A liberal view of Scripture within the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa: a presuppositional apologetical response

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ABSTRACT

This thesis provides an in-depth discussion on the shifts and changes that have taken place over time within the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa (DRCSA). Focusing on the church's history as it pertains to its view on Scripture and the accompanying ongoing debate between 'liberal' and 'conservative' views of Scripture, the thesis provides a comprehensive account of the changes that have taken place in the denomination since its early beginnings in order to understand the DRCSA's current viewpoints on various theological issues. Attentiveness to the pivotal periods of its ecclesiological development discussed in the thesis, therefore, provides the historical background required to comprehend the change in the DRCSA's view of Scripture and related doctrines and provides the necessary background for a presuppositional-apologetical response to the views which run counter to the confessions historically endorsed by the church up until today.

KEY TERMS

Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, apologetics, liberalism, Evolution, historical criticism, homosexuality

OPSOMMING

Alhoewel die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk van Suid Afrika in die verlede die gesag van die Bybel vir elke lewensterrein bely het, is daar deesdae ’n groeiende getal teoloë, predikante en ander lidmate in hierdie kerk wat nie glo in die gesagvolheid van die Bybel nie. Hierdie leerstellige verandering in ’n denominasie wat eers die gesag van die Bybel as kernbelydenis beskou het, moet verstaan word teen die agtergrond van ’n eeuelange stryd in die kerk met betrekking tot Skrifbeskouing en ’n gepaardgaande debat tussen ‘liberale’ en ‘konserwatiewe’ Skrifsienings. Ondersoek na die geskiedenis van die denominasie sedert sy beginjare werp dan ook meer lig op huidige sienings. Dit gee nie net die nodige geskiedkundige agtergrond om die huidige verandering in Skrifbeskouing en leerstellings van hierdie geloofsgemeenskap te verstaan nie, maar dit verskaf ook die nodige agtergrond vir ’n voorveronderstellings-apologetiese verantwoord van sienings wat verskil met dit wat die kerk in die verlede (en tans steeds amptelik) bely het.

SLEUTELTERME

Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk van Suid Afrika, apologetiek, liberalisme, Evolusie, historiese kritiek, homoseksualiteit

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ..... **I**

OPSOMMING ..... **II**

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS ..... **XII**

CHAPTER 1 — INTRODUCTION **1**

1.1 Background **1**

1.2 Problem statement **2**

1.3 Aim **3**

1.4 Objectives **3**

1.5 Central argument of the thesis **3**

1.6 Methodology **3**

1.7 Concept clarification **4**

1.8 Ethical considerations **5**

SECTION 1: THE DRCSA IN THE LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY **6**

CHAPTER 2 — AN INTRODUCTION TO SECTION 1 ..... **6**

CHAPTER 3 — GRADUAL THEOLOGICAL CHANGE OCCURING IN THE WORLD **8**

3.1 Introduction **8**

3.2 Where change began **8**

3.2.1 Ancient universities 8

3.2.2 The Enlightenment 10

3.2.2.1 A precursor to the Enlightenment 10

3.2.2.2 Defining the Enlightenment 11

3.2.3 Enlightenment thinkers 13

3.2.3.1 Francis Bacon 13

3.2.3.2 Thomas Hobbes 14

3.2.3.3 Baruch de Spinoza 14

3.2.3.4 David Hume 16

3.2.3.5 Charles Darwin 18

3.3 Conclusion 19

CHAPTER 4 — EARLY LEANINGS TOWARDS LIBERALISM 20

4.1 Introduction 20

4.2 Gereformeerd Maandblad 21

4.2.1 Charles Spurgeon 21

4.2.2 Events giving rise to the theological ‘down-grade’ of the DRCSA as reported in *Gereformeerd Maandblad* 24

4.2.2.1 May 1892 24

4.2.2.2 June 1892 25

4.2.2.3 March 1893 26

4.2.2.4 December 1894 27

4.2.2.5 May 1904 27

4.2.2.6 February 1907 28

4.2.2.7 July 1910 29

4.2.2.8 September 1910 29

4.2.2.9 1911-1912 30

4.2.2.10 D. Lategan's explanation of the evolutionary character of Higher Criticism (1916-1918) 31

4.2.2.11 Attack on conservatism — revisiting the modernist rising (1919) 32

4.3 Conclusion 34

CHAPTER 5 — CONTROVERSY AND THE CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF LIBERAL THOUGHT 36

5.1 Introduction 36

5.2 Case for the antitheses between the terms 'conservatism' and 'liberalism' 36

5.3 View of Scripture 37

5.3.1 Inerrancy 37

5.3.2 Inspiration of Scripture 40

5.3.3 Higher Criticism 41

5.4 'Kenosis' teaching 43

5.5 A growing naturalistic worldview 43

5.6 Evolutionary thinking 45

5.7 Neo-Orthodoxy 49

5.8 Humanistic psychology 51

5.9 The rise of a 'social gospel' 52

5.10 Conclusion 53

CHAPTER 6 — A CONCERTED RESPONSE TO LIBERALISM 54

6.1 Introduction 54

6.2 Evolutionary thinking 55

6.2.1 Interpretation of 'the Fall' 55

6.2.2 Interpretation of the variation among species 56

6.2.3 What to make of ape-men? 58

6.3 View of Scripture 59

6.3.1 Inspiration 59

6.3.2 Higher Criticism 63

6.4 Kenosis teaching 64

6.5 The state of the Stellenbosch Seminary 65

6.6 A new hermeneutic 66

6.7 Conclusion 67

CHAPTER 7 — LIBERALISM IN 20TH CENTURY DRCSA 68

SECTION 2: THE DRCSA IN THE LATE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY 70

CHAPTER 8 — AN INTRODUCTION TO SECTION 2 70

CHAPTER 9 — NATURALISM – THEISTIC EVOLUTION 72

9.1 Introduction 72

9.2 The influence of Du Plessis 72

9.3 Louw Alberts — Faith vs. Science 73

9.3.1 Creation and the 'Big Bang' 74

9.3.2 Creation and millions and millions of years 75

9.3.3 Reconciling 'ape-men' with Scripture 79

9.4 Gideon Joubert — The Great Thought 81

9.4.1 Theistic evolution 81

9.4.2 Creation and the Big Bang 82

9.4.3 Creation and millions and millions of years 83

9.4.4 The days of creation 83

9.4.5 Starlight and time 84

9.5 Albert Alberts — Evolution for Christians 84

9.5.1 Belief in 'tween-phases' and the provability of Evolution 85

9.5.2 Casting doubt on catastrophism 85

9.5.3 Evidence for Evolution in anatomy 86

9.5.4 The Primate family 86

9.6 Conclusion 87

CHAPTER 10 — INERRANCY ASSAULTED – HISTORICAL CRITICISM PREVAILS 88

10.1 Introduction 88

10.2 The evolutionary 'backbone' of historical criticism 88

10.3 Explicit attempts affecting change — creating a lasting influence 90

10.4 Pushing for a change of scriptural view – Jurie le Roux 90

10.4.1 Le Roux's understanding of Johan Heyns' view of Scripture 91

10.4.2 Questioning the God-inspired nature of Scripture 92

10.4.3 Le Roux's endorsement of historical criticism 94

10.4.3.1 Avoidance as an explanation for non-subscription 94

10.4.3.2 Interpretation of church history & the effects of the Enlightenment 94

10.4.4 A contextualised, post-modern and absolute-truth-denying hermeneutic 96

10.4.5 Critical of the Reformed approach to Bible interpretation 98

10.4.6 Disbelieving the existence of the Autographa 98

10.5 Andries van Aarde — Fatherless in Galilee 99

10.5.1 The illegitimacy of Christ 100

10.5.2 Doubting the bodily resurrection of Christ 100

10.5.3 Doubting and trivialising deific traits of Jesus in light of Greek mythology 101

10.5.3.1 The miraculous conception of Christ 101

10.5.3.2 The term 'Son of God' 101

10.5.3.3 The future bodily resurrection 102

10.5.3.4 Jesus' perceived view of the Church 102

10.5.4 The 2002 General Assembly 103

10.6 Conclusion 111

CHAPTER 11 — THE ACCEPTANCE OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE DRCSA 112

11.1 Introduction 112

11.2 Pieter Cilliers — A Closet is for Clothes 112

11.2.1 His early years 112

11.2.2 University years 113

11.2.3 Finding comfort in an affirmatory hermeneutic 114

11.2.4 Encouragement from the secular media for his chosen orientation 115

11.3 The changing landscape within the Church as it involves homosexuality 116

11.3.1 André Bartlett – gay activist 116

11.4 Conclusion 117

CHAPTER 12 — LIBERALISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY DRCSA 118

SECTION 3: A PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICAL RESPONSE TO THE DRCSA 120

CHAPTER 13 — AN INTRODUCTION TO SECTION 3 120

CHAPTER 14 — A PRESUPPOSITIONAL EVALUATION OF THEISTIC EVOLUTION 122

14.1 Introduction 122

14.2 Scripture and Evolution 124

14.2.1 The problem of sin 124

14.2.2 The authority of Scripture 128

14.2.2.1 The order of creation 128

14.2.2.2 The timing of the creation 130

14.2.2.3 The genre of Genesis 132

14.2.3 The hermeneutic of theistic evolution 136

14.2.3.1 The perspicuity of Scripture 136

14.2.3.2 The unchanging character of Scripture 137

14.2.4 The presuppositional nature of theistic evolution 139

14.3 Conclusion 141

CHAPTER 15 — A PRESUPPOSITIONAL EVALUATION OF A LIBERAL VIEW OF SCRIPTURE & HIGHER CRITICISM 142

15.1 Introduction 142

15.2 The anti-supernaturalism of historical criticism 144

15.3 Rejection of the grammatico-historical hermeneutic 145

15.3.1 The grammatico-historical hermeneutic compared to the historical-critical hermeneutic 146

15.4 Rejection of the authority of Scripture 148

15.4.1 The authority of Scripture in church history 148

15.4.2 The 20th century response to the rejection of biblical authority 150

15.5 Inspiration 151

15.5.1 Inspiration defined 151

15.5.2 Presuppositional evaluation of views that are critical of the traditional view of inspiration 153

15.5.2.1 The Bible is only partially inspired 153

15.5.2.2 It is neither feasible nor scientific to speak of the existence of an Autographa 156

15.5.2.2.1 The Old Testament's presuppositions with regards to the importance of the Autographa 157

15.5.2.2.2 The New Testament's presuppositions with regards to the importance of the Autographa 159

15.6 Inerrancy 161

15.6.1 The historical background of inerrancy 161

15.6.2 Inerrancy defined 161

15.6.3 Presuppositional evaluation of DRCSA views that are critical of the traditional view of inerrancy 162

15.6.3.1 The Bible is historically inaccurate – Biblical reporting can be contradictory, exaggerated, or inaccurate 162

15.6.3.2 The Bible is scientifically inaccurate – Evolution has disproved the biblical account of creation 166

15.6.3.2.1 The philosophical and theoretical nature of evolutionary science 166

15.6.3.3 Karl Barth's claims of historical criticism 168

15.7 Additional proofs for inerrancy 170

15.8 Conclusion 171

CHAPTER 16 — A PRESUPPOSITIONAL EVALUATION OF THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, QUEER AND INTERSEX+ BIBLICAL HERMENEUTIC 172

16.1 Introduction 172

16.2 The hermeneutical foundation of LGBTQI+ 173

16.3 Is the Bible authoritative in matters other than salvation? 176

16.4 Do the passages in the Bible that address homosexual acts as sinful, still mean they are sinful today? 177

16.4.1 Old Testament passages 179

16.4.2 New Testament passages 181

16.5 Ecclesiastical response to LGBTQI+ 184

16.6 Conclusion 185

CHAPTER 17 — PRESENT DAY LIBERALISM IN THE DRCSA 187

CHAPTER 18 — GRAND CONCLUSION 190

BIBLIOGRAPHY 192

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DRCSA	Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, etc.
NHKA	Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika

CHAPTER 1 — INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

While in the past the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa (DRCSA) confessed the authority of the Bible as the Word of God, many within the Church today do not see the Bible as authoritative on all matters. Prevailing views on the Pauline epistles is a prime example. In many ways, Paul is viewed as "a product of his time who could only describe the awesome reality of God's saving presence in limited (patriarchal) language" (Mouton, 2012:123).

The well-known South African theologian Andrew Murray, himself a member of the DRCSA, reacted as far back as 1862, shortly after the midway mark of the 19th-century, to the large-scale rationalism that had been advocated in Dutch theology faculties and warned against the influence it may have had on fellow ministers in the DRCSA (Choy, 2004: loc. 1513). This battle where the authority of Scripture was at the centre became so severe that it was not able to escape the Cape courtrooms (Choy, 2004: loc. 1518).

Toward the beginning of the 20th century, Dutch Reformed minister and professor of the DRCSA's theological seminary in Stellenbosch, C.F.J. Muller, had a similar battle against the same influence of rationalism as he saw it, under the guise of 'historicism' (Muller, 1911a:32). In 1911 there was a 'tête-à-tête' between him and D.J. Pienaar who was an early DRCSA advocate of German Higher Criticism (Pienaar, 1911a:13).

However, decades before these controversies during the settlement period of the Cape Colony, "theological liberalism" had already been part of the fabric of colonial religious society. To prove this, T.N. Hanekom (1951) traces the historical development of scriptural liberal thinking in South Africa from its earliest roots until more recent times. He does so by not neglecting the world-historical context within which the said liberalism developed in the Cape Church. By being particularly mindful of 18th century Enlightenment (referred to in German as 'Aufklärung') and the detrimental influence it exerted on Christianity over the centuries that followed, Hanekom 'connects the dots' leading to a more vivid picture of the South African Church context (Hanekom, 1951:3). He pays particular attention to the fact that 'new worlds' like the Cape Colony became increasingly filled with ex-Europeans, who were in reality children of this century of reason, rationalism or enlightenment.

The current (21st century) doctrinal state of the mainline churches of South Africa, in particular the DRCSA, should be understood in light of this history of debate about the authoritativeness of the Bible – or as it is known in the vernacular – between "liberal" and "conservative" views of Scripture.

This study focuses on a historical survey of Scripture criticism in the DRCSA and its influence on the thinking of the denomination. Once the historical framework has been established, the presuppositional method of apologetics, a discipline of apologetics that assumes the Scriptures as the highest authority with regards to knowledge about God, will be employed to evaluate it.

1.2 Problem statement

The study examines several examples of a long process of changes in the DRCSA. As stated by Mohler (2005), all disagreements come from a central point, that is, a diminished view of the authority of Scripture. It is, therefore, the argument of this thesis that the most systemic problem underlying most (if not all) changes in the views of the DRCSA could potentially be attributed to both the questioning of the authority of Scripture and the historical denunciation of scriptural inerrancy.

Simply stated, the research will aim to answer the question: Does the current state of the DRCSA differ dramatically from the Church's Calvinistic and Reformed roots? If so, what is the nature of the differences and which historical developments contributed to them? This question will be biblically evaluated through presuppositional apologetics.

Questions arising from this research problem:

1. Which factors in the 19th century were responsible for the scriptural criticism laid on exponents of the DRCSA?
    a) How did rationalism influence theological thought?
    b) To what extent was the DRCSA influenced by scriptural criticism during its early years?
    c) Did the new theological interpretations spark any controversy during the early years?
2. Which factors in the 20th and early 21st centuries were responsible for the continuation and growth of scriptural criticism in the DRCSA?
    a) What influence did naturalism and new approaches involving the question of origins exert on the denomination?
    b) What were the effects of a changing view of God's Word?
    c) How did an alteration in hermeneutics lead to the changing views of God's law?
3. How can a presuppositional-apologetic approach assist in biblically refuting scriptural criticism and the consequences thereof?

1.3 Aim

This study aims to understand how scriptural criticism entered the DRCSA, and to critically evaluate their traditionally-held doctrinal views and current doctrinal position through the employment of biblical apologetics, specifically the presuppositional apologetic approach.

1.4 Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To evaluate the historical growth of scriptural criticism in general and in the DRCSA, specifically during the 19th century.
2. To gain insight into factors which were responsible for the continuation and growth of scriptural criticism within the DRCSA during the 20th and early 21st centuries.
3. To consider through the presuppositional apologetic approach: a. Theistic evolution, b. Historical criticism which denies the doctrines of the plenary, verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures, and c. Homosexuality as found in the DRCSA.

1.5 Central argument of the thesis

The central argument of this study is that part of the DRCSA's leadership, ministers and some members have shifted from the Church's former views on Scripture and doctrinal beliefs. This concern will be investigated by critically evaluating the doctrinal changes that have taken place through the presuppositional apologetic approach.

1.6 Methodology

The methodological approach of this study will be to evaluate the current doctrinal approach of the DRCSA by comparing it to the historical Reformed-Evangelical tradition. The process will take place as follows:

Firstly, a literature analysis of the historical developments that gave rise to 20th-century liberalism or modernist views will be conducted. There are various publications in the DRCSA archives that can serve this purpose, but only three that describe the process in detail and reveal the pivotal information needed to identify liberalism and its doctrinal manifestations for this research process: The 1892 incepted journal of the DRCSA, *Gereformeerd Maandblad*, as well as those that followed, *Die Ou Paaie* and *Het Zoeklicht*.

Once the historical background has been established, an in-depth study of important aspects of the DRCSA's current doctrinal stance will be conducted. This will be done by identifying doctrinal positions that have been interpreted differently in the past. In addition, the possible influence of

naturalism and its varying manifestations on scriptural interpretation will be examined. Starting with their stance on special revelation (van Til, 1955:105), the study will also look at each of the manifestations, the acceptance of higher critical thought which is part of evangelicalism as a whole (Thomas & Farnell, 1998:104), and the wide acceptance of Evolution as the authority on the question of origins (Grudem, 1994:275).

An apologetical model will be used to evaluate relevant views in the DRCSA that are in contrast to their confessions and former doctrinal views. The presuppositional method of apologetics has a proven track record within the Reformed tradition (Bahnsen, 1998:24) and should be effective in the evaluation of the identified modified views or interpretations of the DRCSA.

1.7 Concept clarification

- 'Apologetics' is the systematic approach of defending the Christian faith using Scripture, logic, science, and history, to counter arguments against Christianity, and to offer arguments for the truth of Christianity (Beilby, 2011:14-16).
- 'Presuppositional Apologetics' as a systematised approach to Apologetics, is the method of making a defence for Christianity from the standpoint of Scripture itself. Through the combined utilisation of Scripture and logic, it utilises the presupposition that the Judeo-Christian worldview is the only credible, valid, and reliable worldview (Schaeffer, 1976:180-181).
- 'Liberalism' is defined as the antithesis of orthodoxy. In the introduction of his book, *Die Liberale Rigting in Suid Afrika*, Hanekom (1951:x) describes liberalism, insisting that "the basis and spiritual trait of the liberal movement is not to be found in the seeking of freedom, but rather in its rejection of authority," i.e. the authority of Scripture. It must be noted that Hanekom does have the liberal movement of the 19th century in mind; however, rejection of the authority of Scripture is true of theological liberalism in general. For this study, the terms 'liberalism' or 'liberal' can be seen as synonymous with the implicit or explicit rejection of the authority of Scripture.
- 'Conservatism' is used as the opposite of liberalism. What liberalism wishes to redefine, 'conservatism' strives to preserve and protect. For example, during the 1920s conservatism was generally defined as fighting for the preservation of the Evangelical understanding of the nature of Scripture: the authority, inspiration, inerrancy, reliability, and infallibility of Scripture. These topics were at the very heart of the debate between the theologically liberal and conservative, as was seen in the correspondence between two well-known DRCSA theologians, Johannes du Plessis and Dwight R. Snyman (1926:6).

- 'Orthodox Christianity' is the term which defined the DRCSA in the past. The South African Oxford Dictionary (2006:430) defines the adjectival usage of 'orthodox' as "holding beliefs that are traditional or generally accepted." In other words, to be 'orthodox' for this study is to agree with the original post-reformation creeds, especially their view of Scripture. In this regard, the Westminster Confession of Faith will be favoured as a prime example of orthodox Christianity, together with the confessions the DRCSA itself profess namely the Belgic Confession, The Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt.
- 'Authority of Scripture' is defined by MacArthur & Mayhue (2017:103) who insist that keeping the nature of God's Word in mind, "He alone is qualified to establish and attest to Scripture's divine authority."
- 'Inerrancy' is the view that Scripture is entirely without error in its original form. Paul D. Feinberg (1984:142) states that "Inerrancy is the view that when all the facts become known, they will demonstrate that the Bible in its original autographs, and correctly interpreted, is entirely true and never false in all it affirms, whether that relates to doctrine or ethics or social, physical or life sciences."
- 'Hermeneutics' is the "art and science by which one interprets the biblical text" (Couch, 2000:32). Couch further explains that the ultimate goal of a sound hermeneutic is that it is a reflection of true biblical theology.

1.8 Ethical considerations

According to the risk categories used by Universities in South Africa, this is a study with minimal risk. The study entails a review of literature available in the public domain. No contact with human participants is involved.

SECTION 1: THE DRCSA IN THE LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

CHAPTER 2 — INTRODUCTION TO SECTION 1

To understand the present, it is necessary to survey the past. In this study, therefore, the focus is on examining various shifts and changes in the DRCSA concerning their view on Scripture.

This section gives a general introduction to understanding the development of liberal thought. In chapter 3, the past is studied starting as far back as the Enlightenment period. The Enlightenment is an important starting point since, to this day, the tenets of modern-day approaches to Scripture are anchored in what the Enlightenment produced, at least in terms of its major tenets, which, according to Schaeffer (1976:121) "can be summed up by five words: reason, nature, happiness, progress, and liberty." The movement, which was preceded by 'academic' musings from within pagan culture was later developed by its intellectual backbone, Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, Baruch Spinoza, David Hume and Charles Darwin. Their philosophies are described as key to Enlightenment thought and development.

Once this background has been presented, it will be argued that leaders in the DRCSA started to assume a more liberal[1] approach to Scripture through the years. This direction or trajectory will be discussed in more detail in the following three chapters which trace the development of liberalism in the DRCSA through the lens of three of its historical journals in which these developments were observed.

The first of these is the DRCSA journal *Gereformeerd Maandblad* (translated *Reformed Monthly*) which will be discussed in chapter 4. This journal was founded by Dutch Reformed seminary

[1] The term 'liberal' and 'liberalism' (previously defined) lead to the same end result, a diminished regard for Scripture. Whereas the word 'liberalism' points more toward a system of belief or philosophical approach to Scripture, the adjective, 'liberal,' describes the views, convictions, attitudes and persuasions of the person subscribing to 'liberalism,' or a diminished regard for Scripture. Most significant for the study at hand is that this can usually be observed in the liberal's understanding of the authority, inerrancy, and infallibility of Scripture. The Chicago statement of 1978 was a notable effort to endorse the conservative approach to Scripture by juxtaposing the view of the conservative to that of the liberal. For instance, article XII of the statement (1978) illustrates this: "We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit. We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood."

professors J.I. Marais and C.F.J. Muller, who were men of conservative persuasion (ref. 4.2). Yet, they were men who did not serve their terms devoid of liberal influence. This will become evident in the debate regarding Higher Criticism between D.J. Pienaar and C.F.J. Muller — Muller taking the conservative ground. The journal took shape in the late 1800s, moved beyond the Anglo-Boer-war era, and continued far into the 20th century.

In chapter 5 the second journal titled *Het Zoeklicht* or *The Searchlight* will be discussed. The journal was started by J. du Plessis, who was an influential figure in the DRCSA and their seminary. He was instrumental in introducing new and previously frowned-upon biblical interpretations to the Stellenbosch Seminary and the Church. Some of the previously rejected interpretations that du Plessis introduced in the classroom and the Church included: Higher critical thought of Scripture leading to the jeopardising of the doctrine of plenary, verbal, and the inspiration of Scripture that affected the doctrines of infallibility, reliability and inerrancy. In addition, du Plessis adopted evolutionary interpretations for the creation week described in Genesis 1-2, which led to a crisis regarding the interpretation of human depravity. Lastly, he adopted the view of the 'kenosis,' which, as will be shown later (ref. 5.4 and 6.4), was a misrepresentation of the humanity of Christ crossing the border to the heretical. All of the above theological leanings of du Plessis will be identified in *Het Zoeklicht.*

Lastly, in chapter 6 it would be informative to turn to the last journal of study, *Die Ou Paaie* or *The Old Paths*, which was an effort by Dwight R. Snyman a well-known Stellenbosch minister, to counter du Plessis in many of his interpretations of Scripture. While *Het Zoeklicht* represented the more liberal approach to Scripture, *Die Ou Paaie* endorsed conservative views. Both were published more or less concurrently, the former having been launched in 1923, and the latter in 1926. *Die Ou Paaie* was mainly focused on exposing the liberal theology of du Plessis.

To emphasise, the main purpose of the following chapters is to identify and understand some of the main theological/doctrinal developments in the DRCSA which have origins mainly in Europe, Great Britain, and North America. This is followed by a discussion on the main theological/doctrinal developments within South Africa, pinpointing and describing the decades, quarter-centuries, half-centuries, and centuries in which these developments had their greatest influence within the DRCSA.

SECTION 1: THE DRCSA IN THE LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

CHAPTER 3 — GRADUAL THEOLOGICAL CHANGE OCCURING IN THE WORLD

3.1 Introduction

Attempts at understanding doctrinal developments within the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, the largest Reformed Church in this part of the world, begins with understanding the background to the changing theological landscape of Reformed evangelical doctrine, thinking, and practice in the global context of Reformed evangelical scholarship. This is a phenomenon that has been inspected and described by others, most notably Hanekom (1951), within the South African context, yet, what may distinguish this inquiry from others is that it desires to ascertain the force that liberal theological shifts exerted on the DRCSA.

3.2 Where change began

3.2.1 Ancient universities

In the British Isles and North America, there was a time when many universities propagated a Christian ethos. In pre-Reformation England, universities like Oxford were mainly Catholic.[2] However, in North America, some of the first universities were founded on Protestant values. This was true of some of the oldest Ivy League schools of America, most of which started as higher-education institutions for the clergy. Hodge (2007) observes that Harvard, for instance, was started by Puritans and that Yale was founded by clergymen who focused on theological training.[3]

However, centuries prior, ancient universities of Europe were different. Linnemann (1990:23) states that the European university system was built on pagan roots, and can be traced as far back as the 5th century AD. Linnemann (1990:23) explains:

[2] Salter & Lobell (1954) affirm the Catholic roots of Oxford University when they say: “From early times there were certain religious houses in the neighbourhood of Oxford which were concerned with learning—the Augustinian priory of St. Frideswide's, founded in 1122; the abbey of Oseney, founded as an Augustinian priory in 1129; and also the college of the secular canons of the church of St. George in the Castle of Oxford established by Robert d'Oilly and Roger d'Ivri in 1074, which is thought to have some claim to be the most likely source from which the schools immediately sprang.”

[3] See https://answersingenesis.org/christianity/harvard-yale-princeton-oxford-once-christian/ for more information.

> "The university as a phenomenon of Western culture was from the very beginning a pagan institution. The university in Athens was closed because of its pagan character [in 529 B.C.]. The re-establishment of the university in the High Middle Ages at the end of the twelfth century occurred in conjunction with renewed interest in aspects of pagan culture as the main object of study…The writings of Aristotle — a pagan philosopher — were the objects of study which gave rise to the founding of the second university, this one in Paris."

In support of Linnemann's view, Gregory (1986:235) notes: "In Greece, as opposed to the other areas of the empire, the spread of Christianity is often thought to have been slower because of the strength of paganism in the Schools, especially in Athens." Acknowledging the isolated character of Greece within antiquity, Gregory (1986:235) states that "Greece was apparently something of a cultural and economic backwater in which we might well expect to see the survival of old fashioned ideas and ideologies."[4]

These "old fashioned ideas and ideologies" that received renewed impetus in the schools of the High Middle Ages, were eventually reinforced by different movements, most notably, the development of 'scholasticism' (Linnemann, 1990:24). Linnemann (1990:24) describes scholasticism as an effort at reconciling worldly knowledge with biblical knowledge during an age in which much scientific discovery was being made. She describes the dawn of the movement by referring to what she believes was its most "weighty and fateful decision!" (Linnemann, 1990:24) During this time scholastics placed scientific or natural truth and wisdom on a level equal to biblical truth and wisdom, which according to them, is what people most desired. Based on their understanding of Colossians 2:3, the scholastics insisted that God was only authoritative in spiritual things such as "redemption and the Christian life" but that worldly knowledge is authoritative in all other matters. For this reason, Greek philosophers like Aristotle became "the source of all valid knowledge of the world, that is, for the realm of natural sciences, social sciences, and so on" (Linnemann, 1990:23).

According to Linnemann (1990:23), the desire for autonomy in European universities led to the gradual disinterest many developed toward the Bible. She (1990:23) laments, where the Bible used to be central to understanding the world, it was now moved more and more to the periphery

[4] Gregory (1986:236) lists one other factor that may have contributed to the preserving of paganism in Greece which perhaps involved the initial spread of Christianity: "One other factor is the apparent absence of monasticism in Greece outside such centers as Thessaloniki. In other areas of the empire the monks were the 'shock troops' in the spread of Christianity, and their virtual absence in Greece must certainly have had an effect."

since it was no longer viewed as authoritative in both spiritual and scientific matters. This attitude toward the Bible characterised the period of the Enlightenment.

3.2.2 The Enlightenment

3.2.2.1 A precursor to the Enlightenment

Highlighting certain aspects of the Protestant Reformation might be helpful at this juncture. In some ways, the followers of this movement became more extreme than its actual leaders. For instance, John Calvin's successors were often described as becoming almost hyper-Calvinistic[5] It would, of course, be wrong to identify Calvin as a precursor to Enlightenment mantra, but it is worth taking note that the average Western European population at the time of the Reformation seemed to have been ready to be influenced on a religious, philosophical, and social level. Reeves (2010:80) discussing these issues, describes how the Reformed theology of Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli was received by the radical Swiss-German fringes. It must, therefore, be noted, says Reeves (2010:80), that "something both Luther and Zwingli faced was the presence of radicals. In both Wittenberg and Zurich, some thought that the Reformation was going too slowly, or not far enough."

Lunatic fringes were bound to spring up and certainly did in the likes of a charismatic baker from Haarlem, Jan Matthijs, who "predicted that the city of Müntzer in northwest Germany was the future New Jerusalem. It would be the centre of all apocalyptic action, where the true believers would gather, and from where the judgment of Armageddon would begin" explains Reeves (2010:84). As a result of the radical behaviour that was being spawned, certain noble groups, such as the Anabaptists who became persuaded over credobaptism, were mistakenly viewed as radicals. Olson (2009:217) reminds about the extreme way in which this reformation development led to the execution of many Anabaptists:

> "Back in Zurich, Zwingli and the city council passed laws against the Anabaptists and urged the civil authorities throughout Europe to hunt down and arrest them. Felix Manz, Zwingli's onetime star pupil and protégé, was the first Anabaptist martyr. He was arrested and taken to Zurich for trial. Zwingli consented to the sentence: drowning. This so-called third baptism became the punishment of choice for Anabaptists among both Catholics and Protestants. On January, 5, 1527, Manz, the leader of the budding Swiss Brethren movement, was bound and thrown into the Lammant River in the center of Zurich. During the next few years, thousands of Anabaptists were hunted down by the special police, known as the Täuferjäger (Anabaptist-hunters), and many, including women, were executed. Children of

[5] R.C. Sproul (1986:142) calls such views of Calvinism "sub-Calvinism" or "anti-Calvinism."

> Anabaptists were taken away and given to families of officially recognized church bodies."

These events and many others like them are what perhaps laid the foundation for an equal and opposite movement. As such, the Protestant Reformation and its 'five solas' and oft 'bloody' example, proved that change was not just possible, but inevitable (Schaeffer, 1976:120). Religious change for continental Europe was not only at this stage already being envisaged, but would later also be brutally enforced. Death by drowning in Reformation Europe would soon be replaced by beheading in the French Revolution. As Schaeffer (1976:120) notes, the philosophically minded in Europe were curiously observing how the "Reformation base" in England could resist the monarchy and establish a new status quo. With England as its role model, or at least so treated by Voltaire, "like the humanists of the Renaissance, the men of the Enlightenment pushed aside the Christian base and heritage and looked back to the old pre-Christian times" (Schaeffer, 1976:122).

3.2.2.2 Defining the Enlightenment

There have been many periods and times producing certain philosophical and cultural outlooks on reality. Not one of these, however, had a significant impact on the church as did the period of the Enlightenment.[6] In short, the Enlightenment or 'the Age of Reason' was a philosophical movement that started in Europe and which was interested in 'enlightening' or 'illuminating' people's minds to the true reality behind concepts that had long been accepted as true. The Enlightenment focused on removing forms of 'blind faith' and argued that these should be replaced by reason. In a religious sense, this era moved away from the ideals of the Reformers for whom 'faith' was the benchmark of salvation. Schaeffer observes (1976:121):

> "The humanistic elements which had risen during the Renaissance came to flood tide in the Enlightenment. Here was man starting from himself absolutely. And if the humanistic elements of the Renaissance stand in sharp contrast to the Reformation, the Enlightenment was in total antithesis to it. The two stood for and were based upon absolutely different things in an absolute way, and they produced absolutely different results."

Jesse Szalay (2016) discuses two developments during this period, the first being the Renaissance, and the second, the Scientific Revolution. He further states that it was the

[6] According to Viney (2010:84), "When it came to the subject of religion, there was no single Enlightenment view, but the claims of revelation were increasingly subject to scrutiny, scepticism, and denial."

Renaissance that challenged men to inspect and research the observable world more intently, leading to the Scientific Revolution. He explains:

> "With each new scientific discovery, the accepted Judeo-Christian understanding of the universe changed. Gradually, thinkers embraced the Copernican-Newtonian paradigm. This paradigm holds that while God created the universe, science defined it…Intellectuals began to see the universe as possibly infinite and full of motion. This paradigm set the stage for Enlightenment philosophy and the embrace of mankind's rational thoughts."

Given this, Schaeffer (1976:120-121) maintained that it was perhaps no less an infatuation regarding the English 'Bloodless Revolution'[7] that sparked the much more detrimental counterpart — the French Revolution. Schaeffer (1976:121) described "the utopian dream of the Enlightenment" as an age that "can be summed up by five words: reason, nature, happiness, progress, and liberty." In addition, the Enlightenment, according to Schaeffer, was properly secular in its thinking. He explains that "the humanistic elements which had risen during the Renaissance came to flood tide in the Enlightenment." (Schaeffer, 1976:121) Man was not only the most important but also the very middle point of all discovery. As stated by Schaeffer (1976:121), "if the Renaissance stands in sharp contrast to the Reformation, the Enlightenment was in total antithesis to it."

As Hampson (1968) states, the Enlightenment was a period that was steadily and progressively being strengthened in its naturalistic underpinnings. Hampson (1968) explains:

> "Looking back on the seventeenth century in the light of what followed, one can notice the evolution of certain attitudes which were gradually to spread and to fortify themselves with new evidence until they became the conscious principles of most educated men. The first problem was not so much the acquisition of knowledge, as the means of distinguishing truth from plausible error. As science seemed to establish itself on an impregnable basis of experimentally verified fact, doubt and confusion eventually gave way to self-confidence, the belief that the unknown was merely the undiscovered, and the general assumption — unprecedented in the Christian era — that man was to a great extent the master of his own destiny."

[7] The "Bloodless Revolution" is so called by historians because of the relative ease by which the common folk in England secured their own voice in governance. Schaeffer says that "it was made clear that Parliament was not a junior partner but an equal partner with the crown. This arrangement brought about the deliberate control of the monarchy within specific legal bounds." In addition, Schaeffer calls to mind Voltaire's "Letters Concerning the English Nation" (1733) where he commended them for such an effort, saying that the English managed to establish "that wise government where the prince is all powerful to do good, and at the same time is restrained from committing evil" (Schaeffer, 1976:120).

3.2.3 Enlightenment thinkers

The Enlightenment was indeed a movement with many advocates – with Voltaire at its forefront. Yet even before him, some were already pondering thoughts which were contrary to the century-old 'Christian roots' of Europe. Of its most influential Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes, and the Jewish philosopher, Baruch de Spinoza, probably rank the highest. To study the influence that the Enlightenment has had on the DRCSA, even if indirectly, the philosophies of each of the most influential thinkers and contributors will now be investigated.

3.2.3.1 Francis Bacon

It can be argued that Francis Bacon had a significant influence on what eventually became the Enlightenment philosophy. Bacon (1561-1626), who was of English descent, was also an early advocate of "the empirical and inductive method in science" (Bahnsen, 1998:371). His most influential work was published in 'The New Organon' or 'Novum Organon' of 1620, which was intended to replace the Aristotelian old 'Organon' which was a treatise on logic. Thomas & Farnell (1998:86) observe:

> "In 1620, just over a century after the Reformation, Bacon published his *Novum Organum*. This work was foundational for not only modern biblical criticism but also the resultant historical-critical methodologies. British empiricism grew out of the thought of Francis Bacon. In this work, Bacon made the inductive method — namely, what is learned by experience and experiment — the basis of discovering all truth. Furthermore, science and not religion becomes the true model of the world. For Bacon, truth becomes known pragmatically, for whatever works, is truth. Truth and whatever works are synonymous."

This form of philosophy sees the natural world as authoritative in determining truth. Science is placed centre-stage and everything else, including religion, is considered through a scientific lens. Bacon declared the following about the scientific method or the actual derivation of knowledge using his tenets or axioms found in Novus Organon (Devey, 1902:15):

> "XVIII The present discoveries in science are such as lie immediately beneath the surface of common notions. It is necessary, however, to penetrate the more secret and remote parts of nature, in order to abstract both notions and axioms from things by a more certain and guarded method.
>
> XIX There are and can exist but two ways of investigating and discovering truth. The one hurried on rapidly from the senses and particulars to the most general axioms, and from them, as principles and their supposed indisputable truth, derives and discovers the intermediate axioms. This is the way now in use. The other constructs its axioms from the senses and particulars, by ascending continually and gradually, till it finally arrives at the most general axioms, which is the true but unattempted way."

This above-quoted section reveals Bacon's devotion to science as the only true means of attaining knowledge of the world. What is also clear from these words is the process by which he concluded that this kind of knowledge should be pursued, namely, inductively, starting with generalisations and moving toward principles regarding truth.

Unlike natural science, Scripture, according to scholastics "came to be regarded as authoritative only in those areas touching on redemption and the Christian life" (Linnemann, 1990:24). Natural science, on the other hand, was considered authoritative in the things of the world. Each had their views of what they thought accurately described the natural world. To the scholastics it was Aristotle. To Francis Bacon and his followers, it was Bacon and his 'new knowledge.'

3.2.3.2 Thomas Hobbes

One such follower of Bacon was Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). It would be wrong, however, to describe him as one who merely walked in the footsteps of his mentor, Bacon, to whom he was a secretary for a brief period (Thomas & Farnell, 1998:87). Though influenced by Bacon to some degree, Hobbes was original in his own right. What made him famous as a philosopher-scientist was his view regarding reality, which he stated was based solely on materialism. Sorell (2018) provides a helpful overview of Hobbes' life and most noted views and works.

> "Thomas Hobbes, (born April 5, 1588, Westport, Wiltshire, England—died December 4, 1679, Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire), English philosopher, scientist, and historian, best known for his political philosophy, especially as articulated in his masterpiece *Leviathan* (1651). In metaphysics, Hobbes defended materialism, the view that only material things are real. His scientific writings present all observed phenomena as the effects of matter in motion. Hobbes was not only a scientist in his own right but a great systematizer of the scientific findings of his contemporaries, including Galileo and Johannes Kepler."

Hobbes had a naturalistic outlook on reality and viewed the human soul as a myth seeing the death of the body as the end of existence. Such a naturalistic outlook on existence ultimately spurred Enlightenment philosophy and the eventual effect which it would exert on the Church.

Hobbes' most notable legacy is that, according to him, everything is merely materialistic and finite. Nelson (2015:30) describes Hobbes' view in the following way: "…what we see in the universe is all there is; there can be no spiritual world beyond our physical universe."

3.2.3.3 Baruch de Spinoza

Spinoza was born in Amsterdam of Jewish ancestry (1632-1677) and according to Thomas and Farnell (1998:89), his "free thinking resulted in his expulsion from the synagogue for 'abominable heresies which he practices and teaches.'" Thomas & Farnell (1998:89) continue by explaining

that Spinoza's "ideas were not only repugnant to Jewish authorities but also to Christians. Sometimes described as a hideous atheist and other times as God-intoxicated, Spinoza was a rationalistic pantheist."

What is also well-known about Spinoza is the fervour with which he denied much of Scripture. In his estimation, as he admits in his "Tractatus Theologico-Politicus" or "Theologico-Political Treatise," the Bible was an attempt (by religious people) at explaining philosophical truth to basic, unintelligent people, in a primitive way.

When commenting on the Books of Moses, Spinoza writes,

> "The greater part of the grounds or first principles of historical Scripture knowledge is therefore wanting or lost to us; a misfortune that might have been endured, had later writers confined themselves within proper bounds, transmitted the little they had received or discovered with good faith to their successors, and abstained from coining novelties out of their own brains, where it has come to pass that the history of the Hebrew Scriptures is not only defective, but is so full of errors that it is now impossible to reconstruct it free from all imperfection."

Further, Spinoza did not believe in the existence of miracles as described in the Bible. As a rationalist, he believed that the world could only be explained through rational, naturalistic means, therefore, refuting the possibility of the miraculous. Miracles, according to Spinoza, were Jewish attempts to help the heathen nations believe in their God. Spinoza explains (de Spinoza, 1862:121),

> "When we inquire into the origin of such prejudices, we have to look as far back as the times of the primitive Jews. In order to convince the heathen nations about them, worshippers of visible deities, the sun, moon, stars, earth, air…, that such gods were weak and inconstant, and under the dominion of an invisible God, whom they adored, they narrated many wonderful miracles he had wrought; and further endeavoured to show that the whole of nature was ruled by him for their peculiar advantage. The system thus inaugurated laid such hold on the minds of men that even to the present day each tribe or nation has not ceased from imagining miracles favourable to the conclusion that it was more acceptable to God than all the rest of mankind, and was, in fact, the final cause for which God at first created, and still continues to uphold, the world. Such vulgar folly arises from the circumstance that men in general have no sound conception either of God or of nature; that they confound the desires and imaginations of man with the desires of the Almighty, and figure nature in such small proportions as to believe that man is its principal part."

What is noticeable from Spinoza's (1862:122) attitude toward miracles is that he believed them to be the inventions of men, and in particular from within the Judeo-Christian worldview, the Jews. In addition to this, Spinoza describes faith in miracles as a response to natural phenomena and places man at the centre of reality.

In the same volume (de Spinoza, 1862:122-132), Spinoza lists the principles which according to him should govern any interpretation of the miraculous:

1. Nothing ever happens against the order of nature. In other words, he believed nothing could ever happen that would go against normal logic.
2. He believed that miracles do not assist in making God known to us, even if they did occur.
3. He believed that God's providence and other attributes are not displayed through miracles, but rather through the normal operation of creation. He motivates this view by pointing to natural phenomena as the real reason behind anything that is said in the Bible about the working of God in a supernatural way: "In Genesis 9:13 God informs Noah that he would show himself in the clouds, and set his bow there, which is but another way of expressing the natural law by which the rays of the sun suffer refraction when they fall upon drops of water" (de Spinoza, 1862:131). According to Spinoza, therefore, all phenomena are natural and a consequence of the elements. This view has much in common with the God of deism that later influenced men like Thomas Jefferson who was probably one of its most popular North American advocates (Ahlstrom, 2004:367).[8]

While there are several other major Enlightenment influences, such as Kant with his agnosticism, Schleiermacher with romanticism and Hegel with idealism, I will conclude this survey with two last important 'faces' of Enlightenment philosophy; David Hume and Charles Darwin.

3.2.3.4 David Hume

Nearly all Enlightenment philosophers had a reasonable measure of success in influencing Bible interpretation. However, if one may be singled out it would be the philosopher, David Hume. His contributions to scepticism have continued to shape liberal Bible interpretation. According to Thomas and Farnell (1998:97), no other philosopher has had such a destructive effect on biblical authority. Speaking of Hume's background, despite from a young age appearing to acknowledge the existence of a 'higher being,' as far as committing to Christianity was concerned (Hume was a native of Scotland which had a rich Reformation history), he never seemed to commit to any formal expressions thereof, and his theism was always "of a vague and weak-kneed sort"

[8] Farnell (1998:93-94) provides a helpful definition for English Deism. He says that deism "…conceives God as being beyond the universe but not in it and as not being supernaturally active in the finite world He created. Rather, everything operated by natural law flowing from God's nature. In fact, natural law was human kind's sole revelation of God. Deists rejected any Christian claims to supernatural revelation, for God does not reveal Himself in any other way but through His creation."

(Earman, 2000:4). However, as the years progressed his beliefs turned to antagonism toward any organised religion. Earman (2000:6) explains:

> "Hume's inconsequential theism was combined with an abhorrence of organized religion, which Hume saw as composed of superstitions that have had almost uniformly baneful effects for mankind…Given such an animus toward organized religion, it is easy to understand why Hume would want to attack religious miracles, for the argument from design and the cosmological argument were supposed to establish the existence of God while miracles were supposed to serve as indicators of what kind of God exists."

Hume's influence on an understanding of reality has positioned him as one of the greatest opponents of conservative evangelical thought. His rationalistic approach to miracles is of particular interest. In his notable 1748 work 'An enquiry Concerning Human Understanding,' Hume dedicated an entire section to miracles. A few observations are noteworthy.

In a section (section X) of his book, he reveals his commitment to science as the authority in all matters, even when it involves things that cannot be explained, like miracles. As it involves the verification of facts involving miracles Hume (1748:77) believes that "[a] wise man, therefore, proportions his belief to the evidence. In such conclusions as are founded on an infallible experience, he expects the event with the last degree of assurance, and regards his experience as a full proof of the future existence of that event." In other words, experience is what is most important. Of course, it is scientific to apply evidence to the discovery of the truth of a matter. However, Hume applies this logic to the miracles found in Scripture. As it involves the words of Scripture describing naturally impossible events, according to Hume then, experience must be seen as primary in one's assessment of reported events.

Hume (1748:78) continues to explain the process by which 'far-fetched' accounts of reality must be understood, noting:

> "Suppose, for instance, that the fact, which the testimony endeavours to establish, partakes of the extraordinary and the marvellous; in that case, the evidence, resulting from the testimony, admits of a diminution, greater or less, in proportion as the fact is more or less unusual. The reason why we place any credit in witnesses and historians, is not derived from any connexion, which we perceive a priori, between testimony and reality, but because we are accustomed to find a conformity between them. But when the fact attested is such a one as has seldom fallen under our observation, here is a contest of two opposite experiences; of which the one destroys the other, as far as its force goes, and the superior can only operate on the mind by the force, which remains."

In other words, Hume suggests that "the extraordinary and the marvellous," unlike accounts that have been observed previously, provide strong evidence that the extraordinary event did not take place.

It was this kind of empirical approach to 'all' truth, even that which is of miraculous nature, that guided Charles Darwin in the nineteenth century to propose an alternate understanding of the creation account that is found in the book of Genesis.

3.2.3.5 Charles Darwin

Darwin is most known for his publication of the 'Origin of Species' on 29 November 1859 (Culver, 2005:326). This publication has influenced evangelicals on two levels, broadly speaking. Firstly, it has influenced evangelicalism in its view of the Genesis account of creation. Darwin introduced a new view that had to be reconciled with the account provided within the pages of Scripture. As a result of the contrary-to-Genesis nature of Darwin's book, many were forced to reconcile his account with that of the Genesis account. This was arguably one of the most significant effects of the 'Origin of Species.'

As Culver (2005:326) explains, "In the optimistic atmosphere of the times strong efforts were made to incorporate the doctrine of Darwinian Evolution into Christian theology — and out came theories of theistic evolution as well as efforts to unite Evolution with Pantheism." Culver continues by drawing attention to the fact that since this period in history, "Evolution has become a 'fact' in the mind of millions, propagated vigorously in university textbooks and lectures, public schools, and the secular press generally."

Secondly, Darwinism has not only left its marks on the interpretation of the creation week in Genesis and biological thinking alone, but also on how Evolution has also affected people's understanding of religion. Erickson (2000:600) explains:

> "…the various religions were thought of as products of long periods of development. Based on a study of the development of religions, it was concluded that the Hebrews' religion was the product of an evolutionary process and had derived many of its major conceptions from the religions of the surrounding peoples. The Genesis account."

This line of thinking was also applied to the questioning of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch by the Graf-Wellhausen school that developed the Documentary Hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, it is suggested that there had to have been a gradual period of development or 'evolution' in the authorship of the Old Testament. (Thomas & Farnell, 1998:110). According to this view, the five Books of Moses are said to have started with simple, unevolved writings, before being developed into the completed Pentateuch.

3.3 Conclusion

If there ever was a period of rapid theological and philosophical development, it is undoubtedly the Enlightenment. Characterised by the denouncement of the Christian values and tenets of its predecessors, 'enlightened' thinkers sought other explanations for reality. Their explanation of phenomena lay in the natural world and pure natural evidence, which in turn produced more scepticism, ultimately informing the theologians of the Enlightenment era, and steadily moving into European society. What is of interest, is that the history of European/American philosophical and theological liberalism also played a part in the history of South Africa. The study will now turn to examples from South Africa concerning the DRCSA.

SECTION 1: THE DRCSA IN THE LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

CHAPTER 4 — EARLY LEANINGS TOWARDS LIBERALISM

4.1 Introduction

The period of the Enlightenment proved that a philosophy of life never remains in the realm of philosophy alone. Once philosophers start to proclaim their understanding of reality, it is only a matter of time before their ideas are taken up by the general population which leads to a new "spirit of the age" (German – "Zeitgeist").[9]

Such was also the case with the DRCSA. As mainline Christian denominations in Europe were influenced by the philosophies of the day, so too was the DRCSA. The denomination may not have been present in continental Europe, and in particular the Netherlands, but the influence of the Enlightenment philosophy impacted on South Africa through colonisation.

Although the major concern of this study is with 20th and 21st century liberalism, it is useful to be aware of liberal leanings in the DRCSA before this period. In order to identify the entrance of liberal theology in the DRCSA, the study will henceforth focus on one of its first official journals, namely *Gereformeerd Maandblad* or *Reformed Monthly*, in which changes in the DRCSA can be seen occurring. These changes generally can be described as not being toward orthodoxy, but rather toward liberalism. At this juncture, it was especially the Reformed doctrine of scriptural 'inspiration[10]' that became heavily affected by German Higher Criticism that would eventually in later decades challenge the DRCSA's interpretation thereof.

[9] The Merriam-Webster online dictionary adds that "scholars have long maintained that each era has a unique spirit, a nature or climate that sets it apart from all other epochs." (Merriam-Webster Online Dicitonary, 2018)

[10] The Reformed view of "inspiration" can be summarised according to its understanding of Scripture's own claims regarding its nature. The basic Reformed view espoused thus reflects the understanding that all 66 books of the Protestant Bible are inspired by God, constituting as the very words of God. Chapter 1 of the Westminster Confession of Faith emphasises that each of the books of the Bible "are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life." Article 3 of the Belgic confession that is formally professed by the DRCSA states it in a similar way: "We confess that this Word of God [referring to the 66 canonical books of the Bible] was not sent nor delivered by the will of men, but that holy men of God spoke, being moved [inspired] by the Holy Spirit…"

4.2 Gereformeerd Maandblad

What is first evident in the *Gereformeerd Maandblad* is the noble attitude of its authors. The journal was started for several reasons, some of which, according to its editors, J.I. Marais & C.F.J. Muller[11], included the following (Marais & Muller, 1892a:1):

1. Primarily to assist young pastors in their calling by helping them in their responsibility to preach the Word of God, but also to assist them in day-to-day practical pastoring. The motivation behind this consideration was that many pastors become tempted to aim for a minimum standard that would enable them to preach, but not excel at their studies and preparation.
2. The aim was to accomplish this goal of helping pastors by regularly including sections in the journal that would answer specific questions that a pastor may have as he encountered challenges in his studies and also the pastoral ministry in general. This would be done while pointing to other men in the ministry, not necessarily from the DRCSA, but from other parts of the world, who were examples of successful labourers in God's work.
3. Lastly, the intention was to include a 'kroniek'[12] or a chronicle that would inform the pastors regarding theological developments/shifts of their time. The intention was to keep them informed so that they could answer their congregations' questions about worldwide developments and discoveries.

It is therefore not surprising that one of the first articles written in the journal was about the life and ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who, during his pastoring career at the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, became known for his fervent preaching.[13]

4.2.1 Charles Spurgeon

The article that was published in the journal was in effect a eulogy in honour of the late Spurgeon and written as a reminder of his godly character when he was still a young preacher. Spurgeon

[11] Both Marais and Muller were influential professors of the DRCSA Seminary at Stellenbosch. Both men, like many of their contemporaries, subscribed to premillennialism, also known as chiliasm. See Malan (2014) for more information on the eschatological understanding of the DRCSA during the second half of the 19th century.

[12] The *Gereformeerd Maandblad* was published in Dutch in the days before the development of Afrikaans, which is a derivative of Dutch and other languages.

[13] Drummond (1992:25) motivates: "During the nearly four decades of ministry, [Spurgeon] added over 14000 new members to his church. Two thousand two hundred and forty-one of Spurgeon's sermons were published up to the time of his death in 1892."

was passionate about reaching the next generation of pastors to thoroughly prepare them for the work of the ministry and was instrumental in the establishment of a seminary for pastors (Marais & Muller, 1892c:12). It was around 1856 that he started this facility to support men in their ministry as pastors. Spurgeon was by no means learned, at least not according to academic standards. It is said that he had no formal training in Latin, Greek or French. Rather, it was his love for God and Scripture, combined with extreme wit and a firm command of the English language, which contributed to his success. What was certain about his character was that "he was a man who was an expert of two books: the Bible and the human heart" (Marais & Muller, 1892c:12).[14] As stated by Marais & Muller (1892c:12):

> "Spurgeon's effectiveness was not found in his eloquence of speech or his energy, or his command of the English language, but rather in his unshaken faith in the doctrines that he taught from Sunday to Sunday, and which he doubted as little as he doubted his own existence."[15]

The most important aspect of the life of Spurgeon, in relation to this study, was his fight against liberalism. Like others before him, his ministry took place during the era of 'modernity,' or what was referred to among the Baptist Union of England as the "New Theology" (Dallimore, 1984:210). There were two strong influences in the union that led to the acceptance of novel biblical interpretations. The first, as Dallimore (1984:204) explains, involved the acceptance of alternate ways of understanding the creation account in Genesis: "This opposition to evangelical truth sprang first from the publication in 1859 of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Teaching that life had originated not by divine creation but by blind change, it directly contradicted the Scriptures and obviated the very idea of the existence of God."

Fuelled by this new view on origins, German Higher Criticism cast doubt on the Bible's reliability involving the historicity of its contents. Dallimore (1984:204) insists that "[t]his was an attempt to reconsider the sources of the books of the Bible, and it brought new ideas as to the identities and

[14] Quotations from *Gereformeerd Maandblad* have been translated to the author's best ability. The quotes should therefore be read as paraphrased from the Dutch into English, instead of as word-for-word translations. Hence, some quotations may be more literal than others. The main commitment however is to quote the essence of a thought instead of providing a to-the-letter translation. In addition, block quotations that have been translated into English will be footnoted in its original language, whether Dutch or Afrikaans.

[15] "Spurgeon's kracht was gelegen niet in zijne welsprekendheid of energie of beheer over de Engelse Taal, maar in dat onwrikbaar geloof in die leerstukken, die hij Zondag tot Zondag predikte, en waaromtrent hij zoo min twyfelde, als aan zijn eigen bestaan."

the dates of the writers. It led to attempts to explain away the miracles of the Bible and to reduce the inspired Word to the level of a merely human book."

It was such forces within the Baptist Union, which led to Spurgeon's pressing desire to address matters. This is well documented in what became known as "The Down-Grade" of the Baptist Union, at least from the perspective of Spurgeon and others.[16] "The Sword and Trowel," a magazine started by Spurgeon, became the mouthpiece which addressed the church issues. This was facilitated by a series of articles that were published in this magazine in March of 1887. The following excerpt from the August edition of the same year highlights Spurgeon's concerns (Schindler, 1887):

> "A new religion has been originated which is no more Christianity than chalk is cheese; and this religion, being destitute o moral honesty; palms itself off as the old faith with slight improvements, and on this plea usurps pulpits which were erected for the gospel preaching. The Atonement is scouted, the inspiration of the Scripture is derided, the Holy Ghost is degraded into an influence, the punishment of sin is turned into a fiction, and the Resurrection into a myth, and yet these enemies of our faith expect us to call them brethren and maintain a confederacy with them."

These articles in The Sword and Trowel were received with much criticism by Spurgeon's colleagues and as a result Spurgeon eventually withdrew from the Baptist Union. MacArthur (1993a:213) maintains that Spurgeon's resignation from the Union was due to accusations made by a Council of the Baptist Union. MacArthur, discussing what took place, refers to private correspondence and conversations between Spurgeon and a particular officer of the Union, General Secretary Booth. Booth appears to have privately encouraged Spurgeon "to speak out against the modernism that was running rampant in the Union" (MacArthur, 1993a:213). Booth "had even given Spurgeon details about the widespread compromise and names of men whose orthodoxy he had reason to doubt" (MacArthur, 1993a:213). What Spurgeon encountered during the end of his ministry, therefore, conflicted with his own biblical beliefs.

It must be noted that at the time that the life of Spurgeon was reported in *Gereformeerd Maandblad*, the DRCSA had already been challenged theologically quite extensively. This took place during the modernist rising of 1858-1865 (ref. 4.2.2.11), which, at that stage, did not yet lead to the denomination-wide acceptance of new interpretations of old doctrines. However, the lingering effect of the modernist rising – aided by varying opinions coming from Europe and the British Isles especially as they involved the credibility of the Old Testament and the Scriptures in

[16] MacArthur (1993a:197) notes that it was actually a close friend of Spurgeon, a man by the name of Robert Schindler who wrote The Down-Grade articles as he received counsel from Spurgeon throughout the exercise.

general – would from this point on become the topic of much discussion in *Gereformeerd Maandblad*.

4.2.2 Events giving rise to the theological 'down-grade' of the DRCSA as reported in *Gereformeerd Maandblad*

4.2.2.1 May 1892

In the May issue of 1892, the critical question involving the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was brought forward. The writer of the article postulated that according to the rising criticism of the time that was aimed at discrediting the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the view had arisen that Moses could not have been the author of these five books. According to the critics, this could not have been the case because the gamut of the Old Testament (OT) could safely be placed somewhere closer to the end of the Jewish Exile.

According to a theologian by the name of Reuss, "the prophets are older than the Law, and the psalms are younger than both." According to this view, it would be faulty to start with Moses and not the prophets when dating the OT. Even David, who is seen as the great poet and minstrel of Israel, loses his place as the overarching author of the psalms. According to this view, Scottish higher critic, Prof Cheyne, declared that the current collection of the psalms was produced during the time after the exile (Marais & Muller, 1892b:4).

According to editors J.I. Marais & C.F.J. Muller (1892b:4), the problem with this view is that it makes no room for the supernatural compilation of Scripture and in particular the books of the OT. It was precisely the view of Kuenen & Wellhausen[17] that the OT Scriptures are no different from any other book because they were not specifically given by inspiration. These authors were convinced that the five Books of Moses developed over time and that the collection's namesake had virtually nothing to do with its composition. The gamut of Israel's literature is alleged to have been written at the time of the exile during which time it underwent a period of great progress, a so-called Jewish literary heyday.

There is, however, another interpretation of this matter that created similar shock waves in the Church according to Marias and Muller (1892b:4). In the United Kingdom and the U.S.A the doubters of the Mosaic authorship of these books may not have denied inspiration altogether as the Germans did, but their musings similarly resulted in a challenge to the credibility of Scripture

[17] Hague (2013) observes that Kuenen was "a most influential writer…" He "was one of the most advanced exponents of the rationalistic school." Wellhausen on the other hand "who published in 1878 the first volume of his history of Israel…won by his scholarship the attention if not the allegiance of a number of leading theologians" (2013).

in general. It was Scottish higher critical theologians like Robertson, Smith, Driver[18] and Cheyne who popularised the view that even though Moses had nothing to do with the writing of the Pentateuch, no damage occurs to the overall view of the God-given nature of Scripture.

4.2.2.2 June 1892

In the June 1892 issue of *Gereformeerd Maandblad*, the question pertaining to the inspiration of Scripture is revisited. The editors J.I. Marais & C.F.J. Muller referred to English Congregational Principal, Alfred Cave, who in his book *The Inspiration of the Old Testament Inductively Considered*, described the basic standpoint amongst liberals that was starting to gain more ground: The view that the history of the OT started with Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah. The exodus from Egypt along with its leader Moses became the subject of legends (myths) and so did the Judges and the Kings of Israel. According to the book by Cave (1888), the Law was never given at Sinai and the connection between Moses and the Law is entirely uncertain. As a result, the idea of 'revelation' itself must be subjected to change (Marais & Muller, 1892d:16). The implication is problematic according to the editors of *Gereformeerd Maandblad*. They started their apologetic by highlighting some of the consequences that Cave's approach to the inspiration of the Old Testament would have: According to Muller & Marais (1892d:16), if Cave's view of inspiration is correct, not only would the Levitical laws be viewed as the product of people's ideas and understanding regarding religion, but they (the Levitical laws) would also be understood as not originating from God at all. For these reasons, the critics stated that the classic understanding of the origin of the OT must be abandoned. Along with this theory, all other important doctrines must be rectified as well, doctrines about God, sin, and the doctrine of the Person of Christ.

In order to prove the faulty nature of this trend in the Reformed tradition, it was then reported that Dr W. Hay Aitkin[19] responded to criticism of the Mosaic authorship of the Old Testament in the following way: he explained that for the same reason that no one will hold Christ to the math skills of Isaac Newton, no one should hold Christ to the critical scholarship of Wellhausen. This line of reasoning is advanced for its time since Aitkin created the impression that, based on his humanity and his pervading flaws as a result, Jesus could be excused from historical accuracy when referring to Moses as the author of the Pentateuch. He does, however, seem to attempt to defend Christ's view on Mosaic authorship (Marais & Muller, 1892d:16) by insisting, on the other hand, that if God, through special revelation, revealed to Christ the authorship of these books, then the

[18] More information on Driver will follow.

[19] Aitkin has been described as one of the most gifted preachers of the Episcopal Church (Marais & Muller, 1892d:16).

critics must be viewed as liars. Lastly, Marais & Muller (1892d:16) points out that Aitken promoted an approach to Old testament authorship that is not that concerned with the historical facts of authorship, and quoted him saying: “The true author of everything that has moral and spiritual value is God, the way that he deemed it necessary to reveal this to us remains to me an issue of less importance…”

To conclude, *Gereformeerd Maandblad* highlighted the uncertainty of this scriptural criticism (Marais & Muller, 1892d:17). The editors pointed out that words like ‘probably,’ ‘possibly’ and the like are repeated over and over by influential English scholar of Hebrew and Old Testament textual criticism, Dr Samuel Driver (Marais & Muller, 1892d:17). In response to this, the Reverend G. Ensor has said, “regarding a situation of this magnitude one does not care about ‘possibility,’ rather one is concerned over ‘certainty’” (Marais & Muller, 1892d:17).

4.2.2.3 March 1893

In the March 1893 issue of the *Gereformeerd Maandblad* it was reported that a certain Dutch Reverend, Adama van Scheltema bewailed the sad state of church body life as early as the turn of the 19th century in a Dutch theological publication called ‘Bouwsteenen’ (Marais & Muller, 1893:1-2). In his writings, he discussed nominalism by expressing his disdain for what had happened in the Dutch Reformed Church of Holland in this regard. According to him, there seemed to be a divide between the call of the Gospel and the actual state of the public life of the Church. The two appeared to be at odds with each other.

Van Scheltema referred to a story from the life of Charles Spurgeon where he visited a Baptist Church in Cambridge (Marais & Muller, 1893:2). As was the custom of the Baptists, communion was something that was celebrated every Sunday. Yet for three weeks in a row, not a single soul came to befriend Spurgeon after the church service. Only sixteen at the time, Spurgeon realised that he was going to have to take the first step. After one service, he addressed the man who sat next to him and asked him how he was doing. The man responded by indicating that he didn't know him. Spurgeon then responded by saying that he too didn't know the man at that stage, but that based on both of their participation in communion he considered it his duty to address the man as brother. The man then responded by saying that Spurgeon was of amiable simplicity. Spurgeon again responded by asking the gentleman what is Christ to the Church if he is not what ultimately binds the heart of one brother to that of another. Finally, the man responded by consenting to what Spurgeon had to say, however telling him that he was glad that Spurgeon was not addressing a deacon in the same way. This response to the young Spurgeon according to van Scheltema is the reality of the state of the Church in Holland. Through the reporting on this,

the *Gereformeerd Maandblad* was indirectly warning against similar developments that threatened the spiritual health of members of the DRCSA.

4.2.2.4 December 1894

At the end of 1894, reverend and writer of Christian children's books, W.A. Joubert, was reported saying that the Church's strength lay in its commitment to holy living. When holiness is the driver, Joubert notes that even a church of humble means can be mighty (Joubert, 1894:136). Joubert emphasised the fact that the Church needed to "seek usefulness through holiness." He continued to explain by saying that: "A church rich in numbers, possessions, and giftedness could exercise little influence for the good if too many of her members do not exercise these in purity and excellence of character, and merely verbally testify to be spiritually alive, but in fact are spiritually dead." Through these words, Joubert is summarising what he sees the state of the Church is in 1894.

4.2.2.5 May 1904

The last edition of *Gereformeerd Maandblad* during the Anglo-Boer War era appeared in April 1900. The publication did, however, resume again in the year 1904. Four years later, we arrive again at a juncture (Marais & Muller, 1904:4).

The editors, J.I. Marais & C.F.J. Muller expressed their concern over a conference held in Green Point, Cape Town, where a certain speaker reported on the state of the Church by quoting Andrew Murray who said: "Nothing less than a revolution is necessary — Nothing else than a new Reformation is in order to restore the previous glory." *Gereformeerd Maandblad* (Marais & Muller, 1904:4) drew attention to the fact that the speaker quoted Andrew Murray when trying to explain the preaching that had been occupying DRCSA pulpits. In addition, Murray was quoted saying: "Something came in the stead of the Holy Spirit. It is the spirit of this world. The way in which it continues on in the pulpit is that of the spirit of the world" (Marais & Muller, 1904:4).

The *Gereformeerd Maandblad* reporter then continued (Marais & Muller, 1904:5) to show his agreement with Murray's sentiment. The solution that the unnamed reporter proposes is to follow the words of Charles Finney. Quoting Finney's evangelistic methods at length, the writer endorses Finney's methods agreeing with him that "without the employment of new ways, it is not possible for the Church to reach the world." However, this recommendation would contradict the monergism beliefs of the DRCSA. Though Presbyterian in his training, Finney adopted views with

regards to salvation that were contrary to that of Princeton Seminary.[20] In Finney's (1876:56) own words, he became aware of "a lack in practical views of the best way of presenting the Gospel to men, and in adapting means to secure the end…" For Finney, to "secure the end" was the definition of successful evangelistic preaching. This was most particularly notable during one of his first "revival meetings" which happened in a town called Evans' Mills. With regards to a particular evening of preaching, Finney (1876:62) recounts: "I was very much dissatisfied with this state of things; and at one of my evening services, after having preached there two or three Sabbaths, and several evenings in the week, I told the people at the close of my sermon, that I had come there to secure the salvation of their souls…"

Finney's dissatisfaction with the ostensible results of his preaching in the above-mentioned example is what led him to pressure people, in one way or another, into converting to Christ. The questioning of his audience about their unresponsiveness to the gospel seemed to have been based on his understanding that evangelistic preaching should always produce immediate results. He (1876:62) reminisced: "I turned this question over, and pressed it upon them, and insisted upon it that I must know what course they proposed to pursue. If they did not purpose to become Christians, and enlist in the service of the Saviour, I wanted to know it that I might not labor with them in vain." It, therefore, seems reasonable to conclude that for Finney, evangelistic results were dependant on human persuasion.

It was from this point in time that there is a notable shift in the focus of the *Gereformeerd Maandblad* and the DRCSA's history. In addition to the problem of the worldliness of its members, the focus shifts to the ever-changing international theological arena that would eventually adopt Higher Criticism of the Bible and its companion, Evolution. The years 1906 until it's finale in 1920, is replete of reporting on both these developments, despite the DRCSA's rejection of it at this stage.

4.2.2.6 February 1907

In this issue of *Gereformeerd Maandblad* the question pertaining to the validity and reliability of historical criticism is addressed by J.I. Marais & C.F.J. Muller (Marais & Muller, 1907:30). Countering higher critical philosophy, they refer to the solution of Professor James Orr, who insists in his *The Problem of the Old Testament* that: "The logic here is simple. If the application of these principles to the New Testament should be rejected, then I cannot trust their trustworthiness when

[20] MacArthur (MacArthur, 1993a:231) points out that it was an aversion to orthodoxy that led Finney to his various persuasions. He says: "Finney did not distinguish between Calvinist orthodoxy and hyper-Calvinism. Consequently, he distrusted orthodox doctrine and rejected Calvinism altogether."

applied to the Old Testament." According to Orr, this means that by failing to preserve the message of the Gospels the system similarly fails in its treatment of the Pentateuch or others. Orr makes the point (Marais & Muller, 1907:30) that the higher critics must be willing to subject their own system of inquiry to its own philosophical underpinnings. It seems that this article in *Gereformeerd Maandblad* was justified at the time due to a rise in the number of theologians who were accepting these methods.

As has been noted, the topic of Higher Criticism was discussed in great detail, which during that period, was consistent with its eventual acceptance as truly scientific. It was during these same developmental years that Charles Darwin's theory of Evolution started to impact on the denominational 'ethos' of the DRCSA, as the July edition of 1910 reveals.

4.2.2.7 July 1910

A significant hint at the probability of theological change in South Africa was reported on in the year 1910. It comes in the form of counsel given by a Messianic Jew, J. Hershensohn, who, although denying Judaism, committed to the task of showing Christians that Genesis was not contradictory to evolutionary science, something that he believed was truly scientific. What brought this closer to the church in the South African context, was the fact that it was reported on in a local newspaper called 'Natal Witness.' Hershensohn who was from Pietermaritzburg, reportedly got involved in a debate over Christianity with a rationalist and an agnostic in which he answers each regarding the question of the Genesis account of the origin of the world.

4.2.2.8 September 1910

In a follow up article in Septemer, 1910, Hershensohn, referring to the question of the Genesis account, is reported saying that 'yom' is not a 24-hour day and that "morning and evening referred to sections, since there was no chapters or verses in the Hebrew text" (Marais & Muller, 1910:142). Hershensohn explains that "'Evening' and 'morning' refers to the direction in which the mass of created elements were evidently moving" and cautions that "the creation days should not be held as literal 24 hour days," since according to him, "the word 'yom' refers to a period and not a literal 24-hour day" (Marais & Muller, 1910:142). *Gereformeerd Maandblad* would refer to Hershensohn's writing in the Natal Witness once more in January 1911. What was significant about this article was Hershensohn's endorsement of 'uniformitarianism' as a possible solution for the long periods required in evolutionary theory, at a time when 'catastrophism' was the general solution to natural phenomena.

4.2.2.9 1911-1912

Gereformeerd Maandblad reported quite extensively on the Muller-Pienaar debate during the first half of 1911. The issue that was debated was yet again the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. In a January 1911 article entitled 'Higher Criticism' Pienaar offered a rebuttal to a prior article by Muller in which he endorsed the Mosaic authorship of the Old Testament. Referring to Muller's interpretation, Pienaar (1911a:14) said that to allege that the whole Pentateuch is from Moses is astonishing. Pienaar (1911a:14) continued: "Facts are stubborn things. Moses did indeed write one part, but not everything. No one can say exactly how much, but we can say for sure not everything." Furthermore, Pienaar (1911a:14) defends the impossibility of Moses as the author of the whole Pentateuch by referring to the fact that the last event recorded in Genesis took place almost 400 years before the birth of Moses. This fact alone, according to Pienaar (1911:14), is what necessitates the receiving of information in ways other than just direct revelation, i.e. oral tradition, or other written sources.

In March 1911, Muller responded to the main argument of Pienaar and that of Higher Criticism in general, which states that Jesus was not omniscient and that this is what affected his judgment on the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. This objection is often defended by Higher critics by making reference to Christ's own attestation in Mark 13:32 that only the Father knows the time of Christ's return. Muller (1911b:42) however responds to this by reminding Pienaar about certain claims made by Christ which only an omniscient being can make. In addition, he answers the Higher critic's reference to Mark 13:32, explaining that this verse is not a reference to Christ's lacking certain knowledge about the timing of his coming (Muller, 1911b:42). Rather, says Muller (1911b:42), the wording suggests that the timing of Christ's coming is the prerogative of the Father.

Pienaar responded to Muller in the March 1911 issue of *Gereformeerd Maandblad*. This time he defends his argument against Mosaic authorship by referring to that which he sees as evidence for the Documentary hypothesis, which, according to Pienaar (1911b:46) was first recognised in 1680 by a French Priest, Richard Simon who noticed that the same events in the Pentateuch were described by a different language, style, order, etc. Pienaar (1911b:46) motivates this by referring the account of the Flood. Pienaar (1911b:46) says that this is a classic example of a combination of older documents because the names used for God in this account all differ from each other, alternating between YHWH and Elohim.

Muller would yet again respond to Pienaar in April and furthers his argument for Old Testament authorship by referring to the Psalms. Muller (1911c:60) points out that according to Higher Criticism, there are few Psalms that are psalms of David. However, Muller (1911c:60) reminds

that 73 out of 150 psalms have been attributed to David. To motivate his argument Muller (1911c:60) refers to the fact that Jesus acknowledged the Davidic authorship of certain Psalms (Luke 20:42).

After the conclusion of the debate between Muller and Pienaar in May 1911, the issue of Higher Criticism resurfaced yet again in 1912. In an article published in June 1912, the editors reported (Marais & Muller, 1912:90) on the Higher Criticism that was starting to take shape in Dutch faculties as it was endorsed by theologian, G. Hulsman, who said that the new criticism should be accepted. While addressing students in Groningen, Hulsman challenged students of the Bible to take the findings of Higher Criticism seriously, especially as it involves the authorship of the Pentateuch, which has allegedly been proven as non-Mosaic. In apparent agreement, the editors of *Gereformeerd Maandblad* recall the advice given by Professor Hofmeyr (presumably, N.J.) who said that it was not of significant importance if Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, rather, it is of significance if Jesus knew that Moses was not the author (Marais & Muller, 1912:91). In favour of the conservative approach which views Moses as the author, *Gereformeerd Maandblad* posed the question regarding whether this new direction (of Bible criticism) was to become a threat to orthodoxy (Marais & Muller, 1912:91), suspecting that it did indeed pose a danger.

As has been stated, the final years of the *Gereformeerd Maandblad* involved much talk about Higher Criticism and Evolution, and seemingly a general level of 'indecision' among many regarding these issues. The very last years of the journal was concluded with two final warnings, the first warning from D. Lategan against German Higher Criticism, and the second warning issued by revisiting the period 1858-1865 in which Prof N.J. Hofmeyr, P.D.M. Huet, Dr P.E. Faure, and Andrew Murray warned against the Modernist movement in the DRCSA. These were published regardless of the liberal trajectory on which the DRCSA had at this stage already been placed by those who adopted the Modernist approach, like Pienaar, who saw an unwillingness to engage in Higher Criticism as being un-academic. Consistent with his view Pienaar likewise praised the men who stood for this view, describing them as "godly, believing, and added to it, highly qualified men" (Pienaar, 1911a:13).

During the final years of *Gereformeerd Maandblad*, the journal would continue to revisit the question of Higher Criticism.

4.2.2.10 D. Lategan's explanation of the evolutionary character of Higher Criticism (1916-1918)

Minister of Philipstown-turned-lecturer of Stellenbosch Seminary, D. Lategan, was given the opportunity in the final years of the *Gereformeerd Maandblad* to explain the nature and overall result of German Higher Criticism in a series of articles. The first of these appeared in August,

1916 under the heading *the Old Testament in Light of Archaeology*, with subheading *The Old Testament and Higher Criticism*.

Lategan starts (1916:126) his first article by consenting that not all critics of Scripture are equally extreme in their conclusions. Some, he says, are more conservative than others, stating that all of them start from the same philosophical presuppositions. He continues (1916:127) by explaining what the philosophical underpinnings of Higher Criticism are. The first that he points out is that it is based on evolutionary thinking. Since Charles Darwin in his 'Origin of Species' makes the statement that all life has only been evolving from one form to another over long periods, theologians assumed that this reasoning had to be applied to religion as well, starting with the pagan religions. Lategan explains: "Since the discoveries of Darwin and others, evolutionary thinking had been widely accepted in the scientific world to find natural explanations in virtually every field of study…This is the way in which the field of 'religious history' was born." It is according to evolutionary principles that sense was being made of how religions developed, as Lategan explains (1916:127) "starting with animism, then incrementally moving from this to fetishism, polytheism and then eventually monotheism."

Lategan concludes by pointing to the fact that it is this line of reasoning that was eventually applied to Israel's religion despite its unique characteristics when compared to the pagan religions. This he describes as an unnatural and cumbersome process that involved the major reconstruction of Israel's "history, literature, traditions, and religion." Lategan explains (1916:127): "In order to prove their theory, men had to explain the facts and vague history that we have in the Old Testament in a very naïve and natural manner. In this way, for example, Israel's history and religion started with myths, legends, and fables" which were falsely incorporated and imported into Israel's religious history. Lategan explains (1916:127) that this occurs in much the same way that fraudulent documents are used in other instances to commit fraud. Yet, what is done in this case is the committing of some kind of "'pious' form of fraud." What should be noted in the *Gereformeerd Maandblad*'s reporting through this series of articles is that despite the obvious disagreement of Higher Criticism with the traditional view of Scripture, no effort was made to denounce its evolutionary origin. The reason for this revolves around theologians' uncertainty pertaining to the interpretation of Darwin in light of Scripture during these years. This becomes evident in Lategan's handling of Genesis 1-3 in a follow-up article.

4.2.2.11 Attack on conservatism — revisiting the modernist rising (1919)

The late fifties to mid-sixties (1858-1865) can be described as being characterised by great conflict between those who wished to uphold traditional theological interpretation and those who

opted for more modern explanations that were governed by naturalistic presuppositions, as Lategan explained above. *Gereformeerd Maandblad* revisited these issues in 1919.

During these years, it would seem that the conservative group that held the Bible in high regard were unhappy about the fact that some ministers were receiving their training in the Netherlands, in particular universities like the Free University of Amsterdam that have foregone the traditional Reformed view regarding Scripture. Olea Nel (2010) lists these ministers from Holland as "Thomas François Burgers, Johannes Jacobus Kotzé, Hendrik Carel Leibrandt and Stephanus Petrus Naudé." Rev. L.M. Kriel who was minister of the Rondebosch congregation from 1907-1909 stated (Kriel, 1919a:7) that dissatisfaction with this trend in the DRCSA was expressed in an article published in a protest journal, based on a petition that was launched against the conservatives and their supposed 'boycott' of the free-thinking graduates returning from Holland. The petition demanded that the following be removed (1919a:7): "1. The devious and underhanded influence exerted to hinder young ministers that recently arrived from Holland, preventing them to find appointment in South Africa, and 2. The liberty of anyone in the Church to object against the constitution of the Church." The article published in *Gereformeerd Maandblad* concludes without taking any position on the issue highlighted by Kriel.

The July publication of the same year did an analysis of the differences between the conservatives (represented by Andrew Murray and others) and the 'Modernist' (Kriel, 1919b:186) approach championed by Kotzé and Burgers (starting during the years, 1858-1859). Kriel (1919b:187) reviewed some of the most significant points:

1. **View of Scripture**: Kotzé explains his view stating that although he believed that Scripture can generally be classified as the Word of God, he disagreed that everything in Scripture is correct. He suggests that (1919b:187) "much in Scripture is actually in opposition to the truth and thus impossible to be viewed as one entire Word from God."
2. **Miracles**: The view pertaining to miracles can be defined as the following (1919b:188): "[N]othing happens outside of the normal run of nature…Modernist Theology maintains that miracles never happened, and in proof thereof, it calls as witness the general run of the centuries." In other words, what Kotzé is saying is that because one does not see any proof of miracles, one should therefore not not believe in its existence.
3. **The Person of Christ**: The view regarding this topic is found in Kotzé's statement (1919b:188) that "Jesus of Nazareth was equal to all human beings in terms of his origin." Burgers also notes (1919b:188) that "Modern Theology states that [Jesus] like all other human beings, had a human father." He continues to say that "the orthodox doctrine that teaches that Jesus was the Messiah is pure 'make believe.'"

Views like these were opposed by men like N.J. Hofmeyr, P.D.M. Huet, Dr P.E. Faure, and the then moderator of the DRCSA, Andrew Murray, who eventually were sued by Kotzé for wrongful suspension (Kriel, 1920:232-237). Despite tremendous pressure to change its statement of faith, especially with regards to the authority of Scripture, the church prevailed, at least at this stage of its history. The Church took drastic measures to protect its doctrines against the Dutch liberalism that had been affecting their ministers. One such step was to refuse ordination of any men with liberal leanings. Du Plessis (1919:230) explains that this was achieved through "the exclusion from the Church of young ministers who held neologian views." This he recounts (1919:230) was "secured by the institution of a *colloquium doctum* with the Board of Examiners, before all who desired legitimation as ministers of the Church must needs appear."

Through initiatives like the aforementioned, liberalism was halted in the DRCSA for the moment. This was largely facilitated by blocking the stream of ministers coming from the Netherlands and encouraging the ordination of young men who studied at the Theological Seminary at Stellenbosch, as du Plessis (1919:231) describes, "at the feet of those two eminent and devout professors, John Murray and Nicolaas Hofmeyr."

The liberal movement was eventually reduced to an insignificant factor in the DRCSA. Du Plessis (1919:231) reports that "[b]etween 1862 and 1870 the ranks of the orthodox party in the Church were strengthened with between thirty and forty ministers, The Liberal party, which seemed so powerful and influential in the Synod of 1862, had shrunk to a shadow of its former self in 1870, and could muster on critical questions only eleven votes in a Synod of over 100 members."

This was a clear victory for conservatism in DRCSA history, however, the scars were left on its main combatant of the time — Murray. Nel (2010) reminds that "the drawn-out conflict with the liberals have left Andrew Murray battle-worn and ill." She continues by quoting words written by his eldest daughter commenting on the state of her father: "Often my dear mother would come to me and say, 'I am sure your dear father will kill himself. See how exhausted he is.'" What can be gathered from this is that after a long and hard battle against theological liberalism, Murray was a worn-out man. It also illustrates how relentless false theology becomes in its drive toward change, and how equally relentless the guardians of the theological integrity of the Church must be in their response to it.

4.3 Conclusion

The period of *Gereformeerd Maandblad's* reporting can be described as being characterised by the development of a distinct theologically liberal trajectory within DRCSA, albeit only developmentally at this stage. Pertaining to the subject of Higher Criticism, men like D.J. Pienaar were supportive of its findings as became evident in the Muller-Pienaar debate. The aim of the

next chapter is to research the period following *Gereformeerd Maandblad*'s cessation, in search of more clues pertaining to the liberal trajectory in the DRCSA and the acceptance of liberal views.

SECTION 1: THE DRCSA IN THE LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

CHAPTER 5 — CONTROVERSY AND THE CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF LIBERAL THOUGHT

5.1 Introduction

The continuing development of liberalism in the DRCSA can be understood from the perspective of *Het Zoeklicht*, or *The Search Light*, a journal that started in 1922 and was intended to search for the truth by endeavouring to challenge the views of the DRCSA. Throughout the years that it was published, the editor, Prof J. du Plessis,[21] emerged as a theologically liberal successor to Kotzé and Burgers who were referenced in the previous chapter (Olivier, s.a.). This chapter focusses on the gradual unfolding of liberal views within the DRCSA. Unlike the previous chapter in which significant events were documented chronologically, this chapter will conduct a topical handling of these events.

5.2 Case for the antitheses between the terms 'conservatism' and 'liberalism'

In May of 1925, D.G. Malan – who was an alumnus of both Stellenbosch and Princeton seminaries and eventually a primary witness in the du Plessis court case[22] – presented his view on liberalism in relation to the Church. Malan (1925:145) reacted sharply to the development of liberalism, saying, "we call this apostasy in the Church: Liberalism or Modernism. And we will do well if we consent that the old biblical teaching as found in the Scriptures, the kind that our forefathers taught us, is the kind that is much more desirable than the modernist interpretations of late." Malan continues by pointing out that where the modernist (liberal) influences had been exerted from the outside (the international theological community) in the past, they were now being exerted from within the DRCSA. He explains that the threat to the church is greater than before (Malan, 1925:145) since it is "...the leaders and ministers – that are suppressing the essential truths of the Christian faith, this in the interest of today's science and philosophy." Emphasising the

[21] A.R. Oliver reminisced about du Plessis' reasons for starting "*Het Zoeklicht*," saying that from the first edition, it was obvious that du Plessis wanted to use the publication as a medium to promote his own theological views. (Olivier, s.a.)

[22] Although the present writer disagrees with many of his claims, an article written by Neels Jackson (2016) on the online version of *Die Kerkbode* nevertheless provides helpful biographical information on the Malan brothers.

dangers he perceives for the church Malan (1925:145) adds that "this change in the source from which this attack comes does not make it lesser in any way, but rather intensifies it, because we know it is easier to deal with the known enemy than with the traitor from within." Malan (1925:145) finally gets to his main argument by singling out the central point of disagreement between conservative and liberal theology — the interpretation of the supernatural.

5.3 View of Scripture

5.3.1 Inerrancy

One debated topic within Christian academic circles during the 1920s was the biblical doctrine of inerrancy. During this time many naturalistically inclined theologians began doubting the Scripture's internal testimony as well as external evidence for its inerrancy. *Het Zoeklicht*, a journal that was published from 1923-1936 to address theological issues within the DRCSA, addressed naturalism early on. Rev. H. Pienaar (1924c:139) pointed out how half a century previously, from his time of writing, men believed in the plenary, verbal, inspiration of Scripture. Pienaar (1924c:139) points to the fact that this was no longer the case stating that the Bible had become subjected to the naturalistic philosophy of life by men who viewed themselves as scientifically inclined. It was thus suggested that "on historical grounds, one has to accept that there are possible mistakes in the Bible and in the stories recounted in Scripture." Their requirement, Pienaar points out, is the "freedom to inspect issues historically, and as far as is possible, to point out the mistakes in the Bible stories."

It seems to be the view of the *Het Zoeklicht* editor, J. du Plessis, that the 'old-fashioned' view of word-for-word inspiration was not feasible. This at least seems to be the view considering his criticism (du Plessis, 1926:297) of Princeton[23] Seminary theologian, Charles Hodge, who explained plenary verbal inspiration by saying that "all the books of Scripture are equally inspired. All alike are infallible in what they teach. Inspiration extends to all the contents of these several books. It is not confined to moral and religious truths, but extends to the statement of facts, whether scientific, historical, or geographical." Du Plessis then comments that the statement

[23] Princeton Theological Seminary was one of the leading seminaries in the U.S.A, at least until such time that liberalism finally took its toll. Academic headquarters to the Presbyterian Church of the United States, its most notable theologians include J. Gresham Machen, B.B. Warfield and Charles Hodge — Warfield and Machen who are most noted for their countering of liberal thought that escalated at PTS during their tenures in early 20th century and finally leading to the founding of Westminster Theological Seminary.

which Hodge makes (i.e. asserting that all the books are 'equally inspired') does not "keep in consideration the individual temperament [of Scripture][24], and that it is conflicting with the judgment of the Christian Church, which since the earliest times held certain books in higher regard than others."

What is noteworthy at this point is that it appears that Stellenbosch seminary was perhaps taking on a more liberal view before Princeton did. Princeton became the focus of discussion in July 1929, where du Plessis (1926:222) seemed indifferent to the reasons for the departure of certain men, like J. Gresham Machen. Certainly, like-minded Reformed theologians would agree to the reasons for the departure from Princeton that would eventually lead to the founding of Westminster in Philadelphia.[25]

Du Plessis (1927a:24) again highlighted his view on the inerrancy of Scripture which was this time in response to disagreements voiced by Malan in November 1926 under the title *Are Things Really That Terrible for Chronicles?* Malan was responding to the editor's view that there are contradictions between the books of Chronicles and 2 Samuel. Du Plessis explained his view by reiterating his persuasion that there are indeed contradictions. Malan, on the other hand, expressed great concern for the view that was endorsed having asked the question in his previous article: "If the writer of Chronicles was so untrustworthy…then what do we have as a guarantee that he is reliable when it comes to teaching us about God?" This is then challenged by Du Plessis as he continues to prove the contradictions between the books of the Bible in question (refer 14.2.1 for response).

At the end of this section on inerrancy, some additional historical information on Princeton Theological Seminary might be in order. Hart (1980:124) reminds that "Princeton Seminary was the academic centre of conservative Christianity in the United States at the turn of the century,

[24] Information in brackets are not part of the original quotation.

[25] The reasons for Westminster's birth is well-stated on their website in the following terms: "In the 1920's, the mainline Presbyterian Church struggled with liberalism. J. Gresham Machen set the terms of the debate with his book *Christianity and Liberalism*. He argued that liberalism teaches not a lesser form of Christianity, but an entirely different religion. Princeton compromised by reorganizing its board to include members tolerant of liberalism. Princeton's new leadership slowly transformed the seminary from an institution that trained biblically faithful ministers to a mirror that reflected the shifting trends in the mainline Presbyterian Church."

and its influence reached around the world." According to Hart (1980:124), the liberalism of Princeton and the Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA) in general "began in 1874 with the heresy trial of David Swing and climaxed with the reorganization of Princeton Theological Seminary in 1929."

Accordingly, the reorganization of Princeton into a liberal seminary was preceded by the following events: The first development worth pointing out is the liberalism of Harry Emmerson Fosdick, a liberal Baptist minister. Hart (1980:125) explains that he "had gained notoriety when a member of his church circulated (without Fosdick's knowledge) his sermon entitled 'Shall the Fundamentalists Win?'" It was in this sermon as Hart (1980:125) explains, in which "Fosdick argued that the Church should hold ministers responsible for only a bare minimum of doctrine (excluding beliefs such as the Virgin Birth of Christ, the inerrancy of Scripture, and the bodily resurrection of Jesus). Thus, Fosdick concluded, the Church should not exclude the liberals."

The second major development involved the 1923 Assembly which concerned the "five points of 1910 and 1916" (Hart, 1980:125). This involved the five doctrines that were deemed essential to the Christian faith, including, inerrancy, the Virgin Birth, substitutionary atonement, the bodily resurrection, and the miracles of Jesus, which was affirmed by this Assembly of 1923 (Hart, 1980:127).

However, this affirmation of the "five points" would soon be challenged in January of 1924 by what became known as the 'Auburn Affirmation.' Hart (1980:127) explains: "The *Affirmation* challenged the constitutionality of the Assembly's reaffirmation of the five points, and went on to declare these doctrines were only 'particular theories' of the truths taught in Scripture." The division among the Presbyterians continued and the differences among them were made visible for the conservative side by J. Gresham Machen's 'Christianity and Liberalism,' and for the liberals, through the Auburn Affirmation. As a result, a Commission was called in 1925 that would seek to find mediatory ground between the conservatives and the liberal. Hart (1980:127) observes: "The report of the Commission to the 1926 Assembly steered a moderate course through controversy. The Commission repudiated Machen's theory of two distinct religions within the PCUSA. The report urged that the church accept the principle of Christian toleration."

The report of the Commission was eventually adopted by the 1926 Assembly which Hart (1980:127) describes as "a key turning point in the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy in the PCUSA." He (1980:127-128) continues: "It assured moderate theological liberalism a place in the

church because it asserted the power of the presbyteries and eliminated the 'five points' as a point of controversy. The acceptance of the report marked the beginning of the conservatives' waning influence in the PCUSA."

This development among the PCUSA is what spurred changes at Princeton. The tolerance that was advocated by the denomination was also being promoted at the seminary, leading to much disagreement among the governing body and students alike. These disagreements at Princeton became the main topic that was discussed at the Assembly of 1928. However, it wasn't until the Assembly of 1929 that the future of the conservatives at Princeton Theological Seminary would be made known. Voting led to the election of 33 new Board Trustees at Princeton of which Machen noted that only six were true conservatives (Hart, 1980:134). Despite the Board's issuing of a statement that the historic position of the Seminary would remain unchanged, Hart (1980:134) says that "Machen and three other professors refused to serve under the board, and efforts to open a new conservative seminary began." This is what marked the beginning of the formation of Westminster Seminary.

5.3.2 Inspiration of Scripture

In July 1927, J. du Plessis, the editor of *Het Zoeklicht*, in an effort to prove to people that the findings of Higher Criticism were not outlandish, in an article entitled *What Higher Criticism is and Teaches* stated that to believe that Scripture was given by pure inspiration of God was not a feasible answer to the evidence that proves the contrary. For this reason, he promoted the two-fold godly-and-human nature of the Scriptures with a special emphasis on its human nature. It is of God in terms of what it teaches but, according to him, it is of man in terms of its form. He supports his assertion by drawing attention to some of the things written by the apostle Paul. Du Plessis states (du Plessis, 1927a:202) that "Paul demanded inspiration in certain situations and in others not." He then proceeds by pointing to what were in his opinion examples of uninspired words found in 1 Corinthians 1:16; 7:6, 12, 40.

The issues of inspiration were thus the focus when du Plessis was summoned to the Cape Town court to give an account of his theological views. He (1931:365) explained that although he believed that the Word of God was inspired in its content, he did not believe that it was not inspired to the letter. He said (1931:365): "…not every letter in the Word of God is inspired. Many things in Scripture did not come from God. Satan said some things in Scripture and there are lies in Scripture…The whole Bible can therefore not be described as the 'Word of God'…I therefore

always say that everything contained in the Bible is God's Word, not that each and every letter or every single sentence is the Word of God."

5.3.3 Higher Criticism

A result of a naturalistic worldview governing the interpretation of Scripture is to be found in the Higher Criticism movement. Although these men viewed themselves as scientists, their approach stood in contrast to the conservative and traditional approach to Bible interpretation. In January 1924, D.J. Pienaar (1924a:4) explained that Higher Criticism was in his opinion presuppositionally defined. He maintained that it was an approach to Scripture that resulted due to the changing attitudes toward Scripture. Yet, these changes, Pienaar (1924a:4) states, were not exclusively the result of Higher Criticism, rather this view was a result of research in anthropology, archaeology, and biology.

To support this view, Pienaar (1924a:5) drew attention to some of the major developments in the field mainly as it involved the New Testament. For instance, he mentioned that the Pauline epistles to congregations were still viewed as having been written by Paul, however, the Pastoral Epistles were doubted to have been penned by Paul. The gospels were also subjected to similar scrutiny. The Gospel of Mark was seen as the oldest of the gospels, and it became commonly believed that Matthew and Luke based their gospels on what Mark had written.

The above mentioned is a reflection of what was going on in theological scholarship at this juncture in history. The Church, no matter which Protestant denomination was at stake, was forced to make sense of the newfound interpretations and persuasions. What is of interest to this thesis discussion, is the way that the DRCSA was attempting to make sense of all of these differing opinions to the Scriptures. Pienaar (1924a:7) in the same article provides his advice as to how to make sense of Bible Critique. He says:

> "[Criticism of Scripture] is a sort of torch that gives us light, and leads the way in the dark corridors of ancient history, that helps us distinguish between truth and fiction, between what is historical and what is ahistorical, between what is ancient and what is new. Biblical criticism has gone from victory to victory in the battle between true

> and false criticism. True Criticism is the product of the true spirit of the Reformation, and false criticism is the product of deism and rationalism."[26]

Pienaar (1924a:7) concludes by quoting the words of English Congregational minister and contemporary of Charles Spurgeon, Dr Joseph Parker, who wrote on page 39 of his book, *None Like It*:

> "The Christian Church should welcome all the light and aid of the best scholarship in the elucidation of the Bible. There is no orthodoxy so despicable as that which sneers at scholarship. I want all the help I can get. If the Bible as a whole is not the Word of God, I wish to know it. Superstition is mischievous. Prejudice hurts the soul. So let us encourage reverent and competent scholars to dig deeply and speak fearlessly. It is in this spirit that I am about to make a revolutionary suggestion. Why not re-edit and reconstruct the Bible in the light of present-day knowledge? The form might be changed; the substance would remain. The formation of the canon was a human work. The Bible as we have it was never seen either by the prophets or the apostles. If the best scholarship of the Church is prepared to prove that there are literal, historical, chronological errors in the Bible, why not cut them out? Why not publish a revised canon as well as a revised version? It is high time we got rid of all the false traditions. I would not spare them on the ground if their age; I would abolish them, in the ground of their unfaithfulness. Let us get down as far as possible to the rock of reality."

From this paragraph, it appears that there was great respect for scholarship and the scientific method of Bible criticism.

That Pienaar had bought into the ideology of biblical criticism, can be seen in his explanation of the gospels' view of Jesus as the Christ which he explains by assuming the Markan priority of the synoptic gospels. Pienaar (1924b:46) notes that: "Mark, probably the oldest of the gospels, and the 'Logia' of Matthew, the second oldest source, contains something and enough about [Jesus Christ as both the Son of God and the Son of man]." He then goes on to criticise the modernist tendency to divorce the historical Christ from the 'spiritual' Christ. He says (1924b:47): "surely

[26] "De kritiek in't algemeen is 'n soort van fakkel, die ons licht geeft, en leidt in de donkere gangen der oudheid, door ons te doen onderscheiden tussen waarheid en onwaarheid, tussen geschiedenis en wat niet geschiedenis is, tussen oudheid en nieuwheid. De Bijbelse kritiek is gegaan van oorwinning tot oorwinning, in de strijd tussen de ware en de valse kritiek. De ware kritiek is't produkt van de evangeliese geest der Hervorming, en de valse kritiek is het produkt van't deisme en rationalisme."

men would have to have become ultra-scientific and critically-insane to divorce the historical Christ from the spiritual Christ. The modernist may want to do this. Paul does not."

5.4 'Kenosis' teaching

A necessary result of Higher Criticism is the view that the Christ, at least as he is portrayed in the gospels, was a man riddled with inconsistencies and imperfection. As a result, the view of the 'kenosis' was born, based on Christ's emptying of himself as Paul describes in Philippians 2:5-7[27]. The kenosis is a view that was also highly contested during the period of *Het Zoeklicht*'s publication. Some were for it and viewed it as consistent with other findings, like those garnered by Higher Criticism, while others were against it and saw it as a blatant attack on the deity of Christ.

In March 1934 a special commission of the Transvaal's synod of the Dutch Reformed Church wrote a report in which they tackled their own interpretation of various topics that received extensive attention during the du Plessis trials. One such topic involved their view of the kenosis which is described as a topic in which "freedom must be granted for individual interpretation." Du Plessis (1934:66) reported that although this was stated the commission, however, "evaded the main point around which everything revolves, the question whether Jesus was really unknowing pertaining to certain things, e.g. the location of Lazarus' grave, the fact that the fig tree had no fruit, etc." Du Plessis concludes his comments on the kenosis by suggesting, in his view, the fact that many orthodox theologians like Calvin and others had denied the man Jesus the attribute of omniscience.[28]

5.5 A growing naturalistic worldview

In July 1923, *Het Zoeklicht* (1923:215) reported on an event which occurred in February 1891 in the Falkland Islands. A group of whalers were entwined in a desperate battle with a whale which

[27] "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped..." (Philippians 2:5-6).

[28] Calvin's recognition of the humanity of Christ never led him down the slippery path which denies his deity, unlike many kenosis theorists. Rather, Calvin repeatedly affirmed the glorious nature of Christ, which classifies him as nothing less than God in the flesh. Sinclair Ferguson (Ferguson, 2008:35-36) calls to mind how Calvin highlighted the importance of being rooted in Christ for spiritual life when he exposited the Apostle's Creed. According to Calvin, "if we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus that it is "of him" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

they were trying to catch. Eventually, the desperate whale crashed into their vessel 'The Star of the East' causing much water to seep in. Thankfully, there was a boat nearby to assist the struggling sailors. At long last, they managed to bring the whale in and as soon as they started to cut it open to prepare it, to their astonishment, they discovered one of their shipmates inside the belly of the whale. He was unconscious but alive. James Bartley, the sailor to whom this happened, was healthy, only suffering a discolouration of the skin due to the gastrointestinal acids in the whale's belly.

The unidentified writer of this article brings this account to remembrance because of his understanding of the book of Jonah as truly historical. The unnamed writer (1923:217) insisted:

> "We have every reason to believe that the story of Jonah really happened, the Ninevites called to penance and repentance, that he at first was reluctant and disobedient in following God's initial command to go to the Ninevites and preach the message to Israel's archenemies, that through extraordinary means he was eventually forced by God to be obedient and go to Nineveh, and that his message of repentance had one effective result in the Assyrian capital."[29]

The article referred to above endorsed the literal approach to Scripture which was the accepted method of interpretation within the DRCSA at this time. However, in August 1923, Dr E.E. van Rooyen, one of the five translators of the first Afrikaans Bible translation (1933), was compelled to explain to certain enquirers within the DRCSA – who were perhaps becoming sympathetic to the allegorical method of interpretation – why it was not necessary to opt for the allegorical method of interpretation. He responded to a question about the allegorical interpretation explained in an earlier edition of *Het Zoeklicht*. He concludes his answer by pointing to the fact that there is no reason to have to lay the literal-historical understanding of the book of Jonah at the altar of naturalism-driven allegory. He explained that when people get to these kinds of accounts, they are quick to filter it through their realistic or natural worldview. Accordingly, van Rooyen (1923:249) noted:

[29] "Wij hebben dus alle reden om aan te nemen dat Jona werkelik geboden werd, de Ninevieten tot boete en berouw op te roepen; dat hij eerst weigerde aan deze onaangename opdracht gehoot te geven, om tot Israëls erfelike vijanden te gaan prediken; dat hij door Gods wonderlike leiding en voorzienigheid er toch toe is gebracht, Nineve te bezoeken; en dat zijn boeteprediking een gans heilzame uitwerking heeft gehad in de bekering van de bevolking van Assyrië's hoofdstad."

> "...this sort of exegesis often unbeknownst exists under the influence of naturalism, that will not allow a 'supernatural drive' to exist in its worldview. We recommend that there exists no pressing reason to exchange the historical interpretation for the allegorical interpretation. Both the Old and New Testament compel us toward an exegesis leading to this conclusion."[30]

5.6 Evolutionary thinking

In 1925 the theme of Evolution came to the fore as *Het Zoeklicht* aimed to give its readers an answer to the pressure that was already being exerted on the Church community to respond to the various archaeological discoveries that were being made. What is interesting to note is the journal's willingness to draw evolutionist conclusions about man into question, but not so much their conclusions regarding the age of the universe. J. du Plessis, the editor, wrote the article entitled *The Meaning of the Taungs Skull* in which he discusses the various man-like and ape-like fossils that were discovered. Although he disagrees with the assumption that human beings came from the 'primates,' he agrees in the article with the assumptions it is built on. Du Plessis makes the point (1925a:51) that as it involves the creation account found in Scripture, one has to bear in mind "it was written for one nation and one world that did not yet possess of the scientific knowledge, or could have, to make sense of it."

Speaking of the age of the creation specifically, du Plessis (1925a:51) states: "It must be admitted that the universe and the earth in particular is much older than what we are able to conclude from the creation account in Scripture." He calls to mind the studies of Archbishop Usher who calculated all the generations in Scripture from Genesis to the birth of Christ. Du Plessis then comments; "That the world was created 4004 years before Christ, which is what Usher proposes, is not lauded by any sensible interpreter of Scripture." Supporting this he references the then-recent discovery of remains in ancient Egypt and Babylon which allegedly suggest that the age is much older than what Usher proposes. In addition, he calls the meaning of the Hebrew word 'yom' into defence which could mean 'a day' but also 'a period of time.'

[30] "Deze soort exegese verkeert dikwels onbewust onder invloed van het naturalisme, dat geen enkele 'supranaturalistiese stoot' in zijn wereld-beschouwing wil gedogen. Wij menen dat er geen dwingende redenen bestaan om de historiese voor de allegoriese interpretasie in dit geval in te ruilen. Noch, het Oude, noch het Nieuwe Testament noopt ons, bij een konsekwente exegese, daartoe."

Lastly, du Plessis (1925a:51) maintained that it would be unreasonable to believe that God made all the species that we have on the planet today during the creation. He contends that "it is simply unnecessary to presuppose that God made each and every species in this fashion…It is through cross breeding that new species were birthed."

In December 1925, the same topic was revisited by a different author, H.P. van der Merwe. He made a similar argument to Du Plessis. The main drive of van der Merwe's argument was that Genesis 1 was not intended to be understood as a cosmological description of the creation of everything. Rather, van der Merwe (1925:358) states that the creation story as captured in Genesis 1 was not intended to be understood as a detailed description of creation, but as one that contains the general universal truth that God was the one who created. For this reason, van der Merwe suggests (1925:358) that Scripture is no more authoritative on the origin of the world than it is on the topic of physiology, or human anatomy for that matter. The most important thing according to him was not so much 'the modus quo' but the fact that God was behind it all. He said (1925:359) that "God created human beings in his image is essential, it is the central point. The means by which he chose to create him, is accidental."

In the same issue, A.M. McGregor, son of Scottish minister Andrew McGregor, and long-standing minister of Three Anchor Bay Dutch Reformed congregation wrote about the same topic. He has similar yet additional advice to give. According to him, a problem arises when men totally discard the Bible in favour of Evolution or when men discard Evolution completely in favour of the biblical account. He suggests (1925:372) a third alternative, one which harmonises the findings of science with the Bible account. He states: "Men can seek to reconcile science with the Bible. Men can be receptive to the new light that God has given, while staunchly holding on to the old light…In the case of the Evolution theory, my opinion is that this is indeed possible."

This is one of the first verbal descriptions of 'theistic evolution' in the *Het Zoeklicht,* and one that is recommended by McGregor. Despite this attestation by McGregor, it seems that not every DRCSA minister had faith in the theory of Evolution. This at least seems to be the case since an article to the contrary, written by a minister by the name of H.S.M. Botha, was published where he made known his disagreements with Evolution and its suggestion of millions of years for the age of the universe. He begged (1925:373) the evolutionist to provide proof for such assumptions. D.G. Malan similarly provided an attack on blind allegiance to Evolution in February 1926 under the heading "*Where are We Drifting?"* He provided the same kind of defence of conservatism in a follow-up article in March (1926:76) with the title: *The stream Flows in Many Directions.*

Despite these warnings, the academia was desperate for a change in the DRCSA with regards to their approach to scientific discovery. It is for this reason that a minister of the Church, R. Theron, suggested that ministers adapt their preaching to accommodate the 'intellectual' masses in South Africa, particularly among Afrikaners. According to him (1926:140)

> "…it is indeed the question if our Church is making enough provision for the needs of this big pool of learned Afrikaners, and if our preachers are adapting their sermons enough to the persuasions of the cream of our nation."

He then recounts what he heard a certain parliamentarian said about the disconnect between DRCSA ministers and their learned Church members, he

> "…assured me that our Church is fast losing its grip on the academic nature of our nation, not because there is no spiritual hunger or seriousness in the latter, but because many ministers are hopelessly out of touch with the spirit and mind of our time, and in their rigid conservatism, have no open hearted sympathy for those who think different from them."[31]

In December of 1927, Du Plessis once again promoted the philosophy of Evolution. He did so by emphasising his view that Evolution can be accepted by the Church without having to denounce its core tenets. He motivated (1927b:359) his view by quoting a well-known Saint Andrew's professor Robert Flint:

> "Forty years ago the fear that Philosophy, and especially Theology, would be ruined by the doctrine of evolution was widely prevalent. All fear of the kind has now almost vanished, and there are few educated and intelligent persons who do not recognise that what was then regarded as a terrible danger to religion and theology is, and must be, of incalculable value to both. It has come to be clearly seen by the vast majority of thoughtful men that the evolution of the universe through countless ages, in accordance with regular and beneficial laws, is necessarily a far richer and more instructive self-manifestation of the Divine than any mere act of instantaneous creation could be."

[31] "Dit is wel die vraag of ons kerk genoeg voorsiening maak in die behoefte van hierdie groot stand van geleerde Afrikaners, en of ons predikante wel genoeg hul preke laat aanpas by die denkwyse van hierdie room van ons volk. Onlangs het ek met 'n ernstig godsdienstig-gesinde parlementslid gereis wat my verseker dat ons kerk snel sy vat verloor op die geleerde stand van ons volk, nie omdat daar by laasgenoemde geen erns en geestelike honger is nie, maar omdat vele van onse predikante hopeloos buite kontak staan met die gees en denkwyse van ons tyd, en in hul stroewe konservatisme geen ruimhartige simpatie het met andersdenkende."

This quote testifies to the widespread acceptance of evolutionary thinking that was present in the Church by the late 1920s.

In July of 1930, du Plessis again explained his reasons for adopting Evolution as an answer to the origins of all things. According to the article, there are many reasons as to why he believed Evolution was the most credible answer. According to du Plessis (1930:217), the first place to start is with the law of causality: There is no need to call in the help of a Creator until the available scientific means have been exhausted. Second, du Plessis (1930:217) states that the law of uniformitarianism dictates that geological formations got their form over many years. This view, he points out, stands in opposition to catastrophism which was the widely held teaching that the world was formed through periods of great and powerful cataclysms.

Du Plessis (1930:217) continues by pointing to the anatomical similarities between certain species. These similarities, he maintained, were due to years and years of evolving from one species to another with certain similar traits left intact. He, for instance, pointed to the similarities between the hand of a human, the wing of a bird, and the fin of a whale, however big the differences may be. And the same rule applies for other animal types as well, big or small. It is in this way that the unity and solidarity of all living creatures have been proven.

Another reason for his faith in Evolution is the fossil record. This du Plessis believed was credible and authoritative in its testimony of evolutionism. He comments on the credibility of paleontological findings saying (1930:218):

> "Palaeontology or the search for before-worldly animal species have brought to the light some very influential developments. Now we can trace the entire family tree of the horse or the elephant. Let's for instance look at the elephant. Millions of years ago, in what was called the Eocene epoch, there was an animal which scientists named 'moeritherium.' It was about as big as a donkey and it had quite a long snout to eat grass with. Centuries went by and this gave way to another creature…"[32]

[32] "Die paleontologie, of ondersoek van voorwêreldlike diersoorte, het sommige baie treffende ontwikkelings aan die lig gebring. Ons kan nou die hele stamlys van die perd of die olifant blootlê. Laat ons dié van die olifant neem. Miljoene van jare gelede, in wat genoem word die eoseense tydperk, was daar 'n dier, waaraan wetenskaplikes die naam gegee het van moeritherium. Hy was omtrent so groot as 'n donkie en het 'n taamlik lang snuit gehad, geskik om gras mee te gryp. Eeue het verbygesnel, en 'n ander dier het naas die vorige sy verskyning gemaak…"

This quote speaks of wholesale adoption of evolutionary thinking that dictates that animals could not have been created according to the characteristics of the species that we see around us today, but that they rather evolved over millions of years.

5.7 Neo-Orthodoxy

In April 1925, *Het Zoeklicht* published an article under the heading *a New Theological Direction* where the rise of Karl Barth as a respected theologian in Switzerland is discussed (ref. 14.2.5). In the article, the writer briefly discusses his theology from the perspective of a Dr Adolf Keller who wrote about Barth in a monthly journal called 'The Expositor' where Barth is reported to have had an unorthodox approach to Scripture despite his allegiance to the Reformed tradition (du Plessis, 1925b:123).

According to the report in *Het Zoeklicht* (1925b:123), Barth calls his approach 'crisis theology.' The crisis, according to him, comes when there is a sobering revelation by man that he needs God, that he is desperate for God, yet that God is unknowable. For this reason, Barth highlights God's transcendence instead of his immanence. This is also the source of Barth's main criticism regarding the Reformed tradition that has, according to him, "placed too much emphasis on God's immanence, so doing, destroying the space between God and human beings…" Astonished, the *Het Zoeklicht* reporter asks (1925b:124) whether the Church is heading into dangerous territory if Barth is taken seriously. Despite his Reformed soteriology, Keller, as shown in du Plessis (1925b:123) continued to point out that the idea of an unknowable God is not only unbiblical but that it is also a misrepresentation by materialist philosophy. Furthermore, Keller is reported in *Het Zoeklicht* (1925b:124) as describing Barth's view of Christ by referring to the Swiss theologian's own words: "Christ is not a part of history. In so far as he belongs also to historical events, he is irrelevant for us…What we call the historic Jesus, who can be contemplated in an objective way as a personality, has nothing to do with this revelation (i.e. the reign of grace)."

A reporter (who is not identified in the *Het Zoeklicht* article) then responds by asking the reader to imagine what Paul, Peter, or John would have thought when reading these words (1925b:124): "Christ not a historical person! Then there would be no gospel, no salvation, no future, no hope for us in the world. Christianity in essence, is a historical faith, that had a historical beginning and that had a historical end."

In March 1932, A.B. du Preez (1932:76), a minister of the DRCSA in Johannesburg, gave a helpful explanation of what Barth believed about the inspiration of the Word. He explained that Barth

believed that it was wrong to speak of the Bible authors as having been inspired. So, in order to preserve the inspiration of the Word of God, Barth drew a sharp distinction between the human authors and the actual completed canon of Scripture.

Du Preez explained (1932:76) that "[Barth] avoided this idea altogether because he was afraid that people would again lapse into the Neo-Protestant false teaching that builds upon man and his gifts, and that transpired in a sort of idolising of regenerate or inspired man." This understanding leads to the false dichotomy between the 'Word of God' and the Bible (du Preez, 1932:76). According to this reasoning, Barth is reported (1932:77) to have believed that the Bible is only a book like any other book, the difference being that once aided by the Holy Spirit, the person reading this ordinary book comes to the conclusion that it is the Word of God.

Barth explained this process in the following terms as described by du Preez[33] (1932:77):

> "For the natural historically inclined person the Bible looks like an ordinary book, a historical document like the others through which he occupies himself, and he critiques it historically, like he does all other books — we cannot prohibit him from doing this, but we just have to be aware of the fact that this is strictly the process by which the natural man makes sense of it. He may of course identify certain irregularities, contradictions, and mistakes in the historical nature of the Bible from his own perspective, this is highly possible if one's sole interest is the creaturely phenomenon of God's Word. But for those who can see God's Word theologically, this said for those who through the testimony of the Holy Spirit have received ears to hear God speak through the Bible, there will be no hindrance or resentment caused by the criticism of the historical critic. Historical criticism can very well run its

[33] See DRCSA congregation, "Waterval:" https://af.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/NG_gemeente_Waterval

course because the critic operates on a different level than the believer, and his negation does not affect the assurance of the believer in any way."[34]

5.8 Humanistic psychology

In September 1925, *Het Zoeklicht* published a letter written by a certain J.J. Theron who wrote a little booklet called *The Christian and the New Psychology* which was, as can be detected in the editorial response to his letter, heavily criticised. Theron, by all accounts, was suspicious of the newfound discipline of psychology and described the dangers thereof in the following way (1925:281): "...although my knowledge of psychology is limited I know enough about it to see that the scepticism embedded in it suppressed the Church…"

Taken into account that not very much was known about modern psychology and its possible dangers at this stage in history, it is significant to note that the editorial team of *Het Zoeklicht* seemed to support the discoveries that were being made on this front. Whatever it was that led Theron to his conclusions, he seemed to believe that psychology as a discipline was entrenched in humanism, which is one of the central results of enlightenment thinking.

In July 1927, D.H. Pienaar (1927:203) referred to another problem with popular psychology making a good defence for human depravity and a refutation of the psychological view of sin as pure animal instinct. This was in answer to a common view that was being held by modern psychology which said that it is wrong to talk about man as a sinner. This was something that Sir Oliver Lodge promoted a few years before Pienaar's writing. He lamented the conservative Reformed view of total depravity by stressing that "the Higher man of today is not worrying about his sins at all, still less about their punishment." Pienaar explained that these words by Lodge were intended to convey that it is useless and meaningless to speculate about sin, let alone the

[34] "Vir die gewone histories-siende mens lyk die Bybel soos 'n gewone boek, 'n historiese dokument soos die andere waarmee hy hom besig hou, en hy bekritiseer dit dan histories, soos alle ander boeke – ons kan hom dit nie belet nie, maar ons moet net daarvan helder bewus wees, dat dit slegs die gewoon menslike betragtingswyse is. Hy mag miskien vanuit sy beskouingswyse sekere ongerymdhede, teenstrydighede en foute kan aanwys in die historiese gestalte van die Bybel – dit is heeltemal moontlik, as mens alleen 'n oog het vir die kreatuurlike verskyningsvorm van Gods Woord. Maar vir diegene wat die Bybel teologies kan sien, d.w.s. vir diegene wat deur die getuienis van die Heilige Gees ore gekry het om God te hoor spreek deur die Bybel, sal daar geen hinder of aanstoot wees in die kritiek van die geskiedvorser nie. Die historiese kritiek kan dus gerus maar sy gang gaan. Want die geskiedvorser beweeg hom op 'n heeltemal ander vlak as die gelowige, en sy negasie hef die sekerheid van die gelowige hoegenaamd nie op nie."

claim to certainty about man's fallenness. Pienaar paraphrastically added that Lodge went on to say that it would, for this reason, be better to focus on that which is meaningful, like doing one's daily duty.

Pienaar (1927:203) then turned to the Germans' view regarding sin, which is perhaps more intensified than the definition supplied by Lodge. To them, certain people, by means of natural processes, like the assumed evolutionary thinking, have reached 'uber'-human, or superhuman quality. This can be defined as a person that is so far above the reaches of the average human being that the said 'average person,' who does not belong to this category, is made to look savage, primitive, or mediocre at best. Rightly, Pienaar continues (1927:204) by criticising both views, lastly drawing attention to the fallacious manner in which modern psychology presents its view of the human constitution.

Psychology, insisted Pienaar (1927:204), sees sin as pure animal instinct. By its own proponents, it is presented as the constant struggle between these instincts or passions and the goals people wish to achieve in their lives. This understanding differed from the traditional Reformed understanding of man's depravity.[35]

5.9 The rise of a 'social gospel'

In the March issue of 1923, mention was made of the modern tendency toward a 'social gospel.' This reportedly is something which people have interpreted to be a retraction from the true gospel that requires individuals to repent of their sin. Instead, a social gospel demands that "the emphasis should be lessened on the personal repentance of individuals than on systems of social improvement" (du Plessis, 1923:85). The aim of the movement is to encourage pastors to be more involved in commercial and political issues where they can exert greater influence on society. Although *Het Zoeklicht* did not explicitly support the rise of a social gospel, it appears that this might be the direction in which they were heading.

[35] Chapter 6 of the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches with regards to sin under point III. Referring to sin's origin in Adam and Eve the confession states: "They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation." Thus the statement acknowledges the sinfulness of all human beings.

5.10 Conclusion

The early 1920s to the 1930s was, therefore, characterised by a theological debate in South Africa and in particular the DRCSA involving modern interpretations of old doctrines. Naturalism very gradually replaced supernaturalism through *Het Zoeklicht* (*Die Soeklig* from 1933) which impacted on the traditionally held view of the inerrancy and inspiration of the Scriptures as well as the tenets that defined a Reformed understanding of origins. Final approval from modern psychology placed man in the centre of everything, while increasingly shifting Scripture and its teachings on things like the human constitution and total depravity, to the periphery. All of these factors would impact on the DRCSA's theological future.

SECTION 1: THE DRCSA IN THE LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

CHAPTER 6 — A CONCERTED RESPONSE TO LIBERALISM

6.1 Introduction

Het Zoeklicht created great unrest within the DRCSA, so much so that a journal began to be published from within the DRCSA which had the specific goal of opposing certain 'deviating' doctrines espoused in it. The editor of this new journal, Dr and Reverend Dwight R. Snyman, who accepted a call to the Stellenbosch congregation in 1926, saw it as his Christian duty to apologetically react to the views of the editor of *Het Zoeklicht,* Dr J. du Plessis and his board of contributors, in writing. This led to the birth of the conservative theology journal named *Die Ou Paaie* or *The Old Paths*.

Snyman (1926e:5) described the mission of *The Old Paths'* journal in light of the rising liberalist tide in the guise of du Plessis' *Het Zoeklicht* that had already started to sweep through the Church, asking:

> "Is it not strange that we, who as a Church still cling to the absolute authority of the Holy Scriptures, do not have a scientific journal that unequivocally maintains that view? We did nothing for a long time. The influence of free thinking and deviating views have progressively become stronger, and rightly we asked the question: What are we drifting toward?"[36]

Subjects that were countered by Snyman and the editorial team of *Die Ou Paaie* included evolutionary thinking, the liberal view of Scripture which affected the traditional view of inspiration and inerrancy, the liberal view on the kenosis, the failing hermeneutic of liberalism, and the general detrimental effect Higher Criticism has had on orthodox thinking.

Snyman and his editorial team, therefore, set out to be the opposing 'voice' that they felt was needed in the DRCSA under du Plessis' influence, hence the need for the publication — *Die Ou Paaie.* In fact, Snyman stated his intentions for publishing new journal that ran nearly parallel to *Het Zoeklicht* stating that the new journal was an answer "to the modernist attack that has featured itself in the very heart of the Church" (Snyman, 1932:90). For this reason, "…nothing less than a deep sense of responsibility moved us to the establishment of *Die Ou Paaie.*"

[36] "Is dit nie vreemd dat ons wat as kerk nog vashou aan die absolute gesag van die Heilige skrif nie 'n wetenskaplike blad het wat daardie standpunt onomwonde handhaaf? Vir 'n lang tyd het ons stil gesit. Al meer en meer het die stroom van vrysinnigheid en afwykende rigtinge sterker geword, en tereg was die vraag gedaan: 'Waar dryf ons heen?'"

6.2 Evolutionary thinking

6.2.1 Interpretation of 'the Fall'

In an article which was a response to the view that had been adopted by the *Het Zoeklicht* editorial team, Snyman, as editor of *Die Ou Paaie,* proposed where the proponents of Evolution went wrong. Discussing the entrance of sin into the world as a topic that theistic evolutionists needed to provide an answer to, Snyman (1926d:3) pointed out that the prevailing view was that for a 'Fall' to have occurred, the species would have had to evolve from a lower life form to a higher life form. This is described in the following words (1926d:2-3) by once moderator of the Cape synod, Dr H.P. van der Merwe:

> "Concerning the fall, first it must be noted that the word does not appear in its usual sense…and what is understood by it could only have come about through an upward movement…This is the only way by which a moral being could have increased in character and moral greatness…Thus a fall is possible only as beings emerge from a lower to a higher grade of life…"[37]

Based on this quotation, Snyman deduces that van der Merwe proposed that the Fall spoken of in Genesis 3 is only possible if one life form evolved into another. In other words, van der Merwe was convinced that for a Fall of mankind to make sense, Evolution had to be assumed.

Snyman (1926d:3), however, was not convinced by the argument. In response, he states: "This is a false reflection. The core conception of a fall is exactly the opposite, from a higher to a lower condition. Not only does healthy reason dictate it, but it is also true that the entire Bible is in testimony of this." He then argues that if human beings were only evolved creatures, then the personhood of Christ would also lose its wonder. Instead of remaining the only one who could die in our place to rectify what went wrong through the Fall, Christ would become nothing more than a role model that could be followed when necessary. Snyman (1926d:3) notes:

> "The terms sin and salvation can, at its best, only be used in a watered-down sense by evolutionists…according to Evolution, sin is but one of the phases in the development, like birth pains when someone is born into the world, and for this people cannot really be blamed. And salvation, at its best, would have meant, not

[37] "Wat nu de val betreft, eerst moet geconstateerd worden dat dit woord in de gebruikelike zin niet voorkomt…En wat daardoor verstaan wordt kan alleen geschieden door 'n opwaartse beweging…Deze is de enige weg waarlangs 'n zedelik wezen kan opklimmen in karakter en zedelike grootheid…Thus a fall is possible only as beings emerge from a lower to a higher grade of life…"

> that Christ was the substitutionary Saviour, but merely an example or an ideal that is being upheld in a battle that people have to fight on their own."[38]

What Snyman (1926:3) seems to suggest is that the doctrine of sin becomes affected by evolutionary theory, so much so, that humans would evade culpability for sin which the Bible does not allow for. According to Snyman (1926:3), this view of depravity would also affect the doctrine of 'total inability' that would trivialise the sacrifice of Christ as the only means of salvation when people are philosophically convinced that salvation is up to them.

Furthering his argument for the rejection of Evolution, Snyman quotes (1926d:4) van der Merwe who states that it is impossible to reconcile Adam's responsibility for sin and the fact that he came into this world pure, sinless and perfect. Van der Merwe is quoted saying:

> "This view (i.e. that Adam was originally innocent, etc.) assumes that Adam was created morally good…How exactly the evil motive could have resulted in someone who was innocent for all practical purposes, is a problem that refuses to be solved. If there was the evil motive that could be identified, then certainly he had to have been created this way. But if Adam had a good character, then how could he have committed evil?"[39]

Continuing to uphold the doctrine of original sin, Snyman (1926d:4) then responds to van der Merwe by using the example of Christ as proof of the presence of temptation in the Garden of Eden, Christ, the last Adam, being tested as Adam was, yet without sin.

6.2.2 Interpretation of the variation among species

One of the main arguments being brought forth by evolutionists for the variety of species in the world today is the theory of years and years of evolution of one species that leads to another. DRCSA ministers, as well as seminary professors, disagreed among themselves on how to interpret the basic tenets of evolutionary theory. The *Het Zoeklicht* team opted for the same 'naturalistic' approach that had been adopted by their mentor, du Plessis. *Die Ou Paaie,* on the

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[38] "Op sy allerbeste kan die begrippe van sonde en verlossing alleen in 'n verwaterde sin deur die Ewolusioniste gebruik word…volgens die Ewolusie is sonde maar net 'n fase in die ontwikkelingsproses, soos die geboorteweë wanneer 'n mens ter wêreld gebring word – en hiervoor volgens hulle kan die mens nie eintlik die skuld dra nie. En verlossing op sy beste sou beteken, nie dat Christus 'n Plaasvervangende Saligmaker is nie, maar alleen 'n voorbeeld of ideaal wat voorgehou word in 'n stryd wat die mens self moet deurworstel."

[39] "Deze opvatting (d.i. die oorspronklike onskuld van Adam, ens.) Stelt voorop dat Adam zedelik goed geschapen was…Hoe dit kwade motief in iemand, geheel zonder enig zedelik kwaad in zich, kan zijn, is het probleem dat weigert opgelost te worden…Als nu met de eerste verzoeking 'n kwaad motief gevonden wordt in de mens, dan moet het in hem geschapen geweest zijn…Had Adam nu 'n goed karakter, hoe kon hy het kwade gedaan hebben?"

other hand, lobbied for the preserving of the traditional view of origins. It is this view that the editor of *Die Ou Paaie,* Dr Snyman (1928:146-149) defended in a February 1928 article, entitled *Any Concerns Against the Teaching of Evolution*. The main tenet being discussed in this regard was the evolutionary assumption that the most primitive life forms eventually gave rise to the most complex ones, including leading to the dawn of the human race as we know it today.

In this article, Snyman emphasised the fact that he was not convinced by the argumentation put forward in *Het Zoeklicht*. Firstly, he asserted the foolishness of assuming that Evolution was a proven scientific system (1928:148) saying, "Let no one believe that those who promote Evolution are even close to having a proper scientific argument for it. He then proceeded to argue that Evolution was rather something that was more characteristic of the pagan world:

> "Evolution is an idea that has its origin in the heathen world long before the coming of Christ. It was merely a speculation in its beginnings. Today this is still the case. That evolution underwent promotion as a world view, and became the leading view in the schools of the world, still proves nothing. The thought of one single person can reach the world, and can be accepted and developed by many who simply accepts it on the basis of an assumed 'authority.' How many of those who lecture on evolution today have actually had the opportunity to properly test the assertions of the advocates of the theory? There are scientists of name and fame since the rise of Darwinism, the modern father of this teaching (seen this way because at this time he produced the endorsement of this teaching through his well-known book) — scientists who counter evolution as untenable."[40]

Snyman indicates here that Evolution was only in the realm of the speculated, or the guessed. According to Snyman, nothing present in scientific measurement proved its viability.

Snyman (1928:147) then, in the same article, transitions from the presuppositional nature of Evolution to its endorsement of large scale 'evolution' among species by fiercely opposing one of Evolution's main assumptions — that one species can become a different species. He explains that within the theory there is the question of types: "The big question is: how it is possible for the

[40] "Ewolusie is 'n gedagte wat uit die heidendom gebore is lang voor die koms van Kristus. In sy oorsprong is dit 'n blote bespiegeling gewees. Vandag is dit nog so. Dat ewolusie as 'n wêreldbeskouing opgang gemaak het, en vandag die heersende is in die leerskole van die wêreld, bewys nog op sigself beskou niks nie. Die gedagte van een enkele kan wêreldwyd word, en kan aangeneem en verbrei word deur die duisende wat dit eenvoudig aanvaar op grond van 'n vervreemde 'outoriteit.' Hoeveel van diegene wat vandag ewolusie doseer het die geleentheid gehad om die aansprake van die voorstanders daarvan op 'n behoorlike wyse te toets? Daar is wetenskaplikes van naam en faam sedert die opkoms van die Darwinisme, die moderne vader van hierdie leer (so genoem omdat hy in hierdie tyd die groot stoot aan ewolusie gegee het deur die publikasie van sy welbekende boek) – wetenskaplikes wat die ewolusieleer bestry as onhoudbaar."

various amounts of types that exist for it to have originated in this fashion, seeing that real tests that are now being done by experts of nature emphasises the stability of these types, thus indicating the changing of one type into another type does not occur."

6.2.3 What to make of ape-men?

The animal heritage of the human race, which was one of the main tenets that evolutionary thinking was based on, became an issue which DRCSA proponents of Evolution needed to consider and respond to. Snyman (1930:142) made no apology for his strong resistance to any of the explanations that the *Het Zoeklicht* writers offered for this core tenet of Evolution, explaining that, "However one puts it, whether humans originated from apes, or whether humans and apes have the same animal ancestors, the concern of the Bible-believing Christian still remains intact." He continued by explaining (1930:142) that "Evolution assumes the animal origin of the human race. This teaching does not become less grotesque by saying that the human race did not have its origin in an ape, but from an animal ancestor that became the ancestor to both humans and apes."

Snyman (1930:143) then continues by quoting an unnamed American author who states the following about so-called 'primal man':

> "… 'His forehead was low and his jaw resembled that of a wild animal who used his teeth as both knife and fork…His teeth were big and resembled that of some of our wild animals today…He learned to make certain sounds to warn his mates of dangers that were approaching. In this sense he was similar to the dog that would bark if a stranger approached him. In many respects he was less attractive than a well-bread domestic animal.'
>
> The ancestors of humans that, according to the Scriptures were created in the image of God, were, in this God-dishonouring way, being sketched according to evolutionary principles."[41]

The assumption of the animal origins of the human race, thus, became and have remained a much-debated tenet of evolutionary doctrine.

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[41] "'Sy voorkop was laag en sy kakebeen (jaw) was soos dié van 'n wilde dier, wat sy tande gebruik as beide mes en vurk… Sy tande was groot en het gelyk soos die tande van baie van ons eie diere… Hy het geleer hoe om sekere geluide te maak om sy maats te waarsku wanneer daar gevaar aan kom was. Hierin het hy met die hond ooreengekom wat blaf as 'n onbekende hom nader. In baie opsigte was hy baie minder aantreklik as 'n goedgeteelde huisdiertjie.' Op hierdie God-onterende wyse word die voorouers van die mens, wat volgens die Skriftuur na die beeld van God geskep is, vir ons op ewolusionistiese voetspoor geteken."

6.3 View of Scripture

6.3.1 Inspiration

During the mid-1920s *Die Ou Paaie* began to publish articles that contested certain views of Scripture that were being touted by the editor and writers of *Het Zoeklicht.* One of the first of these can be found in the June edition of 1926, where the editor, Snyman, responded to two articles in *Het Zoeklicht,* the first published in March and the other in April. Snyman (1926a:6) started his response by first pointing to the fact that Scripture itself claims to be inspired by the Holy Spirit, despite the doubting of this fact by its detractors. Snyman argues that the way in which the Bible writers presented themselves can be considered as an 'a priori' reason that one can believe in Scripture's inerrancy, as well as the fact that prophecy was fulfilled in such an accurate fashion.

Responding to the issue of contradictions in Scripture as a reason for not believing in the inerrancy of the Bible, Snyman (1926a:6), addressing du Plessis directly, states:

> "…in the first place, the fact that there are contradictions in Scripture can be denied. An error that creeps in during the copying process of the original manuscript is far from being a contradiction. That it was the original writer of the manuscript who made these errors cannot be proven because we do not have the autographs in our possession."[42]

Here Snyman is pointing to the fact that Scripture has been copied and recopied over centuries, increasing the probability that errors could slip through.

The doctrine of inspiration was discussed again on numerous occasions in *The Old Paths*. In an article that appeared in January 1927, the inspiration of Scripture was discussed in view of the Barthian 'solution' to large-scale scepticism of Scripture by Dr B.B. Keet, who was an esteemed professor of the Stellenbosch Seminary and one of the five translators of the 1933 Afrikaans Bible translation.[43] Keet (1927:175) saw large scale rejection of the traditional doctrine of inspiration (which was Barth's solution to German Higher Criticism) not as a solution, but rather as an outright attack on the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. Keet (1927:175) insisted on the absolute historicity of the biblical text as the only answer to a faulty orthodoxy, in this case, neo-orthodoxy

[42] "In die eerste plaas moet ontken word dat daar werklike 'tegenstrijdigheden' in die Skrif is. 'n Onnoukeurigheid wat met die oorskrijwing van die manuskrip ingesluip het, is nog lang nie 'n teenstrydigheid nie. Dat die oorspronklike skrywer, wat alleen aanspraak gemaak het op Goddelike inspirasie, hiervoor verantwoordelik is, kan nooit bewys word nie omdat ons die autographa nie in ons besit het nie."

[43] Keet was named as one of South Africa's most gifted theologians in W.J. de Kock's 1968 publication, "Suid Afrikaanse Biografiese Woordeboek."

Keet warned (1927:175) that "It is also not the Christian faith that is being implied here, because the Christian faith stands or falls with regards to its historicity."

Keet continued (1927:175) by saying that "this is the reason that [Scripture] is a historical reality and not merely a mythical form with a spiritual core." He continued "…to single out one example…The Christian faith stands or falls with the historical reality that Christ rose from the grave (according to 1 Corinthians 15:17)." Keet (1927:175) insists that one can continue this train of thought throughout the Bible, and continue to highlight that the redeeming faith spoken of in Scripture is so intertwined with the historical reality of the events documented, that one cannot be separated from another. According to him (1927:176) "form and content belong together, if we accept the spiritual as unconditionally authoritative, then we must also accept the material in which this spiritual reality has been presented. Who can fathom where the one starts and the other one ends."

An in-depth analysis of the views which *Het Zoeklicht* and its editor du Plessis, had been propagating was written by Dr E.E. van Rooyen of Stellenbosch. After having set the stage by reflecting on the centuries that went before, and how Scripture was viewed by the reformers and the reformed of those periods, van Rooyen then critiques the view that du Plessis had been propagating, illustrating where, in his opinion, du Plessis was going wrong.

Du Plessis appears to endorse the view of Scripture that was developed by the Graf-Kuenen-Wellhausen school. However, van Rooyen states (1929:94) that "not only the method of the school, but also the very dangerous results of the school were accepted by [du Plessis] and was unashamedly being propagated by him." Van Rooyen (1929:95-96) continues by discussing their (including du Plessis's) treatment of the Old Testament commenting:

> "For the sake of clarity it is necessary at this juncture to once again remind that the New Testament clearly places the inspiration of the Old Testament at the foreground. The classical passage in 2 Timothy 3:16, regardless of the translation used to read it, makes no significant difference whatsoever…Sure thus stands the fact that 2 Timothy 3:16 assumed that the 39 books of the Old Testament was nothing less than the Word of God. In addition, the Old Testament itself contains important references that pleads for its inerrancy..."[44]

[44] "Duidelikheidshalwe is dit nodig om hier net weer in die verbygaan in herinnering te bring dat die Nuwe Testament die inspirasie van die Ou Testament duidelik en helder op die voorgrond stel. Die klassieke teks in 2 Tim. III:16, of 'n mens die ou of die nuwe vertaling van hierdie vers volg, maak geen materiële verskil nie… Vas staan dus dat 2 Tim. 3:16 die 39 boeke van die Ou Testament self bevat belangrike gegewens wat pleit vir sy inspirasie…"

The problem with *Het Zoeklichts*' interpretation, according to van Rooyen, is not that du Plessis did not believe in inspiration at all, but rather that even while conceding his belief in inspiration, his definition of inspiration is severely flawed. For du Plessis, the Old Testament was not entirely inspired by the Holy Spirit, rather he insisted that it was only the 'religious' and 'ethical' passages of the Old Testament that were inspired. Van Rooyen (1929:96) insisted that this kind of 'dualistic' approach to inspiration was unwarranted by Scripture itself. This view stood in contrast to the view of the DRCSA which was revisited by *Die Ou Paaie* in a December 1929, article. D. Lategan (1929:220-221) here quoted the Church's stance as the following:

1. "An objective revelation from God that were at certain times revealed unto people who were the messengers and carriers.
2. The godly and supernatural assistance and illumination of the mind of the person by the Holy Spirit, in order to rightly comprehend the message being given.
3. The godly enablement by the Holy Spirit to rightly and purely interpret the revelation for others.
4. The entire supernatural assistance or help of the Holy Spirit to record in written form the message that was received without fault or error.
5. The personality of the writers is not being suppressed but is rather sanctified and controlled in such a way that the truth of God is purely and faultlessly related in written form, and thus preserved for the human race.
6. The view of inspiration of the Holy Scriptures that is thus endorsed and promoted by the curators is that of the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, which the Holy Spirit views as equally inspired in all of its parts, infallibly and authoritatively."[45]

This view was being challenged during this time of the DRCSA's existence, especially by du Plessis and others like him who did not believe in these traditional views anymore. Du Plessis

[45] "(1). 'n Objektiewe Godsopenbaring wat op bepaalde tye aan mense as die organe en draers van die openbaring, meegedeel is. (2). Die goddelike bonatuurlike bystand en verligting deur die Heilige Gees van die verstand van die persoon om die openbaring reg en suiwer te verstaan en te begryp. (3). Die goddelike bekwaam-making deur die Heilige Gees om die openbaring reg en suiwer te vertolk aan andere. (4). Die ganse bonatuurlike assistensie of hulp van die Heilige Gees om die ontvange openbaring suiwer, sonder foute neer te skrywe en te boek te stel. (5). Die persoonlikheid van die skrywers word nie onderdruk nie maar geheilig, beheers en bestuur op sodanige wyse dat die waarheid van God onvervals en suiwer te boek is gestel, en langs hierdie weg vir die mensdom bewaar word. (6). Die inspirasieleer deur die kerk bely en deur die Kuratore bepleit is dus 'n 'Plenary' inspirasiebegrip wat die Heilige Gees beskou as ten volle geïnspireer in al sy dele, onfeilbaar en gesaghebbend."

opted for the modernist approach to understanding the process of inspiration. In this respect, Lategan (1929:221) insisted that "…for professor du Plessis the entire Bible is not the Word of God, that it is not infallible, inspired and authoritative in all of its parts, but that the so-called sanctified human mind has to judge between the infallible godly content and the fallible humanly form or structure from within which the godly message is shared."

Some months later the same topic was revisited by Daintree & Mowbray (1930:411) who agreed with Lategan pertaining to the divine nature of Scripture. They describe the process of inspiration by firstly acknowledging that although the Scriptures were indeed given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, there was nevertheless a human agency that was necessary for the process to be completed.

This process of dual authorship is described as having started with the Spirit who can be identified as the 'godly revealer' to the one that he was inspiring. Through this process, the authors continue (1930:411), the one who received such revelation was also given a spirit of wisdom and "revelation in the full knowledge of God," referring to Ephesians 1:7. Thus, according to the authors, it can be said that the human agency in the writing of the Word of God, therefore, required assistance throughout the entire process through which God allowed the formation of his Word. This process involved, as the authors explained (1930:411), "the process of ensuring that the writers are qualified for the transmitting of the godly message through him."

The process being spoken of here is the process of being inspired by the Holy Spirit in the writing of Scripture. Agreeing, Lategan, Daintree & Mowbray (1930:411) describe the entire process of plenary, verbal inspiration in words similar to the DRCSA's traditional view that was so severely being challenged by du Plessis. They first explained that "the way by which inspiration occurred is supernatural, therefore human beings are not able to explain it. The basic ingredients of inspiration have however been shown," and so the authors describe the basic tenets that are necessary for an orthodox, Reformed view of inspiration as (1930:411-412):

1. The reality of an objective revelation that is assumed to be present everywhere in Scripture.
2. The revealing of this message through the agency of human beings.
3. The perceived presence of the inspiring Holy Spirit in the consciousness of the inspired person.
4. The unifying of the godly and the humanly in the inspiring activity of the Holy Spirit.
5. The increasing of the human faculties through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

6. The inspiration concerning the words, as is repeatedly explained in Scripture (e.g. 2 Samuel 23:2; Jeremiah 26:2,4; Jeremiah 30:1, 2); and then as a result an inspired message as well as an inspired person — Compare Haggai 1:13…
7. The authority and absolute credibility of the completed, written Word, as is commonly assumed in the Bible; and ensured by the fact that in the New Testament parts of the Old Testament are being quoted by our Lord and his apostles…"[46]

6.3.2 Higher Criticism

As one attempts to make sense of Higher Criticism and the effects that the study thereof has had on the Reformed theological world, it is important to note that many of its core tenets were based on the interpretation of certain archaeological discoveries.

Archaeology had played a tremendous role in the formation of the sceptical beliefs of many German Higher critics, and the very reason for its development in the first place. This combined with a natural sceptical bias toward the miracles and wonder of Scripture led to the large-scale denunciation of volumes of Scripture. In August 1927, Dr Dwight R. Snyman again set out to remove confusion regarding these archaeological findings.

Snyman (1927:28) first highlights the 'scientific snobbery' that, according to him, was characteristic of Higher Critics at the time. According to Snyman, they thought that they were being extremely scientific in their approach, however, Snyman (1927:28) comments that "the main grievance with Higher Criticism in its current practice is based on the fact that its method is subjective, and resultantly unscientific. From this is born the extreme dogmatism that is so characteristic of Higher Criticism."

Snyman insists (1927:28) that Higher Criticism is subjective, explaining: "The main objection against Higher Criticism in its current form is based on the fact that its method is subjective, and resultantly unscientific." Snyman then raises his concern with the self-assuredness embedded in

[46] "Hulle is soos volg: 1. Die werklikheid van 'n objektiewe openbaring, wat orals duidelik veronderstel word in die Bybel. 2. Die bekendmaking van die openbaring deur middel van die mens. 3. Die gevoelde teenwoordigheid van die ingewende Heilige Gees in die bewussyn van die geïnspireerde mens. 4. Die vereniging van die goddelike en die menslike in die ingewende (inspirerende) werksaamheid deur die Heilige Gees. 5. Die verheffing van die menslike kragte deur die ingewing van die Heilige Gees. 6. Die inspirasie as strekkende tot die woorde, soos herhaaldelik verklaar word in die Skrif, bv. in 2 Sam. 23:2; Jer. 26:2, 4; Jer. 30:1, 2; en gevolglik 'n geïnspireerde boodskap sowel as 'n geïnspireerde mens – vergelyk Hag. 1:13…7. Die gesag en absolute vertroubaarheid van die finale geskrewe Woord, soos algemeen aangeneem word in die Bybel; en seker gemaak deur die feit dat in die Nuwe Testament dele van die Ou Testament aangehaal word deur onse Heiland en Sy apostels…"

Higher Criticism, saying that it is from this subjectivity that "the dogmatism is born that is so terribly typical of Higher Criticism. They know everything! They think that they know everything!" Furthermore, "If [the Higher critic] makes discoveries that challenges his presuppositions, he simply dismisses them."

In other words, what Snyman talks about here is the true nature of scepticism, and in particular the sceptical presuppositions of Higher Criticism that leads to the wholesale rejection of the Bible as a geographically and historically accurate commentary on ancient Near Eastern times. It is along a trajectory that eventually leads to these conclusions regarding Scripture that the Higher critic must, as Snyman puts it (1927:28), "feel his way around…" Even if certain discovery proved his presuppositions wrong, then "he distances himself from these." According to Snyman (1927:28-29) the core worldview leading to this is an evolutionary understanding of the development of civilisation:

> "He approaches Scripture with a well-established world view, namely evolution, the teaching that through the process of evolving that is controlled through certain circumstances and natural laws, people originated from a lower animal type, and this animal type originated from yet another life form that was even lower than itself, and so the evolutionist keeps reverting back until he reaches no more than a little wet spot. This view, as anyone who reads the Scriptures will know, is the exact opposite of that which is taught by the Bible."[47]

One of the main supporting facts for this, according to him is the reality of the entrance of sin into the world that merited the death of the Saviour. If Evolution is a viable explanation to the question of origins then, Snyman explained (1927:29), "…sin can be nothing more than a struggle in the everlasting upward motion of human beings, which is what they teach, yet something that God's Word clearly denies."

6.4 Kenosis teaching

As has been stated in Chapter 4, the kenosis teaching that became so prevalent during the turn of the 20th century was a significant contention between the liberal and the conservative groups. Du Plessis and readers that agreed with the *Het Zoeklicht* writing emphasised the humanness of

[47] "Hy nader die skrif met 'n kant en klaar opgemaakte wêreldbeskouing, nl. ewolusie, die leer dat die mens deur ontvouing wat gekontroleer is deur seker omstandighede en natuurwette, afkomstig is van 'n laer diersoort; en daardie diersoort weer kom van 'n vorm van lewe wat nog laer is, en so gaan die ewolusionis terug totdat hy net by 'n natplekkie uitkom. Hierdie beskouing soos elke een sal weet wat die Skrif lees, is die teenoorgestelde van die wat die Bybel leer."

Christ while downplaying the divine. The Snyman-resistance, on the other hand, continued to vie for the traditional view which insisted on the impeccability of Christ, in spite of his humanity.

Die Ou Paaie visited this topic in June 1928, in an article entitled *Was Jesus Omniscient?* The article was written by an ex-elder of the DRCSA in Stellenbosch, D.G. Cillie, who disagreed with the held notion that Jesus was anything less than God. Responding to one of the questions which he sets out to answer in the article, he proceeded to offer biblical evidence for the deity, most specifically the omniscience, of Christ.

To support his stance, Cillie lists passages in the New Testament that show the omniscience of Christ. The first of these in John 1:49 relates to the calling of Nathanael and Philip. He points out (1928:51) that in this narrative Jesus is portrayed by John as having had perfect cognisance of the thoughts that Nathanael had about Jesus, this without Nathanael expressing these thoughts verbally for Jesus to have known. Jesus referred to him as "...an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit" (John 1:47). Continuing, Jesus answered Nathanael's astonishment at the fact that he had such knowledge. Asking Jesus how he knew him, Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you" (John 1:48).

A second example that Cillie (1928:51) discusses is the fact that Jesus knew that Lazarus had died in John 11:14. Cillie points out that it would have been impossible for the Lord to have known this about Lazarus if he was merely a man (Cillie, 1928:51). Cillie continues by referring to a few more examples to biblically prove the omniscience of Christ.

6.5 The state of the Stellenbosch Seminary

In June 1926, Snyman wrote an appeal to the students of the DRCSA and in particular those who were studying in Stellenbosch. He appealed to the students to be cautious and sceptical of some of the DRCSA ministers' and professors' endorsement of the liberal movement. Here Snyman (1926b:28) appears to be warning against the spreading of the new orientation, including the acceptance of Darwinist Evolution and Higher Criticism, of which Dr H.P. van der Merwe was now an outspoken advocate.

Snyman warns against this as he disagrees with liberalism in general, but also possibly due to the fact that many students who had previously believed the Scriptures as they read them had now become influenced by evolutionary explanations of origins and views that threatened the traditional view of inspiration and inerrancy, in particular. Snyman's hope to combat the rising tide of liberalism, lay in the fact that, as he explains (1926b:28), "The majority of our students come from farming communities, most of them who have great respect for God's Word, and this

opposes every pedagogical principle to suggest that this deep seated respect would just disappear with a sweep of a magic wand, as soon as the student sets foot on campus."

Snyman (1926b:28), in contrast to van der Merwe's opinion, concluded that unbiblical ways had to be avoided and that the old teachings of God's Word had to be emphasised. He insisted that "juxtaposed to this calling of the 'new orientation,' we insist on thorough and positive Bible study, and powerful proclamation of the Gospel." He then uses the example of Harry Emerson Fosdick, who, before he turned liberal, was very careful, alongside Sherwood Eddy, to encourage the students of Princeton Seminary to keep the most important things in their sight. Mainly, Snyman (1926b:28) says that what these men presented to the students was "the power of the cross, the personal experience of God's Grace by which sin is conquered…" along with this "the principle of honesty, purity, and justice."

6.6 A new hermeneutic

Die Ou Paaie also attempted to address the influx of a new hermeneutic in the DRCSA stating that this new means of interpreting the Bible would lead to the allegorising or rendering as non-literal certain 'problem' texts in Scripture. One such example was found in the interpretation of the book of Jonah. Snyman (1926b:31) included an article about this as he attempted to provide an answer to the liberal approach that renders it as pure allegory. He asks in the article (1926b:31), "do we have here a historical account, or do we have an allegory?" He then points out that Higher Criticism sees the story as allegory, not history. Snyman was specifically referring to words written by Ds. R. Theron who suggested that the account of the marooned Jonah, who was swallowed by a big fish, should strictly be understood as an allegory.

Snyman countered this view by referring the reader to the fact that Jesus himself assumed the historical veracity of Jonah and the big fish. To support this Snyman (1926c:31) references Matthew 12:38-41[48]:

> "Many rationalists indicated that in the term, 'the sign of Jonah' they have seen a hint toward an allegory. This is superficial reasoning. The scribes came to the Lord and desired to receive a sign from him. What does the word 'sign' mean? It means a **visible miracle**…And this request for a visible miracle leads the Saviour to speak

[48] "Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, 'Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.' But he answered them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.'"

> immediately about the miracle of Jonah; and note the fact that he refers to him as 'the prophet.' He includes the fact that Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of a sea monster, and in this Jonah became a type of Christ — in the same way he [Christ] would be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. And then the Saviour speaks of the men of Nineveh as real historical people, and so historical are they that they would one day **rise and be present at the judgment**, yes they **repented** at the **preaching of Jonah**."[49]

Snyman continued to warn against such interpretations in *Die Ou Paaie*. However, as will be shown later, the DRCSA would progressively become more receptive to new ways of understanding old texts, not just as allegory, but even as mythical (ref. 10.4 – 10.5).

6.7 Conclusion

Die Ou Paaie rose as a voice against the liberal views that were being propagated in the DRCSA during the early 1900s. The journal contributors and its editor Dr. Dwight Snyman spoke out mostly against the results of a naturalistic approach to the Bible that was sympathetic to new interpretations of old doctrines and texts. Acknowledging this naturalistic tendency, *Die Ou Paaie* largely endeavoured to warn ministers against the adoption of Higher Criticism, Evolution, and the doubting of inspiration and inerrancy, while endorsing their historical counterparts. The issues addressed by *Die Ou Paaie* would, however, continue to influence the DRCSA as alternative theories like Darwinist Evolution and Higher Criticism prevailed and grew in popularity.

[49] "Baie rasionaliste het gemeen dat hulle in die woord 'teken van Jonas' 'n aanduiding van allegorie sien. Dit is oppervlakkige redenering. Die Skrifgeleerdes e.a. het na die Heiland gekom en begeer om 'n 'teken' te sien. Wat beteken 'teken'? Dit beteken 'n sigbare wonder… En daardie versoek om 'n **sigbare wonderdaad** lei die Heiland om dadelik van die wonder van Jona te spreek; en let daarop Hy noem hom 'de profeet'. Hy meld die feit dat Jona 3 dae en 3 nagte in die buik was van 'n seemonster, en hierin was Jona 'n tipe van Kristus – so sou Hy self eenmaal drie dae en drie nagte wees in die hart van die aarde. En dan spreek die Heiland van manne van Nineve as geskiedkundige persone, en so geskiedkundig is hulle dat hulle eenmaal sal **opstaan en teenwoordig wees in die oordeel**, ja hulle het hulle **bekeer** op die **prediking van Jonas**."

SECTION 1: THE DRCSA IN THE LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

CHAPTER 7 — LIBERALISM IN 20TH CENTURY DRCSA

The latter part of the 19th century experienced a shift in theological thought that would become the subject of much debate within Reformed circles. These shifts included different ways of interpreting the Genesis account of origins and particular problem passages that assume the miraculous, like the account of Jonah and the great fish. These theological shifts also included an emphasis on the peccability of Christ which was partly the result of efforts at reconciling Christ's claims about Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

From the perspective of DRCSA journal, *Gereformeerd Maandbald* (1892-1920), these alternate interpretations of old texts could be attributed to the rise of a general scepticism toward the Bible and its claims. The rise of German Higher Criticism, in particular, caused considerable internal debate in the DRCSA. This was most notably witnessed in the debate between C.F.J. Muller and D.J. Pienaar. As can be observed in their 1911 debates, Pienaar and others influenced by him in the DRCSA were convinced by the Higher critical arguments against Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. This was extended to other parts of the Old Testament as well, raising doubt with regards to the Davidic origin of the Psalms. For instance, C.F.J. Muller would fight to preserve the traditional views of Mosaic and Davidic authorship, claiming that Christ's views on Mosaic and Davidic authorship should inform our own. In other words, Muller insisted that because Jesus affirmed the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and the Davidic origin of the Psalms, there should be no reason to doubt his (Christ's) claims.

A few years later, a new journal *Het Zoeklicht* (1923-1936), would affirm the general liberal trajectory of the DRCSA. The claims of Higher Criticism assumed that Darwinist Evolution would continue to be the subject of considerable reporting. It was during this period that professor of theology at the Stellenbosch Seminary, Johannes du Plessis, rose as one of the most popular advocates for the acceptance of Evolution and Higher critical interpretations of certain texts of the Bible. In *Het Zoeklicht* du Plessis most notably defended his belief in the historical existence of ape-men and other pre-historic animals that ostensibly prove Evolution. Interestingly, his team of *Het Zoeklicht* contributors did not all share his views on these matters, in spite of the fact that he was the general editor of the journal. Du Plessis would eventually be summoned to the Cape Town court by the faculty of the Stellenbosch Seminary who saw his view on Evolution, in particular, as heretical.

The general disagreement with du Plessis and other like-minded ministers of the DRCSA would perhaps be best verbalised at the time through the DRCSA journal *Die Ou Paaie* (1926-1932),

that was being published around the same period of *Het Zoeklicht's* publishing. The editor of *Die Ou Paaie*, Dwight R. Snyman would become a voice against the acceptance of Darwinist Evolution and German Higher Criticism that some, whether ministers or members of the DRCSA, had accepted as viable solutions to the creation account in Genesis 1-3 and other passages. From the platform of *Het Zoeklicht*, Snyman and his team would also defend other traditional views of Scripture, like the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Toward the end of its publication, *Die Ou Paaie* reported quite extensively on the du Plessis court case. In spite of its efforts at combatting interpretations of the Bible which it didn't see as biblical, *Die Ou Paaie* would not prevent the continuing development of liberal thought within the DRCSA.

SECTION 2: THE DRCSA IN THE LATE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY

CHAPTER 8 — AN INTRODUCTION TO SECTION 2

In this section, the DRCSA's increasing openness to theistic evolution, Higher Criticism, and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI+) hermeneutic will be discussed. In chapter 9, the development of evolutionary thought will be traced, looking particularly at the opinions of Dr Louw Alberts and his attempts to harmonise the findings of evolutionary science with biblical data through his book of essays on the topic, entitled *Geloof versus Wetenskap.* The same will be done looking at the conclusions of well-known *Die Burger* journalist, Gideon Joubert, in his writing of *Die Groot Gedagte*. The chapter on Evolution will be concluded by looking at the view that Albert Alberts put forth in his *Evolusie vir Christene*. By looking at the claims of these three men, Louw Alberts, Gideon Joubert and Albert Alberts (the former's son), we will see some disagreement among them as to how far Darwinist Evolution should be applied to Scripture, especially when comparing Louw Albert's view to that of his son.

In the previous section, it was reported that theologians of the late 19th and early 20th century had already proposed compromising views to the claims of Higher Criticism, something which Barthian theology facilitated. Chapter 10 builds on these findings by detailing the scriptural developments within the DRCSA, leading to its eventual adoption of Barthian theology. This chapter will trace and evaluate the sentiments, opinions and eventual decisions that gave rise to the adoption of a view of Scripture that will be shown (in Section 3) as being opposed to the Reformed understanding thereof. As it involves modern views of Scripture, DRCSA seminary professor Jurie le Roux's article in University of Pretoria journal *Skrif en Kerk*, that was published at the death of Johan Heyns, will be investigated in this chapter. To discuss the propagation of liberal views of Scripture in the South African context in general, theologian Andries van Aarde's *Fatherless in Gallilee* will also be investigated. Van Aarde's views will be included as an example of the most extreme of views involving the interpretation of Scripture. Although not a member of the DRCSA, he influenced students and colleagues as a theology professor at the University of Pretoria where many of the theological students of the DRCSA were trained.

Lastly, chapter 11 will investigate the LGBTQI+ hermeneutic from the perspective of Pieter Cilliers who, in his book *'n Kas is vir Klere*, tells the story of his homosexuality. In the book, Cilliers not only gives the history of the discovery of his sexuality, but he also aims to defend his homosexuality biblically. This discussion reveals the philosophical presuppositions of the LGBTQI+ hermeneutic, which are important in order to offer a well-reasoned biblical response to it. Lastly, the chapter will take a brief look at the view of André Bartlett with regards to the

legitimising of LGBTQI+ members and ministers. During his career as a DRCSA minister Bartlett has been one of the most vocal supporters for the acceptance of gay members. However, of late, he has mostly campaigned for the acceptance of homosexual ministers. His involvement during the 2015 synodal decision is of particular importance to this chapter and the study.

SECTION 2: THE DRCSA IN THE LATE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY

CHAPTER 9 — NATURALISM – THEISTIC EVOLUTION

9.1 Introduction

When speaking of the theory of Evolution — philosophically referred to as Darwinism — one can see evidence of how this theory became part of the general public mind-set (Padian, 2009). The stir that this theory created in the international scientific community and its eventual near-universal acceptance is well documented. Perhaps not so clearly understood is its entrance into, and eventual acceptance by, the DRCSA. This chapter covers the process by which theistic evolution came to be widely accepted within the denomination.

9.2 The influence of Du Plessis

It can be argued that J. du Plessis posthumously has had a lasting influence within the confines of the Church.[50] As an academic and a leader he continued to have an influence as seen through the 'Zeitgeist' of the DRCSA that followed.

The way in which theistic evolutionists defend their theory is by reconciling the Bible with Evolution. Evolution was already being referred to by many theologians in du Plessis' day as true science. Vouching for the harmony between this science and theology thus became the resulting plea of such advocates, du Plessis included. For instance, during a student conference held in August of 1924 in Strand in the Western Cape, du Plessis argued not only for the possibility of reconciliation between Evolution and theology, but also for the necessity thereof. It is important to note that for du Plessis, true science and the findings of Evolution were interchangeable terms. He insisted (1924:324) that "…there can be no conflict between science and theology, for the

[50] To motivate this argument even further, a short visit to the DRCSA archives in Stellenbosch should convince some about the lasting influence that du Plessis continues to have, in spite of his suspension. In the reception area of the archives there is a plaque dedicated to his name and influence, even accompanied by a Bible, a pair of spectacles and a bicycle that he owned. Ironically, this exhibition is across the hallway from a plaque erected in honour of Andrew Murray's influence. Granted that both men were avid students of the Bible, the former was a theistic evolutionist who seriously doubted the Bible's inspiration and inerrancy. The latter stood firmly within the traditional, conservative parameters of inspiration and inerrancy.

reason that science means systematised knowledge, and that religion in the widest sense is also an object of scientific inquiry."

It has been this desire for the harmonisation between the findings of Evolution and the account of the Scriptures that has been emblematic of the DRCSA since the days in which du Plessis rose as a proponent of this kind of harmony. The debate, it seems, intensified over time resulting in either the acceptance or rejection of the proposed harmonisation by DRCSA theologians and ministers. In order to discover the direction in which the debate eventually shifted, it is now necessary to study the views of some of the most influential advocates of theistic evolution within DRCSA ranks.

9.3 Louw Alberts — Faith vs. Science

Few proponents of evolutionary thought in the past have had as much influence as Louw Alberts did. Alberts, a renowned physics professor, first at the University of the Orange Free State, and thereafter at the Rand Afrikaans University (currently known as the University of Johannesburg), explained some of his evolutionist views in a book entitled *Geloof versus Wetenskap?* or *Faith versus Science?* In this text, he responds to some of the questions regarding the harmony of science and the Bible.[51]

Alberts makes the statement early on in his book that Scripture does not set out to prove the existence of God. He creates a dichotomy between believing in God and the revelation of Scripture by stating (Alberts, 1996:25):

> "…more important is what we can refer to as the God factor. A person does not believe in God as the result of believing in the Bible, but the other way around, the Bible is trustworthy because there is faith in God. The Bible makes no attempt to demonstrate the existence of God. The reality of his existence is first and foremost assumed: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*…The Scripture hardly makes an effort to elaborate on the atheist. Here and there one may find a condescending comment for instance in Psalm 14:1 where it says: *The fool [in a spiritual sense] says there is no God*…a Child that was raised in a Christian

[51] Furthermore, Alberts is described in the following words on the cover page of his book *Faith versus Science?.* "Dr Louw Alberts, voormalige professor in fisiese aan die UOVS en RAU, het benewens sy akademiese betrokkenheid en die openbare posisies wat hy beklee het, al dikwels as spreker by beide nasionale en internasionale Christelike forums opgetree. Hy het ook talle toekennings ontvang, waaronder drie eredoktorsgrade en die Deo Gloria medalje van die Fakulteit Teologie van UP."

> environment, is not first initiated through comprehension and faith in the Bible as the revelation of God. Understanding of and faith in God is primary and the acceptance of the Bible follows."[52]

9.3.1 Creation and the 'Big Bang'

What becomes clear in Alberts' book is that he makes sense of the creation account through the lens of the Big Bang theory. When seeking to make sense of this theory Alberts (1996:41) encourages that individuals should not think of it as some kind of an explosion that started at some point inside a big vacuum. Rather, he insists that "space was born at the same time as the physical universe." He explains (1996:41): "As the expansion occurred, so space was created; the Big Bang quite literally took place everywhere. It is not possible for human imagination to fathom a situation where no space existed." In order to illustrate this point, he (1996:41) uses an example of insects spread on a balloon:

> "The insects on the surface of the balloon are experiencing their two-dimensional world. What will happen the moment that the balloon gets deflated? As it gets smaller the space of the insects is shrinking until it finally disappears (we assume that the balloon deflates close enough to zero). The inverse is also true. As the balloon gets inflated the two-dimensional surface-world gets born and continues to grow as the size of the balloon increases."[53]

In addition to extensive 'scientific' terms, Alberts used the illustration above to motivate the credibility of the Big Bang theory, which is also the theory of the origin of space and the world

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[52] "...nog meer belangrik is wat ons kan noem die God-faktor. Dit kan op die volgende wyse beskou word. 'n Mens glo nie in God vanweë geloof in die Bybel nie maar andersom, die Bybel is geloofwaardig omdat daar in God geglo word. Die Bybel wend geen poging aan om die bestaan van God te bewys of demonstreer nie. Die realiteit van sy bestaan word in die heel eerste instansie sonder meer aanvaar: In die begin het God die hemel en aarde geskep… Die Skrif doen skaars die moeite om oor die ateïs uit te wy. Hier en daar is 'n neerhalende opmerking soos byvoorbeeld in Psalm 14:1 waar daar staan: Die dwaas [in 'n geestelike sin] dink daar is geen God nie… 'n Kind wat in 'n Christelike omgewing groot word, word nie aanvanklik met begrip en geloof in die Bybel as die openbaring van God geïnisieer nie. Begrip van en geloof in God is primêr en die aanvaarding van die Bybel volg later."

[53] "Die goggatjies op die oppervlakte van die ballon beleef hulle tweedimensionele wêreld. Wat sal gebeur as die ballon afblaas? Soos wat dit kleiner word, krimp die ruimte van die goggatjies totdat dit uiteindelik verdwyn (ons aanvaar dat die ballon na genoeg na zero grootte kan afblaas). Die omgekeerde is ook waar. Soos wat die ballon opgeblaas word, word die tweedimensionele oppervlaktewêreld gebore en groei steeds soos wat die volume van die ballon toeneem."

which is propagated by many atheists and agnostic scientists in the world today. The difference between these scientists and Alberts is the fact that he attributed this process to the activity of God in creation. Even though he borrows heavily from the world of naturalism — which dictates that nature is all there is, and requiring faith in the sporadic origin of a random universe — Alberts does not necessarily agree with every atheist conclusion.

At the end of the chapter in which he discusses the Big Bang theory as a plausible solution to the question that begs an answer to the origin of the universe, he attributes this process to the active hand of the living God. This is why he insists (1996:50):

> "No matter how we reason, we cannot evade the revelation that was written in the first verse of the Bible. *In the beginning [of time] God created the heavens and the earth [space and the entire physical reality].* The words in parentheses have been added just to indicate that our current understanding of the cosmos agrees very well with the opening sentence of the Bible."[54]

In summary, despite Alberts' faith in the Big Bang theory, he does attest to the active hand of God in creation stating that it is not possible to ignore the "reality of the design and thus a Designer that we call God…" (1996:59)

9.3.2 Creation and millions and millions of years

Remaining consistent to the Big Bang theory, Alberts also subscribed to the proposed theory of an elaborate and elongated process that led to the first life forms over millions and millions of years. Although he insists that the life-processes that eventually led to the most complex of living forms could not have taken place in the kind of environment that reigned at the time of its development, he nevertheless believes that this kind of development had to have happened over millions of years. As Alberts states (1996:65):

> "The fossil record reveals the following. Life in its most basic forms did not appear long after the earth came into existence. Single cell bacteria already appeared 3500 million years ago. The climate was apparently such that only the most basic life forms could exist for about 3000 million years. At that stage more advanced life forms

[54] "Hoe ook al ons redeneer, ons kan nie wegkom van die openbaring wat neergeskryf is in die eerste vers van die Bybel nie. In die begin [van die tyd] het God die hemel en die aarde [die ruimte en die totale fisiese werklikheid] geskep. Die woorde in hakies is bygevoeg net om aan te dui dat ons huidige begrip van die kosmos baie goed ooreenstem met die openingsin van die Bybel."

> began to appear. According to the fossil record, the great variation in species began around 600 million years ago and continues on even today."[55]

It becomes necessary to draw a distinction between sets of evolutionary models that have been proposed throughout the centuries as viable accounts of reality because this is exactly what Alberts does. Alberts seems to subscribe to an evolutionary model that makes room for a Creator, known as theistic evolution. This system insists that Evolution could not have taken place unassisted by God and casts serious doubt on Darwinism as a philosophical system. For this reason, Alberts contends that one of the main difficulties of the Darwinist approach is its irreproducibility. He explains (1996:71) that it is "the irreproducibility of the biological history that causes the Evolution theory [referring to Darwinism] to be essentially metaphysical by nature". Thus, "according to evolutionism humans today are the end product of a continual line of development that was initiated by inert matter." Lastly, he adds that "some may even postulate that you start with nothing and then migrate to matter, etc. Every point in the curve is the random result of the previous point and there is no desire for direction giving influences from the outside."

Again, this process described above, which is true of Darwinist belief, Alberts juxtaposes to the Christian belief which states that human beings have their origin in God who planned for it. In addition, he refers (1996:71) to the biblical doctrine of man having been created in the image of God, which in turn provides the reason for man's possessing of the ability to choose, reason, love, and to appreciate and enjoy truth and beauty.

Albert further accepts the Christian belief of original sin explaining that there was a time at which sin was not yet a reality on Planet Earth. This was a time at which man and woman enjoyed a personal and undisturbed relationship with God. He sees mankind (1996:72) as "a fallen being in a spiritual sense and cannot recover the upward spiritual of the relationship with God, except through the cross of Christ." For this reason, his main concern with Darwinist Evolution then is that there is no room for a Saviour and, therefore, "Christianity cannot be reconciled with it."

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[55] "Die fossielrekord deel ons die volgende mee. Lewe in sy eenvoudigste vorm was daar nie lank (geologies gesproke) nadat die aarde tot stand gekom het nie. Enkelselbakterieë het reeds sowat 3500 miljoen jaar gelede verskyn. Klimaatomstandighede was blykbaar sodanig dat slegs die eenvoudigste lewensvorme kon voortbestaan vir sowat 3000 miljoen jaar. Op daardie stadium het meer gevorderde lewensvorme begin verskyn. Die groot variasie in spesies begin volgens die fossielrekord sowat 600 miljoen jaar gelede en duur voort tot vandag toe."

The major disagreement Alberts has with the traditional view of creation is the view of a six, literal day creation, and an Earth that is not much older than around 6000 years. He voices his disagreement with the Young Earth Model in a way that shows a preference for his scientific theory to what the Bible describes. This can be seen in the following list of the reasons for his rejection of this model (1996:75):

- "One does not need a Young Earth to reject the previously defined philosophy of Evolution. Science in its own right can handle the merits or shortcomings of the various evolution models even if the earth should be 4 ½ billion years old.
- Most cosmologists aren't wilfully mean and anti-Christian people. They are generally scientists that seek to find answers in the same way people try to unravel the secrets of nature. To treat their attempts with contempt can only cause them to be more estranged to the Christian message and this can in its turn lead to the mocking of Christianity. The Church, for instance as the result of an oversimplified reading of the Bible, endorsed the view that the earth was the centre of the galaxy. Before this, the earth was even viewed by many as being flat.
- The problems associated with a six-day creation are not considered, are ignored, or are answered through some strange explanations. For example: Where did creation take place? Isn't it so that when it is day in South Africa it is night in Australia? Did the creation process continue progressively from continent to continent as the earth turned around its own axis? Where did the light and darkness come from during the first three days if the sun only came about on the fourth day? Why did God accumulate a vocabulary since the first day? Why did he rest on the seventh day? It would have been extremely out of place to suggest that he became tired? Why do the creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 differ so much as it involves the order in which things happened? It has to be noted that the text nowhere explicitly states that a certain entity was made on a specific day. For example, it is not said: on the third day God created grass, plants, trees, etc. Rather, the passage goes: Let there…and God saw that it was good. It became evening and it became morning. It was the third day.
- In the final instance: did the Lord make the entire universe, including our planet in six days, and in the process give it an aged appearance that makes it look as if it is billions of years

> old? Why would he do such a thing? It can't be to fool scientists because that won't be in agreement with the character of God that is presented to us in the Bible."[56]

The above rather lengthy quote will be discussed further in Chapter 15. Alberts, not willing to subscribe to it himself, continued to explain why he could not accept the arguments of Young Earth Creationists. Before he does so, he makes mention of a second view of the creation account that has garnered quite a lot of attention, at least from Christians, since this model provided a way to reconcile the demands of science with that of the Scriptures. In this view, he (1996:76) introduces a Day-Age Model view which became widely accepted during the time at which the Church was seeking an answer for the discovery of many fossils, interpreted by scientists to have existed many years ago and much older than what Scripture presents.

The Day-Age Model suggested that the creation account given in Genesis 1, instead of being understood as six literal days, should rather be understood as representing an age, epoch, or era

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[56] "'n Mens het nie 'n jong aarde nodig om die filosofie van evolusionisme, soos voorheen omskryf, te verwerp nie. Die wetenskap kan in eie reg die meriete of gebrek daaraan van die verskillende evolusiemodelle hanteer al sou die aarde ook 4 1/2 biljoen jaar oud wees. Meeste kosmoloë en bioloë is nie moedswillige, gemene en antichristelike mense nie. Hulle is oor die algemeen wetenskaplikes wat probeer om antwoorde te vind soos wat mens die geheime van die natuur trag te ontrafel. Om hulle pogings met minagting te benader, kan hulle slegs vervreem van die Christelike boodskap en dit kan op sy beurt weer lei na bespotting van die Christendom. Die kerk, per slot van rekening, het 'n paar eeue gelede vanweë 'n oorsimplistiese lees van die Bybel, die siening gehandhaaf dat die aarde die middelpunt van die sonnestelsel is. Voor dit is die aarde deur sommige selfs as plat beskou. Die probleme geassosieer met 'n sesdaagse skepping word nie raakgesien nie, of geïgnoreer of verantwoord met sommige eienaardige verduidelikings. Byvoorbeeld: Waar het die skepping plaasgevind? Dit is tog so dat wanneer dit dag is in Suid-Afrika dit nag is in Australië. Het die skeppingsproses progressief voortgegaan van kontinent tot kontinent soos wat die aarde om sy as gedraai het? Waar het die lig en duisternis vandaan gekom gedurende die eerste drie dae as die son eers tot stand gekom het op die vierde dag? Waarom het God 'n woordeskat opgebou vanaf die eerste dag? Waarom het Hy gerus op die sewende dag? Dit sou geweldig onvanpas wees om te suggereer dat Hy moeg geword het? Waarom verskil die skeppingsverhale in Genesis 1 en 2 soveel wat betref die volgorde waarin dinge gebeur het? Daar moet op gelet word dat die teks dit nêrens eksplisiet stel dat 'n sekere entiteit op 'n spesifieke dag gemaak is nie. Daar word byvoorbeeld nie gesê: op die derde dag het God gras, plante, bome, ensovoorts geskep nie. Die passasie lui eerder: Laat daar… en God het gesien dat dit goed was. Dit het aand geword en dit het môre geword. Dit was die derde dag. In die finale instansie: het die Here sowat ses duisend jaar gelede die ganse heelal, insluitende ons planeet in ses dae gemaak, en in die proses 'n voorkoms van ouderdom ingebou het wat dit laat lyk asof dit biljoene jare oud is? Waarom sou Hy dit doen? Tog nie om die wetenskaplikes te bluf nie want dit sou nie in ooreenstemming wees met die karakter van die God wat vir ons in die Bybel voorgehou word nie."

(Alberts, 1996:76). Acceptance or rejection of this view is, of course, dependent on one very important point of interpretation. Alberts (1996:76) reminds that it stands or falls on one's interpretation of the Hebrew Word 'yom' which carries the definition of both a '24-hour day' or a 'period' or 'age.' He says "the word can justifiably be translated as a day or a long period or era. In addition, the words for morning and evening can be read as the beginning and ending of such an era."

Furthermore, Alberts praises the virtues of this view while pointing to the allegorical approach of interpretation and how this view fits in neatly with it. God, he (1996:76) reminds, does not experience time as we do. He continues by pointing to the fact that Scripture itself claims that for God a thousand years is like a day (Psalm 90:4). He explains (1996:77) that the order of events pertaining to the six days of creation fits in neatly with what scientists have been saying about the origin of life in general.

Finally, he (1996:77) defends his own view regarding the origin of the world when he says that "the first chapter in the Bible is not a historical report but a revelation of the majestic creation work of an almighty God." To motivate his statement, he reminds that it "was mentioned by the Dutch philosopher, Herman Dooyeweerd. The arguments in favour of this approach were already penned by P.J. Wiseman." This is the view that Alberts was most at peace with and so he lastly issued the following disclaimer: "The reader must be warned that this approach is being presented with a great deal of enthusiasm because I find this the most pleasing of all the various views regarding Genesis 1."

9.3.3 Reconciling 'ape-men' with Scripture

Although Alberts does not endorse a specific view with regards to 'tween-stages' that eventually led to humans who, according to him, were bearers of the image of God, he does however suggest that there are ways to reconcile the so-assumed reality of ape-men with the biblical account found in Genesis 1 and 2.

Alberts approaches the topic by conceding that the fossil record has many missing links. Nevertheless, he (1996:80) also sympathises with the conclusions of anthropologists who point to the existence of 'hominids.' Alberts (1996:80) insists that for anthropologists like these "it is reasonable to want to do so from a pure scientific point of view." This is the way he introduces the reader to possible answers regarding the way that God caused human beings to be living souls. According to him (1996:80) the Bible-believing Christian now has a decision to make between if

Adam was made from the dust of the earth as the Bible says, or if Adam has his origin in a primitive being as Evolution teaches, in whom God brought about important changes:

> "According to the Scriptures God created Adam from the dust of the earth. The Bible does not tell us how he brought him forth from the dust. It is reasonable to believe that God started with a brand new species that did not descend from the previous one. This is a godly miracle. Alternatively, the Christian can believe that God selected one of these primitive beings and breathed into him the breath of spiritual and God-consciousness. In other words, in the second instance, God took the body that developed over many years and performed the miracle that transformed him into a being that bears the image of God with the associated spiritual, intellectual and emotional abilities."[57]

Speaking of how sin entered into the world, or how Adam became a sinner and the rest who followed, Alberts (1996:81) offers the following explanation:

> "How do we accommodate our biblical statements like: …*Through one person, sin entered into the world*… (Rom. 5:12)? Was Adam the only human through whose deeds mankind's relationship with God was broken or was he the first human who stood in a covenantal relationship with God, thus creating a catastrophe because he was representative of the entire human race? Again, in terms of our current insights any of the above mentioned views can be seen as reasonable."[58]

Although Alberts does not recommend a certain view, he nevertheless subscribes to the 'possibility' of harmonisation between Scripture and evolutionistic science in general.

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[57] "God het Adam, volgens die Skrif, geskape uit die stof van die aarde. Hoe Hy hom uit die stof na vore gebring het, vertel die Bybel ons nie. Dit is redelik om te glo dat God met 'n splinternuwe spesie, wat nie afstam van 'n vorige een nie, begin het. Dit is 'n Goddelike wonderwerk. Alternatief kan die Christen glo dat die Here een van die primitiewe wesens geselekteer het en in hom die asem van geestelike en Gods bewuswording geblaas het. Met ander woorde, in die tweede geval, het God die liggaam wat oor baie jare ontwikkel het, geneem en die wonderwerk verrig wat hom in 'n wese verander het wat die beeld van God dra met die geassosieerde geestelike, intellektuele en emosionele vermoëns."

[58] "Hoe akkommodeer ons Bybelse stellings soos… Deur een mens het die sonde in die wêreld gekom… (Rom. 5:12)? Was Adam die een en enigste mens deur wie se dade die mensheid se verhouding met God verbreek is of was hy die eerste mens wat in 'n verbondsverhouding met God gestaan het en dus as verteenwoordiger van die ganse mensheid, deur sy optrede die katastrofe veroorsaak het? Weer eens in terme van ons huidige insigte kan een van bogenoemde twee sienings as redelik beskou word."

9.4 Gideon Joubert — The Great Thought

Following Louw Alberts, journalist and theistic evolution advocate, Gideon Joubert similarly explained his reasons for accepting that millions and millions of years were preceded by a 'Big Bang.' Joubert, a retired navy officer, scuba diver, *Die Burger* journalist, and astronomy enthusiast, took to writing in order to 'reconcile' the theories of Darwinist Evolution with the Bible. His book *Die Groot Gedagte: Abstrakte Weefsel van die Kosmos* or *The Great Thought: Abstract Fabric of the Cosmos* was published in 1997 with considerable impact on the DRCSA and South Africans in general.

He became heralded as a true champion for the harmonisation between evolutionary thought and scriptural teaching, so much so that he was awarded the *Andrew Murray Literary Prize* for excellence in theology-related writing. When asked about the success of the book by *Die Kerkbode*[59] reporter, Erika van Rooyen (1998:6), he admitted that even he was surprised by the tremendous response generated by his book. He admits that "…the publisher was just as surprised as I was when the first publication was sold out within the first two-and-a-half months." Joubert's book was warmly received by many within the DRCSA, both ministers and members.

9.4.1 Theistic evolution

At the beginning of his book, Joubert states his understanding of a God-originated cosmos. However, his description of this cosmos is perhaps no different from the one that Louw Alberts believed to have existed before the eventual dawn of mankind. In the first chapter under the heading *The Accidental Universe*, Joubert attempts to make the case for theistic evolution in the universe. Like Alberts, Joubert does not subscribe to an atheistic random process that is responsible for the formation of the universe. However, remaining in agreement with Alberts and theistic evolution, Joubert (1997:4) explains:

> "Many books have been written about the surprising 'accidents' — obviously random numerical values, related patterns, and structural unlikelihood that each had to function exactly that way on its scale, or the universe and life would never have come about. It is as if a Great Thought worked it in exactly this way. So many factors had to possess exact values at the right time within narrow parameters since the first

[59] "*Die Kerkbode*" is the longest running theology journal of the DRCSA. They started publication in 1849. For more information visit: http://kerkbode.christians.co.za/

> moments of the Creation, that the chances are one out of thousands of millions that it could have happened like this per chance."[60]

Given this description, one could easily conclude that Joubert is a creationist, even a literalist interpreter of Genesis 1. However, his understanding of the 'how' of creation quickly becomes obvious as he continues to describe his understanding of the first day of creation.

9.4.2 Creation and the Big Bang

Like Alberts, Joubert was a promotor of the 'Big Bang' theory. He describes the first day of the creation week in light of the faith many secular scientists have in the large release of energy creating an explosion and finally leading to the development of the universe. He (1997:9) describes what he believes the process to have been as: "And then, suddenly, inexplicably, came an incredibly violent burst of energy out of the great silence. The one moment, nothing. The next moment, everything. The 'in the beginning' has begun. Time has begun. The first fraction of the first second of the creation was there." After explaining his understanding of the birth of stars he offers his opinion on the way the universe was born. He (1997:10-11) states:

> "The creation moment, that immense release of energy was different. Physicists call this the Big Bang. Here is where everything originated. Scientists have calculated that everything in the massive universe came from a little place that is thousands of millions times smaller than a single proton, one of the sub microscopic parts of the core of an atom. Many physicists believe it was only an imaginary material dot. A singleness — a nothingness. Everything was compressed in this material dot: all the billions of galaxies and billions of stars, planets, moons…All space and time, not in material form, just energy. And at a given moment, the 'Big Bang moment' when everything began, it exploded with inexplicable violence. Busted. Shot out. Why? How? From where? There are theories that sound convincing but only to create bigger questions. Only this is sure: The Big Bang was an extreme and incredible

[60] "Baie boeke is geskryf oor die verrassende 'ongelukke' – oënskynlik toevallige numeriese waardes, verwante patrone, en strukturele onwaarskynlikhede wat elk op sy skaal presies so moet gefunksioneer het, of die heelal én lewe sou nooit tot stand kon gekom het nie. Dit is asof 'n Groot Gedagte dit presies so bewerk het. Sóveel faktore moet op die regte tydstip presiese waardes binne eng parameters gehad het sedert die eerste oomblikke van die Skepping, dat die kanse een uit duisende miljoene is dat dit toevallig so kon gebeur het."

explosion, so great that it continues on today. The universe continues to burst in all directions."[61]

9.4.3 Creation and millions and millions of years

As a direct result of Joubert's trust in what secular scientists have concluded about the origin of the universe, he also holds the view of an immensely old universe. Continuing his discussion of the 'Big Bang' he adds that scientists have been able to determine the age of the universe based on the very explosion that he described. According to him (1997:11) scientists have succeeded in calculating the speed in which the universe is expanding. He argues that it is therefore possible that "by calculating it in reverse, they can say within close estimate how old the universe is, in other words, when the Big Bang took place" (Joubert, 1997:11).

9.4.4 The days of creation

Having condensed the first three days of creation into 'two phases' of development, both of which allegedly took place over millions and millions of years, Joubert comments on the gradual progress of the universe during the second phase stating (1997:17): "The creation continues on. Also in the cosmos, the cycle of birth, decay, death, and birth is the pattern. The universe never stopped being creative."

Joubert goes on to describe the fifth day (according to his description, the third phase) of creation as a time in which "the first fishes appeared: sharks, lung fish and coelacanths. The sea swarmed with a larger variety of fishes. 'God created the large sea animals and all the other living creatures that were swarming in the waters.'" He states that this took place 320 million years ago.

[61] "Die skeppingsoomblik, daardie geweldige loslating van energie, was anders. Fisici noem dit die Oerknal. Hier het alles begin, hieruit het alles ontstaan. Wetenskaplikes het bereken dat alles in die grote heelal uit 'n plekkie gekom het wat duisende miljoene kere kleiner was as 'n enkele proton, een van die submikroskopiese deeltjies van 'n atoomkern. Baie fisici glo dit was net 'n denkbeeldige matematiese puntjie. 'n Enkelheid – 'n niksheid. In hierdie matematiese puntjie was alles saamgepers: al die biljoene galaksies met hul biljoene sterre, planete, mane… Alle ruimte, alle tyd. Nie in die vorm van materie nie, net energie. En op 'n gegewe oomblik, die Oeroomblik toe álles begin het, het dit met onbeskryflike geweld ontplof. Losgebars. Uitgeskiet. Waarom? Hoe? Waarvandaan? Daar is teorieë wat oortuigend klink maar wat nog groter vrae laat ontstaan. Net dit is seker: die Oerknal was 'n ontsettende, ongelooflike ontploffing, so geweldig dat dit vandag nog voortduur. Die heelal bars steeds in alle rigtings uiteen."

9.4.5 Starlight and time

Although he does not say as much, Joubert creates the impression that the stars hold another key to the age of the universe. While describing the events that took place during what he calls 'the first phase' of creation, he describes the dawn of stars adjacent to his concession of millions and millions of years. He (1997:16) explains that "After the first little star began to flicker, millions of years went by, resulting in the appearance of more stars." Furthermore, he (1997:18) states that "everywhere in the universe stars die. Their lights grow dim and they die, all the while new stars are born without end, until today. Millions and millions of stars. The process gets repeated over and over in cycles of millions of years."

Scientists have in the past estimated the age of the universe by calculating the time it took light emanating from certain stars to reach planet earth. The reasoning goes that since many stars are billions of light-years away, and since we can observe the light that they emanated billions of years ago, the universe must then be billions of years old. Richard Niessen (1983) from the Institute for Creation Research explains this the following way:

> "Light, traveling at 186,000 miles per second, will travel about 6 trillion miles in one year. This distance is called one light-year. There are galaxies that are alleged to be billions of light-years distant from us in space. This means that the light, which left the galaxies 5 billion years ago, should just now be reaching us. This would seem to indicate that the Universe and the creation must be at least 5 billion years old or else we wouldn't be seeing this light. In other words, if the stars were only 6 - 10,000 years old, the light from these distant galaxies would not have even reached us yet."[62]

To conclude this section, I now turn to the last influential voice involving the question of origins and the large-scale acceptance of theistic evolution by the DRCSA — Dr Albert Alberts.

9.5 Albert Alberts — Evolution for Christians

In the preface to his book *Evolusie vir Christene* or *Evolution for Christians*, Dr Albert Alberts thanked his father, Dr Louw Alberts, among others, for cultivating the keen interest that he developed in the question of Origins and Evolution. A man of science himself, Albert Alberts, a once practising and successful oncologist residing in Pretoria, committed to investigating and

[62] For more information on starlight and time consult: http://www.icr.org/article/starlight-age-universe/

writing about this topic as his father did before him, although not exactly in the same way as his father. His book that was released in 2017, contains numerous points that apply to the current discussion. As his predecessors, his father, and Gideon Joubert, he too aimed to honour God through his writing. Only the arguments that are most pertinent to the subject of theistic evolution will be evaluated and discussed.

9.5.1 Belief in 'tween-phases' and the provability of Evolution

One of Alberts' first lines of defence for evolutionary thinking is his faith in the 'tween-phase' species, for example, half-bird-half-reptile-like-creatures and others like it. He starts his defence by admitting that this is something that has not yet been physically observed. He says (2017): "No palaeontologist has ever seen one species transition into another." However, he continues his line of argument by saying that even though something cannot be observed, it can still be scientific regardless of it being observed or not. Lastly, while making his point he notes that the lack of 'tween-phase' species is one of the main objections launched at evolutionists by creationists.

He resultantly resorts to what he refers to as the 'if, then' method of seeking proof for Evolution stating (2017):

> "If evolution took place, then one could expect that the most basic organisms would be present in the oldest fossil carrying strata and that the more complex species would be present in the most recent strata. This is indeed the case all over the world. We find single cell organisms in the oldest strata, then multicellular organisms, then the more complex invertebrates of the Cambrian period. In later strata we see the presence of plants from rural areas, then complex seed-bearing plants and then the development of rural vertebrates."[63]

9.5.2 Casting doubt on catastrophism

In his book, Alberts arrives at the point where he attacks one of the key principles of creationism. He does not hesitate to explain his unwillingness to accept catastrophism as a viable explanation for a large number of fossils and the nature of these fossils by discussing the Grand Canyon in

[63] "As evolusie plaasgevind het, dan sou 'n mens verwag dat die eenvoudigste organismes in die heel oudste fossieldraende strata sal wees en dat die meer komplekse spesies in die meer onlangse strata sal voorkom. Inderdaad is dit wel dwarsoor die wêreld so. In die oudste strata vind ons die enkelsellige organismes, dan die multisellulêre organismes, dan die meer komplekse invertebrata van die Kambriese periode. In latere strata sien ons die teenwoordigheid van plante van landelike areas, dan komplekse saaddraende plante en dan die ontwikkeling van die landelike vertebrata."

the USA. He (2017) remarks: “An example is that creationism alleges that the Grand Canyon in America was caused by water that subsided at the end of Noah’s Flood. Rather, in principle, science is powerless to test for God’s activity during the flood.” He (2017) continues by suggesting that creationists could “appeal to a miracle.” However, he insists that “this cannot be measured.”

9.5.3 Evidence for Evolution in anatomy

A further reason for Alberts’ endorsement of theistic evolution, according to him, is the presence of anatomical structures or organs in animals and humans that are evidence of Evolution. These examples are referred to as ‘mistakes’ and he (2017) offers the following as evidence:

> “Organs that were important in the past, lost their function as evolution progressed with time. Would an intelligent Designer have placed unnecessary structures in the body? He could have done it right from the beginning. There is a long list of unnecessary structures: The appendix and the tail bone of human beings, and in addition, whales and snakes have small hip and femur bones that are situated deep in the body and have no function whatsoever. Why would they have these structures unless they developed from ancestors that had hind legs? Surely, God would not have wanted to intentionally mislead us by making it look as if evolution happened, but in reality did not.”[64]

9.5.4 The Primate family

Lastly, theistic evolutionists like Alberts assume a close relationship between the primates and the human race. Alberts explains that people are members of the primate family based on certain resemblances between the two. He (2017) says: “In broad context we are members of the order Primate, the group that does not just include us and the big apes, but also the Old World ape…”

The rest of Alberts’ book is a comparison between what Young Earth Creationists have said about natural phenomena and his own understanding from an evolutionary standpoint. The book is a typical example of theistic evolution from a Christian perspective. His book, perhaps not to the

[64] “Organe wat in die verlede belangrik was, het mettertyd soos evolusie gevorder en het in onbruik geraak. Sou ’n intelligente Ontwerper onnodige strukture in die liggaam geplaas het? Hy kon dit mos van die begin af reg gedoen het. Daar is ’n oorvloedige lys van onnodige strukture: Die blindederm, die stertbeentjies van mense, walvisse en slange het klein heup en lendebene (femurs) wat diep in die liggaam gebêre word met geen funksie hoegenaamd nie. Hoekom sou hulle die strukture besit tensy hulle van voorvaders ontwikkel het wat agterbene gehad het? God sou ons seker nie met opset probeer mislei het deur dit te laat lyk asof evolusie plaasgevind het nie, maar in werklikheid het dit nie gebeur nie.”

degree as Joubert's, was well received by the DRCSA and has provided evidence to support the harmony between Evolution and the Genesis account. In support of his writing, the editor of *Die Kerkbode* Neels Jackson (2016) interviewed him about his book.[65]

9.6 Conclusion

As discussed above, Du Plessis' legacy in the DRCSA remains firm. Over time it has been reinforced by men such as Louw Alberts, Gideon Joubert, and Albert Alberts who laboured intensely to prove the harmony between evolutionary thought and the biblical data involved. The DRCSA was generally open to the teachings of these men, at least, as such openness can be evidenced by the way Joubert's evolutionary interpretation of origins was received by the DRCSA through his 1998 publication, *Die Groot Gedagte*, which in the same year was awarded the prestigious Andrew Murray literary award and lauded in an article by *Die Kerkbode* writer, Erika van Rooyen (1998:6) as being thoroughly 'God-centred,' which the title of her article seems to imply.

[65] See: http://kerkbode.christians.co.za/2017/06/09/evolusie-dis-hoe-god-ons-gemaak-het/

SECTION 2: THE DRCSA IN THE LATE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY

CHAPTER 10 — INERRANCY ASSAULTED – HISTORICAL CRITICISM PREVAILS

10.1 Introduction

The acceptance of the Theistic variation of Darwinist Evolution within the DRCSA was not a phenomenon that happened in isolation. Rather, the widespread attention and eventual acceptance that the theory enjoyed within a leading segment of the DRCSA can be contributed to a particular view of Scripture. As stated previously, the Higher Criticism of the 19th century found its impetus in Darwin's theory of Evolution that allowed for an evolutionary approach to Israel's literary development. The connection between Evolution and Higher Criticism should not be ignored (ref. 4.2.2.10). Rather, it must be understood as a progressive theological development or trajectory within the DRCSA that led to the doubting of traditional interpretations, especially those that challenge the grammatical-historical hermeneutic that assumes the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Bible and its inerrancy.

10.2 The evolutionary 'backbone' of historical criticism

Although the tendency to doubt the miraculous nature of Scripture (e.g. Israel's desert wandering, the time of the Judges, the ministry of the prophets, Christ's miracles, his death, burial, and resurrection, and the acts of the apostles) was already present in the thinking of certain early 19th-century German theologians, it is the theory of Evolution that gave them a method, or a theory, that could be applied to their methodology. Farnell & Thomas (1998:110) warn against the influence that Evolution has exerted on scriptural interpretation by focusing on the effects that Evolution has had on views of inerrancy and historical criticism.

Farnell & Thomas (1998:110) postulate that the well-known and influential Graf-Wellhausen school "originated during the height of Evolution's popularity in philosophical circles." Over time this philosophy impacted on the thinking of the theologians in Europe, but specifically, German theologians whose 'Documentary Hypotheses' (Graf-Wellhausen) rejected "Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch," and, "it posited a gradual development (long after Moses) of the Old Testament from simple documents (JEDP) into the complexity of the first five books." Farnell & Thomas (1998:110) explain that "The hypothesis developed with a backdrop of philosophical speculations by the rationalist and pantheist Spinoza (who suggested Ezra composed the Torah), the deists, Hegelianism, and the increasing popularity of evolutionary philosophy." Similarly, the New Testament, especially the Gospels, became increasingly subjected to the same philosophy that

was emblematic of Karl Heinrich Graf (1815-1869) and Julius Wellhausen's (1844-1918) interpretation.[66]

Wells (2017:4), discussing George Marsdon in his study of American fundamentalism, points to the fact that the main problem with the approach that Graf and Wellhausen were taking involved the so-perceived authority of God in the Scriptures as opposed to the authority of science or scientific inquiry. Wells (2017:3) explains that "by treating the Bible as a historical text, open to scientific inquiry like any other historical artefact, historical criticism seemed to call into question the sacred status of biblical texts."

Wells (2017:3) continues to explain events that took place:

> "Proponents of the historical-critical method were well-aware of what was at stake in the scientific desacralization of Scripture. Julius Wellhausen, for example, in his resignation from the Theology faculty at the University of Greifswald, noted that 'scientific method of the Bible' is at odds with traditional modes of understanding Scripture."

Wells (2017:3) goes on to discuss what Wellhausen testified with regards to his chosen vocation:

> "I became a theologian because the scientific treatment of the Bible interested me; only gradually did I come to understand that a professor of theology also has the practical task of preparing the students for service in the Protestant Church, and that I am not adequate to this practical task, but that instead despite all caution on my own part I make my hearers unfit for their office. Since then my theological professorship has been weighing heavily on my conscience."

Wellhausen admitted to the impossibility of any harmony existing between his old position as a theologian and his new persuasion as a 'literary scientist,' leading him to eventually take a position as a professor of philology at the University of Halle.

The events in Wellhausen's life are important to the discussion involving the DRCSA's acceptance of the scientific method of historical criticism because unlike Wellhausen who decided to leave his sphere of influence, many DRCSA professors and pastors opted to stay within the denomination believing that their persuasions fall within the parameters of orthodoxy.

The rest of the chapter endeavours to trace the acceptance of various interpretations of Scripture, such as the authority of Scripture, the inerrancy of Scripture, and the transformative effects of

[66] Oden (1987:19-20) does well to explain the gradual development of this idea from those who first conceptualised it, like Eduard Reus, to his understudy Graf, who did far more to introduce it to Germany. The theory was later formulated and developed by Wellhausen.

historical criticism which includes disagreement with the Reformed view of the Old Testament and the Gospels. The focus will be on developments that started taking place in the final decades of the previous century and the beginning decades of the current century.

10.3 Explicit attempts affecting change — creating a lasting influence

The reader will remember from previous chapters that the topic currently under discussion is one that has not gone uncontested. The years 1858-1859 already saw the modernist rising in the Dutch Reformed Church which was largely the result of Enlightenment influences on Christian theology. As such, views of Scripture by men like J.J. Kotzé and T.F. Burgers. South African church historian, Dr Kevin Roy (2000:84-85) traced the build-up to these views and discusses them in light of the liberalism that was already well-developed in the Netherlands. In his book, *Zion City RSA*, Roy makes the point that liberalism became more noticeable in Afrikaner circles when young men, who were desirous of the pastoral ministry within the DRCSA, had to go to the Netherlands and study situating them under the 'liberal' auspices of the Enlightenment influenced Dutch Reformers. In this way, Kotzé and Burgers became some of the first theologically liberal DRCSA ministers and exerted a considerable amount of influence over the denomination at this time. For Kotzé and Burgers, Scripture contains errors, and therefore could not be viewed as the inerrant Word of God.

Both Kotzé and Burgers can be viewed as the mid-19th century predecessors of men like Johannes du Plessis, who, at his time of influence during the early 20th century, encouraged the development of large scale change regarding the DRCSA's view of Scripture. We now turn our attention to an important development that took place in the 1990s, one that perhaps would have gone unnoticed if not for the publicity value at the time.

10.4 Pushing for a change of scriptural view – Jurie le Roux

At the death of Johan Heyns, DRCSA theologian, outspoken protester of segregation, and eventual moderator of the DRCSA some events of a theological nature were simultaneously transpiring.[67]

These entered the theological sphere through the University of Pretoria theology department journal named, *Skrif en Kerk*, currently publishing under the name *Verbum et Ecclesia*. In 1994 ex-University of Pretoria professor of Old Testament studies and liberal scholar, Jurie le Roux,

[67] Heyns was influential in the DRCSA, first as a respected theologian, second as a kind of a quasi-politician. View http://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/johan-heyns-influential-church-leader-and-former-moderator-dutch-reformed-church-murdere for a summarised biographical.

presented his opinion of Johan Heyns' view of Scripture in what, in collaboration with other contributors of this *Skirf en Kerk* edition, was framed as a eulogy in honour of the famed deceased theologian.

The following is a report of some of the statements made by le Roux that are most pertinent to the discussion regarding his view of Scripture, as gathered from his article entitled: *God se brug na die mens: iets goddeliks of iets mensliks? ('n Kort Woord oor Johan Heyns se Skrifleer)* or *Bridging the gap between God and man: something divine or human?*

10.4.1 Le Roux's understanding of Johan Heyns' view of Scripture

Le Roux starts his 'eulogy' of Heyns' theological persuasion by reviewing some of the major ways in which Heyns' theology has influenced the South African theological community, in particular the DRCSA. In order to do that, he provides a short summary of some of the important aspects of his theology. Le Roux describes these as traits that were characteristic of Heyns' theology. He originally organised these according to six succinct points:

1. He mentions (1994:28) the fact that for Heyns the Word of God was central and the most logical starting point to understanding who God is and what He requires from human beings. He remarks that "it is noteworthy how thoroughly he wants to live and work according to the Scriptures." Le Roux emphasises this fact by stating that the Scriptures are central and of high importance to Heyns in light of the fact that he applied them to all spheres of his life, whether politically, culturally, or in everyday life.
2. He also emphasises (1994:28) the fact that Heyns was captivated by the Scriptures. This is what, according to le Roux compelled Heyns to emphasise the godly or divine nature of the Bible. Le Roux maintains that Heyns "was so overcome by revelation and God's bridge to man that it defined his view of Scripture in a mighty way."
3. Le Roux's third observation highlights one of Heyns' most notable traits as the fact that he remained faithful to the Reformation understanding of Scripture's value (le Roux, 1994:28): "Heyns' understanding and usage does however display something orthodox. The word 'orthodox' is deliberately being used because Heyns reminds of the Reformed orthodoxy of the seventeenth century."
4. Furthermore, le Roux (1994:28) highlighted that Heyns believed fundamentally in the efficiency of God's Word and as such was not concerned with what le Roux refers to as the "unending distance between text and reader." Accordingly, it was this lack of concern, le Roux points out, that allowed him to effortlessly jump between the biblical context and our context. In this sense, le Roux brings to mind the recommendation of Gotthold Ephraim

Lessing,[68] who spoke about a "garstige Grabe" or a "nasty ditch" between the Bible context and the current context.

5. Le Roux (1994:29) further describes Heyns as someone who did not fluctuate in his view, but who consistently followed through with it, unchanging until the end.
6. Lastly, and less important to the study, le Roux (1994:29) highlights the fact that Heyns had a unique way to express theological concepts, which le Roux describes as "coining his own language" (le Roux, 1994:29).

In summary, le Roux describes Heyns as a conservative theologian who did not stray from the main biblical principles of the Reformation. According to le Roux, Heyns kept the divine nature of God's Word central in his thinking and beliefs regarding all spheres of life. Heyns was not deterred by the time separation between biblical writer and reader, mainly because he believed in God's superintendence over the whole process of the canon and its continual preservation. One gathers from this description that 'sola Scriptura' was extremely important to Heyns and is what defined his ministry.

Now the focus will be shifted to le Roux's views about the Scriptures, and mainly the disagreement that existed between him and Heyns. It is important to note that the points that le Roux highlighted were done with the motive of encouraging a change of interpretation in the DRCSA. Perhaps, the death of Heyns, in some way, became symbolic of the death of Reformed orthodoxy in the DRCSA.

10.4.2 Questioning the God-inspired nature of Scripture

Le Roux (1994:29), detailing the main characteristics of Heyns' theology for Scripture (or his view of Scripture), places the Word of God under suspicion. Le Roux (1994:30) highlights the human nature of the Word as one of the main disagreements that he had with Heyns by referring to the human nature of Christ, a debate that, challenges the godliness of Christ. This debate references the kenosis theory again.

In order, therefore, to understand the argument of the liberal theologian, kenosis is a necessary starting point. The reason being that it is their view of Christ and his humanity that affects their view of Scripture, both that are alleged to have human sides and therefore often denounced as

[68] Müller (Muller, 1911b; Muller, 1911a) reports: "Lessing became involved in perhaps the most bitter controversy of his career when he also published extracts containing extremely radical ideas from the papers of the recently deceased biblical critic and scholar H.S. Reimarus under the title *Fragmente eines Ungenannten* (1774–77; *"Fragments of an Unknown*"). Theologians viewed these publications as a serious challenge to religious orthodoxy, even though Lessing himself had taken up a mediating position toward the radical theses of Reimarus, who had rejected the basic tenets of the Christian faith.

faulty, inconsistent, and unreliable in certain ways. Le Roux, therefore, insists that the human aspect of Scripture cannot be ignored. He says (1994:29): “Much attention was especially given to the human and godly nature of the Word; the latter should not have been emphasised at the expense of the former.” In other words, according to le Roux, Heyns, even though not deliberately, did not give the right amount of attention to the human aspect of the Word of God, and as le Roux argues, the alleged faulty, inconsistent, and finite nature of the Scriptures.

To support this, le Roux employs the help of ‘Bible science’, stating (1994:30):

> “Bible scientists have told for the last century or so, explaining with much care, how humanly the Scriptures really are: It was developed over many centuries, contains diametrically opposed themes, possesses over no central message, was written by people and groups from completely different backgrounds and conflicting persuasions, etc. This and other issues are not addressed by Heyns. So human and humanly his view of Scripture is not. As a result of his theological conclusions Heyns cannot package the Bible as too humanly…The emphasis is placed so much on the godly revelation and the theologia revelata that the Bible becomes quarantined from all other literature (as well as the world). The godly revelation is understood as a revealed instruction and as a result, Scripture becomes different, foreign to the world, ‘unhumanly.’ Secondly, the Bible becomes separated from history. In order to then avoid problems (especially of critical Bible science) one speaks of revelation or redemptive history.”[69]

Le Roux’s understanding is important because it is viewed as a catalyst for change in the DRCSA in 2002. What is of importance to note is that le Roux’s view with regards to Scripture is, in essence, an antithesis of Heyns’ view. Le Roux’s mention of ‘redemptive history’ hints at the fact that Heyns was somewhat influenced by Karl Barth, but even so, it would only reveal the extent of le Roux’s liberalism, who spoke critically of Heyns in this regard.

Le Roux’s reasoning seems to be as follows: He assumes the conclusion of this modern ‘scientific’ way of scrutinising the Bible, some of which have allegedly ‘proven’ that the Bible contains

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[69] “Bybelwetenskaplikes het die afgelope eeu of wat met groot noukeurigheid vertel hoe menslik die Skrif nou eintlik is: dit het oor baie eeue ontstaan, bevat uiteenlopende temas, beskik oor geen sentrale boodskap nie, is deur mense en groepe van werklik verskillende agtergronde en werklik botsende standpunte geskryf, ensovoorts. Hierdie en ander sake word nie deur Heyns aangespreek nie. So menslik is sy Skrif en sy Skrifbeskouing nou eenmaal nie. Vanweë sy teologiese uitgangspunte kan Heyns nou eenmaal nie die Skrif te menslik "verpak" nie. Eerstens, die klem word soveel op die Goddelike openbaring en die theologia revelata geplaas dat die Bybel van alle ander literatuur (en ook die wêreld) geïsoleer word. Die Godsopenbaring word as geopenbaarde leer verstaan en gevolglik word die Skrif mettertyd anders, wêreldvreemd, "onmenslik". Tweedens, die Bybel word juis van die geskiedenis losgemaak. Om probleme (van veral die kritiese Bybelwetenskap) te vermy word van ’n openbarings- of heilsgeskiedenis gepraat.’”

opposing views or ideas, has no central message, and was written by individuals who had conflicting persuasions. However, it is evident that this is what le Roux believes about the Bible because these views are consistent with the findings of sceptical criticism, which is what he turns to next as perhaps his greatest concern with Heyns' view of Scripture. Le Roux (1994:41-47) listed these concerns under the heading: *A Few Critical Observations: The Scriptures Are Indeed Humanly (The way Bible Science Has Obviously Taught Us).*

10.4.3 Le Roux's endorsement of historical criticism

Le Roux (1994:42) now begins to attack Heyns' unwillingness to take the findings of historical criticism seriously. Le Roux (1994:42) starts by commending Heyns' work as a theologian noting that he "sharpened the Bible sciences to think about the nature of the Scriptures." According to le Roux (1994:42), "No exegete can work with the Bible without enquiring with regards to the nature, authority, clarity, etc." of the Word of God. This is an unusual statement coming from le Roux, who spent time trying to prove the opposite.

10.4.3.1 Avoidance as an explanation for non-subscription

Le Roux (1994:43) alleges that historical criticism was customarily avoided by theologians in South Africa because of the background of the country. He believes that as late as the mid 1990s not many South Africans, and in particular DRCSA theologians, had immersed themselves in the historical criticism field of study because of a 'cultural bent.' What he means is that these men were raised in the Reformed way of interpretation and that they would therefore not consider the findings of historical criticism since it denies many of the core tenets of the Reformed tradition. Le Roux (1994:42) explains this in the following way: "During the last century or so, biblical science changed dramatically and the exegete has been placed under great pressure as a result … Because of historical reasons South African theologians have the tendency to ignore Bible science completely or to handle it as pseudo-problems."

10.4.3.2 Interpretation of church history & the effects of the Enlightenment

In addition to his view of the general historical response of the DRCSA, in particular to higher and historical criticism, le Roux (1994:43) also suggests that South Africa was impacted by liberalism at a much slower rate than for example Europe. He (1994:43) explains:

> "The theological history since the Aufklarüng [the European Enlightenment] changed theological science so invasively that one has to speak differently or at least more nuanced about God and his Word."

Le Roux states that in his opinion South Africa has in many ways circumvented European theological trends. He (1994:43) says that "Afrikaners' battle for survival and their isolation

contributed to the fact that we could not share in the theological and philosophical currents since the Aufklarüng." Le Roux sees this as detrimental, despite the presence of some early streams of liberal thought [ref. T.N. Hanekom's, *Die Liberale Rigting in Suid Afrika* (1951)]. He (1994:43) continues saying:

> "During the nineteenth century the Afrikaner was still engulfed in a battle for survival that it was impossible for him to process the European climate of reason. As a result, we missed the impact of Kant's ideas, didn't understand Schleiermacher's 'flight' in the inner experience, avoided Ritschl's emphasis on the religious-ethical and his denial of objective and doctrinal truth, never took notice of Troeltsch's radical but important historical thoughts, conveniently allowed the sharp historically-critical analysis of the New Testament by David Friedrich Strauss and the Tübingen School to go unnoticed. Since we missed these and other influences it also radically influenced the nature of our theology."[70]

Accordingly, le Roux feels that South Africa evaded many of the theological-liberal influences that eclipsed the European continent, which proved to be beneficial, not detrimental. Le Roux thought that this was a disgrace. According to him, South Africa 'stayed behind' the tide and for this reason, became somewhat theologically deprived.[71] Lamenting this fact, and through his eventual endorsement of the historical-critical method, le Roux highlights his commitment to theological liberalism which can be linked to the 'normalising' of LGBTQI+ orientation within the DRCSA (ref. 15.4.1.1 – 15.4.1.2).

Le Roux (1994:43) continues his argument by referring to the conclusions of historical criticism as "irrefutable." In light of this, he (1994:43) says that it is impossible "to speak of an infallible inspiration, an idealistic process of the forming of the canon, the harmony of the message of Scripture, etc."

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[70] Le Roux explains: "Gedurende die negentiende eeu was die Afrikaner nog so in so 'n bestaanstryd gewikkel dat hy onmoontlik die Europese denkklimaat kon verwerk het. Gevolglik het ons die impak van Kant se denke gemis, het ons Schleiermacher se "vlug" in die innerlike ervaring nie verstaan nie, het ons Ritschl se klem op die religieus-etiese en sy ontkenning van objektiewe of leerstellige waarhede vermy, het ons van Troeltsch se radikale maar belangrike geskiedenisdenke nog nooit kennis geneem nie, het ons die skerp histories-kritiese ontleding van die Nuwe Testament deur David Friedrich Strauss en die Tübingen-skool gerieflikheidshalwe laat verbygaan. Omdat ons hierdie en ander strominge gemis het, het dit ook die aard van ons teologie radikaal beïnvloed."

[71] For comment on this, see Albert Mohler podcast, "The Briefing." https://albertmohler.com/2019/05/08/briefing-5-8-19

Views of Scripture that are reflective of the above-stated attitudes are all commendable, according to le Roux (1994:43), and worthy of any theologian's honest interaction and endorsement.

10.4.4 A contextualised, post-modern and absolute-truth-denying hermeneutic

Le Roux subscribes to a post-modern hermeneutic. Characteristic of this hermeneutic is that it doubts the existence of absolute truth in Scripture, espousing an explanation of the text that denies universal and timeless truth (Gilley, 2009:55).

Furthermore, le Roux (1994:44) promotes an interpretation of the Bible that does not only regard the human element of Scripture but which views it as cardinal information when interpreting a passage of Scripture. Accordingly, meaning is only attached to a situation when it can legitimately speak to a certain context, for instance, the 21st-century culture of gay-and-lesbian relationships (ref. chapter 11). Since both writer and reader are bound to certain contexts, the text only receives meaning as one transports the needed elements of a text, not necessarily its literal, historical meaning.

With regards to the old hermeneutic, le Roux (1994:44) believes that its neglect of historical contexts was its biggest problem. The separated contexts of the writer and the reader are seen as a hindrance to interpretation. With disregard to this hermeneutic, le Roux (1994:44) firstly phrases this perceived hermeneutical 'problem' in the following terms:

> "The nature of the hermeneutical problem lies in the fact that both the text and the interpreter is embedded in a specific situation [context] and, as a result, historically determined. Of course Heyns says this as well, but now only the full consequences thereof get formulated… [The term "the past was of the past"] emphasises that there is a historical distance between the text and the reader that cannot easily be bridged. There is a distance that must be respected. And when we do this, does the light of revelation still fall so easily over the entire cosmos?"[72]

Le Roux (1994:44) continues his argument against a strict Reformed hermeneutic by emphasising his commitment to the findings of the Enlightenment saying:

> "The part that rationality plays in the understanding of Scripture has become much more important. Each one has his own specific view of Scripture that must be

[72] "Die aard van die hermeneutiese probleem is juis daarin geleë dat sowel die teks as die interpreteerder in 'n bepaalde situasie ingebed is en gevolglik histories bepaald is. Natuurlik sê Heyns dit ook, maar nou word die voile konsekwensies daarvan net geformuleer. Die beklemtoning van die "pasters of Che past.". Hierdie uitdrukking beklemtoon dat daar 'n historiese afstand tussen teks en leser is wat nie sommer maar net oorbrug kan word nie. Daar is 'n afstand wat gerespekteer moet word. En as ons dit doen, val die openbaringslig nog werklik so maklik oor die ganse kosmos?"

> critically investigated. These models have taught us the theoretically defined nature of exegetical models, of paradigms in which every theologian moves, of texts with manifold meanings, of the influence of logical positivism and theology's (one sided?) answer to it, of theological thought strategies that just cannot succeed, and many more."[73]

Le Roux (1994:44) speaks of 'rationality models' implying that reason is central. This is consistent thinking for someone who perceives the Enlightenment 'spirit' of reason and intellect as key to biblical interpretation. Supernaturalism resultantly is then removed to the background as something superstitious and characteristic of the Dark Ages. To believe in a supernatural Word of God thus became viewed as archaic and steeped in mysticism.

Accordingly, le Roux (1994:44-45) draws attention to the subjective nature of biblical data and those who interpret it. He speaks of "paradigms in which every theologian moves." In other words, the situation in life, the "Sitz im Leben" (Oxford Biblical Studies Online, 2018).[74] This includes philosophical underpinnings, traditions, superstitions, and the so-perceived subjective nature of their experiences. Reportedly, these cannot be swiftly translated to our current day and age and remain in the realm of the subjective, both because of the subjectivity of the writer as well as that of the reader. Le Roux's (1994:44-45) faith in this is illustrated by his insistence in a non-absolute nature of the biblical text. For this reason, and in clear contrast with the Reformed understanding, he speaks about texts with manifold meanings. The Reformed understanding is described in

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[73] Die rol van rasionaliteitsmodelle vir die verstaan van die Skrif het in ons tyd baie belangriker geword. Elkeen het 'n bepaalde kyk op die Skrif wat krities ondersoek moet word. Hierdie modelle het ons geleer van die teoretiese bepaaldheid van eksegetiese modelle, van die paradigmas waarbinne elke teoloog beweeg, van tekste met meerdere betekenisse, van die invloed van die logiese-positivisme en die teologie se (eensydige?) antwoord daarop, van teologiese denkstrategieë wat net nie die mas kan opkom nie en nog baie dinge meer."

[74] Oxford Biblical Studies Online explains the term in the following way: "A term employed by German Form Critics and one difficult to translate exactly into English. It denotes the social context or 'life setting' in which a narrative emerged. The point being made is that particular items in the OT can only be understood when they are related to the culture and social life of ancient Israel. Before the sources which comprise the Pentateuch were written, they were transmitted orally, probably within the context of worship (their 'Sitz im Leben'). The character of the social situation determines the style of the communication. In NT scholarship critics try to relate sayings of Jesus both to the Sitz im Leben of the Church in which they were transmitted and to the Sitz im Leben of Jesus' ministry in which they may have originated. It has been suggested that sayings of Jesus can only be regarded as authentically his when they can be slotted into neither the experience of the early Church, nor to that of 1st-cent. CE Judaism. Others regard this criterion as excessively sceptical, on the ground that the teaching of Jesus, as a Jew of the 1st cent., must have reflected that of contemporary Judaism." It is reported that German theologian, Herman Gunkel coined this term (Finlay, 2005:6).

chapter 1, article 9 of the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) where it is stated: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be examined and known in other places that speak more clearly."

Lastly, le Roux (1994:45) concludes by emphasising his belief in the authority of the perspective of the writer and the interpreter. He says: "In short: every theology is but one specific perspective of a specific person in a specific situation. How would this view have influenced our thoughts with regards to the bridge between God and humans?"

10.4.5 Critical of the Reformed approach to Bible interpretation

Given contemporary Christian philosophies, many mainline Protestant denominations of the world have shifted to including "a scientific approach" to Bible interpretation (Thomas & Farnell, 1998:86). Likewise, le Roux supported similar shifts in the DRCSA arguing that (1994:45), historical criticism changes what the church 'used to' believe about the biblical text, at least within the Reformed understanding of Scripture. He states: "Historical Criticism has so drastically changed the conservative and/or Reformed and/or fundamentalist view of the Scriptures that it became necessary to think totally different about God and his Word. Like never before Bible scientists have come under the impression of the Scripture's humanness."[75]

10.4.6 Disbelieving the existence of the Autographa

Lastly, le Roux (1994:46) professes his disbelief in the existence of an autographa. Or stated differently, he does not believe in the existence of the original documents which were written by the various Bible writers, whether Old or New Testament. He does not believe that exegesis can lead to the discovery of a basis, or, as he describes, a 'final' text. It is the understanding that there is an original text that according to him has caused exegetes to avoid historical criticism. He encourages (1994:46):

> "If we keep in mind that the final and/or original does not exist, things only get more complicated. Whoever wants to talk about the Scriptures or wants to design a doctrine of Scripture must bear in mind that there is not just one authentic text that is the conveyor of the true meaning of the text. There are only texts that differ and that endlessly complicates the interpretation of a text. We can illustrate this statement with reference to textual criticism. It has been convincingly shown that

[75] Higher Criticism emphasises the humanness of revelation, which includes the Bible and the incarnation of Christ (ref. 14.2.3).

> *something like an 'original and authentic text' of the Old or New Testament does not exist*." [italics added][76]

He then goes on to pose questions (1994:46) with regards to the historical method:

> "And if we speak of the bridge between God and man and attempt to formulate a doctrine of Scripture, is it still important to think about the nature of the Greek and Hebrew text (let alone the Afrikaans translation)? Or does it not really matter? Maybe it really does. It would at least radically influence the way in which we talk about inspiration, authority and reliability."[77]

To conclude this short survey of le Roux's theology, this discussion has shown the trajectory towards more liberal thinking within the DRCSA. In keeping with this trajectory, we now turn to an important and influential book on the view of Scripture.

10.5 Andries van Aarde — Fatherless in Galilee

In 2001, Andries van Aarde's[78] book *Fatherless in Galilee* was published with the aim of 'clarifying' issues involving Jesus' of Galilee's origin (2001). The very premise of the book is that of the existence of a 'historical Jesus' which is different from the one presented in the Gospels. His method of inquiry involves 'seeking' certain secretive sources that are alleged to, in some way, offer insight into the revealing of the true identity of this person who called himself the Son of God.

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[76] "As ons in gedagte hou dat dié finale en/of oorspronklike nie bestaan nie, word sake net moeiliker. Wie dus oor die Skrif wil praat of 'n Skuifleer wil ontwerp, moet onthou daar is nie een outentieke teks wat die draer van die ware Skrifbetekenis is nie. Daar is net tekste wat verskil en die Skrifverstaan eindeloos kompliseer. Hierdie stelling kan ons met verwysing na die tekskritiek illustreer. Oortuigend is aangetoon dat iets soos 'n "oorspronklike outentieke teks" van die Ou of Nuwe Testament nie bestaan nie."

[77] "En as ons oor die brug tussen God en mens praat en ons probeer 'n Skrifleer formuleer, is dit ook nog belangrik om oor die aard van die Griekse of Hebreeuse teks (laat staan nog die Afrikaanse vertaling) na te dink? Of maak dit nie werklik soveel saak nie? Miskien maak dit tog baie saak. Dit sou immers die manier waarop oor inspirasie, gesag en betroubaarheid gepraat word radikaal beïnvloed."

[78] Van Aarde, a University of Pretoria professor of New Testament Studies, became internationally noticed for his theological writings like "Fatherless in Galilee" and others. Although he was a minister in the "Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika," or the "NHKA," his writings were still enough to encourage change in the DRCSA because of the level of "fellowship" between the 'three sister-churches.' The other sister church is the "Gereformeerde Kerke" or the Reformed Churches. This denomination has remained much more theologically conservative, as became apparent through H.G. Stoker's refutation of van Aarde's view in a 1996 article entitled, "*Hierdie Jesus ken ek nie*" or "*This is not the Jesus I know*" This article appeared in said denomination's, *Die Kerkblad*.

10.5.1 The illegitimacy of Christ

What is obvious from the beginning of the book, *Fatherless in Galilee* is that van Aarde subscribes to the theory which vouches for the illegitimacy of Christ. He bases his doubt in the existence of Joseph – who can be referred to as Christ's earthly father (even if not in a biological way) – on the findings of the documents of first priority. Furthermore, he describes the presence of a character like Joseph, Mary's husband as part of the story that was being propagated with regards to Jesus' so-perceived illegitimate birth. He (2001:64) says:

> "…the figure of Joseph does not occur in the early sources, not in Paul, the Gospel of Mark, the Sayings Gospel Q, or the Gospel of Thomas…In the Christian tradition, the role of Joseph is part and parcel of either the polemics against Jesus' alleged scandalous birth or the underpinning of Mary's (perpetual) virginity and Jesus' two 'natures.' It remains a dilemma that Jesus' father is altogether absent in the Gospel accounts of Jesus' public ministry while other members are specified."

Van Aarde continues by explaining his understanding of the 'fatherlessness' of Christ. He (2001:73) mentions that about 62% of the Jesus Seminar members would say that they were "uncertain whether the birth of Jesus was the consequence of rape or seduction." Van Aarde explains his take on the birth of Christ by saying: "…even if rape can be ruled out, illegitimacy is a historic *probability* in light of the Second Temple ideology…"

Van Aarde (2001:73) finally attempts to explain why Jesus then received the title 'Son of God.' According to him since Jesus had no earthly father, he inherited the name in order not to be 'debarred' from the temple. This is based on the purity ideology that was born during the Second Temple period. He says: "Jesus' optative identity, which consists of that status he wished he could occupy but from which he was debarred, seems to be child of Abraham, that is, child of God. This could be the reason why the fatherless Jesus called upon God as his Father." In other words, van Aarde believes that Jesus chose the term 'Son of God' as a term to redeem him from his supposed tainted past of illegitimacy.

10.5.2 Doubting the bodily resurrection of Christ

The person of Christ poses a number of obstacles for the naturalistically inclined. Examples of these are the incarnation, the miracles of Christ, and the resurrection of Christ. Van Aarde (2001:59) refers to E.P. Sanders who said that there are New Testament statements about Christ which we know to be "almost beyond dispute." One of these proclamations involves the disciples witnessing Christ after his resurrection. Van Aarde (2001:59) lists this in the following way, "They saw him (in what sense is not certain) after his death." This statement places doubt on the real, physical-and-bodily, historical resurrection of Christ. Van Aarde (2001:59) lists this as one of the statements that we know about Christ that is "almost beyond dispute," in other words statements

that "one still cannot definitively say but are probably true." Secondly, van Aarde (2001:59) suggests that the sense in which the disciples saw him, "is not certain."

10.5.3 Doubting and trivialising deific traits of Jesus in light of Greek mythology

Consistent with the evolutionary approach of Scripture that liberal scholars undertake, much of Scripture, if not all, is viewed by van Aarde (2001:162) as a product that originated over time as a result of 'cultural evolution.' In the same way, and viewed along with the same constraints, the Gospel writers and other New Testament writers are viewed by van Aarde as having been affected by their cultural climate and therefore wrote their respective volumes of Scripture as products of their times. In this manner, van Aarde (2001:162) views the prevailing culture of the day, the Greco-Roman culture, as the predominant influencing factor that informed the New Testament.

10.5.3.1 The miraculous conception of Christ

The first of the traits of Christ that van Aarde interprets through the lens of Greek mythology, is the miraculous conception of Christ through the Holy Spirit. First, he (2001:162) insists that stories like the virgin birth, death, resurrection, and ascension were seen in characters like Hercules. These stories of Greek mythology "were well known in the first century and it comes as no surprise that both traditions were applied to Jesus."

Van Aarde (2001:162) continues to explain that he finds his motivation in Ovid's Metamorphoses where "Perseus is a model of a fatherless son becoming a hero." He describes this 'model' for Christ's love in the following way:

> "According to the myth, Perseus was the abandoned son of Danae by Zeus. Danae was the daughter of King Acrisius of Argos. The king was warned by prophecy that a son born to his daughter would kill him, so he shut her away in a brazen tower…There through a narrow window Zeus went to her in the form of a shower of gold and she became pregnant. Danae called her son Perseus. In an act of dynastic politics, Acrisius encloses the son and his mother in a chest and set it afloat on the sea. Acrisius's name means 'ill judgment' and Perseus means 'the destroyer'."

10.5.3.2 The term 'Son of God'

Consistent with liberal thought, van Aarde (2001:165) agues for the generality, or mundanity of Jesus' title as the 'Son of God.' To him, it is something that was very general in the Greek literature of the day. His argument rests on his insistence that the writers of the Synoptics, as well as John with his Gospel who wished to prove that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, were influenced by the Greek literature of their day.

Van Aarde draws a parallel between Paul's view of the Son of God and Seneca's Hercules. In this instance, he draws attention to Paul's doctrine of adoption, or "being adopted as a child of God." Van Aarde (2001:165) compares this to the myth of Hercules who "stands out not only because of his divine conception but also his adoption as child of Zeus when he conquered death." Again he motivates his comparison of the New Testament with Greek mythology because "contemporary sketches and portrayals of divine birth and/or virginal conception and adoption (for instance of Hercules, Perseus, Horus, and Priapus) were well known in the time when the New Testament was written."[79]

In this way, much of the New Testament is viewed as a book that was heavily influenced by the ideas and environment of its time (Sitz im Leben). Even minute details in the text are sometimes interpreted as having been influenced by the Greek culture of the day.

10.5.3.3 The future bodily resurrection

Van Aarde offers his explanation for the resurrection expectation that the early Church had. He (2001:181) makes sense of this, describing it as 'apocalyptic' and therefore part of an "imaginary transcendental world." He then makes the statement: "The conviction that there will be a general resurrection from death is embedded in this (*mythological*) idea of the switching of worlds" [italics added].

10.5.3.4 Jesus' perceived view of the Church

Lastly, van Aarde (2001:184) toward the final part of the book explains what he understands about Christ's involvement with the Church. At the beginning, he says: "Jesus never conceived the Church or intended to establish the Church". The Church is not a product of Jesus' will, intention, or action. He then offers that "the earliest Jesus movement in Jerusalem emanated from a faith based on the resurrection belief."

[79] Bart Ehrman is a well-known critic of the New Testament who has similarly denied its miraculous nature. One of his reasons for not believing in the reliability of the New Testament accounts of the life of Jesus in particular is, in his own words, because "they occasionally tell stories that are historically implausible." Dr Michael R. Licona responds to this by calling to his aid the historical accuracy of the resurrection of Jesus. He says: "…we have very good historical evidence that Jesus rose from the dead, which adds plausibility to the miracle accounts in the Gospels, including Jesus's virgin birth. After all, if Jesus rose from the dead, a virgin birth would be child's play (pun intended)." See https://thebestschools.org/special/ehrman-licona-dialogue-reliability-new-testament/licona-detailed-response/ for his entire response to Ehrman.

In summary, van Aarde, who once was a theology professor at the University of Pretoria where DRCSA theology students were trained, views the Bible as an untrustworthy source with regards to fundamental aspects of the Christian faith.

10.5.4 The 2002 General Assembly

The 2002 General Assembly of the DRCSA brought about the official shift in the DRCSA's view of Scripture. This shift would result in interpretations that disagreed vastly with that of the founders of the Stellenbosch Seminary in the middle of the 19th century to whom the mere thought of 'mistakes,' 'inconsistencies,' and 'contradictions' in Scripture would have been unthinkable as became evident in their protest against attacks on Scripture (Marais & Muller, 1892e:13-15).

The official change in the view of Scripture by the DRCSA occurred despite some stern warnings. Influential figures like retired Dr Willie Marais made no apology for his stern rebuke of what was planned as part of the proposed report on Scripture for the 2002 assembly. Klaasing & Mouton (2010:30) reflect:

> "In his letter of 40 pages Dr Marais indicated that the report, if it should be accepted, would cancel the previous decision of the 1986 synod. This meant that the Church would officially be heading in a new direction as it involves its view and approach to Scripture. In spite of Dr Marais' and the warning of others the synod went ahead and approved the report, and with it changed the official scriptural view of the DRCSA and radically changed their interpretation of Scripture as well."[80]

Klaasing & Mouton (2010:30) furthermore point out that although it was said that the 2002 general assembly would not change any matter that was agreed upon in 1986 involving the same issue, this promise was largely disregarded as the 2002 assembly went ahead with their report and its approval. The "way in which the 2002 report speaks about the Bible does not result in strengthening of the faith of members and preachers in the Bible as the Word of God, but results rather in its destruction" (Klaasing & Mouton, 2010:30).

It must be noted that the statement primarily describes the 2002 assembly's motivation for proposing a reinterpretation of the historically Reformed doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy, as well as the assembly's concluding interpretation of these doctrines. Here follow some excerpts

[80] "In sy brief van 40 bladsye toon Dr Marais aan dat Die verslag, indien dit aanvaar sou word, die (vorige) standpunt van die Sinode van 1986 sou kanselleer! Dit het beteken dat die Kerk amptelik 'n nuwe koers sou inslaan in sy siening van en benadering tot die Skrif. Ten spyte van Dr Marais en ander we pogings het die Sinode die verslag goedgekeur en daarmee die amptelike standpunt van die NG Kerk met betrekking tot Skrifbeskouing en Skrifverklaring radikaal gewysig."

(Glo die Bybel, 2018)[81] from the report accompanied by a brief analysis for each statement that is pertinent to the study.

Firstly, the DRCSA's reference to, and explanation of the authority of Scripture, deserves attention at this point. The DRCSA states:

> "5.12.4 The General Synod declares that the authority of the Bible as God's Word is not a form of slavery that spiritually enslaves us. For this reason acceptance of the authority of Scripture does not require sacrifice of our reason, which is undeniably a gift of God, but rather the crucifying of our fallen, idolatrous thoughts that know no limits."[82]

What is alluded to in this statement is the notion that scriptural interpretation must align itself with modern scientific finding for it to be classified as a reasonable interpretation. It is seen by the General Synod of 2002 as 'slavery,' in a metaphorical sense, of course, to believe in the traditional view of certain biblical texts at the expense of modern science, assuming they are referring to texts that go against the requirements of modern empiricism, like the creation of Adam from dust (Gen. 2:7), the parting of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:21), and the virgin birth of Christ (Is. 7:14). Reference to 'slavery' can also be understood as being helplessly archaic and tethered to that which has been proven to be obsolescent despite scientific progress which does not confirm the scriptural account in many ways. In general, the impression that one gets from this statement of the DRCSA is that they are giving preferential treatment to what science has to say about certain theological questions and not Scripture.

This view of the unreasonable nature of Scripture is buttressed by their insistence on the perseverance of the 'godly character' of the Bible:

> "5.12.5 The General Synod declares that the human nature of the Scriptures pose no threat to its godly character, but the latter is expressed through the former. Exactly through the humanness of the Scriptures comes the gracious condescension of God, which culminates in the cross of his Son (Heb. 1:1).Therefore, the Scriptures were not given to us as an infallible source of exact natural sciences and historical

[81] These excerpts are not necessarily in chronological order, rather they have been arranged topically.

[82] "5.12.4 Die Algemene Sinode verklaar dat die gesag van die Bybel as God se Woord, nie 'n dwingelandy is wat ons geestelik verslaaf nie, maar dat God se waarheid ons vrymaak (Joh 8:32). Daarom verg die aanvaarding van die gesag van die Woord nie die opoffering van ons denke wat immers 'n gawe van God is nie, maar wel die kruisiging van ons afvallige, afgodiese denke wat geen grense wil erken nie."

> information, but to grant us the knowledge 'that leads to redemption through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:15)."[83]

This statement seems to convey that a distinction must be maintained between the human and godly nature of the Scriptures. This is an effort of explaining what the DRCSA perceives as mistakes, contradictions or inconsistencies in Scripture. The distinction between the human or faulty nature of the Bible and its godly nature becomes a necessary one to maintain if the former is assumed about Scripture. To state it differently, the DRCSA believes that it is possible to get the godly blessing of the Bible despite its imperfect nature. They believe that this is how God has revealed himself to people, through an error laded, contradictory, and inconsistent volume. This description of Scripture aligns itself well with Barthian bibliology that sees Scripture in a similar light (ref. 15.6.3.2). Again, the main commitment seems to be a blind allegiance to 'science' at the expense of Scripture.

The DRCSA then presents their understanding of the process of inspiration:

> "5.12.6 The General Synod declares that from the Bible itself it is clear that inspiration of the Scriptures did not occur in a uniform way. Therefore, the nature of the authority of Scripture is not the same everywhere. We can distinguish between the heart of the message of the Scriptures and issues that are more on the periphery, although the heart and periphery can never be separated from each other, but that in combination they actually function as Word of God. We cannot fathom the mystery of the godly inspiration of weak human instruments, rather this inspiration searches us and the total reality of which we are a part, and authoritatively takes hold of our lives."[84]

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[83] "5.12.5. Die Algemene Sinode verklaar dat die menslike aard van die Skrif geen bedreiging vorm vir die goddelike karakter daarvan nie, maar dat laasgenoemde juis tot uitdrukking kom in eersgenoemde. Juis in die menslikheid van die Skrif kom die neerbuigende en genadige neerdaling van God, wat kulmineer in die kruis van sy Seun, na vore (Hebr 1:1). Daarom is die Skrif ook nie aan ons gegee as 'n onfeilbare bron van eksakte natuurwetenskaplike en historiese informasie nie, maar om ons die kennis by te bring 'wat tot verlossing lei deur die geloof in Christus Jesus' (2 Tim 3:15).

[84] "5.12.6 Die Algemene Sinode verklaar dat dit uit die Bybel self duidelik is dat die inspirasie van die Skrif nie op 'n eenvormige wyse plaasgevind het nie. Daarom is die aard van die gesag van die Skrif ook nie oral dieselfde nie. Ons kan onderskei tussen die hart van die boodskap van die Skrif en sake wat meer op die rand lê, hoewel die rand en hart nie van mekaar losgemaak kan word nie, maar juis in hulle samehang as Woord van God funksioneer. Die geheimenis van die Goddelike inspirasie van swakke menslike instrumente, kan ons nie deurgrond nie, maar omgekeerd deurgrond hierdie inspirasie vir ons en die totale werklikheid waarvan ons deel is, en lê sodoende gesagvol beslag op ons hele lewe."

This paragraph starts by noting the non-uniform nature of inspiration which many would agree to. Not every single word in Scripture has been inscripturated in exactly the same way, whether hand-written recollections of personal experience, dictation about personal experiences for others to record, or direct revelation from God [ref. MacArthur & Mayhue's explanation on how transmission took place on p. 145]). However, the conclusion drawn from the assumption of non-uniformity leads to the view that Scripture is not equally authoritative in all its parts (ref. 15.5.2.1). In addition, being apologetic to the fallen nature of the Bible, which the DRCSA sees as the result of the human element, they maintain the sentiment of a godly document or 'Word of God', and even marvel at this fact in light of the so-perceived, erroneous nature of the words contained in it. Human error, or, as they refer to it, 'weak human instruments' become the reason for seeing the Bible as a 'mystery.'

This theme of the human or faulty nature of the Bible is continued and developed in the following statement:

> "5.4.1 As a human book, the Bible comes to us in human language. Although driven by the Holy Spirit, it was people who spoke (2 Pet. 1:21)…Even though inspired by the Spirit, they did not cease being human; they did not even cease being sinful people. This human aspect of the Scriptures is a reality that we should not have to concede to in a forced manner, but one that we should rejoice in…Even with regards to the 'mistakes' in the Bible, we should feel about them as we do about the marks on Jesus' hands and feet."[85]

It can be agreed that the Bible does "come to us in human language" (ref. 15.5.1 for a definition of inspiration). However, the DRCSA's reason for referencing the human character of Scripture is not primarily to explain something about the method by which Scripture came to us in terms of its compilation. Rather, the reference is an effort of providing a motive for their denouncing of the traditional view of inspiration (the traditional view of inspiration sees Scripture as wholly from God and therefore faultless). Emphasising the imperfect nature of human authorship allows the DRCSA to accept a subtle yet profound reinterpretation of the traditional view of the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy (ref.15.6.2 for a definition of inerrancy).

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[85] "5.4.1 In die Bybel as menslike boek, kom die boodskap van God tot ons in die gestalte van mensewoorde. Weliswaar deur die Heilige Gees gedrywe, was dit tog mense wat gespreek het (2 Pet 1:21)...Geïnspireer deur die Gees het hulle nie opgehou om mense te wees nie; hulle het selfs nie opgehou om sondige mense te wees nie. Hierdie menslike karakter van die Skrif is 'n waarheid wat ons nie tandeknersend moet toegee nie, maar waaroor ons ons moet verheug...Selfs oor die menslike "foute" in die Bybel, moet ons voel soos oor die littekens in Jesus se hande en voete."

Having stated their understanding of the faulty process by which God brought Scripture about, the DRCSA then refer to specific examples of what they perceive as evidence for the human and faulty element in Scripture:

> "5.4.2 That the Bible does not comply with the modern standards of scientific preciseness, is so obvious that it is mystifying that this is still debated…On the other hand, the universe is much bigger than the three-story creation (Ex. 20:4), which reflects the accepted view of its time. Through this it becomes apparent that the Word of God does not reside above reality, but that it becomes concrete in a specific time and context. It is precisely in this scientific 'weakness' that the theological power of the Word is situated. If it could not become ("flesh") in the biblical world then it could likewise not speak to us today, because 50 years from now science would have developed again."[86]

Again, the argument is being promoted that Scripture is scientifically imprecise and cannot be trusted in certain matters. This view is supported to the extent that the traditional view, which assumes the accuracy of the claims which Scripture makes on natural phenomena, is seen as ridiculous and being stuck in the past. The Bible, it is said, is powerful despite its scientific weakness because it speaks to us despite the progressive nature of science, which Scripture is ostensibly aloof to. Statements like these seem to betray an underlying pre-commitment to science as primary and authoritative, and not Scripture. Through this statement, the DRCSA seems to reveal their unwillingness to be open to Scripture's claims about science (this kind of intellectual bias has implications for various aspects of scriptural interpretation [ref. 14.2.4 for an explanation of how intellectual bias has aided theistic evolution]). Again, the DRCSA offer examples for their interpretation of the Bible as unscientific and historically inaccurate:

> "5.4.3 Clearly the Bible does not appeal to historical precision. In Acts 9:7, Paul's companions hear a voice but saw nothing; according to Acts 22:9 they saw the light, but heard nothing. The accounts of Judas' death in Matt. 27:3-10 and Acts 1:16-19 differ so drastically that it is clear that there are different traditions that existed about these events. According to 1 Sam. 17, David killed Goliath while in 2 Sam. 21:19, the deed is attributed to Elhanan. Already in 1 Sam. 16 it is told that David played for Saul on the lyre, but after David defeated Goliath (1 Sam. 17), Saul does not

[86] "5.4.2 Dat die Bybel volgens moderne standaarde nie voldoen aan wetenskaplike eksaktheid nie, is so van selfsprekend dat dit verbasend is dat daaroor nog debat gevoer word...Aan die anderkant is die heelal weer heelwat groter (en anders) as die drie-verdieping skepping (Eks 20:4), wat die gangbare siening van destyds weerspieël. Daaruit blyk dat die Woord van God nie bo die werklikheid sweef nie, maar konkreet word in 'n spesifieke tyd en konteks. Juis in hierdie wetenskaplike "swakheid" is die teologiese krag van die Woord geleë. As dit nie in die Bybelse wêreld konkreet ("vlees") kon word nie, sou dit ook nie vandag met ons kon praat nie, want oor 50 jaar is die wetenskap nog weer verder gevorder."

> even know who he is (1 Sam. 17:55-57). In Matt. 27:9 the author quotes Zech. 11:12, but attributes it to the prophet Jeremiah (compare Jer. 32:6-9). There are many more of these examples (for instance, the different versions of the same events by the four Gospels), but it is unnecessary. The claim that there would have been no contradictions in the original manuscripts does not help us any further, since for us, the credibility of the available Bible is significant. And moreover, these historical 'contradictions' can often be explained from the message the author in question wants to convey."[87]

This statement from the General Synod of 2002 begins with a clear assumption that the Bible does not 'appeal to historical precision,' because of alleged inconsistencies or mistakes. To further defend this view, it is also stated that to appeal to the faultlessness of the original manuscripts does not apply either. However, appeal to the original manuscripts in order to defend the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture does still apply, at least as long as inspiration and inerrancy are still defined in terms of the biblical assumption of the existence of the inspired and inerrant original manuscripts (ref. 15.5.1 for MacArthur & Mayhue's definition of the doctrine of inspiration. These authors maintain that the Bible is inspired in the original manuscripts; ref. 15.5.2.2 for a defence of the existence of Autographa.) The assumption that the Bible does not claim historical precision is what then leads to the view which has been accepted by this Synod, that the Bible is unreliable in historical matters, saying: "5.4.5 If it involves exact historical factuality, clearly the Bible does not qualify as reliable. But from Scripture itself it is clear that this is also not the intention of the Bible."[88]

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[87] 5.4.3 Klaarblyklik maak die Bybel ook geen aanspraak op historiese eksaktheid nie. In Handelinge 9:7 hoor Paulus se metgeselle 'n stem, maar sien niks nie; volgens Handelinge 22:9 het hulle die lig gesien, maar niks gehoor nie. Die weergawes van Judas se dood in Matt 27:3-10 en Hand 1:16-19 verskil so drasties dat dit duidelik is dat daar verskillende tradisies oor hierdie gebeure bestaan het. Volgens 1 Sam 17 het Dawid vir Goliat gedood terwyl die daad in 2 Sam 21:19 aan Elganan toegeskryf word. Reeds in 1 Sam 16 word vertel hoedat Dawid vir Saul op die lier speel, maar nadat Dawid vir Goliat verslaan het (1 Sam 17), ken Saul hom van geen kant nie (1 Sam 17: 55- 57). In Matt 27: 9v. word Sag 11: 12v. aangehaal, maar die outeur skryf dit toe aan die profeet Jeremia (vergelyk Jer 32: 6-9). Die voorbeelde kan eindeloos vermeerder word (soos byvoorbeeld die verskillende weergawes van dieselfde gebeure deur die vier evangelies), maar dit is onnodig. Die bewering dat in die oorspronklike manuskripte geen teenstrydighede sou wees nie, help ons nie verder nie, want vir ons is die geloofwaardigheid van die beskikbare Bybel deurslaggewend. En bowendien kan hierdie historiese 'teenstrydighede' dikwels verduidelik word vanuit die boodskap wat die betrokke outeur wil oordra."

[88] 5.4.5 As dit sou gaan om eksakte historiese feitelikheid, kwalifiseer die Bybel klaarblyklik nie as betroubaar nie. Maar uit die Skrif self is dit glashelder dat dit ook nie die bedoeling van die Bybel is nie.

Thus, according to the DRCSA the purpose of the Bible is to be theological, and not to be scientifically or historically factual:

> "5.7.6 Scripture is not interested in hard, cold, facts, but rather the meaning of the facts…In the process different sources and traditions were sometimes used that was available to the final writer, who in his version of the sources, interprets it anew for the situation and context of his time. Thus the Bible is already interpretation that has to be interpreted afresh every time. This entire process falls under the inspiration and leading of the Holy Spirit. The inspiration of the Scriptures should thus be understood as a historical process of oral and written transmission within the covenant community throughout the ages, whereby the community as a whole, and some individuals in particular played a role."[89]

Is it true that Scripture is not interested in hard, cold, facts and only the meaning of the facts? If so, then one could read the creation account in Genesis 1 and conclude that it has nothing to say about true historical facts but only promotes a certain view about God. However, there are compelling reasons to believe that Scripture is accurate and historical in its detailing of events such as creation, something which the genre of Genesis seems to be in support of (ref. 14.2.2.3 for a discussion of the genre of Genesis and how this genre contributes to the notion that the book of Genesis, from the first verse, seeks to convey factual history).

The DRCSA's support of the historically inaccurate nature of Scripture is reiterated and emphasised in the following paragraph, which states:

> "5.9.1 One of the biggest mistakes in connection with the authority of Scripture is that, in the first instance, the Bible is a book that provides inerrant information, that we must swallow or choke. By nature, Scripture does provide all kinds information, but the function of words in general, and God's Word in particular, is that it does not share mere facts, rather that it accomplishes certain things."[90]

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[89] "5.7.6 In naakte feite is die Skrif nie geïnteresseerd nie, maar wel in die betekenis van die feite...In die proses word soms gebruik gemaak van verskillende bronne en tradisies wat tot beskikking was van die finale skrywer, wat in sy weergawe van die bronne, dit opnuut vertolk vir die situasie en konteks van sy tyd. Dus is die Bybel self reeds interpretasie wat in elke tyd opnuut vertolk moet word. Hierdie hele proses staan onder die inspirasie en leiding van die Heilige Gees. Die inspirasie van die Skrif moet dus verstaan word as 'n historiese proses van mondelinge en skriftelike oordrag binne die verbondsgemeenskap deur die eeue, waarby die gemeenskap as geheel, en sommige indiwidue in die besonder, 'n rol gespeel het."

[90] "5.9.1 Een van die heel grootste misverstande ten opsigte van die gesag van die Skrif is dat die Bybel in die eerste instansie 'n boek is wat aan ons foutlose informasie verskaf, wat ons dan moet sluk of stik. Uiteraard gee die Skrif ook allerlei informasie, maar die funksie van woorde in die algemeen, en God se Woord in die besonder, is dat dit nie blote informasie deurgee nie, maar dinge doen."

Lastly, the DRCSA motivates their reinterpretation of the nature of Scripture by referring to examples of theologians, who in the premodern era, cautioned against a literalist approach to certain texts in the Bible.

"5.11.3 Since it is assumed in this report that the Bible is not a source of inerrant scientific and historical information, it will probably be labelled by fundamentalists as a product of modernism. It is undoubtedly true that specifically the modern era as the result of dramatic growth in knowledge, brought us under the deep impression that the Bible is no scientific text book. Yet, Old Testament scholars like John Goldingay has shown that also in the premodern era there had already been considerable declarations by well-known theological figures that points to an awareness of this truth. Origin sees Genesis 1 as theologically true, but not as historically correct. Augustine warns people not to use the Bible as a source for astronomical information while non-Christians know that it is not true. At the time of Calvin, astronomers already knew that Saturn was bigger than the moon, despite the fact that the creation account describes the moon as one of the two 'great lights' Calvin chastises people who seek astronomical information in Genesis while it describes things as it appears to us. On occasion Luther can interact utterly nonchalant with irreconcilable factual contradictions in the Scriptures. According to him one can ignore them since they do not jeopardise the essential articles of our faith. Surely these declarations are not characteristic of theologians of the pre-modern era, but it is rather clear that the interpretation of Scripture did not imply scientific inerrancy."[91]

[91] "5.11.3 Aangesien in hierdie verslag die standpunt ingeneem word dat die Bybel nie 'n bron van foutlose natuurwetenskaplike en historiese informasie is nie, sal dit seker vanuit fundamentalistiese kringe bestempel word as self 'n produk van die modernisme. Ongetwyfeld is dit waar dat juis die moderne tyd as gevolg van dramatiese groei in kennis, ons diep onder die indruk gebring het van die feit dat die Bybel geen handboek is vir die wetenskap nie. Tog wys onder andere die Ou-Testamentikus John Goldingay daarop dat ook in die premoderne tyd reeds heelwat uitsprake by bekende teologiese figure voorkom wat dui op 'n bewussyn van hierdie waarheid. Origenes beskou Gen 1 as teologies waar, maar nie as histories korrek nie. Augustinus waarsku mense om nie die Bybel te gebruik as bron vir sterrekundige informasie terwyl nie-Christene weet dat dit nie waar is nie. In die tyd van Calvyn het sterrekundiges reeds besef dat Saturnus groter is as die maan, hoewel die skeppingsverhaal na die maan verwys as een van die twee "groot ligte". Calvyn betig mense wat sterrekundige informasie gaan soek in Genesis terwyl dit die dinge beskryf soos wat dit vir ons voorkom. Luther kan by geleentheid uiters nonchalant omgaan met onversoenbare feitelike teenstrydighede in die Skrif. Volgens hom kan 'n mens dit ignoreer want dit bring nie die artikels van ons geloof in gedrang nie. Sekerlik is hierdie uitsprake nie kenmerkend van teoloë in die premoderne periode nie, maar tog is dit duidelik dat die inspirasie van die Skrif nie vir hulle sondermeer wetenskaplike foutloosheid impliseer het nie."

In contrast to this claim about the views of premodern theologians, it will be shown in 14.2.3.1 that, in particular, men like Calvin had a reverence for the ordinary, or literal (factual) meaning of any text of Scripture. Thus, the DRCSA's response to the claims of Scripture, in this regard, will be countered through reference to the principle of the perspicuity of Scripture.

To conclude the discussion on the 2002 General Synod decision pertaining to the Scriptures, it seems clear that a number of key interpretations on the nature of Scripture have been adjusted and reinterpreted despite the 1986 decision on Scripture in which the traditional understanding of inspiration and inerrancy were preserved.

10.6 Conclusion

Throughout the latter part of the 20th century, many forces were beginning to exert influence on the DRCSA and their view of Scripture. These forces, although not officially being taken into account, were indeed taking root. The popularising of liberal views resulted in the 2002 decision of the DRCSA to adopt a liberal view of Scripture. It was this new approach to Scripture that later shaped the gay/lesbian debate within DRCSA during the period 2002 until the present. The next chapter will focus on the LGBTQI+ debate.

SECTION 2: THE DRCSA IN THE LATE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY

CHAPTER 11 — THE ACCEPTANCE OF HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE DRCSA

11.1 Introduction

Based on the wide-scale redefining of their view of Scripture, the DRCSA started to redefine the Classic-Reformed meaning of many biblical doctrines. This impacted on traditional views involving gender and relationships. Through the popularising of new views on gender and gender roles, homosexuality[92] began to gain acceptance in society and inevitably started to infiltrate the Church as more and more within the DRCSA, proverbially speaking, 'came out of the closet.'

11.2 Pieter Cilliers — A Closet is for Clothes

11.2.1 His early years

One of the first attempts at 'normalising' 'contra-sexual' behaviour, specifically between two males, was made by Pieter Cilliers, who was a self-confessed 'gay' individual. As an ex-minister of the 'Hervormde' Church (NHKA), his book, *ń Kas is vir Klere* or *A Closet is for Clothes*, unleashed great debate among most mainline Afrikaans denominations, the DRCSA not the least of these.

He starts to recount the story of his 'coming to terms' with his sexual orientation at primary school level. In addition, in quite a graphic description he retells the story of how for the first time he realised that he was attracted to the same gender. He explains that it was during a playful wrestling match with an older boy that he realised his attraction (Cilliers, 1997:22). This, according to Cilliers, intensified as time progressed and he was in close proximity with a certain fellow student. As a result of this attraction, he contemplated seeking the help of his minister. Thinking that the minister would deny that he could be confirmed in the Church (1997:43), he decided to inspect Scripture's view on the subject. He recounts:

> "I found the place easily. In Romans 1. It was about the godlessness and lawlessness of the people of Rome. The further I read, the shallower my anxiety became…I wanted to vomit. The pronouncement that it merited the judgment by death, was the worst. I didn't understand these harsh words. I loved God. I did not make myself guilty of a bad attitude, lawlessness, evil, or lovelessness. My only

[92] In its adjective form, a "homosexual" is defined as a person who is "sexually attracted to people of the same sex." See the "South African Oxford Secondary School Dictionary," 2006, for other forms.

> trespass was my feeling for Andries. And this was punishable by death according to Romans 1[93]. I read the passage again and this time I vomited."[94]

This story which Cilliers recounts here is not unique. For a person who was raised within a Judeo-Christian worldview, it is only to be assumed that there would be this kind of struggle upon the realisation of his own homosexuality. However, more than just being a memoir of his upbringing, the book quickly takes the shape of a 'defence' for his chosen orientation.

11.2.2 University years

Even though he met a girl during university whom he professed to like, he states that he could never shake off his homosexual orientation (Cilliers, 1997:56-58). It was during this time that he began researching the topic of homosexuality more intensely and confesses that he would get information about the topic in *Die Huisgenoot*, which made the point that homosexual behaviour is mainly acquired over time when parents treat their sons like girls; or due to a poor father figure. In his narrative he explains that these explanations were inadequate in assisting him to understand his sexual orientation as he describes his upbringing stating: (1997:58): "We were a normal family. Dad and mom never babied me and I got along well with both of them. The tension that later developed between us was the result of my problem not its cause." He, therefore, continues to search for answers to his homosexual orientation. He eventually landed in the care of a psychiatrist who he met at the then H.F. Verwoerd hospital, who assured him that he could

[93] "Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason, God gave them up to dishonourable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them" (Romans 1:24-32).

[94] "Ek het die plek maklik gevind. In Romeine 1. Dit het gehandel oor die goddeloosheid en ongeregtigheid van die mense van Rome. Hoe verder ek gelees het, hoe vlakker het die angs gelê…Ek wou opgooi. Die uitspraak dat dit die doodstraf verdien het, was die ergste. Ek het hierdie harde woorde nie verstaan nie. Vir God was ek lief. Aan 'n slegte gesindheid, ongeregtigheid, boosheid en onbarmhartigheid het ek my nie skuldig gemaak nie. My enigste oortreding was my gevoel vir Andries. En dit was, aldus Romeine 1, strafbaar met die dood. Ek het die stuk weer gelees en dié keer het ek opgegooi."

cure him of his homosexuality (1997:59). This led to electro-shock therapy that was used by Doctor B to 'cure' him of his homosexuality.

Cilliers (1997:61) concludes the chapter stating that his experience with his psychiatrist "let me feel as if I did not want to be healed" and "made me believe that I was sick."[95]

11.2.3 Finding comfort in an affirmatory hermeneutic

Already at odds with the Calvinism that he was taught during his upbringing, Cilliers reminisces on memories of Mozambican night clubs, Dutch pornographic films, drinking of strong liquor, and his hidden sexual identity while he was at seminary (Cilliers, 1997:76-77). Following his graduation, he was ordained as a minister.

Pertinent to the gay debate within the church is Cilliers' discussion on how women's roles in the 'Hervormde' Church were being redefined. The previously held view that the pastoral ministry was exclusive to the men was being reshaped by his denomination. Cilliers refers to this as encouraging and hopeful (Cilliers, 1997:110-111):

> "A dash of hope came through about women in pastoral ministry. In the meeting it was decided that scriptures like 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:15 are not conclusive arguments against the allowing of women in the role of servant of the Word. That which was quoted before with authority in order to keep a woman from the clergy, was no longer valid. The breakthrough lay in the fact that the Church started to view the historical context through the present. It involved far more than making the age old message applicable to the present. The changing role of women in society was taken in consideration. Selective verses made room for the central message. And this brought the dash of hope. If better comprehension could cause one form of discrimination to disappear, others could possibly follow. In the meantime, black people, coloured folks, and homosexuals waited patiently."[96]

[95] "…het my laat voel dat ek nie gesond wou word nie…" en "my laat glo dat ek siek was."

[96] "'n Tikkie hoop het in die bespreking oor die vrou in die predikantsamp deurgeskemer. Die vergadering het besluit dat Skrifgedeeltes soos 1 Korintiërs 14 vers 34 en 1 Timoteus 2 vers 15 nie deurslaggewende argumente téén die toelating van vroue tot die amp van dienaar van die Woord is nie. Wat vroeër met gesag aangehaal is om die vrou uit die amp te weer, was nou nie meer geldig nie. Die deurbraak het daarin gelê dat die kerk na die historiese konteks vanuit die hede gekyk het. Dit het veel meer ingehou as om die eeue oue boodskap bloot op vandag van toepassing te maak. Die veranderende rol van die vrou in die gemeenskap is in ag geneem. Selektiewe skrifgedeeltes het plek gemaak vir die sentrale boodskap. En dit het die tikkie hoop gebring. As beter begrip een vorm van diskriminasie kon laat verdwyn, kon ander moontlik volg. Intussen het swart mense, Kleurlinge en homoseksuele geduldig gewag."

He describes the Church as "having had it wrong" when he talks about his calling to a congregation in Pretoria. According to Cilliers, it was, in his opinion, this defiant congregation that spurred him to continue questioning certain assumed beliefs. Alluding to his questioning of the church's traditional views on gender roles and sexuality Cilliers (1997:117) explains:

> "There was a grey area in the application of the Bible to prove the Church's arguments. What God meant, what the writers of the Bible meant and what the Church meant, mixed into vagueness. The many Protestant Churches and splinter groups, each holding to its own verses with its own interpretations, contributed to the confusion."[97]

Cilliers (1997:176) also finds affirmation for his sexual orientation in what he refers to as proof which does not require homosexuality to be seen as a sin before God. Cilliers (1997:176) applies this thinking to the biblical warnings against homosexuality from the Old Testament:

> "The Bible says many things. Leviticus and Deuteronomy are examples of this. Accordingly, the eating of shellfish is prohibited...Polygamy was an everyday occurrence. A son that did not obey his parents was stoned by the leaders of the city. A garment that was made of two types of material, wool and linen, was taboo."[98]

These Old Testament laws and a few more are what Cilliers (1997:176) offers as reasons not to interpret such laws as absolute morality markers of such behaviour, including men having sexual relations with men, or women with women. Largely because homosexual acts had to be dealt with according to the same level of punishment as the punishment for insubordinate children, Cilliers (1997:176) seems to minimise the moral absolutism of both.

11.2.4 Encouragement from the secular media for his chosen orientation

It was a newspaper article in *Die Beeld* which reported that certain researchers of homosexual tendency had identified the possible reason for homosexuality (Cilliers, 1997:157) under the title *Amerikaanse navorsers sê hul het homo-geen gevind*, or *American researchers say they have discovered the homo-gene*, that for Cilliers confirmed that what he was enduring was biological.

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[97] "Daar was 'n grys gebied in die aanwending van die Bybel om die kerk se argumente te staaf. Wat God bedoel het, wat die skrywers van die Bybel bedoel het en wat die kerk bedoel het, het vervloei tot 'n vae onduidelikheid. Die magdom Protestantse kerke en splintergroepe wat elkeen aan sy eie skrifgedeeltes met sy eie interpretasie vasgehou het, het tot die verwarring bygedra."

[98] "Die Bybel sê baie dinge. Levitikus en Deuteronomium is voorbeelde daarvan. Daarvolgens is die eet van skulpvis verbode. Die aanhou van slawe word aangemoedig. Poligamie was aan die orde van die dag. 'n Seun wat nie na sy ouers wou luister nie, is deur die leiers van die stad met klippe doodgegooi. 'n Kledingstuk van twee stukke materiaal, wol en linne, was taboe."

It was alleged that homosexuality was a biological manifestation of one's genetic information. To this end, homosexuality was being likened to a hereditary process that is governed by one's ancestry. Amongst others, the following was said: "American scientists recently made one of the most controversial findings in modern biology which proves that hereditary factors cause certain men to be more prone to homosexuality than others."

This research which was conducted by the National Cancer Institute of Maryland's, Dean Hamer, and reported on in the science magazine *Nature Genetics*, allegedly discovered differences in the nature of X- chromosomes. "DNA analysis were done on pairs of homosexual brothers. It was discovered that quite frequently there were interesting patterns on their X-chromosomes. Heterosexual brothers of the same family usually did not have the same chromosome characteristics" (Cilliers, 1997:157).

This theory he (Cilliers, 1997:157) explains, "made the most sense" from his frame of reference. It likewise provided answers to the many questions that he had. Cilliers (1997:157) notes that this explanation stood in contrast to the usual explanation that the Church provided, which was that this behaviour can be unlearned. Cilliers did not agree with the Church's approach, in particular the teaching of Dr Callie Hugo, who, according to him (1997:158), "quoted the very popular verses in an archaic and rigid approach to Scripture."[99]

11.3 The changing landscape within the Church as it involves homosexuality

Cilliers' book did not go unnoticed. In fact, he was invited to a country-wide tour, visiting Hervormde and DRCSA congregations sharing his life story. At the same time, *Die Kerkbode* of 10/11 October 1997 reported on his book. The stance taken by this DRCSA publication to homosexuality was one of understanding, tolerance and acceptance of homosexuality by the Church.

11.3.1 André Bartlett – gay activist

Besides Cilliers, André Bartlett, a DRCSA minister, was also a campaigner for gay rights in the Church. *Die Burger* of 16 October 2015 reported on the success of Bartlett's campaign when the decision was made in 2015 to unconditionally accept gay members. Bartlett's interviewer, Marida Fitzpatrick reports (2015): "[I]t was since 1999 that Bartlett has been fighting for gay rights in the Dutch Reformed Church, that gay people would be accepted as members, marry in the Church, and be ministers in the Church." Fitzpatrick (2015) also reported that it was "in 1999 that the

[99] "…het die oorbekende skrifgedeeltes in 'n verouderde en rigiede skrifbeskouing aangehaal."

Highveld synod called a study commission about the gay issue" to which "André was the chairman." Then again, Fitzpatrick (2015) says that "in later years, from 2004-2007, [Bartlett] became the chairman of the Dutch Reformed, gay task force and it was then that things got too much for him," referring to the opposition that he started to encounter within the DRCSA ranks.

Bartlett states that one of the reasons for his fight for gay rights within the church was due to the commitment of the late Dutch Reformed minister and freedom fighter, Beyers Naude. He recounts to Fitzpatrick (2015):

> "The fact that I persevered had much to do with [Naude's] example. If it involves injustice then it is negotiable, you just have to take the punch. I learnt this from him. About 14-15 years ago I asked him what he thought about the gay issue. He told me, to be honest, he does not understand it, but what he does understand, is that injustices are being committed against people. And where injustices are being committed, things have to be set right."

11.4 Conclusion

Through his memoir, Pieter Cilliers can be singled out as the man who had the greatest impact on the DRCSA with regards to the debate on homosexuality shortly before the end of the 20th century. The awareness he created around issues of homosexuality in the church compelled church officials like André Bartlett to affect change in a more official sense. As the chairman of the DRCSA's task force that would investigate the matter further, Bartlett became resolute to persuade the DRCSA to accept practising homosexuals unconditionally into the church as members.

SECTION 2: THE DRCSA IN THE LATE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURY

CHAPTER 12 — LIBERALISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY DRCSA

In the chapters of section 2, the reader is given an overview in relation to the focus of this thesis discussion of the developments relating to issues of Evolution, historical criticism, and homosexuality in the years 1994 – 2001. Starting with the theory of Evolution in chapter 9, men such as Louw Alberts, Gideon Joubert and Albert Alberts attempted to harmonise Darwinist Evolution with Scripture (theistic evolution) in order to make the theory more acceptable in the eyes of DRCSA members. Aided by a similar naturalistic worldview to the authors above, some South African theologians started to see problems in the biblical text in general, not just where it involved the creation account. The naturalistic worldview thus aided the promotion of theories that were critical of the inspiration, reliability, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture.

In chapter 10 it is shown that men like theology professors, Jurie le Roux and Andries van Aarde propagated the old-school German liberal views that denied the inerrant and inspired nature of Scripture. Le Roux proposed the necessity to rid theology (the DRCSA specifically) of traditional vestiges such as the doctrine of inerrancy and inspiration in order to provide for more scientific approaches. This approach by le Roux was published in *Skrif en Kerk* shortly after the death of Johan Heyns in 1994 and was not only a eulogy in honour of Heyns but also an effort to challenge some of Heyns' conservative views regarding the nature of Scripture.

NHKA theologian Andries van Aarde's (ref. Ch. 10) views were also important to the discussion that involved historical critical interpretations of Scripture, in particular interpretations of the Gospels. In his book *Fatherless in Galilee*, van Aarde constructed an alleged 'historical Jesus' that he believed was the 'real' Jesus introduced to readers of the Gospels. With regards to the many conclusions drawn by van Aarde regarding what he believed to be the real nature of Jesus, the denial of the godly nature of Christ as the Son of God seems to be at the centre of his conclusions.

With reference to the 2002 General Assembly meeting of the DRCSA, it was evident that the scriptural views of le Roux were accepted within the DRCSA.

In chapter 11, ex NHKA minister, Pieter Cilliers argued in his book *ń Kas is vir Klere* that the NHKA's eventual opting for an egalitarian approach to women in ministry was the development that proved to him that perhaps men may later be permitted to have sexual relationships with men, and women with women in his Church. In other words, he understood that the new hermeneutic of scriptural interpretation which his Church employed that allowed for women to

enter the pastoral ministry, could also be used to allow for homosexuals to be married and ordained as ministers.

Lastly, in addition to Cilliers, a leading Dutch Reformed Minister, André Bartlett, campaigned for the rights of homosexual DRCSA members and ministers in ways similar to Cilliers. Bartlett who chose to campaign for the equal treatment of homosexuals as members of the Church with all the rights and privileges of heterosexual members without distinction, found inspiration from late DRCSA minister, Beyers Naudé (who battled segregation), to continue fighting for the equal treatment of homosexuals.

SECTION 3: A PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICAL RESPONSE TO THE DRCSA

CHAPTER 13 — AN INTRODUCTION TO SECTION 3

This section aims to provide a biblical response to theistic evolution, Higher Criticism, and the hermeneutic that allows for gay and lesbian unions in the DRCSA. This will be undertaken by a presuppositionally apologetical response to these significant theological developments within the DRCSA.

In basic terms, the presuppositional method involves the consulting of Scripture as the final authority on theological matters. This is necessitated by the differing worldviews that oppose the biblical worldview. Greg L. Bahnsen (1998:461) explains what well-known presuppositionalist, Cornelius van Til understood by this method: "Van Til realized that when the believer encounters intellectual objections or challenges to his Christian faith from unbelievers (or believers for that matter), the dispute between them is almost always generated by, and will be controlled by, their different fundamental assumptions – their presuppositions." For this reason, the one who believes that the events described in Scripture are true will disagree with one whose worldview does not allow for it. As Bahnsen (1998:463) puts it, "The Christian reads in God's word, and thus believes…" This includes the miraculous events described in Scripture, like the creation account, the truthfulness and accuracy of Scripture which includes events like resurrections, healings, and other similarly supernatural phenomena, and the moral statements that Scripture makes, like requirements for sexuality. In other words, in a presuppositional effort, the Bible is used to evaluate worldviews, doctrines, perceptions and interpretations.

When using the Bible, the employment of a biblical hermeneutic is of the utmost importance. Sound hermeneutics ultimately leads to sound biblical exegesis. This will be shown in this section assuming the plenary, verbal (understandable in human language) inspiration of the Scriptures, as well as the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture. When these presuppositions are present, they ensure that the results of exegesis are seen as the moral requirements of God in the lives of people.

Referring to the ostensible crisis within biblical exegesis today, Walter Kaiser highlights the dangers of a disregard for the hermeneutical, 'single meaning' principle of biblical exegesis, which modern exegetes are often prone to disregard. He explains (1981:47) that if there is no 'singular meaning:'

> "…Communication itself is severely handicapped if not made impossible. If individual speakers or writers are not sovereign over the use of their own words, and if meaning is not a return to how they intended their words to be regarded, then we are in a most difficult situation – everyone communicating, but no one in particular ever receiving (or knowing if he has adequately received) the message."

In this sense, it is the responsibility of 'sound exegesis' or a sound hermeneutic to adequately discern the biblical 'message' as it was written.

Having specified these requirements for the accurate interpretation of Scripture in general, it must also be said that the aim of chapter 14, as it involves theistic evolution specifically, is not to treat the subject exhaustively by employing evidence from external literature or scientific works. Rather, the aim is to evaluate the theologically-liberal understanding of Evolution from the perspective of the Bible. The same will be done in chapter 15 in evaluating the effects of Higher Criticism, and lastly in chapter 16 in evaluating the LGBTQI+ hermeneutic from a presuppositional apologetical standpoint, i.e. a presuppositionally biblical standpoint.

The late Westminster Seminary Professor, Cornelius van Til (1955:107) defined the presuppositional method of Protestant apologetics in the following way:

> "…the Bible, as the infallibly inspired revelation of God to sinful man, stands before us as that light in terms of which all the facts of the created universe must be interpreted. All of finite existence, natural and redemptive, functions in relation to one all-inclusive plan that is in the mind of God. Whatever insight man is to have into this pattern of the activity of God *he must attain by looking at all his objects of research in the light of Scripture*" [italics added].

Every fact of the 'created universe,' as van Til exhorts, must be made sense of through the lens of the inspired and inerrant Word of God, and no other way. Thus, the aim in this section is to answer the said subjects, theistic evolution, the effects of Higher Criticism, and the LGBTQI+ apologetical by focusing on what the Bible says about them.

SECTION 3: A PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICAL RESPONSE TO THE DRCSA

CHAPTER 14 — A PRESUPPOSITIONAL EVALUATION OF THEISTIC EVOLUTION

14.1 Introduction

Denial of the supernatural is not a new attempt at discrediting issues of faith. Rather, it has a lengthy history, finding its roots in the Enlightenment and the eventual era of Modernism. Feinberg (2000:168) highlights that 'modernity' would eventually lead to the death of supernaturalism as "reason is exalted and supernaturalism is denied." He then explains (2000:168) that denial of the supernatural is what eventually led to the post-modernist view, within which all ideas are seen as valid, subjective truths.

With regards to the school of verificationism, for example, every sentence in a language has to be empirically tested, and so doing, confirmed as factual (Bahnsen, 1996:208). However, as an apologist, the late Dr Greg Bahnsen argued that this line of reasoning became 'embarrassing' to schools of philosophy, like 'logical positivism,' who followed verificationism. They soon realised that it was impossible to verify everything, especially every aspect of language which describes supernatural events. But, denial of the supernatural is what would eventually impact on, and begin to change core values of the DRCSA.

The question that will be answered in this chapter is whether a naturalist theory such as Darwinist Evolution is still a reasonable explanation for the biblical account of creation, once it has been evaluated against the requirements of Scripture. At this point, an essential distinction must be drawn between atheistic evolution and theistic evolution. Essentially, the atheistic evolutionist approaches the question of origins from the presupposition that there cannot be a God who created everything, while the theistic evolutionist does acknowledge God's creative activity, albeit through evolutionary processes. Therefore, the theistic evolutionist places his faith in a process (Evolution) which he must prove. As Pelser (2002:16) observes, Charles Darwin himself explained that people have a logical reason to reject his proposed theory as the result of an anaemic fossil record.

Upon further research, it appears that Evolution has been buttressed by the presuppositional commitments of 'naturalism,' most notably, the assumption that all things must have a scientific

explanation. MacArthur (2001:15) refers to 'naturalism' as a religion. Explaining the legacy of Carl Sagan, MacArthur states:

> "All of this underscores the spiritual barrenness of naturalism. The naturalist's religion erases all moral and ethical accountability, and it ultimately abandons all hope for humanity." In support of this, Bahnsen (1998:460) explains: "To be sure, all men have faith. Unbelievers have faith as well as believers. But that is due to the fact that they too are creatures of God. Faith therefore always has content. It is against the content of faith as belief in God that man has become an unbeliever. As such he tries to suppress the content of his original faith…"

Many Christian denominations have preferred theistic evolution as a reasonable 'theistic' alternative to atheistic evolution. Some see Young Earth Creationism as archaic or misleading in light of the findings of science. For instance, well-known Anglican bishop, N.T. Wright (2014:31), describes young earth creationism as false teaching in his 2014 book *Surprised by Scripture: Engaging with contemporary issues*. However, as a philosophy, Darwinist Evolution seems to be contra-Christian, if not anti-Christian, at least as its denying of the nature of God is concerned. To this end MacArthur (2001:24) quotes Marvin L. Lubenow who writes:

> "The real issue in the creation/evolution debate is not the existence of God. The real issue is the nature of God. To think of evolution as basically atheistic is to misunderstand the uniqueness of evolution. Evolution was not designed as a general attack against theism. It was designed as a specific attack against the God of the Bible, and the God of the Bible is clearly revealed through the doctrine of creation…"

Accordingly, what is significant to this study is the widespread acceptance of theistic evolution in the Church. As Bell (2018:273) describes it:

> "Considering how many biblical doctrines are impacted by [Theistic Evolution]…the widespread acceptance of these ideas by contemporary evangelical churches is of great concern. Thinking people of past generations expressed similar concerns about the impact of erroneous teaching. Once it has been imbibed by Christians, their ability to favourably season the wider culture and influence its people for good is much diminished."

Perhaps the acceptance of theistic evolution has something to do with the pressure society has exerted on the Church to be more scientific. As Moreland (2017:9) puts it: "In my experience, theistic evolutionists are usually trying to create a safe truce with science so Christians can be left alone to practice their privatized religion while retaining the respect of the dominant intellectual culture."

Theistic evolution's view has been described in this study when the views of men like Louw Alberts, Gideon Joubert, and Albert Alberts were discussed (and to a lesser degree the evolutionary views of Johannes du Plessis which allowed for a non-literal approach to the Genesis account of creation [ref. 5.6]). What these men have in common is that they believe that everything evolved over a very long period of time to the dawn of the human race. Louw Alberts, Gideon Joubert and Albert Alberts, in particular, also believe in the existence of 'human-like' prehistoric animals, or Primates, which they assume to have been the ancestors of the human race (ref. chapter 9 for an analysis of their respective views).[100] These are all core assumptions that are characteristic of theistic evolution.

Given the above, what this chapter now moves to is a presuppositional evaluation of the claims of theistic evolution (as represented by these DRCSA proponents) in relation to Scripture.

14.2 Scripture and Evolution

14.2.1 The problem of sin

From the outset, it is important to note that Evolution's 'sin problem' is not to be confused with the biblical-philosophical 'problem of evil,' although they are related and problematic for the evolutionist. Rather, the emphasis on the problem of sin referred to in this regard, questions the apparent inconsistency of evolutionary theory as it involves the introduction of sin to the sphere of existence. Theistic evolution has not been able to offer a well-drafted and 'not-grossly-allegorised' explanation for the entrance of sin subsequent to the creation of the human race[101]. It is this entrance of sin that technically allowed for death to enter in. The onus is therefore on the theistic evolutionist to explain how death and natural selection could have been in place before the entrance of sin into the world. Martin Duboisée de Ricquebourg (2012) responds to this

[100] The following quote from Joubert's (1997) *Die Groot Gedagte*, speaks for Louw Alberts, and Albert Alberts as it encapsulates one of the primary tenets of theistic evolution – belief in the existence of ape-men: "There in the brushes was the first ape-like human that walked upright. It was like yesterday that homo sapiens of our time made his initial appearance. It was less than half a million years, probably a quarter million years ago."

[101] Henry Morris III (Morris, 2009a:147; Morris, 2009b:147) insightfully summarises the problem of allegory: "There are some, however, who would suggest that those events are nothing more than allegory, an attempt to explain the burden of social ills and dysfunction. If, however, the Genesis record is an allegory, if it contains nothing more than an ancient attempt to explain the cultural divergences of humanity; if the words of those 'writings' are not actual history, then the rest of the Bible's message becomes nothing more than an addendum to the allegory!"

problem explaining that "theistic evolutionists, in an endeavour to embrace both Darwin and Moses, claim that God created all the original kinds of animals and plants through a process of natural selection (contra Genesis 1–2)." He continues to argue this point, saying:

> "…according to Genesis 3, death came as a result of Adam's disobedience and God's curse upon this earth. When we reject this history, we are compelled instead to view death, bloodshed, violence, disease and the general struggle for survival as the God-given blessings of a perfect world. Yet this makes little sense of 1 Corinthians 15:26, and construes the God of creation to be a moral monster."

The problem that theistic evolution faces here is the presence of natural selection (necessitating death) prior to the fall of mankind, where death was first introduced.

In addition to the entrance of death, theologically speaking, it is necessary to place the Fall (Genesis 3) in the correct sequence after creation in order to provide for the universal transmission of sin's guilt before God. Kulikovsky (2009:204) refers to the view of Forster and Marston espoused in *Reason, Science and Faith* that understands Paul's description of Adam's sin in Romans 5, as not necessarily affecting the rest of humanity in any way. Kulikovsky (2009:204) recounts that these authors believe that guilt for sin is merely the result of individual sin and not something inherited from Adam (as a representative of the human race). Kulikovsky (2009:205) continues by saying that this view "…is totally contrary to Scripture, which

communicates that every human being inherits a sinful nature. All people are by default under condemnation as a result of the first couple's sin (Ephesians 2:3)."[102]

A defective understanding of the entrance of sin into the world will also lead to an inaccurate understanding of the entrance of death theologically speaking (Kulikovsky, 2009:205). Commenting again on the view of Forster and Marston regarding the entrance of sin's guilt and death explained by Paul in Romans 5, Kulikovsky insists that verses 12-13 (especially verse 13) of Romans 5 does not teach the absence of culpability before the giving of the Law, an interpretation that would fit a theistic evolutionary framework. Rather, according to Kulikovsky (2009:205) morality and culpability did exist, even in the absence of an official code. He explains:

> "Firstly, Paul states in Romans 1 that the existence of moral law is obvious to all even though people suppress it (vv. 18-32). Secondly, contra Forster and Marston, verse 13 does not say that there was no sin before the law was given. Rather, sin did indeed exist, but was not clearly defined and therefore was not directly credited to each person. Nevertheless, as verse 14 states, those who lived before the [Mosaic Law] still died as a result of their own sin."

The question about the timing of the entrance of death is biblically important as well, and one to which theistic evolutionists need to respond. To deny inherited guilt, which the Palagian view of Forster and Marston does, is also to deny the correct placement of death's entrance, which biblically speaking, spiritually was the direct consequence of sin, but most importantly to this discussion, also physically. Calling to mind the literary structure of Romans 5:12-13, Kulikovsky

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[102] Under the heading, "The Doctrine of Original Sin," article 15 of the Belgic confession describes inherited sin in the following way: "We believe that by the disobedience of Adam original sin has been spread through the whole human race. It is a corruption of all nature--an inherited depravity which even infects small infants in their mother's womb, and the root which produces in man every sort of sin. It is therefore so vile and enormous in God's sight that it is enough to condemn the human race, and it is not abolished or wholly uprooted even by baptism, seeing that sin constantly boils forth as though from a contaminated spring." The Canons of Dort agree with the Belgic Confession's description of the spread of original sin, stating the following in article 2 under the heading "Human Corruption, Conversion to God, and the Way it Occurs:" "Human beings were originally created in the image of God and were furnished in mind with a true and sound knowledge of the Creator and things spiritual, in will and heart with righteousness, and in all emotions with purity; indeed, the whole human being was holy. However, rebelling against God at the devil's instigation and by their own free will, they deprived themselves of these outstanding gifts. Rather, in their place they brought upon themselves blindness, terrible darkness, futility, and distortion of judgment in their minds; perversity, defiance, and hardness in their hearts and wills; and finally impurity in all their emotions." The DRCSA formally ascribes to both the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort.

(2009:205) highlights the grammatical difficulty of the claim which theistic evolution makes with regards to the entrance of sin:

> "…Paul is talking about physical death. Why does the sudden awareness of moral law bring about physical death?" Forster and Marston's interpretation makes no sense at all of the link between sin and physical death – a link which is highlighted by the small scale chiasmus in verse 12:
>
> Therefore, just as through one man
> A ***sin*** entered the world,
> B and ***death*** through sin,
> B' and in this way ***death*** came
> A' to all men, because all ***sinned***"

Thus, the sequence according to which sin and death entered the world is one that has important implications for human culpability before God. Kulikovsky (2009:206) states that those who accept the claims of modern science have to accept death before the actual entrance of sin, which is not a reasonable theological assessment to make for the aforementioned reasons. As Kulikovsky (2009:212) puts it:

> "…the reason for holding to interpretations that see the death and suffering of animals as an inherent part of God's plan is purely because a commitment to an 'old-earth' creation scenario demands it. Not only do these interpretations allow scientific speculations to override the revelation of Scripture, but they lead to a belief that death and suffering, and the survival of the fittest, were actually part of God's original creation which he described as 'very good' (Genesis 1:31)."

The dating of the start of the culpability of the human race is of immense theological importance and of salvific consequence. Theistic evolutionists grammatically must find ways to fit death in before the entrance of sin for their commitment to evolutionary science to be harmonised with the teaching of the Bible. However, based on the reasons stated above, it would be best to see death as the result of sin that entered in through one man and women, and not as something that was a reality before the Fall.

This principle of the entrance of sin through death and the resultant passing on of sin's guilt to the rest of humanity is a major tenet of the Christian faith that has been supported in many of the traditional creeds, not the least of these, the Heidelberg Catechism[103] of 1563. Stoker

[103] With the Belgic confession and the Canons of Dordt, the Heidelberg Catechism is the three particular creeds the DRCSA formally confess as fully in accordance with the Word of God.

(2010:231) observes that the Heidelberg Catechism refers to the creation and fall accounts of Genesis 1-3 as necessary historical events, stating:

> "An example of this is our confession that we and our children are in Adam and share in our ancestors' depravity. Adam and Eve are referred to as our 'first parents' (HC, question/answer 7). The historicity of this account affects the mediatory role of Christ, because God himself already revealed this 'gospel' to us in the garden (HC, answer 19). If Genesis 1-3 is not understood as historical, then a central aspect of this creed is being denied."

14.2.2 The authority of Scripture

It is necessary to evaluate theistic evolution for its view on the authority of Scripture. A particular aspect which pertains to the authority of Scripture is the fact that Scripture is sufficient in all things, not just spiritual matters. Sarfati (2004:35) reminds that it "is fallacious to limit scriptural authority to only those portions deemed to be about 'faith and practice.' Doctrine is inextricably linked to history and science, so that whatever Scripture affirms on historical or scientific matters is also true." Sarfati (2004:35-36) explains: "For example, the key doctrine of the resurrection is linked to the historical fact that Jesus' body had vacated the tomb on the third day. This also impinges on science, because naturalistic scientists assert that it is impossible for dead men to rise." Such impossibilities within Scripture which theistic evolution does not accept are the order of creation, the timing of creation, and its literary genre.

14.2.2.1 The order of creation

Theistic evolution's departure from the reading of the creation account can be seen in its insistence of a non-literal reading of the Genesis 1: 1-31 verses in order to fit them into a scientific framework that makes sense to them. There are similarities between this and Hugh Ross's Progressive Creationism that is built on a theory of billions of years of creation. In order to illustrate the general departure that theistic evolution and the view of Ross takes from the biblical text, Sarfati (2004:141) has compiled a table that compares the biblical account with that of the general approach men like Ross takes:

Table 1

Order of Appearance (long-age)	**Order of Appearance (Bible)**
1. Sun/stars existed before earth	1. Earth created before sun/stars
2. Sun is earth's first light	2. Light on earth before sun
3. First life = marine organisms	3. First life = land plants
4. Reptiles predate birds	4. Birds predate land reptiles
5. Land mammals predate whales	5. Whales predate land mammals
6. Disease/death precede man	6. Disease/death result from man's sin

This order, suggested by Ross in the left column above, fits within Gideon Joubert's understanding of the origin of creation as a Big Bang. The theistic evolutionist, therefore, suggests that long periods within creation needed to have the presence of the sun before the presence of light in order for their model to make sense. As Sarfati (2004:142) points out:

> "…the creation of the sun after the earth also fatally undermines progressive creationists' attempts to harmonize the Bible with billions of years. This is because they believe the big-bang theory, which has the sun and stars existing before the earth.
>
> So they must explain this teaching away. Some assert that what really happened on this fourth 'day' was that the sun and other heavenly bodies 'appeared' when a dense cloud layer dissipated after millions of years."

Sarfati (2004:142) insists that this "is not only fanciful science but bad exegesis of Hebrew." His reason for his assertion lies in the Hebrew grammar employed in Genesis 1:14-19 that discusses the creation of the sun and other heavenlies, the creation of which, biblically speaking, occurred after the creation of the earth. That the earth was created before the sun and stars does not fit within Big Bang theory, thus the theistic evolutionist must seek ways to reorder them. Sarfati (2004:142) explains: "The word 'asah' means 'make' throughout Genesis 1, and is sometimes used interchangeably with 'create' (bara) – for example in Genesis 1:26-27. Thus, if God had meant 'appeared,' then He presumably would have used the Hebrew word for appear (ra'ah), as

He did when He said that the dry land 'appeared' as the waters gathered in one place on day 3 (Gen. 1:9)."[104]

Given that it involves biblical authority; the burden is on the theistic evolutionist to explain his/her departure from the biblical description of the way God chose to create. Duboisée de Ricquebourg (2012) points out that according to the Bible, God created the earth before the solar system. Likewise, light was created before the sun (philosophically the theistic evolutionist cannot believe this) and God created plants before he created the stars, sun, and moon (again, a problem for the theistic evolutionist).

14.2.2.2 The timing of the creation

The problems stated above pose difficulty for those who adopt a 'day-age' approach to the days of creation in Genesis 1:1-31. In addition, theistic evolution draws into question the timing of creation, as do all of the DRCSA proponents of theistic evolution discussed in chapter 9. The Bible assumes that the instant creation of everything, as described in Genesis 1, occurred in six days. It is true that the meaning of the Hebrew word 'yom' (day) can adopt the meaning of longer periods, however, in its most natural reading, 'yom' assumes a 24-hour period. This is intensified by the repetition of the phrase "and there was evening and there was morning" which indicates that the Bible is referring to the progression of a 24-hour day.

Commenting on the presence of the word 'yom' in Genesis 1, Wenham states (1987:19):

> "There can be little doubt that here 'day' has its basic sense of a 24-hour period. The mention of morning and evening, the enumeration of the days, and the divine rest on the seventh show that a week of divine activity is being described here. Elsewhere, of course, 'in the day of' and similar phrases can simply mean 'when' (e.g., 2:4; 5:1, etc.). Ps 90:4 indeed says that a thousand years are as a day in God's sight. But it is perilous to try to correlate scientific theory and biblical revelation by appeal to such texts. Rather, it is necessary to inquire more closely into the literary nature of Gen 1 and whether chronological sequence and scientific explanation are the narrators concern."

[104] Sarfati (2004:254) calls attention to yet another example where the Hebrew grammar is employed in a way to accommodate science. Ross views the Genesis Flood as something less that a world-wide flood of water. Sarfati (2004:254) corrects by saying: "…in the Pentateuch, [*kasah* (to cover)] overwhelmingly means only 'cover' or 'conceal'…And in the Flood account, it is combined with another verb, (*gabar*), which is translated 'prevailed' or 'rose.' The meaning of *kasah* in this context can only be 'covered.'" In other words complete coverage of the face of the earth is in mind.

Although Wenham takes the view that this passage in Genesis stands outside of the main historical outline of Genesis, he does attest to the fact that the word 'yom' indicates a 24-hour period, as noted above.

Upon deeper inspection of the Hebrew grammar at play, some have rejected the day-age model after having subscribed to it for years. As Sarfati (2004:144-145) shows, this is the case with geologist Davis Young, son of well-known Old Testament scholar, E.J. Young. Sarfati (2004:145) provides an excerpt from a 1990 lecture held by Young at a Wheaton College science symposium, entitled *The Harmonization of Scripture and Science.* The following paragraphs from Sarfati's (2004:145) excerpt of Young's lecture further illustrate the difficulty that efforts at reconciling the biblical text with the scientific requirement of long ages may face:

> "…the text states that on the fourth day God made the heavenly bodies after the earth was already in existence. Here is a blatant confrontation with science. Astronomy insists that the sun is older than the earth. How do day-agers worm out of this? The usual subterfuge involves the suggestion that the light originally visible on earth was sunlight that was obscured and diffused by the thick atmosphere that began to dissipate with the separation of the waters on the second day. Not until the fourth day, however, had the mists thinned to the point where the sun became visible from earth…"

Interpretations such as these are what, according to Young, may have "resulted in temporary damage to the theological musculature" (Sarfati, 2004:145).

What men like Sarfati, Bell, and Young are saying resonate with the teaching of the late Henry M. Morris (1918-2006) who warned against the impossibility of compromise between creation and Evolution. In his seminal work *The Genesis Record*, Morris comments on the peculiarity of the constant repetition of the phrase "and there was evening and there was morning" of whichever day is spoken of. Morris (2006:56) understands these references to evenings and mornings as references to the completion of each distinct day. Morris (2006:56) states that: "Thus each 'day' had distinct boundaries and was one in a series of days, both of which criteria are never present in the Old Testament writings unless literal days are intended." In addition, Morris (2006:56) suggests that the specification of the completion of these day units should dispel any notions of the evolutionary development of the natural order that was prevalent in the ancient world.

The question therefore is, must one be willing to resort to the alternate meaning of the Hebrew word 'yom' in effort to adapt the Genesis account of the creation of the world to the philosophical assumptions of Charles Darwin and its resultant evolutionary science (ref. 5.6)? Must one be willing to see no alternative to the day-age model that is preferred by Louw Alberts, in order to fit

what is seen as scientific into a biblical worldview (ref. 9.3.2)? The answer to this is, not necessarily. In defence of this view, theologians like Victor P. Hamilton acknowledge that it is in an inordinate or unnatural way in which the word 'yom' must be employed for it to be accommodated to the 'day-age' theory which du Plessis endorsed. Footnoting the renowned Dallas Theological Seminary professor, Henry Morris, Hamilton described it in the following way (1990:56):

> "The literal understanding of 'day' in Gen. 1 teaches that God created and then populated his world in a 144-hour period (6 24-hour days). It, does not of course, document whether God worked the entire 24-hour period or just a portion thereof. It needs to be affirmed that in the Hebrew Bible the normal understanding of *yôm* is a day of the week. There are, to be sure, places where it may refer to an unmeasured period of time or to an era such as in the prophets' phrase 'in the day,' or to an unusually long period of time, even up to a millennium (Ps. 90:4). The burden of proof, however, is on those who do not attribute to *yôm* in Gen. 1 its normal and most common interpretation, especially when *yôm* is always described as being composed of an evening and a morning."

In spite of the teachings of evolutionary science, it is, therefore, reasonable to interpret the days of creation as actual 24-hour days.

14.2.2.3 The genre of Genesis

What Morris advised above is that careful attention should be given to the genre or the style of the book of Genesis. According to Gentry (2016:66), it is necessary to be familiar with all the different facets of the literary genre of Genesis to reach one's conclusion with regards to the question of origins. These facets include the interests of the Jews of antiquity, the concern of the writer of Genesis in this study assumed to be Moses, the chronological structuring of the book, and the style of the creation narrative.

Firstly, Gentry (2016:66) shows that Moses was by no means an unqualified writer on the subject of origins. He (2016:66) reminds that Moses was educated in all the ways of the Egyptians, by quoting Acts 7:22. Because of his ancestry, which he pursued despite being raised in the ways of the Egyptians, Gentry (2016:66) suggests that Moses would have had a keen interest in the creation of the world by God. He explains:

> "…in their worldview, the God of Israel was not only the transcendent Creator over history, but also the immanent Redeemer within history. Israel understood that she had an important role to play in God's world as the conduit of His redemptive grace. This conviction arises from God's pre-covenantal promise to Abraham, which states, "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen. 12:3)."

For this reason, Gentry suggests that Moses would have been acutely interested in chronology and history. Louw Alberts (1996:79), however, disagrees with this view saying that "there is no need to let the arrangement of the chapter [Genesis 1] balance with the findings of science because the revelation was not intended to provide a chronological reflection of the creation." This, Alberts (1996:79) believed to be the case largely because "it was meant to show that God was responsible for the creation of everything and that he was satisfied with the results. It is left to science… to find out how God did it through the passing of time."

Gentry (2016:67) disagrees with this idea of Alberts and quotes from page 82 of the Dictionary of the Old Testament, Historical Books by Arnold & Williamson who says that "chronological sequence is the backbone of the Bible's narrative books, their most salient and continuous organizing principle." Gentry (2016:68-69) admits that "by itself the argument for the Jewish interest in history does not prove Genesis 1 is historical narrative. After all, the Jews also wrote abundant poetry…But it is the first step in that direction."

Secondly, the reasons for Moses' writing of Genesis must also be weighed. According to Gentry (2016:69) when accepting the historical nature of Genesis, it seems all the more feasible to accept the Pentateuch's account on origins as part of this historical and literary treasury for the nation of Israel. As Gentry (2016:72) suggests (this is where it ties in with what Morris says), "We find in the Genesis creation narrative numerous subtle testimonies against the pagan creation myths dominating Canaan and the Ancient Near East." Gentry (2016:72) continues to point out that when speaking of the creation of the seas "Moses chooses a word for the 'deep,' [tehom], in Genesis 1:2 that probably intentionally reflects Tiamat, the primordial goddess of chaos that was prominent in creation myths." However, Moses is careful to credit Elohim as the creator of the deep. Unlike the beliefs about the origin of the world, "the six days of creation show an orderly creation process rather than a chaotic one" (Gentry, 2016:73).

Thirdly, Gentry (2016:75) pays attention to the structure of Genesis, which according to him involves Moses providing the Israelites with a historical understanding of their heritage, including God's revelation of the origin of the created order. The book as Gentry (2016:75) points out, falls within a historical literary structure as is evidenced from the Hebrew structuring device named, "toledot," which means an "account" – in the sense of historical account. What is significant about the genre being employed in Genesis, specifically as it involves the creation of the world, is the fact that it sets the standard for the rest of the book that deals with the rest of Israel's national

history, including the covenants to the patriarchs (Gentry, 2016:76).[105] Speaking of the first man, Adam, as it is specified in Genesis, his history is closely tied to the history of beginnings. Gentry (2016:77) highlights:

> "The Genesis 2:4 [toledot] provides the historical backdrop for an historical Adam and his historical testing. It sets him in history following upon the historical creation of the world by God. And this requires that the record of creation be literal, historical narrative. If we are to believe in an historical Adam – as do Luke (Luke 3:38) and Paul (1 Cor. 15:45; 1 Tim. 2:13) – we must accept the setting of his creation as historical, at the very beginning of history."

What Gentry (2016:77-78) suggests is that when admitting to the historical genre of Genesis there is no compelling reason left to interpret the introductory passages of this book as any less historical than any other of its passages, for instance, covenantal or genealogical.

Fourth, the style employed in Genesis also merits attention. If it is meant to be understood in a less than literal way, perhaps even poetically representing eons per day of creation, then one should admit that interpretations of instantaneous creation would not be justified. However, as Gentry (2016:78) explains, it would be quite evident from these passages that one is dealing with poetry or figurative speech if that was Moses' intention: "Hebrew poetry has a characteristic style involving several distinctive elements, including especially parallelism, terseness, and ellipsis" (Gentry, 2016:78). It is when parallelism is combined with a terseness that one gets a poetic effect (Gentry, 2016:78).

However, the first two chapters of Genesis does not lend itself to a poetic device as the repeated employment of the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, "waw," clarifies (Gentry, 2016:80). This repetition of "waw," says Gentry (2016:80): "…is perhaps the most significant feature of Moses' historical style in Genesis 1…*Waw*…is often used as the primary conjunction 'and' or 'then.'" Gentry (2016:80) continues by saying that the construction known as the "'*waw* consecutive' involves a verb that has been prefixed with *waw*.." which is typically used in narrative and is, therefore, "characteristic of historical genre." The *waw* consecutive is the preferred Hebrew way

[105] Sarfati (2018:47) points out that other writers of the Bible refer to characters in Genesis 1-11 as historical people. Sarfati (2018:47) says: "Indeed, there are several other passages of Scripture that cite people from Genesis 1-11 then move on to people from Genesis 12-50 without the slightest hint that the former are less historical." Accordingly, Sarfati (2018:47) highlights 1 Chronicles 1-8 which is a genealogy from Adam to Noah, to the 12 tribes of Israel, including the kings of Israel and Judah and the Babylonian exile. Other such examples are Luke 3:23-38 and Hebrews 11.

of describing past historical events and is therefore "quite significant for the debate over the genre of Genesis 1, for Genesis 1:1 has the word 'created' [bara] in the qal perfect followed by a long series of qal imperfects beginning in 1:3, such as 'then God said,' 'and God saw,' 'and God called,' etc" (Gentry, 2016:81). It is significant to the discussion of creation that Moses used historical narrative to describe the origin of the world instead of poetry, which according to Gentry (2016:81), is something that Moses would have been familiar with.

Lastly, the purpose to which Moses wrote the first two chapters of Genesis must also be considered. What seems evident is that Moses wrote with a 'big picture' in mind which starts with the historical reality of the God who created (Gentry, 2016:86). Gentry (2016:87) quotes Harrison who states: "'The prologue [to Genesis] is cast in universal terms suitable to the subject-matter, and depicts the creative activity of God in fashioning the cosmos and placing man upon the earth. The universality of sin is depicted, along with the fact that, as rebellion against God, it must always stand under divine judgment, a situation exemplified by the account of the deluge."

Thus, the general purpose to which Moses wrote these introductory chapters of Genesis can be attributed to his wish to reveal the unfiltered history of the creation of the world, the introduction of sin, the founding of a nation (Israel) under God, and God's resultant promise of faithfulness to fulfil his promises unto his people as stipulated in the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 1-12).

Well-known Old Testament scholar, E.J. Young, concurs with the historical nature of the first verse of Genesis in the introduction of his *Studies in Genesis One*, saying (1964:1):

> "If the first chapter of Genesis presents and historical account of the creation, it follows that, for a proper understanding of [chapter 1], one must also apprehend the relationship in which the first verse stands to the following. If, on the other hand, the chapter contains mere mythology or untrustworthy tradition or is not to be regarded as historical, the exegetical questions which it raises are of comparatively minor importance."

Young notes that his handling of the text of Genesis 1 "is based upon the assumption that these verses present a factual account of what actually occurred."

Later in his studies in Genesis chapter 1, Young engages with Karl Barth who placed his understanding of the creation week (Gen. 1:1-27) within his believed category of 'holy history,' or 'heilsgeschichte.' To this Young (1964:24) insists that "It would seem that when Barth places the creation account in the realm of Geschichte he is in actual fact denying that Genesis one is a reliable and factual account of what actually transpired." In disagreement with Barth's

understanding of history, Young proceeds to define what he means by the term, historical. "In answering the question," Young (1964:24) says:

> "…we would hold that history does, of course, include the study of matters accessible to the human mind for investigation, but it may also include matters which the unaided human mind cannot investigate, but concerning which God has revealed information. Unaided, for example, the human mind cannot study the creation, but it is legitimate to hold that God can reveal certain information about the creation. Man can study this information and upon the basis of his study can make true statements concerning the creation. The study of this revealed material is as truly the study of history as is the study of Caesar's accounts of ancient Gaul. We may, therefore, indeed, we must, approach the first chapter of Genesis as a reliable historical document, trustworthy in all its statements because its contents have been communicated to us by God."

Thus, what Young suggests is that there is a historical element within the book of Genesis, in particular the first chapter that cannot, as Barth attempted, be placed into an ethereal realm where it becomes something less than fundamentally historical.

14.2.3 The hermeneutic of theistic evolution

14.2.3.1 The perspicuity of Scripture

When approaching Scripture it is necessary to know that God, as Sarfati (2018:37) explains, intended the words of Scripture to be understood in a normal or an uncomplicated way. This quality of Scripture speaks to what theologians would refer to as the 'perspicuity' of Scripture. Sarfati (2018:37) defines this trait of Scripture by discussing the explanation of the late theologian Herman Hoeksema, who said the following about the perspicuity of Scripture:

> "'All of Scripture is given us that we might understand it…all of it is adapted to our human mind, so that, even though there be many things in that revelation of God which we cannot fathom, there is nothing in it that is contrary to human intelligence and logic…Either the logic of revelation is our logic, or there is no revelation.'"

This definition shows the necessity of plain language in Scripture that guarantees the transmission of clear communication between God and man. That the Bible has been written by men to be understood by ordinary people who are enabled by the Holy Spirit is a core tenet of sound hermeneutics (Sarfati, 2018:37).

Sarfati (2018:38) continues to motivate the necessity of a biblically sound hermeneutic that assumes the comprehensibility of the Bible. He (2018:38) reminds of abuses in the Roman Catholic Church that were fuelled by their belief that Scripture could only be understood by the

learned or the elite like the priests, bishops, cardinals, and the only interpreter of Scripture in their view, was the pope.

In essence, the perspicuity of Scripture according to Sarfati (2018:39), means that Scripture can and should be approached at face value. This approach commonly referred to as the literal-historical hermeneutic assumes that what Scripture teaches, including the origins of the Bible, are generally discoverable in a 'prima facie' fashion. Of course, as Couch (2000:36) insists, this does not necessitate a wooden literalism at the expense of symbolic or poetical language, rather, this hermeneutic involves a handling of Scripture that seeks its most obvious sense in the first place. To motivate, Sarfati (2018:39) discusses the instruction of Bible scholar David L. Cooper who is credited for coining the phrase, "if the plain sense makes sense, seek no other sense…"

The Reformer, John Calvin, believed in the strictest sense that the scriptural answer is always the right answer. To this end, he championed what is known as the historical-grammatical method of exegesis. Referring to his commentary on Galatians, Crowe (2009:117) highlights the following advice coming from Calvin: "Let us know, then, that the true meaning of a Scripture is the natural and obvious meaning; and let us embrace and abide by it resolutely. Let us not only neglect as doubtful, but boldly set aside as deadly corruptions, those pretended expositions, which lead us away from the natural meaning."

Lastly, Sarfati (2018:40) refers to Article XV of the Chicago Statement of 1982 on biblical hermeneutics for a definition (not different from Couch's) of biblical hermeneutics that affirms "the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, normal, sense." This normal sense is then defined in the statement as: "The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense. That is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will take account of all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text."

14.2.3.2 The unchanging character of Scripture

Another important aspect of Bible interpretation that must be honoured by the serious interpreter of the Genesis account of origins (Genesis 1:1-27) involves the unchanging nature of Scripture. Having both praised and decried the legacy of well-known Princeton theologian Charles Hodge, Donald D. Crowe (2009:116) compares Hodge's attempt to force scientific discovery into the narrative of the Genesis account of creation to what John Calvin had to say about it. Analysing Hodge's approach Crowe warns that Hodge was forcing his interpretation of Genesis to accommodate for the latest scientific theories. Crowe (2009:116) explains:

> "There are at least three profoundly serious errors in Hodge's statement about always changing our interpretation to accommodate 'science.' The first error is the ready acceptance of atheistically generated speculation as if it were an actual scientific discovery. The second error is the underestimation of the importance of the biblical chronology as the framework of biblical history. To so casually give away the framework of biblical history is like saying that we cannot see any importance of the skeleton, because the body is the really important thing. Hodge regarded this biblical truth as non-essential and beside the purpose of the Bible…The third major error is the disastrous hermeneutic set in motion by the Genesis compromise [referring to the interpretation of 'day' as an age]. Once the undermining of Genesis destroys the foundations of Christian doctrines, it is too late for damage control."

In other words, what Crowe laments most is the compromise that has to be made in order to fit scientific findings into the biblical narrative, which is something that he argues that Hodge did.

The pressure to do what Hodge has done with his interpretation of Genesis 1, has increased in recent years. With the dawn of post-modernism the truths in Scripture have become subject to contestation (McQuilkin & Mullen, 1997:71). According to McQuilkin & Mullen (1997:71) post-modernism has affected biblical interpretation:

> "Postmodern thinking, with new directions in literary criticism, linguistic theory, communications theory and anthropology/sociology, has challenged traditional approaches to Scripture at three points, among others: (1) Unchanging, ultimate truth does not exist. (2) Language cannot accurately communicate thought to another person's mind, and with time and culture distance the attempt becomes ever more futile. (3) The inadequacy of language is not necessarily bad because meaning is constituted of a combination of what is out there (objects and events, including the words of others) and what is in here (my own subjective sense). Though the words of others play a formative role, the controlling element is what I bring to the text. And the outcome of that mix is all the reality there is. Thus meaning is relative, particularly relative to my present subjective perceptions."

It is specifically post-modernism's stance against the Bible's unchanging nature that is of particular importance at this point. The claim of post-modernism that unchanging and ultimate truth does not exist is one, according to McQuilkin & Mullen (1997:71), that evangelicals deny on the following grounds:

> "Evangelicals for the most part reject these concepts. We affirm the existence of God and other unchanging, ultimate truths about him and his world. We believe that God, at least, can communicate what is in his mind with understandable words. Few of us believe that our own subjective perception controls meaning. At least we believe it should not and does not need to. And even if it is allowed to control our perception of reality, we do not identify that "meaning" with reality, which we believe exists independently of our perceptions."

Post-modernism has especially impacted on people's understanding of the creation account of Genesis 1 in that it does not view it as the only truth. However, as McQuilkin & Mullen (1997:79) remind, all truth in Scripture must be viewed as universally true: "Nowhere does Scripture lend credence to the notion that nothing is to be taken universally unless the text so affirms. Scripture consistently treats itself as authoritative and nowhere authorizes external principles for selecting what is to be believed and obeyed."

In other words, Scripture itself, with God's authority, presents itself as universal truth from God (McQuilkin & Mullen, 1997:79). Lastly, highlighting the danger of denying absolute truth, McQuilkin & Mullen (1997:79) state:

> "It is true that Jesus and the apostles set aside much of the OT as no longer prescriptive, but only the inspired author of Scripture or the incarnate Son of God has the authority to set aside or add to what is written. If anyone else does so, he usurps the authority of God the Holy Spirit and embarks on a dangerous course. Revelation 21:18–19 may have primary reference to John's book, but at least by inference the warning is for those who would add to or take from any part of the inspired Book. Jeremiah did not have postmodern thinking in mind, but his words apply: "I am against those prophets who take each other's words and proclaim them as my message. I am also against those prophets who speak their own words and claim they came from me" (Jer 23:30–31, TEV)."

It is especially McQuilkin & Mullen's (1997:79) quoting of Revelation 21:18-19 and Jeremiah 23:30-31 that illustrates the seriousness with which God treats the absolute, unchanging nature of his written Word. Biblically speaking, no one has the authority to change its meaning or deny it.

14.2.4 The presuppositional nature of theistic evolution

Assumptions or presuppositions are often, however, unavoidable. To motivate this statement, Moreland (2017:7) states that every culture possesses a set of "background assumptions" that dictate the way they react to the world around them. These assumptions are not only what provide people with a framework for thinking, but as Moreland (2017:7) explains, they also guide them in terms of what they will be willing to listen to or take seriously.

Moreland (2017:7) refers to this framework of assumptions as a "plausibility structure." As Moreland explains, this structure of assumptions is what drives people's thinking as well as that which they would be open to consider. Moreland (2017:7) explains:

> "Without even knowing it, we all carry with us this cultural map, this background set of assumptions, and our self-talk, the things that form our default beliefs (ones we

> naturally accept without argument), the things we are embarrassed to believe (if they run contrary to the authorities in our map), and related matters create a natural set of doubts about Christianity. Most of these factors are things of which people are not even aware. In fact, if they are brought to one's attention, one would most likely disown them even though, in fact, they are the internalized ideas that actually shape what people do and don't believe."

In other words, these cultural constructs are what, according to Moreland (2017:7), cause people to be resistant to the teachings of Christianity. Moreland (2017:7) continues:

> "Our current Western cultural plausibility structure elevates science and scorns and mocks religion, especially Christian teaching. And it has been the acceptance of theistic evolution by many Christians that has contributed to this mess. Why? There are at least three reasons. First, theistic evolution reinforces scientism because it exemplifies the view that when science and biblical/theological teaching are in conflict, we have to revise the Bible. We don't ever revise the science because scientific truth claims exhibit solid knowledge based on facts…Second, this sort of revisionism–when we change biblical interpretations that have held steady for two thousand years at just the time when there is politically correct pressure to do so, especially when that pressure comes from science–gives off the message that biblical teaching is pretty tentative…Third, the most pervasive definition of theistic evolution is that the general, naturalistic theory of evolution is true, and God is allowed somehow or another to be involved in the process as long as there is no way to detect his involvement."

The determining factor, therefore, within theistic evolution according to Moreland (2017:7), is 'naturalism' which directs how an individual understands the biblical account of creation. Moreland (2017:11) continues by explaining that naturalism is not part of the Christian worldview:

> "It should be clear that naturalism is not consistent with biblical Christianity. If that's true, then the church should do all it can to undermine the worldview of naturalism and to promote, among other things, the cognitive, alethic nature of theology, biblical teaching and ethics. This means that when Christians consider adopting certain views widely accepted in the culture, they must factor into their consideration whether or not such adoption would enhance naturalism's hegemony and help dig the church's own grave by contributing to a hostile, undermining plausibility structure."

Lastly, Moreland (2017:11) laments the manner in which Christians often quickly accept the findings of naturalist science, or as he refers to it, to "scientism" (Moreland, 2017:2). He states that some evangelicals doubt the existence of a historical Adam and Eve. It is not so much the historical question about their existence that concerns him, even though he admits this is a cardinal matter, rather (2017:11) his concern "is the readiness, sometimes eagerness, of some to

set aside the traditional view, the ease with which the real estate of historical Christian commitments is abandoned, the unintended consequences of jettisoning such a belief."

One consequence of the rejection of a historical Christian claim such as the existence of Adam and Eve is that science becomes elevated to the level of being superior to the Bible in the determining of the truth of such matters (Moreland, 2017:12). Such rejection by Christians, according to Moreland (2017:12) "reinforces the idea that science and science alone is competent to get at the real truth of reality; theology and biblical teaching are not up to this task. If historically consistent understandings of biblical teaching conflict with what most scientists claim, then so much the worst for those understandings."

14.3 Conclusion

This chapter evaluated some of the major tenets of theistic evolution, simultaneously touching on aspects of other theistic-evolutionary models, all of which recommend a less-than-literal understanding of the introductory verses to the book of Genesis. The argument in this chapter, therefore, is that proper placement of the authority of Scripture cannot accommodate the reordering of the respective days of the creation week, nor the stretching thereof to fit within a Darwinian evolutionary framework. In support of the literalness of the verses which describe the creation of the world, stands the genre of the book of Genesis that is believed to be narrative of the historical kind and not poetry as is often believed. Adding to the universally literal rendering of these verses, are the hermeneutical principles of the perspicuity and the unchangeable nature of biblical truth. As a final word on the issue, the chapter has discussed the philosophical or presuppositional nature of theistic evolution as an underlying factor that has the potential to predispose Christians to be receptive to its teachings. As such, the chapter has argued that theistic evolution is unbiblical. Thus, the tolerance and even promotion of theistic evolution in DRSCA circles contributes to the view that the Bible must be understood and interpreted in a way that differs from how the Bible presents itself, even if it contradicts the creeds which the church says it professes. If assumed to be the final authority, scriptural criticism and human reason lead to conclusions about creation such as those accepted and promoted by the DRCSA.

SECTION 3: A PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICAL RESPONSE TO THE DRCSA

CHAPTER 15 — A PRESUPPOSITIONAL EVALUATION OF A LIBERAL VIEW OF SCRIPTURE & HIGHER CRITICISM

15.1 Introduction

Historically, there seems to be a strong link between Darwinian Evolution and historical criticism. As Brown (1960:195) points out, speaking of the higher critics specifically, their conclusions about the biblical text were that it "was not infallible, that it should be studied as literature, and that it evolved naturally." To be specific: "Higher criticism and the theory of evolution went hand in hand, and both were kin to the idea of progress" (Brown, 1960:195).

Farnell (2017c:50) agrees to the evolutionary starting point or presupposition of historical criticism. Regarding the origin of Form Criticism specifically which deals with the origin of the New Testament, Farnell (2017c:50) states that "Evolutionary ideas had a strong, quick, and saturating impact in Britain (Darwin's homeland) and in Germany where many of the new theories regarding the origin and development of the New Testament were being germinated during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries." As it involves the impact of Evolution on the Old Testament the Graf-Wellhausen is said to have "originated during the height of the popularity of evolution in philosophical circles" (Farnell, 2017c:51). In its rejection of Mosaic authorship Farnell (2017c:51) explains that this school of thought "…posits a gradual development (long after Moses) of the Old Testament from simple document (JEDP) into the complexity of the Pentateuch."

Johannes Gunkel, who is responsible for the development of form criticism, was also influenced by evolutionary theory in his approach to the book of Genesis (Farnell, 2017c:53). Gunkel, who accepted the results of source criticism, according to Farnell (2017c:53)

> "…neglected Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Instead, under evolutionary influences, he viewed Genesis, as well as the rest of the Pentateuch, as developing gradually over a long period of time (well after the time of Moses), growing out of documents known as JEDP reflected in the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis."

In addition, Farnell (2017c:51) shows that the Two-Document hypothesis popularised by Heinrich J. Holtzmann in 1863, and the Four-Document hypothesis by Streeter (1924), were permeated by evolutionary thought. Farnell (2017c:51) points out that in both hypotheses:

> "…the idea of simple to complex is seen in that Mark [otherwise referred to as 'Q'], material peculiar to Matthew (M), and material peculiar to Luke (L) were combined into the complex documents of Matthew and Luke. The Two- and Four-Document hypotheses developed at a time in which evolutionary philosophy was rocketing to prominence in Britain and on the continent of Europe (e.g. Germany) in the latter half of the nineteenth century."

Therefore, it can be argued, that theistic evolution has served a central role in the development of historical criticism.

In chapter 10, the worldview of those sceptical of the Bible was discussed. What men like theology professors Le Roux and van Aarde have in common is that they see the Bible as essentially 'human.' In other words, they view the Bible as full of human errors. This is in contrast to traditional doctrines like inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility that assume the supernatural and are confessed by the churches that adhere to these doctrines. As can be noted from chapter 10, their worldviews do not accommodate interpretations of Scripture that view God as the trustworthy reliable author and the miraculous nature of many of the events reported in the Bible. The underlying assumption of this approach to Scripture is mainly anchored in the belief that miracles do not happen today and could therefore not have occurred in the past.

To motivate his commitment to historical criticism, le Roux (1994:43) offers as evidence of its credibility the testimony of German and Protestant theologian Ernst Troeltsch who rejected the notion of scriptural authority. In his *Glaubenslehre* lectures, Troeltsch (1865-1923) insisted that contemporary Christianity could no longer be defined in terms that based its definition on the assurance that Scripture is true (New World Encyclopaedia contributors, 2017). Troeltsch (2017) did not believe that anything warranted Scripture's preeminent position within the Reformed tradition. In other words, Troeltsch did not believe as fact that the Bible was true and authoritative in what it teaches.

Le Roux (1994:45) concludes this point by emphasising:[106]

[106] Ek kan voortgaan om die resultate van die historiese kritiek te noem, maar bogenoemde is voldoende om die volgende vrae te stel: Kan ons nog so ongeproblematiseerd van 'n Goddelike en 'n menslike kant van die Skrif praat, kan ons nog so maklik die sentrum van die Skrif aandui, is dit nog moontlik om die foute in die Skrif as "nie-wesenlik" te beskou, moet die kritiese sieninge in verband met outeurskap nie ons Skrifleer grondig verander nie? Kortom: hoe moet ons in die lig van die historiese kritiek nóú oor die brug tussen God en mens praat?

> "I can continue naming the results of historical criticism, but that which has previously been stated is sufficient to ask the following questions: can we still speak so simply of the godly and humanly side of the Scriptures, can we still so effortlessly point out the centre of the Scriptures, is it still possible to view the mistakes in Scripture as non-essential, should the critical views regarding authorship not fundamentally change our doctrine of Scripture? In short: in light of historical criticism, how should we now talk about the bridge between God and people?"

15.2 The anti-supernaturalism of historical criticism

While the main focus of this chapter is on the effects of historical criticism in general, a brief definition of the term 'Higher Criticism' is necessary at this point. As Hague (2017:1) describes, the word 'higher' in Higher Criticism is not to be seen as better, rather as a way of distinguishing it from 'Lower Criticism.' The discipline of Higher Criticism mainly involves a study of the literary structure of the Scriptures, in particular that of the Old Testament. In Hague's (2017:1) view, the main concern with Higher Criticism is the subjective conclusions that are drawn based on the employment of the method. According to Hague (2017:2), the presuppositional nature of this form of biblical inquiry is what lends itself to subjectivity and speculation, the majority of which coincided with a denial of the supernatural. Hague describes this anti-supernaturalism in the following way:

> "…the dominant men of the movement were men with a strong bias against the supernatural. This is not an ex-parte (one-sided) statement at all. It is simply a matter of fact…Some of the men who have been most distinguished as the leaders of the Higher Critical movement in Germany and Holland have been men who have no faith in the God of the Bible, and no faith in either the necessity or the possibility of a personal supernatural revelation."

Thus, for Hague (2017:2) the main concern is that this sort of criticism of the Bible has produced an attitude toward it that is dismissive of its supernatural nature. He notes that this seems to be expected of men who "have been notoriously opposed to the miraculous" (Hague, 2017:2). This does not mean that all Higher Critics reject the supernatural and miraculous nature of Scripture. Rather, the main contention is with those anti-supernaturalists whose ideas form the heart of this type of biblical criticism. Hague clarifies: "What we do say…is that the dominant minds which have led and swayed the movement, who made the theories that the others circulated, were unbelieving in the extreme."

It was indeed this anti-supernaturalism that began to sweep across Europe and the United Kingdom in the latter half of the 19th century. Farnell (2017a:24) observes that the irony of this period within England, specifically, was that:

> "…while Charles Darwin, the man who single-handedly did more damage to the church than any other in recent times with his preposterous hypotheses of evolution

> that had no true scientific foundation, found honor being enshrined in Westminster Abbey, while John Knox, the great Presbyterian reformer who was one of the biggest champions of the Gospel in modern times, lies buried under a parking lot with a small plate marking the spot."

Farnell (2017a:24) continues to describe how the shift of focus that occurred in continental Europe and the British Isles in the late 1800s eventually occurred in North America, particularly the early 1900s. He says:

> "In America during this period, a similar shadow of darkness was attempting to extinguish the glorious light of the Gospel. The Great Awakening of the 18th century had lost its influence. America's churches grew spiritually cold, dead, yet a small remnant remained within them. Bible colleges, originally founded for the proclamation of the Gospel in the 'Colonies' had grown intellectually but decayed spiritually. Harvard, Yale, Princeton, all originally designed to train preachers, were fountain heads of virulent atheism or rampant unbelief."

What these institutions who became open to the findings of historical criticism had in common, was the accommodation of a shared hermeneutic that would replace the older grammatico-historical method of interpretation of the Reformation.

The underlying philosophy of anti-supernaturalism is what also gave impetus to what is referred to as the synoptic problem of the Gospels. This model, also referred to as the literary dependence model, much like the original criticism which started in the Old Testament, has a philosophical basis that informs its assumptions of the Gospels. Describing the view of literary independence which used to be the view of the Gospels for the "first 1,700 years of the church" Farnell (2002:33-34) explains that this view of independence was replaced by the dependence theory as the result of a subtle paradigm shift. Farnell (2002:34) explains:

> "A careful examination of church history reveals that shifts about the nature of inspiration were decisive in the radical change, specifically shifts in historical critical discussions of the Synoptic Problem related to the Two-Gospel and Two-Document hypotheses. Such significant departures from the orthodox view of inspiration were in turn influenced and/or motivated by philosophical assumptions stemming from Rationalism, Deism, and the Enlightenment, to name few."

15.3 Rejection of the grammatico-historical hermeneutic

Le Roux, discussing his philosophical commitments concerning the issue of biblical hermeneutics (refer 10.4.4), suggests that the employment of a historical-critical hermeneutic replaces the literal-historical hermeneutic that has been part of Reformed Bible interpretation because of, what

he refers to, as the 'unbridgeability' of the Bible.[107] By unbridgeability, le Roux is referring to a chasm that exists between the ancient writer and modern-day reader. Christian philosopher and theologian, John Frame (2012) defends the grammatico-historical hermeneutic by vouching for the eternal and timeless nature of biblical truth. Frame (2012) first admits: "Of course, Scripture was written in time and describes temporal, historical events. In those ways it is temporal, and that temporal character is important to the understanding of Scripture. But in other ways it stands beyond our temporal experience."

Frame continues to motivate his endorsement of the timelessness of the Word by referring to the internal testimony of Scripture. For example, Frame refers to the testimony of Isaiah who states that when decay and erosion are witnessed in nature, the Word of God undergoes no change because it is timeless: "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever" (Isaiah 40:8). In addition, the apostle Peter wrote: "since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for 'All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever'" (1 Pet. 1:23-25). Likewise, referencing the Psalms, Frame (2012) draws this thought to a close when he says:

> "First, notice that these passages are not talking about some mysterious Word of God other than Scripture, other than the written Word. In Isaiah and Peter, the Word is clearly the message that God has given to his people, the good news, the gospel. In Psm. 119 it is the law of God, given to Moses on tables of stone. *It is the written Word, the Bible, which is eternal*" (Italics added)."

15.3.1 The grammatico-historical hermeneutic compared to the historical-critical hermeneutic

The difference between the grammatico-historical hermeneutic and the historical-critical hermeneutic is an important distinction to make. Firstly, Farnel (2017b:30) informs that there are traditional differences between these two hermeneutics that merit being highlighted. For example, the grammatico-historical, or independent method, finds its origins in the Reformation, while the historical-critical method "has its roots in deism, rationalism, and the Enlightenment" (Farnell,

[107] Motivating his endorsement of the literal-historical hermeneutic, Couch (2000:36) addresses those who have criticised this hermeneutic for its wooden literalness. He explains: "Literalism does not understand that God has ears and a physical body. That's letterism. Such an accusation is nothing more than a straw man, which opponents use in an effort to discredit a consistent, natural reading of Scripture. A *normal* reading of Scripture recognizes the anthropomorphisms used here in Psalm 18 and throughout the Scriptures."

2017b:30). To motivate, Farnell (2017b:30) refers to Krentz who in his *The Historical-Critical Method*, sees the historical-critical method as a 'child' of the Enlightenment.

There are also differences in the philosophies of these two methods of interpretation. As Farnell (2017b:30) explains, "Because of their distinct philosophical differences and developments, the grammatico-historical method is open to the supernatural and miraculous." Farnell (2017b:30) notes that the grammatico-historical method assumes as fact that the Scriptures are true in what they claim and that the Bible is God's means of 'intervening' in human history. However, the historical-critical method is sympathetic of Ernst Troeltsch's ideology (Jurie le Roux endorses Troeltsch [ref. 10.4.3.2]) which includes the belief, as Farnell (2017b:30 lists), that history does not provide certainty but only probability. In other words, the present dictates ones understanding of the past (if there are no miracles today then there would have been no miracles in the past), the existence of only cause and effect, and the absence of any other outside force or intervention.

Farnell (2017b:31) further explains that the grammatico-historical hermeneutic is inductive and places an emphasis on the meaning of the text intended by the original author. On the other hand, the historical-critical hermeneutic, says Farnell (2017b:31): "…does not attempt to understand the Scripture as was necessarily intended." As such, the historical-critical method is a "deductive approach that *a priori* assumes an interpretation and forces Scripture into that mold" and one that "often practices an allegorizing hermeneutic that sees multiple layers of meaning" (Farnell, 2017b:31).

Lastly, Farnell (2017b:31) suggests that the historical-critical method is synonymous with dependency models of the Gospels that would allow for theories like Markan priority:

> "The history of dependency hypotheses associates them with historical-critical ideologies, not grammatico-historical exegesis…Dependency hypotheses arose in the modern period that has its roots in skepticism of the biblical record, especially the Gospels. Therefore, those who practice dependency hypotheses, are automatically, if not unwittingly, aligned with the errancy position of historical criticism. At root, philosophy controls the exegetical approach of historical-critical approaches like source, form/tradition, and redaction criticism."

It is, therefore, the argument of this thesis that it is precisely the effects of historical criticism on the authority of Scripture which include doctrines such as plenary, verbal inspiration and inerrancy

that oppose the grammatico-historical understanding of the same doctrines.[108] The discussion now shifts focus to the effects that the liberal hermeneutic has had on the traditional understanding of Scriptural authority, inerrancy and inspiration.

15.4 Rejection of the authority of Scripture

15.4.1 The authority of Scripture in church history

Germane to the views of le Roux and van Aarde (and in the years before them with influential DRCSA scholars such as Johannes du Plessis who did not endorse the traditional understanding of plenary, verbal, inspiration [ref. 5.3.2], and before du Plessis, D.J. Pienaar who doubted Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch [4.2.2.9]) is their rejection of the authority of Scripture. This stands in contrast to the view of the Reformers who saw Scripture as authoritatively from God (Kruger, 2012). The Catholic church, however, had a different view of authority at the time. Kruger (2012) points out that because of this view whenever the pope says 'ex cathedra' ('from the throne') it is considered the very words of God himself. As a result of this, the Reformers identified 'Sola Scriptura' or 'Scripture alone' as one of the most important tenets or principles of the entire Reformation. Kruger (2012) continues to explain that 'Sola Scriptura' was the reason for the start or 'formal cause' of the Reformation. He (2012) reminds that it was Martin Luther who emphasised this view during his well-known speech at the Diet of Worms in 1521. Kruger (2012) quotes these famous words of Martin Luther:

> "Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures and by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and *my conscience is captive to the Word of God*. I cannot and will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience…. May God help me. Amen" [emphasis added].

Trusting in the Bible as the most central aspect of the Christian faith and the Christian's highest authority to live by is, however, not limited to the original Reformers. Renowned Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck (1967:363), also agrees to the authority of Scripture. In his systematic theology,

[108] Bush (2007:26) is of the opinion that the view of errancy is a philosophical assumption: Bush (2007:26) says: "Modern biblical criticism is built in a significant sense on the philosophical acceptance of biblical errancy. Attempts by evangelicals to harmonize seeming discrepancies in the biblical text are dismissed by modern theologians as if such attempts were incredibly naïve and painfully irrelevant. Moreover, modern critics often see literary discrepancies or variations as primary evidence of earlier (conflicting) sources that supposedly lie behind the canonical form of the text. To harmonize these various accounts is to work exactly at cross purposes with the goals of many modern critics."

he motivates this point by referring to the way that Jesus and the apostles referred to the books of the Old Testament. Bavinck (1967:363) states that Jesus and the apostles viewed the Old Testament as possessing 'godly authority.' He (1967:363) motivates this stating:

> "It seems clear from the following observations…the formula to which the Old testament is quoted in the New Testament is different, but always proves that for the writers of the New Testament, the Old Testament was of godly origin and that it possesses godly authority…Never do Jesus or the apostles react critical toward the contents of the Old Testament, but they accept it completely without reservation."

Other stalwarts of the faith followed suit, including Charles Spurgeon, who was known for his reliance on the Word of God in his pastoral ministry. Spurgeon (2013) commented on the authority of Scripture by stating:

> "Evidently, [the apostles] regarded the statements of Scripture as conclusive. They took counsel of the Scriptures, and so they ended the matter. "It is written," was to them proof positive and indisputable. "Thus saith the Lord," was the final word: enough for their mind and heart, enough for their conscience and understanding. To go behind Scripture did not occur to the first teachers of our faith: they heard the Oracle of divine testimony, and bowed their heads in reverence. So it ought to be with us: we have erred from the faith, and we shall pierce ourselves through with many sorrows, unless we feel that if the Scripture saith it, it is even so."

In other words, according to Bavinck (1967), the authority of the Scriptures can be substantiated through Jesus' and the apostles' consistent and unwavering acceptance of the Old Testament.

The views of le Roux and van Aarde are also in opposition to many of the traditional protestant and specifically reformed creeds' view of the authority of Scripture. One that deserves mention again is the Belgic Confession of faith which the DRCSA subscribes to. According to this creed, Scripture is indeed authoritative. This much can be deducted from article 5 of the creed's description of the authority of Scripture:

> "We receive all these books and these only as holy and canonical, for the regulating, founding, and establishing of our faith. And we believe without a doubt all things contained in them-- not so much because the church receives and approves them as such but above all because the Holy Spirit testifies in our hearts that they are from God, and also because they prove themselves to be from God. For even the blind themselves are able to see that the things predicted in them do happen."

A notable phrase from this article is that the Scriptures internally "prove themselves to be from God." Men like le Roux and van Aarde strongly disagree with statements such as these.

15.4.2 The 20th century response to the rejection of biblical authority

It might be helpful at this stage to describe the response that the traditional hermeneutic had to this new hermeneutic or interpretational revolution of modernism which challenged traditional biblical hermeneutical principles. As an organised effort, this new approach met its counter-revolution in the fundamentalist movement of the 20th century. In view of what was originally reported on the movement in the *Christian Century* magazine in 1924, *The New York Times* opinion journalist, Matthew Avery Sutton (2019), describes the growth of the fundamentalist movement and the major differences between it and the new biblical hermeneutic of liberalism in the following terms:

> "As the fundamentalist movement grew and expanded, its leaders waged war against religious modernists for control of the major Presbyterian, Baptist and Methodist churches, colleges, seminaries and missionary boards. The liberal Christian Century magazine summed up the controversy in 1924: 'The differences between fundamentalism and modernism are not mere surface differences, which can be amiably waved aside or disregarded, but they are foundation differences, structural differences, amounting in their radical dissimilarity almost to the differences between two distinct religions.' 'The God of the fundamentalist,' the writer concluded, 'is one God; the God of the modernist is another. The Christ of the fundamentalist is one Christ; the Christ of the modernist is another. The Bible of fundamentalism is one Bible; the Bible of modernism is another.'"

In other words, the differences between the traditional/conservative group (those who upheld the grammatico-historical view) and the historical-critical/liberal group (those who doubted the traditional understanding of inspiration and inerrancy) were significant in relation to the finer details of the Bible. These disagreements were, ostensibly, of paradigm-shifting proportions as they involved polarised views on the character and nature of God, the nature of Christ, and the nature of the Bible, leading to, as Sutton (2019) refers to it – differing religions within one religion – Christianity.

Although Sutton (2019) does not fully agree with the reporting of *Christian Century*, saying that the criticism which fundamentalism had of liberalism regarding it yielding to the modernist tendency of naturalism and rationalism, was the very thing which fundamentalism was guilty of. In Sutton's (2019) view:

> "Although fundamentalists claimed to represent the traditional faith, they were pioneering innovators who remade Christianity for tumultuous times. There was little "conservative" about them. Although fundamentalists made modernist theology one of their primary enemies, they drew on modernist thought and practice just as much as their liberal counterparts. Their dependence on modernism was most obvious in how they read their Bibles. They treated it like an engineering manual. They saw

> individual verses as pieces of data that they could extract, classify, cross-reference, quantify, place into taxonomies and then reassemble, to form something new. Unlike actual religious conservatives, they had no sense of tradition or community, nor did they care much for the historic creeds. Fundamentalists were highly individualistic and eager to use the latest technology — radio, especially. Christian fundamentalism and theological modernism were two sides of the same coin; both illustrated the all-consuming power of modernist thought."

What Sutton seems to believe is that fundamentalism, largely because of its emphasis on the technical aspects of the text, i.e. grammatico-historical study of the biblical text, was guilty of the same modernism which they had accused liberalism of. However, this seems to be an oversimplification of traditional Christianity's response to liberalism that was championed by historically critical methods of interpretation. As Hague (2017) and Farnell (2017) pointed out previously, the major point of departure between conservatism and liberalism, or the conservative hermeneutic and the modern hermeneutic, was its interpretation of the supernatural. In other words, the major concern of fundamentalism seems to have been the preserving of the supernatural, miraculous element within Scripture, never at the expense of rational processes. As Kulikovsky (2009:31) argues, the presuppositional starting point for the grammatico-historical interpretation is that God used supernatural means to specially reveal laws and principles to humans that can be 'rationally' understood through linguistically-scientific means. The hermeneutic employed by fundamentalism then, as Kulikovsky (2009:31) describes, assumes that "God supernaturally communicated His message to a chosen spokesperson in the form of explicit cognitive statements of truth, and these statements are recorded in sentences that are not internally contradictory."

15.5 Inspiration

15.5.1 Inspiration defined

According to Bavinck (1967:378), one of the undisputed teachings of the church was that God was the 'primary author' of the Bible. This teaching, says Bavinck (1967:378), used to be "binding and elevated above any doubt." The question that remained was "what kind of effort from God's

side was necessary" to establish the fact that he was the author of a specific Bible book and that he granted it Godly authority (Bavinck, 1967:378).[109]

In agreement with Bavinck, Frame (2013:594) identifies 2 Timothy 3:16 as the primary text which provides a definition for inspiration. Frame (2013:594) explains: "The term inspiration is found only once in English translations of Scripture, in 2 Timothy 3:16. The KJV, in this verse of Scripture, translates the Greek *theopneustos* as 'given by inspiration of God.' The ESV, however, prefers a literal rendering of the Greek, 'breathed out by God.'" Frame (2013:595) offers his own definition for inspiration describing the process in the following terms: "…inspiration is a divine act creating an identity between a divine word and a human word." In general, this definition would classify as the traditional view of inspiration. Lastly, MacArthur & Mayhue (2017:77) define the doctrine of inspiration as the process by which "God through his Spirit inspired every word penned by the human authors in each of the sixty-six books of the Bible in the original manuscripts (i.e. the autographs)."

However, there had been numerous efforts at the redefinition of the traditional doctrine of inspiration through the centuries. In *Het Zoeklicht*, Johannes du Plessis did not believe in the traditional view of inspiration as did his DRCSA contemporaries. He explained his understanding of this doctrine in the following way (1931:365): "…not every letter in the Word of God is inspired. Many things in Scripture did not come from God. Satan said some things in Scripture and there are lies in Scripture…The whole Bible can therefore not be described as the 'Word of God'…I therefore always say that everything contained in the Bible is God's Word, not that each and every letter or every single sentence is the Word of God" (refer 5.3.2).

Du Plessis (ref. 5.3.2) promoted the two-fold godly-and-human nature of the Scriptures with special emphasis on its human nature. According to him (1927a:202) it is of God in terms of what it teaches, but it is of man in terms of its form. He supports his assertion by drawing attention to some of the things written by the apostle Paul. Du Plessis (1927a:202) states that "Paul demanded inspiration in certain situations and in others not." He then proceeds by pointing to

[109] Answering the question of the means by which God inspired his Word, Cornelius van Til (2007:249-250) explains the following about the human element of inspiration: "Verbal inspiration is not to be identified with a mechanical view of the organs of revelation. Verbal inspiration is in consonance with an organic view of the relation of the divine Spirit to the human organs of revelation. The Holy Spirit used the various persons through whom he conveyed his revelation, without suppression of the characteristics of their personality."

what is in his opinion examples of uninspired words found in 1 Corinthians 1:16; 7:6, 12, 40. These are claims that must be evaluated against the claims of Scripture itself.

In addition to the view of du Plessis, more recently Jurie le Roux emphasised the human aspect of the Bible. For le Roux it is no longer scientific to speak of an Autographa, or a primary text for each of the books of the Bible. According to le Roux (1994:46), textual criticism has effectively proven that there is no such thing as a primary inspired source for each book of the Bible. In his estimation, South African theologians have avoided or softened the claims of historical criticism by appealing to the existence of a final or original text for a particular book of the Bible. Le Roux (1994:46) says that "if we keep in mind that the final/original text does not exist, things only get more difficult." Therefore, le Roux (1994:46) suggests that those who want to talk about the nature of Scripture must remember that "there is not a single authentic text that is the conduit of true textual meaning. There are only texts that differ and that endlessly complicate the meaning of the text." Lastly, le Roux (1994:46) believes that it has sufficiently been proven that there is no such thing as an original text or what has been traditionally been referred to as the Autographa. Both du Plessis and le Roux's views will be evaluated according to Scripture.

15.5.2 Presuppositional evaluation of views that are critical of the traditional view of inspiration

15.5.2.1 The Bible is only partially inspired

Du Plessis may have had some compelling arguments in favour of partial inspiration of the Scriptures, however, is this how one should understand some of Paul's words in his first letter to the Corinthians? Two examples should prove the contrary. In 1 Corinthians 1:16 Paul is believed to have had a memory lapse in terms of those who he baptised. This is one of the texts that du Plessis cites to prove the uninspired nature of certain phrases, or passages in the Bible, also implying that Paul dictated his letters without revising them (Garland, 2003:54). However, as Garland (2003:54) explains since Paul discusses the household of Stephanas again in 1 Corinthians 16:15 "as the firstfruits of Achaia, he hardly could have forgotten them. Thus, omission may not have been a memory lapse but a deliberate gambit to underline how unimportant it is who baptized whom." In 1 Corinthians 7:12 Paul comments that he is the one who states something, "I, not the Lord." Du Plessis, and others who subscribe to a limited view of biblical inspiration would say that this an example of words that are not inspired. However, rather than this being an example of an 'uninspired' text in Scripture, it merely becomes an example of the difference between direct and indirect revelation. As Grudem (1994:76) explains, Paul was merely

asserting the difference between revelation which he received directly from Christ or his teaching, and revelation which, though still inspired, comes from himself, i.e. Paul.

Regarding du Plessis' contention that the words of Satan quoted (amongst others, in Genesis 3) in Scripture are evidence of non-inspired texts can be attributed to being part of the process of God's special revelation unto man, not as evidence of uninspired words in Scripture. To understand this phenomenon in Scripture, one must ponder the question of authorial intent, instead of delineating quotes by Satan as instances of non-inspiration. According to Frame (2013:595), the result of their (the authors of Scripture) writing amounts to being nothing less than the Word of God. For the purpose of understanding the presence of Satan's quotes in Scripture, this overarching quality of Scripture which Frame touches on, as being the fully inspired Word of God, would then include Moses' inclusion of the words of Satan in Genesis 3. Such quotes are part of history and supplement one's understanding of how sin entered and spread in the world.

This said, it is the contention of this thesis that Scripture is inspired by God, which I argue can be supported by Scripture itself. As also indicated in the Belgic Confession, Scripture assumes it's godly origin, that it is inspired,[110] and takes for granted its inspiration. Erickson (2000:227) explains how the Bible testifies to its divine origin as seen in 2 Peter 1:20-21. Here, the apostle reminds "...that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Here Peter himself presents the godly origin of the Scriptures, in particular the prophecies, which could by no means have been the product of human interventions. Erickson (2000:227) explains Peter's intention as "affirming that the prophecies of the Old Testament were not of human origin. They were not produced by human will or decision. Rather they were moved or borne along…by the Spirit of God."

The same holds true for Paul's instruction to the young Timothy (Grudem, 1994:85). He reminded him that "All Scripture is breathed out by God...," quite literally meaning that Scripture was 'given' by God. The fact that Scripture was completed by a process known as 'dual-authorship' does not mean that Scripture is not entirely inspired. Rather, as Peter reminded, "as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit," i.e. inspired by the Holy Spirit working through their respective personalities, levels of giftedness, and limitations, men of God wrote the Word of God as they

[110] Millard Erickson defines (2000:225): "By inspiration of Scripture we mean that supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the Scripture writers which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or which resulted in what they wrote actually being the Word of God."

were inspired to do so. It is precisely because of the Holy Spirit's superintending the process of inscripturation, that Scripture can be considered faultlessly and flawlessly inerrant. As Grudem (1994:85) reminds, it is "*written* Scripture (*graphē*) that Paul said was God-breathed" [italics added].

The assumption of inspiration does not, however, dictate one specific way (process) of transmission. MacArthur & Mayhue explain (2017:78)

> "The actual process by which the books of the Bible were composed are many and varied. Moses wrote the Pentateuch under the direct supervision of God. At times, God gave him the specific words to write (Ex. 34:27); in other cases, he included his own thoughts (Deut. 3:23-26). David wrote many Psalms, which were collected into the book of Psalms. Some were the result of specific events in his life (Psalms 32; 51), while others were drawn from his general life experiences (Psalm 23). Some writers researched their subject prior to writing. Solomon searched out and collected many proverbs (Eccles. 12:9), and then he and others compiled them into what is now the book of Proverbs (Prov. 1:1; 10:1; 25:1). Matthew and John wrote their Gospels on the basis of their personal experiences with Jesus. Luke was not an eyewitness of the events recorded in his Gospel. He investigated everything thoroughly before writing it out carefully and in order (Luke 1:1-4) … Even the writing process itself was sometimes unique to the authors and the books they composed. Jeremiah dictated the words God gave him to his scribe, Baruch, who did the actual writing (Jer. 36:32). Paul frequently used an amanuensis (i.e., a scribe or secretary of sorts) to write his letters as he dictated them. This is why in several cases Paul ends his letters with a note written in his own hand—to certify that the letter is from him (1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17)."

Thus, the process of inspiration was not a dictation of sorts which resulted in the 'inspired-ness' of only parts of it and not all of it. Rather, it was a human process, but one that was superintended by the Holy Spirit. It is, however, the Holy Spirit's involvement in the giving of Scripture, that the liberal theologian would disagree with. Frame (1986:222) explains that:

> "In modern theologians like Barth, however…inspiration in the orthodox sense does not exist; God does not place His words on paper. For God to inspire words in this way would compromise His freedom and sovereignty; God himself would not abrogate such words once He has spoken them. Thus, what the biblical writers experienced was, not inspiration in the orthodox sense, nut a kind of illumination similar to what we experience today in the Spirit's witness."

If theologians reject the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture, it has implications for the authority of Scripture (Frame, 1986:222). According to Frame (1986:222), as it involves the Protestant view, the inspiration of the Bible "is what renders it as authoritative…"

The argument for the plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible does seem to revert to the Bible's presuppositional claims about it being the inspired Word of God. Some have argued that this is circular reasoning and that it can be avoided "by refusing to make assumptions, and allowing the evidence to speak for itself" (Goldsworthy, 2006:33). However, as Goldsworthy (2006:33) explains:

> "…this is to make another set of assumptions about what constitutes evidence and how [the Bible] does speak for itself. If we refuse to start with the assumption that the Bible tells the truth in claiming to be God's word, we must start with another assumption: that it does not or may not tell the truth and therefore, it is not or may not be God's word. If we seek to avoid the obvious circularity of this latter approach by saying that we must test the Bible by certain objectively neutral facts, then who determines what is neutral and which facts are applicable? In the end, it becomes human reason that judges what is reasonable evidence about the nature of the Bible. As soon as we admit this, then we see that it is a choice of two opposing circular arguments: one that assumes the ultimate authority of God and his word, and the other that assumes the ultimate authority of unaided human reason."

Thus, such an argument is not any more circular than to say that it is only partially inspired, or not inspired at all, because science says so.

Intricately linked to the view of inspiration is the traditional view of inerrancy. This will be the focus of the rest of the chapter.

15.5.2.2 "It is neither feasible nor scientific to speak of the existence of an Autographa"

The response to whether it is feasible or scientific to speak of the existence of an Autographa lies in the presuppositional assumption that the Bible presents itself as being written or given in a primary form. Therefore, the question of authorship is not a trivial one since it links the canon of Scripture to a human agent who, first hand, ensured its inscripturation (Frame, 2013:632). In order to evaluate the claims made by le Roux regarding the non-existence of an Autographa, or an original text, all of which is a rejection of the traditional view of the plenary verbal inspiration of the Bible, the attitude of the writers of Scripture which reveal vital information about authenticity, must be considered. Habermas (2002:12) describes the attitude of the identified writers of books of the New Testament explaining that these writers had in common that they understood that what they were doing is writing (or dictating) the inspired words of God. In this way, "they were convinced that the Holy Spirit empowered both their teaching and their writing" (Habermas, 2002:12).

This attitude or knowledge of contributing to the inspired Word of God is also something that New Testament writers extended to other parts of the Bible (Habermas, 2002:12). According to Habermas (2002:12-13):

> "…the New Testament writers recognized that Jesus' promise of inspiration also extended to other writers, as well. For instance, I Timothy 5:18 notes two citations, referring to both as Scripture. The first is obviously drawn from Deuteronomy 25:4. Although the second is similar to certain Old Testament texts, it is nowhere quoted. Actually, this saying is the same as that in Luke 10:7 (cf. Matt. 10:10), spoken by Jesus. Comparing a quote from the Law to one found in the teachings of Jesus, and calling them both Scripture, is certainly significant, and for more than one reason. It shows some conviction that the existing canon of inspired texts, consisting only of Old Testament writings, is not the end of the matter. After all, if any writings are considered to be inspired, the words of Jesus should be included! Moreover, Jesus' saying is even placed on a par with the Law itself. Further, New Testament texts by other authors were also recognized."

For the reasons posited by Habermas, it is reasonable or feasible to speak of the existence of a primary text, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As already shown earlier in this section (15.4.1), it is also feasible to speak of the identified authors of the Old Testament, specifically Moses, for the Law, and the Prophets, for their contribution, since the Lord Jesus identified the authors as such.

With regard to the New Testament books, the evidence for their authorship and their primary beginnings similarly lie in the authentication of the Lord Jesus. Habermas (2002:13) explains:

> "We conclude that the chief impetus for believing in the inspiration of New Testament texts rests on the approved teachings of Jesus. He promised His disciples both that they were His special witnesses and that they would be inspired and guided to all truth by the leading of the Holy Spirit. We also have many instances where New Testament authors claimed this promise personally for their own writings, as well as a few examples where they extended this promise to other qualified authors."

15.5.2.2.1 The Old Testament's presuppositions with regards to the importance of the Autographa

Some might object to the fact that the autographs were lost over the millennia as a reason for disbelieving in their existence or necessity. However, as Frame (2013:639) observes there are a few reasons as to why God did not allow them to be preserved. Firstly, Frame (2013:639) calls attention to the observation that some of the original manuscripts might have become the objects of idolatrous worship. Frame (2013:639) responds to this by saying that it might be a valid observation to make: "Recall that King Hezekiah destroyed the brass serpent that Moses had made to heal the people in the wilderness because the people had begun to worship it (2 Kings

18:4).” Secondly, Frame (2013:639) suggests that the presence of the original manuscripts would not aid us any better in understanding and applying the Bible. As Frame (2013:639) points out, “The presence of the autograph would not have…eliminate the debates about the interpretation of texts and the doctrinal use of Scripture. Very few of those debates, if any, hinge on textual questions, and they cannot be resolved by the existence of a pure text.” Thus, says Frame (2013:639), “…for God to have preserved the autographs would have been a superfluous use of his power.”

The Bible’s attitude toward the original text of Scripture might shed light on the issue at hand. Presuppositionally speaking, the Bible highlights the importance of the original or primary manuscript of a Bible book (Bahnsen, 1979). In answering the objection of some that the Bible does not distinguish between the Autographa and copied manuscripts, Bahnsen (1979) insists that by looking at what the Bible has to say about these original manuscripts, it must be concluded that the Autographa is of cardinal importance.

Bahnsen (1979) begins his evaluation of the biblical text in the Old Testament, referencing the passages that attest to the importance of the original autographs. Bahnsen (1979) explains that the survey which he conducts “relates to the biblical writers’ own compositions, which they identify, not as products of divine dictation, but as the equivalent of God’s own words.” It is with this knowledge that Bahnsen (1979) continues to list the following examples from the Old Testament: “…e.g., David, ‘The spirit of Jehovah spake by me’ (2 Samuel 23:2); Isaiah, ‘Seek ye out…(this) book of Jehovah, and read’ (Isaiah 34:16); Jeremiah, ‘(God’s) words…even all that is written in this book’ (Jeremiah 25:13, cf. 30:2, 36:2), or perhaps even Solomon in Ecclesiastes 12:11.”

Additionally, Bahnsen (1979) states that some biblical passages treat the original manuscripts as either ‘present’ or ‘accessible’ in the context in which it is addressed. Accordingly, “., Joshua’s referring to Moses’ writings as ‘the book of the law of God’ (Joshua 24:26), or as immediately accessible, e.g., Joel’s quoting the contemporary (?) prophecy of Obadiah 17, ‘as Jehovah hath said’ (Joel 2:32)” (Bahnsen, 1979).

The biblical presupposition, as Bahnsen (1979) explains, is that people have the responsibility to follow the precepts that are continued in the original text or copies of the Autographa as they are faithful to the original text. Bahnsen (1979) says:

> “The assumption throughout Scripture is that we are obliged to follow the original text of God’s written Word. Present copies function authoritatively because they are viewed as reflecting the autographa correctly. This foundational perspective comes

> to the surface from time to time. For instance, Israel was required to do what God "commanded their fathers by Moses" (Judg. 3:4). This reference implicitly points to the original message, which came from the author himself. Isaiah was explicitly told to write, and his book was to be a witness forever (Isa. 8:1; 30:8); the autographical text was the permanent standard for the future. Daniel "understood by the books" (which we can assume to have been copies), but these very books indicate that the God-given words were "the word of Jehovah [which] came to Jeremiah" (Dan. 9:2). The perfect aspect indicates completed action with respect to the coming of the word of God to Jeremiah specifically."

Lastly, Bahnsen (1979) offers as an example the discovery of the 'book of the Law' in the time of King Josiah. Josiah, "had already begun to follow the law in a hazy fashion, probably according to a traditional knowledge of it (34:3-7). Subsequently the temple began to be repaired, during which time the book of the Law was found by Hilkiah, the high priest" (Bahnsen, 1979). It was, however, the discovery of the book of the Law that sparked Josiah's awe and reverence. Bahnsen (1979) believes the reason for this kind of response is because what Hilkiah the priest discovered could have been the original.

> "What is relevant for our concern here is that this recovered Book of the Law, which corrected and supplemented Josiah's theological outlook, was, I believe, the original, officially preserved mosaic autograph. What was found was not simply "a book" (a copy of some generally known volume) but "*the* book of the law" – a manuscript somehow different from others (2 Kings 22:8). In particular, it was the book of the law "by the hand of Moses" (2 Chron. 34:14, literal translation)."

Bahnsen (1979) does attest that "[w]hile the evidence is not fully decisive and the recovered book was not necessarily the autograph, the weight of evidence favors this interpretation; there is little obvious counterevidence."

15.5.2.2.2 The New Testament's presuppositions with regards to the importance of the Autographa

As with the Old Testament, the New Testament presupposes the fact that truth can be found in copies of the Autographa as they can be shown to come from the original source (Bahnsen, 1979). With regards to the New Testament's view of the Autographa, we will briefly look at only two key internal features that support not only the existence but also the importance of an original text.

Firstly, the trustworthiness of the original writings is hinted at in the promise of the Holy Spirit's working that would involve bringing to remembrance the original words of Jesus to the apostles (John 14:25-26) (Bahnsen, 1979). The apostle Peter referred to the working of the Holy Spirit in

the process of producing the New Testament as that which the Holy Spirit gave beforehand to David (Bahnsen, 1979). Bahnsen (1979) explains:

> "The earlier autograph, given beforehand by the Holy Spirit, is the primary referent of his preaching form present copies of the Psalm. Similarly Paul cited Isaiah 6:9-10, saying, Well spake the Holy spirit through Isaiah the prophet unto your fathers . . ." (Acts 28:25; cf. Rom. 3:2), and he proceeded on the understanding that his quotation was true to the original deliverance given many years previously. The citation of Jeremiah 31 in Hebrews 10 is viewed as a rendition of what the Holy Spirit originally said through the prophet (Hebrews 10:15). Indeed, the comfort that could be gained from the then-present copies of the Scriptures was tethered to "whatsoever things were written aforetime," the original text written in former days (Romans 15:4). In a similar way, that for which Paul claimed inspiration was his autographical text – "The things which I write unto you . . . are the commandment of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37; cf. 2:13)."

In other words, the New Testament writers had awe and reverence for what had been written, as well as for new revelation, as in Paul's case, as they viewed these as having been given by inspiration.

Secondly, Bahnsen (1979) believes that the New Testament writers repeated references to the copies or the manuscripts to prove their unwavering commitment to the original or the Autographa. As Bahnsen (1979) explains, the authority which the New Testament writers attached to certain copies were inextricably linked to the fact that they viewed such copies as faithful representations of the original. Bahnsen (1979) refers to Paul's instruction of the young Timothy as an example:

> "The reason why the sacred writings known to Timothy (perhaps the Septuagint) could make him wise unto salvation is found in the fact that they were rooted in the original, divinely given Scripture – those writings that were the direct result of inspiration and that Paul here associated with Scripture's original form as coming from God."

Lastly, the existence of 'autographic form' of the Scriptures can be seen in Paul's description of its divine origin (Bahnsen, 1979):

> "In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul stresses that all the Scriptures were God-breathed, placing obvious emphasis on their *origin*, and thus on their autographic form. The sufficiency and function of the extant biblical manuscripts is not divorced from, but rather explained in terms of, the original manuscripts, which were divine products."

15.6 Inerrancy

15.6.1 The historical background of inerrancy

Inerrancy, as Graham (2016:3) reminds, is not a new doctrine or understanding of the nature of Scripture. Rather, it is an attestation to the faultlessness of Scripture that has been with the church since the days of Augustine (Graham, 2016:3). Such reference, according to Graham (2016:3) is found in Augustine's 82nd letter written around AD405. Graham (2016:3) informs:

> "In his letter, the church father wrote to Jerome, a theological confidant, distinguishing the inerrant books of the Bible from 'the errant theological treatises of his colleague: 'For I confess to your Charity that I have learned to yield this respect and honor only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error.'"

Graham (2016:3) goes on to show that the doctrine was rehashed by Martin Luther who quoted from the 82nd letter of Augustine to prove his understanding of the difference "between the errant teachers of the church and inerrant Scripture." This doctrine is also endorsed in Roman Catholic doctrine when *Verbum Dei* (1965) again quoted from Augustine's 82nd letter. Lastly, Graham (2016:3) reminds that it was again the doctrine of inerrancy that was reaffirmed through the Chicago Statement on biblical inerrancy of 1978. All of the above, according to Graham (2016:4) serves as examples that the doctrine of inerrancy is not new: "Contrary to many objectors, the doctrine of scriptural inerrancy is not one of recent development."

15.6.2 Inerrancy defined

The traditional view of the nature of the Bible is that it is also without fault, or 'inerrant in the original manuscripts.'[111] To point out the central theoretical argument of the 2002 General Assembly (ref. 10.5.4 for the full handling) against the traditional view of inerrancy, Scripture, according to the highest governing body of the DRCSA, cannot be trusted on the subjects of science and history because the views of Scripture on both are seen as contrary to true science and history. In other words, the DRCSA currently subscribes to the view of 'limited inerrancy.' As Couch (2000:18) explains, this view holds that the Bible "when speaking of matters of faith and practice (i.e., salvation, principles relating to the Christian life, etc.), is free from error. But in matters of science, history, or biography, it can be supposed that there are mistakes." It is according to this reasoning, explains Couch (2000:18), that certain books like Isaiah or Jonah are seen as less inspired than others. At first glance this may seem like a suitable approach, however,

[111] Grudem (1994:1245) defines inerrancy as: "The idea that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm anything that is contrary to fact."

as Couch (2000:18) states, "the liberal interpreter has a problem [as] one cannot pick and choose what is inspired and what is not. Inspiration applies to all Scripture, and we can rely on all information contained in the Bible."

As a result of the close link between the doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy, inerrancy can be vulnerable to attack based on faulty definitions of inspiration (Moo, 1986:187). What is germane to attacks on the traditional view of inerrancy seems to be, as Moo (1986:186) describes, the definition of inspiration as a process of dictation. That it was a process of dictation is not necessarily what inerrantists believe about the giving of the Bible. Moo (1986:187) explains:

> "…as is well known, the vast majority of inerrantists do not assume a mechanical, dictation-type of inspiration theory…The words of Scripture are viewed as the product of a 'concursive' operation whereby the human author freely wrote what he wanted while the divine author at the same time superintended and guided that writing. Once it is recognized, then, that the view of inspiration held by inerrantists does not entail the notion of an ahistorical, 'oracular' process, scope for flexibility in quotation and attention to historical context can be allowed without invalidating inerrancy."

With inerrancy having been defined and placed within the perspective of being closely related to biblical inspiration, what follows is a presuppositional evaluation of some of the foremost arguments of the DRCSA against the traditional view of biblical inerrancy. The evaluation will be centred around the 2002 General Assembly's main concerns with the Bible as being unhistorical and unscientific.

15.6.3 Presuppositional evaluation of DRCSA views that are critical of the traditional view of inerrancy

15.6.3.1 The Bible is historically inaccurate – Biblical reporting can be contradictory, exaggerated, or inaccurate

Johannes Du Plessis's view on inerrancy was informed by alternate renderings of certain biblical texts, leading him to reject such texts as uninspired and erroneous because of the alleged logical contradictions or exaggerations which they posed. In answer to D.G. Malan in *Het Zoeklicht of* January 1927, du Plessis (1927:25) criticised Malan's upholding of the conservative view of inerrancy, offering as proof to the contrary, the contradiction between the amounts paid for Araunah's threshing floor as recorded in 2 Samuel 24:18-25 and 1 Chronicles 21:22. In addition, du Plessis (1927:25) posits his reason for advocating the impossibility of harmonising these two texts is due to the writer of 1 Chronicle's tendency to exaggerate certain numbers or statistics (ref. 5.3.1 for the background to this debate between du Plessis and Malan).

Similar to what du Plessis advocates, others who doubt the traditional view of biblical inerrancy often refer to the numbers listed in Old Testament historical books as their motivation for doing so. As Fouts (1997:379) observes, the question of biblical numbers is one that has been a subject of considerable objection for some, most notably perhaps, for scholars such as J.W. Colenso who in his seven-volume *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined* (1862-1879) objected to the large numbers presented in the Old Testament historical texts.[112] Fouts (1997:379) insists that "[t]hose who would challenge an essentially conservative view of Scripture often do so by appealing to passages that involve large numbers."

The 'incredibility' of such large numbers is what leads to alternate interpretations of inerrancy and inspiration. Having looked at specific examples of the employment of ancient numerology to which he compares Scripture's usage of numbers, Fouts (1997:386) recommends a hyperbolic interpretation of, especially, the OT military numbers. He condenses his findings through the following six observations:

1. Scripture is unique among the ancient Near Eastern literature in the size of the numbers it employs and in their frequency of occurrence.
2. Scripture is distinct in that it admits defeats as well as victories, since Yahweh may be seen to be glorified in both.
3. Scripture differs from other ancient annalistic inscriptional literature in that it does not offer the accounts in the first-person singular, following instead the format of third-person singular – that is, the chronicle format.
4. Scripture is similar to other annalistic inscriptional literature in that the historical narratives of the OT often employ figurative language in the near environment of the large numbers, a fact that may support the thesis that the large numbers themselves are hyperbolic.
5. It appears that all enumerated pre-exilic censuses in the OT may employ hyperbolic numbers.
6. Scripture is similar to other ancient historiography in that it may use large numbers hyperbolically in military contexts.

[112] Fouts (1997:379) also singles out the findings of E. Babinski, who more recently devoted an entire appendix to the ostensible inconsistency of biblical numerology, in the volume "Leaving the Fold: Testimonies of Former Fundamentalists" (1995).

However, the hyperbolic hermeneutical view proposed above challenges the 'plain, normal' interpretation of the Reformation or the grammatico-historical interpretation. In 2017, David F. Farnell offered a critique of Fouts' view which reveals that the hyperbolic view does not serve the traditional Reformation understanding of inerrancy.[113]

A selection of Farnell's (2017) responses to Fouts are significant in defence of the conservative hermeneutic currently under discussion:

1. "It is good that Fouts appears to give credibility to the Bible as well as inerrancy. But one is left wondering just what he means by the term 'inerrancy' as one examines his contentions. Clearly a shift from historically, traditional, orthodox understanding of the term has occurred by examining his 'solution' here."
2. "How does Fouts know the mind or "intent" of the OT writers?"
3. "All we have are these numbers given in the text literally. Grammatico-historical interpretation accepts these numbers at face value in light of no compelling reason textually to dismiss them. Fouts has now stepped away from plain, normal and subjectively imposed non-literal or allegorical or, what he calls, 'hyperbolic' rhetorical devices or 'simply figures of speech…'"
4. "Would the original readers have picked up any clues in the context that the writer 'intended' hyperbole?" Through this question Farnell implies that they probably would not have understood it as hyperbole.
5. "…If the figures are not actual numbers, then how is God glorified through obvious deceit of hyperbole that might not be recognized as the 'intent' of the writer or recognized by the reader of these documents as hyperbole. Common sense would suggest that hyperbole on Fout's supposition assaults the character of God not affirm it."
6. "Inerrancy accepts that the text of Scripture is without error. Fouts' hermeneutic of hyperbole assaults the doctrine of inerrancy rather than affirms it as he contends. The Scripture is made to bow to the fleeting/temporary evidence of archaeology and

[113] Preceding his critique of Fouts' article, Farnell (2017) illustrates that the Reformers were in agreement with regards to the importance of the grammatico-historical hermeneutic. He highlights that German Reformer, Martin Luther, held this hermeneutic in high regard, seeing the necessity for the words of Scripture, as Luther insisted, "to be retained in their simplest meaning possible, and to be understood in their grammatical and literal sense unless the context plainly forbids."

demographics. The Scripture, its integrity, its trueness, is made to bow before the subjective whims of historical criticism evidenced in his analysis."

7. "It is also non-sequitur to say that because others did this during Israel's day that Israel followed suit."
8. "Above all, [Fouts'] 'solution' or 'remedy' is worse than the 'disease' he addresses. By attempting to resolve the difficulty, he creates a bigger difficulty. If the OT exaggerated numbers, why not exaggerate other things...," referring to supernatural historical events like the creation of Eve, the Great Flood, the Exodus, etc. [114]

As it involves the employment of large numbers in the Old Testament, the onus thus seems to be on the one proposing the hyperbolic hermeneutic as a solution to such numbers to prove that this approach is faithful to the Reformation understanding of biblical inerrancy. As Farnell (2017) argues, both cannot be true at the same time. Inerrancy becomes compromised when this hermeneutic is employed, and that does not constitute as true biblical inerrancy. The Bible is therefore accepted as historically accurate in that which it reports on, attributing to the Bible's nature as being inerrant in all that it claims.

The DRCSA's 2002 General Assembly undoubtedly rejected the historicity of the Bible based on what is referred to as contradictions and inconsistencies. However, what is also important to this discussion, is the DRCSA's rejection of the notion that the Bible is unscientific and clashes with the findings of modern science.

114 John Feinberg (2001:577) proposes yet another solution to the large numbers found in the Old Testament: "…this is not history in the sense of modern history or chronicling wherein a historian tries to be absolutely precise in reporting or to give us a veritable unedited snapshot of details. And, as many defenders of biblical inerrancy argue, biblical authors often use approximations in reporting numbers and give us the gist of what happened or was said, rather than giving us a verbatim quote or an exact counting of numbers and recounting of events. However, even understanding their convictions in reporting history, we don't think they have stated falsehoods about the events." Feinberg (2001:577) continues by pointing to an example: "In addition, there is also the added dimension of comparing ancient ways of calculation to our contemporary ways. One example supporting this, would be that within the Jewish calendar it makes perfect sense that Jesus rose on the third day, which supports the Scriptural view (1 Corinthians 15:4). However, according to today's calendar, it seems faulty."

15.6.3.2 The Bible is scientifically inaccurate – Evolution has disproved the biblical account of creation

Chapter 14 showed that theistic evolution is indefensible, biblically speaking. In line with theistic evolution's handling of the Bible, the 2002 General Assembly views the Bible as unscientific and are of the opinion that Darwinist Evolution has proven that the biblical account of creation cannot be taken literally and that secular science must, therefore, be favoured above the Bible's description of events. The following statement already quoted in 10.5.4 effectively illustrates this attitude toward Scripture:

"That the Bible does not comply with the modern standards of scientific preciseness, is so obvious that it is mystifying that this is still debated…On the other hand, the universe is much bigger than the three-story creation (Ex. 20:4), which reflects the accepted view of its time. Through this it becomes apparent that the Word of God does not reside above reality, but that it becomes concrete in a specific time and context. It is precisely in this scientific 'weakness' that the theological power of the Word is situated. If it could not become ("flesh") in the biblical world then it could likewise not speak to us today, because 50 years from now science would have developed again."

Without repeating what has been said in defence of the biblical account of creation in Genesis 1, and the general scientific reliability of the Scriptures that has already been established in chapter 14, a particular aspect of the DRCSA's rejection of the scientific nature of Scripture that deserves further development is the philosophical and theoretical nature of evolutionary science.

15.6.3.2.1 The philosophical and theoretical nature of evolutionary science

Already in chapter 14 the presuppositional (philosophical) nature of theistic evolutionary science has been discussed and evaluated. However, further development of this important aspect of theistic evolution might be important as it sheds light on the DRCSA's openness to the theory. One of the big qualms that the 2002 General Assembly has with the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy is in their view the unscientific nature of Scripture. This attitude toward Scripture seems to be the result of an underlying philosophical (presuppositional) openness to the findings of evolutionary science as true and empirical. As Kulikovsky (2009:39) explains:

"Many technological advances have resulted from scientific breakthroughs, and these success stories have resulted in scientists being highly regarded, and the scientific enterprise being highly valued. Thus, in the eyes of the masses, scientists command much respect and influence, and whatever they say is usually accepted without question."

Continuing this line of argumentation, Kulikovsky then describes how the scientific process occurs, pointing (and by this agreeing with Moreland quoted in 14.2.4) to the presuppositional or subjective nature of science in general, and evolution specifically. Kulikovsky (2009:39) explains the general attitude that people have toward science in the following way:

> "Most people understand science as an objective and largely empirical process involving observation, analysis, hypothesizing, and testing. This is what Charles Thaxton, Walter Bradley, and Roger Olsen identified as 'operations science.' Yet, when it comes to the study of origins and earth history, science works in a different way. The process is much more subjective, involves many unprovable assumptions, and is based on a great deal of extrapolation rather than direct observation. Thaxton, Bradley, and Olsen calls this 'origins science.' Unfortunately, most people – including most scientists – do not understand or acknowledge this difference."

In other words, what Kulikovsky highlights is that those who accept the claims of evolutionary science or theistic evolution accept them according to the same standards to which they accept the theory of the earth's gravitational pull. This is a mistake, and for the church and the Bible, it unnecessarily results in conclusions such as those reached in the DRCSA's 2002 General Assembly.

Furthermore, Kulikovsky highlights the fact that the scientific process is in many respects not as empirical as many would like to believe. Kulikovsky (2009:40) explains:

> "In reality, many conclusions of modern science are neither purely scientific not genuinely empirical. The common perception that science deals only with verifiable facts and direct observation is utterly naïve, as is the notion that scientists are purely objective truth seekers. Indeed, many of the so-called facts of nature are more 'interprefacts' than verifiable facts."

For the reason stated above, it seems inconceivable that so many ministers, theologians and members of the DRCSA have accepted theistic evolution as dogma. According to Kulikovsky (2009:40-41):

> "…many theologians continue to treat scientific conclusions as simply 'matter of fact,' while failing to recognize the ideology behind them. Presuppositions, the need to interpret scientific data, and the selective inclusion or exclusion of data are rarely acknowledged. Despite this, many continue to think that what scientists tell us is always true and reliable. Scientific analysis is assumed to be balanced and objective, and conclusions are presumed to be tested and proven. Indeed, many Christians appear to believe that what scientists say is akin to what God says!"

The presuppositional nature of evolution accompanied by philosophical speculation and empirical imprecision as Kulikovsky describes it, thus means that evolutionary science continues to exist in the realm of the theoretical, not the scientifically proven.

15.6.3.3 Karl Barth's claims of historical criticism

In the 1930s, Swiss theologian Karl Barth proposed a new way of approaching Scripture and many of the concepts discussed therein, in the twelve-part volume *Church Dogmatics* (refer 5.7). This new approach became widely known as 'Neo-Orthodoxy.' His teachings on Scripture created much debate in the DRCSA and was accepted by some, like du Plessis, and rejected by others. It is not the intention to offer a full discussion of Barth as a theologian in this section, neither is it the scope of this study. However, one particular aspect of Barth's view of Scripture might be of value in defence of the Reformed understanding of inerrancy.

With regards to knowledge, and particularly knowledge that teaches that the Bible is a true historical revelation from God to man, Barth had his understanding as described in the section 'Holy Scripture' in his Church Dogmatics. Barth maintained the same general interpretation of Scripture in 'Dogmatics in Outline,' which is a condensed version of the essential principles of his thinking. His view involving Scripture as a revelation from God is stated as follows (Bath 1949:24):

> "Knowledge of God is a knowledge completely affected and determined from the side of its object, from the side of God. But for that very reason it is genuine knowledge; for that very reason it is in the deepest sense free knowledge. Of course it remains a relative knowledge, a knowledge imprisoned within the limits of the creaturely. Of course it is especially true here that we are carrying heavenly treasures in earthen vessels. Our concepts are not adequate to grasp this treasure. Precisely where this genuine knowledge of God takes place it will also be clear that there is no occasion for any pride. There always remains powerless man, creaturely reason with its limitations."

The above illustrates Barth's general approach to Scripture. Although he believed that God is knowable, he also believed that this knowledge is transferred to human beings in a way other than through literal Scripture, or said differently, through the 66 books of the Bible. Scripture can never convey the history accurately since it was written by 'earthen vessels,' therefore, something higher than Scripture itself is necessary if Barth is understood correctly. As far as evangelicals are concerned it is mainly Barth's views about inerrancy that should be questioned.

What seems clear about Barth's view is that he did not believe in a verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture, which is out of step with core Reformation tenets. Equally important to the Reformation

view of the centrality of Scripture is its understanding of the process by which it was given to mankind. This process involved the very hand of God and his superintendence in the giving of the completed Word of God[115] (The Westminster Confession of Faith:1647).

In his systematic theology, well-known Princeton theologian, Charles Hodge, described the supernatural process through which human beings were given the infallible and inerrant Word of God in the following terms (1893:156-157):

> "…the sacred writers were the organs of God, so that what they taught, God taught. It is to be remembered, however, that when God uses any of his creatures as his instruments, he uses them according to their nature. He uses angels as angels, men as men, the elements as the elements. Men are intelligent voluntary agents; and as such were made the organs of God. The sacred writers were not made unconscious or irrational…These representations were, however intended simply to illustrate one point, namely, that the words uttered or recorded by inspired men were the words of God."

Barth's biblical hermeneutic on the other hand leads to a different approach to Scripture, particularly as it involves the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration and inerrancy. In a collection of FAQ's based on David Gibson's chapter about Barth in the book *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, D.A. Carson (2016: loc.) answers some of the most important questions about Barth's understanding of the nature of Scripture. To the question whether Barth believed that the Bible becomes the Word of God when it is received by faith, Carson (2016: loc. 34994) said: " He refuses to speak of the Bible as itself inspired, but links together what is traditionally called the inspiration of Scripture and the illumination of the believer into one whole." To the question whether Barth claimed to aligned himself with the Reformers as Scripture is concerned, Carson (2016: loc. 34999) answered:

> "Yes, he does, but he is clearly mistaken. Comparison with Calvin, for example, casts up not a few instances where Calvin happily speaks of the inspiration of Scripture, the text itself being God-breathed, regardless of whether or how believers receive it. Barth prefers to speak of the out-breathing of the Spirit of God in both the text and the believer, thus distancing himself both from the exegesis of Scripture and from the Reformed tradition. He appears to recognize his distance from Calvin in CD II/2, §3e."

[115] Chapter 1 of the Westminster Confession discusses the nature of Scripture. Under article IV it states: " The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or Church; but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof: and therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God."

Lastly, to the question whether Barth makes room for errors in the Scriptures (Autographa) Carson (2016: loc. 35005) answered: "Yes, he does, though he refuses to identify them (but cf. his treatment of the fall of angels in 2 Peter and Jude, CD III/3, §51, where he finds a theological error in Scripture). For Barth, this seems to be part of the humanness of Scripture, though he insists that God's revelatory authority encompasses the whole, errors and all. That in turn inevitably raises questions about how passages of Scripture that include errors (not identified) can be said to carry the revelatory authority of God."

The answers to the questions above cast doubt on Barth's credibility in matters of hermeneutics and should disqualify him as a representative of the Reformed tradition. The same could be said about Johannes du Plessis who did not believe in the traditional understanding of the inspired and inerrant nature of Scripture, and whose scriptural legacy carried on in the DRCSA.

15.7 Additional proofs for inerrancy

MacArthur and Mayhue (2017:109) point out that the "recurrent declarations of 'thus says the Lord' create an atmosphere in which inerrancy is assumed throughout the Old Testament." For instance, a cursory referencing of Strong's Bible Concordance (1976:1058-1060) reveals that there is a multitude of Bible verses in the Old Testament that employ this type of address. With no exception, all of them attest to the authoritative and inerrant nature of Scripture.

The Lord Jesus himself assumed the faultless nature of the Scriptures (from his perspective, the Old Testament) as revealed in the Gospel accounts.[116] MacArthur and Mayhue (2017:110) state that "Jesus never challenged the accuracy or veracity of a single Old Testament passage. In fact, he never even broached the subject of an errant Scripture because the integrity of the text was always assumed and repeatedly affirmed." In Matthew 5:18 the Lord simply assumed the fulfilment of Scripture and the prophecies exactly according to the way it was revealed. In John 10:35 he again affirmed the certainty that Scripture would always be fulfilled.

Lastly, although inerrancy applies to any reliable translation of the Scriptures, the term in its strictest sense, applies mainly to the original manuscripts. Mistakes may easily creep into the

[116] Inerrancy does not presuppose a "wooden" literalism as is falsely assumed by its opponents. Inerrancy does indeed compensate for ordinary language. MacArthur & Mayhue (2017:112) insist that "the doctrine of inerrancy does not mean that the normal laws of language are excluded. The Bible makes frequent use of estimates (1 Chron. 5:21; Isa. 37:36), and such round numbers are not factual errors. Scientifically imprecise statements do not equate to error; they are simply part of the way we normally use language."

process of translation, however, the autographs were completely without error. In other words, criticism of Bible translation is to be expected, not the original documents.

15.8 Conclusion

To set the background, it was necessary at the beginning of this chapter to discuss the anti-supernatural nature of historical critical inquiry as opposed to the traditional approach to Scripture that assumes the supernatural, or the miraculous, also because opinion makers in the DRCSA propagate the former. This anti-supernaturalism is what informed the formation of a new method of interpretation or a hermeneutic that treats Scripture as a book that cannot finally be understood or taken at face value, essentially being a threat to the traditional Christian view of the authority of Scripture itself. The results of this historically critical device are what produced new views with regards to the inspiration of Scripture and its inerrancy. These views, represented by DRCSA professors du Plessis and le Roux, specifically for the purposes of this chapter, have been evaluated and shown to be unreasonable and unbiblical. For reasons, mainly biblically presuppositional in nature, as well as in accordance with the Confessions also endorsed by the DRCSA, the view is sustained that Scripture is authoritative, inspired in all its parts, and free from error.

SECTION 3: A PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICAL RESPONSE TO THE DRCSA

CHAPTER 16 — A PRESUPPOSITIONAL EVALUATION OF THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, QUEER AND INTERSEX+ BIBLICAL HERMENEUTIC

16.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the issue of same-sex marriage is addressed. As has been shown in Chapter 11, the acceptance of same-sex relationships underwent a process of 'becoming normalised' in the DRCSA with the help of advocates like Pieter Cilliers and André Bartlett. Cilliers was responsible for creating many emotionally driven responses within the denomination, and Bartlett became one of LGBTQI+ members' prime supporters who dedicated himself to help same-sex marriages to be accepted by the church.

As in the case of scriptural criticism and Evolution, the argument for same-sex marriages in the church came from abroad. It has especially been well supported within several church groups in the U.S.A. The key premise of the LGBTQI+ community is that those who speak against LGBTQI+ are homophobic and are committing the same injustice as those who supported slavery in American history. The plea of African slaves for freedom has been reported to be similar to the plea of homosexuals to be able to marry.[117] The liberal argument is that Christians in the past who defended slavery by quoting the Bible, are doing the same today by quoting the Bible to defend their view of same-sex marriage. In response to this argument, Johnson (2012) highlights the error of such comparison:

> "Slavery in Old Testament times was fundamentally different than American slavery. It was an institution of mercy, which people entered voluntarily, for the purpose of providing for their families. It was not based on the kidnapping, sale, and ownership of individuals. Slaves were released every six years (Exodus 21:2). There is no

[117] Jesse Johnson (2012) reports that it got to the point where "it became a common theme that black churches who opposed gay marriage were guilty of cultural and biblical hypocrisy. Many of these articles even expressly stated that the use of the Bible to limit marriage to heterosexual unions is tantamount to supporting the kidnapping, sale, and perpetual ownership of Africans as slaves. After all, some slave owners used the Bible to defend the institution of slavery, and some Americans are using the Bible to define marriage, so the similarities should be obvious."

> concept of perpetual slavery in the Bible… In the Roman world, where kidnapping for slavery was more common, the New Testament says that a person who sinned in such a way was not welcome in the Church. In 1 Timothy 1:10, Paul writes that "enslavers" have no place in the kingdom of God. The Greek word used for "enslavers" refers to those who took people into slavery against their will."

Within the South African context Cilliers, Bartlett and others like them, who wish to change the DRCSA's opinion of gay-and-lesbianism so that the church would be accepting of it, employed three forms of defence: Firstly, they present the view that homosexuality is mainly a 'natural' occurrence and that it is therefore not a choice, but an orientation. Secondly, they compare (as was discussed in chapter 11) the way that African natives were treated in the past by those of, especially Dutch-French descent, to the way that the homosexual community is being discriminated against in the Church today. Thirdly, and also the main subject for a presuppositional and biblical response, they employ a biblical hermeneutic that allows for the large-scale justification of LGBTQI+ relationships, all of which oppose the DRCSA's doctrinal tradition of monogamy between a man and a woman alone. The Westminster Confession of Faith as a reformed confession defines marriage as a union that is strictly reserved for one man and one woman.[118]

16.2 The hermeneutical foundation of LGBTQI+

To discuss Scripture and the church in relation to the LGBTQI+ community, it is necessary to begin with the authority of Scripture. In an article entitled *The Ecclesiastical Promotion of Homosexuality and the Demise of Biblical Authority*, Christopher (2017) explains: "Of all the 'progressive' assumptions that comprise the pro-gay methodology, the most notable is the pro-gay slant on biblical authority. The pro-gay variant on biblical authority forms the basis from which pro-gay hermeneutics are derived."

Discussing the authority of Scripture, Christopher (2017) discusses some of the first, in his opinion, efforts at altering the traditional hermeneutic which assumes the authority of Scripture. Doing so, Christopher (2017) refers to Jack Rogers and Donald McKim whose aim it was in their 1981 writing *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach*, "…to prove that

[118] In chapter XXIV, article 2, the statement says: "Marriage is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband; at the same time." As an additional restriction on immoral unions, the statement also prohibits incestuous marriages in article 4, the broader application of which would certainly at the time of the statement's compilation have included homosexual unions.

the historically central tradition of the Church emphasized biblical infallibility that was limited to matters of faith and practice. Restated, biblical infallibility is confined to redemptive issues, not to other areas the Bible mentions in passing like history, science, geography etc. This means the Bible carries little to no authority in matters outside the circle of salvation."

Matters that fall outside of the circle of salvation, therefore, according to these advocates also involve gender roles. Wayne Grudem in his book *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism* points out that when the authority of Scripture is diminished, one can interpret the Bible passages that instruct as it pertains to leaders, husbands and wives, or anything that involves right gender-related behaviour, in any way one wishes. This kind of theological liberalism is the result of a denial of the authority of Scripture. Defining the title of his book, he says:

> "When I speak of 'evangelical feminism' I mean a movement that claims there are no unique leadership roles for men in marriage or the Church. According to evangelical feminism, there is no leadership role in a marriage that belongs to the husband simply because he is the husband, but leadership is to be shared between husband and wife according to their gifts and desires. And there are no leadership roles in the Church reserved for men, but women as well as men can be pastors and elders and hold any office in the Church."

If Grudem is right, and there is biblical proof that he is right, then the same interpretation can equally be applied to non-traditional relationships like LGBTQI+.

The LGBTQI+ influx into churches in general, according to Grudem (2006), is largely the result of a faulty view of Scripture and a disregard for its final authority in the Church. To prove this point, Grudem draws a parallel between the acceptance of egalitarianism and the acceptance of the LGBTQI+ community. He explains (2006:237) that some liberal evangelical denominations in the world have set the trend for employing evangelical feminist arguments in their legalising of LGBTQI+ In this regard, concerning the U.S.A., Grudem (2006:237) highlights the writings of Virginia Mollenkott and Letha Scanzoni, both who started as evangelical feminists and who later endorsed LGBTQI+. Grudem (2006:237) points to Mollenkott's 1977 book, *Women, Men, and the Bible* that first made the case for egalitarianism, which was followed a year later by Mollenkott's joint effort with Scanzoni (1978) to discuss the acceptance of LGBTQI+ through their book, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* Scanzoni (2005) goes on to endorse gay-and-lesbian marriage in her book, *What God Has Joined Together? A Christian Case for Gay Marriage*.

Although not every egalitarian denomination currently supports LGBTQI+, the link between egalitarianism and openness to LGBTQI+ is one that cannot be ignored according to Jones (2003:24). Jones (2003:24) explains that, among the existence of other 'features' that make

egalitarianism, in a sense, prone to openness toward LGBTQI+, the primary factor could be egalitarianism's minimising of 'gender distinctions.'

According to Jones (2003:26), "[a] critical weakness of the egalitarian hermeneutic, however, is the fact that it fails to recognize that within the fixed scheme of human sexuality, gender roles both stem from and help to define and inform gender identity." And this is exactly where egalitarianism carries implications for the acceptance of different kinds of sexual orientations. Largely "…because men and women have distinct gender identities, they have distinct gender roles, which, in turn, help to define and inform their distinct gender identities. In short, the relationship between gender identity and gender roles is reflexive" (Jones, 2003:26).

Despite their support for distinct gender identity, it is the egalitarian denial of distinct gender roles that lends itself to the LGBTQI+ hermeneutic, as egalitarianism amounts to a "practical denial of differences in gender identity" (Jones, 2003:27). According to Jones (2003:27), as said by biblical feminist Rebecca Groothius, "'[i]t does not promote homosexuality to acknowledge that both men and women have basically the same human needs, desires, and range of abilities and vocational callings … Such a view of men and women will not change heterosexuals to homosexuals.'" However, warns Jones (2003:27) "…when such a view of gender roles leads to a practical denial of differences in gender identity, the end result is a view of human sexuality that is unable to resist arguments waged by advocates of the progressive homosexual movement."

According to Christopher (2016:12), there is more than one hermeneutical approach of pro LGBTQI+ proponents. Cristopher (2016:12) identifies five main hermeneutical assumptions that are used in pro-LGBTQI+ arguments. They are the assumption of differing authorities, the assumption of historical-critical methodologies, the assumption of liberation hermeneutics, the assumption of reader response, and the assumption of social-scientific criticism.

The second hermeneutical assumption listed above deserves closer attention. It is necessary to acknowledge the possible link between the acceptance and results of historical criticism in the DRCSA (ref. chapter 10 and 15) and the resultant acceptance of gay-and-lesbian marriage of members and ministers in the DRCSA. Christopher (2016:13) refers to Mohrman who says that it

is not surprising to find pro-homosexuality advocates appealing to the results of historical critical methodologies to promote their view since it allows for different levels of meaning.[119]

To evaluate this topic of the homosexual or LGBTQI+ hermeneutic further, the biblical data will be considered by asking two pertinent questions: 1.) Is the Bible authoritative in matters other than salvation? and 2.) Do the passages that address homosexual acts as sinful still mean they are sinful today? Both of these questions involve assumptions based on biblical authority and interpretation.

16.3 Is the Bible authoritative in matters other than salvation?

With regards to whether the Bible is authoritative on all matters, Randall (2015:83) discusses how Jesus challenged the Pharisees on their views of marriage. Jesus, in answering the question of divorce, simply points them to the authority of Scripture in all spheres of life when he asks, "have you not read" (Matthew 19:5). In other words, Jesus himself assumed the authority of the Old Testament, in particular Genesis 2:24. By quoting this verse from Genesis Jesus affirmed that marriage had from the beginning, been defined as a union between one man and one woman. Similarly, Jesus might have pointed to another passage of Scripture such as Leviticus 18:22 that states, "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination."

To support the issue of the authority of all Scripture, Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16 states: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Hughes and Chapell (2000:239), while focusing on the two verbs 'correction and training in righteousness' highlight the meaning these verbs convey. First, they remind that these words involve no less than proper conduct before the Lord. The authors then explain the meaning of the Greek word for the English word, 'correction.' The word, they insist, comes from the Greek term for 'straight.' In other words, the Bible is what 'straightens' (no reference to the terms 'gay or straight') God's children out. Hughes and Chapell conclude saying "God's Word is useful in a practical way. Those who accept its reproof will begin to find their lives straightening out. Then they will be ready for the Word's positive effect of 'training in righteousness.'"

[119] Christopher (2016:13) also points out that David Tabb Steward in The Queer Bible commentary subscribes to historical-critical methodology when referring to the "multiple voices'' that speak from the book of Leviticus.

The question of whether the Bible speaks authoritatively to issues other than salvation has in principle already been answered in chapter 15. To remind, it has been argued that the Bible speaks authoritatively, truthfully and accurately to each and everything that it addresses. When applying this to the issue of gender and sexuality it can, therefore, be said that the Bible does indeed speak authoritatively to these issues. Already in the first two chapters of the Bible, it is clear that God made two genders, man and woman. We know from His creation that there is a distinction in their chromosome composition, namely XY and XX. The husband and wife were also specifically made to be able to 'become one flesh' physically in the marriage, as God intended and instituted it.

The disagreement in much of the debate is mostly centred in the actual meanings of the texts that address gender and sexuality, but specifically those texts that address biblical anthropology and sexuality. Many have said, regarding gay-and-lesbianism in particular, the Bible does not condemn either. The following will examine such claims in light of the biblical data.

16.4 Do the passages in the Bible that address homosexual acts as sinful, still mean they are sinful today?

Some in the DRCSA like André Bartlett, believe that homosexual acts are not a sin and that homosexual couples in the DRCSA should, therefore, be allowed to marry. He is so convinced that homosexuality is not sinful, that he believes to disallow them the opportunity to marry is another form of injustice against humanity (ref. 11.3.1).

Can Bartlett's view be defended biblically? In addressing the question of whether homosexuality can be considered sinful today, Randall (2015:56) is convinced that the Scriptures address the issue unambiguously. According to Randall (2015:56), there are eight passages in total, of which four explicitly prohibit homosexuality.[120] Randall (2015:56) emphasises: "It is only special pleading

[120] The eight passages that Randall references: (1) "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." – Genesis 1:27. (2) "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." – Genesis 2:24. (3) "And they called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.'"; "Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulphur and fire from the Lord out of heaven."– Genesis 19:5,24. (4) "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination." – Leviticus 18:22. (5) "…Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?" – Matthew 19:4-5.

that can evade the plain message of these passages. The cumulative force of these passages makes it so abundantly plain that not only the learned but the unlearned, in a due sense of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding.'"

To select one passage, 1 Timothy 1:9-11, where Paul explains that the law is for the unjust, includes in verse 10 the sin of homosexuality in his list of those behaving unjustly. Philip H. Towner (2006:127-128) explains that Paul's employing of the term 'homosexuality' is by no means ambiguous. He affirms: "It denotes, *unequivocally*, the activity of male homosexuality…" [emphasis added]. In other words, there is no doubting the sinfulness of practising male homosexuality. This does not indemnify lesbianism. Towner (2006:128) proceeds saying: "...and the view of this practice adopted in this text corresponds to that of Paul elsewhere (Rom 1:27)." What he refers to is Paul's description of those, including women, who have exchanged worship of God for the worship of the creature, who "exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature…" Against, all men and women who behave this way "...the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness..." (Romans 1:18).

(6) "For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonouring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error." – Romans 1:21-27. (7) "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." – 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. (8) "…understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted." – 1 Timothy 1:9-11.

16.4.1 Old Testament passages

There are three key passages in the Old Testament that address homosexuality. These are Genesis 19:1-11, Leviticus 18:22 and Leviticus 20:13.

In Genesis 19:1-11 Lot is described as being 'surrounded' (Genesis 19:4) in his home by what is referred to in the Bible as men who had wicked intentions (Genesis 19:7). The primary argument of those who are pro-homosexuality is that the intention of the men of Sodom, which was to "know" (Genesis 19:5) Lot and the messenger angels, was not to have sexual relations with them but merely to interrogate them, or talk to them (Grisanti, 2017:120). This is particularly the view of Morschauser according to Grisanti (2017:120), who is reported saying that the desire of the men who surrounded Lot's house was merely to interrogate Lot and the messengers, not to have sex with them. Grisanti (2017:120) says that according to this view the request of the men of Sodom is described as being wicked because in the ancient world interrogations of this nature were usually a brutal affair. According to this view, it would also make sense that Lot offered his daughters as hostages as a 'warranty' that the situation was under control (Grisanti, 2017:120).

Continuing his argument for the biblical teaching of the immorality of homosexuality or all other expressions thereof in general (LGBTQI+), Grisanti (2017:120) suggests the following response to the pro-gay-and-lesbian group. Firstly, Grisanti (2017;120) is adamant that the Hebrew word '*yada*' indeed refers to sexual intercourse, not only in passages like Genesis 19:5 but also in "several others." Context and not an actual translation of the word is what is most important according to Grisanti (2017:12). Thus, says Grisanti (2017:12): "Once Lot offers his daughters to the men surrounding his home, it becomes clear that sexual intercourse and not getting acquainted is the issue being proposed." To prove his understanding of the context of the passage, Grisanti (2017:120) refers to Hamilton who observes: "Lot would never have made such an unusual suggestion if the request was only for a handshake and moments of chitchat."

Grisanti (2017:120) concedes that only 15 of the 948 occurrences found in the Bible of 'to know' is about sexual intercourse. However, "A more challenging obstacle for the pro-homosexual interpretation of this verb is that whenever the Hebrew verb "to know" has a personal direct object (i.e., to know someone, not something), the verb always has a *sexual innuendo*" (Grisanti, 2017:121).

As the last defence of this view of Genesis 19:1-11, there is also the reference in the New Testament to the events that took place in Sodom and Gomorrah. Grisanti (2017:121) refers to the reference in the letter of Jude (verse 7) that explicitly refers to the intentions of Sodom and

Gomorrah as sinful and who "indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire." For this reason, it seems reasonable to conclude that the men of Sodom intended to have sexual relations with Lot and the occupants of his home which is seen as immoral in the Bible.

Secondly, some have suggested that Leviticus 18:22 does not refer to homosexual acts. However, Grisanti (2017:128) appeals to the consensus of a large majority of biblical commentaries on the book of Leviticus as a reason to support the view that the passage does indeed speak to homosexuality or biblically wrongful expressions of sexuality in general.[121] One of the reasons for these laws, as Grisanti (2017:127) points out, is the fact that they would have served as a distinguishing characteristic of the Israelites when compared to the surrounding nations. Grisanti (2017:127) writes:

> "It is fair to assume that the practices condemned in Leviticus 18 were common in Canaanite society. Yahweh prohibited the Israelites from conducting their lives like the Canaanites and thereby damaging their ability to demonstrate God's surpassing character to each other and the surrounding nations."

Thirdly, it would appear that Leviticus 20:13 is teaching the same as Leviticus 18:22. In both passages, the key reference is the fact that these homosexual acts are described as an "abomination" to the Lord.

However, not all are convinced that the reference to 'abomination' should necessarily be seen as detestable (Grisanti, 2017:130). Some would say, according to Grisanti (2017:130) that the term 'abomination' is not necessarily an ethical or a moral reference. Grisanti (2017:130) informs that such interpreters of Leviticus in general, "…recognize that the Book of Leviticus condemned homosexuality, but it also called menstruation unclean, rejects the charging of interest on loans, and refers to burning incense as an abomination." This is similar to the argument posited by Cilliers (ref. 11.2.3) who suggests that the fact that different kinds of offences against God in the Old Testament were met with the same kind of punishment, reduces their moral absolutism

[121] The general focus of Leviticus 18 and 20 involves moral living before YHWH. Grisanti (2017:127) explains: "Leviticus 18 presents different prohibitions against various kinds of sexual relationships that represented covenant treachery. Leviticus 20 has many similarities with chapter 18, giving more attention to the penalties for sinful behavior. Between these two chapters, chapter 19 serves as an important summary of the Law of Moses. 19:1–18 focuses on aspects of loving your neighbor as yourself while the rest of the chapter gives attention to various detailed stipulations of that Law. Throughout Moses's presentation of these covenant requirements, he keeps his focus on the relational core of those requirements by repeating the expression, "Yahweh your God" thirteen times (18:2, 4, 30; 19:2, 3, 4, 10, 25, 31, 34, 36; 20:7, 24)."

(stated differently, denies their sinfulness). In line with this thinking, according to Grisanti (2017:130), is the view of such passages that they reflect "primitive thinking about ancient taboos." Grisanti (2017:130) captures the crux of this view, saying that it stems from the interpretation that "[b]ecause Christians do not have the same fears that the ancients had, those laws that were part of the ritual of ancient Israel have been done away with now in the New Testament."

However, as Grisanti (2017:130) explains, it is not possible to shy away from the biblically unlawful nature of homosexual behaviour. The motivation for this interpretation lies with the lexical meaning of the Hebrew word that is translated as "abomination." Leviticus 20:13, according to Grisanti (2017:130) refers to acts that are "detestable" to God. There is a wide range in which it has been applied in the Old Testament, all of which, according to Grisanti (2017:130) prove that no exception is made of the sin of homosexuality:

> "The noun, "abomination," can signify things that are broadly repulsive or that God finds *generally offensive* (Prov. 6:16). It can refer to acts that are detestable for *cultural* rather than intrinsic moral reasons. For example, this would include the Egyptians' avoidance of eating with Israelites (Gen. 43:32; cf. 46:34; Exod 8:26). It could point to *ritual limitations* that were part of the Mosaic Law, as with unclean foods (Deut. 14:3). Most seriously, it refers to acts that are detestable because they go *against the moral fibre* of God's created world."

For the reasons stated above, Grisanti (2017:131) believes that gay-and-lesbian homosexuality or LGBTQI+ are abominations to God because "it denies God's created order and involves the rejection of Yahweh's stated intention for sexuality…"

16.4.2 New Testament passages

The New Testament passages that seem to be prohibiting gay-and-lesbianism is found in Romans 1:18-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:8-10. Stott (2017:43) divides these three passages into two broad categories, the first is Paul's depiction of sinful pagan culture (Romans 1:18-32), and the second are lists where homosexuality is included as a deplorable sin before God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:8-10). Here follows a survey of the teaching of Romans 1:18-32:

In Romans 1:26-27 specifically, Stott (2017:50) states that "[a]ll are agreed that the apostle is describing idolatrous pagans in the Graeco-Roman world of his day." This, according to Stott (2017:50) means that even though the pagan cultures had a concept of God and faith in the existence of a higher hand, "…they suppressed the truth they knew in order to practice wickedness." People worshipped the creature instead of the Creator and so God gave them over

to a "depraved mind and their decadent practices," which, according to Stott (2017:50), includes "'unnatural' sex."

Seemingly utilising the grammatico-historical method of interpretation Stott (2017:50) admits that the passage appears to be a "definite condemnation of homosexual behaviour." However, this interpretation has not gone without opposition. According to Stott (2017:50), some would assert that Paul could not possibly be warning those of homosexual orientation since Paul is talking about what is 'natural,' and prohibiting going against what is natural. Thus, for a person who is homosexual, such advocates would say, it is only natural for them to express themselves through homosexual behaviour. In other words, Paul is not prohibiting homosexuality per se, rather he prohibits going against what is against nature (Stott, 2017:58). Countering this argument Stott (2017:58) explains that what seems to be the driving force behind passages like Romans 1 is the fact that homosexual acts (or any other forbidden sexuality) go against the created order. Stott (2017:59) explains:

> "The same concept [of the created order] was clearly in Paul's mind in Romans 1. When he wrote of women who had 'exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones', and of men who had 'abandoned natural relations', he meant by 'nature' (physis) the natural order of things which God has established (as in Romans 2:14 and 11:24). What Paul was condemning, therefore, was not the perverted behaviour of heterosexual people who were acting against their nature,…but any human behaviour that is against 'nature' – that is, against God's created order."

To further this understanding of Romans 1, Stott (2017:59) refers to Richard B. Hays who, according to Stott (2017:59) "…provides ample contemporary evidence that the opposition of 'natural' (*kata physin*) and 'unnatural' (*para physin*) was 'very frequently used…as a way of distinguishing between heterosexual and homosexual behaviour.'"

Stott is not alone in his assessment of the teaching of Romans 1:26-27. Theologian Douglas J. Moo (2018:124) joins him explaining that the sexual sin which Paul has in mind in verses 26-27 is undoubtedly the sin of homosexuality. Moo (2018:124) explains: "In yet another similarity to Jewish criticisms of the Gentile world, the sexual sin that Paul singles out is homosexuality: 'women exchanged the natural use of their bodies for that use which is against nature.'" Focusing on the Greek verb for exchange *(metalasso*) in Romans 1:26 which refers to lesbianism, Moo (2018:124) continues to emphasise that this same word is now used to depict the reversal of the natural order when men have sexual relations with men, or when women have sexual relations with women. "The 'natural use,' Moo (2018:124) says, "has been replaced with one that is 'against nature.'"

As has been argued by pro-LGBTQI+ proponents, Paul's usage of "nature" would also include what is referred to as homosexual nature. However, according to Moo (2018:125), the root meanings of the words "natural" and "nature" do not provide for such interpretations. "Natural" and "nature," says Moo (2018:125) is used by Paul to "…describe the way things are by reason of their intrinsic state of birth, and these cases, while sometimes perhaps implicit, there is no explicit reference to divine intention." For this reason "…[s]ome argue, then, that Paul does not here brand homosexuality as a violation of God's will. He is only, they argue, following his cultural prejudices by characterizing homosexual relations as being against what is 'usually' the case" (Moo, 2018:125). Others say Moo (2018:125), "argue that 'against nature' means engaging in sexual relations that are contrary to one's innate sexual preference." However, none of these arguments satisfies Moo (2018:125), thus he states:

> "…neither of these arguments is likely. Paul uses the word 'nature' in this verse as do most Jewish authors, particularly Philo, who included sexual immorality as part of 'natural law' and therefore as a divine mandate applicable to all people. Violations of this law, as in the case of Sodom, are therefore considered transgressions of God's will."

What Paul refers to as "nature" or "natural" should be interpreted in light of God's created order, which is central to the Jewish worldview of Romans 1 (Moo, 2018:126). In this manner, says Moo (2018:126):

> "…the heterosexual desires observed normally in nature are traced to God's creative intent. Sexual sins that are 'against nature' are also, then, against God, and it is this close association that makes it probable that Paul's appeal to 'nature' in this verse includes appeal to God's created order. Confirmation can be found in the context. In labelling the turning from 'the natural use' to 'that [use] which is against nature' an 'exchange,' Paul associates homosexuality with the perversion of true knowledge of God already depicted in vv. 23 and 25."

In addition, reminds Moo (2018:126), this entire verse is part of a passage that deals with sinful passions which are a violation of God's law. When these aspects are considered then "it is clear that Paul depicts homosexual activity as a violation of God's created order, another indication of the departure from true knowledge and worship of God" (Moo, 2018:126).

Romans 1:27 says much the same about unnatural sexual behaviour, however, in this verse men who have these tendencies are addressed as having committed an "error" for which they receive their due punishment. Paul's employment of the term "error," says Moo (2018:127) is not to reduce the seriousness of the sin which they committed in their homosexuality. More accurately, "[t]his punishment, Paul says, was 'necessary,' by which he probably means that God could not allow his created order to be so violated without there being a just punishment" (Moo, 2018:127).

16.5 Ecclesiastical response to LGBTQI+

With the preceding discussion in place, the focus now shifts to the DRCSA. Discussing their stance on the subject of homosexuality in the church, it is helpful to be aware of the fact that departures from certain church denominations have occurred before in church history, at various occasions. Apart from the departure that occurred during the Reformation, which was probably the most notable breaking-away from the established Church, here follows a short reference to a book that was considered controversial in Scotland and that explains the reason for the departure of many ministers of the Church of Scotland.

In the book titled, *A Sad Departure,* by ex-minister of the Church of Scotland, David J. Randall (2015) he details his, and other Church of Scotland ministers' concerns with the Church and their most important reasons for leaving the denomination. The main reason given by Randall is the acceptance of specifically gay-and-lesbian marriage and the ordaining of ministers who are part of the LGBTQI+ community. In the introduction Randall (2015:3) explains that the story that he presents in the book

> "…illustrates what has been happening in the Church of Scotland for a number of years. The 'crack on the forty-second floor' is the crisis that has been occasioned by the question of the rightness or wrongness of inducting practicing homosexual people to the Christian ministry, but the real problem is down in the foundations, where liberally-minded people have been chiselling away at the biblical foundations of the Church for a long time."

Similarly, within the DRCSA, well-known Dr Fritz Gaum, his son, Laurie Gaum, and eight other disgruntled members sued the church after the 2016 overturning of the church's 2015 decision that allowed for gay-and-lesbian marriages of members and ministers. In 2019 the Gauteng High Court (Pretoria) ruled in favour of practising homosexuals being allowed to marry within the church if they are members, and for gay-and-lesbian ministers to be married as well (Venter, 2019). Journalist Alex Mitchley (2019) reported on the judgment, which read: "The differentiation caused by the 2016 decision does inherently diminish the dignity of Gaum because same-sex relationships are tainted as being unworthy of mainstream Church ceremonies and persons in same-sex relationships cannot be a minister of the church." In addition, Mitchley also stated that the "court declared the Church's decision invalid and unlawful and set it aside" and that it "also found that the appeal process within the Church, which upheld the 2016 decision, was also invalid and unlawful and also set it aside."

Randall (2015:7), commenting on the situation, suggests that the changes within the Church of Scotland are the result of years of yielding to liberal interpretations of the Bible which in turn led

to the misinterpretation of what the Bible explicitly describes as sinful. As with those who were in Randall's (2015:7) opinion "chiselling" away at the doctrinal integrity of the Church of Scotland, so also liberal theologians have been chiselling away at the doctrinal foundations of the DRCSA.

Randall (2015:7) later emphasises the seriousness of a departure from the authority of Scripture when further explaining the main emphasis of *A Sad Departure*. "This book," he says, "as well as seeking to provide a record of recent events, sets forward the view of those who believe that, significant as the above points are, they are outweighed by the seriousness of the denomination's departure from its Scriptural basis". Randall's main point is that the primary influencing factor was not the decision that allowed for same-sex marriage in the church and for members of the LGBTQI+ community to be ministers, rather that it is liberal theology that does not take the Bible as the inspired, inerrant revelation, that is what inevitably leads to unbiblical decisions.

Randall, writing on his decision to leave the Church of Scotland states (2015:7):

> "I write with a sense of personal sadness since I owe much to the Church of Scotland. It has been part of my familial DNA. My grandfather and father were elders of the Church of Scotland and I was brought up within fellowship and worship. I served as a minister of Word and Sacrament for four decades in which I sought to serve my parish and also take an active part in Presbytery life and Assembly boards and committees. It has been with great reluctance that I have concluded that it was right to depart from the denomination for the reasons [mainly the homosexual decision] which are explored within these pages. The decline of the Church of Scotland in these last few decades, culminating in decisions of recent General Assemblies, is nothing less than tragic, and it is only with great sorrow that I and many others have concluded that we must leave."

16.6 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the growing phenomenon of the acceptance of gay-and-lesbian behaviour in the DRCSA, or wider applications the acceptance of LGBTQI+. At the beginning of the chapter, the hermeneutical backbone of interpretations that allow for gay-and-lesbian behaviour and marital unions were discussed, focusing mainly on the potentiality which the egalitarian hermeneutic poses for acceptance of the LGBTQI+ hermeneutic. In addition to this hermeneutic, brief reference was made to the role played by historical critical methodology in the acceptance of homosexuality since the DRCSA has yielded to the results of historical criticism in many facets (ref. chapter 10 and 15), possibly aiding the acceptance of homosexuality within the denomination. The question of biblical authority in matters that pertain to sexuality was also briefly discussed, mainly relying on the argument that was made earlier in chapter 15 to show that the Bible is authoritative and inerrant in all matters it addresses, including sexuality. For this reason,

the debate whether God accepts homosexuality or not centres around the key passages which address sexuality. Upon examination of these texts, the Old Testament and the New Testament, affirm that they do prohibit homosexual behaviour. This means that the Bible does not allow for gay-and-lesbian behaviour, gay-and-lesbian marriages, or any other biblically unwarranted expressions of sexuality within LGBTQI+. Lastly, what happened elsewhere in the Church of Scotland when 40 ministers resigned from the denomination as the result of the ordination of gay-and-lesbian ministers, is discussed as having a growing effect on the DRCSA.

SECTION 3: A PRESUPPOSITIONAL APOLOGETICAL RESPONSE TO THE DRCSA

CHAPTER 17 — PRESENT DAY LIBERALISM IN THE DRCSA

Section 3 of this study provided the reader with an evaluation of the teachings that contributed to the current state of liberalism within the DRCSA. These include a changed view of the creation account, the acceptance of historical critical theories in scriptural view, and the DRCSA's growing openness to LGBTQI+ members, ministers, and same-sex marriage.

In chapter 14 the issue of theistic evolution was discussed by presenting some of the theories postulated by well-known figures within the DRCSA like Louw Alberts, Gideon Joubert and Albert Alberts. Their views have been identified as interpretations of the first three chapters of Genesis (specifically the creation account found in Genesis chapter 1) which differ from the historical understanding of creation. A presuppositional apologetic evaluation of such views yielded the following results: Firstly, the conclusion reached in chapter 14 is that the biblical account of creation found in Genesis 1 does not grammatically allow for reordering or a drawing out of the days of creation in order to better fit an evolutionistic framework. The central contributing factor to such a conclusion is the view that Genesis 1 is an example of Hebrew historical narrative and not Hebrew poetry as some theistic evolutionary views might claim. Secondly, the principle of the perspicuity of Scripture contributed greatly to the conclusion about the literalness of the creation week. This principle teaches that 'at-face-value' reading of the text is what was probably in mind. This principle disagrees with the need of theistic evolution to place the effects of sin, such as the entrance of death and disease, before its actual entrance into the world according to the biblical account [Gen. 3:6-19]). This is also proposed as the most uncomplicated understanding of Genesis 1 specifically. Lastly, it was shown that views that accommodate for different forms of theistic evolution rest upon prior philosophical commitments based on what is viewed as true science. The point was made that science is believed by some theistic evolutionists to have disproved the traditional understanding of creation. For these reasons, theistic evolution has been labelled as unbiblical.

In chapter 15 the results of historically critical methods were evaluated, firstly, by discussing the anti-supernatural nature of such methods. To this end, some of the anti-supernaturalism embedded in the school of the German Higher Criticism was highlighted showcasing the presuppositional commitments of such inquiry, which is largely the denial of miracles or anything that speaks of the supernatural. This anti-supernaturalism has been singled out as the primary,

foundational characteristic underlying the historical-critical hermeneutic. The historical-critical hermeneutic is what has been identified as the main reason for liberal views with regards to inspiration and inerrancy, leading to such views as partial inspiration, and views which typically distinguish between what is believed to be salvific inerrancy and scientific/historical errancy. Both of which, it was concluded, are presuppositionally indefensible from Scripture.

Lastly, in chapter 16, the result of liberal doctrine was discussed when the views of the LGBTQI+ movement was again presuppositionally evaluated from Scripture. Although an evaluation of other applications of the same hermeneutic (LGBTQI+ in all of its expressions in the DRSA today) is implied, this chapter addressed the growing phenomenon of the acceptance of gay-and-lesbian members' and ministers' lifestyle, as well as the marriage of gay-and-lesbian members and ordained ministers. The earlier part of this chapter discussed the hermeneutical foundation of views that are sympathetic toward the acceptance of the LGBTQI+ way of living in the DRCSA, however, the egalitarian hermeneutic was identified as, perhaps, a leading factor by providing the correct hermeneutical climate within which LGBTQI+ views can likewise be accepted. Hence, the argument was made that it is egalitarianism's insistence on the eradication of certain gender roles that could create the opportunity for the eradication of all gender distinctions, which is what LGBTQI+ hermeneutic promotes. Alongside the egalitarian hermeneutic, the influence of historical-critical methodology within the DRCSA was also acknowledged, at least, as this methodology paved the way for alternate understandings of pertinent biblical passages that speak to gender and sexuality.

The evaluations that were conducted in chapter 14-16 illustrate the close-connectedness between doctrinal liberalism and the promoting and incremental acceptance of certain doctrinal views over the centuries in the DRCSA. Standing firmly behind all, anti-supernaturalism influenced the discomfort with the traditional view of creation, leading to the acceptance of theistic evolution. Theistic evolution which is presuppositionally more in line with a denial of the supernatural nature of Scripture, influenced many German higher critics, or historical critics, with regards to their assumptions about the origin of the Pentateuch, denouncing it as non-Mosaic, and evolutionarily derived. The combined effect of the anti-supernaturalism of historical criticism (which denies the traditional views of plenary, verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture) accepted in the DRCSA, and the widely accepted egalitarian hermeneutic, promoted tolerance for, and acceptance of, gay-and-lesbian members, ministers and the marital union of both.

Lastly, as has also been shown, all of these developments within the DRCSA stand juxtaposed to what reformed confessions say about the same subjects. As it involves the authority of

Scripture, the post-modern understanding of Jurie le Roux was contrasted to what the Westminster Confession of Faith has to say about the single meaning of a text (ref. 10.4.4). The same confession was referenced for a clear description of the biblical doctrine of inspiration, something which historical criticism has denied (ref. footnote 10). The Westminster Confession of Faith was also consulted to provide the biblical standard for a definition of biblical authority in addressing Karl Barth's view of Scripture (ref. 15.6.3.3). As for the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort, these creeds were referenced to provide a biblical explanation for the entrance of sin into the world as well as the spread of sin from Adam to the rest of the world, something which has been shown cannot be defended from a theistic evolutionary standpoint. In agreement with The Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort, the Heidelberg Catechism in like fashion refers to the creation and fall accounts of Genesis 1-3 as necessary historical events (ref. 14.2.1). The Westminster Confession of Faith was once more consulted for its view on marriage and who should be allowed to marry. In such manner the clearest statement against homosexual unions was found in Chapter XXIV, article 1, of the confession which states that "Marriage is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband; at the same time." As such, the DRCSA was shown to be in opposition to this understanding of the 'one man, one woman' principle for marriage allowing for the ordination of homosexual ministers and the marriage of members and ministers, alike.

CHAPTER 18 — GRAND CONCLUSION

To review, this thesis focused on the development and acceptance of liberal thought within the DRCSA from the late 1800s until the present. Section 1 presented a view of the DRCSA during its earlier days as depicted through the lens of three major theology journals, *Gereformeerd Mandblad*, *Het Zoeklicht*, and *Die Ou Paaie*. During the late 1800s *Gereformeerd Maandblad* revealed that the church was concerned with having the correct response to scientific developments like Darwinist evolution and the claims of German Higher Criticism. Characteristic of this period and journal was the fact that traditional views with regard to creation and the nature of the Bible were largely preserved, in spite of an already changing international theological climate. It was only with the publication of *Het Zoeklicht* in the early 1900s when the question of creation and biblical authority was again revisited, that it led to considerable controversy within the church. This period concluded with the du Plessis trials which centred around the issue of biblical authority and evolution. During the time of *Het Zoeklicht's* publication, *Die Ou Paaie* challenged the beliefs of Johannes du Plessis and others like him in the DCRSA who were open to Darwinist evolution and certain claims of Higher Criticism. It was particularly the 1911 debate between C.F.J Muller and D.J. Pienaar reported on in *Gereformeerd Maandblad* that hinted at the fact that liberalism, at least as it was represented by Pienaar and his insistence on the acceptance of the claims of historical-criticism at the time, was going to be a force to reckon with. A few decades later the view of Scripture of Johannes du Plessis was reported on and rejected by *Die Ou Paaie* as Dwight Snyman refuted the liberal views of du Plessis mainly involving acceptance of evolution and historical-criticism. This period of the DRCSA's history shows that at this stage there were already liberal views introduced to the church, in spite of them not being accepted yet.

In section 2, the reader was reintroduced to the issues of Darwinist evolution and Higher Criticism, with the added phenomenon of the introduction of a homosexual hermeneutic in the church for the first time during the late 1990s. With regards to evolution, Louw Alberts in his *Geloof vs Wetenskap*, Gideon Joubert in his *Die Groot Gedagte*, and Alberts Alberts in his *Evolusie vir Christene* were identified as strong voices that seemingly affected the unbridled acceptance of theistic evolution within the DRCSA in the 1990s and early 2000s. Concurrent to the apparent growing acceptance of theistic evolution within the DRCSA was the continual questioning of traditional views of Scripture in the church. This was predominantly the area of study of men such as Jurie le Roux who in his journal article, *God se brug na die mens: iets goddeliks of iets mensliks?* responded to the theology of the late Johan Heyns. In the article, he criticises the theologically archaic vestiges of an approach to Scripture that, in his opinion, is not fit for a post-modern society. He finds support for such a view in Andries van Aarde's *Fatherless in Galilee*,

who although not a DRCSA theologian, had much in common with le Roux and took the gospel accounts of the life of Christ to the level of the mythical. Lastly, as a final challenge to the traditional view of Scripture within the DRCSA, the book, 'n *Kas is vir Klere* by Pieter Cilliers was briefly reviewed to gain insight into the introduction of the gay-and-lesbian hermeneutic in the DRCSA and to observe some of the first (if not the very first) efforts of presenting this phenomenon as normal to the church. What became evident by reviewing the book is that the gay-and-lesbian hermeneutic employ what is referred to as alleged inconsistencies in the laws of Scripture in an effort to defend the homosexual lifestyle. In addition, what is referred to as discrimination toward women in the past, i.e. not allowing for their ordination as ministers, is likened to the unwillingness of DRCSA clergy to accept gays and lesbians in the church.

Finally, all three phenomena, Darwinist evolution, higher-criticism, and the LGBTQI+ hermeneutic were evaluated in light of what is viewed as the presuppositional claims of Scripture pertaining to each subject. The reason for the culmination of these three subjects is largely because they are seen as closely related. As has already been stated, the anti-supernaturalism that led to the acceptance of theistic evolution can also be said to have contributed to the acceptance of Higher Criticism. Lastly, once egalitarianism became commonplace in the DRCSA (circa 1990s), the church became especially vulnerable to the already accepted anti-supernaturalist claims of higher-criticism. Both egalitarianism and the denials of higher-criticism (including the denial of plenary, verbal inspiration and inerrancy) then became united in providing the fertile soil that currently allows for the acceptance of those with a gay-and-lesbian lifestyle, as members, ministers and in same-sex marriages. This is the doctrinal environment within the DRCSA that has also provided the right environment within the church for the expression of LGBTQI+ or any other expression thereof.

In conclusion, this thesis has argued that theistic evolution, Higher Criticism, and the support of homosexual (and LGBTQI+) behaviour is indefensible from the perspective of Scripture and is, therefore, in conflict with the Protestant Confessions which are still officially endorsed by the DRCSA. To support this, the thesis employed Scripture presuppositionally in the task of evaluating the doctrinal integrity of the DRCSA, their acceptance of theistic evolution, rejection of plenary, verbal inspiration and inerrancy (and their general acceptance of historical criticism), and their acceptance of gay-and-lesbian unions. As such, and in response to the question posed in chapter 1 "Does the current state of the DRCSA differ dramatically from the Church's Calvinistic and Reformed roots?," this thesis suggests that the DRCSA has shifted to a more liberal approach regarding aspects of their theology and morality and are therefore found to be at variance with the teachings and moral requirements of Scripture.

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