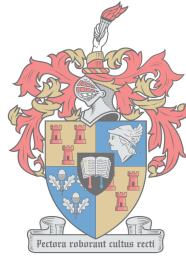


Creation and Salvation? A critical analysis of South African ecotheology

by

Michael Dean Whitcomb



UNIVERSITEIT
iYUNIVESITHI
STELLENBOSCH
UNIVERSITY

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Supervisor: Dr. Nadia Marais

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Declaration

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Abstract

The accelerated rate of global climate change has been investigated by many seeking to understand its origins. In 1967 Lynn White Jr. published a short article in *Science* journal entitled “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” wherein he claimed that attitudes of domination towards nature perpetuated and legitimized by Medieval Christianity, in conjunction with the power to destroy the environment provided by the progress of Western science, were to blame for the 20th century ecological crisis. This profoundly affected theology, as a causal link had been drawn between Christianity and the environmental issues in the world. Having led to the development of ecotheology, it can be argued that all work within this field is, in a way, a response to White. Thus, this project orients itself as part of that response, as it investigates the relationship between two doctrinal loci that have been affected by White’s accusation, namely creation and salvation. This discussion is carried out by means of a critical rhetorical analysis of the interaction between these loci in the work of three theologians. As the scope for this discussion, these theologians, Ernst Conradie, Klaus Nürnberger, and Jaap Durand all write from within a South African context, and all work within the discipline of systematic theology. Each has a distinct approach to how they make sense of the complex relationship between salvation and creation, and this inner logic is explored by focusing on select publications that highlight each theologian’s theological methodology. Comparisons and contrasts are drawn between the three as the discussion asks what the implications of each is for ecotheology in developing a relevant and practical theological response to the pressures of the climate crisis and the underlying accusation by White. Furthermore, this project asks what these three perspectives on salvation and creation mean for ecotheology in a South African context.

Opsomming

Die versnelling van klimaatverandering is al in die verlede talle kere ondersoek in 'n poging om die oorsprong daarvan te verstaan. In 1967 het Lynn White Jr. 'n kort artikel in die Science joernaal gepubliseer getiteld "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" waarin hy beweer het dat beide die Christendom in die Middeleeue en die vooruitgang van Westerse wetenskap, waarin die mens as die heerser die mag het om die natuur te vernietig, verantwoordelik is vir die huidige ekologiese krisis van die 20ste eeu. Hierdie het 'n invloed op teologie gehad omdat White die Christelike geloof en omgewingskwessies onlosmaaklik aan mekaar verbind het. White se artikel het gelei tot die ontwikkeling van eko-teologie, en dus kan die gevolgtrekking gemaak word dat alle werk binne die vakgebied op 'n manier 'n reaksie is op White se artikel. Hierdie gesprek vorm dus deel van daardie reaksie, en sal die verhouding tussen skepping en verlossing ondersoek omdat die twee geloofstandpunte sterk beïnvloed is deur White se aantyging. Hierdie gesprek sal gevoer word deur middel van 'n kritiese retoriese analise van drie teoloë, naamlik Ernst Conradie, Klaus Nürnberger, en Jaap Durand. Al drie skryf as sistematiese teoloë binne 'n Suid Afrikaanse raamwerk en elkeen bied sy eie unieke perspektief op die verhouding tussen skepping en verlossing. Elkeen van hierdie unieke sienswyses sal ondersoek word in die lig van uitgesoekte publikasies waar die teologiese metodologie benadruk en ontleed sal word. Daar sal gefokus word op die ooreenkomste en verskille tussen die drie sienswyses, om te bepaal wat die implikasies is vir eko-teologie in die ontwikkeling van relevante en praktiese benaderings op die klimaatkrisis sowel as op White se aantuigings. Verder sal hierdie gesprek ook ondersoek wat hierdie drie perspektiewe op die verhouding tussen verlossing en skepping vir eko-teologie beteken, spesifiek binne 'n Suid Afrikaanse konteks.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background

The state of global ecological health is a contentious issue which, if it deteriorates further, carries the potential to make earth uninhabitable. The question of how extreme the situation is has been met with a variety of responses, ranging from acceptance of the issue and activism, to outright denial of the idea that humans are causing changes in the global climate, all of which highlight the complexity of the issue and how context can affect one's response to it (Horrell, 2015:15-17). Likewise, within theological circles, there exists a broad spectrum of reactions to the claim that problems like climate change, habitat destruction, pollution, and extinction of species all have a chiefly anthropogenic source. The popularization of the accusation that humans bear the brunt of responsibility for our present environmental challenges can in large part be traced back to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) (Dunn, 2012:578).¹

Within theology, then, a similar accusation, but directed much more sharply at Christianity, came to light just five years later in the form of Lynn White Jr's infamous article "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" (1967). It named Western Christianity as one of the root causes of the environmental destruction which Carson addressed, an issue which had by then gained a much wider audience than just academics, scientists, and politicians. This dual accusation of natural degradation having not only an anthropogenic source but also being directly linked to Christian thought resulted in many of the central pillars of Western theology being put under scrutiny (Butkus & Kolmes, 2011:31). The resultant process of questioning that took place within Western theology and further abroad affected traditions, doctrines, and long-held assumptions, and eventually led to the birth of ecological theology as a discipline.

¹ It is considered by the vast majority of historians to be one of the most significant contributions of the 20th century to inspire the widespread rise of environmentalism in the West (Dunn, 2012:578).

This project's investigation explores one theme in particular which has been significantly affected by these developments, namely the relationship between salvation and creation as doctrinal loci in ecotheology (Butkus & Kolmes, 2011:33-34).

1.1.1. Anthropogenic Climate Change: Lessons from Easter Island

Before looking at the relationship between creation and salvation, we must first understand the background against which the following discussion is set. Being such a global issue, the history of climate change and our present crisis is complex and, naturally, can be explained from a number of different perspectives. A plethora of factors which have contributed in a variety of ways over different periods of time make it impossible to place the cause at only one factor. As Ponting states in his analysis on the relationship between civilizations and their environments:

Human history cannot be understood in a vacuum. All human societies have been, and still are, dependent on complex, interrelated physical, chemical and biological processes. These include the energy from the sun, the circulation of the elements crucial for life, the geophysical processes that have caused the continental land masses to migrate across the face of the globe and the factors regulating climate change (Ponting, 2011:8).

One element his discussion shares with many others, however, is agreements on the undeniable effect human activity has had over the centuries, and especially since the industrial revolution, on Earth's climate. One can go back much further in time than the late 17th century to find evidence of the strain humans can place on their surroundings, and Ponting admits as much in his chapter on the fate of Easter Island. In a powerful comparison, Ponting portrays the story of Polynesian peoples who once inhabited Easter Island as a microcosm reflecting the potential fate of all humankind on the earth, as well as a stark lesson on the sweeping effects irresponsible use of limited resources can have on societies and their environments.

Receiving its name from the Dutch explorer Jacob Roggeveen, the first European to discover its existence, on Easter Day the 5th of April 1722, Easter Island had by that time already been inhabited for centuries (Wielema, 2004:195). Its history as a volcanic rock and its extreme isolation meant that the island had grown into a heavily wooded, lush tropical paradise, home to hundreds of varieties of birds. Unfortunately, the natural prosperity the untouched island had enjoyed for so long was cut short:

A little over 1,000 years ago – or three minutes before midnight on the 24-hour clock of this remote island’s geological history – forest and scrub were being destroyed, soon to be replaced in scattered environments by grasses, sedges and weeds. Burning then denuded and scoured entire landscapes, whereupon soil erosion took place on an unprecedented scale. Several endemic species disappeared. The subsequent decline of forest, and the general depredation of local flora and soil in the palæbotanic and recent geological record, had to be the result of only one thing. Humans had arrived (Fischer, 2006:9).

Although estimates of when precisely humans first arrived vary, the most conservative experts place their landing date somewhere within the 7th century CE. Numbering most likely around twenty to thirty individuals, the first settler groups survived from a simple combination of sweet potatoes and chicken, both of which were brought with them. The time which would have been used to cultivate a more diverse diet was now freed up for more socially dynamic activities. A multifaceted society with numerous religious elements began to emerge as a result, and almost certainly “the most advanced of all the Polynesian societies and one of the most complex in the world for its limited resource base” (Ponting, 2011:4). Integral parts of their religious ceremonies, the statues the island is most commonly known for today were significant contributors to the eventual environmental destruction of Easter Island and the society’s downfall. The statues, carved from large sections of stone (the result of thousands of years of

compounded volcanic ash), were transported across the island to each of the tribe's sacred spaces used for worship. In this process of transport, hundreds of logs acted as rollers under these immense statues. Additionally, the erection of these statues, the timber religious structures around them, the settlements of the inhabitants of the island, and any seafaring vessels they constructed all contributed to the eventual scarcity of lumber which led to the collapse of their society and of the once vibrant ecosystem on the island.

When the population grew to such unsustainable levels, food became an important resource. Competition between clans for dwindling resources led to enslavement of some groups by their conquerors, and as the degradation of their society rapidly worsened, eventually the people resorted to cannibalism to survive (Diamond, 2011:107-109). When European explorers arrived in the 1700's and saw a barren landscape littered with magnificent stone structures but surrounded by, what appeared in their eyes to be barbaric people, they questioned the tribes about how such statues were erected – in response “the primitive islanders could no longer remember what their ancestors had achieved and could only say that the huge figures had walked across the island” (Ponting, 2011:6).

1.1.2. A Historical Perspective

One need not stop at Easter Island to uncover the disproportionately drastic effect human inhabitation (compared to other land-based mammals and indigenous species) has on any area of the world. Theories on when precisely it was that humans began affecting the global climate are diverse. The use of fire and the act of burning by early hominids has had a remarkably powerful effect on the natural and climatic processes and states of the earth over the millennia: “The capture of fire by the genus *Homo* changed forever the natural history of the Earth. The manipulation of fire, a species monopoly, defined humanity's ecological niche. Even today fire appears at the core of many popular scenarios for environmental apocalypse” (Pyne & Goldammer, 2013:71).

Geologists working on the Loess Plateau in China have discovered as much recently when they uncovered some compelling evidence that large scale biomass fires, which are postulated to have been the result of early anthropogenic action, affected the long-term climate and consequent vegetation of the entire area around 150 ka (kiloannum, thousand years) ago (Zou, et al., 2014:1070). Similar conclusions concerning much earlier human history have been drawn by other studies which show that *Homo habilis*' employment of tools coincided with a change to cooler and drier conditions in what would be modern day Ethiopia as far back as 2.5 Ma (Megaannum, million years) ago (Bonnefille, 1983:487). Whether the former was a cause for the latter is uncertain, however it is still considered a possibility by some (Pyne & Goldammer, 2013:417). A consensus does exist that regular controlled usage of fire by *Homo erectus* in Africa took place around 1.6 Ma ago, with burning of food sources being employed to ease digestion, as well as the possible burning of large areas of land for hunting and protection from threats (Roebroeks & Villa, 2011:5209).

These acts, though perpetrated by a relatively small population when compared to today's, spread across the globe to result in the survival of our species by the destruction of our environment. Thus, although modern causes for climate change may be primary targets for change by activists, these sources of environmental degradation are symptomatic of a deeper, more disturbing truth, namely that "the wholesale anthropogenic modification of the biosphere did not begin with the industrial revolution or with the Neolithic revolution, but with the hominid revolution announced with promethean splendour by the capture of fire" (Pyne & Goldammer, 2013:72).

As population grew and *homo sapien* settlements expanded across the globe, their effects were intensified regionally, and the accumulation of these abrupt changes (relative to natural geological heating and cooling cycles which occur over thousands or even millions of years) began to have global effects. Research into ice cores by the Intergovernmental Panel on

Climate Change (IPCC) report a spike in global greenhouse gas levels 7 ka before the industrial revolution, coinciding with increases in global human migration and the beginning of several well documented ancient civilisations (Stocker, et al., 2013:50-51). While trends show consistent decreases in carbon levels during interglacial periods for the last 800 ka, the opposite upward shift is indicative of “anthropogenic interference in the operation of the climate system during the Holocene” (Rudimann, et al., 2014:148). Agriculture and the deforestation that accompanies it are two of the major contributors, with the former causing more greenhouse gas production as a result of livestock and the freeing of natural carbon traps in the ground, and the latter leading to a decrease in carbon absorption (Stocker, et al., 2013:50-52).

Despite natural fluctuations of atmospheric carbon continuing to be the dominant factor in determining global temperature, the cycles of hot and cold were beginning to be exacerbated by human contributions during the central Holocene period, leading to more extremes: “deforestation and agricultural development in the 8000 to 5000 BP period may have led to small increases in CO₂ and CH₄ concentrations (maybe about 5–10 parts per million for CO₂) but increases that were perhaps large enough to stop the onset of glaciation in Northeast Canada” (Steffen, et al., 2007:615).

During the pre-industrial late Holocene, this indirect power struggle for control of global temperatures continued when further population growth and increasingly aggressive agricultural practices worldwide began to make human actions outweigh the natural temperature balancing of the Earth, ushering in what some call the “Anthropocene” (Noel, 2015:67-68). Paul Crutzen, the Dutch Nobel prize recipient for his studies on the atmosphere, suggested the term as a replacement for Holocene, believing we have entered into a new era where *Homo sapiens* are the dominant force on the Earth (Crutzen & Schwägerl, 2011). This period of time leading up to our present era, between 1000 up until 1800 CE, was perhaps more

drastic in terms of greenhouse gas introduction into the atmosphere than even the industrial period:

The large per-capita footprint of early agriculture boosted the greenhouse-gas releases from relatively small pre-industrial populations, and the greater global climate sensitivity during cold climatic states further enhanced the warming caused by early greenhouse-gas releases. As a result, the early anthropogenic warming rivalled or exceeded the industrial warming that has been realized to date (Rudimann, et al., 2014:152).

Steffen, Crutzen, and McNeill offer a useful division of the Anthropocene period, namely: “The Industrial Era” from 1800-1945, “The Great Acceleration” from 1945-ca.2015, and “Stewards of the Earth?” from 2016 onwards (Steffen, et al., 2007:615-618). The first of these three is well known to be a major cause of the rapid climate change and natural destruction we are observing on a global scale at present. Coming out of the 18th century Enlightenment with an explosion of knowledge and technology, the dawn of the industrial era provided the building blocks for rapid societal expansion (Steffen, et al., 2007:616). Characterized by increases in factory production, mechanization of processes, transportation innovation and urbanisation, all of these changes required fuel; fossil fuels provided the necessary energy. While it was a revolution in terms of industry, this time period was simultaneously a regression for the earth’s climate and specifically the health of the atmosphere:

The concentrations of CH₄ and nitrous oxide (N₂O) had risen by 1950 to about 1250 and 288 ppbv, respectively, noticeably above their preindustrial values of about 850 and 272 ppbv. By 1950 the atmospheric CO₂ concentration had pushed above 300 ppbv, above its preindustrial value of 270–275 ppbv, and was beginning to accelerate sharply. Quantification of the human imprint on the Earth System can be most directly

related to the advent and spread of fossil fuel-based energy systems, the signature of which is the accumulation of CO₂ in the atmosphere roughly in proportion to the amount of fossil fuels that have been consumed (Steffen, et al., 2007:616).

“The Great Acceleration” followed the industrial revolution and began after the Second World War in 1945, when rapid population growth saw global population doubling in the span of just half a century. The role of the industrial era in providing a foundation for the 70 years period between 1945 and 2015 cannot be underestimated. With more demands in agriculture, living space, and economics, the environment paid the price. Increases in mining for fuels to accommodate this expensive and expanding trend along with the overuse of fertilizers and the continuing rise in greenhouse gases has and continues to have a devastating impact on the Earth (Steffen, et al., 2007:617). Directly, by destruction of ecosystems, and indirectly, by causing climate change too rapid for fauna and flora to adapt to, the consumption of fossil fuels and the growing population has led to what is undeniably a crisis.

Optimistically, the third era of Crutzen’s Anthropocene, running from 2015 onwards, expects a change in behaviour from the prior two centuries. Steffen, et al. posit that enough political urgency, philosophical shifts, and technological innovations are extant to bring about meaningful change, or at least curb the climate change to a level that lies within the bounds of Earth’s natural cycles (Steffen, et al., 2007:618-619). To accompany this, a self-critical evaluation of the relationship between humans and the Earth has become more common within science. It is important to note, however, that this is not an entirely new development in thought; the role humans play in the natural world has been reflected on within both the secular world and theology for a number of years.

1.1.3. Secular and Theological Responses

Much of the secular observation of and reflection on this relationship has been done under what is today known as the field of “environmental science”. It is a relatively young scientific

grouping, and has been notoriously difficult to demarcate: “Environmental science may not date back to biblical times, but its historical roots are nevertheless difficult to define... Geographers, biologists, physical scientists, chemists, and others all claim this branch of science as their own” (Chasan, 1998:496). A broad discipline group, it includes partially or entirely, among others, geology, geography, meteorology, climatology, biology, biochemistry, and even palaeontologists. In sum, it is a blanket term for all ‘natural world’ scientific study that deals with understanding, preserving, and ensuring the good health of the environment, and “is especially concerned with changes wrought by human activities, and their immediate and long-term implications for the welfare of living organisms, including humans” (Allaby, 2002:2).

Self-awareness of these destructive tendencies humans have in interacting with their surroundings has developed into a field of activism taking the form of contemporary environmentalism and conservationism. While many historians place Rachel Carson’s 1962 publication entitled *Silent Spring* as one of the most powerful literary contributions to have spurred the movement on, the study of the relationship between humans and nature, specifically as a scientific discipline, began to emerge as a field of interest in the late 18th century. In 1799 Alexander von Humboldt, a contender for the greatest natural scientist of his era and possibly the world’s first conservationist, embarked on a journey across the Atlantic from his native Prussia. Spending five years studying the ecosystems of central and southern America, Humboldt concluded that the elements of nature which constitute an environment work together as a system of interdependent parts, in a fine balance (von Humboldt, 2010:79). When humans begin to affect even one of those elements, the ecosystem begins to change and degrade. He saw this most clearly embodied in the deforestation the colonial plantations caused at the expense of the Venezuelan jungle (Wulf, 2017:594).

One of his successors George Perkins Marsh, probably the first modern environmentalist to come out of North America, continued the work of von Humboldt. Though there are those who contend Marsh's unofficially designated primacy in founding the American environmentalist movement, most notably Richard W. Judd (who argues for some other names to be given priority), there is no arguing that Marsh played a very significant role in bringing popularity and public awareness to the importance of natural conservation (Judd, 2004:169-170).

One of his most formative experiences took place while journeying through northern Africa, Egypt, and the Middle East in the early 19th century. Examining the ruins of ancient civilizations which had ceased to exist over a thousand years prior, Marsh saw evidence of the same degradation Humboldt had warned about in Latin America. Not only confirming the globality of this problem, Marsh also began to understand its temporal scope. Witnessing the long-term results of human action still centuries and even millennia after those who caused it had ceased to exist, his experiences led him to a damning conclusion about the enduring effects human habitation has on the Earth:

Throughout the Eastern continent, man [sic] has everywhere left his visible impress on the face of the material creation. He has stripped the mountain-sides of their natural vegetable ornament and protection, and laid bare their surface to the influence of sun and wind and frost and rain, whose action has denuded the rocks of their earthy covering... The intelligent observer here connects the effect with the cause... Not a sod has been turned, not a mattock struck into the ground, without leaving its enduring record of the human toils and aspirations that accompanied the act; and as you mentally follow back the links of this unending chain, you find them stamped with the impress of multitudes, in comparison with whom the myriads that piled up the Pyramids are but a handful. Every turf is the monument of a hundred lives, and to our eye, accustomed

to the verdant and ever youthful luxuriance of the primitive forest, the very earth of Europe seems decrepit and hoary (Marsh, 1860:48-49).

Marsh saw a clear connection between the lifestyle of humankind and the gradual deterioration of the environment. Not only did he warn of immediate consequences, but he saw the potential for global symptoms of the same problem if people did not focus on changing the way they interacted with their surroundings (Wulf, 2017:595). In lieu of these ideas, which were revolutionary at the time, many over the years have joined the cause against the abuse of natural resources and the thoughtlessness which Marsh fought. Despite this, as time has marched on and human population grown, the state of global ecology has continued to decline steadily.

Assimilating the observations of conservationists led to some, in Western science, beginning the process of piecing together a picture of the root causes and scale with which humans affected their environment and the world. While conservationists like Humboldt and Marsh brought focus to issues like deforestation, overfishing, and irresponsible agriculture, others saw problems in the atmosphere. Global temperature shifts had been studied for a number of decades, and as a gradual heating was observed and tracked by scientists, questions were raised as to the possible causes of this potentially destructive change. Svante Arrhenius, a 19th century Swedish scientist and Nobel price recipient for his work in chemistry, is credited with positing a causal link between the presence of carbon in the atmosphere and raised ground temperatures (Uppenbrink, 1996:1122). In his 1896 publication, *On the Influence of Carbonic Acid in the Air upon the Temperature of the Ground*, he charted the correlation between atmospheric levels of carbonic acid (H_2CO_3) and the mean ground temperatures for different latitudes on the earth and corresponding angles of incidence of solar radiation. Finding a consistent correspondence between higher levels of atmospheric carbon and temperature, he was led to conclude a distinct causality between the chemical composition of the atmosphere

and the gradually observed rise in temperature of the earth since the last ice age. Going further, he predicted that rapid doubling of H_2CO_3 levels in the atmosphere at the time would result in a mean temperature rise of between 4.95 deg and 6.05 deg C (Arrhenius, 1896:266).

In completing “an estimated 10,000 to 100,000 calculations by hand” Arrhenius’ predictions were only a few degrees off from contemporary estimates (Uppenbrink, 1996:1122). The major sources of carbon release he saw were: “(1) volcanic exhalations and geological phenomena connected therewith; (2) combustion of carbonaceous meteorites in the higher regions of the atmosphere; (3) combustion and decay of organic bodies; (4) decomposition of carbonates; (5) liberation of carbonic acid mechanically enclosed in minerals on the fracture or decomposition” (Arrhenius, 1896:272). Arrhenius’ predictions, as significant as they were, lacked accuracy in one area: he underestimated the level of blame to place on humanity. As concluded in the previous section, since the first humans began to modify their surroundings a number of millennia ago up until the present, we have been destabilising the ecosystems and natural climate cycles of the planet.

Long before these scientific evaluations of the relationship between humanity and the earth, society’s secular philosophy and politics seemingly had already begun understanding in part the consequences of human presence in an environment. One of the oldest known examples of such reflection can be found in the Hippocratic Corpus, and specifically *Airs, Waters, Places*, which, “written c.400BCE, stressed the importance of good air quality, as well as pure water and a salubrious setting” (Mosley, 2014:144). When urbanisation in ancient Rome led to a great influx of residents, there were complaints of noise and pollution from wheeled traffic that accompanied the population growth. Julius Caesar, seeing the effects such a great number of people were having on the available space and resources of the city and its surroundings, banned all carts and wagons from entering the city during the day (Parking, 2005:8-9). Limitations like these show that, at the very least, ancient people groups were not entirely

ignorant to the effects they were having on their environments. In 1306 King Edward I called for a ban on burning coal within the London city limits as a result of the tremendous amounts of air pollution the city was causing (CCPS Center for Chemical Process Safety, 2006:298).

Through the decades, public interest has undulated as indicated by how many texts were published that had themes concerning the environment or sustainability:

In the early 1970s vast numbers appeared, but far fewer books were being published by the middle 1970s. More ‘green’ titles were issued in the early 1980s, but by the end of the decade large numbers of copies were being returned to publishers unsold and by the early 1990s most publishers would not accept books with titles suggesting anything remotely ‘ecological’, ‘environmental’, or ‘green’ (Allaby, 2002:15-16).

Prior to this decrease in interest by publishers, in 1967 Lynn White Jr., who at that time was a professor at the University of California, published a short article in *Science* journal entitled “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”. While at the time there was no consensus as to what the fundamental causes of the growing environmental crisis were, White’s article played a large part in pointing the discussion towards potential ideological and religious causes (Gottlieb, 2004:191). Beginning by emphasizing the drastic effect humanity can have and has had on the development of nature, White continues by delineating the roles technology and science have played in the relationship between people and their environments. Finally, he makes the controversial claim that attitudes towards the environment and nature perpetuated by Medieval Christianity, with the power over nature present in Western science, combined to create an extremely destructive force (White Jr., 2004:198-199). It is this amalgamation of power over nature, provided by Western technology, and dominance over nature, legitimized by Christianity, which White claimed were to blame for the 20th century ecological crisis (Levasseur & Peterson, 2016:2). This profoundly affected theology, as a causal link was then drawn between Christianity and the environmental issues in the world. Since this ecological

accusation demanded a theological response, many today regard White's article as a significant catalyst in the development of modern ecotheology (Field, 1996:9-10).

It can be argued that all ecotheology is, consciously or subconsciously, a response in some way to White's allegation against Christianity (Jenkins, 2009:285-286). Indeed, although his was an attack on Christianity, the contribution he made to the development of ecotheology should not be underestimated. Elspeth Whitney describes the irony which thus pervades its birth as a discipline and the growth of environmentalism as a movement: "Paradoxically, although many ecotheologians argued vociferously against White, they could use his thesis to reinforce the view that environmentalism was at bottom a religious and ethical movement. Like White, they believed that religious values were the most effective antidote to environmental degradation" (Whitney, 2008:1736).

1.2. Motivation

The most direct motivation for this project came after reading Ernst Conradie's *The Earth in God's Economy* (2015) as it not only sparked my interest in the field of ecotheology, but also served to introduce to me the central role salvation and creation play in the various responses to both the environmental crisis and White's accusation, albeit somewhat indirectly. The levels of complexity inherent to the relationship between creation and salvation became evident, and a curiosity was born as to how this interaction played out in other systematic theologians' works. Thus, this investigation is situated within the bounds of systematic theology, as it pertains to the doctrinal loci of salvation and creation, and more specifically within the discipline of ecotheology.

On a more personal level, this project is an expression of the conviction that theology must be publicly lived out by working to remain relevant to ongoing challenges, especially in responding to issues like the climate crisis. In this sense, one can also label this as a journey in public theology. Moreover, one can argue that all theology is, in a sense, public (Mannion,

2009:122-123). Indeed, the movement of public theology, although perhaps only becoming a popular term in theological publications during the 1970's, has a long history of development prior (Smit, 2013:12).² As with any theological field of study, attempts to demarcate boundaries and areas of focus can lead to a diverse set of opinions on where the field begins and ends.

As Smit indicates, there is even a variety of views regarding the origins narrative of public theology itself. As for the purpose and chief function of public theology, the diversity in publications within the field are evidence in themselves of a lack of agreement. However, some points of agreement can be found in common elements between these different definitions of public theology. John de Gruchy makes as much clear: "There is no universal 'public theology', but only theologies that seek to engage the political realm within particular localities. There are, however, commonalities, both confessional and ecumenical, in approach and substance between theologies that do this" (De Gruchy, 2004:45).³

De Gruchy's points echo the words of Karl Barth, nearly fifty years prior, "In the sphere of the civil community the Christian community shares common interests with the world and its task is to give resolute practical expression to this community of interest" (Barth, 1960:159). Barth's argument follows that the Church and its beliefs are not merely a spiritual organism or symbols of piety, nor is the Church only the gathering of people with a shared belief; Christian theology has significance beyond the religious, and has the power to bring about change far beyond the boundaries of its own community. Sharing Barth's conviction, this thesis draws

² As a term, 'public theology' originated in reference to a phenomenon in the post-Enlightenment era which saw theology becoming privatized and gradually losing its voice in the public sphere. In reaction to this, theology which engaged with society and its issues did so consciously and with the intent of dialogue – these exchanges became known as 'public theology', something which eventually developed into a discipline in its own right (Naudé, 2016:99).

³ He outlined seven such points in his exploration of public theology as Christian witness in the works of Denise Ackermann, Alex Boraine, Joseph Wing, and Douglas Bax: firstly, public theology works without giving unfair priority to Christian values but rather gives preference to the "common good"; secondly, public theology translates theology into relatable themes and terms for secular society; thirdly, it understands secular contexts and relevant issues thoroughly; fourthly, it employs a wide range of methodologies in praxis which reflect the transdisciplinary nature of public theology; fifthly, public theology is largely justice focused; sixthly, public theology must be done in cooperation with local congregations; finally, public theology is to be the practical expression of a rich and dynamic relationship with God (De Gruchy, 2007:39-40).

motivation from the work of Barth as well as guidance from the points of de Gruchy. Theology that is contextual in developing responses to changing circumstances and shared areas with secular society is crucial in underpinning the relevant and responsible action which Barth goes on to describe. The need for such theology is to a great degree the motivation behind choosing to examine the relationship between creation and salvation, as well as the choice to situate this discussion against the backdrop of the present environmental crisis.

1.3. Research Problem

Theological reflection upon the complex relationship between the two can be traced back to the first few centuries of Christendom, and yet remains the topic of many debates today.⁴ While the ways in which theology has engaged with the issue of human-induced environmental ruin is explored below, more specifically it is the dynamic interaction between creation and salvation that offers some distinct perspectives on the present climate crisis. Focus is kept on the approaches of three systematic theologians which address the complex relationship between these doctrinal loci in their work. All of their contributions have been largely within a South African theological environment and thus there is common ground both theologically and contextually upon which comparisons and contrasts can be made. They also share the trait that each of their approaches to the relationship between salvation and creation falls into the category of “deep ecology”, as their focus is on addressing theological issues primarily, which have contributed on a fundamental level to the climate crisis.⁵

⁴ Understanding the contact between salvation and creation is as crucial as it is ancient, arguably as old as Christian theology itself, as demonstrated by Conradie in his *Creation and Salvation: A Mosaic of Selected Classic Christian Theologies* (Conradie, 2012a:15).

⁵ In the distinction Celia Deane-Drummond refers to – initially made by Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss in 1973 – between ‘shallow’ and ‘deep’ ecology, the former refers to proposals to motivate changes in human action based mostly on physically visible criteria. These include, for example, the destruction of ecosystems, abuse of non-renewable resources, and atmospheric pollution. The latter points to proposals for change based on deeper sources of motivation rooted in societal, philosophical, religious, or cultural alterations; these are hoped to effect longer-lasting and more effective changes, as they address deeper sources of the problems in lifestyle which have resulted in our present crisis (Deane-Drummond, 2008:35).

The heart of the problem addressed in this investigation lies in the accusation given by White and the need for a theological response to it. The fundamental assumption made in his article is the existence of a causal relationship between religion and ecological health. Having traced the history of technological advancements which had taken place over the centuries in medieval Europe, he also notes the damaging effects these developments had on the environments humans had settled in. Asking what the inner motives were behind such progress, which took place at the expense of ecological wellbeing, his conclusion is that motivation was drawn from attitudes supported by religious principles:

These novelties [the scratch plow and the Frankish calendars of the 9th century AD] seem to be in harmony with larger intellectual patterns. What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny--that is, by religion (White Jr., 1967:1205).

He proceeds to specify that the ways in which medieval Christianity speaks about the place of humans in the world, especially as it relates to being different from the non-human creation, having a special relationship to God, perpetuates anthropocentrism. This is one of the core principles which White believed affected doctrine and which is to blame for anthropogenic destruction of the environment. His proposed solution, then, is theological: "What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature [sic] relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one" (White Jr., 1967:1206).

It is in this suggestion of "rethinking" where Ernst Conradie begins his reflection; specifically, he believes that attempting to "do justice" to the doctrinal loci of salvation and creation is the point from which a reformulation of doctrine will radically counter anthropocentrism, resulting in a positive relationship between humans and the environment.

This project investigates Conradie's approach, along with Klaus Nürnberger and Jaap Durand's work on creation and salvation, in order to uncover the different ways in which these doctrinal loci are related and what those different approaches mean for the relationship between theology and ecology.

It is thus the hope of this project to present its content as a response, in part, to Lynn White Jr's allegation against Christian theology. This response is by no means a defence of theology against White's polemical language; on the contrary, this project acknowledges the merit of his accusation. It expects the examination of the relationship between salvation and creation to show that these loci can be re-read in new ways which do not encourage destructive action towards the environment, and instead resolve some problems that have been prominent in the history between theology and ecology.

1.4. Research Questions and Goals

Despite engaging in an analysis of argumentation and internal logic, the aim of this project is much less persuasive and more investigative. The immediate goal is to understand the internal logic of how each theologian makes sense of creation and salvation in relation to one another, this being achieved by means of the critical rhetorical analysis described above. The intermediate goal is to uncover insights into how these various perspectives on the relationship between salvation and creation highlight different aspects of the relationship between theology and the environmental crisis. The final goal, in a broader perspective, is to retrieve insight embedded in these approaches for the sake of moving forward in developing theological systems that enable and motivate Christians to publicly respond to the ecological challenges we face in South Africa and the world.

1.5. Methodology

The interpenetrative relationship doctrine has with language, being the communicative core behind its existence as formulation and expression, is at the core of this project's methodology.

While language is a conveyor of information which contributes fundamentally to the design of an idea, this paper takes the assumption that language achieves more than mere description (Compier, 1999:ix). Risto Saarinen and Don Compier, both of whom share this view, are representatives of a common opinion that the study of rhetoric is a necessity in understanding any doctrine (Saarinen, 2012:9). Before examining the relationship between creation and salvation in the theology of Conradie, Durand, and Nürnberger, it is essential to first define the terms and approaches which are used for that discussion, beginning with Compier.

Completing his studies in 1992 with a Ph.D. from Emory University, Don H. Compier has spent most of his time as an academic lecturing in California and Iowa, moving through the ranks as an associate and assistant professor, before founding the Community of Christ Seminary in 2002. He has continued partnering with them over the years as he has worked on publishing new theological works (College for Bishops, 2011). It is, however, one of his earlier publications which bears most relevance to this project, namely *What is Rhetorical Theology? Textual Practice and Public Discourse* (1999). The critical analysis employed for this project comes in the form of a rhetorical analysis based on Compier's definition of 'rhetorical theology' therein. Compier's purposes in his book are fourfold: to offer his contribution to defining rhetorical theology, give a historical overview of which individuals and works he believes this definition should be attributed to, to defend rhetorical hermeneutics from a set of established criticisms it generally has been subject to, and finally to demonstrate the efficacy of his version of rhetorical analysis within a theological sphere, specifically the doctrine of sin (Compier, 1999:ix).

He begins by defining his work as being born in response to the "fragmentation" he and others have noted within dogmatics at the turn of the millennium (Compier, 1999:vii). He believes this perceived disunity in systematic theology not representative of a failure in the

discipline to find a common theological direction, but rather it is reflective of a healthy variety of new, young theological perspectives being ushered into the field (Compier, 1999:vii).

Importantly, in this a period like this, where emerging voices differ from traditional ones, Compier suggests that any methodological submissions which are to guide dogmatics into the future must adhere to three values. Firstly, under what he terms “identity”, suggestions for the way forward should bring the divergent voices of the field into contact with one another by forming a space for mutually informative dialogue on shared points of focus (Compier, 1999:viii). Secondly, “catholicity” demands that this shared space for debate cannot be created at the cost of losing diversity of opinion – all should be equally free to participate and each voice appreciated – as Christian theology, even from its earliest days, has always been typified by a multiplicity of perspective. Finally, under “relevance”, any suggested hermeneutical system should contribute in part to uniting the academic theological world with its secular counterpart (Compier, 1999:viii).

Compier offers *What is Rhetorical Theology?* as an outline of a methodological proposal which he believes has the potential to fulfil those three criteria within systematic theology. Tying this definition to an ancient understanding of what rhetoric means in practice, he challenges some traditional assumptions of where the its roots lie, and which sources should be drawn on for inspiration today. Aristotle, who wrote one of the oldest surviving texts on the subject and is considered by many to be the classical authority therein (Tracy, 1994:122), defines rhetoric as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (Aristotle, 2010:6).⁶

Cicero and Quintilian, whom Compier chooses in part to base his methodology on, define rhetoric wholly around the idea of persuasion. The ethical implications thereof meant

⁶ Despite this, Compier prefers taking guidance from the Roman rhetorical tradition over the Greek (Compier, 1999:2). Thus it can be noted even in how Compier constructs this argument, by choosing to follow an alternative rhetorical tradition, that he adheres to his own ‘principles’.

that the ideal orator in the eyes of ancient Roman society had to not only be persuasive by means of understanding their audience, but also noble in their intentions (Compier, 1999:5). The insistence on the need for an orator to be virtuous in character came in response to accusations of sophistry in rhetoric; this makes sense, especially when one considers that Cicero believed one of the key skills any rhetor should possess was the ability to “determine what is appropriate” to their audience and adapt their message accordingly, in order to maximize persuasion (Compier, 1999:6).

Since Compier concludes that “no theologian can avoid involvement with the persuasive elements known as rhetoric”, adopting a rhetorical lens for our forthcoming analysis becomes a necessity in order to uncover the internal logic each theologian uses to argue for their understanding of the relationship between creation and salvation (Compier, 1999:ix).⁷ His discussion proceeds into a summary of some key historical and contemporary theologians who exhibit this Christian adaptation of classical rhetorical tactics, principles which characterize classical rhetoric in the work of Cicero and Quintilian. Naming examples of this in the works of Augustine, Desiderius Erasmus, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Karl Barth, George Lindbeck, Robert Schreier, Søren Kierkegaard, and Friedrich Schleiermacher, Compier demonstrates how widespread these rhetorical methodologies and characteristics really are. Firstly, he describes rhetorical theology as both “practical and political”, as exemplified by Karl Barth’s life and literature (Compier, 1999:12, 17-18). Rhetoric is also inherently a public action, being so heavily audience-dependent. Additionally, rhetorical approaches acknowledge the importance of praxis as the practical expression of the persuasive goals they set and can, in

⁷ Indeed, Christianity has historically been tied to rhetorical hermeneutics even as long ago as St. Augustine, with his “On Christian Doctrine” reflecting much of Cicero’s work. Over the centuries a number of Christian thinkers have engaged in the same ‘appropriation of rhetoric’ for the purposes of their theology, including Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin (Compier, 1999:11). Despite this, the popularity of rhetorical methods in Western theology has ebbed and flowed over the years, reaching a low during the medieval period and experiencing a revival during the Renaissance, before losing support during the 17th century in the wake of Rene Descartes’s extremely influential and outspoken “distaste for formal rhetoric” (Carr, 1990:1).

themselves, become a form of praxis. With modern theology being affected more now than ever before by the phenomenon of globalisation and the intercultural realities which accompany it, contextual awareness strongly affects rhetoric in theology (Compier, 1999:17).

Receiving more attention in recent years and especially during the 20th century, it is Steven Mailloux's system of rhetorical theology which Compier adopts and employs in the second half of his discussion in an overview of what a rhetorical approach to the doctrine of sin would yield. It begins with the affirmation that argumentation in defence of an opinion is "all we can ever do" (Compier, 1999:32). Herein the intertwined acts of interpretation and persuasion play a consistent role. Indeed, Mailloux, Cicero and Quintilian all agree that humans can always "be persuaded" and that we are fundamentally "argumentative creatures" (Compier, 1999:33). Consisting of four steps, Mailloux's approach begins with recognizing the place of one's argument in the context of existing discussions on the matter (Mailloux, 1989:134). Topically distinguishing one's own discussion from the existing discourse simultaneously defines the boundaries of that discussion while beginning the process of persuasion by demonstrating how one's own ideas are still relevant despite the presence of other voices on the same topic. Secondly, building on this, one must elaborate on the differences between one's methodology and other extant approaches which are being used on this defined subject (Compier, 1999:26). Thirdly, Mailloux states the importance of tying a discussion to contemporary or historical elements, and especially to non-theological factors (politics, geography, economy), which helps one's argument retain relevance to issues important to the audience (Mailloux, 1989:134). These three steps all prepare the way for the final step of persuasion, which is at the heart of Compier's adopted definition of rhetorical theology, wherein an argument is given with consideration to the philosophical constitution of one's audience, their expectations, and their characteristics. This final step, and the three preceding it, are congruent with Compier's requirements for a new methodological proposal which he

laid out in his opening chapter, namely identity, catholicity, and relevance (Compier, 1999:27). This demonstration by Compier of his approach to doing rhetorical theology is essential to understand as it serves as an example of what is attempted in the following analysis of our three theologians.⁸

Contrasting his own rhetorical approach with that of a purely reader-response based view on hermeneutics, Compier argues throughout the book that the latter can lead to a hermeneutic where there are no boundaries or guidelines to what constitutes a “reasonable” interpretation. Finding these boundaries while still allowing sufficient room for free interpretation and persuasion is the balance Compier seeks out. As a solution to this he suggests that “textual artifacts represent an irreducible objective pole within the overall process of interpretation” (Compier, 1999:31). Having laid this as the foundation for all that follows, the four steps Compier borrows from Mailloux which characterize a rhetorical interpretation are explored: “pointing to the text, citing the author’s intentions, noting the traditional readings,

⁸ The final portion of “What is Rhetorical Theology” applies Mailloux’s method to Compier’s topic of choice, the doctrine of sin. Herein we can observe in a practical manner what tools and approaches are used, and determine how we can apply them to our discussion. Beginning by outlining recent publications and developments related to this theme, he remarks on a shared interest in understanding original sin and the human condition, with a noticeable neglect regarding the causes and possible solutions to the issues sin creates (Compier, 1999:49). Distinguishing what he proposes from what others have written on the topic, a focus is placed on the formulation of their arguments, explaining how very few contemporary contributions engage critically with hamartiology and thus have very little bearing on current issues, despite the overwhelming amount of evil in our world. His argument, in contrast, deals with “the theme of actual sins in canonical sources” as opposed to the more common focus on original sin (Compier, 1999:50). Following this Compier orients, for the reader, his position in relation to historical and contemporary trends within academic circles, providing an institutional frame of reference with which one can compare his argument. Studies on the concept of sin in society have found that in North America, for example, the concept of sin and the use of terms relating to it have all but disappeared from a culture in which it was once common. As a result, since the same trend has been observed within the Christian community, the responsibility of clergy in society has been transferred largely to their secular counterparts, like “psychologists and sociologists” (Compier, 1999:50). Institutionally, the trend of professionalizing theological studies and roles within studies have further contributed to this development. Contextualizing is his next step, and this he does by elaborating on the applicability of his discourse to current issues and debates, both within and without theological circles (Compier, 1999:51). Compier names Karl Marx and Mary Daly as two modern examples of influential thinkers who outright rejected the Christian conception of sin, having a dramatic effect on its reception and use in Western society. As part of his rhetorical analysis in this step, he discusses the three most prevalent theological reactions to this development, namely a simple dismissal of Marx and Daly, to stop talking about sin, or to build a critical and progressive hamartiology that responds to their critiques (Compier, 1999:53-54). His final, and most crucial step, persuasion, begins its section with an overview of evil and sin in the world, retracing some of the key points made in the preceding steps, before pointing his argumentation towards a recovery of the “prophetic traditions” (Compier, 1999:59).

and invoking the consensus” (Compier, 1999:31). Compier’s rhetorical approach hinges on the analysis of argumentation and the generation of direct responses to popular critiques. Developing an understanding of current trends in society, the academy, theology, and specifically dogmatics and how they have been affected by his chosen point of focus is a key step in this process. His rhetorical approach also leads him to draw on a wide range of sources, both historical and contemporary, when formulating his responses. Moreover, asking critical questions of the critics themselves acknowledges the effects they have had while simultaneously elucidating for the audience the internal logic in their arguments. These steps, along with highlighting the strategic use of argumentative and rhetorical tools – such as ellipsis, strategic manoeuvring, transfer, allusion, procatleipsis, and various forms of repetition and omission, to name a few – in the works of Conradie, Durand, and Nürnberger, assist in the forthcoming analysis. Thus, by applying the lens of rhetoric as defined by Compier in looking at the structure of argumentation used in each work examined, the hope is to uncover the inner logic of how our three theologians relate salvation and creation to one another, and how each of their theological approaches to this relationship offer something distinct to ecotheology in response to the environmental crisis.

As for the term doctrinal loci, this project employs Risto Saarinen’s definition thereof in his 2012 paper, “Reclaiming the Sentences: a Linguistic Approach to Doctrine”. From the outset of his article, Saarinen situates his linguistic approach to religious doctrine over and against what he calls a “traditionalist” outlook on doctrine. This traditionalism uses linguistic tools merely as a means to developing “postliberal theologies”, and does not give the study and analysis of language enough focus in its own right (Saarinen, 2012:2). Saarinen argues that religion is not merely a cultural or social phenomenon, as he believes “postliberal thought” suggests; instead, it is linguistic first before anything else:

Although the matter is very complex, the approach put forward in this paper proceeds from the view of language as the primary source of religiosity. Such a sentential and cognitive explanation of religious beliefs creates a counterpoint to those theories of cultural and social practice which dominate the postliberal scene. The programme of reclaiming the sentences nevertheless assumes the presence of socially binding forces already on the semantic level (Saarinen, 2012:9).

Accordingly, Saarinen's argument is that a linguistic approach, instead of being simply a means to an end, is already dynamic and dense enough to be given consideration independent of "traditionalist perspectives" on doctrine (Saarinen, 2012:9). It is within this framework that he situates his linguistic approach to doctrine and proceeds to define the "loci method" for discussing and facilitating dialogue between doctrines. Building on the work of Aristotle, Erasmus, and Melancthon, Saarinen gives his own interpretation of this approach, distinguishing his method slightly from his predecessors. The concepts which desire to be understood but remain mysteries are termed the "scopus". The "loci" are those constituent parts which make up the scopus, divided into more manageable units for study. Loci themselves, in turn, are made up of religious language and "Biblical predicates" which are grouped by theme. Finally, the rest of ordinary language assists in understanding Biblical and religious language and in binding these themes together logically (Saarinen, 2012:16).

It is this layered approach to understanding the place and function of doctrine which is applied to creation and salvation theology for the duration of this discussion, with a specific focus on how Saarinen views inter-doctrinal interaction and analysis. This aids in the journey to grasping the tension and overlap between soteriology and creation in the works of Conradie, Durand, and Nürnberger both as individual loci characterized by distinct religious language as well as constituent parts of a greater theological whole.

1.6. Scope and Structure of the Thesis

The choice of scope for this project has been determined to a great extent by the effects of White's article and the development of ecotheology as a result. Additionally, the applicability of this inquiry to an African context has narrowed the contextual focus to South African theology. In 1957 C.H Dodd, a Welsh born New Testament scholar asked, *Is the God of our redemption the same as the God of our creation?*, a question which is indicative of an underlying complexity, and perhaps even a tension, in the relationship between salvation and creation (Dodd, 1957:79). Bolaji Idowu, a prominent Nigerian theologian well-known for his study of traditional religions in Africa and specifically the Yoruba people, responded to Dodd's question a few years later, interpreting it in relation to African theology. The acts of reinterpreting and recontextualising this fundamental question have been continued by other African theologians including Kwame Bediako, who used Dodd's work to discuss ways in which the appropriation of European Christianity and culture to a Ghanaian theological landscape have both helped and hindered the development of distinctly African theology (Bediako, 1999:305). More recently, Frank Kwesi Adams in his 2009 publication on the influence Asante culture has on Asante theology, while discussing the notable contribution of Bolaji Idowu to African theology, dealt with the same issue raised by Dodd (Adams, 2009:169-170). Mercy Amba Oduyoye's book, *Hearing and Knowing: theological reflections on Christianity in Africa* (2009), also addresses Dodd's question from an African context, making the assertion that "Christian theology in Africa will become truly indigenous as it struggles with the question raised by C.H. Dodd" (Oduyoye, 2009:75). By echoing Dodd's understanding of the multifaceted challenges inherent to the relationship between the doctrines of creation and salvation, African theologians' wrestling with the same problem reflects the transcendence of an investigation into how these doctrinal loci interact.

Thus, as South African representatives within the broader context of African theology, Ernst Conradie, Jaap Durand, and Klaus Nürnberger have been selected as the focus for this study. They were chosen because of what they share theologically, namely that all exhibit this tension and overlap between the loci of creation and salvation in their work, and their contributions have been largely within a South African theological environment. Since they have these elements in common, both in content and context, there are grounds upon which a critical rhetorical analysis of their approaches can be made. It was also on account of their differences in perspective on the relationship between salvation and creation, that they were selected. The challenge of this study, in conjunction with the examination of each theologian's different perspective on the relationship between these doctrinal loci, is to ask what South African ecotheology can learn from these distinct approaches as a response, in part, to White's statements.

By covering the historical narrative of anthropogenic environmental destruction in brief, the above introductory section hopes to have grounded the discussion of the following chapters, on the complexity of the relationship between salvation and creation, within this context. The second, third, and fourth chapters, then, focus on the distinct approaches to these doctrinal loci in the work of Ernst Conradie, Jaap Durand, and Klaus Nürnberger, respectively. By means of a rhetorical analysis, the internal logic of how each theologian makes sense of salvation and creation as it relates to ecotheology is explored. Ernst Conradie, being the theologian whose work most directly correlates to the focus of this study, is given the first and most in-depth analysis of the three. For Durand and Nürnberger, then, only those elements of their works which bear the most direct relevance to our inquiry are discussed. With each theologian bringing a distinct focus and point of view, comparisons and contrasts are drawn between the three on what the implications of these perspectives are for ecological theology, especially as a response to Lynn White Jr's accusation. The final chapter consists of a

concluding section which asks critical questions on what these diverse perspectives mean in a 21st century South African ecological and theological context. Before this, however, we first turn our focus to a more specific context, namely the life and work of an eco-theologian from the Western Cape which provided the impetus for this project to begin with.

Chapter 2: Ernst Conradie: God's Economy in Ecological Perspective

2.1. Introduction, Theology, and Publications

Today, Ernst Conradie might be an internationally known author and theologian with a focus on ecotheology, however his story begins in the town of Stellenbosch in 1962, during the apartheid era. Having spent the majority of his academic life in Stellenbosch, he completed primary, secondary, and tertiary education there. After obtaining bachelor's and honours degrees in Arts, he turned his sights towards theology, completing a B.Th and M.Th before writing a doctoral dissertation entitled, "Teologie en pluralisme: 'n Kritiese analise van David Tracy se voorstel van 'n analogiese verbeelding", in 1992. Working at the University of the Western Cape from the following year onwards, he has initiated several literary projects, with the majority of them centred on ecotheology, a topical focus shared by his own publications (UWC, 2013).

While Conradie has been publishing and editing for over twenty-five years on a variety of topics and through different eras in South African theology, it is still challenging to define his theology as belonging exclusively to any single category. David Horrell, in his *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology* (2015) suggests a useful set of categories and labels with which one can begin to understand Conradie's theology. Horrell starts out by acknowledging the effects White's article has had on Christian theology, and draws a distinction between two general avenues of response within biblical hermeneutics since its publication. The first, termed "recovery", seeks to extract a positive ecological message from texts and doctrines which were criticized by White (Horrell, 2015:11). Alternatively, for those who have chosen the path of "resistance", which views the Bible and certain doctrines with an ecological suspicion, they critically work to resist texts which promote environmental destruction. This resistance can evolve into outright rejection, as some have proposed, arguing that "the Christian tradition cannot provide the kind of valuing of the earth

that our contemporary context demands” (Horrell, 2015:13). Both the approaches of recovery and resistance share traits with feminist writings, where Biblical texts are either reinterpreted from being traditionally misogynistic or patriarchal to being more inclusive, or they are exposed as being oppressive and thus rejected.

While Conradie does not go as far as to wholly reject any portion of scripture, he does employ both methods of retrieval and of resistance in his theology (Horrell, 2015:12-13). Conradie’s self-identification is congruent with Horrell’s description of his theology, as he defines ecotheology from his perspective to be:

[It is] an attempt to retrieve the ecological wisdom in Christianity as a response to environmental threats and injustices. At the same time, it is an attempt to reinvestigate, rediscover and renew the Christian tradition in the light of the challenges posed by the environmental crisis. Just as feminist theology engages in a twofold critique, that is, a Christian critique of sexist or patriarchal culture and a feminist critique of Christianity, so ecological theologies offer a Christian critique of the cultural habits underlying ecological destruction and an ecological critique of Christianity (Conradie, 2006:3).

The theme of “justice” is one popular lens through which to view ecotheology, and language of “doing justice” pervades Conradie’s theology, as will be shown, both in how he categorises his own theology and in terms of which eco-theological sources he chooses to engage with. One such discourse with which Conradie has a history of dialogue, the Earth Bible Project (EBP), is an initiative aimed at filling a self-identified “ecological void” which the creators of the EBP perceived to exist in theology leading up to and during the 1990’s (Habel, 2018). Whether Norman C. Habel and his team’s assessment of the state of theology was accurate or not, their proposal for a set of hermeneutical guidelines which could guide ecotheology as a response to White continuing into the 21st century has been significant yet controversial (Conradie, 2004:123). *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, one of an initial

set of five volumes each which apply the ecojustice lens to a different section of the Bible, lays out the six principles pioneered by the EBP: the principle of “intrinsic worth”, of “interconnectedness”, of “voice”, of “purpose”, of “mutual custodianship”, and of “resistance” (Habel, 2000:24). These six are intended to work together in harmony to endorse holistic thinking towards the Earth within Christianity, and in an attempt to counteract the effects dualism has had on Christian theology. They endeavour to bring theologians to read the Bible with the Earth, as opposed to over and against the Earth, much like feminist readings work to read and reinterpret the Bible with women, not for them (Conradie, 2004:128). In terms of seeking justice the EBP believes the following:

[Theologians and humanity] must go beyond enlightenment to empathy, beyond consciousness to resistance. Our planet is an Earth community and much of that community has been violently oppressed by one species – humans. The rights of our planet have been violated and the time has come for humans, in their role as advocates for Earth, to join in resisting this violation of our planet. The time has come for Earth justice (Habel, 2000:26).

The connection drawn by Habel here – between the need for justice and the notion that the earth and all of its inhabitants form one “community” – is the same link Conradie makes in his discussion of ecojustice and the whole household of God in *The Earth in God's Economy*, which is crucial in understanding the inner logic of the argument he presents there.

While ultimately considering their six principles of ecojustice insufficient as the only way forward for Biblical hermeneutics in ecotheology, he engages with them in a manner which elucidates certain traits in his own theology (Conradie, 2010:304). Critical of some of their shortcomings, Conradie does recognize the value of the Earth Bible team's efforts, acknowledging that the values and assumptions the principles promote do guide Biblical reinterpretation in the right direction (Spencer, 2015:417). Proposing such a set of guidelines

is both bold and “by far the most significant product of scholarly attempts to read the Bible from an ecologically sensitive perspective”; it also works directly against the destructive anthropocentrism in which these texts and their subsequent interpretations were born (Conradie, 2004:127). Conradie raises two points of critique towards the EBP’s work, firstly of the danger of projecting these principles onto a text and coming away with an interpretation that is not true to the text itself, and instead only reflective of what the interpreter wished it to say (Conradie, 2004:128). While Conradie’s own theology is contextual, he highly values the integrity of Biblical texts in their own right and opposes reading one’s own ideas into a text. Conradie also raises the issue of a “hermeneutics of suspicion”, and how this suspicion cannot only be pointed towards the Biblical passages in question, but must also be directed inwards at one’s own hermeneutical and doctrinal proposals. Thus Conradie argues that an “ecological biblical hermeneutics should go hand in hand with an ecological reformulation of Christian doctrine. Such a critical reinvestigation of Christian doctrine cannot be narrowly focused on a reinterpretation of creation theology but calls for a review of all aspects of the Christian faith” (Conradie, 2004:133). It is the need for this doctrinal reformulation which the EBP misses out on, and which Conradie seeks, in his own set of publications on the loci of creation and salvation, to address.

2.2. Creation and Salvation

Conradie’s reflections on the need for a “critical reformulation” of Christian doctrine in light of the ongoing global ecological challenges are all situated between two points of tension and overlap: while “it remains far from clear how the work of the Father (the Creator) and that of the Son (the Saviour) is related”, Conradie maintains that “the theme of the relationship between creation and salvation cuts to the very core of any theological position, approach or movement” (Conradie, 2011:4). The importance of the relationship between creation and salvation, while also acknowledging that Christian theologies have in large part (historically

and at present) not been able to do justice to both, has reflected in Conradie's publishing the following five works, each of which are explored in the forthcoming discussion: *Creation and Salvation: Dialogue on Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for Contemporary Ecotheology* (2011), *Creation and Salvation: A Companion on Recent Theological Movements* (2012), *Creation and Salvation: A Mosaic of Selected Classic Christian Theologies* (2012), *Saving the Earth? The Legacy of Reformed Views on 'Re-Creation'* (2013), and *The Earth in God's Economy: Creation, Salvation and Consummation in Ecological Perspective* (2015).⁹

A brief overview of these books and how they fit together as a set is necessary in order to understanding how Conradie builds his argument as well as in knowing which historical assumptions he chooses to take in this process. Beginning chronologically, in 2011 Conradie wrote the first of his three-part *Creation and Salvation* series, which deals with the impact of Abraham Kuyper's theology for modern ecotheology, especially within a South African context, given the controversies surrounding how his theology was used and abused to legitimize institutionalized racism under apartheid (Conradie, 2011:15). The following entry in the series is entitled *A Mosaic of Classic Christian Theologies*, and gives a theological overview of certain classic Christian theologies as they pertain to these loci and their interaction, including the likes of Augustine, Irenaeus, Aquinas, Calvin, and others. Published the same year, *A Companion on Recent Theological Movements* explores similar questions, only in a later theological period ranging from the mid-19th century to the end of the 20th, with Conradie thus making rather liberal use of the term "recent". The series takes on a retrospective quality, each focusing on a distinct period in Christian theological history, Conradie's goal being to retrieve theological, and perhaps ecological, wisdom from those past theologians which may be of some use in resolving the present tension he observes.

⁹ It should be mentioned that while these five books form the bulk of content subject to critical rhetorical analysis here, many of the questions which drive these works have already been introduced, in less detail, in an even earlier publication of Conradie's, *Hope for the Earth* (2000).

Following this, no longer part of the same series but exploring similar themes, *Saving the Earth? The Legacy of Reformed Views on 'Re-Creation'* covers a period of time more or less between *A Mosaic of Selected Classic Christian Theologies* and *A Companion on Recent Theological Movements*, with some overlap into both. The bulk of *Saving the Earth* deals with the legacies of different reformed perspectives on the idea of “re-creation” over the past five centuries. As Conradie moves through the theologies of Calvin, Bavinck, Barth, Noordmans, Van Ruler, and Moltmann, his discussion highlights a theme common to all: the presence of a “creative” tension, which manifests in one form or another, between salvation and creation (Conradie, 2013:8).

Saving the Earth? and the preceding series all culminated in 2015 in Conradie’s research project entitled *The Earth in God’s Economy: Creation, Salvation and Consummation in Ecological Perspective*. While the majority of the publications leading up to this one were focused on understanding, and retrieving wisdom from, the past, *The Earth in God’s Economy* has the freedom to take on a distinctly contemporary character. With its focus shifted to discussing proposals for the present and future, Conradie uses the bulk of his chapters outlining challenges involved in formulating a theology which can do justice to both creation and salvation. He also discusses the virtues and limitations of a number of popular perspectives, before finally presenting his own proposal for such a theology, which comes in the form of a modified *oikotheology* (Conradie, 2015:22, 221-223).

The shared premise of the *Creation and Salvation* series, *Saving the Earth?* and *The Earth in God’s Economy* is that Christian theology has failed to do justice to God as both creator and saviour, and this has had an adverse effect on the ways in which Christianity interacts with the natural world. Lynn White Jr. addressed the damaging relationship human beings and specifically Christians have had with the earth, and Conradie’s works are, in a way, a reaction to White’s 1967 paper (Conradie, 2015:1). He explores in these books what he

believes to be one of the roots of White's accusation, namely this struggle to understand God equally in a salvific and a creative capacity (Conradie, 2004:125). The final proposal he makes in his 2015 *The Earth in God's Economy* to resolve this, namely that doing justice to both loci requires placing their relationship within the larger narrative of God's economy, was initially argued four years prior in the first book in his series, *Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for Contemporary Ecotheology* (Conradie, 2011:5). In the structure, order, and content of these related works, then, Conradie builds his argument by layering his discussions upon one another from one book to the next, moving temporally through key periods of discussion for his argument and their accompanying significant theologians and theologies. Thus, the arrangement of these works in relation to one another is just as important to Conradie's argument formulation as the argumentation within each book itself, since each assumes, at times, knowledge by the reader of the preceding work and the arguments made therein. What follows is a rhetorical analysis of the argumentation in each of these works individually, and together as theological unit, in an attempt to understand Conradie's message more clearly.

2.3. Dialogue on Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for Contemporary Ecotheology

Stating from the beginning of his preface that this work "has to be understood against the background of an ongoing research project entitled 'The Earth in God's Economy'", Conradie commences his search for theologies that can do justice to both the loci of creation and salvation with the controversial Abraham Kuyper (Conradie, 2011:ix). Bringing together a number of theologians to examine the work of the 19th century Dutch theologian and politician, *Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for Contemporary Ecotheology* is centred around a collection of essays written by Conradie on the relationship between salvation and creation in Abraham Kuyper's theology and his legacy for ecotheology from within a South African context. Divided into two parts followed by a final concluding section, the first is a thorough outline by Conradie of Kuyper's reception in the South African context and the controversies surrounding the various

uses of his theology. This is followed by a few chapters discussing his ideas on general and special revelation, and grace. The second part of the book consists of eight contributors' independent responses, some supportive and others critical, to Conradie's reflections on the problems and potential which Kuyper offers ecotheology at present.

Beginning with part one of *Abraham Kuyper's Legacy*, doctrinally, Conradie's analysis of Kuyper is founded on both being reformed theologians, and this common ground, provides the basis for his dialogue (Bolt, 2013:353). Naturally, considering the destructive applications of Kuyper's theology in the past, Conradie's choice to focus on his reflections with regard to creation and salvation might be met with a degree of hesitation. In response, by making it abundantly clear that the scepticism which Kuyper's theology meets within a South African context is valid and reasonable, Conradie begins his argument by placing himself in agreement fundamentally with popular post-apartheid opinion. By aligning himself with those who at the very least deal with Kuyperian theology with suspicion (and at the most polemical rejection), Conradie works to allay any suspicion to his writing which may arise purely because of the subject he has chosen to work with. This aids in opening the reader's mind to his suggestion of the possibility of reinterpretation and retrieval of wisdom from Kuyper's theology for contemporary ecotheology. This rhetorical strategy, which Conradie uses often in his works, can be labelled as a form of procatleipsis, whereby a rhetor will pre-emptively address an audience's objections, anticipating their protests to what will be said (McGuigan, 2011:32).

Having taken note of traditional readings of Kuyper and discussed some of the trends which have surfaced in reaction to his theology, Conradie proceeds to "point to the text" by dedicating a substantial section of the next chapter to exploring the ideas of general and special revelation in Kuyper's works. He uses questions at the end of one chapter to introduce some points of focus for the next:

For the purposes of this contribution, I will focus on Abraham Kuyper's views on general and special revelation. Can a critical engagement with his position help us to see what is at stake in this regard? Can we learn from the inconsistencies in his work (as identified in secondary scholarship)? Is there room for a post-Barthian return to Kuyper? Is he still of any use, to us, today? (Conradie, 2011:53).

This style of posing a number of questions in quick succession as a prelude for an argument is used by Conradie throughout his writing. The results of this approach to presenting an argument include preparing the reader for the topics he intends to address, making mention of some common problems and critiques which come up with those topics, as well as demonstrating to the reader that he is cognizant of these and of the complexity of the task at hand. Additionally, by expressing the position he wishes to argue for in the form of a question, he presents his views as matters to be explored and not set statements or claims. This makes it difficult to bring any immediate critique against what Conradie argues for, as he does not make a fixed claim yet, thus simultaneously inviting the reader to investigate these questions and shielding his argument from being prematurely dismissed.

This method of setting up the reader into approaching this discussion from his perspective by directing what questions they ask leads us into the next chapter, which presents Herman Bavinck as the lens one must use if Kuyper's theology is to be usefully appropriated for contemporary ecotheology. Conradie delineates in seven points the main tenets of Bavinck's position on revelation, effectively outlining the contents of *Our Reasonable Faith*. Crucial to Bavinck's perspective is the assumption that humans have within themselves an innate drive to search for the knowledge of something which transcends, something divine. Furthermore, Bavinck's reformed leaning is demonstrated by insisting that attaining this knowledge is only possible with God as the initiator. Equally important is Christ's centrality in this self-revelation, and the idea that this revelation has a special quality different to that general

revelation of God found in nature (Conradie, 2011:56-57). As a prelude to his own opinion which is given some thirty pages later, Conradie places emphasis on Bavinck's statements about the connectedness of general and special revelation, strengthening his forthcoming argument. As general revelation is contained within scripture, and our eyes are only opened to scripture through special revelation in a meeting with Christ, "general revelation thus cannot be understood except in the light of special revelation" (Conradie, 2011:58). This method of previewing his argument before actually making it (by giving the reader glimpses throughout his writing of the vision he plans to present later) is another tool which pervades Conradie's style. It is used in this instance to underscore the idea that describing special and general revelation as being very different from one another can be dangerous. Asserting this assumption which is so fundamental to his argument here already, helps with formulating and supporting the logic of his argument that ecological wisdom can be retrieved from Kuyper as long as he is read in light of Bavinck's work (Bolt, 2013:353).

As Conradie develops the ideas Bavinck presents, he consistently introduces Barth as a conversation partner, as if Barth were present during the unveiling of Bavinck's notion of divine revelation (he would only have been a teenager at the time). Of course, Barth would disapprove of the division Bavinck proposes between special and general revelation, and thus Barth acts as the representative voice of all those readers who might also disagree with what Bavinck believes. Specifically, in the eyes of Barth, "the very notion of general revelation leads ineluctably towards the kind of natural theology that he [Barth] so fiercely resists" (Conradie, 2011:62). In using Barth in this way, as a representative voice for potential objections to his argument, Conradie engages in a form of "strategic manoeuvring". This rhetorical tactic achieves two things: it gives a measure of recognition to the critiques readers may raise against what they are seeing described in Bavinck's position, and it diverts critiques to Bavinck himself instead of Conradie (Zarefsky, 2014:138). Barth is known for his critique of general revelation,

and by presenting a debate between Barth and Bavinck, readers may be less inclined to reject Conradie's subsequent proposal, as he presents himself as a third party to their disagreement.

By the way in which Conradie presents the above debate, the relationship between creation and salvation is shown to be the fulcrum around which Bavinck's entire reflection on the nature of revelation turns. One's perspective on revelation will be directly affected by the way one views the interaction between these two loci. In his *Philosophy of Revelation* Bavinck defines revelation as "divine wisdom" which "greatly transcends reason" and is a "disclosure of μυστήριον του Θεού" (Bavinck, 2012:25). A process of interaction between these two loci in Bavinck's theology begins to emerge here as he distinguishes between general and special revelation and the mechanics of how they interact with nature and fulfil God's aim of redemption in different ways. He sums up his position on revelation's relationship to the loci well in stating:

What neither nature nor history, neither mind nor heart, neither science nor art can teach us, it makes known to us, – the fixed, unalterable will of God to rescue the world and save sinners, a will at variance with well-nigh the whole appearance of things. This will is the secret of revelation. In creation, God manifests the power of his mind; in revelation, which has redemption for its centre, he discloses to us the greatness of his heart (Bavinck, 2012:25-26).

Bavinck advocates for a balanced perspective between general and special revelation as they each describe different processes, even though they overlap in some areas. While the former has the natural world as its primary channel for revelation, the latter is dependent on a life-changing encounter with Christ. Bavinck describes a form of symbiosis in that while each is distinct, neither can truly fulfil their purpose without the other's existence. Despite this mutual dependency, an inherent hierarchy emerges throughout his discussion wherein special

revelation is emphasized slightly more than its counterpart (Conradie, 2011:64). Conradie, quoting Bavinck explains further:

“Without general revelation, special revelation loses its connectedness with the whole cosmic existence and life. The link that unites the kingdom of nature and the kingdom of heaven then disappears... It is one and the same God who in general revelation does not leave himself without a witness to anyone and who in special revelation makes himself known as a God of grace... Nature precedes grace; grace perfects nature. Reason is perfected by faith, faith presupposes nature”. On the basis of this discussion, Bavinck suggests that the inadequacy of general revelation demonstrates the indispensability of special revelation (Bavinck, et al., 2003:322; Conradie, 2011:60-61).

Having sufficiently covered the key points of Bavinck’s distinction between special and general revelation, Conradie’s focus comes finally to Kuyper. Although the reformed division between the two had been around since the late 16th century, Kuyper’s engagement with revelation challenged some long-accepted tenets of the doctrine, as well as challenging his contemporary Bavinck’s ideas (Conradie, 2011:63-64). Kuyper’s understanding is similar in some ways to Bavinck’s in that both acknowledge the need for defining the different sources of revelation, however Kuyper was critical of a sharp separation between special and general revelation. His fear in the case of such a point of departure is that certain reformed views will be compromised, as humans may begin to be portrayed as those who drive the revelation. Kuyper thus makes it abundantly clear that it is and must always be God who is perceived as the initiator, and that revelation takes place for God’s sake, not ours:

Kuyper sees revelation in terms of the decrees of God, namely a God who wishes to be made known to his creatures. God created human beings in order to be known and glorified... In this way, God’s revelation is not found in creation (creatura) but God’s

act of creating (creatio) is itself viewed as revelation. This divine intention was thwarted by the obstruction of sin. God's ongoing revelation to generations of human beings therefore had to take on a 'special', namely soteriological, character in order to accomplish the original plan (Conradie, 2011:64).

Thus Kuyper draws a causal link between general and special revelation, where the latter is a continuation towards the same aim as the former. In contrast to Bavinck, Kuyper avoids a particularly strong soteriological focus in his description of revelation, in an attempt to circumvent the danger of limiting the scope of God's salvific work to only those instances of special revelation and the incarnation. The brand of common grace Kuyper makes use of helps in this regard as it keeps nature in the balance between being upheld from destruction by damnation, but not to the point of being actually saved eternally (Conradie, 2011:65). For Kuyper, the sinful nature of human beings similarly hinders our ability to encounter God, and it is only by the same token of grace we are able to seek God through general revelation. Even that, however, is not enough, and thus a special revelation is required to compensate for human sin, one in the form of Christ. While revelation of God by only natural means is a less specific and less dramatic revelation, it is a prerequisite for special revelation to take place. Kuyper goes as far as to say that special revelation is only there in a period where our sins prevent us from the natural discovery of God, and thus revelation will become less contingent on Christ as sin becomes less prevalent (and Kuyper assumes that it will at some point) (Conradie, 2011:67, 70-71). In his *Sacred Theology*, Kuyper elaborates:

Hence, when it [creation] comes to a state of purity, when sin shall have been eradicated so that its very memory shall no longer work its after-effects in the creation of God, then all the riches of special revelation shall merely have served the end of bringing natural theology back again to its original lustre, yea, of causing it to glow with a brightness which far excels its original lustre... it has no other tendency than to lift

natural theology from its degeneracy. Natural theology is and always will be the natural pair of legs on which we must walk, while special revelation is the pair of crutches, which render help, as long as the weakened or broken legs refuse us their service. This indeed can be frankly acknowledged, even though it is certain, that as long as our legs cannot carry us we can only walk by means of the crutches, so that during this abnormal condition our legs do not enable us to walk truly in the ways of the Lord, but only our crutches, i.e. not natural theology, but only special revelation (Kuyper, 2001:125).

Herein lies the key to how Conradie believes Kuyperian theology can be retrieved to benefit ecotheology. Barth's critique of natural theology is scathing, and he even goes as far as to remark on the likeness between the attitudes of German church-goers who promoted general revelation and the rise of Nazism in his time. Commenting on the Barmen declaration's rejection of revelation outside of Christ he says,

This text is important and apposite because it represents the first confessional document in which the Evangelical Church has tackled the problem of natural theology... The question became a burning one at the moment when the Evangelical Church in Germany was unambiguously and consistently confronted by a definite and new form of natural theology, namely, by the demand to recognize in the political events of the year 1933, and especially in the form of the God-sent Adolf Hitler, a source of specific new revelation of God... The history of the proclamation and theology of these centuries is simply a history of the wearisome conflict of the Church with the fact that the 'also' demanded and to some extent acknowledged by it really mean an 'only'... The logic of the matter demands that, even if we only lend our little finger to natural theology, there necessarily follows the denial of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. A natural theology which does not strive to be the only master is not a natural theology... It is noteworthy that it was conservative movements within the Church, like those inspired

by Abraham Kuyper and Adolf Stöcker, which acted most naively. But the naivete reigned at every point. The concept of revelation and that of reason, history or humanity were usually linked by the copulative particle ‘and,’ and the most superficial provisos were regarded as sufficient protection against all the possible dangers of such combinations. Happy little hyphens were used between, say, the words ‘modern’ and ‘positive,’ or ‘religious’ and ‘social,’ or ‘German’ and ‘positive,’ as if the meaning then became self-evident. The fact was overlooked that all this pointed to the presence of a trojan horse within which the superior enemy was already drawn into the city (Barth, 2000:173).

He takes issue with how Kuyper’s theory had been applied and argues that while natural theology and general revelation present themselves simply as a partner to the well-established Christological special revelation, any form of natural theology will inescapably be driven towards becoming the only form of revelation. The problem with this is that human assumptions about what is part of the “natural order” and what is “reasonable” become tied to this natural theology, creating a space in which destructive ideologies can flourish unresisted by the message of Christ, as natural theology is considered by Kuyper to be more fundamental than special theology (Bolt, 2013:353). Conradie uses the term “divine ordinances” in reference to those instances of perceived general revelation which might enable natural theology to support destructive “social structures”, and he names Nazism and apartheid as two examples of this. He acknowledges this danger which Barth points out, and his response is to have Kuyper be read through the eyes of Bavinck who presents more nuance and balance between special and general revelation, leaving less room for the destructive natural theology Barth warns against to creep in (Bolt, 2013:353). One is not subsumed under the other as much as Kuyper might have it; instead Bavinck insists on a cooperation and co-dependency, which resolves

neatly Barth's concerns and allows portions of Kuyper's theology to be retrieved for application in ecotheology despite its former destructive expressions (Conradie, 2011:58).

In his concluding section Conradie expands on his argument, incorporating some of the insights the writers in part two brought forth, as well as finally revealing the reason why he selected Kuyper for this endeavour and not someone with more obvious suitability for use in ecotheology (Arnold Van Ruler is one name he mentions as having been a potential alternative). As a choice for the focus of Conradie's book, Kuyper represents a reformed voice, an ambivalent legacy, a conflict with Barth, and a relevance to South African history (Conradie, 2011:257-258). More than these, however, the selection of Kuyper offers Conradie an opportunity to begin his reflection on the relationship between "nature and grace, and on salvation as *re-creatio*", the interaction between these three being central to his argument presented in *The Earth in God's Economy* (Conradie, 2011:259). This, in turn, also affords him the opportunity to present more ideas of importance for later, specifically "*herschepping*" and what that means in relation to *creatio*. How is *re-creatio* as Kuyper sees it useful for eschatological expressions of ecotheology, if one does begin to attempt to retrieve some wisdom from his theology? Furthermore, the differences between Barthian and Kuyperian theology are expanded on, especially along the lines of causality: Kuyper's insistence on seeing Christ as the reaction to a fallen world and *creatio* and *re-creatio* as the primary revelation, in contrast to Barth's emphasis on Christ's salvific actions as God's chief form of self-revelation (Conradie, 2011:259). Although these ideas are simply introduced briefly in this final section of his book, not expanded on in any depth, Conradie's stated intention is to determine whether anything of value for ecotheology can be retrieved from Kuyper. Thus Conradie leaves the more extensive discussion of what these retrieved elements mean, and how they interact with each other and in the context of ecotheology, for later.

Conradie recognizes that his own argument is narrow in focus and bears direct relevance only to a small niche in the context of global theology and its need for an ecological transformation (Conradie, 2011:261). In terms of indirect relevance, however, he hopes that the way in which he has approached the need for a reinterpretation of these particular traditional theologies, which have been previously dismissed as ecologically destructive, will contribute towards showing the way forward in terms of responding to the need he identifies in contemporary systematic theology and, more broadly, Christianity:

[extant] discourses seem to remain quite distinct from one another, even though many Christians are participating in more than one such discourse. My observation is that there are underlying methodological tensions between these discourses that may well be related to the methodological tensions between the various traditional subdisciplines of Christian theology. These methodological differences need to be clarified so that contributions such as this volume, which draws especially from insights in systematic theology, can indeed complement such other discourses” (Conradie, 2011:263).

Having stated this, Conradie outlines next how his work fits into extant ecotheology and similar attempts at responding to both White’s accusation and the need for a revision of Christian theology for our present era. In light of the goal that this work will demonstrate a methodology of reinterpretation, the formulation of Conradie’s argument becomes important to clarify. Again, arrangement of the book as a whole has a rhetorical purpose, as Conradie leads the reader first through Bavinck’s theology before exposing them to the (arguably) harsher realities of Kuyper’s reflections on special and general revelation. As a result, one may be more inclined to view Kuyper’s theology through the lens of Bavinck, and thus be more receptive to Conradie’s proposal of retrieval. Finally, he concludes by stating how this is all relevant to the wider discourse and what he hopes his efforts will accomplish going forward. He leaves the reader with the entire argument summed up in a few short paragraphs, and a

comment about where he hopes his message is taken in the future. This both guides the reader to interpret the entire argument they have just heard according to the purposes of Conradie (again, a form of strategic manoeuvring) as well as placing an element of responsibility on the reader themselves for bringing Conradie's urge for change out beyond the book. Interestingly, this strategy is not only employed by Conradie in each individual book, but as a whole in his series, as each book functions partially to prepare the reader for the next argument. For example, when Conradie finally gives his own proposal for a theology that he hopes can do justice to both creation and salvation four books after this one on Kuiper, in *The Earth in God's Economy*, he speaks often about restoration of nature, a natural reformation, retrieval, and re-creation as parts of God's soteriological plan. These represent nearly identical phrases and ideas on the relationship between salvation and *creatura* which Bavinck expresses in his own theology which Conradie adopts, "It does not mean an annihilation, but a restoration of God's sin-disrupted work of creation. Revelation is an act of reformation; in re-creation the creation, with all its forms and norms, is restored; in the gospel, the law; in grace, justice; in Christ, the cosmos is restored" (Conradie, 2011:62). Although he does not reference Bavinck in his final book directly, he uses this first book in the Creation and Salvation series as well as his *Saving the Earth?* as a way of introducing the ideas he will build his own proposal on at a later point (Conradie, 2013:87; Conradie, 2011:264). Like with Bavinck, Conradie, on a number of occasions, uses certain theologians' work as anchor points for his argument, from where he borrows arguments and terms, reinterpreting them for the context he addresses. These are many of the same individuals whom Conradie continues on to his following book, *A Mosaic of Selected Classic Theologies*, as well as in the 2013 *Saving the Earth? The Legacy of Reformed Views on Re-Creation*. In doing this Conradie continues the process of layering his arguments on one another while preparing the reader for the forthcoming content in his series.

2.4. A Mosaic of Selected Classic Christian Theologies

A Mosaic of Selected Classic Christian Theologies takes a journey through various “classic” Christian theologians’ ideas around the relationship between creation and salvation, taking the form of a compilation of chapters each written by a different author with focus on a distinct theologian. Despite this, the publication remains useful for gaining further insight into Conradie’s theology as he authored both the editorial introduction and the final chapter on John Calvin. Additionally, certain rhetorical strategies can be gleaned from his choice of contributors to this collection, as well as the chosen focus of their chapters. Covering Irenaeus, Athanasius, Gregory of Nazianzus, Augustine, Maximus of Constantinople, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, various Franciscan monastic perspectives and also a chapter on medieval female mystics, the definition of “classic” theologians spans a vast time period, from the 2nd to the 16th century (Conradie, 2012a:7). In terms of Cicero’s canons of invention and arrangement, this accomplishes two things rhetorically: not only does this selection ensure a broad enough temporal and theological spectrum to lend credibility to the conclusions he draws from this, but his own argument is also protected somewhat from criticism as the writers of his chapters all write from their own diverse theological points of origin, and this diversity makes it difficult to challenge Conradie’s book as a whole. Whether or not this was an intentional persuasive strategy, or simply a means of including a variety of opinions, it aids the potency and longevity of Conradie’s conclusions. The assortment in perspectives and theological focal points also means the book reaches a broader audience than it may have, had the scope been more limited.

Similarly, the context(s) within which he places his discussion assist in outlining who his audience is and preparing the reader for his argument by defining his terms and goals which shape the direction of his upcoming discourse. Firstly, while Christian ecotheology is set in the broader background of the ongoing journey of humanity trying to make meaning of this life and world in general, Conradie defines ecotheology itself as being concerned with making

sense of the world as *creatura*, a distinct word which describes all which God has created, as opposed to *creatio* which simply refers to the act of creation (Conradie, 2012a:8). To even use the word *creatura* to describe the world as “God’s creation” is in itself already an act of meaning making and answering existential questions about the purpose of humans and the earth we live on (Conradie, 2012a:9). A secondary, but equally important context which Conradie orients his argument towards is the environmental challenge we face as a species, and the earth faces as a whole. He defines ecotheology by stating that, as it works to “retrieve and rediscover the ecological wisdom embedded in the (premodern) Christian tradition”, it also provides a chance for a new type of reformation process (Conradie, 2012a:7). Specific discussion of Conradie’s usage of premodern theological sources, such as those in Irenaeus’s theology – in particular the ideas of the economic trinity, the role of recapitulation, and infra- and supralapsarian positions – will be held later under the section on his *Saving the Earth? The Legacy of Reformed Views on ‘Re-creation’* because there are some other points in the sequel to the present book which must be understood before showing how Conradie’s argument leans on Irenaeus’s theology.

2.5. A Companion on Recent Theological Movements

Continuing the theme of doing justice to creation and salvation, *A Companion on Recent Theological Movements* introduces itself as a partner work to *Dialogue on Abraham Kuyper’s Legacy for Contemporary Ecotheology*, as it explores many of the same questions but from a different starting point. It also starts the process of clarifying Conradie’s stance gradually more on some key issues as, during his introductory remarks, more light is shed on how Conradie perceives the two loci of creation and salvation to interact. He admits that the controversial legacy Christian theology has left with regard to natural destruction means that any attempt to suggest a theological solution to the present ecology will most likely be viewed with a measure of scepticism (Conradie, 2012b:1). Discussing the place of the notion of “saving the earth” in

ecotheology, both historically and today, Conradie defines it as meaning that God's works of salvation extend beyond humans only, and that the saving humanity might experience is not *from* the planet, but more probably *with* the planet. Of course, this language is interspersed with numerous questions, including what form this salvation might take, what this would look like practically, what the place of Christian theology is in the process, how much involvement is required (if any) by humans, and why is there a general lack of consensus on what "salvation of creation" means (Conradie, 2012b:1)? Again, having been acquainted with some of the rhetorical strategies Conradie makes use of in his writing when formulating an argument, it becomes evident quickly that the opening section of *A Companion on Recent Theological Movements* includes more questions than answers, questions which steer the reader in a direction which fits Conradie's desired areas of reflection (and perhaps away from some less desirable areas of focus), while also providing hints as to the core argument Conradie plans to make later on, both in this book and in the series.

The difficulty Christian theology has in 'doing justice' to both loci, a theme repeated from the first publication in this series, is again given here as the motivation for this book and the need to explore some recent responses to the difficult questions posed above, as a form of introspection. These questions, though mentioned indirectly in his first publication, are built upon the ideas presented there and developed more clearly here: what role does revelation play in knowing God and through what medium does that revelation take place? Should knowing God as saviour be given primacy over knowing God as creator? What does salvation mean, and to what extent can the parts of creation be participant in God's salvation plan? How do we avoid dualism in talking about salvation and creation without falling into relativism? What is the goal of salvation (restoration, re-creation, reconciliation, or something else) (Conradie, 2012b:2-3)? What differences in understanding of "creation" result from the terms *creatio* and *creatura* and what do those mean for the loci's relationship to salvation? Finally, Conradie asks

what role the relationship between God, Son and Holy Spirit play in the interaction between creation and salvation (Conradie, 2012b:4)?

This volume, again a compilation of contributions from various sources, is enormous in scope, with “more than fifty contributors... from at least twenty-four countries” (Conradie, 2012b:8). Though it covers only “recent” theological movements, the definition of what is “recent” is intentionally unclear, allowing for a number of present contributions to be included alongside others nearly a century older (Conradie, 2012b:6). Chapters are divided along diverse criteria, mostly geographical, but a few theological schools are given their own chapter to allow for deeper exploration (Roman Catholic Theologies and Western Ecofeminist Theologies). While Conradie is the editor of the entire volume, each chapter has its own subeditor (a specialist on the region or movement of that chapter) who has brought together several works from certain theologians whom are considered influential enough to merit inclusion according to the selection criteria, with Conradie only personally editing chapters four and six of the total fifteen. This being the case, there is not as much content from Conradie himself which can be analysed for deeper insight into the relationship between salvation and creation as there was in the first book in the series. Though published in the same year as *A Mosaic of Selected Classic Christian Theologies*, this book should be read second as its focus is chronologically newer and thus certain theologies explored here are built on some of the earlier “classic” theologies (Conradie, 2012b:6).

Selection criteria for inclusion here, then, also gives the reader a hint as to how Conradie wishes to shape the content of this volume and how it contributes to his overall argument. Despite portraying itself as an honest attempt to cover as many theological spheres and developments in recent history as possible, Conradie acknowledges that it is impossible to do so, and likely not with a limit of 2500 words for each contributor. As such, it is clear certain editorial choices had to be made, and choices to include some sources while neglecting others

become evident upon closer inspection. The first point of selection criteria laid out by Conradie is whether the theologian in question “holds promise for contemporary attempts to do justice to God’s work both of salvation and of creation – especially in the context of ecotheology” (Conradie, 2012b:6). Ironically, it is only later in *The Earth in God’s Economy* where Conradie actually explores what he considers to be relevant “contemporary attempts to do justice”, and thus some of the choices here can act as suggestions for what theologies he considers important in contemporary discourse on creation and salvation. This becomes even more evident as Conradie defines the terms for his own discussion as to what constitutes “contemporary”, what is an “attempt”, what it means to “do justice”, and perhaps most importantly, what “creation” and “salvation” mean in the context of these theologies. The second criteria for inclusion is arguably even more subject to Conradie’s discretion, namely “whether a particular theologian’s position is recognised to be highly influential, at least in a particular context and tradition”. The third and final criteria is vaguely worded, generic, and does not protect his argument from potential critiques of selectivity (Conradie, 2012b:6-7). Indeed, it appears that selectivity is on display here, with criteria which are either too vague to challenge his inclusions and exclusions, or criteria which are so specific that almost only Conradie himself can ultimately determine the suitability of contributions (Prelli, 2006:12). Despite this, Conradie does acknowledge by name a few movements or fields which are influential enough that their omission might raise suspicion, and gives his reasons for their exclusion, in all cases being that they do not provide enough in terms of an attempt to “do justice to creation and salvation” according to him. While this seems like a token qualification, is hardly satisfying and but a few sentences long, the volume is ambitious in its attempt to “do justice” to the vast history of this topic – the question is whether it is overly ambitious, and whether Conradie here is guilty of trying to condense conversations which should not (or cannot) be condensed? Does Conradie “do justice” to those

conversations he includes, included on the grounds that they attempt to “do justice” to salvation and creation, and does he adhere to his own criteria (Conradie, 2012b:7)?

From his choices to include such a wide collection of sources, however, it becomes clear how ecumenical Conradie considers his questions to be, finding relevance in a number of major theological movements and spheres in “recent” times. He even goes on to clarify the role the dialogue on these loci plays in the context of the discussion on ecumenism in South Africa today in *South African Perspectives on Notions and Forms of Ecumenicity* (Conradie, 2013:43). While this widespread effect does make the questions he asks more difficult to answer, it also invites a greater assortment in response from which one can gather understanding. Furthermore, Conradie’s choice to dedicate an entire chapter to Western Ecofeminist perspectives brings a much needed voice to the dialogue he hosts. In *Christianity and Ecological Theology*, one of his earlier publications in ecotheology, Conradie makes specific mention of the shared traits between ecotheology and feminism, as well as the (then) emerging “ecofeminism” field (Conradie, 2006:72). Additionally, his work on Abraham Kuyper was nearly entirely devoid of any feminist contributions, despite being a volume consisting of a number of authors – this imbalance may have been a source of criticism which Conradie has sought to compensate for here. While Conradie’s justification for excluding Pentecostalism, “American creationism and fundamentalism”, Methodist contributions, and the Anglican tradition from this discussion may seem forced and perhaps insincere, his dedicating such a proportionately large section of this volume to feminist hermeneutics should be seen as an earnest attempt to include a voice which he has, on a number of other occasions, described as indispensable to contemporary ecotheology and indeed this specific conversation on salvation and creation.

Since Conradie has a vested interest in the message his chapters and this book as a whole presents, not only because it is his book but also because he considers it to be a volume

which provides historical background for further reflection later, the comments he makes at the beginning and end of each of his editorial contributions can be analysed to understand his position on salvation and creation better. Moreover, from these few paragraphs by Conradie, the reader encounters some rhetorical patterns which Conradie uses here and in the build-up to his final theological proposal. From the two chapters which Conradie edits it becomes clear that Conradie considers himself an expert on both “West-European reformed theologies” and the “science and theology discourse”, as his criteria for the editor of each chapter was that they be an authority in the subject matter of their section (Conradie, 2012b:8).

He begins his chapter on West-European reformed theologies by defining the tradition along the lines of the Latin maxim “*semper reformanda*”, which has been shortened from “*ecclesia semper reformanda est*”, meaning “the church must always be reformed” (Conradie, 2012b:113; Huggins, 2013:200-201). Not only is this significant for understanding Conradie’s view on the core of his own theology (as a self-identified reformed theologian), but also in terms of how he views the role of the body of Christ in responding to a problem as dynamic as climate change and an accusation as multifaceted, deep, and challenging as White’s. Reforming and reinterpreting core doctrines in Christian theology like creation and salvation are parts of the process of “introspection” Conradie mentions as one of his hopes for this book. They are also processes involved in “retrieving ecological wisdom” from the “recent” theologians which are discussed in this volume. An evolving problem such as climate change requires an equally dynamic solution, and defining his own theology as reformed, and then defining reformed theology as being built on *semper reformanda* as its “core intuition”, Conradie effectively projects this motto and its merits onto his own approach (Conradie, 2012b:113). He thus, making use of the rhetorical technique known as “transfer”, indirectly paints his theology as pragmatic, with the adaptability to overcome the numerous questions he poses of the interaction

between salvation and creation (Smith, 2012:349). This can work to aid his credibility in the reader's mind, in turn assisting his argumentation.

As Conradie ties the value of this reforming approach in ecotheology to the importance of doing justice to creation and salvation, again we see an example of one of Conradie's most commonly used rhetorical devices, allusion. He briefly previews a term during the chapter introduction in order to prepare readers for language he will use in upcoming arguments: "At the heart of this ecological reformation of the reformed tradition lies the need for a renewed understanding of the relationship between creation and salvation. Can the destruction elicited by the reformed tradition be inverted towards a salvific impulse for the whole household of God?" (Conradie, 2012b:113). As we will discuss in a later section on *The Earth in God's Economy*, the idea of "God's household" is used by Conradie as root metaphor in his proposal for a theology that *can* do justice to salvation and creation, while remaining useful for ecotheology.

As he continues on to introduce the theologians this chapter will focus on, building on his discussion of natural theology in his book on Kuyper, Conradie reiterates the effect one's definition of creation as either *creatura* or *creatio* has on one's understanding of the relationship between grace and nature:

How does God's work of creation relate to God's work of salvation? Where does the priority lie, also in terms of the eternal divine counsel? Teleologically, is creation for the sake of salvation (or covenant) or is salvation for the sake of creation? Noetically, have we come to know God first as Creator or first as Saviour? How are the first and second articles of the creed related to each other? Does the key perhaps lie in the third article (Conradie, 2012b:114)?

Hypophora, a less specific version of the aforementioned procatlepsis, is the rhetorical strategy whereby an orator would ask a question which the audience cannot answer

immediately, pause for a moment to raise the curiosity of the listeners, before proceeding to answer it either directly or with another question (Farnsworth, 2011:226-234). Conradie's use of hypophora here is evident, both in the immediate sense of this quote, but also in the broader sense of how these questions are posed now but will only be answered in a later publication. This is one of his most commonly used rhetorical devices, and it accomplishes a few crucial things for Conradie's argument. Hypophora has the effect of drawing listeners or readers into a dialogue with the speaker or author by engaging their sense of curiosity over a question to which the answer is not immediately obvious. Beyond just engaging the critical thinking of the audience deeper, when no answer to the posed question is self-evident (even after a moment of pause), the author's suggestion of an answer is powerful and it gains more credibility as the first (and sometimes only) response (Farnsworth, 2011:234). In the context of Conradie's series, he asks these difficult questions on a number of occasions without answering them directly, multiplying the effect upon the audience. Here, after these same questions are asked, Conradie's overview of the reformed theologians' positions on the relationship between nature, sin, and grace are given, and effectively fill the role of the "pause" between when the questions are asked and the answer is given. This informative pause provides the reader with layers of theological history and reflection, all of which are necessary for one to read before finally hearing Conradie's answer to his own question. Recognizing this moment of hypophora allows the reader to take note that what follows is something Conradie considers especially important as background knowledge for his upcoming answer.

The individuals Conradie has selected for this chapter, and the singular elements of their theology which he chooses to point out, are thus all important to take note of. Bavinck is stated to have revived his predecessor John Calvin's perspective that nature and grace can coexist without the latter being in conflict with the former, grace instead being a force for the "restoration" of nature to a former intended state. This process of God's salvific action

proceeding from God's act of creation was called "re-creation" by Bavinck, a term which Conradie's argument relies upon heavily later (Conradie, 2012b:114). Barth believed this position opened the door for an underappreciation of divine salvation in the form of Christ, hence Barth's belief that creation was a prerequisite vehicle for the incarnation. Oepke Noordmans "radicalised Barth's critique by arguing that creation is not to be understood as formation but as separation, as God's gracious judgement for forgiven sinners", and emphasized the cross to the point at which creation became nearly irrelevant (Conradie, 2012b:114). The Dutch theologian Arnold Van Ruler argued the opposite to a similarly extreme degree, describing an eschatological element in salvation, claiming that salvation was only there on behalf of creation, to ensure its return to God's initially intended state. Moltmann, according to Conradie, represents a balance between Van Ruler and Barth, and his theology on creation and salvation are in large part a response to the problem of evil and suffering in the world, thus forming "a response to the theodicy problem" (Conradie, 2012b:114).

Conradie's other chapter can be divided into two sections, with one chiefly focused on contributors to the "science-theology debate" as it is perceived in mainstream Western and North American Christianity, and the other dealing with the topic of evolution and theology, specifically from a Roman-Catholic context. These two points of focus by no means reflect the breadth of the chapter topic, especially not when ecotheology becomes a partner in the dialogue, and Conradie admits as much in saying that "in the realm of ecotheology, there is a plethora of exchanges between theology and science – too many to indicate here" (Conradie, 2012b:211). This chapter makes mention of a wide range of aspects in the dialogue between science and theology, and a number of significant individuals' work, whose theological and scientific contributions could never be sufficiently explored within the restrictive boundaries laid down at the beginning of the book. The question begs, if it was not possible to do justice to the depth of this conversation in the first place, why explore it at all?

The answer lies in his comments on the chapter's content and purpose, as Conradie states that theology and science offer two different, but equally useful, things to ecotheology. From the perspective of ecotheology, it should not be a matter of embracing one or the other, but rather both. In a statement on the way forward for the science-theology dialogue with ecotheology, he emphasizes the importance of recognizing what the "driving or leading questions" are behind each contribution, whether theological, ethical, scientific, or something else, as that determines their relevance for ecotheology (Conradie, 2012b:212). The form these questions take, in turn, bring into the conversation various doctrinal loci, and in the case of what Conradie is exploring here, the instances where creation and salvation get involved are those he chooses to focus on. Thus, as Conradie reveals his methodology for deciding what avenues of these complex discussions to explore, and which to leave out, namely discerning the "driving questions", the diversity of his inclusions in this chapter (and indeed the book) make more sense. Despite not being able to explore fully, or even close to fully, the individuals and movements contained within this issue of the Creation and Salvation series, they are included to allow for the demonstration of Conradie's process of discerning the driving questions behind a theology or person, determining its suitability for participation in his final suggestion for a theology which does justice to both creation and salvation. This hermeneutical process of uncovering the core question behind a certain position is key to Conradie's procedure of preparing an argument, and is especially visible in portions of *The Earth in God's Economy*, as the reader will shortly see.

As the German-Swedish theologian Sigurd Bergmann says, perhaps the most significant achievement of this book is to serve as a demonstration of what riches are to be uncovered when creation and salvation are explored through such a theologically diverse endeavour. Indeed, as one nears the end of the publication, the answer to Conradie's

introductory question on what value an investigation of the creation-salvation relationship would yield becomes obvious:

Both volumes on the theme of creation and salvation show how the interaction between an understanding of the world as creation and the experience of and hope for salvation as served as a central driving force, a systematic steam “locomotive” in the history of theology. Creation and salvation need to be related, at every place and in every time anew, and both need to be embedded in each other in order to keep the inner dynamic of Christian life and work together... Can and should one regard the work of salvation and liberation in itself as a part of the triune God’s ongoing creation? Obviously yes, I would say (Bergmann, 2012:391).

Thus, by the end of this volume and its predecessor, what was once posed as an open question during the introduction by Conradie, has now become a certainty at the conclusion of a historical exploration into classic and recent theological movements. As the various understandings of creation and salvation, some destructive and others helpful, have been investigated, they have culminated in a formulation suitable for use in Conradie’s journey forward.

2.6. Saving the Earth? The Legacy of Reformed Views on ‘Re-creation’

Filling the gap between the “classic” and “recent” theologies explored in his previous two publications, Conradie’s *Saving the Earth?* takes the ideas introduced in the *Creation and Salvation* series and develops them further through a deeper investigation of a few reformed theologians and their views on “re-creation”. The bulk of this book deals with the legacies of these different reformed perspectives on the idea of ‘re-creation’ over the past five centuries. As Conradie moves through the theologies of Calvin, Bavinck, Barth, Noordmans, Van Ruler, and Moltmann, his discussion highlights a theme common to all: the presence of a creative

tension, which manifests in one form or another, between salvation and creation (Conradie, 2013:8).

As is customary for Conradie, he begins his introduction by briefly reviewing conclusions he has reached in previous books and discussions. This repetition of recently reached conclusions at the beginning of a new discussion mimics the rhetorical strategy of anadiplosis, where one repeats a word or phrase at the end of one sentence and the beginning of the next (Enos, 2013:9). The effect here is to generate persuasive momentum, as repetition is known to create in oral rhetoric, as well as emphasis, and the creation of a sense of continuity in argumentation between Conradie's various publications as he brings ideas from each volume, repeats them, and builds on them for the next one (Zarefsky, 2014:95). This style can also be likened to what is described as "refining" in the fourth book of *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (traditionally attributed to Cicero, though this has been disputed significantly in recent times), "dwelling on the same topic and yet seeming to say something ever new. It is accomplished in two ways: by merely repeating the same idea, or by descanting upon it. We shall not repeat the same thing precisely — for that, to be sure, would weary the hearer and not refine the idea — but with changes" (Caplan, 1954:365). The points Conradie brings up in repetition here include, firstly, the notion of "retrieval" as the methodology which he applies when dealing with past texts, theologies, and theologians. Secondly, the shared traits between the feminist objections and the eco-theological critique against destructive or oppressive Christianity is also mentioned. He also gives, in the form of a list, a review of recent discourses within ecotheology which he deems to be significant, many of which have been discussed at length in the previous publication. Importantly, the idea of "earthkeeping", a central theme in *The Earth in God's Economy* is discussed again, this time in relation to ethics and Christian praxis (Conradie, 2013:1-2).

Despite this project's methodological choice of adopting Compier's definition of rhetoric which gives hermeneutical primacy to the Roman rhetoric and Cicero's definition over that of his Greek predecessors, the three pillars of persuasive rhetoric introduced by Aristotle cannot be ignored, especially when called upon so specifically by Conradie. The appeal to ethos can be defined as when an author calls on the "character" of the audience or a value of a concept to bring about persuasion (Killingsworth, 2005:27). In this case, Conradie discusses the concept of an "ecological ethos", which "touches on virtually all aspects of life and has implications for all ethical subdisciplines" (Conradie, 2013:2). This widespread relevance can lead to ecotheology, closely tied to this generic concept of an "ecological ethos", being diffused into something which holds some value everywhere but does not have enough intrinsic value to be defined as its own discipline. By stating that ecotheology has value for Christian praxis and his conceptualisation of "earthkeeping" independent of its ethical implications, Conradie's point is to argue against reducing ecotheology to a subgenre of ethics, even though its environmental awareness means that it has relevance to so many other fields of study (Conradie, 2013:2-4).

Another example of Conradie's method of developing an idea by repetition can be found in his defining the salvation of creation as both *creatura* (the product of God's creative work) and *creatio* (the act of creating itself), both of which are ideas already introduced in earlier texts but that are repeated and added to here (Conradie, 2013:11-12). He affirms that God is simultaneously the creator of that which needs to be saved, and the creator of the salvation which that creation experiences (Conradie, 2013:43-45). Before asking some key questions regarding salvation, creation, and ecotheology, as Conradie does in order to direct his forthcoming analysis, he clarifies the addition he plans to make to what he has already covered in the previous contributions, namely a discussion on the problem of an anthropocentric salvation. Retrieving ecological wisdom for such an ecologically destructive worldview is challenging, and Conradie reverts to the "burning ship" metaphor in order to

express what such a retrieval might look like. Likening the earth to a “burning ship”, an anthropocentric redemption sees God save humans (the passengers) from the wreck, with Christ as the lifeline. A more cosmic view of salvation, which Conradie advocates for, “implies a loving concern for the burning ship itself” (Conradie, 2013:4).

As a lead-in to the reformed focus of this book Conradie also repeats his explanation of the relevance the *semper reformanda* motto has for Christianity and ecotheology (Conradie, 2013:1-3). Again, as these ideas are repeated, they are also added to each time and developed slowly as they annex conclusions from each new context they are exposed to. This combination of repetition and continuing change both reflects the “ever reforming” attitude Conradie himself believes is important for theology and the balance between “dwelling on the same topic and yet seeming to say something ever new” discussed above. This layering of arguments, which Conradie has used at various points already, which may in itself be considered another form of strategic manoeuvring (van Eemeren, 2010:94), aids in bringing unity to the concepts upon which Conradie eventually builds his argument.

These repeated arguments and rhetorical strategies, from their original form and as they have developed, have been discussed in the context of classic theologies, recent theologies, and in the context of Kuyper and Bavinck’s work. Filling in a gap in the timeline of that which Conradie has already explored, only the Reformation period remains to be examined for the purpose of retrieving ecological wisdom. To direct the discussion further, Conradie lists pages full of questions, some of which have been addressed before (one need only read the footnotes to see which questions are new and which he has already dealt with, as Conradie constantly references his own work) and others which are new and bear more relevance to the reformed tradition, which is the focus of this book. As these begin to construct for the reader a picture of how complex the issue is which Conradie is addressing, and how many issues it affects in practice, it can be easy to lose focus of what the main goal of his project is. Thus, to conclude

the long round of questioning, Conradie states summarily that with relation to doing justice to creation and salvation, “the aim of this study is to search for such appropriate theological categories in the history of the reformed tradition of Swiss, Dutch and German origin and in the reception of that tradition in the South African context” (Conradie, 2013:8). The movement from general to specific here brings a focus and momentum to Conradie’s expectation that he *can* find “appropriate theological categories” in the reformed tradition, despite him labelling this effort as a “search”. Moreover, the effect of reading an extensive list of questions only for it all to be condensed into one point of focus, is that his thesis statement, as the final consideration in the list, is emphasized as being more important and more central than all of the other questions may be. When this is followed, then, by his motivation for this study, and when that motivation is the same as the previous three publications’ drive, a weight of significance is transferred to his endeavour here. The impetus of *Saving the Earth?* again comes from the failure both in traditional and contemporary theology to “do justice” to the loci of salvation and creation (Conradie, 2013:9).

Some general examples of this failure include Protestantism’s tendency to place an emphasis on salvation over creation, with the latter only acting as a host to the important action of the former (Conradie, 2013:9). In response to this, a trend of portraying salvation as a path to meeting God as creator became popular. This assisted in taking creation from being a doctrine purely about where all things have initiated from, to being a doctrine which describes an integral part of God’s self as Creator, not only for a moment, but in an ongoing sense (Conradie, 2013:10). In other, more contemporary movements such as liberation and feminist theologies, salvation has retained its place as the main focus, but it has been reinterpreted to move away from language of domination or oppression. Naming Matthew Fox as an example, Conradie also takes note of a more recent group of theologians who have dedicated their focus nearly entirely onto creation and have neglected salvation almost entirely. Emphasis in this

camp is on the sacredness of creation itself as the original expression of God's self, which builds on the influential work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. This renewed interest in creation doctrine has led to a greater dialogue between theology and science over the past twenty years. The point of these remarks by Conradie which trace some developments back and forth between a focus on creation and a focus on salvation is to demonstrate simply that Christianity in the West has had difficulty "doing justice" to both (Conradie, 2013:11).

In Conradie's ensuing analysis, he places an emphasis on the distinction between *creatio* and *creatura*, explaining in more detail than before the implications of favouring either definition over the other. By stating that one's definition of creation as either *creatio* or *creatura* is a type of fulcrum around which his conversation about doing justice to salvation and creation turns, Conradie effectively demarcates the boundaries of where he wishes this conversation to take place (Conradie, 2013:12). This further narrows the focus of his investigation and continues his process of moving from general to specific questions, allowing audiences to digest one specific root question or problem, rather than try to make sense of the endless challenges the salvation-creation-ecology discussion brings out. In addition to this simplification, Conradie also gives a qualifying statement that assists in defining what the reader's expectations should be from this endeavour. From the plethora of bold and difficult questions Conradie began his discussion with, it could be easy to assume he intends to solve these, or at least to present a solution to his root question. On the contrary:

Nothing more than relative adequacy can be asked for here. I certainly do not claim to have found the appropriate categories and will not offer a constructive contribution here. At best, what one may ask for is food along the way (bread and wine may do), for provisional answers that will enable one to continue along the way amidst immense challenges from all sides (Conradie, 2013:12).

Exploring further the root question of what *creatio* and *creatura* mean in relation to salvation, Conradie breaks it down into four even more basic points of discussion: firstly, how we see *creatura* in relation to God. As a useful perspective on how we see creation, Conradie's suggestion for a way forward is to emphasize that *creatura* belongs to God, not as God's possession in dominance, but as God's beloved creation arising from the loving act of *creatio* (Conradie, 2013:12-16). Of course, the challenge of theodicy is inescapable here and must be responded to. Conradie proposes that telling the full story of God's actions, both in creation and in salvation, aids in making sense of the difficulties the problem of evil presents. Maintaining the balanced perspective between *creatio* and salvation which is necessary to communicate this "full story" can be achieved by not giving noetic precedence to one or the other, but rather seeing both as God's actions equally: "Each of these aspects of God's work (and there are more), one may argue, are co-original... The knowledge of creation does not come before the knowledge of salvation, nor does salvation necessarily have an epistemic priority over creation" (Conradie, 2013:15).

In expanding this definition of *creatura* and investigating the ways in which that affects one's image of the Creator, Conradie turns to a section in Daniel Migliore's *Faith Seeking Understanding*. Challenging the traditional categories of panentheism, theism, and pantheism as being inadequate for use in describing the relationship between the Trinity and *creatura*, Migliore discusses five alternative 'analogies' which are more accurate: "generation", "fabrication", "emanation", "mind/body", and "artistic expression". The last of these metaphors, borrowed from Scottish theologian George Hendry, is favoured by Migliore and Conradie for its ability to portray *creatio* as a creative act which brought God joy (as opposed to the negative connotations associated with human "work") (Migliore, 2004:110-112). When seen as an artistic act, *creatio* becomes playful, emotional, and a reflection of the character of the Artist. *Creatura* in turn becomes product of that creativity which lies within the Creator –

this perspective, when understood correctly, will be balanced between the extremes of seeing *creatura* as a “commodity” (with humans only seeing how it can be consumed), as a fallen or lost place (with the focus being only on sin and fear), or as a “romanticized source of beauty” (where only the good is seen and painful realities of suffering are ignored) (Conradie, 2013:16). The artistic expression model defends against certain destructive interpretations of God’s relationship to *creatura* (Migliore, 2004:112). For example, the idea of God being uninvolved or uninterested in God’s creation is incongruent with the Biblical witness, according to Migliore. Similarly, the co-dependency which panentheism promotes does not do justice to the sovereignty God has in relation to creation. In summary:

The model of artistic expression is attractive because it combines the elements of creative freedom and intimacy of relation between artist and artistic creation. Just as the love of God is freely expressed and shared in intratrinitarian communion, so in the act of creation God brings in love a world of free creatures that bear the mark of divine creativity (Migliore, 2004:113).

Conradie’s choice of using Migliore’s discussion of the artistic model assists his argument both by consolidating and reinforcing his point that one’s definition of *creatio* and *creatura* affect perception of God, and by introducing into the discussion the role of the Trinity (which up until this point has not been discussed in depth by Conradie, but is essential to his proposal in *The Earth in God’s Economy*).

Following on this, the second point Conradie examines in the *creatio/creatura* and redemption relationship asks what salvation of *creatura* means. Important to understanding his position on the matter is to note the emphasis placed on sin and its effects, as Conradie chooses to remain congruent with the reformed focus thereon (Conradie, 2013:19). *Creatura* (at least locally, perhaps more cosmically) now is radically different to *creatura* at the moment of *creatio*, and theology has only theoretical ways of interacting with that ideal state of *creatura*

(Conradie, 2013:17). Despite this inability to directly interact with the world as it was intended, the role of sin, and the salvation of all *creatura* is needed, both human and non-human. For Conradie, to define salvation as the redemption of only humans would be too narrow and anthropocentric; to define it as salvation only from anthropogenic destruction would be too broad and would fail to recognize the cosmic scope of Christ's action; if defined only as restoration of what was before, then the challenge would be to reconcile this view with evolutionary history; a purely spiritual salvation would be "escapist", while a purely natural one would be "reductionist" (Conradie, 2013:19-26). Thus a middle ground is needed, where salvation refrains from perpetuating destructive dualisms, while still maintaining the tension between sin and grace, without becoming anthropocentric but also not ignoring the effects of humans. Although Conradie does not give a direct proposal for what this means yet, he does go further here than in any of his previous works towards defining the boundaries for which categories salvation should and should not be placed within. As he gradually reveals his argument, Conradie builds some suspense towards what his definition of such a satisfying salvation looks like.

Some other insights come to the fore when the relationship between salvation and creation as *creatio* is considered. The two most important points for discussion here again consisted of providing boundaries for where a discussion on this relationship should not go beyond. The danger at one end is that *creatio* and redemption become merged to the point that they are indistinguishable. Such a perspective may seem to be justifiable based on the way in which the two are bonded in the Bible: "God's acts of creation are salvific (establishing order amidst chaos and allowing for the flourishing of creation), while God's acts of salvation are creative and may indeed be portrayed as a 'new' or 'renewed' creation" (Conradie, 2013:29). Despite this, the danger which Conradie names here (and has named before) is that one will be subsumed under the other, and that which is distinct to either may be lost. The opposite danger

is one of “compartmentalisation”, where the two are completely separated. Conradie references his work on Kuiper to demonstrate the type of destructive theology that can arise from this (Conradie, 2013:30). Again, Conradie uses this point simply as an illustration of the hazards this conversation poses if not conducted within certain margins, as well as to use those margins to demonstrate where he believes an appropriate theology lies.

The final point asks how it is possible for God to be seen as both creator and saviour. The debate within Protestantism on “supralapsarian” and “infralapsarian” views are well-documented. The former perspective dictates that God’s acts of salvation have always been an inevitability, regardless of *creatio* or the state of *creatura*, and thus the value of either is dependent on their role in God’s overarching salvific acts. Infralapsarian describes the process of salvation as a renewal or reclamation of a former pristine state, thus making salvation a process by which the greater goal of “restoration” can be achieved. Both of these can lead to subordinating either salvation or creation under the other, exactly what Conradie warns of as being hurtful towards his goal of “doing justice” (Conradie, 2013:32). In another example of how he builds arguments on one another, using one to prepare the reader for the next, Conradie refers back to his *Mosaic of Selected Classic Christian Theologies* and his piece on Irenaeus as a suggestion for something in between infra- and supralapsarian perspectives. The term “recapitulation” is defined by Conradie as “duality”:

Recapitulation is on the one hand a return to the original state, the fresh and natural; on the other hand it is as perfecting of the original. The secret to this duality is that restoration comes to pass through the second Adam, who by his perfection brought new life to the created and gave humankind something more than the life Adam had lost (Conradie, 2012a:30).

This definition of recapitulation does give some focus to the issue of human sin, the “fall”, and the effects thereof on *creatura*, and Conradie approves of this focus, especially as a

reformed theologian, as “appropriate” (Conradie, 2013:17). Irenaeus’ formulation of recapitulation indicates that he views creation and salvation through an eschatological lens, as God’s creativity is allowed to continue through Christ’s salvific action as *creatura* is renewed and recapitulated to a mature, perfected version of the original (Conradie, 2012a:32). Arnold Van Ruler similarly uses recapitulation as a key concept in his eschatological vision, and through this discussion Conradie elaborates on the idea of “consummation” in Van Ruler’s theology (yet another concept introduced into the conversation here for use in a later argument). Consummation, then, is more than simply an ending of all things; rather it is all of history brought together, revealed, and consummated in Christ’s final victory over sin (Conradie, 2013:240). While Van Ruler maintains the “reformed position” (according to Conradie’s definition) that “the underlying problem does not lie with creation or history but with sin”, he reinterprets recapitulation to not improve on what was originally created, but to rather only return to and maintain that initial state of *creatura* as intended by the Creator (Conradie, 2013:240). In Conradie’s theology the role of the Holy Spirit is especially prominent in consummation, and the processes leading up to it. While he describes God mostly in relation to *creatio* and Christ’s work as salvific, the Spirit is involved in “re-creation, comfort, sanctification” (Conradie, 2013:34). Although he does not elaborate more on this idea of a doctrinal division being aligned with Trinitarian roles, he presents this idea and its importance briefly to the reader. Combining a rhetorical question with a statement of need, Conradie’s conclusion is resolute: “Only a fully trinitarian theology will do, but where can such a theology be found?” (Conradie, 2013:34).

As mentioned earlier, the aim of *Saving the Earth?* is not to “offer a comprehensive history of this tradition... Instead the focus here is on selected episodes and figures in this tradition that may provide us with conceptual tools that may be useful today” (Conradie, 2013:8). Thus, although the concept of recapitulation is not how Conradie wishes to resolve

the tension between salvation and creation, it contributes to achieving the aim of this book. From each reformed theologian examined here, then, something of value for Conradie's goal of "doing justice" is uncovered, discussed, and brought forward to *The Earth in God's Economy*. From Calvin Conradie highlights his understanding of God as both immanent and transcendent, as well as his notion of heaven as the "culmination" point for creation and salvation (Conradie, 2013:57). Given the critiques raised against Calvin's theology in the form of accusations of dualism and anthropocentrism, as well as the debate of whether he would support natural theology, Conradie's choice to focus on Calvin's theology of heaven is a counter-intuitive one. It is in the "eschaton" and culmination, however, where Conradie finds that Calvin's theology of heaven brings together creation and salvation (Conradie, 2013:56).

From Herman Bavinck the key ideas extracted there are a more condensed, focused version of the perspectives presented earlier in *Dialogue on Abraham Kuyper's Legacy for Contemporary Ecotheology*. For Bavinck, special revelation through Christ's salvific action was contingent on sin entering the world, and a means to allow us to experience God again through the initially intended general revelation. Thus, special revelation is inextricably connected to Bavinck's description of re-creation (Conradie, 2013:87). Another theme Conradie highlights in Bavinck's corpus is that of grace and nature, and how common grace preserves the state of *creatura*, "while special (salvific) grace redeems, restores and transforms creation and culture" (Conradie, 2013:92). This leads into the final concept of Bavinck's that is included, namely the definition of re-creation as being "restoration" instead of "re-creation". The difference is that the former implies that re-creation restores creation to what it was initially intended to be (but did not attain because of sin), while the latter involves bringing *creatura* back to a state of perfection which it used to be at, but has fallen from due to sin (Conradie, 2013:95).

Taking a chronological journey through certain aspects of Barth's theology, Conradie notes that the younger Barth has the tendency to describe salvation and creation as one united divine action from above; this, in turn, feeds into Barth's "uncompromising critique" of natural theology (Conradie, 2013:122). Barth's process of maturation made him less polemical in his rhetoric against natural theology and eventually adopt a slightly softer stance on the matter. In contrast, his concept of Christ as Light of the world and the "lesser lights" as a metaphor for reconciliation strengthens as he grows older, as he continues to subordinate *creatio* and thus *creatura* to Christ's salvific action (Conradie, 2013:154). Finally, Barth's supralapsarian viewpoint means that re-creation is simply a means for God to fulfil the soteriological aspect of his covenant with humanity (Conradie, 2013:168). In summary, Conradie chooses to draw attention to how Barth defines his description of God as Creator based on his preformed image of God as Saviour, and that creation is for the purpose of a covenant with God (Conradie, 2013:121-122).

Although Noordmans writes from a reformed perspective somewhere between Barthian and neo-Calvinist theologies, he differs from Barth on matters relating to natural theology and re-creation (Conradie, 2013:175-176). He critiques Barth's Christological obsession as too one-sided, not giving enough attention to the Spirit. Noordmans finds Barth's tendency to limit the work of the Spirit to within the bounds of the work of Christ disagreeable (Conradie, 2013:178). In response he develops a theology which describes this existence as wholly corrupt, not easily "repaired" or simply "restored"; no, to rid this world of sin requires a more powerful act, one of re-creation by the "Creator Spiritus" (Conradie, 2013:176). This, in turn, makes God's choice to re-create simultaneously an act of salvation and an act of judgement (Conradie, 2013:186).

Conradie explores only a few key points in Arnold Van Ruler's theology, of course choosing to focus on his work with the interplay between salvation and creation, which is

substantial. Interpreting Van Ruler's work through the lenses he has developed in this book and the series so far, Conradie remarks that "Van Ruler's position entails a certain priority that is attributed to creation over salvation, in the sense that salvation is for the sake of creation. Sin and salvation are secondary and accidental features of reality... we are not saved from being, from our createdness, but only from sin" (Conradie, 2013:217-218). Thus, although it may appear that by Van Ruler's affirmation that God the Creator and God the Saviour are simultaneously one and the same he succeeds in doing justice to both, Conradie identifies a favouring of creation. As such, Van Ruler's notion of re-creation becomes relevant, as it assists in bringing balance to this equation. Conradie again leans on his own earlier work regarding Bavinck in explaining Van Ruler's position here as a "radicalized" version of Bavinck's *re-creatio*. Van Ruler sees eschatology as permeating the entire doctrinal spectrum, and thus *re-creatio* becomes more than a purely soteriological action, but that it assumes a place in the eschaton as well (Conradie, 2013:236). *Re-creatio* is more than restoration for Van Ruler, and Conradie uses the term "consummation" to describe the idea of all of existence coming together in an instant. *Re-creatio* is used as a replacement for the New Testament "new creation" as *re-creatio* is not an act *ex-nihilo* but rather "*ex-creatura*" (Conradie, 2013:242). In this way Conradie presents Van Ruler as avoiding dualism and Gnostic paths since that which has been created retains significance, not only as the initial expression of God's creativity, but also as that which will participate in *re-creatio*.

Conradie acknowledges that, although it is easy to trace the influences on Moltmann, as he himself recognizes for example Van Ruler, it is difficult to condense his thoughts on creation and salvation into a clear message as not only is his body of work large, but it is spread across a broad spectrum of contributions to systematic theology, quite unsystematic itself (Conradie, 2013:277-278). All of Moltmann's theology, in Conradie's opinion, may be oriented around his theology as a response to suffering in the world. In his "neo-platonism"

Moltmann seeks to bring the apathetic distant God closer as the Trinity specifically, which in turn makes God relevant to the world we live in (Conradie, 2013:280-281). Indeed, God's participation in this world is by no means past, as perhaps one might (mis)understand in lieu of Moltmann's historical focus. On the contrary, a historical perspective highlights God's ongoing actions in this world through Christ and the Spirit, leading towards a point of consummation (similar to Van Ruler's conception of the eschaton) in the form of *nova-creatio*, a "consummation and not merely reparation" (Conradie, 2013:295).

Stated at the beginning of nearly every chapter, the aim of this book is not to give an unbiased overview of reformed theologians' perspectives on creation and salvation; on the contrary, Conradie's intention here, and indeed in the books leading up to this one, is to selectively present elements of certain theologies which may help in uncovering a perspective which does justice to creation and salvation (Conradie, 2013:8). While on one level Conradie's explanation for this trend is that each theologian's entire corpus of work is too vast to discuss in one specific chapter – too difficult to categorize comprehensively, and that it would be inappropriate or impossible to do so in any case – his only recourse is to highlight selected parts of their theology, which conveniently assists his process of persuasion and building towards an argument (Conradie, 2013:51, 77, 121, 277, 321). He uses these chapters and theologians to present certain ideas in the work of well-known reformed theologians which will be used in support of his own argument. He chooses theologians with whom he shares a theological foundation in being reformed, thus aiding readers to understand some of the core concepts which drive his own theology. This also allows him to pre-emptively respond to certain blanket critiques which may come his way for identifying as "reformed" by summarizing lengthy historical debates, critiques, and their responses which the individuals he discusses experienced themselves. Moreover, his concluding chapter, which he admits to being biographical in a sense, gives readers even more direct understanding of what context his

theology developed in, why he insists on certain viewpoints, and how his theological journey fits into the broader history of South African reception of reformed theology (Conradie, 2013:322). Finally, in repeating certain themes here which have already been discussed prior, as well as introducing new ones, Conradie continues building a network of ideas and arguments which rest upon each other, and which all can be traced back to a particular point or theologian in history.

2.7. The Earth in God's Economy: Creation, Salvation and Consummation in Ecological Perspective

In one sense, capturing the rhetorical thrust of Conradie's work is challenging because he does not present his argument in one chapter, or even in just one book. Rather, his perspective on creation and salvation is something which has been built up over various works published over the course of a decade. In another sense, this gradual movement towards a defined theological proposal (which is finally presented here) allows readers the chance of journeying through the theological layers which contribute to the foundation of the argument which Conradie builds. Thus Conradie's position, when presented, has the support of the historical journey he has taken readers on to clarify his position on certain key theological themes which will play a role in *The Earth in God's Economy*. For our project, having taken a rhetorical path has assisted in uncovering the internal logic behind some of these concepts, and ultimately of Conradie's perspective on what the relationship between salvation and creation holds for contemporary and future ecotheology. In his own words:

This study is the culmination of a personal, collaborative and ecumenical journey that started for me in 2006. Following much reconstructive work, I seek to offer here a constructive contribution on understanding the place of the earth in God's economy. It

is necessary to gather together some highlights on this journey in order to understand the context within which this study emerged (Conradie, 2015:17).

From the first page of *The Earth in God's Economy* Conradie begins reviewing themes covered in previous volumes. The first thing he does is to orient Christian ecotheology around a response to Lynn White Jr. The type of response that is needed he says must share the traits with feminism, specifically an ability to resist oppression by means of reinterpretation (Conradie, 2015:1). He again explains that he writes from a reformed perspective and that his outlook is informed by his “heroes”, Calvin and Irenaeus, as well as Barth and Augustine (Conradie, 2013:12; Conradie, 2015:4). The principle of *semper reformanda* is something which his own theology is built around, and what he believes ecotheology needs to have as a core value in order to remain relevant and dynamic (Conradie, 2012b:113; Conradie, 2015:2). Early on Conradie also emphasizes the importance of having the whole Trinity represented in one's understanding of the relationship between salvation, creation, and consummation (Conradie, 2013:16, 280; Conradie, 2015:3).

Having briefly named some of the themes he wishes to draw attention to from prior publications in responding to “the underlying problem, namely the need to do justice to God's work of creation and salvation”, he proceeds to outline some previously named issues which contribute to the core challenge this book seeks to address (Conradie, 2015:4). Most of these come, as is Conradie's style, in the form of a list of questions: which theological and secular contexts are affected by the relationship between salvation and creation? How does this problem affect African theology specifically? What role should reflection on the problem of theodicy play in forming a theology which “does justice” (Conradie, 2015:5)? How are we to compensate today for the traditional tendency in the West to see salvation as “from” the earth? This leads into how destructive dualism can be avoided? What effect does definition creation as either *creatura* or *creatio* have on the underlying problem? How do special and general

revelation mirror emphasizes on salvation and creation respectively? What is the relationship between grace and nature as explored by Abraham Kuyper? What exactly is the target of salvation, and what is it being saved from? How does the reformed focus on sin affect one's understanding of the underlying problem? What are the origins of sin? How should theological proposals to do justice to creation and salvation respond to suffering, both natural and human-induced? What dangers are involved in fusing and compartmentalizing salvation and creation, and how can they be avoided? What role does or should a Trinitarian perspective play in the development of a response to the underlying problem (Conradie, 2015:7-14)?

Taking over a decade to discuss the above questions and introduce themes which he believes are relevant in answering them, Conradie finally begins his response:

Eschatology forms the key to doing justice to both creation and salvation, albeit that this merely defers the problem to focus on diverging notions of the eschatological consummation of God's work. The set of problems concerning the relationship between the creation and salvation outlined above can therefore only be addressed within the larger framework of the whole work of God (Conradie, 2015:15).

The metaphor Conradie chooses to use for "the whole work of God" is borrowed from Irenaeus' version of the "divine economy". Specifically, he defines God's economy as referring to all historical, present, and future actions of God, of creation, salvation, and consummation (Conradie, 2015:16). The influence of Irenaeus on Conradie is strong, as he even mentions him as being one of the "heroes" of Christian theology's attempts to find a balance between salvation and creation (Conradie, 2013:344). Conradie emphasizes the continuity between *creatio*, the incarnation, and consummation as moments of action, and thus Irenaeus' narrative-style theology, used in opposing Gnosticism in his era, is appropriate for Conradie's purposes (Lashier, 2014:1). Furthermore, as will become evident in our rhetorical journey through *The Earth in God's Economy*, maintaining a Trinitarian perspective is integral in Conradie's vision

of the divine economy, something which Irenaeus' theology becomes useful for (Conradie, 2015:14).

This list of questions is quickly followed by an ambitious proposal for a theological perspective which avoids the above pitfalls, offers a response to the above problems, and most importantly, can do justice to creation and salvation. The arrangement of Conradie's chapter (and indeed entire book, as we will see) is a microcosm of the journey he has taken in discovering and presenting a theological system which he finds satisfactory. By first observing the complexities of the underlying problem, and covering content essential to understanding his theology, the reader understands the scope of the challenge he has laid out, and what needs to be considered in overcoming it; as stated before, this tactic of delaying answering his own questions amplifies the impact of his answer (Farnsworth, 2011:226-234). Additionally, in another example of strategic manoeuvring, by listing questions and focusing the problem around traditional critiques to reformed theology, Conradie shapes the discussion and the reader's perception of the "underlying problem" in such a way that his own proposal makes sense as a direct response to the issues he highlights.

The structure and content of this volume may be confusing for audiences who read it in isolation, as his previous publications, though much longer in sum than this one, have functioned almost as a prolegomena to his thoughts here. This is also true in the manner in which chapters here build on one another, with the "subtitle" of one chapter becoming the title of the next chapter, so that each theme introduced "invites reflection" on the next which builds on everything prior to it (Conradie, 2015:20). Ironically, his introductory chapter which reviews the content of those other books which have thus far thoroughly expounded Conradie's conversation on the challenges in doing justice to creation and salvation, is so brief and rushed in its overview that it does not "do justice" to the complexity of the issue Conradie attempts to

address. Conradie admits that to respond to the vastness of the problem he has begun to uncover is difficult if one intends to approach it systematically:

It is not necessarily wise to identify a rigid starting point for theological reflection on this set of questions. It is far more appropriate to maintain a movement from one question to the next than to get stuck in any one aspect... In searching for a relatively adequate response to this set of questions a particular thesis gradually crystallized. This may be stated in summary form: *The Christian confession may be regarded as a way of seeing (the meaning of) the multi-layered history of the earth as part of the story of the triune God's acts of house-holding (economy)* (Conradie, 2015:20).

In order to discuss this notion of house-holding adequately, Conradie moves from one facet to another, covering key doctrines and supporting themes. Despite this being the volume where Conradie gives his answer to the “underlying question”, he does not simply give it – instead he begins with a conversation that is cosmic or universal in scope and gradually moves to a more focused discussion on doctrine, praxis, and eventually the “ecological moral of the story” (Conradie, 2015:23). Thus in chapter two Conradie spends some time exploring the philosophical implications of humans claiming to “know” God, and how this relates to what Conradie terms “ultimate questions”. According to Conradie, the innate human search for meaning in relation to each other and their surroundings, which has been going on since “time immemorial”, is expressed in the form of “ultimate questions” (Conradie, 2015:66). He states that these questions can be divided into five groups, and that his division stems directly from his reformed background: general questions about where everything comes from, questions about the immediate future and destiny, questions about who we are as human beings and what our purpose is, questions about causality (how and why the world works as it does), and finally questions about suffering (Conradie, 2015:67-69). Attempts to answer these questions have in

large part come from within the religious sphere, leading specifically to the concept of one or many divine entities (Conradie, 2015:76).

As these concepts crystallized over time, the need arose for beliefs to be solidified and gathered in one set form, which in the case of Christianity culminated in oral confessions and eventually written creeds. Conradie's argument is not to say that our understanding of God is simply the result of reflection. Rather:

My argument is that the Christian confession of faith in the triune God is situated in this broader quest for answers to ultimate questions, that Christian theology necessarily had to adopt categories for the divine being from pre-Christian and non-Christian sources and that adopting such categories almost always distorted the confession, but that Christians also challenged and adapted such categories in the light of their emerging understanding of the identity and character of the triune God (Conradie, 2015:80).

The lengthy section preceding this quote serves to situate the concept of Trinity, which, as will be shown, is essential to Conradie's notion of "divine house-holding", within the context of "ultimate questions" outside a purely Christian philosophical sphere. His statement above, in turn, allows him to historically embed the reformed attitude of *semper reformanda* in the historical development of a belief in God as Triune. Thus Conradie in effect argues that the dynamism which he believes a theology must have in order to "do justice", namely the ability to always reform itself in adaptation, has actually historically already been part of the formation of a core Jewish and Christian doctrine. The significance of this claim underpins Conradie's use of historical sources as support for ongoing reflection on creation and salvation – in a way this makes Conradie's argumentative process of appropriating or reforming concepts and theological perspectives from the past for use in his present discussion a mirror of the same process he deems necessary within any theology which aspires to do justice to creation and

salvation. His own reflections on Abraham Kuyper's theology can serve as one of many examples of this – a theology which has been historically destructive to both human and non-human *creatura* alike – whereby he takes a theology from the past which is not suitable “as is” for use in his vision of contemporary ecotheology, and “re-forms” it into something that is suitable.

Another point which Conradie emphasizes early on in his argument which is essential to his understanding of house-holding is who the earth belongs to. Using the metaphor of describing the cosmos as God's “household”, and the divine economy as acts of “house-holding”, Conradie hopes that his quest will also result in finding an answer to the underlying question of determining “the place of the earth in God's economy” (Conradie, 2015:16). He states repeatedly that the cosmos, and specifically the earth, is “God's own”, “God's household”, “God's work”, “God's good creation”, “God's body”; while arguing against the harmful danger of viewing the earth as simply a by-product of God's plan for the salvation of humanity, Conradie again applies a reforming lens to previously destructive possessive language when referring to the earth by using it consistently, not with human redemption in the picture, but instead in relation to God's self (Conradie, 2015:39-41). He further supports this by incorporating Desmond Tutu's *ubuntu* theology, which emphasizes humanity's place within the family of God and also states, by extension, that this world we live in is God's household. As such, the statements of creation being “God's” are not only a claim of action, but also one of possession, belonging, and identity (Conradie, 2015:35). This reinterpretation of the earth “belonging” to someone, God instead of humankind, combats anthropocentric tendencies which are some of the most dominant dangers to ecotheology that Conradie names, both historically and today. This confession functions polemically within Conradie's argument; furthermore, it aids in relating his discussion of creation, salvation, consummation and house-holding with ecology, thus assisting in support of his original argument: “To confess that this

world is indeed God's creation has an immediate soteriological and therefore ecological significance" (Conradie, 2015:209).

Moving from these questions of a cosmic nature towards something more immanent, Conradie states that these confessions, and the knowledge of God that they reflect, are not standalone claims, but rather portions of a narrative. Among the many implications in saying that Christian confessions about God are parts of a greater whole that is structured in movement from *creation* towards consummation through Christ, is that it stresses the personhood of God. It emphasizes that God is real, has acted and still acts in the history of Israel and Christianity respectively: that "Yahweh is the God of Israel's history and indeed of world history" by bringing the God of Israel in continuity through to today and into the future of Christianity and the rest of God's household (Conradie, 2015:113). This is important for how Conradie attempts to define God's economy for his discussion because it is dependent on God being active, and being the same God throughout history, something which his emphasis on narrative structure offers. In a literary sense, the genre of narrative brings additional insights into how an "economic" perspective portrays the actions of God. Some characteristics Conradie highlights include: the fact that narrative has an inherent order of events to it, or chronology; narrative is a retelling imbued with narrative vision; this vision is informed by the fact that "both the one who sees and what is seen are in motion"; narrative implies development, progress, or growth as a story; a narrative also has a definite plot, with characters who have characteristics that interact with that plot and perhaps with each other; the idea of narrative as a series of frames strung together to form a motion picture implies a "sequence that confers upon distinct images a certain coherence and meaning"; finally, narrative makes use of literary devices for the purpose of communication, including imagery, symbolism, and drama (Conradie, 2015:114-115). Adopting a narrative outlook further reinforces the ways in which telling the whole story of God as triune in action at the moments of creation, redemption, and consummation, and that

the universe is “God’s own” beloved creation, are responses to the challenge of theodicy (Conradie, 2015:116).

As stated, Conradie makes use of Irenaeus in his own theology, but how much he leans on the second century theologian must be clarified. In Irenaeus’ time, the greatest threat to Christianity was Gnosticism and thus much of his theology was shaped around formulating appropriate responses to the subtle doctrinal distortions it promoted. It is well known that he used narrative theology and telling the whole story of God’s action in the form of a divine economy as refutation of Gnostic thought. Additionally, the internal logic of Irenaeus’ economy, upon which Conradie has modelled his own, depends heavily on a strong trinitarian focus:

This trinitarian understanding, in turn, provides the logic that supports Irenaeus’ explanation of the work of God in the economy, that is, the creative and salvific work that constitutes his unified reading of the scriptures firmly fleshed out in *Against Heresies 3-5* and his only other extant work, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*. Thus, in order to understand fully the nature of Irenaeus’ reading of scripture, one must grasp his trinitarian understanding of God (Lashier, 2014:6).

On this second point, the level to which we can describe Irenaeus’ theology as trinitarian, there is less consensus (Lashier, 2014:1). Though Conradie’s argument depends heavily on the assumption of a distinctly trinitarian definition of the economy by Irenaeus, there are a number of factors which have contributed to a debateable trinitarian legacy.¹⁰

¹⁰ In post-modern times, Friedrich Loofs’ 1930 study, *Theophilus von Antiochien Adversus Marcionem und die anderen theologischen Quellen bei Irenaeus* was persuasive and important in swinging Western scholarship towards the conclusion that “Irenaeus was a careless and muddle-headed anthologist”, and not the systematic trinitarian he had been thought, at times in the past, to be (Minns, 2010:x). Additionally, Lashier argues that the emergence of higher criticism led much of Western scholarship to doubt Irenaeus’ trinitarian quality on the grounds that “trinitarian developments of later centuries were not ‘intended’ by biblical authors – intention now being the final arbiter of meaning” (Lashier, 2014:4). The more this trend of removing trinitarian theology from biblical authors grew (which argued that any supposed trinitarian language found in the scriptures had been largely read into it by later interpreters) the more difficult it became to attribute trinitarian thought to Irenaeus, due to his proximity and association with New Testament authors. To attempt to label Irenaeus’ theology as trinitarian, then,

Despite this, though he uses Irenaeus' thoughts as a starting point for much of his reflection, he engages with these, as always, by a process of reinterpretation and reformulation. He chooses a specific type of narrative, a 'multi-layered palimpsest', to achieve this: "The Christian vision is cosmic in scope and is expressed in the form of a narrative that allows for rich nuances and subtleties... One may detect a number of layers of inscription on this palimpsest: the most basic layer of the story, perhaps the parchment on which the various versions of the story are written, is the history of the universe" (Conradie, 2015:117). Inside this, one finds a "historical" and perhaps even "eschatological" layer. Further situated in this, then, there is the history of the earth itself, the histories of the creatures upon it, various cosmological narratives which form part of the human search for meaning, and the subsequent reflection on these narratives (Conradie, 2015:120-121). All of these form a complex web of interconnectedness, each representative of one lens with which the story of the world can be seen. Conradie is careful to clarify that a grand meta-narrative is not his own starting point for his argument on the grounds of the various critiques postmodern philosophy has brought forth against these overarching structures of cosmic good, evil, and ultimate meaning. He does however recognize the value such narratives in terms of guiding reflection on "ultimate questions" posed earlier (Conradie, 2015:142-143). Moreover, they aid in understanding the shape and direction of the complex "multi-layered palimpsest" that Conradie suggests best describes his narrative view of Christianity (Conradie, 2015:129).

Having established the importance of narrative to his description of the divine economy, Conradie continues his process of building a working definition thereof by journeying to an

could be considered "speculative", and speculation in theology was something Irenaeus himself fought against strongly in Gnosticism. Therefore, one could reach the conclusion that "if Irenaeus rejects such speculative thought on epistemological grounds, it is argued, searching his writings for trinitarian theology (now assumed to be extra biblical) is a misguided and anachronistic exercise. Irenaeus simply did not ask these questions" (Lashier, 2014:4). Thus, Conradie's argument, much like Lashier's, is to challenge this popular opinion that Irenaeus' theology only is trinitarian in retrospect, not in initial intent. It is important to recognize that Conradie chooses to base a significant portion of his own proposal for a theology which does justice to creation and salvation on an interpretation of a classic theology which, in recent times, could be considered a minority opinion.

even more specific point of discussion, namely who the participants in this narrative are and what roles they have. The questions of agency, namely what the balance is between divine and human action, and what those actions entail, are interconnected to Conradie's perspective of the Trinity. When discussing certain interpretations of agency which he believes "miss the mark", Conradie notes a tendency in some cases for the process of salvation to be described in terms of a "synergy" between humans and God (Conradie, 2015:204). Drawing from his discussion in *A Companion on Recent Theological Movements*, he chooses to side with Arnold Van Ruler, and the argument is made that soteriology needs to shift away from language which implies that salvation is fully or even partially dependent on human and divine collaboration – Christ's salvific work was accomplished in spite of humanity and, in fact, on its behalf. Under this assertion, however, a distinction must be made between the work of Christ and that of the Holy Spirit: "whereas synergy is a Christological heresy, it is a Pneumatological necessity" (Conradie, 2015:205). Thus the role of the Spirit in God's economy as it pertains to salvation is distinct from the work of the Son in that the Spirit's work is in cooperation with human action, not separate from it. While this is true, the God's choice to forgive and reconcile humanity to Godself is, on the other hand, beyond the possibility of any human initiative to invoke. The salvation plan of God proceeded before humanity had an understanding of even needing redemption (Conradie, 2015:204). In terms of Cicero's canon of "arrangement", by focusing his conversation of agency around this "paradox of multiple agency", Conradie's implicitly supports his own earlier argument that a fully trinitarian perspective is indispensable if one believes that God's economy is a perspective that can do justice to both creation and salvation. This, again, is what Conradie uses to aid in his exploration of the role of the Trinity as it functions with relation to God's economy, both individually and corporately. Again, telling the whole story of God, with consideration for all three members of the Trinity and their actions, is useful in answering questions around theodicy and is powerful in defending against

ecologically destructive, anthropocentric interpretations of the relationship between God, humans, and *creatura*: “the polemic significance of seeing the world in terms of the triune God’s identity and character should not be underestimated. This is a difference that makes all the difference in the world” (Conradie, 2015:208).

Conradie discusses a few terms to further clarify his stance on specifically how the actions of the triune God function in economy, and how we are to reflect on them in relation to *creatio*, *creatura*, salvation, and consummation. Firstly, two opposite but equally extreme interpretations of God’s action must be avoided: the aforementioned reductionism, which claims that “discerning God’s action in the world makes no actual difference to what occurs”, and interventionist interpretations that insist God’s actions consistently flout the natural rules which govern God’s creation. He calls these both “crude” and states that alternative categories must be sought to describe divine action (Conradie, 2015:210-211). The difficulties around causality are evident when reflecting on the claims which Conradie insists must coexist in a definition of the economy – for example, the acknowledgement of suffering as result of sin in the world, a non-negotiable stance on God’s ultimate goodness, that all creation is God’s, that there exists some form of divine plan or will for creation but that creation retains free will and autonomy as intended, and that God is both immanent and transcendent. Just as we know that faith in the Christian God is not an ontological necessity but is chosen as a framework of interpretation, says Conradie, the choice of ascription of acts to God, present and retrospectively, are hermeneutical tools which can assist in making sense of some of these paradoxical claims (Conradie, 2015:36, 63, 214).

Entering his fifth chapter, Conradie defines the root metaphor which forms the core of his vision of God’s economy, namely “the whole household of God”. The notion of the household of God that Conradie refers to is one which has emerged since the 1950’s, and has

since become known as “oikothology”. This concept allows three themes to be brought together under what Conradie terms “ecumenical quests”:

the quests for ecumenical fellowship (amidst the many denominational and theological divisions within Christianity worldwide), for economic justice (amidst the inequalities and injustices of the current neo-liberal economic order), and for ecological sustainability (amidst the degradation and destruction of ecosystems)” (Conradie, 2015:221).

Oikothology is built on the Greek *oikos*, which means household, but also forms the stem of *oikoumene* (which refers to the world in general), as well as *oikonomia* (meaning “economy”), *oikoumenike* (“ecumenics”), and *oikologia* (“ecology”) (Conradie, 2015:222).

Before discussing further the household of God itself as root metaphor, he first clarifies some terms. Metaphors are simply symbolic, and their uses are well understood within theology; root metaphors, on the other hand, are defined as:

A metaphor with staying power, that is, the power to illuminate. A root metaphor, like all other metaphors, enables one to see one thing in the light of something else. This is suggested in the core thesis of this study, namely that the Christian vision enables one to see the world as the triune God’s household, to see the history of the universe as God’s economy (house-holding). Therefore, if this metaphor has staying power, it will continue to challenge other ways of seeing the world. It will enable one to see the ecological significance of the story of God’s economy, to empower an ecological praxis, ethos and spirituality (Conradie, 2015:223).

In terms of unifying his argument, by defining God’s household as a root metaphor along these lines, Conradie can bring the discussion he has had thus far, which has been largely doctrinal and philosophical, into the realm of praxis through the door of ecotheology. The definition he gives of root metaphors is thus crucial for relating his proposal for God’s economy

as a system which can do justice to creation and salvation, to the field of ecotheology – the root metaphor of “God’s household” acts as the roof under which his ideas come together, both in terms of the structure of his argument and the logic of the theological system he presents. In other words, a root metaphor is given more than just hermeneutical primacy over other metaphors; root metaphors, due to their “staying power”, become “embedded in well-known theological constructs” which allows them to retain relevance to contemporary contexts (Conradie, 2015:224).

Ironically, for how essential this definition of root metaphor is to his argument, the chapter discussing God’s household is the shortest chapter in the book. Furthermore, of this already compressed chapter, he also spends a fair portion of it outlining the “severe limitations” of the metaphor. Though the “whole household of God” has become the root metaphor for ecotheology – that is, as Conradie defines ecotheology to be – through a natural theological selection due to the “rise of the modern ecumenical movement”, the first drawback to this metaphor is its association with patriarchal structures which, at the time in which *oikotheology*’s ancient roots were being founded, women and the marginalized of society were oppressed by the concept of *oikos* (Conradie, 2015:225). Thus the metaphor bears an inherent quality which may contradict the ecumenical and inclusive purpose Conradie wishes to use it for here. At the same time, this portion of the chapter where he acknowledges potential faults in the root metaphor can be categorized as the rhetorical strategy of “concession”, whereby a rhetor concedes potential critiques against their argument, only to draw them out for immediate repudiation: “Rhetorical concessions, or oratorical withdrawals, are acts of pseudo-generosity aimed only at convincing the jury of the extent and force of one’s principal entitlement... Pure concessions form the pretext for all the more scathing refutations” (Dupriez, 1991:110). This can actually strengthen an argument, as it simultaneously negates critiques and draws attention to certain strong points of the original argument. In this case, as Conradie admits the counter-

intuitive original use of the *oikos* term, it highlights his application of the *semper reformanda* principle, which allows for and encourages a reinterpretation of this term in light of the ecumenical movement and “God’s mission to establish the power of love throughout the whole *oikoumene*” (Conradie, 2015:225).

With the whole household of God acting as the bridge in Conradie’s argument which relates his application of Irenaeus’ divine economy to contemporary ecotheology, it must be clarified how the household of God can be compatible with all of the symbols, processes, and core themes which have been built up thus far in support of Conradie’s argument. Firstly, Conradie claims that the household of God metaphor finds its “best” expression within the context of God’s economy (Conradie, 2015:225). As a result, in terms of the dichotomy between the immanent and the economic Trinity, the whole household of God is best understood in light of the latter, as part of God’s dynamic acts of “house-holding”. This, combined with the emphasis placed on it being the *whole* household of God in which the economic Trinity acts, namely human and non-human *creatura*, allows for a genuine ecological concern to emerge (Conradie, 2015:226-227). How this root metaphor does justice to both creation and salvation is also explained, as Conradie suggests “a soteriology based on inclusivity, adoption and incorporation... Indeed, the possibility of the fellowship of all creatures within this household is only there on the basis of the reconciliation in Jesus Christ that embraces and celebrates the diversity of creatures” (Conradie, 2015:229).

In terms of Conradie’s argument, this point is where the idea of ecojustice – a concept which he has mentioned on a number of occasions prior, during his earlier publications which form the rhetorical build-up to his current presentation on God’s economy and the whole household of God – fully matures. The phrase was first introduced by William Gibson in 1973 and subsequently popularized by Dieter Hessel in the 1980’s and ‘90’s (Hessel, 2007). Gibson’s definition of ecojustice is built on the following tenets: the assumption of an

interconnectedness between human suffering and environmental health; an equating of “social and economic justice” with the wellbeing of *creatura* (Gibson, 2012:xii); an understanding that the need for the same justice pervades both the social and environmental spheres which make up our world; the knowledge that different contexts require different expressions of justice, a hope that the quest for justice will yield a better future; the knowledge that initiatives informed by ecojustice “are contributing to an ecological reformation”, a reformation which directly fights anthropocentrism; because ecojustice is defined as both a social and ecological struggle, it demands the support of those who work for sociological and economic justice (Gibson, 2012:xiii-xv). These pillars of ecojustice in Gibson’s definition culminate in transformative action which works steadily towards the healthy co-existence of “humankind and otherkind in one Earth community over time” (Gibson, 2012:xvi).

Oikotheology offers ecojustice a platform of expression, wherein economic and ecological injustices can be addressed within the household of God by the economic Trinity’s acts of house-holding, and through the hospitality of Christ’s sacrifice which has united all of *creatura* under one roof. Having explored Conradie’s emphasis on the principle of continuous reformation, a soteriology of inclusivity, his polemic against anthropocentrism, and his appreciation for the interconnectedness of different forms of injustice and suffering, it becomes clear from their compatibility why Conradie selected to align his argument with Gibson’s definition of ecojustice. It explains why “ecojustice” was selected from the start of this multi-year project as one of the driving motivations for Conradie’s inquiry into the relationship between creation and salvation, as well as why he consistently describes this journey in terms of “doing justice”. Another reason why Conradie adopts Gibson’s view on ecojustice can be found if we return to the brief mention at the beginning of this chapter on Conradie’s critique of the Earth Bible Projects “principles of ecojustice”. It would seem that his two points of suspicion towards their proposal cannot be applied to Gibson’s definition of ecojustice, since

Gibson names both the need for a contextual and ecological reformation of our definitions of justice, and the need to reread Biblical texts with an ecologically sensitive, yet hermeneutically suspicious, eye which will not compromise their integrity.

How the whole household of God as root metaphor takes form as a narrative is stated summarily by Conradie as follows:

This world may be understood as God's own beloved creation. It is God's household, the place where the triune God has opted to dwell, "on earth as it is in heaven". Accordingly, the history of the universe may be regarded as the slow process of building the house, making it habitable, finding company together with micro-organisms, insects, fish, reptiles, birds, mammals, hominids, humans. This narrative has not always run smoothly. It is indeed a drama involving spectacular cataclysmic forces, with immense fireworks on display. One episode in this story involves us as human beings. There was much joy in God's household when hominids first arrived on the scene. However, we as human beings have messed up the house without actually managing to destroy it. We are now even trying to burn the house through global warming. As a result, there is great consternation in the household of God. What we do not always realize, though, is that the triune God is not leaving the story just there. It remains God's household. There is a counter-narrative according to which God is patiently seeking to restore relations in the household. The word 'restoration' is not understood as returning something to its former glory. The household remains dynamic with innovations, new inhabitants, new dreams being entertained. Christians have a glimpse of what God is doing in this regard. The church is not the household but is situated within the household as a community of those who have some vision of what the household is all about (Conradie 2015:230-231).

This description of narrative allows Conradie to demonstrate the connectedness of a number of elements in his argument which up until now have been discussed in isolation from one another. Thus the narrative perspective which Conradie gives here performs the same function *in* his argument as it does *for* his argument itself – bringing unity and a sense of interdependency between the various elements of the story – both over the course of human history and over the course of the decade Conradie has used in presenting his argument here.

Before concluding his discussion of the metaphor of house-holding, Conradie adds that the tension between seeing the earth as “house”, “home”, and “hearth” gives the household metaphor some adaptability in light of some of its basic limitations. A “house” is a physically habitable location, and contains certain characteristics which allow some inhabitants to survive or thrive more easily than others, but provides within itself the shelter needed to survive at the very least. For a house to become a “home”, then, certain activities of “house-making” and house-keeping are required, namely those provided first by God’s providential care in *creation*, and subsequently by God’s redemptive acts in Christ and throughout the history of the world (Conradie, 2015:241-242). These actions also include eschatological action, re-creation, and consummation where all things are united unto God. Within the home, there is another, even more intimate grouping. The “hearth-hold”, a concept Conradie borrows from Mercy Amba Oduyoye, describes how the Church is the centre of community, unified in Christ, which resides within the greater household, unified in God. The role of the hearth is to provide a space for “*koinonia*” in Christ (Oduyoye, 2001:79).

Expanding on this last point, the essential question of what role the church plays in the metaphor is addressed in more detail. Where, to use Conradie’s symbolic language, in ‘the household’ is the church located? To answer this question Conradie turns to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, quoting his *Ethics* in order to highlight that the church offers a space where reconciliation in Christ can be found, not only for humans, but for the whole world

(Bonhoeffer, 2005:63; Conradie, 2015:244). Though it would be impossible within this project to give an overview that does justice to Bonhoeffer's theology and the many different interpretations thereof, some comment must be made on the rhetorical significance which this choice holds for Conradie's argument.

Firstly, Bonhoeffer is a controversial figure, whose theology has been interpreted in a variety of ways to suit a number of different theological convictions, many conflicting. Being a talismanic figure for some in terms of his fight against perceived evil, as well as having a theology which evolved rapidly over the course of his life, it might be said that Bonhoeffer has become "all things to all men, beloved by all, everybody's saint" (Weikart, 2012:2). His diverse legacy has been heavily debated in the decades ensuing his death, so Conradie's choice to associate with him is an interesting one. Bonhoeffer's radical resistance against oppression and abuse of power aligns well with Conradie's adoption of ecojustice as his motivation for this investigation. Indeed, Bonhoeffer's soteriology can be described as speaking to "both the problem of destructive social power and the problem of the powerful ego" (Green, 1999:139). His concern for the marginalized of the world is compelling, and it is this concern which Conradie attempts to recruit. Being such a polarizing figure, Conradie's choice to connect him to the practical role of the church in God's household does a few things: in one sense, it emphasizes the real-world importance of what Conradie is attempting to achieve in wanting to do justice to salvation and creation, and ultimately in pursuing ecojustice as he has defined it. On the other hand, because of the many voices competing for what Bonhoeffer should be remembered as today, the choice to associate with him could, to some readers depending on their theological alignment, harm their perception of Conradie's argument, more than help it. It has been observed by many that Bonhoeffer's theology changed as he neared the end of his life, and though this is debated by some (Plant, 2014:97), the trend of Bonhoeffer's writings during the mid- and late-1930's period was moving increasingly towards a direct use of

scripture: “The determined plainness and resistance to intellectual sophistication is to be taken at face value: to read the biblical writings from the 1930’s is not to be invited to reflect, but to be summoned by evangelical address” (Webster, 2016:79). It is during this period, and after, when these changes had become even more prominent, when Bonhoeffer wrote *Ethics* – Conradie makes exclusive use of two pages from *Ethics* (pp. 63-64) in support of his description of the role the church plays in the whole household of God metaphor. Since his theology appears to have changed so rapidly and drastically, the selective use of a small section of Bonhoeffer’s work, in a transitional phase in his theology, to support such a crucial part of Conradie’s own explanation of the root metaphor, should be read with suspicion. Despite there being compatibility between Conradie’s theology of creation, salvation, *oikotheology*, and Bonhoeffer’s soteriology and creation theology, Conradie’s brief usage of the German theologian here, near the pinnacle of his argument, cannot be met by the reader with uncritical acceptance. Additionally, though Bonhoeffer’s theology was in opposition to oppression, the argument could be made that his understandings of salvation and creation were too anthropocentric to be compatible with contemporary ecotheology, especially in light of White’s accusation against Christianity, published twenty years after Bonhoeffer’s death (van den Heuvel, 2017:5-6) – if this is the reader’s prerogative, then the use of Bonhoeffer to support Conradie’s idea that the church should be the “hearth” of God’s whole household is counter-productive to the point Conradie attempts to make.

Conradie concludes his constructive proposal with a section on how the divine economy and God’s acts of house-holding should be understood in relation to eschatology. Again, Conradie follows his typical style in this concluding section, beginning by posing some questions, followed by an overview of different interpretations accompanied by a warning of some potential pitfalls they entail, before giving his own suggestion in response to these. To tell the story of God’s economy as it should be told, Conradie insists that the key lies in the

final chapter (Conradie, 2015:264). This final chapter, namely “consummation”, is subject to several possible misinterpretations, and the same cause for such misinterpretations which Conradie has warned of throughout his publications is mentioned here again:

In my view, distortions typically emerge because one theme is subsumed under another. This is especially evident from the ways in which the two crucial themes of creation and salvation are brought into play. It is also possible that both creation and salvation can be subsumed under another aspect of God’s work” (Conradie, 2015:265).

The difficulty is that each element of the narrative of God’s work, each chapter, deserves as much attention as the next. Thus Conradie, again borrowing from the work of Herman Bavinck, suggests the image of a “juggler”, where chronology is less important than giving due attention to each chapter in relation to the other chapters. If this dynamic movement from one theme to another is maintained, one mitigates somewhat the possibility of distortions emerging from choosing one starting point for reflection over another (Conradie, 2015:272).

Even this, however, is not sufficient for Conradie – instead, he offers his own constructive proposal for how consummation should be described. Conradie distinguishes four typical categories within which extant narrative descriptions of divine action in the earth fall: “replacement”, “restoration”, “elevation”, or “recycling”. If the plot of this narrative culminates in replacement, with the original creation be completely destroyed and replaced with something new, the problem is that humans are not encouraged to live with an ecological sensitivity (Conradie, 2015:275). If one takes the route of describing consummation in terms of recycling, where all creation should be seen as part of an eternal cycle, Conradie, quoting Moltmann, believes that this “overlooks the fragility and destructibility of the earth’s organism and thus the earth’s own need of redemption” (Conradie, 2015:277). If choosing the third alternative, “elevation”, one of the problems is the potential for a dualistic worldview, and the related other is how to make sense of the incarnation. Finally, if consummation is described as “restoration”,

the difficulty of how to make sense of natural suffering comes to the fore (Conradie, 2015:283-284, 288).

In Conradie's alternative proposal to these four paths, "maturation" is given as a term useful in describing salvation in the economy. To clarify, salvation is not the maturation of *creatura* – salvation is the process which takes away all that hinders the maturation of *creatura*. Conradie makes a concession, again, acknowledging that the term maturation is "imperfect" as it becomes insufficient when applied to certain categories, for example biology "where the term evolution may be more appropriate" (Conradie, 2015:288-289). Despite this, Conradie's choice in using "maturation" as his proposed way forward is pragmatic, as "maturation" is "not one-dimensional" and can thus be applied to a number of ontological spheres (Conradie, 2015:291). This lack of specificity, then, provides Conradie with the opportunity to define the term to suit his needs, and to pre-empt those problems the four aforementioned narrative eschatological categories have.

With regard to Conradie's argument, so far, all of his works have been either building a theological background and theoretical foundation for the theological proposal of how to do justice to creation and salvation, or have been actually describing how God's economy and the root metaphor of God's household do justice to creation and salvation. What has not been addressed as yet is what practical impetus this telling of the story provides for praxis in terms of the world, and specifically ecology? Clearly there is a distinct gap between belief and action, what is considered "right" and what is done in response to that, and thus the primary issue is not developing a moral vision (though Conradie is adamant that we need one, or that one will emerge when we tell the story as described above), but in reconciling human action to that vision (Conradie, 2015:307-308). Conradie does not deviate here from his formula of presenting an argument, as he first mentions five characteristic groupings in contemporary attempts at defining a morally motivated ecological praxis before giving his own analysis of

their faults and a consequent counterproposal. The majority, he says, are based on the works of the French philosopher and priest Teilhard de Chardin, Catholic theologian Thomas Berry, and physicist Brian Swimme (Conradie, 2015:308). The issues he highlights have to do with how these various perspectives on praxis lead to distortions in understanding of the relationship humans hold or should hold to the cosmos, and specifically the earth and other creatures. A description of this relationship which Conradie finds appropriate is one which lies in the tension between “longing” and “belonging”. If either is over-emphasized, then praxis is in danger of being neglected:

Being at home in the promised land is not to be taken for granted... in Christian terms, a sense of belonging is perhaps best understood as the very content of an eschatological longing. It is only through the Christian longing for the new earth that we can discover our belonging, in body and soul, to this earth. The earth may therefore be our (only) house, but it is not our home yet (Conradie, 2015:312).

For the earth to become our home we must receive, and be agents of, God’s acts of house-holding and homemaking. The moral of the story that provides the impetus for praxis, then, is to see the complexities of *creatio* and *creatura*, to have a vision of hope for consummation in the eschaton, but perhaps most importantly, to see the world and ourselves as members of the triune God’s household (Conradie, 2015:323). The tension between present belonging and an eschatological longing is not, however, the only source from which inspiration for transformative praxis can come – for Jaap Durand, journeying into the past provides a third, equally important source of creative tension.

Chapter 3: Jaap Durand: Principles, Historical Context, and the Power of Metaphor

3.1. Introduction, Theology, and Publications

Born in 1934 in the Free State, he completed his primary and secondary education at a local school in Dealesville, where he stood out academically and creatively (Furstenberg, et al., 2009:3-4). Registering at the University of the Free State, he completed a BA degree with honours *cum laude* before moving again in 1956 to Stellenbosch where he pursued a degree in theology, where his theology began to take a more defined shape through his academic efforts, as explained by Furstenberg, a classmate of Durand's: "Jaap rounds off his M-dissertation over the course of his first year at the faculty of theology. It deals with Calvin's perspective on the right for civil resistance against unjust action by government. Are the foundations laid here already for his fearless resistance against apartheid theology and practices?" (Furstenberg, et al., 2009:11)¹¹. He continued on to study for a Ph.D. in Amsterdam between 1959-1961, where he was exposed more in depth to the theologies of Barth and Kuyper, and first-hand experience of Bavinck's theology. Qualified through the Dutch Reformed Church as a minister, he rarely worked as one, and followed a career as an academic instead. From 1961 he travelled and taught in a number of different settings, before settling in as a lecturer, eventually professor, at the University of the Western Cape from 1974 onwards (Furstenberg, et al., 2009:13-15).

Throughout his life he has worked to foster change in the lives of the people he meets, with special attention being given to communities comprised of the those disadvantaged by apartheid. His desire to share the heart of the gospel through his actions and to fight against

¹¹ My English translation is given above, and all Afrikaans quotes which follow the original wording is given in the footnotes: "In die loop van sy eerste Kweekskooljaar rond Jaap sy M-verhandeling finaal af. Dit handel oor Calvin se beskouinge oor die reg van burgerlike verset teen onregmatige optrede van die owerheid. Is die grondslag hier reeds gelê vir sy latere onverskrokke insette teen die apartheidsideologie en -praktyk?" (Furstenberg, et al., 2009:11).

injustice in South Africa makes him much more than simply an academic. It speaks volumes about his character, something which Archbishop Tutu lauds him for specifically when speaking about his influence at UWC (building on the work done by predecessors like Jakes Gerwell) and how Durand changed an institution which historically underpinned apartheid by its very existence as a designated “coloured university” (Tutu, 2009:i). It comes as no surprise that his life reflects a keen awareness for historical structures and systems of oppression, as his actions draw their direction from his theological convictions.

The first chapter of *Discerning God's Justice in Church, Society and Academy: Festschrift for Jaap Durand*, written by Jaap Furstenberg, Phil Robinson, and Daan Cloete, each friends and academics of Durand's throughout different phases of his life, describe this concern for the marginalised in society and the power that theology can have when lived out. The immense impact attributed to Durand's life in this chapter, by those who have known him since school and until his retirement, has been societal, academic, and spiritual. It is, however, his fearless search for justice in all things which shines through as the common driving factor behind his remarkable life and consequent legacy.

Although Durand's theology is distinct in many ways, it is his inimitable approach to doctrine which has led to his inclusion in this discussion. His body of work is distinctly characterised by a clear historical consciousness. This awareness of contexts and the effect they can have on theology is clear even in some of his earliest works, like his second doctoral thesis submitted in Stellenbosch in 1973 entitled “*Heilsgeskiedenis en die dialektiek van syn en denke*” (Smit, 2013:206). Apart from works in which Durand explicitly discusses either the loci of creation or salvation, when reading his historical works, for example *The Many Faces of God*, it would be assumptive to conclude that because he is giving a historical overview of, in this case, the development of the doctrine of God, that not much can be seen of his *own* theology here. On the contrary, history is always told from a perspective, and can hardly be

separated from contexts and influences (McGrath, 2012:13-15). Thus, the perspectival choices and selections made in terms of doctrines or individuals being given more or less focus by Durand in telling the stories he recounts should be given attention as a reflection of his own theological preferences. What follows is a critical analysis of Durand's perspectives on creation and salvation, and how these two interact as loci, based on specific publications by Durand himself and those written about him by others. In order to do justice to Durand's historical approach, this chapter follows suit by situating each of these publications within a framework of three methodological phases Durand identifies in his own story, with each giving a special context and insight into his creation and salvation theology during that phase.

3.2. The Quest for a "Theologia Perennis"

Despite this historical awareness being dominant throughout his life, Durand's theology itself has gone through certain phases over time, each of which has consequently led to various nuances appearing in his publications. As such, the best way to discuss these and the effects they had on his perception of creation and salvation, is to begin by taking a brief historical journey through key moments on his theological path. When asked by Dirkie Smit to give a summary of his own theological journey of development, a request he had received twice before, Durand consented, albeit with some resistance, to writing one, now published in the article *Hoe My Gedagtewêreld Verander Het: van ewige waarhede tot gekontekstualiseerde metafore* (Durand, 2002:64-65). A comment can be made here on the humility and historical sensitivity with which this account is given, Durand refusing to accept the label which he believes usually comes with such endeavours, namely that it is only "important" theologians who take the time to write a version of their own theological thought development process; instead he insists he was asked to give this account only because he has a distinct story to tell. Ironically, it is perhaps because of his historical awareness that Durand is reluctant to tell his own history, as he names Augustine's *Retractationes* and Barth's *Menschlichkeit Gottes* as

examples of “great” theologians’ own stories (Durand, 2002:65). Hennie Rossouw, former professor of philosophy and Vice-Rector of Stellenbosch University, makes mention of this tendency in his foreword to Durand’s *Doodloopstrate van die Geloof: ‘n Perspektief op die Nuwe Hervorming*, saying “Durand had an eye for the relativizing power of history. He writes like someone trying to understand the spiritual climate of his time, and by his interpretation of the Christian message wishes to take it seriously” (Rossouw, 2005:1).¹² Despite this – Durand’s theology being such a product of his context, was in some ways a retrieval of that which he admired in those who came before him, and a subsequent reinterpretation and contextualisation thereof for a 20th century South African context – Durand’s work has an element of transcendence to it, especially when considering what methodological forces were driving his work, and that the principles guiding those approaches can be applicable even today.

This pervasive appreciation of contexts comes through in all that Durand does, and thus it is interesting to note that the first stage in Durand’s methodological evolution is the stage of “theological principles or eternal truths”, a phase wherein he approached theology and hermeneutics from the starting point of searching for principles which are true in all circumstances, regardless of historical context (Durand, 2002:65). While Durand acknowledges that though this is a phase he has been through, this is for some still the only way to “do” theology – a critique he gives, however, explains why this methodology was left behind:

The Christian faith has to do with history, with Someone who came to us in history, who lived, died and rose... Through the usage of a number of detached texts, isolated from the time in which they were written, theological principles are deduced one after

¹² Original: “Durand het ‘n ope oog vir die relativerende krag van die geskiedenis. Hy skryf as iemand wat die geestesklimate van sy eie tyd probeer verstaan en in sy vertolking van die Christelike boodskap daarmee wil erns maak” (Rossouw, 2005:1)

the other. This is exactly what is happening here in South Africa with the attempts to justify apartheid on Biblical grounds (Durand, 2002:65-66)¹³.

This methodology and the principles derived from it within “orthodox” reformed theology, combined with Kuyperian creation theology, is identified by Durand as the source of much that legitimized Afrikaner theology and the practices of apartheid. Though Barth was not part of Durand’s prescribed reading material during his time at the theology faculty in Stellenbosch, he now recognizes that Barth’s characteristic Christological emphasis, focus on justice, and polemic against natural theology would have been the antidote to these developments at the time (Durand, 2002:67).

The methodology which Durand practiced during this phase he had adopted from this, and would define his approach to fundamental theological questions up until the early 1960’s, after which a change began showing in his publications. Just because Durand’s methodology was the same as those around him, didn’t mean that he was in tacit support of apartheid. On the contrary, Durand, quoting Willem Vorster, says that both those who fought apartheid theologically and those who supported it were using the same methodology – the difference was only in their value system (Durand, 2002:66). Since during this phase Durand participated in a theology of eternal truths, when he explains how this methodology originated and how different doctrines were affected by it, he effectively relates his own views at the time. Thus, in Durand’s discussion of election as a doctrine which was affected by this methodology, we catch a glimpse of how he related creation and salvation, at least in that period. Firstly, the doctrine does not originate as a doctrine, but as a part of the scriptures first, from where it is drawn out and formulated into a belief, and eventually a doctrine that is a principle which

¹³ Original: “Die Christelike geloof het te doen met die geskiedenis, met Iemand wat in die geskiedenis tot ons gekom het, wat geleef, gesterf en opgestaan het... Deur die gebruikmaking van ’n aantal losstaande tekste, losgemaak van die tyd waarin dit geskryf is, word die een of ander teologiese beginsel daarvan afgelei en van hierdie beginsel weer ander beginsels. Dit is presies wat hier in Suid-Afrika gebeur het in pogings om apartheid op Bybelse gronde te regverdig” (Durand, 2002:65-66).

directs understanding about how God interacts with human beings (Durand, 2002:65) – as is shown below, for Durand the affirmation of scriptural authority as the source of revelation of divine salvific acts is of utmost importance within his understanding of reformed theology (Durand, 1974:256-259). Secondly, in line with the reformed emphasis on God’s sovereignty, election takes place eternally, some elected to be with God and others not, all with the purpose of glorification of God’s name. Finally, how this ultimate claim about salvation and judgement relate to other doctrines is revealed:

Everything is made subject to this. God’s choice to create is the way by which he carries out this decision. Christ is the medium through which he saves some and his crucifixion is only of meaning to the elect. Thus the doctrine of election becomes the doctrine from which all the others can be deduced. It becomes the sum of all Christian doctrine and the measurement of orthodoxy (Durand, 2002:65-66)¹⁴.

The act of *creatio* only exists in order to give physical expression to the deeper purpose of existence, namely to bring glory to God by participating in God’s elective process which is enabled through Christ’s sacrifice, and thus *creatio* is contingent on salvation. In other words, a theology of principles and ultimate truths leads to a subsuming of creation under salvation, and thus becomes guilty of what Conradie warns against in his discussion of the potential pitfalls when doing theology by Kuyperian methods (Conradie, 2011, 58). Durand reiterates that the process this methodology relies so heavily upon, namely of removing texts and reflection thereon from their contexts, in search of enduring principles, “is exactly what happened here in South Africa with the attempts to justify apartheid on Biblical grounds... From that the assumption that apartheid is indeed a Biblical principle was deduced. Along with

¹⁴ Original: “Alles word nou hieraan ondergeskik gemaak. God se besluit om te skep is die weg waarlangs Hy sy besluit kan uitvoer. Christus is die middel waardeur Hy sommige red en sy kruisdood is slegs van betekenis vir die uitverkorenes. So word die leer van die uitverkiesing die vernaamste leerstuk waaruit al die ander leerstukke afgelei kan word. Dit word die hoofsom van die hele Christelike leer en die maatstaf vir regsinnigheid” (Durand, 2002:65-66)

the established doctrine of election and calling of certain people groups and nations, the stage was set for a theology which would become the measure of all orthodoxy” (Durand, 2002:66).¹⁵

If this theological methodology was so integral to the Biblical justification of apartheid, why did Durand and others, who had adopted their way of doing theology from their mentors, not also end up supporting apartheid? This may have to do with a few factors: firstly, Durand has a deep-seated historical awareness which was in natural conflict with the process of removing texts from their contexts. Secondly, Durand’s parents who, despite being part of the same “ideological group” as those who championed Afrikaner theology, transferred to Durand a deep-seated sense of justice (Durand, 2002:66). Thirdly, the work of Bennie Keet is mentioned as being one of the most significant factors to influence Durand’s resistance to apartheid ideology. Crucially, Durand notes that despite their value systems differing from those who used the race orientation of white South Africans in general, and Afrikaners in particular, Bennie Keet and his colleagues struggled to make much headway in their fight. The reason Durand identifies for this is the same reason he gives for apartheid theology gaining so much support theologically in the first place: a shared methodology by both sides which resulted in Biblical texts being selectively used as evidence for one side against the other (Durand, 2002:66). When Kuyperian creation theology came into Afrikaner theological framework, it only theologically legitimized destructive race-based oppression and segregation: “Kuyperian cosmology formed the cornerstone of the theology which legitimised the Afrikaner religious practices. This doctrine of creation, with its emphasis on the orders of creation, was combined with orthodox reformed theology in such a skilful was that the dormant

¹⁵ Original: “is presies wat hier in Suid-Afrika gebeur het in pogings om apartheid op Bybelse gronde te regverdig... Daaruit is die afgeleide beginsel van apartheid vasgestel as inderdaad ’n Bybelse beginsel. Saam met die reeds vasgestelde beginsel van die uitverkiesing en roeping van mense en volke was die tafel gedek vir ’n hele teologie en het dít die maatstaf van alle regsinnigheid geword” (Durand, 2002:66).

natural theology that lay hidden in Afrikaner theology never became recognized for what it was” (Durand, 2002:66).¹⁶

Abraham Kuyper was well-aware of the history of the Boers in South Africa and had a tendency towards sympathising with their struggles under British colonial expansion. Using them as a picture of what Christian expansion into the indigenous realms of southern Africa should look like, it becomes easy to understand why his theology was attractive to those who worked for theological support of apartheid. Gaining support from his anthropology in addition to his support of the Afrikaner expansion, Kuyper often spoke of the “civilising effect” European Christianity had on the indigenous peoples of Africa, and believed that colonial efforts were reflective of racial and social superiority (Conradie, 2011:18). Theologically, he used some literal readings of Old Testament passages, combined with his distinct understanding of general grace, to also further this disparity between “white” and “black”:

He regarded Africa tribes as the descendants of Ham – who lack the long-term benefits of both common grace and special grace. They are therefore located at the very lowest level of human development and should be subservient to the descendants of Japeth and Seth. This was seen as a matter of divine election in nature, in providence as in redemption (Conradie, 2011:19).

3.3. Pathways in Historical Contextualisation

This phase should be, most accurately, described not only as the phase of historical contextualisation, but also the phase where Durand began to wrestle with the approach of principles and truths he had grown up with, resulting in the search for a new methodology. It is this transitional period of searching which served to define much of what Durand would

¹⁶ Original: “Kuyperiaanse kosmologie (skeppingsleer) wat die hoeksteen gevorm het van ’n teologie wat legitimitieit verleen het aan die Afrikaner- burgerlike godsdiens. Hierdie skeppingsleer met sy beklemtoning van die skeppingsordeninge is op so ’n kunstige wyse gekombineer met ’n ortodokse gereformeerde teologie dat die dormante natuurlike teologie wat in Afrikanerteologie skuil gegaan het, nooit herken is vir wat dit was nie” (Durand, 2002:66).

become known for in a South African context. At the time, during the Cold War and in the aftermath of the Second World War, while Africa was being decolonized and during the global struggle between capitalism and communism, the question of what the path of salvation *in* history was, became just as important as the one of the history of salvation. In terms of the latter of these two, just like Conradie, Durand refers to Irenaeus as one of the core sources he relies on for a starting point in reflecting thereon (Durand, 2002:67). It was also during this phase, in 1968, when reading the declaration *A Message to the People of South Africa* written by the South African Council of Churches where Durand, inspired by the document, became convinced that apartheid was fundamentally against the tenets of the gospel of Christ. Reformed theology was more than what he has experienced it as in his first phase, a collection of truth claims and ultimate principles; rather, reformed theology was a way to engage with the Bible “in an ongoing hermeneutical process within a specific historical situation” (Durand, 2002:67)¹⁷. As a result, the search for Durand began for the heart of the gospel in a specific historical situation, a part of which was reconciliation between people. Durand admits that any efforts to reconcile people while apartheid structures were still in place were futile, as it was an ethical opposition they held against the starting point of apartheid thinking. Apartheid was based on the ideological affirmation that certain people were irreconcilable – it was this which Durand, some of his colleagues and a few superiors believed was in direct conflict with the heart of the gospel (Durand, 2002:67-68). This notion was proposed in writing in *A Message to the People of South Africa* (1968), and Durand says that its statement that apartheid “rejects as undesirable the good reconciliation and fellowship which God is giving us by his Son” affected him such that “With me the seed was planted that apartheid’s fundamental ideological point of departure was in direct conflict with the central moment of the gospel of Christ: the

¹⁷ Original: “in ‘n voortgaande hermeneutiese gebeurtenis binne ‘n spesifieke historiese situasie” (Durand, 2002:67)

reconciliation between one human and the next. Keep them apart, because they are irreconcilable” (Durand, 2002:67).¹⁸ Thus, by interpreting the gospel and the story of the heart of God’s redemptive action in Christ in light of the historical context Durand was in, his own theological shift in conviction could contribute to a historical change.

Before explicitly expressing his consciousness for the power of history, it had already taken root since his earliest days as an academic, where he wrote his master’s thesis on Calvin and his philosophical perspective on the right for a people to revolt against their government (1956) (Smit, 2009:131-132). The following analysis of Durand’s works which fall under this phase, however, includes only *Heilsgeskiedenis en die dialektiek van syn en denke: Strukturele verbindingslyne tussen Thomas Aquinas en die teologie sedert die Aufklärung* and *Skrifgesag, heilsgeskiedenis en die subjek-objek-polariteit*. These two works, published only a year apart (1973 and 1974 respectively), form a combined argument that demonstrates the foundations upon which Durand began to tie together on the one hand, his desire for historical awareness and on the other, his personal struggles with the reformed theological support of the oppression perpetrated by apartheid.

Heilsgeskiedenis demonstrated a deeper literary and methodological development of Durand’s extant historical awareness, as well as a clearly articulated struggle with certain accepted principles and truths within the reformed community by which he was surrounded. His argument in *Heilsgeskiedenis* might be summed up as follows: while the dual discourses of hermeneutics and salvation history dominate contemporary (1973) reformed theology, there exists herein also a steadily developing questioning of the assumption that God’s revelation may chiefly be contained within a number of eternal truths. In its place, then, the suggestion that God’s self-revelation and salvation story can be seen throughout moments in history, some

¹⁸ Original: “by my is die kiem geplant van ’n gedagte dat apartheid se fundamentele ideologiese uitgangspunt in direkte stryd is met ’n sentrale moment in die evangelie van Christus: die versoening tussen mens en mens. Hou hulle apart, want hulle is in wese onversoensbaar” (Durand, 2002:67)

of which are recorded in the Scriptural accounts. Additionally, Durand confers a measure of transcendence to the importance of these historical acts, as he insists that they are of importance for Christian life today, despite being past in chronology (Durand, 1973:1).

The argument Durand presents in *Heilsgeschiedenis* is based on his perception that the movement in reformed theology from the 1970's towards a historical consciousness was not reflective of a true theological shift, but rather, it was only a superficial change – a shift away from what Durand calls a “*theologia perennis*” has not actually occurred (Durand, 1973:6). On the contrary, Durand's accusation is that most theologians, despite an apparent interest in the historical Christ, for example, are still doing theology along the same lines that Aquinas and the scholastic theologians did (Durand, 2002:65). In order to show this, Durand's process is to analyse Aquinas's methods, conclusions, and theological processes, and likening what he finds there to trends within reformed theology. Having demonstrated that modern theology, despite attempting to break from a *theologia perennis*, has failed in achieving its goal, Durand's final aim is to present a methodology which *does* make a clear break from the past and stands on its own. This theology cannot interpret salvation history in a way that moves back towards scholasticism, overarching truth claims, or a-historical conclusions; instead, Durand's proposal is that of a narrative approach, anchored in historical events as the starting point for hermeneutics, in conjunction with an understanding of audience as “a historical being that lives within a concrete historical situation” and an image of God as one who actively participates in human history to carry out a plan of salvation – a plan which begins in *creatio*, continues in God's self-revelation of redemptive intent through actions in human history which culminate in Christ” (Durand, 1973:2).¹⁹ This counters directly the problem he highlights within modern reformed theology in South Africa at the time of writing.

¹⁹ Original: “‘n historiese wese wat lewe binne ’n konkrete historiese situasie” (Durand, 1973:2).

His argument progresses by stating that if the case is that we receive revelation from God through historical acts, and those acts are concretely recorded in the Scripture and tradition, then the hermeneutical processes we follow in interacting with those sources are of utmost importance in shaping our theological journey. Durand also makes the point in *Heilsgeschiedenis* that the audience to these events are equally as historically grounded and affected by context as the events they are encountering through the text (Durand, 1973:2). Thus the choice by Durand to take historical events as the starting point for his reflection on divine revelation leads to an interdependency between various factors; as Smit states in commenting on Durand's thesis, "It is obvious that the hermeneutical, theological, and historical questions begin to blend here, so that one cannot be answered without the other" (Smit, 2009:134).²⁰ Herein, by emphasizing that both the text and audience themselves are affected by their respective contexts Durand touches on something which Conradie also discusses at length, namely the need to find a balance between text and context, and the relativizing power of history and context. Stories should not be so hermeneutically "contextualised" that they become irrelevant for today – however they cannot be under-contextualised so that they are all encompassing truths, removed from the historical situation in which they are founded. The balance Durand seeks here is the same process Conradie engages in in *Saving the Earth?* where he seeks balance between "escapism" and "reductionism" in soteriology, with both theologians reaching the same conclusion: a historical narrative perspective is the answer to finding this balance and to doing justice to the story of God's acts, both creative and salvific (Conradie, 2013:19-26; Durand, 1973:2). What Durand argues for, then, by advocating for a soteriology grounded in historical events, and a picture of God that is triune and active in the history of the world, is highly compatible with Conradie's suggestion of the need for "telling the whole story

²⁰ Original: "Dit is duidelik dat die hermeneutiese, teologiese en historiese vrae hier inéénvloei, sodat die een nie sonder die ander beantwoord kan word nie" (Smit, 2009:134).

of God”, and not reducing it to a set of questions and answers, nor to a handful of eternal truths. Such principle-based theology neither does justice to the complexity and depth of the plot itself, nor does it recognize the layers of context, authorial, textual, interpretive, and otherwise, which contribute to the richness of the history of salvation.

At this junction between the two it is important to mention the rhetorical pattern Durand follows, and what it indicates about his argument. He begins by introducing a problem which he has identified, in this case that the challenge which the subject-object-polarity poses to the methodology embodied in Aquinas has infiltrated 20th century reformed theology in South Africa, specifically through Kuyper, and that this methodology and its implications endanger some of the fundamental pillars of reformed theology, especially *sola scriptura*. This problem is analysed historically, by tracing the development of the issue and its various expressions throughout the years, finally coming to the conclusion that an alternative approach to theology must be made use of in reformed circles in South Africa, one which does not succumb to the same issues as a theology of principles and eternal truths. Durand then proceeds by giving his own constructive proposal for such an alternative, recognizing its inherent flaws, but also emphasizing its strengths. Thus, his rhetorical approach contrasts Conradie’s significantly in that he does not present his work as an open investigation of a question, but he instead begins immediately with the parsing of his problem statement. This more direct approach is less nuanced than Conradie’s – Durand follows a historical journey through the problem and towards a solution, discussing only those perspectives which directly contribute to the problem he identifies at the beginning of his discussion. Conradie, on the other hand, emphasizes the complexity of issues, highlighting the sheer number of perspectives on a topic, and based on the multiplicity of opinion he has grounds to identify trends, ask questions, and eventually propose his own approach to an issue, which he always insists is just one among many. Conradie discusses the strengths and weaknesses of a broader range of perspectives (often

including outlying or extreme perspectives) in order to give a fuller picture of as many aspects as possible of a particular discussion or debate, while Durand is much more focused in his argumentation, only incorporating those viewpoints directly relevant to his proposal: Conradie meanders while Durand marches. What they share in persuasive intent, however, is an expert ability to identify specific problem areas, and develop proposals with points of strength which correlate directly to the problem areas, as a sort of step-by-step response to those issues highlighted. Thus it can be said that Durand is much more open about his intent to persuade the reader, while Conradie subtly builds up his discussion in such a way that he moulds the reader's mindset as they approach his constructive proposal, so that what he offers is perhaps more palatable or acceptable than it may have been had he not immersed the reader in his investigative process. Durand leads the reader through a (often chronological) historical journey of development, while Conradie brings the reader into a room filled with voices, all offering a distinct perspective, and leads the reader through his own hermeneutical process.

Durand expands on his argument from *Heilsgeskiedenis in Skrifgesag, heilsgeskiedenis en die subjek-objek-polariteit* (1974). Here he investigates how Willie Jonker's view of how Berkouwer's faith and revelation correlation affects scriptural authority. Still wrestling with the problem of a *theologia perennis*, he begins on a methodological analysis of Thomas Aquinas. He concludes that, despite engaging much with classical philosophy, Aquinas replaces the ancient Greek worldview of reason with one of causality out of "*ordo ad Deum*" (Durand, 1974:252). For Durand this causality is fundamental to Aquinas's ontological circle, described in his *Summa Theologiae*, whereby in the "*exitus*" creation proceeds from God, and in the "*reditus*" all things return unto God, the *reditus* being the underlying cause for all existence. Christ then only is shown as the way through which the "*causa finalis*", the *reditus*, is achieved – thus Aquinas arranges all reflection on the salvation narrative around the point of return to God, even the incarnation (Durand, 1974:252-253). The reason this is important to

understand is that the critique Durand offers against this, and specifically the Aristotelian worldview by which it is underpinned, shows why he values historicity as the foundation of all reflection on salvation, specifically as a historical narrative:

Why does Thomas do this? In my opinion we need look no further than the fact that no place is set aside for history within the Aristotelian view of science. Aristotelian science is focused on the *universalia*, or in other words, that which is constant, necessary and eternal. In contrast to this, history has to do with that which is not constant, that which is changing. Therefore it is not accessible to reason. History must consequently be given the senses of sight and touch to become accessible to reason. The concrete shape of Biblical salvation history is seen as the medium through which the eternal *ordo ad Deum* manifests itself within the horizon of the temporary and the immanent (Durand, 1974:253).²¹

Within this ontological circle which guides Aquinas' reflection, then, a dependency emerges in his philosophy on certain fundamental assumptions about the subject-object relationship that cut to the heart of what Durand attempts to argue against here. Aquinas assumes the subject to be rational, as was natural within the scholastic movement which borrowed much from ancient Greek philosophy, and thus also begins reflection on the object from the place of assuming a logical agreement between conclusions reached by the subject and claims put forth by the object (assuming as well that the object is equally rational) (Durand, 1974:254). Again, this way of thinking is what the reformed theology in South Africa did not move away from despite attempts or intentions to do so. What this approach means when, for

²¹ Original: "Hoekom doen Thomas dit? Myns insiens hoef ons nie verder te soek nie as die feit dat daar vir die geskiedenis geen plek ingeruim kan word binne die aristoteliëse wetenskapsbeskouing nie. Die aristoteliëse wetenskap is gerig op die *universalia*, m.a.w. dit wat konstant, noodsaaklik en ewig is. Die geskiedenis daarenteen het te doen met die nie-konstante en veranderlike. Daarom is dit vir die rede nie toeganklik nie. Die geskiedenis moet gevolglik "syn", "dingfest" gemaak word om vir die rede toeganklik te kan wees. Die konkrete gestalte van die Bybelse heilsgeskiedenis word gesien as die *modus* waardeur die ewige *ordo ad Deum* as genade-orde binne die horison van die tydelike en die immanente verskyn" (Durand, 1974:253).

example, interpreting Scripture, is an uncompromising search for rational principles which consistently prove themselves logical, regardless of the historical context from which those principles are extracted or the contexts in which they are intended to be applied – and thus follows Durand’s accusation that within the subject-object relationship put forth by Aquinas “the subject receives a creative preference, and in addition to this subjectivism there takes place a dehistoricization of the Scriptures” (Durand, 1974:254).²² To compensate for this, and the possibility of compromising the authority of Scripture, Durand suggests that Aquinas places Scripture “safely within the territory of grace” (Durand, 1974:253).²³

Having given a summary reflection on these issues he finds within Aquinas, and how they match reformed theology today, Durand has actually been building the platform for a further argument, one which would prove fundamental to Durand’s theological journey and impact in South African reformed theology in the 1970’s. As a continuation of his thoughts, Durand asks whether the authority of Scripture and the subject-object-polarity described above are necessarily mutually exclusive ideas? He proceeds to discuss Kuyper as an example of a theologian who attempts to retain both, but that places the subject even higher than Aquinas did, but only when theology is approached as science, and only when the object of that theological reflection is revelation and not Godself. Durand concludes that Kuyper’s resultant approach to revelation by this definition of theology as science opens the door to subjectivism, and as a result, undermines scriptural authority (Durand, 1974:256). On these grounds Durand maintains a suspicion towards Kuyperian theology, asking “Do we not find in Kuyper the aftereffects of orthodoxy’s Aristotelian renaissance, which, with its perspective on theology has moved away from the deepest intentions of the reformed *sola scriptura*?” (Durand,

²² Original: “kry die subjek ‘n kreatiewe oorwig en gevaardgaande met hierdie subjektivisme vind daar ‘n onthistorisering van die Skrifopenbaring plaas” (Durand, 1974:254).

²³ Original: “veilig binne die genadeterrein” (Durand, 1974:253).

1974:256-257).²⁴ As Durand suggests, perhaps the Kuyperian approach to reconciling the subject-object-polarity and the question of Scriptural authority falls prey to the same difficulties that Aquinas faced, and that his attempt to overcome this challenge is fundamentally in conflict with the tenets of reformed theology. As this is the case, Durand's argument leads him to an eventual rejection of Kuyperian theology on the grounds of an irreconcilability between Kuyperian and reformed theology, and – more personally important for Durand – on the basis of a compromising of Scriptural authority by the “dehistorization of the Scriptures” (Durand, 1974:254).²⁵

Durand follows his analysis with some points of conclusion in which he explicitly opposes Kuyper. Firstly, when taking the subject-object polarity as one's point of departure for reflection on scriptural authority, there is no defence against an eventual subjectivism (Durand, 1974:259). Secondly, if one is to preserve the authority of the scripture in a “reformed sense” – Durand defines this in terms of a soteriology structured around Christ and God's salvation history, as “God's authoritative Word in the present which comes from God's concrete salvific acts in Christ” – revelation must be recognized as belonging to God, initiating there and then travelling to humans as it is, revelation not being a “noetically controllable” concept, as Kuyper might have it; rather, for Durand, the only way of relating to divine revelation is by faith (Durand, 1974:259-260).²⁶ Thirdly:

[Only from a] confession of the inherent authority of Scripture that the salvific history of God's revelation can be maintained. Here there is no space for a subject who, from a set understanding of himself, has to build a bridge to the time of the original revelation. By the authority of the history of salvation in the Scripture and through the

²⁴ Original: “Vind ons nie hier by Kuyper 'n nawerking van die aristoteliese renaissance van die ortodoksie, wat met sy visie op die aard van die teologie wegbeweeg het van die diepste intensie van die reformatoriese sola scriptura nie?” (Durand, 1974:256-257).

²⁵ Original: “onthistorisering van die Skrifopenbaring” (Durand, 1974:254).

²⁶ Original: “God se gesagvolle Woord in die hede in sy gerigtheid op en appèl vanuit God se konkrete heilshandeling in Christus” (Durand, 1974:259-260).

Holy Spirit, the Word is brought across the ages and the perfection of God's salvific acts descend upon us in such a way that they become a reality without losing their perfection. By hearing the gospel, through the working of God's Spirit, the history of revelation becomes real in such a way that it can, in itself, make history again (Durand, 1974:260).²⁷

Thus Durand ultimately finds Kuyper's approach to salvation and revelation too extreme, and reacts similarly to Conradie, by mentioning the more moderate position of Bavinck (under whom Durand studied in the Netherlands and completed his first doctoral dissertation) as a potential alternative while acknowledging the merit of Kuyper's perspective, though only in brief (Durand, 1974:259).

The Kuyperian interpretation of the doctrine of election, the idea of inherent "natural orders" between people of different races, the notion that Christianity has a "civilising" effect, and that indigenous people are of a lower tier in the ladder of humanity, the primacy given to general revelation, all worked together to form a complex issue that was difficult to separate from what reformed theology at the time in South Africa was, especially since Kuyper supported the Afrikaner cause and right to expansion. Durand's decision to resist Kuyper methodologically instead of purely on a hermeneutical or theological basis was crucial, and his historical awareness of an alternative methodology, rich in historical awareness, was key in enabling this. Since the *theologia perennis* subsumed creation under salvation, it was easier to resist by means of the reformulated soteriology that Durand suggested in the form of a narrative history of salvation.

²⁷ Original: "belydenis van die inhoudelike gesag van die Skrif, die heilshistorisiteit van God se openbaring ten volle gehandhaaf kan word. Hier is nie ruimte vir 'n subjek wat, vanuit 'n bepaalde verstaan van homself, die brug moet slaan na die tyd van die openbaring nie. In die gesagvolle duiding van die heilsgeskiedenis deur die Heilige Gees in die Skrifwoord, oorbrug hierdie Woord die eeue en kom die perfectum van God se heilshandeling op ons af, op so 'n wyse dat dit 'n praesens word, sonder dat dit daardeur sy perfectum-karakter verloor. Deur die werking van Gods Gees in die hoor van die evangelie word die openbaringsgeskiedenis geaktualiseer op so 'n wyse dat dit self weer geskiedenis maak" (Durand, 1974:260).

Durand's personal journey with and objections to Kuypertian theology and the aforementioned methodology coincided with a more public movement by Durand and a few colleagues, where they developed an initiative in writing to petition to the DRMC synod of 1978 that apartheid should be rejected "as being in direct conflict with the gospel of Christ because the ideological point of departure thereof is the irreconcilability of people" (Durand, 2002:68).²⁸ Since the inner logic of Durand's soteriology was based on the reconciliation God accomplishes in Christ and throughout the salvation history of the world, it was a crucial point of distinction by Durand to say that the most fundamental assumption of apartheid theology was the irreconcilability of certain peoples. In other words, it was a choice Durand and his colleagues could not reconcile themselves with, to claim that the DRC's perception of people's irreconcilability was greater than the power of God's reconciliatory acts in Christ. The acceptance of this motion proposed by Durand had the direct consequence of leading to the acceptance of the Belhar Confession of 1986. The immense contribution of Allan Boesak cannot be covered here, but let it suffice to mention that his work in 1982 is recognized by Durand as the point of no return for apartheid, where the conclusion was reached that "since apartheid essentially contradicts the gospel, the theological justification thereof is heretical" (Durand, 2002:68).²⁹

In 1981 Durand, the same year he was appointed deputy vice chancellor of UWC, co-edited a volume of twelve essays entitled *Storm-kompas* with David Bosch and Nico Smith aimed at providing the Dutch Reformed Church with clear directives on how to move forward in an increasingly divided and hostile South Africa. After some years of building tensions within the theology faculty where Durand was employed, as well as rapidly growing unrest

²⁸ Original: "as direk in stryd met die evangelie van Christus omdat die ideologiese uitgangspunt daarvan die onversoenbaarheid van mense is" (Durand, 2002:68).

²⁹ Original: "as apartheid basies en essensieel die evangelie weerspreek, die teologiese verdediging van apartheid kettery is" (Durand, 2002:68).

within the Dutch Reformed Mission Church on the topic of segregation, this publication was printed (Furstenberg, et al., 2009:16-17). At the same time clear calls were being made for an ending of the relationship between the *Broederbond* and the DRC, as well as a public denouncing of government enforced apartheid. It also pushed for a uniting of the four wings of the DRC (Livingston, 2014:36). Despite having shared goals, the contributors to this compilation had diverse theological and social backgrounds, leading to some conflict between the essays. When Johan Heyns wrote about the need for the Church in South Africa to be an agent of reconciliation and yet he failed to discuss the suffering of black people and the history of inaction from the Church in addressing this meaningfully, Durand responded in his next paper strongly criticizing this lack of perspective from Heyns. Durand's keen historical awareness allowed him to notice and defend against this subtle yet powerful inadmission of culpability from Heyns on behalf of the Dutch Reformed Church (De Villiers, 2013:84).

This historical focus continued through the years in many of his publications, perhaps most notably in the influential series *Wegwysers in Die Dogmatiek* where he partnered with renowned theologian Willie Jonker. Each book follows similar structures, beginning with a historical overview of the doctrine being discussed, ranging from the patristic period through to modernity. Next, debates, opinions, and issues which are relevant in contemporary contexts are explored, before concluding with guidelines for further reflection on the topics. Giving such extensive consideration to historical factors at play in the development of theology over the centuries, Durand brings with him a wealth of knowledge in terms of the developing and understand of the relationship creation and salvation (Durand, 1982:9-10). Moreover, not only telling the story of theological development, Durand also engages in a critical manner with the narrative of creation and salvation. This historical narrative view on the dynamic role God plays in this world, which consistently defines Durand's worldview, is not just useful in

understanding the past, but also crucial for developing a theology for the future (Lombard, 2013:288).

3.4. The Power of Metaphors

Eventually, however, this immensely impactful journey of historical theology for Durand gave way to something new. During a time of immense unrest in South Africa, with uprisings and a fierce battle between the proponents and opponents of apartheid, within society, the academy, theology, and the government, Durand entered the third phase, in which he still is (Durand, 2002:69). This final methodological shift for Durand began as a result of the influence of the theology of David Tracy. In response to the so-called “linguistic turn” and the work of Tracy, Durand was inspired to revive a methodological focus which had been more or less dormant since his second doctoral thesis, namely an appreciation for the power of analogy. Because the fundamental assumption of the linguistic movement, that “Christianity is not, in the first place, a historical event, but a linguistic one”, is in conflict with Durand’s tendency within theology, he states that this re-awakening to the power of metaphors came within an “agreement-in-difference” (Durand, 2002:67).³⁰ Durand recognized a shortcoming in his heavily historical approach to theology, namely that even though events have their root of physical existence in history, they are carried across and expressed to others first as a linguistic act. Acknowledging the central role metaphors play in Christianity, he believes that it is impossible to do theology apart from metaphors, as they convey things which literal expressions cannot, “when we express the inexpressible” (Durand, 2002:69).³¹ Metaphors work to give expression to the mystery of God, and the number of conflicting metaphors in this quest means for Durand that humility in hermeneutics, philosophy, and all theology is essential. Finding a balance between a historical approach and an appreciation for metaphors and their meaning, uses, and intentions

³⁰ Original: “die christelike geloof is nie in die eerste plek ‘n historiese gebeurtenis nie, maar ‘n taal gebeurte” (Durand, 2002:67).

³¹ Original: “wanneer ons die onuitspreekbare probeer uitspreek” (Durand, 2002:69).

is what defines this third phase of Durand's methodological journey, a stage which he is still in (Durand, 2002:69-70). Additionally, a metaphorical approach gives recognition to the processes of interpretation which occur in telling a historical narrative:

In the search for similarity-in-difference the interpreter in conversation with the biblical text as metaphor will have to distil the intent and meaning of the metaphor. To that end the interpreter's commitment to the biblical text, as a believer honed by the tradition from which he or she comes, plays a crucial role in enabling him or her to distinguish between that which is vital in the biblical metaphor and that which is not. Once this has been discovered a new metaphor is created corresponding to the self-understanding of the interpreter. This is the metaphorical character of theology and this is the way in which Christian doctrine has been created over many centuries (Durand, 2011:15).

A publication of Durand's that is deeply relevant to this phase is an article he published in the Journal of Theology for Southern Africa in 1993, *Theology and Resurrection – Metaphors and Paradigms*. Herein Durand follows the same rhetorical structure as in *Skrifgesag, heilsgeskiedenis en die subjek-objek-polariteit*. He begins by identifying a trend which he regards as a problem, namely that historically, the resurrection has not been given due attention within Western theology. This is followed by a suggestion of why he believes this has occurred – that is, he narrows the focus of discussion to the twentieth century, stating that this undervaluation of the resurrection has taken place because of the immense focus which has been placed on questions around hermeneutics – and an analysis of the major contributing factors, namely the work of Bultmann. After a discussion of the various contrasting perspectives on what role hermeneutics should play in theology, he comes with a constructive proposal.

Durand's statement that the resurrection does not receive enough attention is based on a historical survey of dominant theological trends within Western theology, distinct from

Eastern Christianity. The crucifixion and Christ's life have proportionately been greater points of focus, and thus, despite the centrality of the resurrection to soteriology and indeed eschatology, Durand is correct in describing it as surprising that an explicit resurrection theology has not been developed yet (Durand, 1993:3). In fact, it was only during a brief revival of interest in eschatological studies in the past century that the resurrection received some much-needed attention. Of the aspects in the history of God's salvific acts towards creation, Durand cannot emphasize enough how important he believes the resurrection to be: "Without the central salvific fact of the resurrection of Christ there would never have been a New Testament and the religion that is called Christianity would never have existed" (Durand, 1993:3).

The obvious question is, if the resurrection is so important, why has it not been given more focus in the West? Durand hypothesises that the verbalisation of hermeneutical queries around the ways in which the interpreter and the Biblical text interact have led to doubts surrounding the historicity of the resurrection, and questions as to how much the event's happening itself is connected to faith in what the resurrection represents. Durand believes this can, in recent times, be attributed largely to the work of Bultmann. The fundamental relationship his work explores is one between the world of the text and the world of the reader, and in addition to historical study to understand the context in which the Bible came about, there occurs an internal study of the self and the importance of the subject's self-understanding becomes prominent (Durand, 1993:4). There are two reasons Durand describes Bultmann's work as a "turning point", firstly because his insights were convincing and widely read enough that "it was no longer possible to go back beyond Bultmann"; and secondly, since interpretive weight was placed on the subject, Christians were relieved of the pressure to base their faith on the actual happening of the events described in the Bible, and thus the historical-critical

movement had no limits to what it could explore, and how deeply it could question the historicity of the Biblical witness (Durand, 1993:4).

For Bultmann, the only “resurrection” which exists in certainty is the proclaimed one, and further than that, faith is not dependent on the question of whether that proclamation correlates to a historical moment or not. Durand acknowledges that there is some debate as to whether Bultmann actually denied the resurrection itself, or if he simply denied a dependency between faith and the historical resurrection. As a conversation partner to Bultmann, Durand introduces David Tracy’s approach to these questions, and hosts a hypothetical conversation between the two, giving his own version of how their perspectives on the resurrection would differ. To Bultmann, what matters most is the confession the disciples gave of Jesus’ resurrection, not whether it happened or not – in fact, since the claim that Jesus was dead and then came back to life after three days in a sealed grave challenges our, the subjects’, understanding of what is possible in the natural world, in creation, the hermeneutical priority must be given to the subject (Durand, 1993:6). Durand’s description of what Tracy might say, on the other hand, begins by acknowledging that the idea of a physical resurrection challenges the subject’s understanding of what is possible in the natural world, and thus the subject’s self-understanding is forced into a dialogue with the text, with neither given outright primacy over the other (Durand, 1993:7).

In this hypothetical description that Durand gives – knowing from his self-identification in *Hoe My Gedagtewêreld Verander Het* that he aligns his views largely with Tracy – we see how Durand hopes to do justice to both salvation and creation in light of the subject-object polarity, the question of self-understanding raised by Bultmann, the idea of history as narrative, and the ultimate importance of the resurrection. It is accomplished by accepting the inevitability of dialogue between all of these factors that is described, that “ultimately a conversation cannot be ruled out” (Durand, 1993:7). Creation in the form of the natural world

and the ways in which we understand the laws of life and death stand on the one hand, and the salvific claim of the resurrection stands on the other – for Durand justice is not done by subsuming one under the other (just as Conradie warns against), but rather that theology, and Durand specifically speaks to reformed theology, is “a way to wrestle with the Biblical message in a dynamic historical process” (Durand, 2002:67).³² Perhaps justice is found in an indefinite yet purposeful wrestling with the text, and not in a *theologia perennis*, nor in just a search for pure historicity in the Bible – Durand’s hope is that metaphor is the way forward in finding justice between the subject and the object, between our understanding of the world and the claim of the resurrection, between creation and salvation. It is worth noting the similarity between Conradie and Durand in this regard, both in their definition of what the role of metaphor is in theology, and in terms of the importance they place on metaphors in their theology. For Conradie, the household of God as root metaphor is essential in allowing for his description of God’s economic acts of house-holding, and saving acts throughout human history. Durand shares this emphasis on the necessity for metaphor to be part of reformed theology going forward if it is to adapt itself to the changing world around it. For both Durand and Conradie, reconciliation is key to their understanding of salvation, while the reconcilability of *creatura* is fundamental to creation.

3.5. A Re-forming Journey

Durand’s life story is an incredible testimony to the transformative power theology can have to effect positive change in the world. It is also symbolic of a theological transformation which took place as a result of shifting contexts, socially, theologically, and politically. Durand’s own description of his path has guided this chapter, and in Dirkie Smit’s chapter on Durand in the

³² Original: “’n manier is om met die Bybelse boodskap te worstel in ’n dinamiese historiese proses” (Durand, 2002:67).

volume *Reformed Churches in South Africa and the Struggle for Justice: Remembering 1960-1990*, he quotes Durand saying,

The deepest source of my (theological) reaction was my intense outrage and dissatisfaction with the system of injustice in which we in South Africa lived. It brought out my reaction against the thought world from which I had come out of, and against the ways in which theology and philosophy were being used to justify the inhumane and Godless system. Professor Bennie Keet strengthened me in my moral outrage, but could not give me the theological framework within which I could express myself (Durand, 2013:298).³³

Though he drew inspiration from Keet's value system, the methodology Keet operated under was not the way forward for Durand, and thus his journey of re-forming theological methodologies began. We see in his life a reflection of the same force that drives Conradie to find answers to the questions, including, for example, a commitment to *semper reformanda*. Durand has continued re-forming his methodology, refining it and adapting it to new contexts he encounters, a process which has allowed his innate awareness of history to shine through as a dominant theme in his work. Even this, however, was only a phase which he eventually moved through, as he came to realise the shortcomings of his approach and sought out the work of Tracy, drawing from his work on metaphor and the role of dialogue between subject and object. Durand's third phase, then, is probably not his last – and if he had been working for a theology which would be perfect for all circumstances, then he would be working against the very notion he moved away from after his first phase – indeed, he has freed himself from the burden of *theologia perennis* that works for all contexts and themes because his fundamental

³³ Original: “Die diepste bron van my (teologiese) reaksie was my intense verontwaardiging en ongelukkigheid oor die bestel van die onreg waarin ons in Suid-Afrika geleef het. Dit het my in reaksie gebring teen die denkwêreld waaruit ek gekom het en die wyse waarop dit teologies en wysgerig gebruik is om die onmenslike en Godonterende bestel te regverdig. Professor Bennie Keet het my gesterk in my morele verontwaardiging, maar kon nie aan my die teologiese denkraamwerk gee waarbinne ek my kon verwoord nie” (Durand, 2013:298).

assumption is that adapting dynamically to contexts is necessary to do justice in theology. Having said that, Durand does not avoid seeking some truths or principles which can stand the test of time, it is just that his entire theology is not centred around that as its goal; neither is he obsessed only with uncovering how the historical Bible can be of use today; nor does he operate on a purely metaphorical level. Durand finds the best in each, and takes it with to the next phase, and this gives his theology a flexibility and allows him to make a meaningful impact over a broad range of contexts and time periods.

In terms of salvation and creation in relation to ecotheology, Durand is motivated by a quest to do justice to both salvation and creation, as well as to work towards making the world a more just place. The dynamism of his ever-evolving theology enables this, and his appreciation of the power of contexts and the subject-object dialogue mean that though his theological process is perhaps more fluid than Conradie's, the foundations they lean on in trying to solve the challenge of doing justice to salvation and creation are quite similar. The above quote by Smit is evidence of this quest for justice, the fuel which drives him, enabled by his attitude of *semper reformanda*, which adapts his approach as needed, guided by his historical consciousness, which brings a necessary element of perspective. The processes Durand followed in his passionate fight against oppression in the form of apartheid, namely seeking a re-formation of salvation in the form of a *heilsgeschiedenis* and a rejection of Kuyperian creation theology, as well as asserting the importance of the resurrection by tracing Tracy's approach, all are indicative of what Durand believes is essential in fighting oppression. For ecotheology, this means that in order to fight anthropogenic oppression of the earth these same processes and principles can be applied. Durand shows a way forward for reformed theology to respond to the accusation of Lynn White Jr., and to respond to the climate crisis: reinventing itself by becoming aware of its place in history, by not being afraid to reformulate

principles which it leans on in order to be more effective in its present context, and by being relentless in seeking to do justice to salvation and creation.

Chapter 4: Klaus Nürnberger: Ethics and Ecology

4.1. Introduction

Being a Namibian by birth, with strong German heritage and influences, Klaus Nürnberger does not strictly fall into the category of “South African systematic theologian”. He has, however, lived, studied, written, and taught in a South African context for many years, witnessing the rise and fall of apartheid and its transition from a 20th to a 21st century nation. Moreover, having contributed so significantly to the field of Christian ethics specifically and systematic theology generally in South Africa over the decades, it is appropriate to include his body of work in this discussion. After primary and secondary schooling in Namibia, Nürnberger moved to Pretoria to continue his tertiary education in agriculture at the University there, earning a BSc degree before heading overseas to Germany for postgraduate studies, participating at the theology faculties of no less than six universities. He received his doctoral degree while at the University of Marburg, after which he moved back to Natal in South Africa where he worked as a pastor and lecturer in systematic theology for about a decade, until 1979. Nürnberger also worked with the Berlin Mission Society during this time, all the while continuing his studies at UNISA and completing a second doctoral degree (1978). He then became a lecturer in the discipline of theological ethics until 1989, when he made a shift to the University of KwaZulu-Natal, also lecturing in the fields of ethics and systematic theology. He retired in 1998 and now has moved back to Pretoria to research and write (Nürnberger, 2012).

4.2. Introduction to Theological Ethics

This chapter seeks to give an outline of Nürnberger’s theological approach, which is distinct from both Durand and Conradie, looking to uncover the internal logic of how he relates creation and salvation to each other by analysing a select few of his works which are relevant to this inquiry. The first of these is one of his earlier books, *Introduction to Theological Ethics*, the first edition published in 1980 (we will be using the third edition, published in 1988) while

working as a pastor and lecturer, just after having completed his second doctoral degree. While not focused purely on the doctrinal loci we are examining, this book provides a brief overview of where Nürnberger situates his approach to theological ethics within the broader sphere of ethics, as well as shedding light on some of the basic internal processes which guide his understanding of ethics as a Christian.

For Nürnberger it is the field of theological ethics which facilitates dialogue between the doctrinal loci of creation and salvation. He defines ethics as “a reflection on what ought to be, and on how we can be liberated and motivated to bring it about” (Nürnberger, 1988:9). His definition presupposes a normative value of “what ought to be”, which he believes, as a Christian, should be generated from “a reflection on the kinds of transformations God intends to bring about in our lives and in our world through his Word and in the power of his Spirit” (Nürnberger, 1988:22). Thus, since Nürnberger relies heavily on the Bible, the natural question of the role of hermeneutics comes to the fore. Firstly, in order to assist in the hermeneutical process, he insists on the importance of dialogue. He self-identifies as a “committed ecumenist” and thus, despite having his roots in the Lutheran tradition, he advocates strongly for an openness between different traditions, that each has something of value to offer a point of discussion (Nürnberger, 2012). The goal of such dialogue is to find “common ground” where ethics of different backgrounds and foundations can be mutually informative. The element of dialogue is particularly relevant in a South African context, as the diversity in political, philosophical, economic, cultural and religious viewpoints demands the ability to find such commonality (Nürnberger, 1988:19-20).

Understanding Nürnberger’s view of ethics requires firstly a distinction between morality and ethics, two overlapping and often easily confused fields. While the former deals with how one should act in a practical sense, the latter is concerned with discussing the “alternatives, reasons and consequences of human conduct” (Nürnberger, 1988:10). It is also

important to note the process of reasoning required for the type of ethics proposed by Nürnberger, as it involves a number of elements: an analysis of the problem or topic, an investigation to ascertain any present biases, and a decision on which moral source will be the authority or standard upon which actions are evaluated (Nürnberger, 1988:12-13). The “problem” Nürnberger sees in the world is sin and its expression in the form of evil; the “biases” that are involved in identifying these issues lie in large part in human subjectivity, being ourselves perpetrators of the issue we are trying to understand, as well as in the complexities surrounding inter-traditional dialogue, interpersonal dialogue, and the dialogue we hold with the text of the Bible; the response to this problem and these biases has to come from outside ourselves, that is, from God in the form of salvific action towards creation. Nürnberger sums this position of his up neatly in stating that, “to me it seems that there can be no genuinely Christian theological approach to ethics that does not take as its starting point God’s initiative in Christ to save his creation from the ravages of sin and evil” (Nürnberger, 1988:22). Interestingly, or perhaps, expectedly, the above formula he gives as his “process of reasoning” is nearly identical to the structure used in building his argument for a constructive theological system (which unites God’s redemptive and creative works as a response to the environmental crisis) in his 2011 publication *Regaining Sanity for the Earth*, which is discussed in more depth below.

One of the reasons Nürnberger takes the above position is to bring an emphasis to the soteriological aspect of Christian ethics. He believes it is something which is neglected by the majority of ethicists, to the detriment of the discipline. He identifies a tension within ethics between two points, namely the “normative”, being that the present state of creation is not as it should be, and the “soteriological”, that human beings are unable to resolve this problem (Nürnberger, 1988:10). Just as central as this soteriological problem is to Christian ethics, so too Nürnberger views our perception of creation and the many emerging questions surrounding

themes like genetic alteration, the abuse of natural resources, the need for exploration at the expense of the environment, and the dichotomy between improving economies and reducing our impact on the earth (two needs which seem at times to be mutually exclusive), to name a few (Nürnberger, 1988:17). Sub-Saharan Africa also faces a number of issues distinct to its geography and history, and Nürnberger uses South Africa as a specific example of the problems involving economic inequality, poverty, poor sanitation, substandard housing, unemployment, and diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria. Climate-change related issues like drought induced water shortages, erratic and unpredictable weather patterns that affect agriculture and cause famine, and increasingly extreme temperatures affect the continent and South Africans in very tangible ways. These issues combined with continued population growth, which has put a strain on an already suffering agricultural sector, cause cycles of destruction. Nürnberger explains:

The growth of industrial production in the centres and the growth of population in the periphery are extremely dangerous. On the one hand population growth may soon outstrip the capacity of our globe to produce enough food. Apart from that population pressure destroys the natural environment on which we depend for our survival. This stage has already been reached in some countries, especially in Africa. On the other hand industrial growth threatens the world with pollution hazards – the most dangerous of which is the radiation produced by nuclear power generation (Nürnberger, 1988:52).

There are countless numbers of such situations where solving one problem perpetuates the next, and although the burden of guilt rests firmly on human shoulders, it comes parted with an apparent inability to self-resolve the issues we have created. Nürnberger's theoretical solution to this is not fully explored in this book, but he suggests that a type of "paralysis" keeps humans in this destructive cycle, whereby our inaction causes the problem to develop in complexity, and that the solution to this is to assemble an "interdisciplinary team" which can

cooperate on multiple fronts to develop social, scientific, ethical, and religious responses to, for example, the problem of climate change (Nürnberger, 1988:63-65).

4.3. An Economic Vision for South Africa

This multidisciplinary approach includes addressing economic inequality, which Nürnberger, as he expresses in *An Economic Vision for South Africa: The Task of the Church in the Post-Apartheid Economy*, believes is connected to many of the problems the world faces today, including the uninterrupted spreading of diseases (specifically HIV/Aids, malaria), high infant mortality rates (especially in Africa), political instability, and indeed climate change. Continuing in his deontological approach, the state in which creation *should be* Nürnberger defines as “God’s rest” (Nürnberger, 1994:6-7). This state of peace is what should be striven towards, where the realities of our world are no longer in conflict with what God intends for creation:

God’s rest can only materialize when God is at peace with his creation, including themselves; when reality corresponds with God’s intentions; when what is, corresponds with what ought to be, when God can stand back and say ‘it is very good’... Because of the discrepancy between what is and what ought to be, God is not at peace. Mission is the expression of God’s restlessness, which translates into the restlessness of his people... The anticipation of the ultimate goal of what ought to be drives us forward into the future. This is the basis both of our hope and our action (Nürnberger, 1994:7).

In this description Nürnberger places humans both in the role of recipient and agent of God’s salvific mission to bring creation to the state of “what ought to be”. In this process of agency – as he has already established the causal or perpetuating connection between economic deterioration and other issues including climate change – the need to make judicious use of natural resources is stated to be crucial to the process of building a strong economic foundation from where change in other areas can proceed. Although South Africa, “of all the Sub-Saharan

countries ... has the greatest potential of developing a vibrant economy”, issues like corruption, mismanagement of natural and fiscal resources, misused human capital, high unemployment rates, and wealth inequality persist (Nürnberger, 1994:17). Taking agricultural potential compared to actual agricultural output as an example, we see poor decision making and wastage as large contributors to an already declining agricultural sector. Water wastage is a problem, as while South Africa already has unpredictable weather cycles, it is estimated that up to 90% of the rainwater that falls on South African soil is lost to evaporation. Moreover, issues like eutrophication, contamination of groundwater by pollution, topsoil erosion due to short-sighted farming practices, and urbanization all have led to this problem being compounded (Nürnberger, 1994:37-39). These issues, especially concerning water wastage and storage, needed to have been dealt with before the new millennium, and yet predictions of ecological disaster which Nürnberger made in 1994 for the year 2020 have begun to come true in recent times, with the 2016-2017 drought being one of the most recent and dramatic examples.

Employing something similar to Conradie’s approach of argumentation, having spent the bulk of his book so far building up reasons why South Africa and the world are heading deeper into an environmental crisis, and why responses thus far have been ineffective, Nürnberger begins to reveal what his alternative suggestion is and how it, on a point by point basis, can be a direct response to the failures of past responses. Thus, before we examine his response, it is important to note that he has described the issue along a certain set of criteria which provide a framework within which his response seems suited to meeting the demands of this problem. Nürnberger’s suggestion for an appropriate theological response to the deteriorating ecological situation – a situation which has been exacerbated both by the economic problems South Africa has faced and certain theological trends that have encouraged a domination and oppression of the natural South Africa and world (as those Lynn White Jr. names) – is, of course, an ethical one. Nürnberger believes the most basic challenge is for

human beings to discern how, for the sake of ourselves and our posterity, to maintain and “regenerate” the natural reservoirs of resources which have been abundant and in balance until the footprint of anthropogenic ecological destruction was first felt by the earth (Nürnberger, 1994:43). Thus, even though “by and large the agendas of mainline economics and the policies of decisive economic and political actors at home do not reflect this agenda, but strive for growth in wealth and power regardless of the consequences for the natural environment... it is part of the prophetic ministry of the church to cry out against this selfishness and short-sightedness” (Nürnberger, 1994:45).

Such a prophetic outcry may be exactly what is needed, however, there are certain doctrinal hindrances which stand in the way of meaningful theological change. Nürnberger explains that if the church, soteriologically, does not draw a link between Christ’s salvific action and their practical responsibility, it will be difficult for our belief and hope in God’s saving power to become praxis. Furthermore, “if members believe that faith has to do only with rescuing their immortal souls in an eternal heaven somewhere beyond space and time, they are unlikely to recognise their redemptive tasks in this world” (Nürnberger, 1994:50). Thus Nürnberger identifies one of the same issues Conradie does, namely the need to find a balance between an immanent and transcendent understanding of salvation. He proposes that God’s plan of salvation is all encompassing and not just aimed at human souls. This cosmic salvation is especially aimed at the saving of this world from environmental deterioration, and works towards its restoration to God’s intended state. He draws a strong connection between a change in action and a change in theology, and since the environmental issues he addresses have very real consequences, his proposal is to begin at a soteriological shift which eventually results in altered praxis: “Make no mistake: the Christian faith must change its thrust: from pious anxiety to redemptive concern ... For this to happen theology must change its paradigm” (Nürnberger, 1994:50).

4.4. Prosperity, Poverty and Pollution: Managing the Approaching Crisis

Published just five years after *An Economic Vision for South Africa*, his 1999 *Prosperity, Poverty and Pollution* deals with some of the same content, but in a more direct and focused manner, and with a greater sense of urgency. Nürnberger begins this book as he did its predecessor, setting the stage by discussing some pressing problems humankind faces in the 21st century including population growth, economic inequality, and growth of “conflict potential”. One issue this research focuses on is “the cumulative destruction of the natural habitat, on which all life on earth depends, the wasteful depletion of non-renewable resources, especially fossil fuels, and the overexploitation of renewable resources” (Nürnberger, 1999:3). Coupled with the other challenges Nürnberger lists, an overwhelmingly innovative, dynamic, and interdisciplinary response is needed to save the world and humanity from the “approaching crisis”. Using the term “economics” loosely as a blanket term for development and growth as a force which has brought about the problems he deals with, Nürnberger hopes to employ an ethical model in his response. The goal this model aims for is to reformulate our understanding of creation so that it no longer is a victim of ecological degradation, and of salvation so that human action towards creation is motivated to change. In this sense, Nürnberger portrays the need for developing a new, ethically driven understanding of salvation as being more actively important than developing our perception of creation, since non-human *creatura* plays a passive role in his description. This ethical reformulation would include a reorientation of goals as humanity, thinking not only in terms of human survival and flourishing, but rather giving due consideration to the following:

The comprehensive wellbeing of its [humanity’s] entire social and natural environment. Not that the term ‘comprehensive wellbeing’ does not suggest a utopia where no trade-offs have to be taken into account. It is formulated, rather, as an antithesis against the cancerous pursuit of self-interest at the expense of wider social and natural contexts...

ecological concerns should receive priority over economic concerns, rather than the other way round. The reason is, simply, that an economic growth which is not sustainable is also irresponsible. If we squander the earth's resources now, other have to pay the bill in the future (Nürnberger, 1999:7).

Nürnberger's description of the ideal relationship between humans and the rest of *creatura* still places humans in a distinct position of power over our surroundings – though this may be problematic in some ways, for Nürnberger it is exactly this power which demands human responsibility on ethical grounds. If humans were described as having less power over nature, and that the relationship between humans and non-human *creatura* was subsumed under, for example, the “household of God” as metaphor, then the ethical appeal of Nürnberger would hold no weight. It is precisely because of this choice, by Nürnberger to emphasize the “human to non-human” relationship and Conradie's choice to emphasize the “God to *creatura* (as a whole)” relationship, that Conradie states,

Christian ecotheology clearly cannot be reduced to environmental ethics as a sub-discipline of Christian ethics; it also requires a reinvestigation of Christian doctrine. Likewise, it cannot be narrowly focused on a reinterpretation of creation theology but calls for a review of all aspects of the Christian faith, including the mystery of the triune God, creation, humanity, sin, providence, salvation, the church, the sacraments and Christian hope (Conradie, 2012a:8).

Herein we find the most fundamental difference between the starting assumption of Nürnberger and that of Conradie. Nürnberger's argument assumes the elements of choice to a greater extent than his counterpart, as if there is a choice for human beings to squander or not to squander natural resources, to destroy or preserve natural resources, and because of this assumption it becomes an ethical discussion for him. Conradie on the other hand places much more weight on the pervasive effects of sin and evil in the world, stating that both we and

creatura must be saved from evil (not just the natural world being saved from human evil). Nürnberger's notion of salvation is more limited in scope, in that salvation is directed at our actions, choices, and perspectives which need to be saved – that is why he posturizes that an ethical reformulation of the human to non-human relationship is what is needed. Ironically, this leads to some slightly anthropocentric undertones which come through in how Nürnberger approaches this issue, by making it so ethically focused. Conradie, on the other hand, suggests the need for a cosmic salvation and reformulation of creation theology which brings all *creatura* under one roof in God's household, affected by God's acts of house-holding in the divine economy as expressed in the actions of the triune God moving towards consummation in Christ. Nürnberger recognizes this critique and responds to it after his next section. For now, however, the logic of Nürnberger's argument is clear: since he identifies anthropogenic climate change and ecological destruction as the problem, the solution is to change the choices humans make by affecting their worldview through an ethical appeal.

Before exploring in more depth exactly what this ethical appeal and reformulated worldview would look like, Nürnberger returns first to the manifestations of anthropogenic environmental damage in order to highlight certain elements which assist his argument for the urgency of an ethical approach. Beginning by qualifying some characteristics of this issue he states that there is an inverse relationship between affluence, numbers, and ecological impact, as follows: the wealthy are few but have an immensely negative impact on the environment despite being numerically inferior to the poor, who may do less damage per person but are much more numerous (Nürnberger, 1999:70). He also explains that different anthropogenic environmentally destructive phenomena have different specific causes and therefore spheres of influence, for example:

Some ecological devastations, such as soil erosion, have locally confined effects, others, such as air pollution, have global repercussions. Nuclear radiation has

particularly devastating transnational effects, as the Chernobyl disaster has shown. Global warming and the erosion of the ozone layer are other examples. But even local effects tend to spill over national boundaries. Witness, for example, the new phenomenon of “ecological refugees” (Nürnberger, 1999:71).

Indeed, the movement of human communities itself could be considered one of the most powerful contributors to environmental change, as human beings are guaranteed to change their surroundings where they settle permanently, or even semi-permanently. From the ancient “barren hills of Greece, where once flourishing forests were chopped down to build Phoenician fleets” to the industrial revolution where such dominance ushered in the modern era of technology, wherever humans settle in concentrated groups this effect is multiplied. Population growth and industrial expansion fuel each other in alternating cycles of industrial development and population spikes (Nürnberger, 1999:72).

In a finite world, with limited space and resources like ours, such growth cannot be indefinite – a turning point where demand exceeds production must be reached at some juncture. How far in the future that point is remains to be seen, but at the rate non-renewable resources are being depleted and damage is being done, it seems to be approaching ever faster. When our “natural capital” is spent it may well be too late to make a change (Nürnberger, 1999:72-73). This ecological problem is multifaceted, and although certain aspects of it may get more attention in the public sphere (pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, for example), all contributing factors are equally important: population growth, food production, depletion of non-renewable resources, pollution (atmospheric, water and soil), exploitation of renewable resources, and war (Nürnberger, 1999:75-83).

Having given these aspects a more detailed look, Nürnberger returns to his proposal for an ethical path forward, and makes some qualifying statements. As stated, this “ethical” approach can become anthropocentric if not placed within a framework which acknowledges

that creation, salvation, and the source of our ecological problems belong also to a broader discussion. This is precisely what Nürnberger recognizes in stating the need for an understanding of the transcendence which Christian ethics bring to the discussion, as opposed to secular ethics. The “Christian” addition, or more accurately, starting point for ethical reflection, is essential in taking Nürnberger’s very grounded approach beyond praxis and lending it an element of longevity and deeper meaning that comes with Christian truth claims and the historical scope of God’s salvific acts.

Nürnberger warns against a few attitudes that hinder relief from the environmental problems we face, beginning with hopelessness, or the idea that powers far greater than ourselves have already put something in motion which we cannot stop. Problems seem more complex than what we can grasp and more overwhelming than humanity can seem to cope with. Postmodern relativism and deconstructionism hinders unity in action and robs us of guiding principles. Finally, “short-sighted and superficial interests” destroy any sense of unified identity or accountability for dealing with issues (Nürnberger, 1999:157-158). The role of faith, in conjunction with an ethical perspective, is key in motivating action, in light of these hindrances, and especially when working in tandem with realism. For Nürnberger, “realism” works against the building up of false hopes and helps retain perspective regardless of success and failure. Additionally, faith stops the lens of realism from transforming into “fatalism”. Just as important as combatting hopelessness and fatalism is avoiding relativism (Nürnberger, 1999:159).

Soteriology comes into the picture as we begin to understand Nürnberger’s notion of agency: “Being at peace with God, therefore, can mean nothing else but sharing God’s creative authority, God’s redemptive concern” (Nürnberger, 1999:163). He repeats the emphasis he placed before on human change being the solution to anthropogenic problems in nature, and that salvation must thus be directed at bringing about a practical change in humanity.

Nürnberg also, hoping to balance his earlier statements, reiterates that while this is largely a soteriological endeavour, combatting the problems he has described will absolutely require a reinterpretation of how we define humans in relation to the rest of creation:

Human beings are part of God's creation. We are mammals and belong to the animal kingdom; our "souls" are embedded in our bodies; our bodies are part of communities; communities are part of society; society is dependent for its very survival on the rest of the natural world. A spiritual realm, isolated from the concreteness of physical and social reality, is an idealistic delusion ... there can be no "peace with God" unless God is at peace with his creation (Nürnberg, 1999:161).

Conradie mentions at various points in his argument the importance of finding a balance within the tension of immanence and transcendence, both in how we see the Trinity and how we view the problems creation faces. The immanence of what Nürnberg attempts to communicate above is essential, and his focus on real issues with the physical creation that require immediate responses reminds the reader again that although his approach is an ethical one, his concern is with seeing results and change, for the sake of our world now and our posterity. For Nürnberg, the ability the Christian gospel message itself has to remain relevant through all time and context brings with it enough transcendence that he is justified in attempting to find the balance Conradie describes by emphasizing the importance of acting now, and seeing results. This is why Nürnberg's long build-up to this final section works well, because it reminds the reader that although salvation is transcendent, the issues facing our world are immanent and pressing, and thus it will not suffice to simply reflect inward upon humanity's place in the world (as the danger of too much such reflection is the development of an anthropocentrism). Instead, Nürnberg wishes to inspire immediate action by presenting his formula of an ethical appeal for change based on a reinterpretation of the human to non-human *creatura* relationship, and the close proximity of anthropogenic ecological disaster.

Finally, as a way of bringing these ideas together into an “ecosystem” which is balanced, Nürnberger proposes that the above ideas should come coupled with his suggestion for a new way of thinking about the world, a reinterpretation of the traditional evolutionary principle of survival of the fittest:

An outdated evolution theory, based on the principle of the “survival of the fittest”, seemed to suggest that control of individual selfishness was an ethical imperative at odds with the evolutionary conditioning of human nature. Recently the natural sciences have discovered the importance for living organisms of going beyond individual self-interests. A more adequate concept of evolution is based on a systems theory that focuses on the dynamics of self-transcendence. It is not individual organisms that strive for survival but relationships in contexts. An organism that thinks only in terms of its own survival will invariably destroy its environment, and, as we are learning from bitter experience, will thus destroy itself (Nürnberger, 1999:170).

This powerful statement reflects the dangers of anthropocentrism mentioned by Lynn White Jr., to which both Nürnberger and Conradie have responded in their distinct ways.

4.5. Biblical Theology in Outline: The Vitality of the Word of God

This book, though broad in scope, is necessary to include at this point because it deals in more detail with something not discussed thus far in Nürnberger’s work, namely how his understanding of salvation and creation play a role in his eschatology. In one of the later chapters of this work it is interesting to note how Nürnberger’s notion of eschatology deals largely with a “vision” God has (and hopefully humanity will gain) for the future, and that this vision and how it is to be brought is dependent on his definition of salvation. Dominant in Nürnberger’s description of God’s redemptive salvific work is the message of agency in that “God acts redemptively through redemptive human acts. If believers cannot change the

situation by themselves, they expect their God to empower them to do so” (Nürnberger, 2004:208).

Again here the reader is faced with the question of whether this focus by Nürnberger on human agency could be considered dangerous in terms of leading towards anthropocentrism. Nürnberger has demonstrated an awareness of the dangers of anthropocentric thinking, and attempts here to pre-empt any such “anthropocentric” critique of his ethical approach by having a high Christology. Indeed, while he acknowledges that human agency is essential in the process of responding to the climate challenges, no such meaningful human action is possible without the initial act of Christ, and without Christ’s continual leadership forwards. Thus, the picture Nürnberger paints of his perception of ethics, soteriology and creation theology is as follows: the target of this salvific movement is the restoration or even reconstruction of creation, while the tools of that salvation are humans, initiated and led by Christ, governed by Christian ethics.

The transformation of the “old” creation into the new reinforces Nürnberger’s fundamental assumption that “things are not as they should be”, but more importantly, it implies that there is an intended order within creation which is now not reflected in our present reality: “both the notions of initial creation and ultimate transformation presuppose that experienced reality does not reflect what it ought to be” (Nürnberger, 2004:228). As Nürnberger describes the historical hope the Israelites held during the difficult times they endured throughout their history according the Old Testament narratives, this hope and sense of longing carries over to their perception of creation. Adopting that for this day and age, Nürnberger believes Christians must embrace that same type of hope which looks both back in time, to God’s initial creation and intended order for this world, and forwards towards the eschatological promises of new creation. From this retrospective and prospective hope the

Christian's ethical concern can be fuelled and change driven in working towards salvation from earth's present destruction (Nürnberger, 2004:228-230).

In the closing section of this chapter Nürnberger turns to the Ancient Near Eastern (and adopted by the Israelite) narrative of God versus chaos. Chaos is essentially the enemy of the created order, and "for the first time in the history of the universe we are confronted with the prospect of global chaos generated by human activity" (Nürnberger, 2004:235). Nürnberger's eschatological message from this observation is clear: the God of the Old Testament is against chaos, and disrupts it to bring created order – we must allow God's salvific acts in Christ to disrupt our destructive chaos-causing action just as God disrupted the chaos by God's creative acts in the beginning, to form part of a new beginning, a re-creation.

As his description of how this process might take place continues, Nürnberger refuses to describe technology in any sort of positive light ecologically speaking and paints a stark picture of the future:

Due to the increased powers unleashed by science and technology, the throughput from resource base to waste is accelerating. It has already reached such a rate that many scientists predict ecological collapse within a century or two. It is important to understand that technology does not create reality; it dismantles reality, utilizes some parts for its constructs and discards the rest. So technology enhances the speed of the entropic process. It may soon have reached a point of no return (Nürnberger, 2004:235).

It is only once the situation is recognized and accepted as problematic that an ethical concern funded by faith and hope can invite humankind as agents in God's salvific plan for creation; when that time comes, people will "see themselves as God's representatives on earth, who are meant to participate in God's own creative authority, redemptive concern and comprehensive vision" (Nürnberger, 2004:235).

4.6. Regaining Sanity for the Earth

In a way Nürnberger's next publication is a constructive expansion on the critique of science and technology he gives at the end of *Biblical Theology in Outline* above. Nürnberger begins his book by outlining the locus of his discussion, namely examining the relationship between modern secular science and the Christian faith in the context of the destruction of nature we are now experiencing on a global scale. Four contributory elements to this destruction are named: population growth, materialism, unchecked technological advancement, and a lack of accountability to something transcendent (Nürnberger, 2011:12). This book neatly ties together his sense of urgency about climate change, the place of ethics within Christian theology, and the role of salvation and creation in acting as an accountability partner to secular science.

In terms of how Nürnberger presents his argument, we find in *Regaining Sanity for the Earth* one of the most obvious examples of a clash in style when compared to Conradie. Nürnberger begins by stating exactly what question he is investigating, what his aim is in the book, and he openly gives his own position on the matter. There is no mystery as to what he is trying to argue for, or "discover"; though this robustly direct style leaves very little unknown to the reader, it is appropriate for this topic as it reflects the urgency with which Nürnberger wishes to convey his message: there is no more time to wonder about this problem, there can be only action before it is too late. Nürnberger's opening section, then, having introduced the argument, reiterates the dire situation the earth is facing:

Ecologically speaking, the infrastructure of life on earth is in danger of collapsing under the weight of human extraction, production, consumption, and waste. Climate change, depletion of scarce resources, over-exploitation of renewable resources, destruction of plant and animal life, pollution of water and air, soil erosion, declining food security in many parts of the world – these are symptoms of a deadly trend that must be reversed if humanity (and much of life in general) is to have a future (Nürnberger, 2011:12).

As stated earlier, Nürnberger's argument is presented in the same format as what he described the 'process of reasoning' in his 1980 *Introduction to Theological Ethics*, where he begins with an analysis of the problem or topic, an investigation to ascertain any present biases, and concludes with a decision on which moral source will be the authority by which these proposed actions are evaluated (Nürnberger, 1988:12-13). This format is followed for the majority of the book, laying the ethical, theological and philosophical foundations for his description of a constructive proposal for a dialogue between science and theology in response to the ecological crisis.

These drastic circumstances demand a response in the form of human action, and Nürnberger believes that science and Christianity have a powerful impact in society that reach beyond individuals, and that their "naturalistic" and "transcendent" assumptions, respectively, are in a state of tension which can lead to either stale debate or creative action (Nürnberger, 2011:11). He goes on to state that philosophically, underneath this tension, at the foundation of the ecological challenges we face, lies a resistance against authority, tradition, a questioning of long-held principles and cultural phenomena, and an innate drive for autonomy. These are the hallmarks of modernism, and Nürnberger believes that modernity has caused a rift between faith and science, and thus the former no longer guides the latter (ethically), while the latter no longer lends credibility to the former. Out of this split, mostly taking place since the Enlightenment, has emerged a scramble for resources, technological progress, and "success", all at the expense of the natural world (Nürnberger, 2011:13). We have, through modernity, discovered our humanity as a species with the ability to think and progress, as evidenced most spectacularly by the rise of the sciences, but have lost our responsibility in the process. It is precisely here where Nürnberger wishes to propose the role of Christian ethics to become of supreme importance:

Human intentionality and agency are highly ambiguous. They can be creative or destructive... A system of meaning is an indispensable prerequisite to human life. It forms a “sacred canopy”. That circumscribes the identity of individuals, communities, society and nature within the whole of reality... Authentic human existence is defined by acceptable purposes, goals, norms and values. They are acceptable if they are oriented towards a vision of comprehensive optimal well-being – at least within the limited horizons of collective consciousness at any point in time. To be authentically human, humans are expected to act consciously, responsibly, creatively and redemptively (Nürnberger, 2011:13).

Nürnberger’s language here is rich in the theme of agency which reiterates his stance on humans being co-active with God in the salvation plan, and non-human *creatura* being painted as passive. While a distinction is retained in one sense between human and non-human creation (in terms of one being the dispenser of change and the other the recipient), in another sense they are equal as both form part of God’s “sacred canopy”, whose “optimal well-being” is the goal of God’s salvific initiative.

Nürnberger sees science as an irreplaceable dialogue partner with Christianity in the above process of agency, as ethically-minded advancements in technology are essential in producing positive ecological change for the planet. Each has a distinct role and this contributes to a relationship with an inherent tension. Accordingly, Nürnberger asks, “What then is the relation between science and faith thus conceived? ... They have demystified the world, each in its own way ... Both are integral parts of a civilization that is running down the planet. They are jointly responsible for finding a way forward ... Science needs the ‘best faith’ to become oriented and responsible; faith needs the ‘best science’ to become plausible and relevant” (Nürnberger, 2011:16-17). It is essential to note that in this statement Nürnberger resists the simple duality that White put forward as central to his argument – namely that Christian

attitudes of dominance are to blame for environmental destruction – by including secular science and unhindered and irresponsible technological advancement as sharing the burden of responsibility for our present crisis. Nürnberger constructively suggests that the same elements responsible for the ecological problems are the same ones which have the potential for resolving them.

Beginning with faith, the offer it puts forward lies largely embedded in its transcendent perspective. More specifically, “Faith entails both an all—inclusive view of reality and the assumption of its dependence on something greater than itself that determines both the source of its existence and the goal of its operation” (Nürnberger, 2011:197). Thus, contributing to this transcendent lens, creation theology and soteriology form two branches of the tree of faith that bear direct relevance to the sciences. Christian faith describes a God who is actively involved in a “creative and redemptive project that aims at the comprehensive optimal well-being of the whole of reality” (Nürnberger, 2011:197). The transcendent contribution faith offers “experiential”, and this message culminates in the cross, a powerful picture of transcendent redemption and God’s salvific intention towards creation (Nürnberger, 2011:198). In light of this, what faith offers science is direction, guidance, and a powerful purpose beyond the physical; it offers meaning, and above all, accountability (Nürnberger, 2011:17).

This, however, does not mean that the faith has the means to access or describe the world in ways that are practically relevant – for this it relies on the sciences, “[whose] concern is to gain the kind of grounding, structure and orientation of human consciousness that can claim ultimate validity and lead to human authenticity” (Nürnberger, 2011:197). The perspective of science is immanent, observational, tactile, and practical – its concern is less with meaning and more with an exploration of and interaction with the physically extant world. Science offers faith the ability to be “relevant” in ways that only the keen study of the world

we live in can put forward. The dual existence of our world reflects the duality between scientists and believers for Nürnberger. While our existence is governed by the laws of physics, and the mechanics of this ontology can be understood through scientific study, we “also live in this world as humans who need meaning, acceptability and authority. This practical circumstance makes the interaction between science and faith necessary and urgent, particularly in view of the looming economic-ecological crisis” (Nürnberger, 2011:48).

For this dialogue to take place, one where creation and salvation meet through a dialogue with the sciences, theology needs to relate to science in a certain way. Being a Lutheran, Nürnberger uses Luther’s “experiential” approach to theology as an example of how a theological system can be constructively compatible with “best science”. Though his theology is not the only example of this, Luther did present an innovative way of integrating experience and theology in a practical way. To answer the question of how theology can incorporate “best science” in order for it to be itself “best theology”, Nürnberger explores Luther’s framework. Luther’s theology has certain distinct and defining characteristics, including things like the idea that in this world we experience God’s power but not God’s intentions (that is, apart from in the Gospel); faith is never easy and is always “afflicted” (Nürnberger, 2011:207); a focus on God’s omnipotence; the idea that one’s notion of truth can only be gospel based, otherwise it is invalid. Along with these traits which Nürnberger chooses to highlight, comes a distinct perspective on salvation and creation theology that fits into Luther’s worldview.

While the above characteristics are key to defining certain elements of Luther’s theological system, his creation theology is an area where “best theology” and “best science” can meet. Creation is *ex nihilo*, but is also *creatio continua* – “God’s presence is experienced in the very fabric of life. It is inescapable and undeniable (*Deus in vita*). Human experience of reality is the experience of God’s creative power” (Nürnberger, 2011:209). In this sense Luther’s creation theology takes a much more dynamic and immanently relevant character

than, for example, theology that limits creation theology to the ancient narrative genre. Luther's sense of *creatio continua* makes it a suitable candidate for dialogue with something as immanent as the sciences, while at the same time remaining relevant to God's transcendent soteriological plan.

That salvation, then, must be centred on the work of Christ on the cross. It is within the paradox of the cross that Nürnberger highlights how God's redemptive purpose can co-exist creatively with "best science". In the cross, a terrible moment of violence against perfection – a moment where beauty is destroyed – is revealed by God to be the crux of the divine plan of salvation. This is essential as "it reassures us that the afflictions, predicaments and catastrophes we encounter in our lives do not question God's commitment to our salvation" (Nürnberger, 2011:206). The environmental crisis we face, regardless of whether it is our doing, does not disqualify us from redemptive grace nor does it exclude us from God's salvation plan. It is especially within hopeless and destructive circumstances that we see God's heart, and in suffering (in this case the ongoing suffering of the natural world and the present and potential suffering of humanity in a destroyed earth) that God's advocacy for a message of change should be most strongly heard.

In the end, though Luther's approach alone is insufficient for today's problems, for Nürnberger it is a demonstration of what is possible when one attempts a creative reconceptualization of core doctrinal themes in and around creation and salvation. In response then, the final portion of Nürnberger's argument is a presentation of his own reimagining of the relationship between these core doctrines (Nürnberger, 2011:229). His proposal for such a radical reconceptualization, then, leans heavily on the idea of "sacrificial creativity". Before exploring this idea, Nürnberger makes a few guiding statements to sum up his argument so far. Firstly, the role of science is to "correct" and "enrich" traditional theological claims. His second point is a reflection of Durand's resistance against a *theologia perennis*, namely that our

hermeneutical interaction with the Bible is not aimed at deducing eternal truths but rather should reflect our contextually diverse world. Thirdly, the transcendence which faith offers science stems directly from God's own ontological transcendence. Fourth, human actions matter only in their "contribution to God's creative and redemptive project... Christ is the authentic human being through whom God manifests and enacts God's redemptive intentionality and in whose life we are meant to participate" (Nürnberg, 2011:229). Also, this life which we participate in is reflective of God's acceptance of the broken and care for the suffering (in all creation). Finally, the trinity is expressed in God's initiating redemptive project whose intentions came to expression in Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and whose work continues through the Holy Spirit that enables the church worldwide to act in line with that redemptive plan (Nürnberg, 2011:229). The importance of the trinity to Nürnberg's proposal is markedly similar to Conradie's incorporation of the concept in his theological proposal, as both theologians insist on a role being attributed to each member, with all roles and members being coexistent, co-original, and co-dependent.

The concept of "sacrificial creativity", then, is Nürnberg's constructive proposal for how we can, guided by the ethic of Christ and enabled by the power of the Spirit, participate as agents of God's redemption in God's plan. Nürnberg's understanding of how creation and salvation relate to one another with regard to ethics and ecotheology hinge on the cross:

In theological terms, God sacrifices parts of God's creation so that we can live. And we are called upon to participate in God's redemptive project by sacrificing parts of our lives, and ultimately our lives as such, so that other creatures may have the space and the resources necessary to live and prosper. There is no way we can be with God without participating in the sacrifice that God offers to his creation. At the social and spiritual levels of emergence, this sacrifice of God culminated in the cross of Christ... This is where human authenticity is located (Nürnberg, 2011:260).

Such a sacrificial approach to Christianity is surely at the heart of the gospel, and if this framework permeates the lives of Christians, it is Nürnberger's hope that "sanity for the earth" will be regained. Though he does not mention Lynn White Jr.'s article directly, Nürnberger's proposal is a response which addresses one of the key problems highlighted by White, namely a lack of perspective and guidance within Christianity. The destructive interpretation of Biblical texts to legitimize ecological devastation and the oppression of non-human *creatura* was urged on by an over-emphasis on transcendent reflection and an underappreciation for environmental contexts. Whatever the philosophical reason was which closed off Christian theology from a meaningful dialogue with the sciences – whether it was pride as in a philosophical hubris, or fear in terms of having truth claims challenged, or something else – it is Nürnberger's hope that such a dialogue can be established to allow science and theology to moderate one another in a fruitful relationship, bringing out their mutual "bests" for the sake of the earth.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1. Introduction and Review of Findings

Thus far this investigation has yielded some conclusions, including firstly, that the present environmental crisis has an anthropogenic origin, and as such, it is logical to assume that the solution lies within a change in human behaviour. Thus, we have an answer to the ‘who’, or in other words, the subject and object of the ecological challenges we face. Answers to further questions, however, of what should change, how those changes should take place, as well as over what time-frame, are less obvious. In terms of the ‘what’, if one accepts the assumptions behind the accusation of White, as this project has, then it is a theological shift which must take place in order for human action to be changed. Ernst Conradie is convinced that the key to developing a response lies in the relationship between creation and salvation, and specifically in “doing justice” to both, not subsuming one under the other. It is in this claim that the present project has found its chief motivator, as well as its starting point for reflection. Jaap Durand and Klaus Nürnberger also acknowledge the centrality of this relationship and thus their theological approaches, although distinct when compared to each other and Conradie, have also held value for this inquiry.

5.1.1. Ernst Conradie

By means of a critical analysis of argumentation and rhetoric in Ernst Conradie’s work, it has been demonstrated that for Conradie, the key to doing justice to salvation and creation lies in a few points, beginning with an understanding of the terms *creatio* and *creatura*, the former referring to the moment and act of creation, and the latter referring to all products resulting from that creative act. Understanding the difference is key, as it is God’s salvific acts which must be balanced with *creatio* for the sake of *creatura* (Conradie, 2011:64). Secondly, it is important for Conradie not to reject all theology of the past simply because it has been abused, misinterpreted, or led to destructive behaviour towards the environment. Instead, he primarily

approaches theological sources and attitudes from the past with an optimism of possible recovery, instead of outright rejection (Horrell, 2015:13; Conradie, 2006:3). This is, for example, how he is able to engage constructively with the creation theology of Abraham Kuyper to retrieve something of value for ecotheology in South Africa – namely the rereading of Kuyper’s notions of special and general revelation through Bavinck who offers a balanced perspective between the two, and therefore also a balance between creation and salvation – despite the destructive expression which Kuyper’s natural theology found in South Africa through apartheid (Conradie, 2011:15). In engaging with Kuyper in this manner, Conradie demonstrates that doing justice to salvation and creation leads to an ability to retrieve ecological wisdom from previously destructive theologies; in this way Conradie responds to White’s criticism since Kuyper’s theology serves as an example for broader Christian theology to demonstrate how theological opinions and attitudes, such as those of domination criticized by White, can be retrieved through finding balance between our two doctrinal loci (Conradie, 2011:58).

Thirdly, Conradie relies on patristic notions of the trinity, specifically Irenaeus’s understanding of the economic trinity, in his approach (Conradie, 2012a:7; Conradie, 2015:4). The reason he is able to take theology from two millennia ago and make it relevant for a problem we face today is thanks to a guiding principle which can be traced through all of Conradie’s work, namely the reformed maxim of *semper reformanda* (Conradie, 2012b:113). Fourth, Conradie insists that this journey is not only a reformed undertaking, but that it must, by necessity, remain an ecumenical process of developing a theology which balances creation with salvation because the challenges Christian theology faces are not limited to one theological tradition, but concern all Christians, and all humanity (Conradie, 2015:17). Next, Conradie demonstrates the importance of developing an appropriate conceptualization of how eschatology must also do justice to both doctrinal loci: Conradie, in light of what he uncovers

in Moltmann's approach, places special emphasis on the idea of consummation in the eschaton, and how God's salvific acts and creativity come together in a moment of consummation as part of *nova creatio*. This *nova creatio* is not a recovery of what was initially created, nor is it something completely different, nor is it simply a type of restoration; rather, Conradie situates himself somewhere between Van Ruler (who subjects salvation to creation) and Bavinck (who subjects creation to salvation) (Conradie, 2013:295). Finally, Conradie's constructive proposal for a theological system that fulfils all of his desired criteria comes in the form of using "the whole household of God" as root metaphor for the economic acts of the trinity in relation to *creatura* (Conradie, 2015:221).

5.1.2. Jaap Durand

It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to do justice to the theological impact Jaap Durand has had in South Africa, especially during its transition from pre- to post-apartheid existence. His theology has always been highly contextual and adaptive, and this has contributed significantly to the ability he has had to make meaningful changes in the environments he has found himself in. Having traced the three phases Durand describes his theology as having gone through, his own story is in itself a reflection of the powers of perspective, time, and context, all elements which he believes strongly are needed in developing meaningful theology. Despite Durand's historical perspective being one of the elements which has always set his theology apart, he describes his first methodological phase as being slightly less concerned with such a perspective. The phase of eternal truths was dominated by making theology about a search for a set of principles which were always true regardless of the historical context (Durand, 2002:65). Though this methodology offered him little opportunity to meaningfully oppose racism in institutions, it alerted him to the role value systems were playing in the debate around apartheid, and also became a demonstration for Durand of how Bible texts can be used as ammunition for both sides of an argument based only on hermeneutical preference one way or

the other. Having been inspired by the value system of Bennie Keet, Durand began to believe that theology was there for another, deeper, purpose than to find a single set of eternal truths (Durand, 2002:66).

The impetus for Durand's next phase of historical contextualization, then, came from the study of salvation history and the work of Thomas Aquinas. For Durand, it became steadily more evident how destructive a *theologia perennis* could be, and how polarizing and exclusive expressions of the doctrines of creation and salvation led to some devastating theological outcomes in the form of theological justification of apartheid and the claim that certain people groups are fundamentally "irreconcilable" (Durand, 2002:67). It was this which he sought to resist by placing an emphasis on the salvific acts of God throughout history, towards all humanity regardless of context, culture, or race, all with the ultimate goal of reconciling humanity. If, by applying this historical lens, the heart of salvation for creation in the gospel was shown to be a fundamentally reconciliatory act, then the apartheid assumption of irreconcilability had to be wrong (Durand, 2002:68).

Having participated integrally in the declaration of apartheid as a heresy, Durand's third phase was ushered in during a tumultuous, yet excitingly transformative period in South Africa's history. The methodological phase of metaphors came as a direct result of the work of David Tracy exposing a shortcoming in Durand's historical approach, namely the ability to put words to the depth of meaning behind the historical events that make up the story of salvation (Durand, 2002:69). An example of how this newfound appreciation for the power of analogy works unexpectedly well in conjunction with his historical awareness can be found in his analysis of the resurrection in *Theology and Resurrection – Metaphors and Paradigms*. Herein, by means of a historical review of theological publications in Western Protestantism, Durand concludes that the resurrection has received too little attention, an issue which he attributes to the effects of Bultmann's work on hermeneutics (Durand, 1993:3). Since the hermeneutical

burden had been so heavily placed on the reader, the role of historical criticism was no longer tied so strongly to the affirmation of faith but rather took on its own agenda with no limits to what could be questioned, or how deep those lines of questioning could be taken. Thus, he takes issue with how the questioning of the historicity of the resurrection in lieu of Bultmann's work, which itself affirmed that only the resurrection expressed linguistically mattered, led to an imbalance within the subject-object polarity (Durand, 1993:4). This, in turn, brought to light another tension, closely tied to the first, namely the claim of the resurrection versus our understanding of the natural world, or in other words, a tension between the claim of salvation and our experience of creation. Durand ultimately seeks balance through dialogue, rather than one being given ultimate primacy over the other; it is in this space that his approach of appreciating the power of metaphors while still giving due consideration to historical contexts comes into its own (Durand, 1993:7). Throughout these phases we observe a confirmation of the value of the attitude of *semper reformanda* which Conradie also considers to be so essential in formulating a theological response to the ecological challenges of today. Moreover, Durand's resistance of all forms of oppression by theological means, through a balanced use of historical lenses, clarity on the relationship between subject and object, and an appreciation of the power of metaphors, is an example we can and should follow in developing a theological approach which does justice to creation and salvation in our response to White and environmental destruction.

5.1.3. Klaus Nürnberger

The lens through which Nürnberger views the world is an ethical one, and his analysis of the problem of climate change demonstrates this clearly. He adopts a deontological approach by stating that the ecological situation is deteriorating, and that there is an intended state, "what ought to be", which is not being reflected by the state of the earth now (Nürnberger, 1988:9). Tracing the problem back to the root, the environmental destruction is anthropogenic, and this

action is being motivated by something: while for White it was the attitudes of domination over nature perpetuated by the church in the West which was to blame, Nürnberger believes the pervasive effects of sin have brought us away from the normative state we should be in (and consequently our actions towards the earth) (Nürnberger, 1988:22). On account of this, Nürnberger believes the solution must lie in human participation in a God-driven soteriology that is motivated by an ethical framework which seeks to bring the state of *creatura* back to what was intended (Nürnberger, 2004:228).

This participation can take many forms, and because of the connection Nürnberger sees between environmental issues and economic problems, one of the most effective ways agency should be expressed is by the church polemically resisting anthropocentric economical practice which destroys the environment. If economic choices are made chiefly with the aim of growing as fast as possible and developing wealth quickly, it does not take into consideration the long-term ecological impacts thereof. If this is to take place, Nürnberger proposes an ethical rearrangement of priorities where the flourishing of non-human *creatura* is placed on equal standing with the need for human development. This ethical reorientation must be motivated and inspired by the salvific work of God in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit if it is to succeed. Maintaining long-term perspectives with a genuine redemptive care for the earth and all of its life is key (Nürnberger, 1993:7).

The inspiration for this must necessarily come from the Word, and specifically from the cross. Nürnberger believes in the need to follow the example of Christ, and in the paradox of the cross we find sacrificial creativity in its most pure form, where a sacrifice of Perfection came for purpose of creating a new world (Nürnberger, 2011:229). In this interpretation of the cross Nürnberger does justice to both creation and salvation, and in that justice is where Nürnberger sees the answer to our ecological problems. Taking its impetus from the cross, faith

gains credibility from a dialogue with science, but also brings out the best in science by acting as its plumb line of ethical accountability (Nürnberger, 2011:16-17).

5.2. Creation and Salvation in South Africa: The Road Ahead

Though institutionalized oppression by race is no longer government sanctioned in the same ways it was under apartheid, another form of oppression lives on in South Africa, and indeed the world. Anthropogenic environmental destruction has reached unprecedented levels, and as the accusation of White in terms of humankind dominating the earth still bears relevance today, the question of what Christians in South Africa can do to respond remains.

The challenge this project ends with is how, if possible, Conradie, Durand, and Nürnberger's insights can be brought together in formulating a theology that deals with the above problems. In the works of Conradie, Durand, and Nürnberger we find a consistent affirmation of the centrality of the relationship between salvation and creation in developing a response. The story of the destructive interpretation of this relationship in Kuyper's theology – one that led to the theological justification of oppression based on race in South Africa – must be taken as an example of the power theology has had and continues to have in South African society. Though this power has historically been used for destructive ends such as apartheid, and on a broader scale the oppression of nature White refers to, Conradie, Durand, and Nürnberger all believe a retrieval and reformulation around creation and salvation is possible and necessary. While they approach this goal in different ways, the hope is the same: a reorientation around doing justice to these loci has the power to bring positive change publicly. They share a distinct resistance against injustice and oppression, and in the South African context these problems persist and thus the need for theological responses continue.

If we begin with the connection Nürnberger draws between economic problems and ecological issues, South Africa's present situation provides the church with strong motivators and a clear starting point for developing such a theology in response. In terms of practical

solutions, dialogue with science is key for “best theology” to play its role. The “prophetic” role Nürnberger believes the church should have in calling people to action implies an active public voice. What will this voice say? Led by the hope of “what ought to be” as taken from Biblical descriptions of the eschaton and new creation, inspired by the salvific work of Christ, an ethical framework (based on the progress of humanity being held as equally important to the progress and health of nature) is an essential guiding point (Nürnberger, 1993:7). The economic inequalities of South Africa must be addressed in a sustainable way, otherwise we are only delaying the ecological and economic demise of the country. Consideration for posterity must be given not only in terms of financial well-being, but also in terms of environmental health. The voice of the church must be heard in the public sphere, calling for ethical and ecologically minded choices to be made, by the government and by South African citizens.

This voice, then, must be underpinned by a strong awareness of contexts, both physical and temporal. The value of a historical perspective in resisting oppression and imbalances between the doctrinal loci of creation and salvation has been demonstrated by Durand time and again. The oppression of nature at the mercy of human progress must be resisted theologically by the Church knowing its place in the history of South Africa. Hope for the future can be sourced from telling the story of Christ and the resurrection, a key part of which is appreciating the power of language in Biblical metaphors for crossing the many socio-cultural barriers and challenges we have in South Africa in order to effect positive change (Durand, 2002:67). If the church cannot find a balance in how it speaks about the value of creation, the cosmic scope of salvation, and the immanence and transcendence of the triune God’s story of salvific acts in human history, the effect of its voice will be nullified.

To find this balance we return to Conradie and the root metaphor of the whole household of God. The implications of this metaphor are numerous, and its power is accentuated against the injustice in South Africa’s history and the inequality in its society at present. The equal

value of all people, and indeed all *creatura* is a fundamental assumption of the household metaphor, as all are under one roof and all are “God’s”; moreover, the interconnectedness of all life, living in the same household, is emphasized – one should not be allowed to progress to the detriment of another (Oduyoye, 2001:79). The divine acts of householding by the triune God in economic unity should guide this house, centred around the hearth, that is, the church, as the heart from which warmth and nourishment flows. Gathered around the hearth, the family of God, all of God’s *creatura*, are valued because they are God’s, and are called by the salvific acts of Christ to unity in the bond that only the Holy Spirit can provide (Conradie, 2015:241-242). From here the household looks forward to that moment of consummation in the eschaton where the tension between “longing” and “belonging” is resolved, where neither is given preference. Until that point, as “the earth is not our home yet but only our house”, we work towards being participatory in God’s acts of householding to be rid of hindrances to the process of maturation which *creatura* must go through to become a new creation in Christ (Conradie, 2015:312, 323).

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