Chapter 5. The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Pneumatology looms large in the theology of Van Ruler, but it is not possible to cover all the aspects of Van Ruler’s pneumatology.\(^1\) It is necessary to limit this chapter to those aspects of the work of the Spirit which directly relate to the exploration of the presence of the future. It will show that the Holy Spirit is the eschatological Spirit of God.

It has often been said that the twentieth century was the century of the rediscovery of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. Many theologians have defended the shift of emphasis from Christology to Pneumatology, because the doctrine of the Holy Spirit had been neglected.\(^2\) It has been asked whether the emphasis on Christology in the twentieth century, has been used as an excuse not to talk directly about God. It is claimed that speaking about Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit is easier and has less need of verification than to speak of God. Van der Kooi calls Pneumatology the new medium for speaking about God.\(^3\)

Van Ruler may have been ahead of his time in regard to the importance he placed on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. He certainly gave ample space to Pneumatology in his dissertation written in 1947. He even broached the idea that perhaps Pneumatology ought to be discussed ahead of Christology.\(^4\) Although he did shy away from this, he nevertheless could be called (like Calvin) a theologian of the Holy Spirit. This does not

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2 Some indicate that this neglect was not as pronounced in the East, i.e. in the Orthodox Churches. Cf. John D Zizioulas, ‘Lectures in Christian Dogmatics’, ed. Douglas H. Knight, (London & New York: T & T Clark, 2008), Ch.2 ‘The doctrine of God’, where he clearly shows the interconnection between the three Persons.


4 Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 80 and 184.
mean that Van Ruler would want to theologise only from a pneumatological angle; he would state that theology is to be approached only in a trinitarian manner.

Salvation is not only received in Christ but also through the Holy Spirit. The kingdom of God is an act of salvation (*heil*) and so is the gift of the Holy Spirit. The outpouring of the Spirit is an act of salvation, similar to, but not the same as, the incarnation of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection. The real centre of Pneumatology is the ‘*inhabitatio Spiritus Sancti in nobis*’, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us. Christians are the dwelling place of God in the Spirit. It includes the Christian church, the whole Christianised world and the cosmos. “Nothing less than God the Holy Spirit himself, and so the whole Trinity, dwells with us and in us … In this way the kingdom of God has come and is present.”

5.1 The relation of Christology and Pneumatology

Soteriology and the work of Christ in salvation are not separately covered in this research. Yet it is not possible to progress to the works of the Spirit without some connection shown between the two. Van Ruler states clearly that the reconciliation that we have received in Christ comes to us through the Holy Spirit. The two are inseparable. Therefore this discussion about the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from Christ and his work. This study does not include a section on Christology as such, not because Van Ruler underestimated the importance of Christology. On the contrary, in his dissertation, *De Vervulling van de Wet* [The fulfilment of the Law], he states it is through the work of

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5 Arnold A Van Ruler, ‘Christusprediking en Rijksprediking [Preaching Christ and preaching the kingdom of God]’ in *Verwachting en Voltooiing [Expectation and completion] Een bundel theologische opstellen en voordrachten [A collection of theological essays and lectures]* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1978), 46. The ‘us’ here refers to the Christianised nations, but Van Ruler would not limit the realms of the Spirit to this, as will be seen later.

6 Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 182. “… that the Spirit takes everything from what is Christ’s and that the Christ goes out into all reality through the Spirit.”
Christ that the law has been fulfilled.\(^7\) The cross and resurrection of Christ are the foundations of his theology. Time and again Van Ruler will say: Salvation (\textit{heil}) and therefore the fulfilment comes to us \textit{in} Christ and \textit{through} the Holy Spirit.\(^8\) He upholds the Anselmic view of the substitutionary work of Christ, and also maintains that the coming of the Kingdom of God is based on the work of Christ.\(^9\) In fact the kingdom is present amongst us because of the work of Christ. In him the kingdom has appeared. This work of Christ will continue, says Van Ruler, until such time that Christ will hand back the kingdom to the Father. But we cannot stop at the work of Christ. The benefits of Christ need to be applied to humanity, the nations and the world. Christ’s benefits of forgiveness, grace and love are spread out, through the Holy Spirit, into creation.

This indicates that there are structural differences between Christology and Pneumatology.\(^10\) Van Ruler drew attention to these in a lecture he gave in 1961, in which he enumerates a number of differences. He contrasts the emphasis in Christology on the incarnation and the union of the divine and human natures, the \textit{unio personalis}, with the emphasis in Pneumatology on the Spirit indwelling us in such a way that we remain human, yet become the ‘counterpart’ (\textit{tegenover}) of God. In Christology we see that Christ the Logos has

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\(^7\) This statement hardly does justice to the lengthy explanation Van Ruler gives about the fulfilment of the law. The law is fulfilled by God himself. Cf. Van Ruler, \textit{De Vervulling van de Wet}, 461. The law is fulfilled in Christ (483), but mostly in the historical reality of love (484) and therefore is also the work of the Spirit (321) and expressed in the coming of the kingdom (483).


assumed (aangenomen) human nature, the assumptio carnis.\textsuperscript{11} The human nature has been added to the divine. Pneumatology, on the other hand, is not concerned with human nature, but with the human person. The Spirit of God comes and takes up residence with us, in us. The Spirit and human nature don’t become one, but remain two; never does the human become divine, not even in the eschaton. Yet the indwelling of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for humankind to participate in salvation (heil), completely, that is, in the whole of our humanity. That means, in the manner of heart, soul, mind and body; the whole of life, knowingly and willingly. This is not limited to the individual, but spreads and permeates throughout the whole community and cosmos.

Another difference that Van Ruler mentions is that in Christology the emphasis is on ‘substitution’; Christ has taken our place. In Pneumatology the Spirit does not take our place, but works with us, in us and through us in such a manner that it is possible to speak of reciprocity, but always as a theonomous reciprocity.\textsuperscript{12} This will be dealt with more fully later. Whereas the work of ‘substitution’\textsuperscript{13} means that Christ Jesus takes our place, the work of the Spirit is not one of ‘taking our place’, but is his indwelling. If the Spirit were to take our place, the result could be a divinisation of human nature, according to Van Ruler. He states that it must not lead to a deification of the human nature. He calls the work of the Holy Spirit the ‘touching’ (aanraking) of the Spirit and says that it is the real mystery in pneumatology.\textsuperscript{14} He understands this indwelling as a spiritual (not physical) touching and contact, not as ‘caress’ (liefkozing), but as guidance and direction.


\textsuperscript{14}Van Ruler, ‘Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie’, 17. Cf. also 21: “In the place of the enhypostasis is the touching (aanraking) the great pneumatological category.” Cf. also 28 in the same chapter. Cf. also: Fries:
It is important to note that Van Ruler is anxious to avoid any idea of the divination or deification of human nature; he stresses again and again that the work of the Spirit does not have that outcome. In this he follows the theological emphasis of Western theologians, who perhaps do not entirely understand what the Eastern church means by it. However, Van Ruler has a very robust view of the work of the Spirit: the Spirit works within us to renew the ‘image of God’ even to the point that we begin to think, act and will as God thinks, acts and wills. Here Van Ruler avoids any suggestion of an ontological change in the human person through the work of the Spirit, but in fact he seems to be rather closer to an Eastern approach to pneumatology and anthropology than he realises.

Van der Kooi sums up the fundamental difference between Christology and Pneumatology as follows: “Christology deals with the ‘extra nos’, Pneumatology with the ‘in nobis’. Christology deals with incarnation, Pneumatology with inhabitation.”¹⁵ In the ‘assumptio carnis’ the Son has his personhood in God. Believers, on the other hand, despite the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, remain the persons they are. There is no enhypostasis. The Spirit does not work an assumption and does not take on human flesh, but adopts the believer. The work of the Spirit places humans in a new relationship, in which they learn again to take their proper place in the whole of creation. The work of Christ is the means, while the Spirit leads to the goal, namely that God’s dwelling place is with humanity (Eph.2:22) and the whole creation. Van Ruler says:

…the dwelling place of God in the Spirit is the nations, which have been incorporated by the apostolic Word into the covenant of God with Israel. The coherence of the generations, the structure of society, the culture of these nations, their political shaping of life – all this essentially belongs to God’s dwelling place in the world.¹⁶


¹⁵ Van der Kooi, ‘De moed tot leven’, 49.
¹⁶ Van Ruler, ‘Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie’, 15.
God’s dwelling place is with humanity and the nations.

It is possible to criticise Van Ruler here and state that it is impossible to separate the work of Christ from the work of the Spirit. He would probably agree with this. However, he wants to accentuate the difference in mode between Christ’s work and that of the Spirit. The Spirit touches us and indwells us, while Christ represents or takes our place before God.

Van der Kooi also draws attention to a particular characteristic in Van Ruler’s theology. In relation to Christology and Pneumatology, Van Ruler uses the structure of the ellipse, rather than the circle. Van Ruler works with two centres or poles, the poles of Christology and Pneumatology. In Karl Barth’s theology we find an example of the use of the circle structure with his emphasis on the doctrine of Christ; all aspects of theology are brought back to the work and Person of Christ. This cannot be said of Van Ruler, who continually uses the structure of the orbit of the ellipse with two foci or poles.

5.2 The Holy Spirit and sanctification

In an earlier chapter (3) the relation between Christ and reconciliation was shown as necessary for the basis of humankind’s relationship with God. Before moving on, it is necessary to show that Van Ruler is quite clear that there can be no sanctification without reconciliation: “… it is necessary to see behind (the reign of Christ) the king who in his self-offering sanctifies, cleanses and reconciles himself, and in himself also his people, before the face of God.” It is God who sanctifies on the basis of forgiveness of sin.

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17 This has been mentioned also in the Introduction (p.10).
18 Attention to this was drawn to this in a different context in chapter 3.5. Cf. Van der Kooi, ‘De moed tot leven’, 53.
19 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 101.
The work of the Spirit and that of Christ differ but they are complementary. This is illustrated by Van Ruler in his discussion of the ‘fulfilment’ of the Law. The Law is not only fulfilled in Christ, it is also fulfilled through the Spirit. Speaking about Romans 8:4 he says: “The work of the Holy Spirit is of even more importance for our study, because here fulfilment is to be understood as fulfilment of the Law.” 20 That the Law is fulfilled through the Spirit, “… brings, in Christian reflection, all sorts of difficulties and tensions with it. These are the tensions and difficulties of the doctrine of sanctification.” 21

Rather than discuss the finer details of the ‘fulfilment’ of the Law, it is important to continue the discussion of the Spirit’s work of sanctification. According to Van Ruler it is important to make a clear distinction between sanctification (heiliging) and reconciliation (verzoening). “One has to develop the truth of sanctification in such a way that it says something different from, and more than, the truth of reconciliation through the sacrifice of the Messiah.” 22 The truth of sanctification is that the outworking of the work of the Spirit is expanded throughout the whole of reality, touching every aspect of the creation. Next, he makes the curious remark that this expansion takes place “in such a way that it does not become an anticipation of the kingdom of glory, at least not in such a way that the ultimate deliverance as a new act of God (i.e. the unveiling of the salvation that is hidden in the flesh) is made superfluous.” 23 One might have expected that Van Ruler would state this positively, not negatively, namely that it is an anticipation of the ultimate kingdom of glory. The reason why he denies this is that he is thinking here of the kingdom of glory in its consummated, perfected state rather than its partial (anticipatory)

20 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 119.
21 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 119. Here Van Ruler states that these tension and difficulties will be discussed in the second part of his dissertation, where he gives exegetical explanations of various passages. It would lead too far from our subject to begin to discuss these. It suffices here to see that the work of ‘fulfilment’ is not only Christ’s work, but also that of the Spirit.
22 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 175.
23 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 175.
fulfilment within the history of the world. In fact, he writes frequently of a ‘fulfilment’ (*vervulling*) in the life of the church. This is a clear example of Van Ruler’s sense or intuitive grasp of the anticipatory structure of the kingdom’s presence, without, however, having a fully developed and clearly articulated understanding of the concept of anticipation. If this is not the explanation, one must see in the sentence under discussion an element of inconsistency or a qualification which actually negates his main point. No-one arguing for an anticipatory fulfilment of the eschatological promise would assert that the ultimate deliverance is made superfluous.

The more important point in the context here, is that the Holy Spirit does something unique, something different from the liberating and reconciling work of the Messiah. This difference is seen in the fact that in the work of Christ God the Son takes on human nature, while in the work of the Holy Spirit we see that the Spirit indwells human nature and works with and through human nature. “In the work of the Spirit it is always God the Holy Spirit who acts not only in and upon us, but always with us, in the sense of ‘together with’ us.” Van Ruler stresses this difference:

> If the Spirit does nothing unique in comparison with what Jesus as the Messiah does, then reconciliation is no longer reconciliation (the juridical, satisfaction and ‘once for all’ aspects are lost!), and sanctification is no longer sanctification (the provisional and the conservative aspects are lost) and redemption is no longer redemption (for the eschatological aspect is lost).

Here Van Ruler emphasises that the work of the Spirit does bring something unique to the believer. At the same time he also stresses that the work of the Spirit is ‘relatively’ independent from that of Christ and points out that if the work of both Persons flow together and become mingled, the distinctive works of each are lost. He wants to maintain a relatively independent place for the work of the Spirit.

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24 Van Ruler, ‘Structuurverschillen’, 181.
25 Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 175,176.
At the same time, as was noted earlier, Van Ruler warns that we must not see the work of the Spirit as a changing of human nature or a divination of human nature. The work of the Spirit does not bring about a change of substance or essence; nor is anything added to human nature.²⁶ Again Van Ruler shows that he shares the Western fear and is afraid of the idea of the deification of people. The work of the Spirit is not to be understood in that way. The sanctification of human existence is for its preservation or salvation. The sanctification of existence is not its glorification, nor its perfection or completion, even though there is the promise of glorification. “The sanctification of the world and human existence is its preservation for God’s future.”²⁷ Here the eschatological nature of the work of the Spirit is clearly indicated.

There is one more point that needs consideration, namely the extent of the work of the Spirit. In regard to this study it is important to see the connection between the work of the Spirit, on the one hand, and fulfilment and ‘conformatio’, on the other. Van Ruler speaks of the ‘pneumatic fulfilment’ of the law.²⁸ He makes the point that “The Law of God, as expansion of salvation in the world, is the realisation of the reconciliation and sanctification brought about by the Messiah and the Spirit in the life of the world.”²⁹ The concept of fulfilment has been dealt with extensively in chapter 3; here it is mentioned to make a clear connection between fulfilment and the Holy Spirit. Fulfilment is the work of the Spirit. The extent of this work is also seen in the ‘conformatio’, “… a confirmation of the person with God. All promises and all commandments are moments in the proclamation

²⁶ Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 211, 214. Cf. also Van Ruler, ‘Structuurverschillen’, 185: “Wil men dieper en inniger vereniging tussen God en mens, dan komt men onvermijdelijk tot vergoddelijking van het schepsel” [Do we want a deeper and more intimate union between God and the human, then this would inevitably lead to divination of the creature.] Further: ‘Human nature’ seems to be the best translation here for the Dutch word ‘existentie’.
²⁷ Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 272.
²⁸ Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 516.
²⁹ Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 518. The way Van Ruler uses the concept of ‘realisation’ will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter.
of God’s deeds. The believer can only answer this with acknowledgement and praise.” 30

Van Ruler means that through the work of the Spirit in human life, people will more as God wills and become more like God. The ‘image of God’ will become more evident and clear, not just in the future, but already now. These aspects of the Spirit’s work will be dealt with more fully later in this chapter. Van Ruler writes, “It is necessary to speak of a Gottförmigkeit des Menschen, a conformatio of the human person with God.”31

In summary, it is clear from the above that Van Ruler stresses the extent and external character of the work of the Spirit and emphasises that the kingdom, its coming, and fulfilment, are related to the sanctifying work of the Spirit.

5.3 The works of Christ and the Spirit as ‘rescue operations’.32

The work of the Spirit is important, not only for the life of the believer, but also for the coming of the kingdom. The kingdom cannot come, nor can it be present, without the Spirit, and this kingdom will come to fulfilment in the eschaton. This has implications for the work of Christ and of the Spirit? When the work of the Son will have been completed Christ will hand back the kingdom to the Father. The kingdom of Christ, a modality of the kingdom of God, will become fully the kingdom of God. This means that the economy of Christ’s work will have come to an end, to completion. His messiahship will be

30 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 511, 512
31 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 511/512. Van Ruler states that the German quotation comes from K.Barth, Die kirchliche Dogmatik, I, I, 232/3, 251.
32 Some prefer the term: “interim measure”, but the precise translation of the term Van Ruler uses is ‘emergency measure’ (noodmaatregel). The choice here is: ‘rescue operations’ for it says more about the purpose of the measure. This is a rather speculative aspect of Van Ruler’s theology. Many have criticised this part of Van Ruler’s theology. Velema points out that in Revelation 21 and 22 the Messiah is spoken about as the Lamb, who maintains his place in the new heaven and earth. The messiahship is carried across the border of the old and new, it continues in glory. “And because (Jesus) is in the flesh in heaven, he has glory”. The messianic intermezzo does not do justice to the change from ‘humiliation’ to ‘glorification’ by way of the resurrection, says Velema. Cf. W. H. Velema, Confrontatie met Van Ruler, denken vanuit het einde [Confrontation with Van Ruler, thinking from out of the end] (Kampen: Kok, 1962), 94–96. Cf. also G C Berkouwer, In Gesprek met Van Ruler [In conversation with Van Ruler] [In Conversation with Van Ruler], ed. Prof. Dr.A.S. van der Woude (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1969), 60–64. Cf. also: E. Martien Brinkman, De Gereformeerden en Van Ruler [The Refomed and Van Ruler], in Verder met van Ruler - Men moet telkens opnieuw de reuzenzwaai aan de rekstok maken. [Continuing with Van Ruler - One has to, time and again, make a mighty swing on the horizontal crossbar], ed. Dirk van Keulen George Harinck, Gijsbert van den Brink,, (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2009), 178.
concluded, the incarnation will be surrendered and the Son will continue as the Second Person of the Trinity. As important as the work and kingdom of Christ is, according to Van Ruler. It is nevertheless an ‘intermezzo’, \(^{33}\) i.e. ‘an emergency measure’ \((noodmaatregel)\), or ‘interim measure’, He says,

If it is true, that God with his special revelation in Christ comes to fruition only then, when his salvation is reflected in us, then it is also true, that already in the work of the Spirit the incarnation is to some extent undone. Salvation, eternal life, the kingdom of God, is then not only found in Jesus Christ. In any case the mode of substitution, so distinctive for the incarnation, is trespassed and broken in the work of the Spirit. In the end Christ will, according to Paul, hand back the whole kingdom to the Father. That includes, in my opinion, also that He will lay down all flesh. The work of the Spirit has not yet reached that point. … The point is, that this is coming, that we in ourselves are the glory of God and that the world is this also. \(^{34}\)

It is important to note that Van Ruler does not base this premise only on the slender evidence of 1 Corinthians 15: 24ff, where it says: “Then comes the end, when he (Christ) hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power.” \(^{35}\) Rather, Van Ruler bases the thesis of the incarnation as an intermezzo on the whole pneumatology of the New Testament. \(^{36}\) Van Ruler seems to say that the work of the Spirit continues – and to some extent takes over – the work of Christ. The intermezzo idea underlines the eschatological emphasis on the Spirit’s work. Yet none of the work of Christ will be lost, the blessings obtained through the work of the Messiah are able to reach us because the Holy Spirit brings them to us, applies them to us and does so in such a way that these blessings become our own. This is where my work in this chapter is heading, namely: how are the benefits of Christ applied to humanity?

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\(^{33}\) Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 517.

\(^{34}\) Van Ruler, ‘Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie’, 25, 26. Italics mine.

\(^{35}\) Quote from NRSV. Cf. Arnold A Van Ruler, *De dood wordt overwonnen; 1 Corinthen 15 in morgenwijdingen* [Death is Conquered; 1 Corinthians 15 presented in morning devotions], 2 ed. (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1972), 82.

\(^{36}\) Van Ruler, ‘Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie’ 26. Unfortunately Van Ruler does not give a fuller explanation. I take it to mean that the work of the Spirit complements the work of Christ, that both are a medium for the coming of the kingdom and after that ‘coming’ their work no longer will be needed.
To say the least, the above is a troubling speculative interpretation to his interpreters, however, a helpful contribution to the above discussion is made by Jürgen Moltmann, who picks up the question posed by Calvin in his comments on 1 Cor.15:28, to the effect that Christ will hand over the kingdom to the Father. “Does Christ make himself superfluous when the kingdom of God comes?” Moltmann says that although this may sound speculative, it is nevertheless a logical consequence which arises from the question about what happens at the end, when the kingdom arrives. Calvin stressed the Messiah’s function of being the substitute and in a sense God’s deputy. For this Christ took on human nature and when he hands back the kingdom to the Father, he will also empty himself of these functions as well as his human nature. Moltmann says:

Calvin is not thinking of an annihilation of Christ in person, but of a transference of the divine rule from the humanity of Christ to the divinity of Christ. If the incarnation in humility was conditioned by sin and directed towards deliverance, it will become superfluous in the redemption … The eternal Son of God, so to speak, retreats into the Trinity, and the man Jesus enters the host of the redeemed, or conversely, the whole of redeemed existence enters into the divine relationship of the unio personalis, i.e. into immediacy with God. In redeemed life, that has immediacy to God, there is no place anymore for the humanity of Christ, that has been crucified for the redemption of sinners.

After having given a summary of Calvin on this topic, Moltmann mentions Van Ruler and comes to this conclusion: “Here Van Ruler makes Calvin more radical. What Calvin expressed in eschatological suggestions, becomes with Van Ruler a firm thesis.” He adds: “The passage of 1 Cor.15 in Paul, to which Calvin and Van Ruler refer, gives no proof that the mediator will one day become superfluous.” In fact, Paul goes on to speak of Christ as the Son, which indicates his total being in relation to the Father. “For Paul, the title ‘Son’ not only expresses a function of Jesus for men, but also denotes his

whole being in relationship to the Father."\textsuperscript{41} As noted in footnote 28, here we have a very speculative aspect of Van Ruler’s theology, a point which Moltmann underlines.

According to Van Ruler, not only the work of Christ will be completed in the eschaton, but also the work of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{42} The Spirit will bring about the eschaton, through his work of renewal and through history, which contains the acts of God. The Spirit will work until the kingdom of God has received permanent form in the eschaton. Then creation will be ready to be returned to the Father in a perfected form; then the work of the indwelling and recreating Spirit will be complete and as an ‘emergency measure’ no longer necessary.\textsuperscript{43} The indwelling of the Spirit will come to an end and “… in the eschaton it appears we will no longer need the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{44}

Does the fact that the work of the Spirit will be completed in the eschaton mean that nothing will have changed, that nothing has been added to the proton, the original creation? On the contrary, Van Ruler says: There will be a ‘plus’ in the eschaton, namely the whole process of history between creation and the eschaton.\textsuperscript{45} The Spirit’s work remains effective. Nothing of the Spirit’s work has been in vain. Through the work of the Spirit the creature will have come to conquer sin and evil. The Spirit will have helped the creation and the creature to become ‘fire proof’.\textsuperscript{46} That means that the creature will no

\textsuperscript{41} Moltmann, \textit{The Crucified God}, 264, 265.
\textsuperscript{42} Cf. also The Anglican Church of Australia, \textit{A Prayer Book for Australia} (QVB, NSW 1230 Australia: Broughton Books, 1999), The Affirmation of Faith, 37.
\textsuperscript{43} Here Van Ruler again alludes to the fact that the work done before the consummation of the kingdom is temporary in nature and therefore an interim measure. Van Ruler states that both the work of Christ and that of the Spirit before the eschaton are interim measures.
\textsuperscript{44} Acts 2:1 ff. Cf. Van Ruler, ‘Structuurverschillen’, 185, 186.
\textsuperscript{45} Arnold A Van Ruler, ‘De mens in de geschiedenis in bijbels en christelijk licht’ [The human in history, in biblical and Christian light], in \textit{Verzameld Werk, Deel 3 [Collected Work, Vol.3]}, ed. Dirk van Keulen, (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2009), 317. “…it is impossible to regard the eschaton and the proton as the same. History has a real meaning. The eschaton is creation plus history.”
\textsuperscript{46} Van Ruler uses a word here that we use for an oven dish, it is ‘fire-proof’, it is ‘heat resistant’. With this Van Ruler means that the person has become resistant to sin. Sin will no longer affect the person or the creation. For a fuller explanation see Chapter 2.5.
longer be able to sin. In the eschaton the creature will be *non posse peccare*, i.e. unable to sin. The kingdom will then be completed, the creation will be renewed, the creature will be living in perfect harmony with God and the rest of creation; God will be all in all. It also means that through the work of the Spirit salvation is secure and certain.

In summary, the above section on the ‘intermezzo’ in Van Ruler’s theology is very speculative. And one wonders whether it is helpful. However, it does bring out the point that Van Ruler stresses the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. He wishes to give some independence to the work of the Spirit in relation to the work of Christ. And that he sees this work of the Spirit as eschatological in nature, working from the eschaton.

5.4 The Holy Spirit, time and grace

The way in which Van Ruler uses the concept of time was discussed in an earlier chapter.\(^{47}\) In this chapter it is necessary to view the connection between time and the Holy Spirit. In this context Van Ruler says that the work of the Holy Spirit combines the aspects of time - the past, the present and the future. He says:

> For God only the whole of time, from the beginning until completion, in its unity and summation (*samenvatting*) is the manifestation of his image and the establishment of his kingdom. We, however, can only stand at a particular moment in time, in the present. That implies that we have on the one hand, to take in (*consumeren*) the past and, on the other, to anticipate the future. The dogmatic work of the church and theological scholarship may be likened, from the point of view of the development of dogma, to a card player who in every round has in mind the whole of the game so far and to a chess player who in every move can see the whole game through to its end. Clearly, this is asking a huge amount, but to this end the unfailing guidance of the Spirit has been promised us.\(^{48}\)

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of time, the Spirit of the past, the present and the future.

The Holy Spirit guides us through time and into the fullness of time. Van Ruler sees the

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\(^{47}\) Cf. Chapter 3.5.

Spirit at work in all aspects of life and time, in the individual as well as the whole world, the creation.

When it is said that humankind is filled with the Holy Spirit, with his power, his works and his gifts, then the question is raised as to how this filling with the Spirit, as an act of God, is to be understood in human existence? This working is often called ‘grace’. The first point that needs to be stated is that this grace is not a ‘substance’, but first of all a relationship. 49 This will be worked out more fully shortly.

Secondly, Van Ruler maintains a strong bond between Word and Spirit and states that all knowledge of the Spirit comes through the Word. He stresses the relation of the Word and the Spirit. 50 This also comes to expression when he says that the gratia interna [internal grace] has no substantial reality, but is something that can only be proclaimed. 51 In relation to the work of the Spirit, the church has often spoken of the gratia interna or the gratia infusa [infused grace], or also the gratia spiritualis [spiritual grace]. Often the gratia interna has been understood in anthropological, mystical or spiritual categories. Here Van Ruler does not completely agree with Van der Leeuw, whom he quotes, and who claims that the gratia interna has to be understood as a sacramental reality. Van Ruler wants to go further. He accepts that it is possible to use the categories of anthropology, mysticism and sacramental language, but says that more categories need to be included. “If one wants to describe fully the work of the Spirit, the gratia interna, one needs to include at least also the categories of the political, the cultural and the historical.” 52 The work of the Spirit does not stop at the

49 Many theologians have pointed this out. Cf. G C Berkouwer, *Faith and Perseverance. Studies in Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 114. Berkouwer says: “For John (i.e. the Gospel of John) faith is not a conviction that is subjective and that is valuable in itself; it is being involved in salvation, in the fellowship with Christ, being in Him who is Truth and in the love the Father has given us.” Italics his.

50 Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 230.

51 Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 230.

52 Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 208.
border of human life and salvation, but reaches out to all aspects of life, permeating life with grace.

Van Ruler says that in the *gratia interna*, in one way or another, the kingdom of God is established in the present world.\(^{53}\) The *gratia interna* is the means by which salvation (*heil*), given in the revelation of Christ, enters reality and becomes a part of our existence.\(^{54}\) It is expressed in form (*vorm*) and image (*beeld*). The form relates to the creation and the image to the image of God. “And in this form and in this image we find the continuity and durableness (*duurzaamheid*) of the presence of God. From this presence we cannot exclude one moment of reality.”\(^{55}\) Also, in this way, according to Van Ruler, the future is already present among us. “The Spirit sends forth (*poneert*) the Messiah and causes him go out into the real world (*werkelijkheid*). That is already a realisation (*realisering*). The Spirit expands salvation and gives it concrete expression (*uitbeelding*) in life (*existentie*). That is even more realisation [of salvation].”\(^{56}\) It is clear that Van Ruler connects the work of the Spirit and grace with the realisation of salvation and the presence of the kingdom in the world.

Van Ruler places particular weight on the continuity between revelation and the concrete reality of our existence, because according to him the *gratia interna* is the content of the fulfilment of the law. Van Ruler shows that the content of the fulfilment of the law cannot only be christological and he goes to great lengths to show that it must also be pneumatological. Yet Van Ruler does not want to lose the connection between the two. The Messiah enters our existence with his salvation. The Spirit is poured out in our existence

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\(^{53}\) Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 206. Van Ruler says literally: ‘in the flesh’.

\(^{54}\) Van Ruler, ‘Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie’, 10.

\(^{55}\) Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 207. Van Ruler often uses this expression ‘form and image’. The form relates to how the world and reality has been shaped in creation and the image is how this creation is to become more and more like the image of God, the way God intended he creation to be.

\(^{56}\) Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 221.
through his indwelling. Thus there takes place a union, a binding and mixing. This leads to
an expansion and enactment of salvation. Salvation (heil) enters into the normal forms of
existence. Here Van Ruler uses the term ‘realisation’, or in the gerund form ‘realising’. This
realisation includes salvation in its widest sense, in that the Holy Spirit, through the *gratia
 interna* makes the whole reality into the image of God. 57 He is prepared to use this term
‘realisation’ to express how the messianic categories on the one hand, and pneumatological
categories on the other hand, are present.

Through the Spirit salvation is intensified in human existence. Finally, the Spirit makes existence
what it is: the image of God. That is the true realisation … In the same way we see that the
realisation of salvation and human existence through the Holy Spirit, in the *gratia interna*, consists
in the whole of existence being made into the image of God. 58

Here Van Ruler draws two parallel lines. The one is the fulfilment of all things in Christ; the
whole of reality is seen as signs of the kingdom of God. 59 The second line is the work of the
Holy Spirit in the *gratia interna*; in this way the whole of our existence is made to be the
image of God. 60 The *gratia interna* is an eschatological category. 61 Salvation in Christ
restores the creation, in that it removes creation from under the blanket of sin. The Holy
Spirit brings humanity into a new relationship with God and restores the image of God, as
was intended in the creation. “The work of God in nature has pedagogical value and the work
of the Holy Spirit connects with this and recreates nature.” 62

As one would expect, this internal grace worked in humankind by the Holy Spirit is an
infused grace (*gratia infusa*), a grace which comes to us from without. However, this grace is

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57 Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 221.
58 Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 221. When Van Ruler says “the whole existence is made into the
image of God”, he means that the image of God is ‘social, collective, catholic and universal by nature’, 223.
All powers of creation and all people together, alone can display the complete image of God, and that is a
59 Cf. Chapter 4.2.
60 Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 221.
61 Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 225.
62 Van Ruler, *De vocazione*, 240. “… ,het werk van God in de ‘natuur’… heeft pedagogische betekenis en
het werk van de Heilige Geest sluit erbij aan en herstelt de natuur.”
in fact an internal grace (*gratia interna*), which brings about a change and growth within human nature. Most theologians would regard this as the work of sanctification, but Van Ruler reminds us that the work of justification is also a work of the Holy Spirit in the believer, since it involves the whole of our being. The two are not to be separated. Not only righteousness is imputed; a person also needs to be a justified person.63

Because Van Ruler does not regard the grace of the Spirit as a substance, he does not see the Spirit, through the *gratia infusa*, elevating humanity to the level of God. In other words, believers are not lifted to the level of divine being; they remain the created being God made. Even their ‘rebirth’, or being ‘born again’, does not turn them into another kind of being, but renews them before God and places them in a new relationship with God. It is important to Van Ruler that the ‘continuity’ between creation and the justified and sanctified creature is maintained. Grace is given in order to combat and overcome sin and open the way for salvation (*heil*) to have effect in creation. The work of the Holy Spirit, as a gift of grace, through justification, sanctification and regeneration, brings about a renewal of the ‘image of God’ in which humankind was created. “The Holy Spirit turns human existence (*existentie*) into what it is: the image of God.”64

Van Ruler’s insistence that a ‘substantiation’ of grace and the consequent ‘elevation’ of the human are to be avoided leads him to dispute A Kuyper’s teaching of ‘general grace’. Kuyper talked about the ‘seeds’ (*kiemen*) which God had planted (*geplant*) in his creation, making it possible for humanity to remain human and, through the ‘particular grace’ granted by the Holy Spirit, to turn to God in repentance and conversion. According to this

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64 Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 221.
view general grace was like a foundation for particular grace. Van Ruler does not accept this position and steers clear of a ‘general’ grace, afraid that it might lead to a ‘natural’ grace. Van Ruler stresses that all grace is the work of the Spirit. It also clarifies the point that the Spirit works not only from outside the human person, but also inwardly.

a. Theonomous reciprocity

As stated above, one way to describe the work of the Messiah is as substitutionary, i.e. for us (pro nobis) and in our place (plaatsvervanging); it was done for us once for all (eph hapax). Van Ruler says that also the work of the Holy Spirit is ‘once for all’ (eph hapax), for the Spirit was poured out in Jerusalem. It took place once in Israel. Yet it is different, for the Spirit does not do the work ‘in our place’. The emphasis is not on ‘substitution’ but on the indwelling of the Spirit and the support and guidance received through the Spirit. Van Ruler speaks of the ‘inhabitatio’ [indwelling] of the Spirit. This means that humankind has been fully taken up in the totality of the work of the Spirit, though not taken up into the ‘being’ of the Spirit, for that would mean ‘elevation’ according to Van Ruler. The Spirit does not work independently of the human. A person is fully taken up into this work of the Holy Spirit. There is a reciprocity between the work of the Spirit and that of the believer. Van Ruler stresses that the work of the Spirit needs to be appropriated (toe- eigenen). By this he means that humanity is fully involved in the work of the Spirit. Yet the initiative remains with God the Spirit; therefore it is a theonomous reciprocity. It is not a co-operation or synergism, but a reciprocity in

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65 A Kuyper, De Gemeene Gratie [General grace] 2nd ed. (Kampen: Kok, No date) Vol.3 624-631. Despite the fact that Van Ruler has much respect and appreciation for Kuyper’s exposition on grace, especially the relation between grace and culture, Van Ruler nevertheless spends a long section of his dissertation (p.210-214) pointing out that ‘something’ (iets) cannot be added to the existence (existentie).”, 214. Van Ruler says: “Instead I would state, it is the work of the Holy Spirit”, cf. Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wei, 210. Cf. also Brinkman, ‘De Gereformeerden en Van Ruler’ 178-184. Also Fries states: “…grace never becomes something added to being, to complete it.” Cf. 119, note 82.
66 Van Ruler, ‘Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie’, 184.
which the believers are fully involved, even to the extent that they think, do and are what God would have them think, do and be. “We are the συνεργοι του θεου [the co-workers with God]!”

It is important to conclude this section on grace, by stating once more that grace is not a substance. Nor does it mean that humanity is elevated to a different ontological level. Nothing is added to the human that is ‘heteronomous’, i.e. different from our creaturely ontological being. This is where, according to Van Ruler, Reformed theology departs from the theology of Rome. Rome works with two levels of grace and claims that grace and salvation are added to nature and become the super nature (boven natuur), i.e. nature perfected. In this way the ‘theonomous’ is understood in a ‘heteronomous’ manner, that is as something external, namely as an ‘inpouring’ of the Spirit. However, Van Ruler stresses that grace and salvation permeate and indwell humans in such a way that they become more and more the image of God, as intended in the creation. This is true not only of the creature, but also of the whole of creation.

b. Theopoiesis

The work of the Spirit has far reaching consequences for each person, according to Van Ruler. The Spirit works with the whole of the human being. This is expressed particularly


69 Arnold A Van Ruler, ‘Het gezag in de kerk [Authority in the church] ’ in Theologisch Werk, Deel 5 [Theological Works, Vol 5] 1953 (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1972), 80. Van Ruler rejects the teaching of the two layers of grace, one belonging to nature or creation and the other as coming from outside of nature, namely from God. The Spirit renews the whole of nature.

70 This word is a composite of two Greek words. θεός (God) and ποίησις (doing, working or making). It needs to be distinguished from the word and meaning of Theosis as used in Orthodox theology. According to Fairbairn, ‘Theosis’ is the vocation of the believer of aspiring to union with God. “Furthermore, the role of the atonement is clearly to make possible our becoming united with God. Christ did not complete the human vocation for us; he completed it in himself so as to guide and accompany us as we walk the pathway to eternity.” Cf. Donald Fairbairn, Eastern Orthodoxy through Western eyes (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), Chapter 6, Salvation: The Path of Theosis, 85. It needs to be stressed that this is not the way Van Ruler uses the concept of ‘theopoiesis’. In the theopoiesis the human does not aspire to union with God, but becomes the co-worker of God and wills, does and is as God. The human remains the instrument of God and does not become like God. Again, there is no elevation of humanity.
when he speaks of a ‘theonomous identity’. It means that a person becomes more and more like God. Van Ruler uses here the word ‘theopoiesis’, to mean ‘doing as God’. In being and action, humans become and do as God would have them be and do.\(^{71}\) This does not mean that they become like God. There is no elevation; they remain creatures.\(^{72}\) Nor does theopoiesis cancel out the autonomy and the freedom of the creature. A person, in his or her freedom, is, wills and does as God intends the creature to be, will and do. It is a theonomous freedom, for it is a theonomous reciprocity brought about by the Spirit.\(^{73}\) In this way the person is totally free, yet has a freedom that begins and is maintained by the Spirit of God, helping the believer to live according to the Law.\(^{74}\)

Just how encompassing the work of the Spirit is becomes clear when Van Ruler reminds us that it is the Spirit of God who ensures God’s presence. It is the Spirit of God who makes history. He writes, “The Spirit acts. And therefore something happens. He makes existence historical.”\(^{75}\) Furthermore, it is the Spirit of God who brings the eschaton from the future. “The Spirit makes existence what it is: the image of God. That is the real realisation … The realisation of salvation consists therein that the whole of reality is made into the image of God, through the Holy Spirit, through the gratia interna.”\(^{76}\)

Van Ruler says that history is to be seen as the coronation of God, but is not to be understood as just glorification, it is also a struggle. It is the struggle against the

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\(^{72}\) Van Ruler, ‘Structuurverschillen’, 185.


\(^{74}\) Theonomous, is made of of theos (God) and nomos (law).

\(^{75}\) Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 251

\(^{76}\) Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 221.
rebelliousness of humanity, the struggle with chaos, the struggle of the coming of the kingdom, coming towards us from the future, yet present amongst us. Therefore also the indwelling of the Spirit means struggle, a struggle against humanity’s flesh, i.e. humanity’s sinfulness. This does not take away from the fact that the work of the Spirit remains a mystery, in which the Spirit makes ‘jumps’. Van Ruler uses this word ‘jump’ to mean that the Spirit of God can do new things, contingent things, surprising things. It happens when the Spirit ‘touches’ (aanraking) us or the world. Through the Spirit God touches humanity and so changes a person. This work of the Spirit often remains hidden, and it keeps the person continuously dependent (blijvend afhankelijk) and in a struggle of the Spirit against the flesh and the flesh against the Spirit.

However, all this does not preclude Van Ruler from speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit as a ‘mixing’ (vermenging). This is part of the structure and work of the Holy Spirit. It means that neither the one nor the other dominates, but that there is a ‘mixing’ of sinfulness with the goodness and salvation obtained by Christ and applied to us by the Spirit. It is a synthesis of the particular (bijzondere) and the universal (algemene), a synthesis of redemption and creation. Such a mixing would not be possible in the relationship with Christ; that would lead to elevation and divinisation. In the work of the Holy Spirit this mixing leads to christianisation (kerstening), but it is never perfected and therefore remains in torso. Paul Roy Fries asks: “Does the Spirit take us above Christ, in contemplation and meditation, to the very council of God …?” Van Ruler does not answer this positively, but does say that through the work of the Spirit an identity – a theonomous and ‘content identity’ – is created, which capacitates a person, so that God’s

77 Van Ruler, Verwachting en voltooiing, 37.
78 Van Ruler, ‘Structuurverschillen’, 186.
79 Van Ruler, 'Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie', 17.
80 Van Ruler, 'Structuurverschillen', 187.
81 Fries, Hope for a Truly Human Existence, 105.
judgements become our judgements. “Through the work of the Spirit we come to mirror the very thoughts of God.”

This expands the explanation of ‘theopoiesis’ as a pneumatological concept. Van Ruler stresses that the Christological and pneumatological lines cross each other regularly, but that the pneumatological emphasis is stronger in regard to the kingdom. Through the Spirit the relationship between God and humankind is recreated after the image of God. This does not happen in the eschaton, but already in the present, the here and now. It is part of the presence of the future kingdom of God.

In summary, Van Ruler stresses the presence of the kingdom in the world, which happens through the working of the Spirit. It is the Spirit of God who brings the eschaton from the future. It is the Spirit who helps believers sing, pray and work to the glory of God, a glory to which God is entitled as Ruler and King. It is the Spirit who assists the ‘being’ and living of believers in which they acknowledge God as King.

c. Image of God

Van Ruler often speaks of the ‘image of God’. We have been created in the image of God. This means that God intended us to be ‘beings’, who would reflect his glory, who would manage his creation and give to him the praise and worship due to God. This

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82 Fries, Hope for a Truly Human Existence, 106.
83 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 182. “…many of the crossing lines, which we found in the relation between the Holy Spirit and the Christ, can be clarified somewhat from the future of God. (Because) … the living God present himself through the Spirit and in Christ in the present.”
84 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 181. “The Spirit is more clearly the power and the modality of the kingdom than that the Messiah is its representative.” [De Geest is duidelijker de dynamis en de zijnswijze van het rijk, dan dat de messias er de representant van is.]
85 Van Ruler, 'Structuurverschillen', 189.
86 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 162. “De Geest is het eschaton zelf als Dynamis in antizipierend Erstanbruch, of ook: het eschaton als vorwirkende Dynamis.” Here Van Ruler mixes Dutch and German. (“The Spirit itself is the eschaton as the power of the anticipated first beginnings, or also: the eschaton as proactive power.”)
praise and worship is part of daily life. It is not to be interpreted in a docetic manner or as ‘churchy’ or ‘pietistic’. The image of God is reflected in the creature’s being and personality, in the whole of life and work, in engineering, art, housekeeping, marriage and family life. The whole of life is the praise of God. This is made possible by the indwelling of the Spirit, who permeates our being and our doing. The result is that believers do not become, but are God’s glory.\(^87\) As stated before, the Spirit indwells people in such a way that a person is, wills and acts as God is, wills and acts. The Spirit leads us into faith, hope, love and action. In this manner people not only become, but are, the image of God. In this way people reflect the life and service of Christ and thereby are and become more and more like Christ. This is our creaturely calling and destiny.\(^88\)

Van der Kooi summarises Van Ruler here in this way: “In the work of the Spirit, we are drawn with our thinking, believing and feeling into the actions of God.”\(^89\) Speaking about the questions, What is God’s plan? What is the purpose of it all? Van Ruler says that the work of the Holy Spirit is to answer these questions:

He (i.e. the Holy Spirit) places us in faith, hope and love. He causes the whole kingdom to be present. He gives us new knowledge of God and his decrees; he places us in true communion with the triune God, with humanity and with all things, including eternal life. He draws the lines of salvation (heil) and of eternal glory through the whole of individual and communal existence.\(^90\)

The work of the Spirit encompasses the whole of reality and brings about the presence of the eschatological kingdom of God. He brings all that God wants the believer to have, he empowers the believer. He imparts the benefits of Christ and enables the creature to be

\(^{87}\) Van Ruler, ’Structuurverschillen’, 190

\(^{88}\) Cf. Pannenberg: “Only on the premise of this ecstatic elevation (by faith) to Jesus Christ can it be said conversely that Christ is in us (Rom.8:10; cf.Gal.2:20) and with him the love of God that came to light in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Rom.5:5ff.) and that renews us inwardly (2Cor.4:16) after the pattern of Christ in which our destiny to be the image of God is manifested (cf.Col.3:10).” Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology Vol.3*, trans. Geoffrey W Bromiley (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998 ), Vol.3, 200.

\(^{89}\) Van der Kooi, ’De moed tot leven’, 52.

\(^{90}\) Van Ruler, ’Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie’, 25.
and to live as the image of God.\textsuperscript{91} This image is not restricted to humankind in a narrow way, but includes the whole of our cultural, political and historical reality. It is “…. The Spirit who makes the human existence (existentie) what it is, namely the image of God.”\textsuperscript{92}

d. The content of the image

What is the content of the image of God? To answer that question it is necessary to look to Christ. The incarnate One is the true image of God. In all that he was, did and proclaimed, he was the true image of God. He was truly human and revealed true humanity. In response, humanity is invited to become like him, in order to become truly human. Being, acting and living as true humans, humanity is to be like Christ. Christ is the image of God and the closer humans live to him, the more they become the image of God. Not only are believers with him, but also in him. Again, the content of the image cannot be sought in a ‘substance’ or a characteristic, but is found in a relationship, a relationship established and maintained by faith.

There is a close connection here between the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit. By faith Christ is in and with the believer and is the believer’s substitute, taking his or her place, but the believer is also in him and with him.\textsuperscript{93} The work of the Spirit causes us to be, not only ‘insitio’ (implanted [in him]), but also ‘insertio’(added [to him]). This results in the ‘unio mystica cum Christo’. This is the pneumatological opposite of the unio

\textsuperscript{91} Cf. Fries: “The unio mystica cum Christo is the means by which that kingdom enters existence. But the unio mystica demands the inhabitatio Spiritus Sancti. The Spirit enters into the forms of human existence, uniting creation with Christ, and stamping reality with the imago Christi which is the impress of God’s own kingdom.” Fries, Hope for a Truly Human Existence, 103.

\textsuperscript{92} Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 221 cf. also 206.

\textsuperscript{93} Pannenberg says: “The Pauline message about Christ, however, relates such statements, along with what they say about the divine likeness, to the manifestation of the image of God in Jesus Christ (2Cor.4:4). The Easter message explains this, for new and imperishable life was manifested with the resurrection of Jesus. The image of this second Adam that all are meant to bear (1 Cor.15:49) is that of the Creator in the sense of Gen.1:26f., after which we are now to be renewed or refashioned (Col.3:10).” Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, Vol.2, 219, 220.
personalis.\textsuperscript{94} It needs to be noted that Van Ruler does not state that the content of the kingdom is Christ. Christ is a moment in the kingdom, he may even be called the pivot and the hinge of the kingdom, but he is not the totality or the content of the kingdom. Neither is the believer, but through the Holy Spirit and his work, humanity and the whole created reality become part of the kingdom.\textsuperscript{95} That is why the presence of the kingdom would not be possible without the presence of the Spirit. In fact, Van Ruler states: “The time or dispensation (bedeling) of the Spirit is a mode of the kingdom.”\textsuperscript{96} Again: “The Spirit is even more clearly the power (dynamis) and the modality of the kingdom than is the Messiah, who is the representative of the kingdom.”\textsuperscript{97}

The Spirit not only indwells the creatures, but also the whole of creation. Van Ruler poetically says that “every year the leaves on the trees could not become green without the working of the Spirit.”\textsuperscript{98} As in all aspects of Van Ruler’s theology, also in his pneumatology, it is the creation that is the final purpose of God’s work. It is Van Ruler’s attempt to overcome the chasm which sin has brought about, Van der Kooi says: “Van Ruler states that the Spirit is the power which seeks a synthesis with the creation. The Spirit rests, not when everything has returned to God, but when the world and all that is separate from God is incorporated in his kingdom and will.”\textsuperscript{99}

In summary, the Spirit enables the human to be the ‘image of God’, in that the human becomes God’s co-worker. Van Ruler puts it clearly this way:

\begin{quote}
All the work of God (which includes history) wants to take on the form (gestalte) of the work of humankind. The work that is done by people is also the work of God. In that way people are also called
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{94} Van Ruler, ‘Structuurverschillen’, 188.
\textsuperscript{95} Arnold A Van Ruler, ‘De kerk in de komende cultuur [The church in the coming culture]’ in Theologisch Werk, Deel 5 [Theological Works, Vol 5], (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1972) 100-102.
\textsuperscript{96} Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 137.
\textsuperscript{97} Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 181.
\textsuperscript{98} Van Ruler, ‘Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie’ 313. Loose translation.
to give account *(tot verantwoording geroepen)*. This also means that God’s work, like the work of humankind, is essentially of a secular and worldly character.\textsuperscript{100}

5.5 *The Holy Spirit and anticipation*

Although the concept of ‘anticipation’ will receive fuller attention in the next chapter, it is necessary here to show the relation between the work of the Holy Spirit and anticipation. Van Ruler gave attention to this relation in an address originally given on radio in 1957,\textsuperscript{101} and again in 1973, as part of a larger theological work.\textsuperscript{102} He states that we ought not to speak of the gifts of the Spirit in the plural, for the Spirit himself is the gift of God. Although it is possible, according to the New Testament, to give many names to the Spirit, Van Ruler also calls the Spirit ‘the Spirit of promise and of *bebaiosis*,’ i.e. of confirmation and establishment. The Spirit not only promises a future, but also confirms that future and establishes that future in the present in an anticipatory way. Van Ruler writes:

> …the Spirit and the gift of the Spirit are our present relation to the world, as it will be in the eschaton, according to God’s initial and final purpose. In other words, the gift of the Spirit is our present relation to the kingdom of God as, in and from Christ, a present kingdom. We taste the powers of the coming world. The Spirit is our advocate with the Father and the Son and therefore our Comforter – and in both aspects everything he does concerns the world, so that we learn to experience the world as God experiences the world and as God wants us to experience the world. Is that a realisation of the kingdom of God? Is it the beginning of the kingdom? In any case, the kingdom does not have just one form, namely the church. More than life in the church, life in the world is the kingdom of God, destined to be kingdom of God. Already in the creation, the created reality, everything that is, and the fact that there really is something, is anticipation of the eschaton … The relation of the Spirit with the kingdom and the world is even more important than his relation with Christ and his work. In the Holy Spirit the kingdom has received a firm foundation on earth, by which the world is saved.\textsuperscript{103}

Sometimes Van Ruler is given to overstatement, particularly when he says that “The relation of the Spirit with the kingdom and the world is more important than the relation

\textsuperscript{100} Arnold A Van Ruler, *Eschatologische Notities* [Eschatological Notes], in *Theologisch Werk, Deel 1 [Theological Works, Vol 1]*, (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1969), 230.

\textsuperscript{101} Van Ruler, ‘Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie’, 289ff.

\textsuperscript{102} Van Ruler’s ‘Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie’ was published earlier in Theologisch Werk, Deel 6 [Theological Works Vol.6] in 1973.

\textsuperscript{103} Van Ruler, ‘Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie’, 303.
with Christ.” It is not correct to make a distinction here between the importance and value of the work of the Spirit and that of Christ. And therefore it almost sounds like a contradiction of an earlier statement, in which he says that the kingdom has received a firm foundation in the saving work of Christ. Van Ruler is clearly trying very hard to present the work of the Spirit as unique and different, giving it a relative independence, from the work of Christ.

It is also clear from this long quotation that we cannot separate the Spirit from the world or from the kingdom. It is the Spirit who helps us live in anticipation of the completed kingdom, the kingdom that in various ways is proleptically already with us. This brings us to the aspect of the future in the work of the Holy Spirit.

In the theology of Van Ruler the presence of the future comes to expression in the work of the Holy Spirit. “Eschatologically the kingdom is coming. At present the kingdom is actually coming. Historically the kingdom has come.” This does not mean that the completed kingdom is with us; the kingdom remains in torso, i.e. incomplete, hidden and imperfect until the eschaton. The kingdom is with us soteriologically, in that we are justified through the work of Christ, and ontologically, in that we have become the ‘image of God’, the actual co-workers and co-labourers of God in this world. This is the presence of the Kingdom that comes from the future. To put it differently, the Spirit takes the kingdom from Christ and gives it form in history until in the eschaton the Spirit will

104 Cf. quotation above.
105 Cf. Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 82. “The kingdom of God is absolutely bound to the person of Jesus Christ.] Het koningrijk God is absoluut gebonden aan de person van Jesus Christus.] a.o.
106 Pannenberg also speaks of the ‘image’ and the future destiny of humanity, he says: “We must understand our present life, and especially our personality, in terms of this future destiny. It is thus that our future destiny manifests itself.” Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, Vol. 2, 224.
107 Van Ruler, ‘De kerk in de komende cultuur’, 102.
return the kingdom to the Father. There creation in its ‘nakedness’ will be all in all with God.  

Van Ruler clearly states that the future is among us in the present. He says: “The kingdom of God has broken into (binnengebroken) the world. God’s future has been established in the present.”  

Even more, already we are able to enjoy the coming kingdom. “The Spirit also enables people to enjoy the kingdom of glory. Already we taste the powers of the coming age.”

Despite the ineradicable tension of the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ of the kingdom, it is possible – even necessary – to speak of the presence of the future kingdom among us. Therefore, already here and now, the renewal of the imago Dei can be experienced by us though not yet in a complete and perfect way. Indeed, Van Ruler declares that “the whole created reality as such – in that there is something and not nothing – already is anticipation!”

This is the anticipatory presence of the kingdom, expressed in every aspect of our daily life. That which will be perfected in the eschaton is brought into the present by the Spirit and has begun to transform human life and community.

Thus our life before God is already eschatologically formed. We are reminded of Psalm 8, where the Psalmist says: “You have made them (human beings) a little lower than God,

108 Arnold A Van Ruler, ‘De Verhouding van het kosmologische en het eschatologische element in de Christologie’ [The relation between the cosmological and eschatological element in the Christology], in Verzameld Werk, Deel 4A [Collected Works, Vol.4A], ed. Dirk van Keulenl, (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2011), 171. Cf. also Van Ruler, ‘Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie’ 28. Van der Kooi makes the following remark about the expression ‘naked existence’. “The question which one could ask Van Ruler in connection with this expression, is whether we can call the redeemed existence, naked existence. Once there has been the touching by the Spirit, once the pleat (vouw) has been pressed into our world by what the Spirit has done with people, then one would expect this to be expressed in the wording that this existence has been clothed (overkleed) with glory.” In other words, Van der Kooi says that ‘naked’ is misplaced, for in the eschaton we are clothed with glory. Cf. Van der Kooi, ‘De moed tot leven’ 53.

109 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 141.

110 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 159.

111 Van Ruler, ‘De kerk in de komende cultuur’ 103.
and crowned them with glory and honour.\footnote{NRSV Psalm 8:5; cursive mine.} Fries draws attention to the fact that this lifts humanity to an incredible height.

The Spirit leads beyond its own indwelling to the eternal song of praise of the kingdom. In so doing, the Spirit leads man to his fullest humanity, raising him to an incredible stature. This is the final goal. The indwelling work of the Spirit, since it draws nearer to the goal, can itself be seen as the provisional goal, while the work of the Messiah finds its best description in the word means.\footnote{Fries, \textit{Hope for a Truly Human Existence}, 108.}

Very pertinently Fries adds: “In short, man lives eternal life pneumatologically.”\footnote{Fries, \textit{Hope for a Truly Human Existence}, 111.}

Well may we add, here and now!