great caution.

Not even the fervent plea of independent fiscal Pieter Rheede van Oudtshoorn “that not only was it against all church orders, but even against the law of the Sovereign to remove a predicant who had been lawfully called from a higher to a lower place” could initially sway the Council of Policy. The Heeren XVII, however, reinstated Bode. Hence, the Company retained the right to place and remove predicants as it saw fit.

This recognition of the freedom of predicants raised the question concerning the freedom of consistories to call their own predicants. The 1709 admonition by Classis of the Cape Town Consistory for being too demanding and prescriptive with respect to the appointment of chaplains was a clear indication that consistories could not claim too much freedom, but had to accept their subordinate position to the VOC in this regard. Classis was also compromised on this point. Although orthodox Reformed church polity maintained the right of consistories to elect and appoint predicants, the national Church had compromised on this point. The Dutch government had been granted the right of approbation in a bid to ensure government endorsement of the national church order – which was subsequently withheld by government.

When the Cape Governor and the Council of Policy decided that predicants of neighbouring congregations had to serve a vacant congregation on a rotational base, the Combined Assembly reacted by requesting Classis to send another predicant in order to avoid execution of the resolution by the rulers.

There are more examples of predicants who appealed for the enaction of the principle that ecclesiastical matters be treated in an ecclesiastical manner. It did not only entail that ecclesiastical jurisprudence had its own internal philosophy, but also

25 Appendix to missive 92, in Spoelstra, Bouwstof Jen, 285.  
26 Vorster, Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk, 39-40, 43.  
29 Missive 71, 75, in Spoelstra, Bouwstof Jen I, 229, 236.
that the church should be free to conduct its own discipline.

As already indicated, the resistance to improper governmental interference was unfortunately not in evidence when the Cape Town Consistory conceded to the order of government to interfere in the disciplinary process of Swartland Congregation.

The 1748 case against ds Cloppenburg also yielded relevant information. In his defence against the guilty verdict by the Combined Council, he argued that the integrity of church law had been violated. Consistory failed to conduct "ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner" by allowing his public enemies to be present at his hearing. These enemies were not members of the consistory and should therefore not have been present at the meeting. Moreover, he claimed, the elders and deacons were not properly informed of the agenda of the Consistory Meeting. Notwithstanding the irregularities, Consistory laid a charge against him at the Political Council. His response was that although he was subordinate to kings and princes, the biblical principle that said that it was more important to fear God than honour the king, was applicable in his case.

The Theron case at Drakensteyn (See Appendix C) also justifies comment here. It is the only example in the correspondence of congregational members demanding that their complaint be heard in a purely ecclesiastical manner. The appeal to Classis and authoritative Reformed sources by the complainants-turned-convicted, bears testimony to a time when an understanding of the fundamentals of orthodox Reformed church polity and their ability to appeal to Scripture, the confessions and church order was common. Congregational members of Drakensteyn, despite their apparent low standard of education, insisted on ecclesiastical order without state intervention. It bears evidence of the free spirit of the Huguenot inheritance of a church "under the cross" without established status. Their valiant opposition to a consistory resolution ratified by government was unparalleled in Cape-Dutch Christendom. Bear in mind that consistory consisted of government approved office bearers under the chairmanship of a paid government official. This opposition reflected something of the Calvinist doctrine of resistance as developed by the Huguenots in France during their struggle against an unjust state. It did not, however, meet the support of either Consistory or Classis. Hence,

30 Appendix to missive 70, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 224-28.
31 See John W. De Gruchy, "The Freedom of the Church and the Liberation of Society: Bonhoeffer
the complainants in this case were censured on the grounds of insubordinancy to their lawful government.

Even though some of them were of French descent, they were able to refer to the Belgic Confession and the Church Order of Dordrecht. This case dramatically demonstrated the contradictions that were inherent in Cape-Dutch Christendom. The Church was not free to manage its own affairs, especially where this had an impact on public life. A justified complaint according to church order against the ordination of church officers was viewed as rebellion against the state and hence subject to the heaviest form of church discipline. On the other hand, the Council of Policy (as the undisputed patron of the Church) and its judiciary could, seemingly with full support of Classis, intervene in ecclesiastical matters.

Sadly, the voice of the office of believer was disregarded. While Reformed polity allowed for the crucial participation of believers in church governance by affording them approbation of the election of special offices, this was not honoured in the case under discussion. Not only did Company patronage obstruct believers from playing their role, but sadly even Classis and Synod became obstacles in this respect. Classis even went as far as advising the Cape Town Consistory to call on government for the forceful restoration of order in Drakensteyn. To the credit of the Cape Town Consistory, which had obviously come of age by that time, they did not rashly follow the advice of Classis and Synod. This decision must have needed much courage on the part of Cape Town Consistory. Instead of following the advice of Classis and Synod, the government was advised to exercise prudence in the whole matter.32

The main aim of Classis was to restore rest and peace for the sake of the kingdom. The same can be said about ds Van der Spuy’s successor at Drakensteyn. When one of the censured four of the Roos party eventually confessed guilt as he sensed his impending death, Ds Aling expressed his hope that this deed would hopefully lead to “general rest and Christian harmony in this congregation... [and that] God will give prosperity!”33 To this Classis responded by encouraging Ds Aling and consistory to continue in healthy, pure doctrine, but also to edify the other censured members through humble, friendly, compassionate, peace-loving, virtuous...

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32 Missive 152, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 532.
33 Missive 151, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 530.
and pious conduct. By so doing, he had to win others and extend the poles of Jesus’ Kingdom in Africa. “May God give that the shrinking congregation of Drakensteyn once again flourish”, Classis concluded.\textsuperscript{34} It is sad to realise how little sympathy the objectors in Drakensteyn received from Classis. Classis was sold on Company patronage and “rest and peace” at all costs.\textsuperscript{35}

The struggle for further ecclesiastical freedom was still in evidence during the death throes of Cape-Dutch Christendom. On 2 June 1795, Cape Town Consistory still attempted to convince Classis to support its quest to liberate the Church at the Cape in two respects: to be granted the right to freely elect church councillors and have the Combined Council reinstated.\textsuperscript{36} In 1791 the Consistory of Graaff Reinet requested government to honour its freedom to deal with ecclesiastical matters according to the church order. Ironically, three years later, the Consistory requested government to take action against members who did not contribute financially!\textsuperscript{37}

Connecting structures between congregations

The struggle to enjoy normal ecclesiastical connectivity was a long and frustrating one at the Cape. An early precursor was a combined church council held by two consistories in 1728, which brought about a quick solution to a mutual problem.\textsuperscript{38}

The drive towards a formal connecting structure among the Cape congregations found more local support than in the fatherland – whether from the VOC or the Classis. In a meeting presided over by Governor-General Joan van Hoorn in 1710, the desirability of a classical assembly at the Cape for the three existing congregations “that belong under one government and reign”, was recorded in the minutes. Ds D’Ailly, however, found it necessary to advise the meeting that “it was against the intentions of the brethren in the fatherland” (Classis) and that the independent state of the congregations should therefore be left intact until “further orders from the honourable Lords XVII”.\textsuperscript{39}

Thirty-six years later (1746) the congregations were granted permission by

\textsuperscript{34} Missive 272, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 227/8.
\textsuperscript{35} Cf. Appendix C at the end of this work.
\textsuperscript{36} Missive 165, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 579.
\textsuperscript{37} Vorster, \textit{Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling Kaapse Kerk}, 45.
\textsuperscript{38} Extracts from minute books: Stellenbosch Consistory, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 377.
\textsuperscript{39} Government missives and extract resolutions, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 610, 612.
the Cape Government to hold an annual *classical* (general church) assembly.\(^{40}\)

The Combined Council portrayed a healthy ecclesiology. It justified its existence by asserting that it could promote mutual visitation between the congregations, which in turn would promote peace and prevent disunity in the congregations. This was done by exposing conflict and solving it in an amicable manner.\(^{41}\) The purpose of the Combined Council was to promote everything that could contribute to the peace and strengthening (*stichtinge*) of the churches. This would ensure the maintenance of good order.\(^{42}\) Hence, the Combined Council reported with acclamation that the congregations were apparently in a satisfactory state, but expressed the wish that God would also "promote knowledge, virtue and true piety through His Spirit as well as His heart-changing grace through people's diligent partaking of the means of grace".\(^{43}\) In turn, Classis commended these intentions and efforts of the Combined Council.\(^{44}\) Peace was commended by quoting: "Where there is envy and strife, there is confusion and all manner of evil action".\(^{45}\)

In 1775, as a result of the already mentioned cases of Hendrina van der Westhuizen and Swartland consistory in 1762\(^{46}\) and the Theron saga at Drakensteyn, the Cape Town Consistory pleaded with Classis for the reinstatement of the Combined Council.\(^{47}\) The Classis of Amsterdam could not fulfil the role of connecting structure due to the distance from the Cape.\(^{48}\)

**CULTURAL DISESTABLISHMENT**

Due to the dual effect of Orthodoxy and Enlightenment a progressive cultural disestablishment was experienced during the 18\(^{\text{th}}\) century. Hence, during the final quarter of the 18\(^{\text{th}}\) century, the norm of "rest and peace" no longer served as an indication of the wellness of the Church. A new standard had to be found. Despite external rest and peace, reports concerning "the essence of the religion of the heart"
revealed a state of “spiritual indifference despite admonition”, “lack of zeal and apathy”, “carnal confidence and carelessness”, “a spirit of complacency” and a lack of knowledge. The Church could no longer assume popular participation and wide acceptance of its morality.

No longer did the Company coerce the populace to subject itself to the ministry of its established Church. This was reflected in the decline in attendance of public worship and the sacraments. This trend was especially obvious with regard to the attendance of “the very necessary and beneficial sermons on the catechism”. The growth of the Church through the profession of faith, baptism and formal compliance with religious practices was no longer viewed as a sign of the health of the Church. Unaccompanied by holy lives, these were considered to be mere external factors (uutwendig) and nominal growth. 49

The hope was expressed that numerical growth would be accompanied by the heart breaking grace of the Spirit that expose people as sinners and produce virtue and true piety and that God “may provide more joy, desire, and love, through his Spirit and grace, that the means [of grace] may be blessed to the hearts of the congregation, that more may be born in Zion, planted in the house of the Lord and therefore cherish the means of grace and bear witness to God’s free grace that still produces growth and fruit in the portals of the Lord...”. 50

While many in Drakensteyn merely professed the faith and maintained the customary public religious practices, there were “those who loved the Lord Jesus in all sincerity”. The Cape Town Congregation was content with “an external Christendom”, but there were “those who know the power of the gospel of Christ and as saints of high places, prayed in sincerity, wishing to live for the Lord, and to honour his free grace”. Hence, Consistory prayed for the continual grow of the congregations and the daily increase of the true and saving knowledge and the fear of God. 51 Classis expressed the wish that the Lord would repair the “fallen Christendom” through a lavish outpouring of His Spirit and through the preaching of His Word. These, Classis asserted, would result in “the salvation of those who had given themselves over to dangerous decay by continual shunning of the means of grace”. 52

Amid this spiritual and moral decay rose the language of the faithful

50 Missive 110, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 327.
51 Missive 98, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 301/2.
remnant, which God would preserve. The hope of revival of the degenerate, leading to faith and sanctification became a general theme.

Yet we shall be guilty if we do not acknowledge God's free grace, in that the Spirit has not yet vanished from our midst, as sometimes here and there people are born in Zion, and are awakened to ardently desire salvation. ...a few faithful that still have the well-being of Zion at heart.

In this vein Classis encouraged: “May the piety of the faithful be seen and recognised as seed blessed by the Lord” and may those lacking zeal be converted. While the gospel became a smell of death unto death for many, to others it became one of life unto life. The latter valued the merit of the crucified Christ and walked in the faith and sanctification. Fortunately, those who valued the Word, the holy ministries and the Saviour’s meritorious work could still be found. They proved themselves as belonging to a particular people reformed by the Lord to proclaim his glory. This was manifested in their actions, which speak of love as a result of faith and pure love of God.

In order to deal with the phenomenon of dwindling devotion, they were called upon to profess God’s sovereignty. Hence, predicants were exhorted not to grow weary because many were called, but few elected.

Orthodoxy was no longer sufficient. Orthopraxis was emphasised as a necessary accompaniment thereof. Classis advised the Church at the Cape to continue in healthy, pure doctrine and to edify censured members through pious conduct. Edification (stichting) that led to “rest and peace” became a matter of both faith and life (leer en wandel). Good order, love of peace, attendance of public religion, including the Lord’s Supper, teaching of catechism, adding new members to congregations had to be accompanied by people who were not only hearers of the Word, but doers thereof as well.

54 Missive 130, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstof 1*, 455.
56 Missive 130, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstof 1*, 455.
59 Missive 260, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstof 2*, 198; May the late ds Kuys be replaced by someone “die door leer en voorbeeld die gemeente moge stichten.” (Missive 271, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstof 2*, 225.).
The haughty language of "extending" and "building" the kingdom of God, made way for the modest biblical language of "entering" and "seeking" the kingdom of God. It indicated a shift in self-perception of the Church. Instead of a self-confident agent of evangelism, the Church came to experience itself as a group of sinners in need of God's gracious reign over and through them. These metaphors indicate the need for (continual) conversion of the church in terms of moral regeneration during a time of decay that would strengthen the witness of the Church and serve its evangelistic task.\(^61\) Van Lier's sermon on Isaiah 53:3a is a moving call to the followers of Jesus Christ to accept that their master was scorned and rejected and that this was also their lot.\(^62\)

It is remarkable how the language of revival is cast within the frame of the Dutch Reformed confessions. Here I specifically refer to the emphasis that salvation and sanctification are first and foremost the work of God triune through the ministry of the Word and sacraments. The revivalist movement of the final decade of VOC rule, which was associated with ds Helperus Ritzema van Lier and his successor ds MC de Vos, reflected this confessional continuity. Van Lier's own faith and preaching were deeply grounded in the profession of God's sovereign and gracious election. In this respect his preaching was also in line with that of the Reverend John Newton of Olney and George Whitefield, who were leaders in the "advanced evangelical party" in Britain rather than that of the Wesleys and their Armenian followers.\(^63\) Hence, Theal was correct in asserting that this movement was in

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\(^61\) In 1771 Cape Town Congregation was reported to be marked by shocking indifference and lack of zeal in the seeking God's kingdom and its righteousness despite God's chastisement of the past years (pox). Most people, the report continues, disregarded the beauty of God's law as something foreign. Yet, there were the few who wished to walk the narrow way that led to entrance into the kingdom of heaven. May the great King of the church give that His word, the gospel of the crucified Christ, be found to be the power of God and the wisdom of God. May God use the Classis as builders of Zion's walls (Missive 109, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffers I, 324.). Classis responded by bewailing the lack of seeking of the kingdom of God and that our dear Christian religion is disregarded with indifference and lack of zeal (Missive 241, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffers II, 152/3.). Classis used the phrase "entering the kingdom of Christ" as referring to: Believers' calling and election that had to be "fixed firmly"; conversion; fruit of the Spirit that was to be born; growing up in the Lord; long suffering; resulting in the holiness of his house that will be beautiful for times to come and letting the knowledge of the Lord fill the earth (Missive 250, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffers II, 174.). The latter phrase indicates that "entering the kingdom of Christ" referred to the continual conversion of the Church – a conversion which is epitomised in brotherly peace prevailing among the ordained office bearers. This conversion is set as a prerequisite for the evangelistic task of the Church, enabling it "to extend the kingdom of our great God and saviour in their congregations." (Missives 210, 240, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffers II, 95, 150.).


\(^63\) It is noteworthy that the Cape reports use the term synergy, normally associated with Armenianism, to describe the relationship between Van Lier's ministry and God's blessing thereof, as well as between the faith of people and "God's free grace" (missives 154, 99, 167, in Spoelstra,
continuity with the orthodox faith that was preached and professed at the Cape, as reflected in the Heidelberg Catechism, which was preached and taught. Revival was interpreted within the profession of divine election. Hence, the revival of a little remnant “according to the election” was hoped to be the harbinger of the manifestation of God’s grace among the people.

Theal further suggested that this movement distinguished itself from that which had been the norm regarding the role of emotion and experience in the Church at the Cape. Van Lier taught that notwithstanding one’s professed faith or one’s conduct “he was not a Christian until he felt an entire change in his soul and knew that he was reconciled with God”. He had an emotional mode of preaching and encouraged works of benevolence. Hanekom, however, points out that Van Lier was not only aware of emotional tendencies at the time, but that he countered them by stressing the objectivity of salvation. Hanekom does, however, point out that Van Lier, with his Pascal-like conversion, emphasised the subjective appropriation of salvation.

Earlier Hanekom stated that the counter balance to the 18th century’s decay of faith and morality was the emergence of pietism with its emphasis on experience. Ds MC de Vos, the spiritual heir of Van Lier and a native of the Cape, however ascribed the opposition he experienced from Classis to his placement at the Cape as springing from the view Classis had of him as a bigot/enthusiast (dweeper). His “earnestness” and his allegiance to the “Evangelical movement” were frowned upon. Theal states that “[t]he introduction of new opinions had the effect of rousing people from a state of lethargy. In a short time interest grew in the conversion of the heathen and philanthropic institutions of different kinds were originated. Generally the ideas of men regarding their duties to others were broadened.”

Bouwstoffen I, 538, 303-4, 585-6.

64 George McCall Theal, History of South Africa II -- IV, 1915 -- 1927, Facsimile Reprint by by C. Struik, Cape Town (1964), IV, 380. Hanekom’s research supports this.


70 Theal, History of South Africa, IV, 380.
PART THREE
CONCLUSION

After consideration of my partners’ theological renditions of Christendom in their respective contexts and subsequent discovery of the contours of Christendom at the Cape during the VOC regime, I now intend to conclude by proposing a model of Christendom (chapter seven) and by drawing a profile of Christendom at the Cape. In chapter eight I shall indicate how my partners’ renditions of Christendom in their respective contexts interact with my rendition of Cape-Dutch Christendom. This is not limited to the VOC era, as I subsequently venture to draw trajectories of Christendom at the Cape through the ensuing eras to the present. The present challenges that the legacy of Cape-Dutch Christendom pose to the Cape Church are also identified.
After consideration of Christendom at the Cape Colony under the VOC in the light of my conversation partners' renditions of Christendom in their respective contexts, I now wish to propose a model of Christendom which is not only basically present in all the accounts of my interlocutors, but which should be comprehensive enough to analyse and assess other instances of Christendom as well. In the following chapter I intend to work out more specifically how this basic understanding of Christendom contributes towards understanding Cape-Dutch Christendom in particular, but also its historical trajectories in later periods of Christendom at the Cape and in South Africa.

In the light of the foregoing research, I propose that Christendom is the intricate, dynamic network of power relations amongst the gospel, church, political society, civil society and culture. By the gospel I mean the good news as revealed in Scripture of the reign of God that came and will come in Jesus Christ. By church I refer to the institutional form of the community of believers in Jesus Christ, with the various offices and church councils. Political society refers to the state and rulers. By civil society I mean the totality of societal institutions, groups and categories that are separate from political society and the church. By culture I refer to philosophical systems and currents, worldviews, ontology, epistemology, beliefs, attitudes, values and ideologies that exert power in the totality of society.

1 I choose to construe “the gospel” in Trinitarian and Christological terms – as a breaking in of divine intervention to redeem, reconcile, liberate and recreate creation in general and humankind in particular. Obviously this good news finds expression in church, political society, civil society and culture. Since this model specifically attempts to provide the tools to understand the dynamics between the gospel and these other entities and how it finds embodiment in them, it is important to distinguish the gospel from these other concepts.

2 Church can also signify believers in their personal, secular callings; the liturgy; the ecumenical church; etc.

3 The concept of civil society as employed by my Latin American interlocutors specifically makes room for analysing a modern, post-feudal society where social class stratification is ruled by the nature of an economic system. The nature of an economic system is influenced by the other elements of Christendom – the cultural power of capitalism for instance; the ways in which the gospel is construed in relation to capital and the means of production; and, the roles of political society and of the church respectively.

4 As it is difficult to abstract the gospel from the other proposed constitutive elements of Christendom, it is likewise difficult to abstract culture from them. It is however expedient to
The question is always: which aspect(s) of Christendom wield(s) power over which other aspect(s). Which bestow(s) privilege on other(s), which control(s) other(s), and which aspect(s) struggle(s) for freedom from other(s). It is of the nature of Christendom that such power relations can and indeed do change over time – as the form and content of the respective constitutive elements also change. Use of the concept of Christendom is therefore not simply a matter of understanding the elements and their interrelations, but indeed of understanding the metamorphosis of both elements and relationships between them – indeed an historically dynamic process that continually takes on different shapes in different contexts.

Diagrammatically Christendom can be represented as a pentagon within a pentagram that shares the same five points. These five points represent the five constitutive points of Christendom viz., gospel, church, political society, civil society and culture. Each point is connected to the other point, either directly or via any other point or points. This signifies the web of power relations amongst the constitutive elements of Christendom. This diagram can be drawn without lifting the pen which signifies the intertwined interrelations of the elements of Christendom.

Furthermore, the pentagonal structure is reminiscent of the inner circumference of the Castle of Good Hope, the second fort erected by the VOC. This strategic military defensive shape has become a symbol of power. Cape-Dutch Christendom was an intricate set of power relations. The inner connection of the pentagon points forms a pentagram, which is also a symbol associated with Christendom. It was used by Emperor Constantine I, arch patron of Christendom, as a protective amulet. St George’s Cathedral in Cape Town also has the Star of Good Hope in one of its stained glass windows. Hence, both the Castle and the pentagram aptly signify Cape-Dutch Christendom. The five constitutive elements of Christendom initially found their centre and integration in the Castle of Good Hope. It was the centre of state and Church. Here the gospel and the powers of culture distinguish philosophical and social powers that seek to find expression in the other constitutive elements of Christendom.

See booklet distributed at the Cathedral, The Cathedral Church of St George the Martyr (undated), no publisher given, p 12.

Symbolic of the powers of sea faring and commerce are the statues of Neptune and Mercury (?) that guard the entrance to the castle. These statues are all the more significant in the light of Calvinism’s caution against idolatry and statues.
met, converged or clashed. From here civil society was governed and ministered.

This model incorporates all elements, relations and dynamics of Christendom as presented by my conversation partners, as well as my rendition of Cape-Dutch Christendom into a single model. It is general and wide enough to analyse and assess the particularities of any of these manifold forms of Christendom and any other forms of Christendom and the ways in which they change.

One has to bear in mind that these five elements are also present in contexts that cannot be defined as Christendom, but rather as missionary ones. What specifically constitutes Christendom, however, in contrast to a missionary context, is that political power is bestowed on the institutional church through its relationship with any or more of the following: political society, culture, or civil society.
CHAPTER EIGHT
A RETROSPECTIVE PROFILE OF CHRISTENDOM AT THE CAPE

The constitutive elements of Cape-Dutch Christendom were unique in nature, as was the set of mutual relations among them despite similarities with Medieval Latin Christendom, Latin American colonial Christendom, Protestant Christendom in Europe – particularly the United Netherlands and North American colonial Christendom. Therefore we will start with a general characterisation of Cape-Dutch Christendom as compared to the Christendoms addressed by our partners.

Thereafter we will look at a number of pertinent issues that have emerged in the interaction between my construal of Cape-Dutch Christendom and those of my partners. After having assessed these issues within Cape-Dutch Christendom, I will attempt to draw some trajectories that these issues have taken at the Cape and in South Africa since the termination of VOC rule and challenges they currently pose to the gospel and the Church.

GENERAL CHARACTER OF CAPE-DUTCH CHRISTENDOM

Cape-Dutch Christendom was a colonial venture of capitalist, upper middle class, Dutch Reformed merchants. Although Cape-Dutch Christendom, like early Latin and North American Christendoms, was also colonial in nature, it was different as the functions of the state were not vested in dynastic imperialism. While both Latin American colonial Christendom and that of the North American colonies, whether under British or French rule, resulted from dynastical expansionism, Cape-Dutch Christendom had its origin in the mercantile venture of a capitalist mercantile corporation. At the Cape the powers of the state were vested in the Company. Even though the VOC honoured Prince William of Orange by naming the five bastions of the Castle of Good Hope after his various titles, dynastical power, which was already limited in the United Netherlands, played no role at the Cape. The reigning culture behind Cape-Dutch Christendom was clearly not dynastic imperialism and expansion of medieval feudalism as some scholars argued with regard to Latin American colonialism. Whereas dynastic imperialism played virtually no role in Cape-Dutch Christendom, mercantile capitalism was the undisputed raison d'être.
Cape-Dutch Christendom was even more a function of the culture of mercantile capitalism than that of colonial Latin America. Whereas Richard had to belabour the point that the Iberian dynasties were actually driven by mercantile capitalism in their conquest and colonisation of Latin America, this cultural force was the overt and unabashed ideology that underlay Cape-Dutch Christendom. The latter was clearly the result of a corporate venture of the capitalist upper middle class merchants of the free cities of the republic of the United Netherlands. Not only did the States General leave commerce in the hands of the middle class merchants, but even mandated their corporation to perform typical state functions such as governance of their colonies and patronage of the Church in their mercantile domain.

At the Cape, this resulted in a society that was socially stratified. Company officials, including Company chaplains, formed the ruling elite. An inadequate working class was eventually supplemented by the introduction of slaves of colour. This was and is the worst conceivable form of capitalistic exploitation of people. A dependent middle class in the form of free burghers was also established.

In Latin American and North American colonial Christendom middle class opposition to dynastic rule resulted in wars of independence. Victory afforded them control of state functions, including patronage of the established church. At the Cape there were some signs of similar conflict. In this case it was not resistance to imperial dynasty, but rather to a mercantile capitalist corporation, which had political and economic control. Apart from the monopoly of trade with East India, the VOC regime also centrally controlled the economy at the Cape. Free burghers could only sell their produce to the Company or they had to pay government tax when selling it to a third party. Like Latin American Christendom, Cape-Dutch Christendom was economically dependent. It existed only to produce agricultural produce for the benefit of the VOC and the Netherlands.

Cape colonial middle class resistance to this system and concomitant abuse of power was met with repressive measures from the government. Towards the end of the VOC regime such resistance gave rise to the republican ideal of the Cape Patriots. This ideal could, however, only be fulfilled after the VOC era and outside of the Cape colony when the Boer republics were established to the north in defiance thereof.
of British colonial rule during the 19th century. At the Cape the middle class heirs of Cape-Dutch Christendom only saw their republican ideal come to fruition once the Nationalist Party managed to declare South Africa a republic in 1961. This new-Christendom, however, followed the trajectory of the United Netherlands and the VOC as the Nationalist government created a capitalist system in which semi-government corporations had a monopoly. This time, they benefited the heirs of Cape-Dutch Christendom’s middle class – the Afrikaners.

The position of the Church in Cape-Dutch Christendom was similar to that of the established church in Latin American colonial Christendom. In both instances they were the established churches of the mother countries. The rulers of both Iberia and the Netherlands had assumed patronage of the established church in their domain. Contrary to Latin America, the patronage of the Church at the Cape was entrusted to a separate body that was primarily commercial rather than political in nature. In both these Christendoms the churches remained loyal to their political patrons and their respective ideologies and uncritical of the societies created by them. The exceptional commitment of Latin American clergy of the likes of Bartholomew las Casas to the well-being of slaves and native people, did not have a counterpart in the Church at the Cape.

The gospel which the Church professed was formally that which was expounded in the three reform creeds accepted at the 1618/19 Synod of Dordt. It was, however, reinterpreted in the ideological and social realities of the VOC Cape, as will be shown below.

**Implications of Christendom for Politics, Church, Culture, Society and the Gospel**

*Capitalism, quietism and nationalism*

It was expedient for the Company to co-opt the Church into its organisation and to be party to a Christendom arrangement since the Church expounded a gospel that blessed capitalism, recognised rulers and the rule of law and promoted “rest and peace” in church and society.

In its conflict with the Anabaptists, the Dutch Reformed had pronounced an anathema against those who rejected governmental authority and governors; disobeyed the rule of law and imported communal ownership. People that did this
disturbed the integrity that God had instituted among people.\textsuperscript{1} By contrast the Church supported the VOC government, its administration of justice and capitalistic ideology.

One has to bear in mind that mercantile capitalism had come to the rescue of the Reformation in the Netherlands and of the Dutch people per se. This ideology and the body of functionaries that put it into economic and political practice at the Cape therefore enjoyed the status of patron not only of the Reformed faith, but indeed the Republic of the United Netherlands. Dutch Reformed Christendom depended thereon for survival. Therefore it would border on betrayal of the Reformed faith and anti-patriotic to critique economic principles of the VOC and the regime. This would have been seen as being unfaithful to the theocratic ideal of the Church.

The Church at the Cape was generally very loyal to the authorities. It only critiqued the excesses of a capitalist life style after Governor Rijk Tulbagh had promulgated his pomp and circumstance laws. Hence it merely echoed its master’s voice. No other social critique is reflected in our primary sources.

The Church placed such a high premium on “rest and peace” that for practical purposes it became a hallmark of the true Church. The value ascribed to “rest and peace” also applied to society at large. Law and order were important. A Church, which was firmly under Company control and which propagated “rest and peace” through its proclamation and life, was an asset to a refreshment and military post which consisted of diverse and displaced people where mutiny and revolt could find fertile breeding ground.

When civil resistance to public maladministration surfaced, the Church supported the regime, albeit by quiescence. During the resistance to the rule of Governor WA van der Stel there are no signs in Church documents of any official support from of the Church. When Ds Le Boucq criticised his acting successor and regime, the Church joined the Company government in condemning Le Boucq’s actions.

When civil resistance resurfaced during the last 16 years of VOC rule, nothing was reflected in the official documents of the Church, even though it can be

\textsuperscript{1} Confessio Belgica, article 36
assumed that most, if not all, Cape Patriots were members of the Church. The Church stayed loyal to the VOC as patron, however much the latter was guilty of corruption.  

This quietist posture of the Church is reminiscent of Newbigin’s dictum that missions preferred to operate under colonial regimes that guaranteed political and social stability. Under such circumstances there was much to gain for the life and work of the church.

Historical trajectory

After Britain had annexed the Cape Colony and subsequently assumed patronage of the Dutch Reformed Church at the Cape, the church continued to stand loyally by its new political patron by disapproving of the “Great Trek.” By withholding ministry to the Trekkers, the Cape Church in effect censured its members who took part in the trek.

However, the First War of Independence brought a dramatic change in the allegiance of the Church to its political patron. More than ever before, the Cape Church was confronted with a situation of political conflict where it had to choose between loyalty to the lawful government or siding with its members. For the first time it chose to take the side of the progeny of the Cape-Dutch Christendom middle class – the Boers (Afrikaners) – in their struggle against British Imperialism. After the rebellion of 1914 – 1915, the Cape Church, however, joined the Dutch Reformed churches in the other provinces of South Africa by giving sympathetic credence to the rebellion. It continued to provide theological and spiritual guidance to the Afrikaner nationalist movement right up until the Nationalist Party won the election in 1948. Within the new-Christendom of the Apartheid state, where Afrikaner nationalism reigned supreme, it could once again revert to the old quietist position of championing “rest and peace” in Church and society. Church leadership had learnt to “accompany the flock”, as Willem Nicol argued convincingly.

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3 The term “Cape Church” is now used instead of the hitherto “Church at the Cape” since the Dutch Reformed congregations in the Cape Colony had meanwhile formed a synod in 1824.
4 Due to a court ruling, separate synods were constituted in the three Boer republics.
At present the Cape Church is still reluctant to speak prophetically against the new cultural master of the flock, namely the wave of new-liberalism that has become the reigning ideology in the wake of the shaming of Afrikaner nationalism. Efforts to resist the restructuring of the Church according to the logic of the market, have been frustrated by presbytery and synodical officials who prefer to maintain the “rest and peace” at all costs. This author experienced this during and in the wake of the Vredelust case that was heard by the Classis of Bellville and the Legal Commission of the Synod of the Cape Church. This tendency is part of the character of the Cape Church that was formed in Dutch and Cape-Dutch Christendom.

Van der Walt reports on a recent qualitative study done in a number of Dutch Reformed congregations, which highlights this point:

It is clear that the majority of people think that there should not be conflict in church. It is the one place where we should not be at variance with one another. Reaction to a question regarding conflict in a congregation is usually one of denial (“I do not know anything”). Conflict is usually “glossed over, wished away, swept under the carpet”.

Van der Walt then concludes by posing the question:

What is it that helps with the establishment of a culture of open conversation? Perhaps too much intimacy foils healthy conflict resolution. We at all costs want to preserve that which has been cultivated in koinonia ministry. Leaders are needed that do not shy away from conflict and its potential to foster growth and that are able to create a safe space within which everybody can participate in conversation with regard to difficult issues.\(^6\)

This view of the church as a space that is free from conflict has a long history in the DRC. Dr Coenie Burger, chairperson of the moderamen of the DRC is reportedly not willing to face conflict in the church and therefore shies away from assuming a bold position on issues. This he does in a bid to preserve unity despite all differences – all for the sake of peace.\(^7\)

**Material and social expediency**

When Richard speaks of chaplaincy as a Christendom structure of ecclesiastico-political nature, it is applicable not only to the VOC’s predicants and sick comforters, but also to the Cape congregations, their consistories, as well as the

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\(^7\) Unknown, "Opstand in die NG Kerk," *Die Vrye Afrikaan* (Durbanville), 19 August 2005, 1.
short-lived Combined Council. Despite Company infringement on the integrity of the Church, the latter profited by this arrangement in terms of material provision and the influence gained directly or indirectly in society.

Hundreds of sick comforters and predicants were hired by the Company. This not only secured them an income, but launched them high into the ranks of Company officials and hence afforded them instant social status.

Establishment benefited members of the Dutch mother Church as they had the privilege of being organised into congregations by the Company. Furthermore, they had the privilege of enjoying the ministry of predicants and sick comforters without having to provide for their sustenance from their own means. They also benefited from the provision of church and school amenities without any financial obligations from them. Consistories simply had to communicate their needs to the local Company administration. If that did not yield the necessary results, the Classis of Amsterdam was willing to persuade the higher echelons of VOC management to provide for the needs of the Church.

**Historical trajectory**

So deeply was the Church at the Cape conditioned to material sponsorship that it vehemently opposed the voluntary principle which the Cape Parliament accepted in 1875. It was argued that state material sustenance of the Church was tantamount to the Christian character of the state. The theocratic ideal was therefore at stake. The voluntary principle, it was argued, would render predicants dependent on the voluntary support of members and therefore jeopardise their freedom to preach the gospel in an uncompromised manner as members would then be in a position to pressurize them.

As soon as legal establishment was terminated, this objection to disestablishment played itself out in a particular manner. Shortly after disestablishment, the First Boer War of Independence against British Imperialism brought about the rise of Afrikaner nationalism. To the Church, this ideology became a rival power for that of the state. The dramatic shift since Thomas Hobbes’ 17th century work Leviathan, when the power of modern states were absolute and rulers could enforce their will on the people and order society according to their likes and dislikes, now saw “Leviathan” having to make way for “Lilliput” – for the
manifold threads of popular opinion that had come to rule modern society. State patronage and its reduced privileges had to compete with a new type of patronage, namely that of a cultural force, in this case nationalism. The nation in effect laid claim to the patronage of the Church.

During the 20th century this ideology also obtained the instruments of the state which led to a new-Christendom where state and the ideological patron of the bulk of the membership of the Cape Church were in concord once again. Loyalty to this ideological patron meant much for the sustenance of the Church. Its members benefited economically and booming voluntary offerings were reflected in the many new grandiose church buildings that shot up during that period.

With the shaming of new-Christendom, new patrons are presently being sought. The current hegemonic ideology among Dutch Reformed members is that of the new-liberal market. Hence, congregations that befriend this patron flourish financially while many others have to close their doors. Meanwhile there are signs of a new surge of Afrikaner nationalism. Nationalism and capitalism, however, do not have to contradict one another. National-capitalism is a formula that formed a cornerstone both in Cape-Dutch Christendom and in the new-Christendom of the Apartheid. It might just be that new liberalism and nationalism join forces once again.

**Evangelism, the kingdom of God and reductionism**

The winning of souls – “the extension of the kingdom” – was the sole prerogative of the Church at the Cape. Therefore they opposed the Moravian mission and would not allow the Khoïna to convert to “a false faith and sect”. The end of the Cape-Dutch Christendom era, however, saw a change of heart in this respect and influential voices from within the Church advocated the return of the Moravian mission. Not that evangelism – the salvation of souls – became less important to the Church. It was rather a matter of ecumenical contact through the “advanced

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evangelical movement”, which countered the sense of monopoly that the Church had hitherto maintained.

Like the missions of the 19th and 20th century, as Newbigin asserted, it was in the interest of the Church at the Cape that “rest and peace” prevail in church and society in order that it could evangelise, proselytise and grow in numbers. The ideal was to get as many as possible of the Cape population within its fold. The pax Compania provided the ideal situation for the Church to win over Catholics, other Protestants and heathen for the Dutch Reformed faith and Church. After an age of devastating religious strife and wars, a haven of “rest and peace” was also attractive to strife torn Europeans.

The Church viewed its evangelistic task solely in terms of “winning souls for Christ” – of “extending the kingdom of God”. The language used has a number of implications. First, “the kingdom of God” was used, with one exception, to indicate what Calvin called “the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ”. Calvin used this phrase to distinguish the church from “civil polity” – the state. For Calvin it was, however, clear that the reign or kingdom of God extends over both church and state. The gospel as preached by the church was relevant for both church and world – including the state. Contrary to Calvin however, the Church at the Cape limited the “kingdom of God” to what Calvin called the “spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ”. Hence, the often mentioned phrase “extending the kingdom of God” referred solely to the salvation of souls from eternal damnation; joining the Church; and the continual conversion of the church. The latter in turn had to promote the conversion of outsiders to the Reformed faith and to the Church.

As Luther’s two kingdoms doctrine was misinterpreted to mean that the church had to confine itself to the “kingdom of the Word”, so Calvin’s distinction was construed to mean that the Church should confine itself to the “spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ”, while carefully avoiding any pronouncements regarding “civil polity”. This is the trajectory of Christendom to which Guder drew attention. It is the accommodation of political and cultural powers leading to reductionism of the gospel to the “spiritual” sphere instead of maintaining biblical relevance for all of reality. This severed the gospel of the kingdom from the all encompassing reign

9 Calvin’s Institutes 4, XX, 12
of God. At the Cape, the Church confined the gospel of the kingdom to the salvation of souls under the dual pressure of the Company’s limitation of its chaplaincy to the “spiritual sphere” on the one hand, and the secular power of the Enlightenment on the other.

This is unlike North American colonial Christendom where churches of especially Reformed persuasion viewed themselves as custodians of “civil polity” – the vestiges of which are still evident in North American churches. One must bear in mind that the active involvement of the church in public education, public social welfare and family life were viewed as areas where Church and state should cooperate. Equally important was the insistence that key functions of government had to be performed by its members.

Not only did the Church reduce the gospel of the kingdom of God to the sphere of the “spiritual”, but secondly it spoke about the salvation of souls in terms of its own agency. It viewed itself as the subject of “extending the kingdom of God”, as though the Church could be the subject of the salvation of souls. Hunsberger’s dictum that American churches view the kingdom of God as their sales project is therefore relevant to the Church’s view of evangelism. Being part of a commercial venture could well have encouraged such language. One would, however, expect that Newbigin’s emphasis on mission which emanates from the Trinity should be at the root of the Church’s understanding of evangelism. It was a mere thirty years prior to the establishment of the Cape Refreshment Station that the Dutch Reformed Church accepted the Canons of Dordt, which confessed God as the sole author of salvation.

**Historical trajectory and present challenges**

The end of Cape-Dutch Christendom witnessed the ever greater secularising power of the Enlightenment and the drastic reduction of the Church’s traditional public involvement. Hence, the reduction of the gospel to the private sphere of individual salvation increased. The Cape Church is currently still characterised by this confinement of the gospel of the kingdom. Its proclamation as public truth is not appreciated, especially if related to political and economic matters. Former State President P W Botha could simply appeal to this persuasion during his repressive
rule of the 1970s. He had the backing of the leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church.10

Church growth programmes are once again common and “rest and peace” is seen to be the prerequisite for numerical growth of the Cape Church. In the post-Apartheid ideological vacuum, fragmentation among Afrikaners, their culture and their church affiliation is the order of the day. Denominational loyalty is dwindling and a pervasive culture of consumerism is making itself felt also on the religious terrain where members shop around for a church which ministers to their emotional needs. Under these circumstances it is hoped that church growth can counter congregational and denominational decay. Portrayal of an image of “rest and peace” at all costs, so archetypal of the DRC’s ecclesiology, is vital in this endeavour.

The Cape-Dutch Christendom language of “extending the kingdom of God” has tenaciously prevailed in the language of the Cape Church despite the corrections of biblical scholarship and the ecumenical movement during the past century.11 Changing this language to reflect the all inclusive scope of the gospel of the reign of God on the one hand, and to acknowledge the divine agency thereof and how it implicates the church on the other, remain challenges for the Cape Church.

**Social contradictions, justice and the diaconate**

The diaconate as one of the particular ministries of the church was readily accepted


11 In a polemical booklet by six authors, written during the first half of the 20th century against chiliasm in the Dutch Reformed churches, the “false” doctrine of the chiliastic kingdom of God was countered by asserting that the church is the kingdom of God. Whereas chiliasm obviously had the eschatological reign of God in mind, these authors defend the orthodox Reformed position by appealing to Calvin’s term “the kingdom of Christ” for the church to mean the eschatological reign of God through Jesus Christ. (C.R. Katzé, G.N.P. Cloete, *Die Joodse Vraagstuk en die Wederkoms Van Christus* (Bloemfontein: Die Sondagskooldepot, no date), 18-19.) The notion of the “kingdom of God” as an indication of God’s cosmic rule in Jesus Christ did not show to better advantage in the reduced and questionable identification of the reign of God with church.
in Dutch Reformed faith and order. While the Anabaptists’ teaching of communal ownership of believers was confessionally opposed, a ministry of compassion to those in need was instituted as an ordained office in Reformed church order.

This ministry was understood and practised within the theocratic understanding of society at the Cape. The Church took charge of the welfare of all in need, whether members of the Church or not; whether Christian or heathen. The Company provided patronage for this ministry and supported it legally and financially. Thus, the Church was the public ministry of welfare of the Colony. It is noteworthy that Van Lier, as exponent of the revivalism of “advanced evangelicalism”, encouraged his flock to do works of benevolence. As is also true in other respects, this movement served to revitalise the existing value of charity.

On the positive side the diaconate served to relieve the excesses of poverty and need which resulted from a mercantile capitalist system that created a society with economic discrepancies ranging from Company officials living in pomp and splendour to slaves who owned nothing, but were owned as status symbols. It has to be mentioned that where there were excesses of pomp and circumstance among colonists and Company officers, the Church echoed the Company’s condemnation thereof.

The diaconate also countered racism, as well as cultural and religious superiority that were fostered within a system where slaves were bought and caught from heathendom and not from the remnants of Latin Christendom. In a social setting where “otherness” in terms of religion, culture and race qualified people to be treated as merchandise and corporate or private property, the Church at least affirmed the humanity of all people by its commitment to charity to all and sundry in need. This even included the Khoïna who had no other status in the eyes of the Company other than producers of meat.

One could argue critically that the teaching of Calvin, as reflected in early Dutch church orders, concerning the responsibility of the diaconate to address the injustices that gave rise to poverty and need, did not materialise at the Cape - at least not with regard to slavery. This neglect can be ascribed to the Company embargo of chaplains communicating about political or economic matters. Newbigin’s assertion that some colonial governments regarded the work of missionaries as an embarrassment because they interfered with the commercial interests of the
Europeans and that the East India Company therefore forbade missionaries in areas under their control is not applicable to Cape-Dutch Christendom. The Church at the Cape definitely did not interfere with the commercial interests of the Company – nor did the Moravian mission for that matter. The former benefited Company commercial interests by providing moral justification for Company ideology and practices. Over and above that it was the Church that opposed the Moravian mission and not the Company. Hence, diaconate was practised in conjunction with the Company’s administration at the Cape as a Christendom structure ecclesiastically-social nature, a la Richard.

Instead of addressing the injustices of mercantile capitalism, the diaconate (together with evangelism and education eased the conscience of the Church. The Church could argue on these grounds that slaves were better off in a state of slavery within Christendom than being free in heathendom. Therefore the justification for slavery provided by the diaconate helped to perpetuate this fundamental injustice within the mercantile capitalist colonial project.

_Historical trajectory and present challenges_

The historical trajectory of the issue of slavery and the Cape-Dutch Christendom bears witness to the fact that the justification of inequality and injustice associated therewith prevailed. It was the heirs of the privileged classes of Cape-Dutch Christendom who resisted the freeing of slaves and the concomitant policy of equality. This resistance contributed to the so-called Great Trek of the 19th century and the formation of Boer republics with their reigning ideology of “geen gelijkstelling” (no equality). The ideology of Apartheid in the 20th century could build on this cultural conviction.

Although the scriptural dimension of the diaconate regarding economic justice is currently still reflected in the formula for the ordination of deacons, mention is made of the “alleviation of the circumstances that gave rise to need”. Ever since the inception of Cape-Dutch Christendom a gap has remained between the essentially charitable work of the Church diaconate on the one hand and the advocacy for economic justice on the other. This gap was only temporarily crossed under the auspices of Afrikaner nationalism on behalf of poor Afrikaners. While it is presently still accepted that diaconate as charity is offered to all and sundry, any mention of common economic justice remains a contentious subject in the Cape
Church. In the same way that the rift between welfare and economic justice was bridged regarding “poor whites”, the challenge facing the Church is to contribute towards bridging that gap for all poor people. If diaconate remains charity without addressing the issues of justice that underlie them, Hunsberger’s indictment against North American churches that diaconate represents mere tokenism, needs to be seriously considered with regard to much of the diaconal work of the Cape Church.

The Cape Church continued the habit of being diaconate in conjunction with political society and corporate business as the VOC was both company and government. The diaconal work of the Cape Church is still mainly done in conjunction with government. At the same time it (the Church) also uncritically associates with corporate business. A congregation of the Cape Church serves as example. It recently joined the local chamber of the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut (Afrikaner Chamber of Commerce) in order to advance its diaconal work among poor people of all races.

When Afrikaner nationalist rule was terminated, the Church seemingly found new ways of doing diaconal work with the 20th century patron power, namely Afrikaner national capitalism. Working within this framework will, once again, not jeopardise the interests of its flock nor the ideology that functions as patron. Moreover, diaconate can once again serve to soothe the conscience of Afrikaner capitalists, the number of which has grown dramatically since the inception of the new democratic South Africa while poverty and unemployment remain as serious as ever before.

On the positive side the involvement of the Cape Church in public welfare is at least still a link – probably the last remaining one – between the institutional Church and public life, albeit in a reductionism form.

In conclusion one can say that sesquicentennial Cape-Dutch Christendom

12 Although there has been a deterioration of congregational diaconate since the voluntary principle was enacted, reducing deacons to congregational revenue collectors that have to compensate for the loss of state funding, the Cape Church instituted diaconate on synodical level, which is once again a joint service of mercy with state funding. This enterprise has even survived the new Christendom of the apartheid era. The Cape Church has lately formed a partnership with of the URC in the Cape. Apart from a combined synodical managerial team for diaconal services, there are currently 56 residential institutions; 34 community based services that range from fairly small to fairly large institutions; 56 social service programmes; and, seven other related activities.

laid the foundation for the extensive diaconal work of the Church among both its own fold and those outside thereof in conjunction with the state and Afrikaner national-capitalist movement.

**Education and culture**

The Dutch-Reformed theocratic ideal set itself the task to cultivate a society which understood the world in terms of the Augustinian settlement, as interpreted by the Calvinist reformation in the Netherlands. This cultural aspect of Christendom – the synthesis of gospel and Roman antiquity – was transferred to civil society by means of education. The Church, in conjunction with the state, became the custodian for transferral of this culture through public education. Newbigin's allusion to the education of the Benedictine Order of rural Europe to the Latin-Christian world view, is echoed in the education of the Church at the Cape where all and sundry (excluding the Khoina) were enculturated into Cape-Dutch Christendom and its world view. For the Church this signified the reign of Christ in culture and for the state it ensured an orderly and well functioning society.

The Church at the Cape, despite its submissive position with regard to the state, was privileged to be put in a powerful position to ensure that the Christian foundations of public education were unrivalled and that the reigning culture of the colony was according to its theocratic ideal. It could avail itself of state power to secure this ideal, which it indeed did as deemed necessary.

The Augustinian settlement was placed under new pressure during the 17th and 18th centuries by the powers of the Enlightenment. Direct challenges of the Enlightenment to the Dutch Reformed Christendom world view were warded off in the Cape Church by the selection of orthodox teachers and calling on government to remove unorthodox teachers.

The remonstration of Drakenstein members during the Theron case of the 1770s who ascribed the irregularities in their congregation and at the Cape to weak education. They propagated better education as a tool to liberate the Church from oppressive Company control. This may be construed as taking the same direction as the much later Basic Education Movement of Paulo Freire in Latin America.

**Historical trajectory and present challenges**

The Batavian republican rule under De Mist signalled a crisis for this most
powerful theocratic tool of the Church as it attempted to secularise education. It encountered resistance, however, as colonists resisted the new taxes and the Church, as other main financier of education, held on to its deeply rooted interests in education.14 British Governor Cradock even granted the Church a substantial amount of its say in the schools. However, after him, the policy of secularisation of the schools continued, diminishing the role of the Church. Anglicisation of the schools contributed to this estrangement. The Church, however, retained their involvement in education, inter alia through establishment of educational institutions.15

The trajectory of this saw the development of Christian-National education in the 20th century, which has still been upheld in Church and Society Report of 1986.16 Christian-national education also became the hottest contested issue during the constitutional negotiations leading up to the adoption of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The National Party, as ideological partner of the Church in that respect, no longer exists. Neither has the Church any direct say in public education.

Durand deals with the current crisis of the Afrikaner as a disintegration of the close knit unit that used to exist in this progeny of Cape-Dutch Christendom between Church, gospel, culture and politics.17 The scandalising of Apartheid incriminated the Church which had provided divine justification thereof. The Church was also the guardian of Christian education, which became suspect due to this involvement of the Church. Subsequently, members of the DRC have found themselves adrift with respect to world view and faith. This state of disorientation has created a vacuum that is filled either by secularism or religious fundamentalism of the creationist kind.

While the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA) have had a tradition of Christian higher education institutionalised in the former University of

14 Anne-Marie Bergh, "Jacobus Abraham de Mist and Marc-Antoine Jullien: a comparison of educational ideas at the beginning of the nineteenth century" (English), EducaRe (Pretoria, South Africa) 27, no. 1 & 2 (1998): 42.
Potchefstroom which promoted a Reformed (new Calvinist) world view within a modern scientific world, the DRC has not propounded a coherent world view of this kind. After the loss of influence in education and without a catechesis geared towards filling this gap, this crisis will rather deepen than abate. Building on Calvin’s tradition will have to include a vision for the public witness of the Church, as argued by Newbigin. The present crisis of modernity should be used by the Church to boldly pronounce the gospel as public truth. Newbigin argued that “agnostic pluralism” of modernity should be countered from a stance of “committed pluralism”. However this should not imply a break with the positive side of Enlightenment. As Bonhoeffer pointed out the quest for factual, scientific truth should be retained. Van Lier’s reaction to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, however understandable, must not stand in the way of a rigorous dialogue between theology and science. The revivatist tradition in the Cape Church, which has its roots in the “advanced evangelicalism” of Van Lier and De Vos, should not provide an escape into the private sphere.

**Secular vocation and public voice**

The Church at the Cape, as will be argued below, compromised its prophetic task regarding the political and economic life at the Cape. It was, however, privileged as only its members could be appointed in senior government positions. Through its membership the Church indirectly had a say in the public life of the Colony.

For this reason the Church fought hard to dissuade the Cape Government from appointing senior officials of other persuasions when the Government became more and more accommodating during the course of the latter part of the 18th century.

**Historical trajectory**

The loss of this privilege when the British annexed the Cape left a great vacuum in the Church’s influence in public life. The new-Christendom project in the 20th century Apartheid state witnessed the Afrikaner Broederbond (as a “Christian organisation” in Richard’s terms) performing the function that the Church once played in Cape-Dutch Christendom, for instance to ensure that people of Dutch Reformed persuasion fill prominent public positions and thereby ensure the influence of the church in public life. The Church could no longer perform this role.
as it had lost its legal established status amid ecclesiastical plurality and that organisational division within the Church along provincial and denominational lines had taken place before the unification of South Africa. The Broederbond managed to mediate a new unity between the various factions of the Cape Church on the one hand and Afrikaner nationalism on the other.

With the crisis of new-Christendom, the Church is now without the power to have its people fill key public positions and also without a tradition of speaking to the public as institutional church.

Newbigin’s vision of a Christian presence in current Western society, which should function amid the denouncement of the Church to any claim to positions of power, is applicable to the Cape-Dutch Reformed Church at present. The challenge is for believers who occupy positions in society only on the strength of secular considerations, to witness to the gospel in their respective spheres of influence without colluding with political or ideological power.

In a context that has a plurality of Christian churches and persuasions, Church members should find ways to relate ecumenically to other believers in their particular life spheres in order to bear communal witness.

A greater challenge to Church members will be to engage in dialogue with adherents of non-Christian religions and secular humanists in order to find common ground in terms of public norms and values. This confronts the Cape Church with historical deficits in terms of public theology, theology of religions and dialogue with secularised culture.

**Church order and ecclesial freedom**

As the chaplaincy of the VOC, the Church compromised the integrity of its own order and therefore also its public witness. A system of predicants and sick comforters appointed as Company chaplains and holding different ranks implied a hierarchy within the ministry of the Word. Moreover, the right of congregations to elect office bearers, whether by approbation or election from double the number proposed by consistory, was jeopardised by Company control, as dramatically...
demonstrated by the Theron case at Drakensteyn. Consistories became small power centres to which there was no recourse for members of the congregation. It became a matter of consistory nominating members and the state electing them.19

**Historical trajectory and present challenges**

Although the Cape Church has become free to elect its own office bearers, it has never given the congregation more than approbation right (through silence) of those elected by consistory. Objections to people elected by consistory cannot stop their induction. As the 2005 ecclesiastical case against some consistory members of the DRC Vredelust has shown, even complaints by members, upheld through conviction by classis and ratified by synod has not led to the deposition of church councillors, even though the latter were subsequently charged again for persisting in their transgressions. Furthermore, as illustrated by the congregation of Vredelust, the trend is for congregations to become larger while their consistories are reduced to the minimum number allowed by the church order. Consistories virtually elect and re-elect themselves without the participation of the congregation. Even when consistory invited members to suggest names of possible candidates, none of those were elected.

This disempowerment of the congregation has contributed to authoritarianism among Afrikaners and does not put the Church in a position where its life and order can make a positive contribution to a democratic public order.

The attempts of the Church to free the Church order from Company control were mostly thwarted. The little success the Church had towards regaining its freedom to order itself, could not be translated into the freedom of prophetic witness. The Church remained “his master’s voice”. Even when it spoke out on behalf of social justice after the First War of Independence, it merely became the voice of the new patron – the volk.

The 1857 compromise of the order of the Church, namely the condonation of the Cape Synod of separation along racial lines regarding worship and Holy Communion has still not been overcome after 150 years. This compromise set the

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tone for further ideological accommodations, which have rightly earned the Church
the reputation of being party to the ideology and practice of apartheid.
APPENDIX A

"REST AND PEACE” AND “THE EXTENSION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

The following is a number of references from my primary sources regarding the recurring themes of “rest and peace” and “the extension of the kingdom of God”.

In a state of “rest and peace” the preaching of the gospel was expected to lead to the salvation of many, as the grace of the Holy Spirit would manifest itself in regeneration, faith and sanctification. For others it would, however, lead to their downfall. Hence, Cape Town Consistory reported on the state of the church saying that God was to be thanked for “sweet peace” causing the ministry of God’s servants not to lack God’s blessing and “God’s heart changing grace resulting in the winning of many souls for King Jesus”.

The Church at the Cape regularly reported in the following vein: “There is good rest, love, peace and unity, awakened by admonitions, towards virtue and piety, while the congregation increases through a marked growth”. Internal harmony and growth of the Church were seen to go hand in hand. Hence, Classis rejoiced in the fact that congregations at the Cape enjoyed peace and that God’s work could be seen in some. This affirmed that the Lord strengthened that which he had brought into being and made his grace to abound in the congregations – all to the honour of his Name and the salvation of many souls. Elsewhere Classis expressed the hope that the growth of congregations and their public and private teaching ministries would be blessed so that the name of Jesus would be glorified and treasured in the congregation and everywhere.

The following remark by Classis in 1738 explicitly laid a causal relation between the state of the Church and its appeal to outsiders: “May God grant that the state of peace prevalent in the church expand and be established and serve as an inspiration to those who find themselves in the thickest of pagan darkness to ask

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1 Missive 90, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 390.
2 Missive 93, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 344.
3 Missive 53, 75, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen 1, 478-81.
5 Missives 222, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 116-17.
6 Missive 251, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 344.
after God and receive the power of his grace and of the Saviour through the Holy Spirit". In 1754 Classis also expressed the hope that ministers sent to East India would have the spirit of God and be blessed instruments for the conversion of many souls. Classis hoped that there would be a change of hearts and that there would not only be external peace and quiet and that the officers would become the spiritual fathers of many spiritual children in Christ.

In 1771, shortly before internal strife broke out in Drakensteyn, it was reported that God in His providence granted rest and peace; that the congregation found itself in a state of good order and discipline and that many would grow in love and grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and sing songs of praise to the honour of Zion’s great King which would be heard in that part of God’s vineyard.

Likewise Cape Town Consistory expressed its joy at the return of rest and peace and the subsequent numerical and qualitative growth of the congregation. Furthermore, that the Lord of the harvest would grant a great harvest of souls as He healed the “rifts” caused by the death of a quarter of the congregation due to a plague that hit the Cape.

Classis commended the rest of the “African Churches” of “this outpost” for being that part of “God’s Zion” where rest and peace among the ministers and congregations had contributed to “the growth of Christendom [read: the Church] and the strengthening of the faith that was once passed on to the saints”. This was in stark contrast with the situation elsewhere (probably a referral to East India) where there was disunity and strife instead of the “deep rest” prevalent in “such a far off part of the world” (probably referring to the Cape).

Classis viewed its calling as that of helping the Cape congregations to “extend and fertilise Jesus’ kingdom”. For this purpose ministers of the Word had to be selected carefully lest they caused more unrest than peace.

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9 Cf. Appendix C at end of thesis.
The following reports illustrate the premium placed on salvation and incorporation of all people into the established Church at the Cape. Ds Petrus Kalden reported as early as 1697 that the congregation at the Cape was growing daily as more heathen were converted and baptised. Christians also turned arduously to the word of God and partook of the table of the Lord.\(^\text{15}\) Classis took note of this with joy and expressed the hope that two Chinese who had been taught the Catechism had also “come over unto the lap of the church” \((\text{overgekomen tot den schoot van de kerke})\) and that the light of the gospel would shine and be blessed which would result in the winning of many souls.\(^\text{16}\) The spiritual plight of the “Hottentots” was also of great concern to Kalden and he reported that he had been learning their language in order to be in a position to minister to them. He had communicated this to the government. God wanted to expand the church, Kalden wrote, and “flood it with His influence of grace” so that “the heathen may also be born unto the lap of Jesus’ Church”.\(^\text{17}\)

Classis, therefore, expressed the hope that God would grant young gifted ministers with courage to go to the Cape to expand the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus in order that “the new cultivations of Christendom may multiply and increase powerfully...”\(^\text{18}\) and that the Pastor of Israel would bring a new pastor to the Cape, lead and keep him and equip him with the wealth of his grace so that many “Christians and heathen” could be sustained through the word of God.\(^\text{19}\) Elsewhere Classis declared that it wanted to contribute to the matters of God and His Kingdom and expressed the hope that the Lord would equip the ministry of the combined meeting to sanctify the saints, convert sinners and extend His kingdom among “the heathen” so that His name should be exulted to the ends of the earth.\(^\text{20}\)

The Consistory of Drakensteyn congregation, which had previously reported how it tediously maintained its mainly colonial and French speaking membership, in 1703 reported on the conversion of a person of Muslim parentage and expressed the hope that the Khoina would also follow suit.\(^\text{21}\)

\(^\text{15}\) Missive 11, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 32.
\(^\text{16}\) Missives 170, 175, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 12, 23.
\(^\text{17}\) Missive 14, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 37,38.
\(^\text{18}\) Missive 196, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 71.
\(^\text{19}\) Missive 208, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 92.
\(^\text{20}\) Missive 207, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 89-90.
\(^\text{21}\) Missive 12, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 34.
Classis responded by providing a link between the maintenance of the colonial section of the congregation and conversion from “heathendom”. It ensured the Drakensteyn Consistory that they were placed in that corner of Africa through divine providence. The hope was expressed that Ds Beek, who understood the French language, would be blessed in his ministry and that by ministering in Dutch he would help the Huguenots to understand the Dutch language and overcome the “apathy and lack of zeal of many with regard to public religion”. Classis also rejoiced in the conversion of a Muslim and expressed the wish that God would “terminate His curse over the lineage of Ham, let in the fullness of the heathen and redeem all of Israel so that many would be converted and sanctification of the saints would take place.”

Likewise, Cape Town Consistory reported on 9 April 1703 on the increasing number of conversions among “the heathen”, including a Chinese and two prospective Chinese members. All of them were initiated into the community through the baptism of Christ. The report continued that evening prayers were said at the hospital, for the military at the castle and also at the schools for Company slaves, followed by catechismal teaching.

The Combined Assembly reported that the congregations at this outpost (uithoek) of Christendom were still at peace and that God’s blessing (heil) over them was evident. This state of peace was seen to be dependent on ministry of the Word. Hence, the request to Classis to pray and intervene in order to ensure that men of the cloth, filled with the Spirit of wisdom and love, were recruited to promote this harmony. They had to be godly ministers of the Word who could contribute towards keeping the Church at this outpost pure. Classis commended the brotherly peace prevalent among the ordained office bearers which resulted in their work “extending the kingdom of our great God and saviour in our congregations.”

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22 Missive 171, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 15.
23 Missive 13, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 35,37.
24 Missive 71, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 229.
25 Missive 76, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 240.
26 Missive 80, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 249/50.
27 Missives 210, 240, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 95, 150. Comment: the presbyterial system whereby all offices are equal necessitates harmony among the offices.
Cape Town Consistory reported on the death of Rev Croeser of Zwartland and requested the sending of a competent, pious and energetic minister to heal the fallen state of affairs and breach in Zion to which Classis expressed the hope that the Lord would provide a lively, able and faithful minister for the Zwartland to restore the fallen cause of the Lord and to extend the Kingdom among "the heathen" and that Drakensteyn would grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Furthermore that the Almighty would confirm this through visible signs of His miraculous power and that the congregation would grow daily with new members assigned for salvation. This would glorify His Name among "the heathen". It would encouragement the predicans at the Cape to minister amid signs of the blessing of the gospel among a corrupt people – where there were people who travelled the narrow road leading to the Kingdom of God. Classis prayed that people at the Cape would repent and bring glory to God in order that the good reputation of the congregation might be a blessing to "the heathen" and that many of them would join the congregation and bring glory to God as the God of all.

Classis was pleased to hear of the formation of the Combined Assembly and expressed the hope that this arrangement would benefit the congregations so that they could experience peace and grow numerically – and include those from "blind heathendom" who accepted the Christian faith.

With the Theron issue pending at Drakensteyn, Consistory reported that the gospel of the crucified Christ was still proclaimed fruitfully among the quiet and peaceful who valued the Saviour's merit, proving themselves to be part of the people whom the Lord had made to proclaim his glory. This missive is concluded with the prayer: "Dear God, grant that more and more who are saved be added to the congregation". (See Appendix C)

HARVESTING SOULS: APPROACHES TO VARIOUS CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE

THE "STRAYED AND LOST SOULS" OF CHRISTENDOM

While both Lutherans and Reformed in Germany were given full equality by the Peace of Munster (1648), in the Netherlands only the Reformed faith and church received established status. In the North the position of the Lutherans was initially difficult: their meetings were disturbed and their pastors often driven from the cities. The pressure of Scandinavian and North German trade relations, however, brought about an improvement in their legal status during the 17th century. At the Cape, however, their position stayed precarious, as they were not allowed to form a congregation, have a church building or an ordained pastor until 1781.32

Much energy went into the Reformed – Lutheran divide. At the Cape it was a matter of (1) conversion of Lutherans to the Reformed faith and their assimilation into the Reformed Church; (2) maintenance of own established rights as opposed to those of other creeds; and, (3) if all of the aforementioned failed, to strictly limit the rights of Lutherans.

In 1714 the Cape Town Consistory consulted Classis regarding Lutherans who wanted to share communion with the Reformed. Consistory was of the opinion that this request should be granted.33 Classis consented provided that the Lutherans maintained the sound doctrine of sanctification.34 This was subsequently communicated to aspiring proselytes. The result, however, was that they refrained from coming to be tested for the soundness of their faith. Nevertheless, Consistory reported, many new members whose parents were of other persuasions joined the Cape Town Congregation.35 Gradually Lutherans came “to profess their faith and partake of communion in mutual love and unity to the mutual edification of life together”. Hence, there was rest and peace and the ministry of the gospel was

33 Missives 28, 75, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 134, 236.
34 Missive 180, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 56; compare missive 78, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 247.
blessed by numerical and spiritual growth of the congregation. Classis received this report with approval and hoped to learn more about the “flourishing and fertile circumstances of the congregations”. Later, the Cape Congregation reportedly consisted of approximately 200 members “apart from a considerable number of people from other persuasions (gezintheeden)” such as Lutherans and others.

An example of how highly the conversion of Lutherans was valued – especially influential ones – becomes apparent from the 1776 Cape Town Consistory report stating that despite the emergence of all kinds of vices associated with the growth of the town, there were good things, such as secunde Hemmy who came over from the Lutheran faith.

Little explicit mention is made of people of persuasions other than the Lutheran faith. The children of Catholics for whom Reformed witnesses took responsibility could be baptised. These children were dealt with in a way similar to those of slaves! Mention is made of the adult baptism of an elderly man of Mennonite parents. This was regarded as a sign of God’s increased blessing.

“HEATHEN SOULS”
The 1618-19 Synod of Dordrecht requested the States General to exert itself “with Christian earnestness” to promote “the procreations of the holy Gospel” in the East Indian countries where it held authority. The motivation of the Synod was that all true Christians ought to strive for the extension of God’s honour among all people and desire the salvation of their neighbour. Therefore it was their duty to use all means at their disposal for furthering this goal as the Lord had opened up countries that lacked the true and saving knowledge of God.

Shortly after Dordrecht, the second octroi / charter was signed between the States General and the VOC. Company patronage of the Reformed faith and Church also included promotion of “the true religion” among “the heathen”. The Belgic Confession, which had been accepted as creed at Dordrecht, stated in article 36 that

35 Missives 32, 35, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 145, 150.
36 Missive 185, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 47.
37 Missives 41, 43, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 163, cf. 166.
38 Missive 124, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 436.
40 Missives 2, 4, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 9, 13.
the Church held civil government responsible for both political administration and patronage of Church and creed. It read: rulers had to protect the holy ministry of the Word and thereby oppose all idolatry and false religion and exterminate it; destroy the kingdom of the Antichrist and promote the kingdom of Jesus Christ and let it be proclaimed everywhere, so that God would be honoured and served by everybody as ordered in His Word.

This understanding was also reflected in the 1624 Batavian Church Order, which aimed at the "establishment of a Christian order and gathering the heathen into the lap of the congregation of God".\textsuperscript{41} Decisions taken by the Consistory of Batavia, inter alia, aimed at the "procreation of Christendom"\textsuperscript{44} and that government would prohibit Chinese and other "heathen from practising their pagan superstition and serving the devil in public, especially in the streets, since in no Christian republic would such incursions of the honour of God be tolerated". This would prevent many non-Dutch from joining and enjoying such "pagan practices."\textsuperscript{45}

Van Riebeek’s prayer on arrival at the Cape reflects this understanding of Company patronage. Classis also shared this sentiment: "May the Lord of the harvest bless your [Church at the Cape] ministry among the blind heathen of the Cape so that their eyes will be opened to kiss in faith the Lord and commander of the heathen, and will walk in his ways"\textsuperscript{46} and that his kingdom would grow among "the heathen" and that many souls would be won for the Lord Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{47} Here, in quintessential Reformed fashion, we see that the winning of souls, the confession of the private and public Lordship of Christ through word and deed, are held together. It is in this spirit that Classis reported that it had reached an agreement with the Council of Seventeen on the restoration of the seminary at Colombo (Ceylon).\textsuperscript{48}

Ecclesiastical consciousness of the evangelic responsibility toward "the heathen" is also evident in the greeting of the Presbyteries of South Holland to their Cape brethren: "...from the house of the Lord, with wishes of the good Jerusalem over them and their congregations; that the Moor in Zion be born".\textsuperscript{49} Bearing in

\textsuperscript{41} Church Order of Batavia, 1624, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 558.
\textsuperscript{44} Church Order of Batavia, 1624, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 570. Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 399-400, 332.
\textsuperscript{45} Church Order of Batavia, 1624, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 572.
\textsuperscript{46} Missive 180, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 37.
\textsuperscript{47} Missive 181, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 38.
\textsuperscript{48} Missive 170, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 13.
\textsuperscript{49} Missive 220, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 113.
mind that “Zion” was used as a metaphor for the Church, this portrays a significant understand of mission as incorporating converts from “heathendom” into the community of believing colonists. Mission was not thought of as a sending away of missionaries to form congregations of converts from “heathendom”, but rather as an incorporation of the nations into Christendom.

**The souls of slaves**

During 1678, ds J Overney expressed the hope that he would set a good example through his ministry and life in order to bring in many souls for Jesus Christ. Classis affirmed this sentiment and expressed the wish that ds Overney continue to work in such a manner and a state of mind that he “would be more competent to expand the kingdom of Christ among Christians and the heathen”. Classis wished him “the blessing of the Lord of the harvest on his labour, which will yield much fruit and the winning of many souls to the honour of his great name”. Earlier, (1666) Overney had requested guidance from Classis with regard to the baptism of various categories of children. This bears witness to the fact that from very early on church membership was open to whosoever met the requirements of covenant baptism.

Ds Overney supplied information on four different practices at the Cape. The second category concerned slave children who were brought for baptism by their slave masters who promised to educate them and also have them educated in the Christian religion. This, Overney remarked, should imply that slave owners would improve the care of their slaves. Even though slaves were private property they were “also human and should through their slavery with us rather be made more happy than not”. The third category concerned slave children of whom the parents had been baptised by the Portuguese or children sired by the “Dutch nation” (*Duitse natie*) with slave women (whether baptised or not) or all those slave children for whom a VOC employee accepted guardianship and subsequently attended school to learn to read, write and know the Catechism.

The Consistory of Drakensteyn Congregation, which had previously reported on how it tediously maintained its mainly French speaking colonial membership,

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reported on 4 April 1703 that a convert (proselyte) from Muslim parentage had been accepted as part of the mystical body of Jesus Christ. 54

If Lutheran men were to take their wives and children over to the Lutheran church, it would reportedly cause much harm to the congregations and weaken the offerings needed to help the poor. The reason for this was that many poor people who received diaconal assistance were neither Reformed nor Lutheran colonists, but baptised freed slaves and their children. These would remain the liability of the diaconate of the Reformed Church once the Lutherans had formed their own congregation. 55

Five years after the establishment of the Cape Colony, sick comforter Pieter van der Stael reported on the marriage of the council assistant of the fortress, Jan Woutersz of Middelburch. The latter had wedded a “black maiden” named Catharina Anthonis of Ceylon in Bengal. Van der Stael wished God’s blessing upon the marriage. 56 Later Van der Stael reported on the baptism of two children: one was the child of a sergeant (sarychant) and the other of a slave named Heindrick. His comment regarding these two children from very disparate social standing was the following: “May God give that they grow up to His honour”. 57 Likewise, the baptism of the child of a vrijburger is mentioned together with that of two slave children born out of wedlock. Again there was not a hint of racial or class undertones. 58 Mention is made in the same matter-of-fact manner of the baptism of three children born out of wedlock to the daughter of a vrijburger. 59 In 1790, however, the baptism of slave children was reported separately from those of Company employees and Colonists. 60

During 1707, ds Le Boucq insisted that children of Christian slave mothers or “European fathers” be baptised, as opposed to those of “non-Christian mothers or black fathers” – if such children were not properly adopted. Children of Company slaves had to be accompanied by witnesses on behalf of the Company. 61 This

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54 Missive 12, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 34.
55 Missive 220, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 112.
56 Missive 2, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 8.
57 Missive 4, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 12,13.
58 Missive 6, 8, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 17,24.
59 Missive 7, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 20.
60 Extracts from minute books: Cape Town consistory, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 569, 572.
61 Appendix to missive 19, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 71.
indicated that Le Boucq viewed the Company as a Christian institution, warranting the baptism of its “children”.

In 1703 Classis responded to a question of ds Overney regarding the baptism of slave children. Classis quoted the acts of the General Synod of Dordrecht that such children were only to be baptised if they had been instructed in the “fundamentals”, “the first principles of the Christian religion” and had done profession of the faith and managed to give account of that faith. Furthermore they had to indicate their intention to be baptised and had to be accompanied by able witnesses who promised to further their education in the Christian religion. Once baptised, such children should enjoy the right of freedom of all Christians and not be sold by their Christian masters or alienated from them in any other way that could cause them to become slaves of “heathen” masters. Hence, Classis prayed that God of the harvest would graciously bless ds Overney’s ministry so that it might yield much fruit and win many souls, all to the glory of His great name.62 The christening of slaves was a matter that the Synod of Dordrecht had already dealt with, including their incorporation into the Church. A baptised slave of a Christian master secured such a slave the “freedom” of the continued patronage of his or her master.

Theal provides a background picture of slaves and the way they were integrated into Cape-Dutch Christendom: Of the children born to slave mothers approximately one quarter were black, the remainder were “half-breeds”. Commissioner Isbrand Goske, who visited the settlement in February 1671, considered this circumstance so “scandalous and demoralising” to the whites that he attempted to pass legislation to stop “half-breeds” from being enslaved. Goske was of the opinion that “heathen” Africans did not understand the obligations of marriage and fidelity between man and wife. In his opinion, therefore, slaves could not be married as long as they remained heathen. However, he issued instructions that female slaves were to be matched with males of their own class. They were all to be sent to church twice on Sundays and assembled every evening for religious instruction. During these assemblies, the sick comforter had to recite prayers slowly. These they had to repeat after him. As soon as they were sufficiently advanced in knowledge and could profess their Christian faith, they were to be baptized and

62 Missive 169, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen II, 10.
married. All the children were as heretofore to be sent to school, so that none might grow up as heathens.\textsuperscript{63}  

A letter mentions sending an orphan to the Netherlands without "\textit{een knegt of meyd}" – as was the habit in India in contrast to the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{64}  

\textbf{Khoina souls}  

The Company chaplains were aware of the missionary charge of Cape-Dutch Christendom. Hence we read that on 2 May 1662 sick comforter Van der Stael reports on the baptism of Eva, an elderly woman, who was the first indigenous person, named "Hottentoes", to be baptised. Van der Stael himself, together with the second in command of the fortress who carried the rank of merchant, acted as witnesses.\textsuperscript{65}  

Sick comforter Wylant expressed the wish to teach the Khoina to read and write and to minister the gospel to them as he believed they did not have any religion. For this purpose he wished to learn their language and have some of their young settle with him. Their language, he said, was unfortunately very difficult. Furthermore, they were nomadic. However, God Almighty was able to draw them to the light of His Son, Jesus Christ and out of the reign of darkness and the hands and bonds of Satan and to bring them into the reign of his Son. He assumed that it was the wish of "the good God to show His love and grace to wretched, pitiful people." Hence he wished Classis God's peace and blessing on its work, in order that many souls be added for Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{66}  

Some time after October 1678 Ds Overney referred to Eva and her children who had become church members. They were the only baptised Khoina. The reason was that "this nation simply resists our religion" notwithstanding all efforts to convert them.\textsuperscript{67}  

In April 1703, after reporting on the conversion of a Muslim, the Consistory of Drakensteyn expressed the hope that "our great God and pastor of the sheep may [also] bring the old inhabitants of this land (the Khoina) to the sheepfold of Jesus, so

\textsuperscript{63} George McCall Theal, \textit{History of South Africa II -- IV}, 1915 -- 1927, Facsimile Reprint by by C. Struik, Cape Town (1964), III, 184.  
\textsuperscript{64} Missive 227, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen II}, 127.  
\textsuperscript{65} Missive 8, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 23.  
\textsuperscript{66} Missive 1, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 4.  
\textsuperscript{67} Missive 10, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 28,29.
that Ham will no longer be the servant of servants....” This would take place at the
time “that pleased God in His mercy to let the fullness of the heathen enter.”

As reported in 1706, the spiritual plight of the Khoïna was also of great
care to Ds Kalden and he learnt their language in order to be in a position to
minister to them. He requested the VOC and Classis to grant him a year and a half to
perfect his fluency of their language “to strengthen him to serve these Africans”.God, he says, wants to expand the church, and to “flood it with His influence of
grace” so that “the heathen too may be born in the lap of Jesus’ Church”.

The 1738 report of the Cape Town Consistory reflected some awareness that
the evangelisation of “heathen” was the responsibility of the church and not that of
government. Although there was no trace of the conversion of “the Hottentots” to
date, Consistory trusted God to fill Classis with His Spirit to increase its zeal for His
church even more.

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58 Missive 12, in Spoelstra, Boowstoffen I, 34.
59 Missive 14, in Spoelstra, Boowstoffen I, 37, 38.
70 Missive 53, in Spoelstra, Boowstoffen I, 184.
APPENDIX C

THE THERON CASE AT DRAKENSTEYN

The twelve year long church struggle which commenced in 1773 was initiated by the induction of Thomas Arnoldus Theron as an elder of the congregation of Drakensteyn and subsequent opposition to this step.

Theron had held a prominent position in society as a member of the heemraad (jury) and had been a burger-luytenant (civil-lieutenant) notwithstanding that he had been found guilty by the civil court of justice.\textsuperscript{71} Popular resistance to his induction as elder pointed towards an understanding that the local faith community was free to question the power of political society over the church.

This took place against the background of the Cape congregations being denied government permission to form a combined council. Government was obviously not in favour of the Cape congregations forming connecting structures and becoming too powerful and independent of Company control.

The story must also be seen against the background of the sound Reformed principle which prescribed a regular rotation of members of consistory as a measure against the concentration of power in the hands of a small band of individuals.

What in Reformed polity would normally be treated as an internal church matter, lead to a collision with government as the latter reserved the right to approve elders before their induction – an aberration that had started in the Netherlands in order for government to control consistories as it had been proven during the Dutch freedom struggle that they had the potential to instigate and coordinate revolt. So it happened that Thomas A Theron was elected by the small Consistory of Drakensteyn chaired by ds P van der Spuy, who had obviously been approved, placed and paid by government.

The congregation opposed the small consistory’s nomination of Theron as elder. The latter had allegedly breached water laws and was therefore deemed antisocial. Four church members of Drakensteyn under the leadership of Thielman Roos opposed his appointment as elder and alleged that Theron had grabbed land and removed a weir in the river to benefit himself and disadvantage others.

\textsuperscript{71} Appendix to missive 113, in Spoelstra, \textit{Bouwstoffen I}, 344.
According to orthodox Dutch Reformed church polity, congregants had the right to contest the election of the special offices. According to the Church Order of Dordrecht the congregation has the right of approbation, which meant that all uncensored church members had the right to voice their opposition of the election by Consistory of new office bearers. Such complaints had to be investigated before the induction of the proposed office bearer.

Despite objections to Theron's election, government approved his ordination. This led to a serious confrontation between those who complied with subservient position of the church in Cape-Dutch Christendom and those who viewed the church as a body where every member had the freedom and obligation to participate in church polity – even when it involved an issue with public implications.

The reaction from Consistory, under the chairmanship of ds Van der Spuy, was drastic as the four objectors were summarily censured. The reason given was that since government had already approved Theron's election as elder, the objectors rendered themselves guilty of rebellion against their lawful government.72 Not only did consistory argue that the initial objectors had made themselves guilty of disobedience of civil government, but moreover, of disobedience to ds Van der Spuy.73 This gives an indication of how much authority preachers wielded in the church as government officials despite the fact that according to Reformed polity, predicants did not wield personal authority apart from proclamation of the divine Word and holding a seat in Consistory.

This resulted in strong popular support from within the congregation for the four censured members. The petitioners maintained that in the light of his anti-social behaviour Theron could not be appointed as elder. Ds Van der Spuy, on the other hand, argued that if Theron were guilty of a public vice as alleged, he should be excommunicated from the congregation. If not, his appointment as elder should be carried. However, Van der Spuy maintained, it was the prerogative of government to decide whether or not he held the office of elder.74

The Council of Policy then took charge of the case as it had previously dissolved the Combined Council which could have attended to the matter. Hence,

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72 Appendix to missive 113, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 339.
73 Appendix to missive 113, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 348.
74 Appendix to missive 113, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 341.
church and civil justice became completely interwoven as the Council of Policy took on the role of a general (*meerdere*) church judiciary.

Subsequently, the four censured Drakensteyn members lamented the fact that Consistory requested government to intervene and that the process was drawn out intentionally. They appealed to Classis because if they appealed to a civil court they would appear to be suspect before the world. Although this was normal in terms of orthodox Reformed church polity, it flew in the face of Company patronage and its usurpation of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. For this reason the complainants-turned-accused were even willing to undertake the arduous journey to the Netherlands to have their appeal heard by Classis. They intended to appeal against the resolution of Consistory to have them censured as schismatics (*scheurmakers*). For this purpose they appealed to the truth of God’s Word, on which, they argued, the National Church Order, the Confessio Belgica and the formularies were based. Therefore, they contended, a consistory could not pretend to have the power to judge and condemn someone before a proper investigation had been done and – referring to Theron – force such reprehensible hirelings (*huurlinge*) upon the flock of Christ and cause division. Classis had to judge whether church management could be entrusted to a consistory like that of Drakensteyn. In closure they expressed their prayer for God’s help to Classis to build up the walls of Jerusalem.75

This was followed by a petition from Drakensteyn Congregation to the Cape Government requesting the freedom that rightfully belonged to all honest citizens and Christians by virtue of divine and human laws to be granted so that they could enjoy their ecclesiastical rights and maintain their good names to the honour of God. This implied that they be given governmental approval to defend their case before the Classis in Amsterdam.76 To them freedom meant the integrity of the church to manage its own internal affairs.

A petition signed by a large portion of the congregation (128) was also handed to the Council of Policy77 – an act of popular protest unparalleled in the Cape Colony to date. They claimed the right of church members to approve or disapprove the election of elders by Consistory and their endorsement by government. Hence, here we witness the formal recognition of the priesthood by all believers in

75 Missive 114, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 399-400.
76 Appendix 1 to missive 121, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 419.
77 Appendix to missive 113, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 342.
Reformed church polity and the insistence that government reckon with popular opinion.

The VOC Judiciary Council subsequently heard the case. Ds Van der Spuy argued that some of the evidence was of a political nature and some of it ecclesiastical. Nevertheless, a civil court heard all the evidence. Cape Town Consistory supported ds Van der Spuy's cause by appealing to Classis to convince the Council of Seventeen to reinstate of the Combined Council. Then this ecclesiastical case would be dealt with in an ecclesiastical manner (*kerklijke zaak kerkelijk mogte worden afgedaan*).

Although Van der Spuy pleaded for a sharp distinction between ecclesiastical and political matters, four members of consistory had testified before the Political Council that Roos and his co-protestors-turned-accused were known to be above reproach in both ecclesiastical and secular ("worldly") matters. Consequently they also blurred the line between ecclesiastical and civil spheres in a similar way to the Roos party who had accused Theron of being antisocial in civil affairs. Classis then advised that disputes of a civil nature did not necessarily imply conflict of an ecclesiastical nature and that Consistory should have followed the principle of *ecclesia sequitur curiam* – church discipline should follow the lead of state administration of justice. The Reformed principle of, on the one hand, maintaining the freedom of the church to practice its own internal discipline (regardless of whether such sin is deemed ecclesiastical or public) without state intervention, while on the other, honouring the divine right of the magistrates to administer public justice, were clearly in conflict in Cape-Dutch Christendom.

Hence, ds Van der Spuy defended the jurisdiction of government as being in accordance with Scripture. The four complainants were subsequently censured because of their unwillingness to reconcile with Theron and because they failed to comply with the decision of their lawful government. This disqualified them from engaging in their normal membership rights.

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One can only imagine the social effects of censure in a close-knit community such as 18th century Drakensteyn. It was a small isolated farming community consisting predominantly of Huguenot descendants. A person’s good standing in church was probably a fundamental aspect of one’s social position.

A remarkable aspect of this saga is the level of knowledge and understanding of church polity reflected by the Roos party. One has to bear in mind that they had little access to professional advice. Nevertheless, the Roos party, in their opposition to the induction of Theron as elder, rightfully appealed to Scripture, the confession, catechism and the formularies “adopted by our Reformed Church”. Theron’s conduct, they argued at length in their appeal to Classis, was not only against Scripture according to the texts they quoted, but also against Art 32 of the Belgic Confession, the “practice of the Dutch Reformed Churches”, the Catechism and the Formularies of Unity as well as the “Articles of the National Church Order and the formularies that attest to these”.

One has to bear in mind that these people were predominantly the offspring of French Huguenots who managed to appeal to the canons of the Dutch reformation. Nevertheless, they lamented the shocking lack of knowledge in the Colony (Drakensteyn), which according to them, was worse than anywhere else. It warranted the establishment of a proper school to educate their young well.

The glory of God, the deepest missionary motivation in Reformed thought, was well understood by this congregation. Protesting members wrote to Classis as guardian of the congregation to fend the congregation from all strife and schism and to help it out of its pitiable state by promoting its well-being and peace, to enable this congregation of Christ to be set on earth to God’s glory.

128 members of the congregation wrote to Governor Van Plettenberg and the Council of Policy stating that the processes of the Theron case had caused much unrest and trouble and hindered everybody from fulfilling their daily work and

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84 Missive 129, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 449; cf. P. B. Van der Watt, Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1652-1824 (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1976), 61-62 – with colonisation our forefathers brought with them the ecclesial principles concerning faith and government as contained in the State translation of the Bible, the formularies of Unity and the church order of Dordrecht, which all resulted from the National Reformed Synod of Dordrecht (1618-19), placing the religious practices on the basis of the practices of the mother church.
85 Appendix to missive 113, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 344.
86 Missive 114, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 399-400.
87 Missive 113, in Spoelstra, Bouwstoffen I, 332.
causing agriculture to come to a halt. (Note that the VOC government depended on their agricultural produce.) The drawn out legal processes were also detrimental to the state of the Church. Drakensteyn Congregation had been in a sorry state for a considerable time and therefore they foresaw nothing but a total rift in their beloved congregation. Hence, they pleaded for the reinstatement of the Combined Assembly to ensure that somebody as reprehensible as Theron was removed from the office of elder and that the four censured members be reinstated. That would “heal the division in the congregation to the glory and praise of the uppermost and righteous Pastor of the Church”. Furthermore, they reported, the voluntary offerings of the church were shrinking. In an allusion to ds Van der Spuy and the rest of consistory, they alleged that the enemies of justice and peace were at work to destroy the last vestiges of truth by defending “this yeast of decay” in the church. Where is the exemplary life of elder and predicant? they asked. The induction to the office of elder of such an anti-social character (*vuylgewinzoeker*), even after having been found guilty by a civil court of justice, they contended, was not in line with Scripture, the articles of faith and the practice in Dutch Reformed churches, the church order and the form of ordination. It caused the true religion to be slandered. Morality and order were to be held together to maintain the integrity of the congregation as a witness to the gospel.

The intensity of the enduring popular opposition against ds Van der Spuy becomes clear in the 1781 letter of congregational member J Retief to all the predicants of the Church at the Cape after his demission. Retief appealed to them to do something about the state of Drakensteyn or else aggravate God’s wrath over land and church. Christ’s lordship over the church had been jeopardised by ds Van der Spuy. The congregation used to belong to the Christian church, but since the disunity had been left uncensored, it could no longer be counted as part of the body of Christ. The leaders who continued to minister the sacraments were slandering God’s name. Although God led them to confess Christ as King of His church before the world, Drakensteyn was a God-forsaken church that broke the covenant as it scorned all Christian laws in the church and even disrespected the only ruler of the church – God and His Christ. Retief contended that God would exclude those

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89 Appendix to missive 113, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 344.
sinners who followed Van der Spuy in his public sin from His kingdom. They were to know that true religion in *Christendom* only existed in obedience to God’s will.\(^9^1\)

\(^9^1\) Missive 141, in Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen I*, 478-81.
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**PART I: MISSIVES OF THE CAPE CHURCHES, MAINLY TO THE CLASSIS OF AMSTERDAM**

Nr 1. Sick comforter Willem Barentsz to the Classis Amsterdam (20 April 1655)
Nr 2. Sick comforter Pieter van der Stael to the Classis Amsterdam (5 March 1657)
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