Chapter 6. The anticipation of the kingdom. ¹

6.1 The history and development of the idea of anticipation.

a. Introduction

This chapter will trace the history and development of the idea of ‘anticipation’. It will commence with Johannes Weiss, for his theology brought about a profound change in the understanding of Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God as emphatically eschatological. Next, a step back will be made to see how the idea of “prolepsis” and “anticipation” developed over the centuries. The reintroduction of the concept of “prolepsis” became a catalyst for the development of the idea of “anticipation”. This necessitates going backwards and forwards a little in history, rather than following a strictly chronological order. After the use of the idea of “anticipation” in history and antiquity it will be shown how Pannenberg and Van Ruler used this idea in their theology. The comparison with Pannenberg is made chiefly because of his extensive working out of the concept of anticipation. The chapter will also include a discussion of the concept of the future, in particular its presence already here and now. However, we begin with the last decade of the 19th century.

b. Johannes Weiss

In 1892 Johannes Weiss wrote a booklet of 67 pages which changed the course of the study of eschatology within theology. ² “It was this work, … which marks the turning point from nineteenth to twentieth century New Testament research” states the Introduction. ³ It recognised Jesus’ eschatological emphasis

¹ Cf. Chapter 2 and 3 for Van Ruler’s views on the kingdom of God.
³ Keck, ed., Die Predigt Jesu, 2.
in his ministry. This idea broke with the tradition of identifying the historical
Jesus with the Jesus of Christian piety or with the “liberal lives of Jesus”, the
quest of liberal theologians at that time.\textsuperscript{4} Weiss wanted to show how Jesus had
really understood the kingdom of God. Schleiermacher had placed the emphasis
on Christian experience: the kingdom of God was understood to refer to that
experience, as the rule of God in the hearts of humankind. The kingdom of God
was to be expressed in human piety which would gradually bring about a new
society. Against such understanding Weiss stated:

The kingdom of God as Jesus thought of it is never something subjective, inward, or
spiritual, but is always the objective messianic Kingdom, which usually is pictured as a
territory into which one enters, or as a land in which one has a share, or as a treasure
which comes down from heaven.\textsuperscript{5}

There were two concerns that mainly occupied Weiss. The first was the
historical question of what the New Testament revealed about Jesus’ thought
and teaching regarding the kingdom of God. Here he broke with the teaching of
his father-in-law, Albrecht Ritschl, and all those influenced by the theology of
the Enlightenment.\textsuperscript{6} Weiss’ publication was based on New Testament research,
but was contrary to the Ritschlian views held at that time. According to Weiss,
the kingdom was not to be understood primarily in moral terms or as a
relationship of love for God and humankind. Weiss claimed Jesus’
understanding of the kingdom to be thoroughly eschatological.

Weiss showed that the source for Jesus’ understanding of the kingdom was a
form of late Jewish ‘apocalyptic eschatology’. This is shown in the emphasis on
the transcendence of the kingdom of God. The creation will be renewed. He

\textsuperscript{4} Keck, ed., Die Predigt Jesu, 3.
\textsuperscript{5} Keck, ed., Die Predigt Jesu, 133.
\textsuperscript{6} Keck, ed., Die Predigt Jesu, 6, reports that Weiss delayed the publication of his views until
after the death of his father-in-law.
says, “This event of a new creation and transformation of the world is most clearly intimated by Jesus … Jesus, too, seems to have expected a new heaven and a new earth. In any case, he declared that he would drink of the fruit of the vine anew in the Kingdom of God his Father (Mark 14:25.).” This kingdom cannot be transposed into this present world, neither can it be developed gradually from a small beginning. The kingdom is to come from the future and it can only be awaited prayerfully. Liberal theology at that time thought the kingdom was an assignment; through moral effort humankind was to build the kingdom on earth. Weiss said, “The Kingdom was a gift, not an assignment.”

Every person is encouraged to live in such a way as to be prepared for the coming of the kingdom. Instead of the kingdom being the goal, it becomes the motive for one’s life. The kingdom is eitel Gnade, pure grace. The coming of the kingdom was an event to be brought about solely by God in the future. Believing it to come from the future meant that it was expected.

Yet Weiss’ conception was not without problems. He struggled with the New Testament texts that stressed the presence of the kingdom. Weiss shifted his position somewhat in the two following editions of Die Predigt Jesu. He rejected the hypothesis that Jesus visualised the kingdom in two stages, namely the ‘fulfilment’ of the kingdom and the ‘consummation or completion’ of the kingdom. Weiss claimed that such a view is not supported by the New Testament. He said Jesus did not teach his disciples to pray for the completion, but the coming of the kingdom. Neither did Weiss accept that the kingdom

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7 Keck, ed., Die Predigt Jesu, 93. Italics his.
8 Keck, ed., Die Predigt Jesu, 129. Weiss said: “The disciples were to pray for the coming of the kingdom, but men could do nothing to establish it.”
9 Keck, ed., Die Predigt Jesu, 10.
10 Keck, ed., Die Predigt Jesu, 11.
must be equated with the church; rather, he stressed that the kingdom will come in the future.

It is asserted by the editors of *Die Predigt Jesu* that Weiss did not really solve the paradox that the kingdom is both present and future.\(^{12}\) Weiss said, “Alongside such expressions as these, however, [namely those that imply the presence of the kingdom] stands a great profusion of sayings in which the establishment of the Kingdom remains reserved for the future, whether near or distant. This relationship between these two types of sayings is to be explained by reference to the parallelism implicit in the religious viewpoint mentioned above: Satan’s kingdom is already broken, the rule of God is already gaining ground; but it has not yet become a historical event.”\(^{13}\)

Later, Albert Schweizer followed Weiss’ emphasis on the eschatological nature of the kingdom.

The idea of the Passion is dominated *only* by the eschatological conception of the Kingdom. In the charge to the Twelve the question is *only* about the eschatological - not about the ethical - nearness of the Kingdom. From this it follows, for one thing, that Jesus’ ministry counted *only* upon the eschatological realisation of the Kingdom.\(^{14}\)

With his emphasis on *only* it is clear that Schweizer did not allow another interpretation.

In summary, Johannes Weiss gave a new direction and impetus to the interpretation of the New Testament concept of the kingdom of God in that he showed that the eschatological interpretation is the one that describes Jesus’ mission most accurately. The kingdom is not something subjective, but comes

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\(^{12}\) Keck, ed., *Die Predigt Jesu*, 43.

\(^{13}\) Keck, ed., *Die Predigt Jesu*, 79.

down from heaven.\(^{15}\) The kingdom is the rule of God.\(^{16}\) The kingdom to come will not abolish this world, but this world will become the showplace of the people of God.\(^{17}\) The way was cleared for a different understanding and emphasis of the kingdom of God in the future.

c. *Clement of Alexandria*

Clement was a formidable teacher who wrote during the years 175 - 200 CE. He also maintained that the relationship between theology and philosophy was important. Of greatest interest in the context of this study is his use of the notion of prolepsis. The word prolepsis (προληψις) has been in use for a long time, but not always with the same meaning. The word comes from the verb *pro-lambano* which means literally ‘to take beforehand’, ‘to take before time’ or to ‘anticipate’. In ancient philosophy it was used to mean ‘pre-conception’. To say that something is ‘proleptic’ means to say that something is anticipated ahead of its time.

Clement connected the Christian faith with the philosophical understanding of knowledge. In this way he thought to make the Christian faith more acceptable generally. Clement moves from this understanding to say that faith, itself proleptic, is the foundation of knowledge. Mostert, referring to Book 2 of the *Stomateis*, says that Clement’s argument can be expressed in the form of a syllogism: 1. There is no knowledge without prolepsis. 2. Faith is proleptic. 3. Therefore faith is indispensable to knowledge.\(^{18}\) Clement moves from this

\(^{15}\) Keck, ed., Die Predigt Jesu, 133.
\(^{16}\) Keck, ed., Die Predigt Jesu, 134.
\(^{17}\) Keck, ed., Die Predigt Jesu, 135.
position later by saying that knowledge based on Christian faith, which comes from the Scriptures, is the surest knowledge of all.\textsuperscript{19}

Kugelmann states that the word ‘anticipation’ is now used as a theological concept, but this was not always the case. He showed the development of the concept of anticipation through philosophical and theological history. He showed the Greek origins of ‘prolepsis’ and how the Stoics, and also Clement of Alexandria used this term. They claimed that there is a natural knowledge of God, but the difference is accentuated in that Clement claims that especially ‘fear’ leads to a knowledge of God. This knowledge or faith ‘reaches ahead’ (\textit{vorwegnehmen}) to the knowledge that “All beings obtain from all points of departure a relationship with the Father and Creator of the universe by way of their natural disposition and without education.”\textsuperscript{20} Clement developed this into a concept of prolepsis in order to have a basis for faith within the theory of cognition as accepted in his day.\textsuperscript{21} On the one hand, Clement defended the Christian faith over against the ‘Greek philosophy’; on the other hand, he also accentuated the proleptic structure of faith. He also made a distinction between prolepsis and \textit{katalepsis}, the latter being related to scientific explanation. Until that time the two terms were used interchangeably.\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{19} Mostert, 3.
\textsuperscript{20} Lothar Kugelmann, \textit{Antizipation; Eine begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung} [Anticipation, A historical concept research ], (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht,, 1985), 121. “Dieser Glaube aber ist eine "προληψίς", weil er "vorweggenommen" (\textit{αντιλαμβανειν}) wird: ”Alle Wesen gewinnen von allem Ausgangspunkten her eine Beziehung (\textit{αντιλαμβανεται}) zu dem Vater und Schöpfer des Weltalls durch ihre natürliche Anlage und ohne Unterricht.”
\textsuperscript{21} Kugelmann, \textit{Antizipation}, 121.
\textsuperscript{22} Kugelmann, \textit{Antizipation}, 125.
d. Kugelmann

In the previous section it has been shown that Kugelmann is helpful to the discussion for presenting a comprehensive historical overview of the idea of ‘anticipation’, including its contemporary use. He not only draws attention to the German word ‘Antizipation’, but also ‘Vorgriff’ (grasping ahead or reaching forward, i.e. a form of anticipation) and ‘prolepsis’ (which is close to ‘anticipation’). He also shows the connection between ‘prolepsis’ and the understanding of time. Humans know about death and time and this causes them to reflect on ‘being’ or reality (Dasein) itself. This is illustrated in the work of Heidegger\(^\text{23}\) and Bultmann.\(^\text{24}\) They imply that humans’ knowledge of their coming death has a direct bearing on faith. Kugelmann summarises this point this way: “…that Bultmann takes up (übernimmt), indeed in a consistent manner, Heidegger’s existential analysis of ‘Dasein’. This comes to expression in that the power of faith is to be characterised as an anticipatory whole in Heidegger’s sense (here the ‘preliminary decision’ (vorlaufende Entschlossenheit) has become the reality (Eigentlichkeit)).”\(^\text{25}\) What this means is shown in the following sentence. “The believer takes the concrete future decisions of love, to some extent, in advance.”\(^\text{26}\) In other words, the believer anticipates them.


\(^{25}\) Kugelmann, Antizipation, 205, 206. ”So kann zusammenfassend gesagt werden, daß Bultmann tatsächlich in konsequenter Weise die ontologische Daseinsanalyse Heideggers übernimmt. Dies drückt sich inhaltlich darin aus, daß selbst der Glaubensvollzug noch als antizipativer ganz im Sinne Heideggers (hier vollzog sich die Übernahme der Eigentlichkeit als ”vorlaufende Entschlossenheit“) gekennzeichnet werden kann.”

\(^{26}\) Kugelmann, Antizipation, 206. “Der Glaubende nimmt im Glauben gewissermaßen die konkreten einzelnen Liebesentscheidungen der Zukunft voraus.”
According to Kugelmann, Karl Rahner uses the idea of ‘Vorgriff’ and ‘Antizipation’ as a form of experience. God becomes ‘the last subject’ of anticipation.\textsuperscript{27} It would lead too far from our subject to review the entire discussion that Kugelmann offers in his historical and philosophical study. More pertinent is the fact Kugelmann accentuates (in the theological context) Johannes Weiss’ use of ‘anticipation’ in an original exegetical manner in his theology of the kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{28} Expanding on what was said above, Weiss says that the essence of Jesus’ message is the certainty that the kingdom is coming. This certainty, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the view that the kingdom has already come, lead to the ‘proleptic’ statements of Jesus. What this ‘prolepsis’ or ‘anticipation’ means Weiss explains by way of an image. He compares the interweaving of the present and future of the kingdom in the proclamation of Jesus with the coming of a thunderstorm. “When the thunder clouds are approaching and the lightning can already be seen on the horizon, one may say ‘a thunderstorm is building’. One can also ‘proleptically’ say ‘there is a thunderstorm’.”\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{27} Cf. Kugelmann: “Rahners “Vorgriff” und Kants “Antizipation der Form der Erfahrung” in Kugelmann, Antizipation, 209 ff. Cf. also “… weil Rahners Absicht immer mehr auf eine allgemeine Grundlegung der Gotteserfahrung und des Zugangs zu Gott überhaupt hinauslief”. […] because Rahner’s intention is more and more a general foundation for an experience of God and moves towards an openness to God.,] 346, note 27.

\textsuperscript{28} Cf. Kugelmann: “Die antizipierte Struktur des Gottesreiches bei Johannes Weiss. “Wie es auch immer um die Kontextualität der 1892 erschienenen Schrift von J. Weiss über “Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes” bestellt sein mag, kann doch nicht bestritten werden, dass hier in profiliertier Weise durch eine exegetische Argumentation die eschatologische Bedingheit der Predigt Jesu aufgewiesen wird. Sofern nun in diesem Zusammenhang der Begriff Antizipation virulent wird, sind die Aussagen von Weiss von vorneherein für unsere Themenstellung von Interesse.” Kugelmann, Antizipation, 23 – 25. [However one may evaluate the context of the 1892 publication of J. Weiss on ‘Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God’, it cannot be denied that here, by clearly outlined exegetical argument the eschatological nature of Jesus’ proclamation is demonstrated. Insofar as in this context the concept of anticipation is clarified, these assertions of Weiss are of interest for our theme.]

\textsuperscript{29} Kugelmann, Antizipation, 24. “Wenn die Witterwolken aufziehen und die Blitze schon am Horizont zucken, so mag man sagen: es kommt ein Gewitter. Mann kann aber auch proleptisch sagen: es ist Gewitter”.

Kugelmann says that this means that the sayings of Jesus regarding the present have within them a proleptic structure which points to the future of the kingdom. “In the proclamation of Jesus the kingdom of God remains, even when stated as present, a greater future reality, because these sayings are simply presentiments of something new, bold anticipations of the consummation.”30 It is clear that Weiss opened up new vistas and made use of the concept of prolepsis in a new way.

In the third part of Kugelmann’s book entitled: ‘Concept of anticipation; a critical introduction into an eschatological (proleptic) ontology’, he draws attention to the fact that both ‘anamnesis’ and ‘prolepsis’ are temporal terms, insofar as the past can only be remembered and the future can only be anticipated; an equalisation of both concepts is therefore wrong.” Kugelmann goes on to describe the way that ‘anamnesis’ and ‘prolepsis’ have been used in history. His object is not so much to give an explanation of the concept of anticipation itself, but to clarify “…the meaning and function of the important structure of anticipation for theology and its inherent boundaries in relation to the meaning given within philosophical argumentation.”31 He also shows the development of ‘anticipation’ (Vorgriff) into a proleptic ontological concept and illustrates its use by Bloch, Moltmann and Pannenberg.

After a discussion of Moltmann, Kugelmann states that “Through the idea of anticipation … the emphasis on the present effective operations of God in his

31 Kugelmann, Antizipation, 237.
creation and his outstanding coming future is to be expressed.”  

It is clear that Kugelmann underscores the possibility of the anticipation of the kingdom of God in the present and thus the presence of the future.

According to Kugelmann, the significance of the concept of anticipation has become evident in the modern history of theology only since the discovery by J. Weiss of the eschatological dimension of the proclamation of Jesus. He says: “… until then one could speak of a pact between modern self-engaged reason with the theology of progress, where the foundation of the kingdom of God on earth by Jesus became a seminal point of departure, particularly in regard to Christian praxis this side of the consummation.” In Kugelmann’s view, the emphasis on the presence of the kingdom of God brings about and makes possible a new quality of the kingdom of God in regard to its future and its effects already in the present.

In summary, the value of Kugelmann’s work lies in the fact that he traces the development of the concepts of ‘prolepsis’ and ‘anticipation’ through history. He clarifies the use of ‘prolepsis’ by Clement of Alexandria. He underlines Johannes Weiss’ observation that anticipation is an eschatological concept, based on the future opened up by Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom of God. He further explains how ‘prolepsis’ is understood by Bultmann and Heidegger, as well as the use of Vorgriff by Rahner. He shows that these concepts have slowly developed over centuries into the concept as now used in theology.

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34 Kugelmann, *Antizipation*, 286.
particularly by Pannenberg.\footnote{Kugelmann, Antizipation, 265. Kugelmann criticises Moltmann’s method of obtaining knowledge about the future via ‘extrapolation’ “The future is extrapolated from the facts and the processes of the past and the present.” Kugelmann, Antizipation, 265. Kugelmann states that Bloch grounded extrapolation on an empirical basis, while Moltmann grounded his in the promises of God.} It is clear that there was indeed a development in regard to the meaning and use of the words anticipation and prolepsis.

It is important to note that Kugelmann’s dissertation was written in 1985. He was a student of Pannenberg, but could only rely on the earlier writings of Pannenberg. The most recent relevant work of Pannenberg quoted by Kugelmann is Grundfragen Systematischer Theologie of 1980. He could not include Pannenberg’s Systematic Theology or works after 1977. Neither does he dwell at length on the ontological sense of anticipation. He shows how throughout history the concept of prolepsis or anticipation developed from a form of faith, which included concepts available in the philosophical realm which were incorporated into the Christian faith. It developed from a noetic concept into an ontic concept, from a ‘gnosis’ to a matter of ‘being’ (Seinswesen). In a very significant sentence, he writes “In other words, the development of (the concept of) Vorgriff (a reaching forward/anticipation) includes an ontic-real fact, when this is denied it will consequently lead to the destruction of the concept of anticipation”.\footnote{Kugelmann, Antizipation, 280.}

This indicates that Kugelmann does see the ontic nature of prolepsis as important, in fact so important that without the ontic sense the idea of anticipation becomes much less significant. At the same time he states that in the framework of his study he cannot enter into a full discussion of this topic.\footnote{Kugelmann, Antizipation, 362.}

It means that in Kugelmann’s study, valuable as it is for tracing the historical...
development of the idea, he did not see it as being his task to give a full analysis of the meaning of anticipation, especially in its ontic sense, as Pannenberg developed it.

e.  *Jürgen Moltmann*

Moltmann also helps with an account of the history of ‘anticipation’. In *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* he speaks about ‘anticipation’ in the context of the messianic life brought about through the Lordship of Christ and gives a historical overview of the way the concept of ‘anticipation’ has been used. He mentions how Epicurus used the term ‘prolepsis’ in an epistemological sense, “to describe the preliminary concepts and tentative images through which we adapt ourselves to experience and true ideas.”38 Here ‘prolepsis’ does not yet have the meaning given it today, namely that it becomes virtually synonymous with ‘anticipation’, but it has a cognitive or epistemic sense, as a way of ordering our experience.

Moltmann also gives his own definition of ‘anticipation’. In the section, ‘The Anticipation of the Kingdom of God’, he writes “As the eschatological future the kingdom has become the power that determines the present. This future has already begun. We can already live in the light of the ‘new era’ in the circumstances of the ‘old’ one.”39 Moltmann says that the eschatological becomes historical in this way; he calls it ‘Messianic Mediation’ because it is brought about through the Lordship of Christ. In faith we hunger for seeing ‘face to face’. Yet “the presence of the Spirit puts the new creation into

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force." As a result, the experienced liberation is understood as a ‘fore-token’ of the resurrection of the dead. “The messianic life is in this sense not life in constant deferment, but life in anticipation. Just as the messianic era stands under the token of ‘not yet’, so it also stands under the sign of the ‘no longer’ and therefore under the sign of ‘already’.” It means that we do not ‘put off’ till later, but live a life of anticipation now; proleptically we live the ‘not yet’ full redemption ‘already’.

Moltmann also gives an important insight into the meaning of anticipation when he writes, “An anticipation is not yet a fulfilment. But it is already the presence of the future in the conditions of history. It is a fragment of the coming whole. It is a payment in advance of complete fulfilment and part-possession of what is still to come.” A ‘fulfilment’ is more than an anticipation and an anticipation is in part a fulfilment. Fulfilment refers to the consummation and the perfection of the kingdom. Moltmann does not deny that anticipation refers to the completion of the eschaton, but says,

If the anticipation pars pro toto represents a fragmentary taking possession of the coming whole, then the part anticipated stands in the present, not only ahead of the whole but at the same time for the whole. Anticipations are hence always a preliminary taking possession of what is to come … Anticipations in both knowledge and life therefore always have a representative character for something else and for other people.

It is clear that Moltmann does not make a clear and conceptual distinction between a ‘noetic’ anticipation and an ‘ontological’ anticipation, as Mostert does. Nevertheless it is clear that Moltmann uses anticipation in an ontic sense. His distinction between ‘anticipation’ and ‘fulfilment’ helps in the

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discussion of Van Ruler’s understanding of anticipation, seeing that Van Ruler uses the term ‘fulfilment’ (*vervulling*) very often when referring to the anticipation of the kingdom.

Speaking about the historical context regarding the anticipation of the kingdom, Mostert writes, “Its use, especially when equated with ‘prolepsis’, has a long history, not only in theology but in philosophy.” He says: “The concept of ‘anticipation’ (or ‘prolepsis’) plays a role in discussion of many subjects. However, Pannenberg has given it an importance in systematic theology unparalleled by any other theologian.” How much its importance has grown is shown by Mostert when he quotes Pannenberg and says:

> The category of anticipation or prolepsis, which was originally introduced to describe the distinctive structure of the history of Jesus, especially of his resurrection, … shows itself to be a fundamental structural element both of cognition and of language, and of the being of beings in their temporality.  

Clearly the concept of ‘anticipation’ has grown in importance in theology and taken on a very distinctive meaning, far beyond its original noetic or epistemic context.

*f. The anticipation of the kingdom*

After having looked at the concepts of ‘prolepsis’ and ‘anticipation’, it is necessary to see their use in connection with the idea of the kingdom of God. The term ‘the anticipation of the kingdom’ has been used by various theologians and the question remains whether they all mean the same thing. It is therefore necessary to give a clear indication of what is meant by this phrase in this study, namely as a ‘pre-actualisation’ of the eschaton. This implies

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47 Mainly: W Pannenberg, J Moltmann, L Kugelmann and A A Van Ruler.
motion, the movement of the eschaton coming from the future towards us in the present. It implies the presence of the future, because the eschaton is present already in a proleptic manner, ahead of its time. The eschaton, i.e. the fulfilment of the kingdom of God, is present in its anticipation. Anticipation here means more than expectation. An expectation is a mental and noetic movement from us towards the future. An anticipation, its ontological sense, is a pre-actualisation of a future reality. The distinction between ontic and noetic is crucial here, for ‘anticipation’ also has a noetic sense, when it denotes a mental act. This important distinction was first clearly introduced by Christiaan Mostert in his discussion of Pannenberg’s views on anticipation. This study is concerned with the ontic meaning of ‘anticipation’.

In the previous chapter it was shown that, in his theology, Van Ruler speaks of the presence of the future kingdom, for the kingdom of God has come in Christ and through the Spirit. The aim of this chapter is to show that, in his theology, Van Ruler uses the idea of the anticipation of the kingdom of God. At times this will be compared with the way other theologians use this idea.

**g. The presence of the future.**

Before moving to the concept ‘anticipation’ as used by Pannenberg and Van Ruler, it is necessary to look briefly at the notion of ‘the presence of the future’. This study is about the ‘presence of the future’ and implies a certain priority of the future. How does the future have priority over the present? Pannenberg speaks of the ‘priority of the future’. This is related to his view of time and

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God. For Pannenberg the coming rule of God, the ‘kingdom of God’, is the ultimate future. That ultimate future will establish God’s rule perfectly and completely. It will be the consummation, the eschaton. The ultimate future or eschaton is the rule and power of God.\(^{50}\) He states: “The deity of God is his rule.”\(^{51}\) In other words, the kingdom is inseparable from the very being of God, whose rule it is.

Commenting on Pannenberg’s view of the kingdom, Bradshaw writes “The kingdom of God is present as the future of God’s final reign proleptically arrived in Christ, and yet the future holds the fullness of this reign and our participation in it.”\(^{52}\) Bradshaw speaks of the ‘future perfect’, and the ‘future tense’ thereby stressing the dominance of the future aspect in Pannenberg’s theology. “It is surely a strength of Pannenberg’s very unusual ontology of the future perfect that historical freedom and contingency is given a ground in the freedom of God, ...”\(^{53}\) Mostert speaks of the ‘priority of the future’ and ‘an ontology in which primacy lies with the future’.\(^{54}\)

The future is related to the present suffering and hope of humanity, for in this suffering and hope people long for and reach out towards a better future, a better kingdom. This noetic sense of anticipation is also found in Pannenberg.\(^{55}\)

Important for this study, however, is his use of the ontic sense of anticipation

\(^{50}\) Pannenberg also states that God is the future; obviously his view of the future is related to his definition of God, which includes a new understanding of the ‘structure of reality’; cf. Richard J. Neuhaus, Wolfhart Pannenberg: Profile of a Theologian in Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom, 12. This subject matter is not included in this study.

\(^{51}\) Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom, 55. Cf. also Mostert, God and the Future, Ch. 4.

\(^{52}\) Timothy Bradshaw, Pannenberg: A Guide for the Perplexed (Wiltshire: T&T Clark, 2009), 102.

\(^{53}\) Bradshaw, A Guide for the Perplexed, 103.

\(^{54}\) Mostert, God and the Future, 19, 22 and 102 respectively.

and the priority of the future. For Pannenberg, God becomes the power of the future. This is shown, according to Pannenberg, in the relationship between Jesus’ message regarding the kingdom of God and the actual future coming of that kingdom. The message of Jesus regarding the kingdom of God already implies a proleptical presence of that kingdom. There is a direct relationship between the message of the kingdom and the presence of the kingdom.

Pannenberg illustrates this by referring to Jesus’ teaching of the kingdom of God. The kingdom is expressed as being present, while in actual fact it is not as yet completed. It is present in an anticipatory manner. “Futurity is fundamental for Jesus’ message.” No less is the presence of this future. This is shown particularly in Jesus’ resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus reveals already what the final meaning of that resurrection will be. That meaning is present already by way of anticipation. Now is revealed what actually is or is to come. The resurrection already reveals the final meaning, that the kingdom of God has ‘already’ come.

Pannenberg draws attention to the structural parallel between Jesus’ message of the kingdom of God and the resurrection of the dead. He writes, “The structural parallel between Jesus’ message of the kingdom of God and the event of his resurrection from the dead is remarkable: in both cases the future – in the one case, of the kingdom of God; in the other, of the eschatological resurrection of the dead – is viewed as already and actually having broken into history.”

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57 Pannenberg, Theology and the Kingdom, 54.
This is more than just a reality in waiting, more than what we hope for; it is a future reality proleptically present. Pannenberg writes: The final reality is present: in the case of the resurrection of Jesus, this reality has a continuing effect through the presence of the Spirit of life, for the resurrection of Jesus is believed to be the Spirit’s creative work.\textsuperscript{60}

This ontological priority of the future, remains a matter of faith and hope: it needs to be verified in the eschaton. “The truth of this anticipation hinges on the still-absent future. Only if that future actually arrives, was it in fact already present in the life of Jesus.”\textsuperscript{61} Yet, this does not diminish the value and meaning of these statements about the kingdom, because it is believed that proleptically that kingdom is present until shown otherwise.

This futurity is to be seen as a new ‘quality of being’.\textsuperscript{62} This future is not vague and unknown, but concrete and existent, according to Pannenberg. The future is a power which we can experience. At a time of suffering this power can be confronting, even frightening; yet at a time of hope this power is comforting and promising. In other words, for Pannenberg the future is not determined by the past or present, nor does this future only exist in our imagination. There is a reality and a power that can be ascribed to the future. Pannenberg relates this to time and eternity, for time is a moment of eternity and participates in eternity.\textsuperscript{63}

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{60} Pannenberg, \textit{Metaphysics and the Idea of God}, 95, 96.
  \item \textsuperscript{61} Pannenberg, \textit{Metaphysics and the Idea of God}, 96. Cf. Stanley J. Grenz, \textit{Reason for Hope; The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg} 2 ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publ. Company, 1990), 145. “Pannenberg asserts that the resurrection of Jesus remains an open event not only epistemologically, in the sense that its truth remains contestable until the eschaton, but also ontologically, in that its final meaning has not yet been determined.”
  \item \textsuperscript{62} Pannenberg, \textit{Basic Questions in Theology}, 241.
  \item \textsuperscript{63} Cf. the discussion of time in Ch. 3.7.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The future therefore, being a part of time, already takes on reality.\textsuperscript{64} Pannenberg emphasises the ontological priority of the future.

In relation to this, it might be asked whether Pannenberg stresses the future at the cost of the present? He maintains a fine balance between the present and the future, because he maintains the tension between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’. The ‘not yet’ is ‘already’ with us in some sense. He differentiates between the two, but does not separate them. The future has already come into the present in a proleptic, anticipatory way. Bradshaw puts it this way: “The resurrection of Jesus is the event anticipating the ultimate end of history and so disclosing its whole truth, and yet this resurrection is itself still ‘open’ and enriching its meaning as we move forward into the future, bringing past truth with us and forging ever new syntheses, which in turn are tried and tested and re-configured.”\textsuperscript{65} Bradshaw shows that the resurrection is the basis for futurity, because the eschaton, the ultimate end of history, will disclose the whole truth. Yet that truth is already with us proleptically, not in a static form, but ever renewing and being tested. In brief, Pannenberg does not diminish the past or the present, but helps us see both in the light of the future.

The future as the new ‘quality of being’, as shown above, is important for it is a theme that belongs to the coming of the kingdom. This is seen in the theology of Van Ruler as well as that of Pannenberg. That future can be spoken of in different ways, yet is already actualised in an anticipatory way in the present.

\textsuperscript{65} Bradshaw, \textit{A Guide for the Perplexed}, 15.
6.2. Pannenberg’s concept of ‘anticipation’.

a. The main motifs in Pannenberg’s theology

In the previous section we have been discussing Pannenberg’s emphasis on the future. In this section the main themes in his theology will be explored, followed by his discussion of anticipation.

At the risk of reducing a major thinker’s theology to a small number of main points, it is arguable that there are three main themes in the theology of Pannenberg. McClean argues that there are two main themes. He does not call them Grundprinzipien (basic principles), as Shults does, but they are nevertheless themes which determine the whole fabric of Pannenberg’s theology. The first is that everything comes under the doctrine of God, everything is sub ratione Dei. The second is the eschatological structure of his theology, of which anticipation is an aspect. A claim can be made for a third major theme, namely his stress on the ontological character of anticipation.

McClean correctly stresses that according to Pannenberg everything comes under the rule of God, everything is sub ratione Dei. The second theme is ‘anticipation’. He says: “Anticipation is not the Grundprinzip of Pannenberg’s

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66 McClean calls the themes ‘motifs’.

67 Mostert, God and the Future, 133. States that according to Pannenberg “God’s deity is God’s rule.”

68 Bradshaw, A Guide for the Perplexed, 102. The motif of anticipation is inseparable from the aspect of the future, the future of the kingdom, which in turn is connected with the future of God. Bradshaw summing up Pannenberg’s position says “The future remains the future in our historical continuum, and the kingdom of the Father remains in the future, however it has arrived proleptically in Christ.”

69 Mostert, God and the Future, 55ff. Mostert sums up Pannenberg’s position in a chapter called ‘An ontology of the whole’. And says: “Pannenberg’s ontology is indeed an eschatological ontology, in which the future has ontological priority.”, 56, 57.
thought but is indispensible to his project.” McClean states that in Pannenberg “… all assertions have the structure of anticipation.” Elsewhere he says: “Anticipation plays a precise role in Pannenberg’s thought and has special relation to Pannenberg’s Grundprinzip (i.e. sub ratione Dei) …[for] anticipation is the key motif which allows him to relate all things to God. Because he can argue that all reality anticipates an existence in God’s eternity to achieving this.” In this context it also needs to be said that for Pannenberg anticipation is a relational concept, “because it refers to the way in which identities change due to the unfolding of history. Pannenberg uses the motif of anticipation to claim that, although true identity is realised only at the end (i.e. in the eschaton), it is present proleptically during the process.” This is a good example of his understanding of anticipation, as referring to the being of things rather than the thinking of things.

Strictly speaking, ‘anticipation’ may not be called a third motif in Pannenberg’s theology, since it is implied in the whole of eschatology (as described above), yet it is important to show that his stress on the ontological is an important aspect of Pannenberg’s theology. McClean writes,

For Pannenberg the anticipation is both epistemological and ontological. Epistemologically, anticipation refers to the preliminary appearance of what will appear fully and truly at the end of the historical process. Ontologically, the concept of anticipation is counterintuitive, since it claims that the essence that comes to light at the end of the historical process has been determinative throughout the process and so was present proleptically.
Bradshaw also stresses repeatedly that ontology plays an important role in Pannenberg’s theology, e.g. that Pannenberg’s Christology is ontological; “Pannenberg’s doctrine of being, that is constituted by final significance, gives Jesus an ontological basis,...”\(^{75}\) Bradshaw also speaks of an ‘ontology of the Spirit’,\(^{76}\) and in his chapter on ‘Historicist Trinitarian Ontology’ speaks of a trinitarian ontology.\(^{77}\) In fact, “The whole theological structure, epistemologically and ontologically is one of meaning coming from the future, of openness to God’s future,...” McClean also shows that the ground for this ontological emphasis is found “in an account of God’s being as his own future, existing as eternity, which is the future of all reality.”\(^{79}\)

In summary, it is clear from the above that a case can be made for at least three emphases in Pannenberg’s theology, namely: 1) The underlying principle of God’s rule, that everything is to be seen \textit{sub ratione Dei}, 2) The motif or idea of anticipation and 3) the emphasis on the ontological character of anticipation. The motif of anticipation now needs closer attention.

\emph{b. The context in which Pannenberg uses ‘anticipation’}. 

For Pannenberg ‘anticipation’ means a pre-realisation or a pre-actualisation of the future. An anticipation in the sense of a pre-knowledge or expectation \textit{as a mental act} is noetic in nature. However, for Pannenberg an anticipation can also be a pre-actualisation of a future happening or event, a \textit{‘pre-experience’} of a future reality. This concept of anticipation is ontic in nature and this is the sense

\(^{75}\) Bradshaw, \textit{A Guide for the Perplexed}, 106.  
\(^{76}\) Bradshaw, \textit{A Guide for the Perplexed}, 125.  
\(^{77}\) Bradshaw, \textit{A Guide for the Perplexed}, 108 ff.  
\(^{78}\) Bradshaw, \textit{A Guide for the Perplexed}, 179.  
\(^{79}\) McClean, ‘Anticipation in the thought of Wolfhart Pannenberg’.
in which Pannenberg mostly uses it in his theology.\textsuperscript{80} In his use of it, “the concept of anticipation elucidates the ‘already’ in its connection with the ‘not yet’.\textsuperscript{81} For example, he uses the concept of anticipation to describe the relationship between the presence of the kingdom of God in Jesus’ message and ministry (the already) and the future coming kingdom of God (the not yet). This is an ontic sense of anticipation; there is a relation between what is ‘now’ and what is to come, the ‘not yet’. In this way anticipation is a correlative of eschatology in that it describes something future as being present already, not in its fullness, and certainly subject to confirmation or proof, but nevertheless real. Pannenberg has presented a well-defined notion of anticipation and applied it across the whole of his theology. This is clearly shown by McClean, who reviews several cross sections of Pannenberg’s theology, including the doctrines of Revelation, Christology and the doctrine of God. He shows how anticipation is the thread that runs throughout all these loci of Pannenberg’s theology. It might be asked how far the motif of anticipation extends in Pannenberg’s theology. Both McClean and Bradshaw show that it permeates the whole of his theology. Bradshaw says, “… the structure of all reality is proleptic, at the heart of all being and knowing.”\textsuperscript{82} It is clear that the ontology of anticipation plays a determinative role in Pannenberg’s theology.

In chapter 5 of \textit{Metaphysics and the Idea of God}, Pannenberg explains the development of the motif or concept of anticipation in philosophy. He begins with an overview of the development of the ‘concept’ in metaphysical thought in antiquity moving towards the present day. Often metaphysical reflection

\textsuperscript{80} Christiaan Mostert has introduced the difference between the noetic and ontic sense in the concept of anticipation, in \textit{God and the Future}, 55ff.
\textsuperscript{82} Bradshaw, \textit{A Guide for the Perplexed}, 83.
takes the form of ‘conjectural construction’. More precisely, he adds that the philosophical concept “will reveal itself to have the structure of anticipation.” He writes, “But hypothetical thought is more accurately anticipatory in the sense that it reaches out towards or anticipates (vorgreift) empirical constellations by means of assertions, which then require confirmation or refutation through experience.” Not that an anticipation is only hypothetical, for “Anticipations look forward, on the one hand, to the occurrence of future experience and, on the other, to the content of such experience.”

Pannenberg does not want to restrict the concept of anticipation to philosophy or metaphysics. He stresses that it has been very important also in theology.

Within Protestant theology, especially since the portrayal of Jesus’ message by Johannes Weiss (1892) and particularly in the last three decades, the concept of anticipation has been employed to describe the relationship between Jesus’ message concerning the coming kingdom of God and the future of this coming itself. Derivatively, it has also been used to describe the relationship between the resurrection of Jesus and a future general resurrection of the dead, as is awaited in Jewish apocalyptic.

It is a genuinely theological inspiration. Pannenberg takes the starting point of his ontological concept of anticipation from the message and ministry of Jesus, his sayings about the kingdom and especially from the resurrection of Jesus. He then draws a parallel between Jesus’ resurrection and the general resurrection of the dead. Jesus’ resurrection was a pre-actualisation of what is to come for all. Pannenberg says:

The final reality is present: in the case of the resurrection of Jesus, this reality has a continuing effect through the presence of the Spirit of life; for the resurrection of Jesus himself is believed to be the Spirit’s creative work.

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87 Pannenberg, *Metaphysics and the Idea of God*, 96. This quotation was used earlier (p.187), there in the context of the kingdom, here in the context of pre-actualisation.
Unsurprisingly, for Pannenberg Jesus’ resurrection is of fundamental importance. It is not just a historical fact, but also the ground for our expectation of the resurrection of the dead. It creates an expectation and anticipation of the future. Pannenberg draws attention to the parallel between the resurrection of Jesus and the general resurrection of the dead, because the nature of resurrection is eschatological. The historical facticity of Jesus’ resurrection is important for it holds the promise of the resurrection for others. In Jesus’ resurrection the meaning of history is revealed. It anticipates the end of history ‘proleptically’ as the reality of the world to come, it has already appeared in history. Jesus’ resurrection is the ontological anticipation of the resurrection life of the eschaton.

The truth of this anticipation depends, of course, on its future ratification. Jesus’ resurrection is not just a promise of what is to come, but stronger; it is a pre-actualisation of a future reality. This can be verified in the parousia; then it will be confirmed that Jesus rose from the dead and his people will rise with him. Thus believers have already in some degree – in anticipation – a real experience of the joy and salvation, which will be completed in the future. According to Bradshaw, Pannenberg works with an expected future verification of his theological premises, and he says, “He argues, consistently with his ontology and epistemology, that theological statements are in theory verifiable but not until the eschaton … ”

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88 The same may be said of Van Ruler. Cf. Arnold A Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet. Een Dogmatische Studie over de Verhouding van Openbaring en Existentie [The fulfilling of the law. A dogmatic study regarding the relation of revelation and existence]. (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1947), 218, 448. Although it functions differently in Pannenberg’s theology, in that he sees the resurrection as an anticipation of the future resurrection.

89 Bradshaw, A Guide for the Perplexed, 151.
In summary, it is clear that for Pannenberg the claim, that the future kingdom of God was present proleptically, is grounded in Jesus’ ministry and in his resurrection. This is the basis for his concept of anticipation and eschatological ontology. Pannenberg maintains the ‘now-not-yet’ tension in the New Testament and makes it part of his ontology. This tension was first articulated in late nineteenth and early twentieth century biblical scholarship, but Pannenberg has it run throughout the whole of his theology.

c. The idea of the ‘ontology of the whole’.90

In the context of this study it is not necessary to give a complete overview of Pannenberg’s theology, but there are some aspects of his theology which have an important bearing on the discussion of ‘anticipation’. One in particular instantiates his view of ‘anticipation’, namely the idea of ‘the totality of the whole’.91 Earlier Pannenberg’s idea of openness towards the future was discussed, and this is related to his view on time and reality as a whole. In contrast with some philosophers of the past, Pannenberg does not support a closed view of reality; rather he speaks of ‘reality as a totality’ that is open towards the future. Reality is a process, not a fixed structure. “Everything that is in process, and the processes that comprise finite reality are ‘never definitely concluded’”.92 Not that Pannenberg develops his theology in the direction of Process Theology, but he refuses to understand ‘the reality of the whole’ merely in terms of the here and now. He incorporates in this openness to the future two factors, namely the ‘totality of being’ and the ‘totality of meaning’, the

90 I borrowed this phrase from Mostert, God and the Future, 55.
92 Mostert, God and the Future, 70.
ontological and the epistemological, and in this way transcends the here and now.

In this way he moves beyond Hegel.

Mostert says, “Hegel failed to keep the future truly open, in a way that would permit new things to be continuously brought forth. But the more the system is open, the more its incompleteness forces itself on us. How then, can it be known as a whole? Pannenberg answers this with the help of two concepts which are very important in his thought: the concepts of ‘meaning’ and ‘anticipation’.”

Pannenberg puts it this way,

“The totality of reality does not exist anywhere as complete. It is only anticipated as a totality of meaning. The totality which is an essential framework for any item of experience to have a determinative meaning does not exist at any point as a totality; rather, it can only be imagined by transcending what exists at any point. This anticipation, without which … no experience is possible at all, always involves an element of hypothesis, of subjective conjecture, which must be confirmed – or refuted – by subsequent experience.”

This does not mean that Pannenberg sees the present extending into the future, rather he sees the future (the ‘not yet’) being present in the here and now (the ‘already’). The anticipated future is already present in its anticipation.

Pannenberg believes the meaning of the whole of reality can be anticipated in the present. Nevertheless, an anticipation will need confirmation from the future.

Mostert says, “… unless the future of which something is said to be an anticipation actually arrives, that event will not have been an anticipation of the supposed future reality.”

As stated before, Pannenberg applies this idea of anticipation to the kingdom of God. This kingdom is based on eschatological understanding of Jesus’

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resurrection, which is a pre-realisation and an anticipation of the final future resurrection. This future is like a semantic whole, in that the parts make up the meaning of the whole and the whole stands in relation to the parts; each determines the other. Pannenberg therefore speaks of an ‘ontology of the whole’. We cannot know the whole until the eschaton, but we anticipate it. Dilthey said that we cannot understand the parts until there is a whole.\textsuperscript{96} And that whole determines the meaning throughout. The end of a person’s life will constitute a ‘whole’ which will verify or confirm the meaning of that life as it was anticipated in the course of that life. The eschaton is still future, but the totality of the kingdom has appeared proleptically, i.e. it is has come among us in an anticipatory way. In the eschaton the nature of the kingdom that has been anticipated will be confirmed or not. This ontology of the ‘whole’ undergirds Pannenberg’s concept of the ontology of the future, without, in his view, cancelling out contingency and freedom.

This ‘ontology of the whole’ is important for two reasons: it opens the possibility for the future to be present in a proleptic sense and it highlights the importance of the present. Assuming that there will be a future confirmation, the future reality already appears proleptically in the present. In other words, it is possible to experience the future reality in a ‘provisional’ yet ‘real’ sense. This happens, for example, when Christians celebrate the Eucharist.\textsuperscript{97} In the celebration of the Eucharist the presence of Christ in anticipatory form is celebrated, knowing that in the eschaton this will be fully realised. In the communion, in the broken bread and poured out wine, a prefiguration and realisation takes place, the presence of

\textsuperscript{96} For more on Dilthey cf. T Plantinga, \textit{Historical Understanding in the Thoughts of Wilhelm Dilthey} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980).

\textsuperscript{97} More will be said about this later in this chapter.
God in Christ is proleptically but truly present. This sense of Christ’s presence will be confirmed as such in the eschaton.

Pannenberg applies it also to the Christ event, which happened once for all. He says: “future salvation is already assuredly present for believers through Jesus Christ. Along these lines Pauline theology is in keeping with the relation between future and present divine rule in the message of Jesus. In and by Jesus the future salvation is opened up for believers and can be attained now.”  

Pannenberg explains further,

First, salvation is linked to the future of God, which is already present in this world in Jesus Christ, though its consummation is still ahead. Second, participation in salvation is mediated through the history of Jesus and especially his crucifixion. Paul in particular tied the latter aspect – the significance of the death of Jesus Christ for assurance of present salvation – to the concept of reconciliation.  

Even though all of this needs verification from the future, the future is present with us, for present life is an anticipation of future life. Christian faith with its ‘already’ and ‘not yet’, is part of this anticipation. This also relates to reconciliation; in reconciliation we proleptically enjoy in faith, the redemption and joy that is ultimately an eschatological reality.

In summary, the future reality, already appearing proleptically in the present, shows that the concept of ‘anticipation’ is grounded in Pannenberg’s view about

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98 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 400.
99 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 402, 403.
100 Eilert has written a beautiful study on reconciliation in the theology of Pannenberg. Eilert wants to highlight both sides of the action of reconciliation, the divine as well as the human. In order to describe both aspects he uses the themes of anticipation, actualisation, proclamation and consummation. The question that needs to be raised, however, is whether he does justice in using these themes to Pannenberg’s use of anticipation and actualisation? After all, these two themes have particular meaning in Pannenberg’s theology and play a particular function, namely that ‘already’ we can have a ‘pre-actualisation’ of what is ‘not yet’, but will be fulfilled in the coming kingdom of God. Cf. Kent Eilert, Faithful to Save, Pannenberg on God's Reconciling Action, ed. Ian. A.McFarland John Webster, Ivor Davidson Studies in Systematic Theology (London: T&T Clark, 2011).
the future. His openness to the future is based on the idea of ‘the totality of reality’ in the form of a totality of meaning. This future reality can be experienced as real by way of anticipation. Yet he does not accentuate the future at the expense of the present. The kingdom of God is really present now but in an anticipatory way.

6.3 Van Ruler’s use of ‘anticipation’.

a. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that, and how, Van Ruler also uses the idea of anticipation in his eschatological theology. However, from the outset it needs to be said that he does not use the concept in the same precise manner as Pannenberg. Van Ruler uses it in a more intuitive manner. In other words, he is aware of the idea and supports the thought conveyed by ‘anticipation’, namely that it is possible to experience already in the present a reality which is awaited from the future, though it is more covert or concealed. The following discussion will show that Van Ruler uses the concept of anticipation, and how he employs it in his theology. In Chapter 3 Van Ruler’s ideas about fulfilment were stated in regard to his theology of the kingdom of God; in this chapter the idea of fulfilment is explained as his idea of anticipation.

As stated before, Van Ruler’s theology can be termed an eschatological kingdom theology with an emphasis on the future. The kingdom of God comes from the future with overwhelming power and breaks into the world in all reality and abundance, albeit in a hidden and incomplete manner.\footnote{Van Ruler, \textit{De Vervulling van de Wet}, 24.} This kingdom is already present, though not in its fullness but, in Van Ruler’s view, it is nevertheless
The concept of fulfilment plays an important role in his theology. It is necessary to return briefly to this idea.\(^\text{103}\)

**b. Fulfilment (‘vervulling’)**

One of the difficulties encountered in the translation of Van Ruler is that the word ‘vervulling’ cannot just be translated by ‘fulfilment’. In English the word ‘fulfilment’ usually means completion, fullness or finality. Therefore, at times it can refer to the consummation, inasmuch as things will have been fulfilled. However, Van Ruler uses it often to indicate that there is already a fulfilment, though not yet complete. It indicates an action in process.

Sometimes Van Ruler uses the term ‘fulfilment’ with reference to that work of Christ which has brought salvation (heil); this comes to the cosmos through the power of the Spirit.\(^\text{104}\) He applies the effects of the work of Christ to all aspects of salvation (heil) and the promises of God. “The fulfilment is after all a fulfilment of salvation. It is the salvific power of the Messiah’s work which, in and through being fulfilled, permeates all things.”\(^\text{105}\) This salvific reality is not to be limited or under estimated. Christ’s work of salvation is spread and expanded throughout the world through the power of the Spirit. This fulfilment, as the reality of salvation, belongs to the kingdom of God. In Van Ruler’s words, “it is a modality of the kingdom”.\(^\text{106}\) “...the idea of the kingdom simply brings with it

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102 Pannenberg would not agree with the last clause of this sentence (see below).
103 Van Ruler uses the concept of ‘fulfilment’, but the Dutch ‘vervulling’ is used in ‘gerund’ form and therefore in Dutch it has a more dynamic connotation than in English. It is an ongoing action, the ‘fulfilling’ is not yet completed. Therefore ‘vervulling’ indicates a process of ‘fulfilment’.
104 A fuller explanation of Van Ruler’s use of ‘fulfilment’ was covered in Chapter 3.3 and 3.4
105 Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 48.
106 Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 48.
the truth [or reality] of fulfilment. ... Fulfilment is given in and with (implicite) the kingdom of God."\(^{107}\)

This ‘fulfilment’ (vervulling) of the kingdom comes from the future. This fulfilment will be completed in the eschaton and does not, for Van Ruler, abrogate the tension between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’, a tension which will be resolved only in the eschaton. It is clear that for Van Ruler the concept of fulfilment and kingdom are closely related, so closely related that the concept of fulfilment expresses something of the kingdom, namely its anticipatory presence, for it states that we are experiencing already in the present something of the kingdom that is coming. This eschatological consummation is an anticipation of the kingdom. Fulfilment (vervulling) as anticipation, as a present action and reality, comes to expression in the signs and seals, as firstlings, pledge and security (onderpand), of the glory of God in the eschaton.\(^{108}\) The whole of existence is redeemed; God’s salvific power has changed the world already, even if not completely or in ‘toto’.\(^{109}\)

Van Ruler uses the Law as a wide encompassing concept. ‘Fulfilment’ (vervulling) as a present reality starts with Christ having fulfilled the law. This is an ongoing work, a process that started in the life and work of Christ, with ongoing effect for the present. Van Ruler understands the concept Law in an extremely broad sense. Christ fulfilled the Law, the torah, not as a set of

\(^{107}\) Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 49.

\(^{108}\) Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 24. Van Ruler also relates this to the Trinity, but it is not necessary to extend this here.

\(^{109}\) Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 7. The law is related to everything. “… zij (de wet) heeft op alles betrekking.” CF. also page 18. “Er wordt van meer dingen gezegd dat zij vervuld zijn. Ik noemde reeds den kosmos, den tijd, de belofte, de kerk en den mensch. [It is said of many things they are fulfilled. I mentioned already the cosmos, time, the promise, the church and the human beings.]”
commandments or rules, but as the medium or bridge between revelation and existence. It is also “the paradigm of all forms of the kingdom of God in the flesh (in het vleesch)” or the reality of creaturely existence. The Law, for Van Ruler, is the medium or vehicle of God’s revelation in history. Far from being abrogated by the fulfillment, the Law is the foundation (grondlegging) of salvation in the world. In Christ and through the Spirit, God has fulfilled every demand and every stipulation of the Law. In fact, redemption is already present in and for humanity, albeit in a hidden and provisional manner. The whole of the cosmos has already been set free from the burden of sin and darkness. Humanity is living in the light, the promise and even the reality of the future perfection. Salvation (heil) has come to the world, the cosmos, the universe. However, “Instead of salvation (heil) one can also speak of the presence of God in the world or of the kingdom of God in the flesh”. In other words, “…this salvation, the presence of the kingdom of God, is given expansion (uitbreiding), form (vormgeving) and expression (uitbeelding) in the world creaturely forms and structures (in de gestalten van het vleesch).” This salvation is clearly a present reality and has ongoing effect.

Here it becomes clear that Van Ruler is speaking of a pre-figuration of the total redemption of the eschaton. He employs the two concepts of ‘fulfilment’ and ‘the kingdom’ together, intertwined in such a way that the kingdom itself is being fulfilled. In this way the future is present proleptically, ahead of its time, and humanity lives in the anticipation of a fulfilment which, though already present, is also still to come. In expanding the concept of fulfilment, he states:

110 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 11.
111 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 11.
112 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 11.
If fulfilment indeed is to be understood as a fulfilment through the Spirit and if the gift of the Spirit is especially to be understood in the category of power, then the basic idea of the word ‘fulfilment’ is apparent ... that fulfilment, including fulfilment of the law, at all times means to make effective (van kracht maken), to empower, to fill with power (met kracht vervullen), in Kraft setzen. This is the basic thesis, which I would like to prove in this study. That the living God has fulfilled his law in the Messiah through the Spirit, means that he has made the Law effective for all nations and all times.¹¹³

However, Van Ruler does not limit ‘fulfilment’ only to the Law. There are other things which are also fulfilled: time, the cosmos, the promises and prophecies. Fulfilment also applies to the church and humanity, when the people are filled with the Spirit.¹¹⁴ He sums up his views on ‘fulfilment’ as follows: “The word ‘fulfilment’ has a threefold meaning: being present in, bringing meaning and content, and bringing about (terecht brengen).”¹¹⁵ Accordingly, for Van Ruler fulfilment means fulfilment as a present reality, fulfilment as bringing understanding and having content, namely the future, (the eschaton) and fulfilment as putting things to right.

For Van Ruler, fulfilment (vervulling) is a dynamic concept indicating an ongoing action in the present of a reality that will be completed in the future. He states that the law has been fulfilled in Christ. By this he does not only mean an empowering of the mosaic laws. It is more, “The Law by virtue of its fulfilment in the Messiah has been empowered (van kracht gemaakt), because in him the Law has received ‘body’ (lichaam), form and content; because in him the Law has received substance and reality.”¹¹⁶ “The Law has been given through Moses, grace and truth became (zijn geworden) through Jesus Christ (John 1:17).”¹¹⁷

Van Ruler elaborates further: “[Christ] is the body of the things that are to come

¹¹³ Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 164.
¹¹⁴ Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 462,3.
¹¹⁵ Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 464.
¹¹⁶ Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 483.
¹¹⁷ Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 483. Van Ruler takes the Greek more literally than the normal English translation.
(toekomende) (Hebr.10:1). Fulfilment is: giving reality (*lichamelijkheid*) to the kingdom, the future and the being of God ... In this sense Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of the Law.”¹¹⁸ He is the pre-actualisation of the eschatological kingdom.

It can be shown that for Van Ruler (as for Pannenberg) the future is the ‘source’ of the fulfilment received. When Van Ruler speaks about the eschaton, he does not speak about the ‘fulfilment’ as the coming consummation of the kingdom of God, but as the revelation (*onthuld*) of the kingdom. In other words, in the eschaton, what has already taken place in Christ will be revealed. “Now, in the Messiah, [the Law] has been fulfilled; but in God’s future it will be ‘completed’ (*voleind*), that is revealed (*onthuld*).”¹¹⁹

In summary, Van Ruler uses the term ‘fulfilment’ (*vervulling*) in the sense of ‘anticipation’, for he uses it as a pre-actualisation of a future reality. He does this in relation to the Law, for the Law has been fulfilled as a present actualisation of a future reality. Van Ruler does not use ‘anticipation’ with conceptual precision, as Pannenberg does, but in a looser, less rigorous sense, a sense which is also expressed in other terms. It is therefore necessary to turn to these other terms: ‘reaching or grasping ahead’ (*vooruitgrijpen*), pre-figuration, prolepsis, realisation.

c. Reaching out towards....

When Van Ruler speaks about the future he does so in two ways. One is that the future follows the present, graphically illustrated in an arrow pointing right (→).

¹¹⁸ Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 483.
¹¹⁹ Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 495.
The other way is that the future comes towards us. Here the movement of time is from the future, graphically illustrated in an arrow pointing left (←). We see this when Van Ruler says: “Those who think biblically begin at the end.” Again, “The retroactive movement in the biblical understanding of God constantly goes from the end, from the future of God, …”  

At times he speaks about the future in a different way, namely when the arrow or movement of time is from present to future, the arrow moving from left to right (→). This does not deny the fact that the consummation and the kingdom come from the future (eschaton), but it expresses the fact that we anticipate (in our minds) the future fulfilment, the coming kingdom. We reach out towards that future. Van Ruler says,

... it is impossible to push our deliverance completely to the ultimate future. Everything (alle heden) present is anticipation (anticipatie), a reaching forward (een vooruitgrijpen) to the future. History, as it now proceeds (zich voltrekt) as it is consummated, will – through the great judgement – fill the eschaton. There is certainly nothing else that can fill the eschaton. If there is no history, neither is there an eschaton. This anticipation (anticiperen), this reaching out to the ultimate kingdom of God, actually commences already in the beginning, with the creation. The fact, that there is something and not nothing is already an anticipation (anticipatie) of the eschaton. One way or another, the whole of reality, is the kingdom of God. 

It is clear from this that Van Ruler identifies this ‘reaching forward’ with ‘anticipation’. History is both the content of the eschaton, and also leads us to the eschaton. By way of our history (whether that is personal or world history) we move ahead, we reach out towards the future. For Van Ruler the word ‘vooruitgrijpen ’ conjures the image of a person in a dark room feeling or groping her way towards the door, towards the full light, in the certain knowledge that it is there. In fact, some of that light is already present and visible, already experienced as a reality.

120 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 27. Cf. also page 46.  
122 Cf. earlier chapter 3.4 section on ‘The reciprocity between eschaton and history’.
This is the eschatological tension of the ‘already’. Here the anticipatory movement is from present to future, the arrow of time moving from left to right. At the same time there is an ontic movement of the kingdom from the future to the present, the arrow of time moving from right to left. In the latter sense the light of the future, the kingdom of God, is already in a real sense a present reality. It is clear that Van Ruler connects our (noetic) ‘reaching out’ to the future and the (ontic) counter movement of the future coming towards the present. Indeed in our history the eschatological future has already proleptically come into the present. In fact, Van Ruler uses the idea of ‘reaching forward’ as a ‘reaching’ and experiencing in advance, to express the anticipation of the future. The ‘reaching forward’ is predicated of the whole creation. The whole of existence is ‘reaching out to’ the future. He does not limit ‘anticipation’ to a particular thing (like the Law) or a particular area (like reconciliation). This is clear also from the following:

We have argued there is much anticipation (anticipatie) of the eschaton, from the creation to - and including - the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Just as the eschaton is the consummation of the historical process, so the historical process is the anticipation of the eschaton. Must we not also say – to remain on the Christian track - that our entire active existence is anticipation?123

Van Ruler also uses the expressions ‘reaching ahead’ and ‘reaching out to’, in the sense of an anticipation or ‘pre-actualisation’ of the eschaton. He says: “Our expectation of the kingdom is an impulse towards, and a positive power, in our actions. The kingdom is the vision, the dream from which we live, the model, the pattern after which we seek to act. The whole of existence is

streamlined through this. We build the kingdom of God. Rather, we participate in its building. At least we build with an eye to the kingdom."\textsuperscript{124} In other words, the content of our ‘reaching out’ is the kingdom, which is a future reality. But it is also a ‘reaching out’ to what is already proleptically present, namely the kingdom of God that has come in Christ. In this sense the terms ‘reaching ahead’ and ‘reaching out’ are in a sense a ‘pre-actualisation’ of the eschaton.

d. Prefiguration and prolepsis

It was claimed earlier that Van Ruler uses the term ‘fulfilment’ in the sense of anticipation. Another way in which Van Ruler speaks of anticipating the future is in using the word ‘prefiguration’ (\textit{prefiguratie}). Speaking about the eschaton and history, seeing the two in a real correlation, he remarks that humanity cannot place itself outside of time. Every day people live towards the eschaton and make history. Every day is a ‘pre-figuration’ of the parousia.

If we do not place the eschaton dualistically outside and opposite, but – in one way or another – in time, there is openness for the idea that every day in time has something of the character of – is a prefiguration (\textit{prefiguratie}) of - the last day. We cannot be satisfied only with longing for the eschaton; that may bring something romantic and idealistic to the Christian and eschatological expectation (\textit{verwachting}) but threatens to result in the opposite. The last day, the eschaton, throws us radically back into the present; for there it is already prefigured (\textit{prefigureerd}). In the present, in every new day, in the future our concern is with this world, some by preaching, liturgically, or sacramentally, others politically, scientifically, or culturally.\textsuperscript{125}

Here the movement of time accentuated by Van Ruler is clearly from the future towards the present (the arrow of time moving from right to left $\leftarrow$). Even as we long for the future, we need to be a prefiguration of the future, living in the present, but in such a way as already to anticipate the future, to be a

\textsuperscript{124} Van Ruler, ‘Grenzen van de eschatologisering’, 116.

prefiguration of the future. In rejecting the romantic expectation of the eschaton, he accentuates an ontic understanding of anticipation, for he is clearly speaking about a future reality being already expressed in the present. In the present the future reality is already prefigured, anticipated and lived; this is the presence of the kingdom of God. This future is expressed in many different actions and ways, embracing the whole of life and the whole of creation. In this way humankind is part of the ‘pre-figuring’ of the kingdom of God, or the actualisation of the future. The whole world is, in Van Ruler’s view, a pre-realisation of the eschaton. Sometimes he describes what people are doing in the kingdom of God as sanctification, which he defines as follows: “Seen properly, all we do in sanctification (heiliging) is ‘uncovering’ the creation from [the blanket of] sin (van onder de zonde vandaan halen)”.

Van Ruler applies this to the whole of life in all aspects, political, cultural and ethical.

It could be argued that, in the long quotation above, Van Ruler’s sense of anticipation is primarily noetic rather than ontic. Van Ruler does not explicitly distinguish between these two senses, but the ontic sense is unmistakably pre-eminent. In his view, the eschaton should not be thought of dualistically and as the antithesis of time, but in time, because “… every day in time has something of the character of – is a pre-figuration of - the last day.” That pre-figuration is grounded in Jesus’ whole ministry and in his resurrection, in which the future kingdom of God is proleptically brought into the present. Thus he writes: “In the present, in every new day, in the future our concern is with this world…”

Here he links the present and the future indissolubly, blurring the boundaries

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126 Van Ruler, ‘Grenzen van de eschatologisering’, 117.
between them. It is because of the proleptically present kingdom that we can truly live in the world ‘with the whole of our being’. That is more than a longing for the kingdom, more than an expectation of it; in the strongest sense it is an anticipation of the kingdom. Van Ruler wants us to live in the present, a present reality already suffused with the future.

Sporadically Van Ruler uses the word ‘prolepsis’. In his article about the new theological questions we have an example,\(^\text{129}\) using it in a question. Speaking of the resurrection of Jesus, he asks, “…is it the prolepsis of the eschaton, from which ‘in principal’ the whole of the world’s historical process in its unity, in its meaning, as revelation of God becomes transparent?”\(^\text{130}\) Here he uses the concept ‘prolepsis’ in the appropriate sense of the presence of something future ahead of its time. Earlier, in 1950, he wrote an article about pietism (bevinding) and in this context he also used the word ‘prolepsis’. “Even in the highest mystical forms (of piety) one does not experience anything other than what happens in the sacrament, unless one experiences it (i.e. mystical experience) as a prolepsis of heaven.”\(^\text{131}\) In this context he uses it in a negative sense, but still using its intended meaning, namely of something future being present already. A third example of his use of this concept is found in one of his earlier books, again using the concept of ‘prolepsis’ in the sense of the presence of something future ahead of its time. He writes: “It is heathen prolepsis of eternity, … if I want to have more than the Christian form, the Christian


\(^{130}\) Van Ruler, ‘Nieuwe vragen’, 509. The editor, Dirk van Keulen, remarks in a note: “Probably Van Ruler offers here a summary of the vision of Wolfhart Pannenberg (cf. e.g. his Grundzüge der Christologie, Gütersloh 1964)”, 529, n.91.

appearance of my existence.” 132 Perhaps not the most positive usage of the word, but it is clear that Van Ruler is aware of the meaning of the concept of ‘prolepsis’.

In summary, it has been shown that Van Ruler used ‘prolepsis’ in the sense of anticipation, in its ontological sense. The word ‘prolepsis’ is identical with the strong sense of ‘anticipation’. In fact, we find the idea and meaning of ‘prolepsis’ throughout the whole of his theology, but more as an underlying principle than a conceptually and systematically precise concept. For Van Ruler, the kingdom of God is present among us; it has come, is present and will come. In his view, ‘fulfilment’ (vervulling), is something occurring already, it is being actualised already here and now.

e. Realisation or actualisation

Van Ruler also speaks of ‘realisation’. In his dissertation he seems to limit this to the realisation of salvation (heil) and does not yet apply this to the ‘realisation of the kingdom’. 133 He does not differentiate between the ‘realisation of salvation’ and ‘the realisation of the kingdom’, but places them both in context of the future as an already present reality. The realisation of salvation (heil) is part of the kingdom. This salvation is spread throughout the world, it receives expansion (uitbreiding) throughout the kingdom and the world. Van Ruler writes: “The Law has been fulfilled in the Messiah as the foundation for salvation in the world and is fulfilled by the Spirit as expansion of that salvation in the world.” 134

132 Arnold A Van Ruler, Religie en Politiek [Religion and Politics], (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1945), 35.
133 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 466.
134 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 499. Italics original.
In addition to using the terms ‘reaching ahead’, ‘pre-figuration’ and ‘prolepsis’, Van Ruler also uses ‘realisation’ as an equivalent of ‘anticipation’, in its ontic sense. This is clear from a 1953 lecture in which he used the word anticipation *(anticipatie)* (of the kingdom) no less than ten times.\(^{135}\) Each time in reference to the future, the kingdom of God or the eschaton, it is clear that he uses ‘realisation’ to mean the actual presence of the future kingdom. He then poses this question:

> Is the fact that we are here, in the church and in the world, to be understood as a realisation *(realisering)*, albeit as an initial realisation, of the kingdom? To what extent is there, also from God’s perspective, thus with full justification, an anticipation of the ultimate future?\(^{136}\)

This quotation implies the ontic sense of anticipation. When Van Ruler speaks about being *(zijn)* and reality *(realiteit)*, he uses anticipation in the ontic sense. Believers not only live in hope and expectation, but their behaviour, their outlook and their very being is already in a sense what it will be, in anticipatory form. The present already exists as a form of the future, as an anticipation, a pre-realisation and a fore-shadowing of what is to come.

In many ways believers actualise in the present (albeit imperfectly or incompletely) what will be fully actualised in the fullness of time, the eschaton. Believers not only reach forward to the future (noetically), but the future kingdom is already present in an anticipatory form. As God’s people, they anticipate the fulfilment of the kingdom of God and their place in it. The future is present for them and among them. Here the movement of time is from right to left, from the future to the present. Things in the present anticipate the future.


\(^{136}\) Van Ruler, ‘De categorie realisering’, 73.
(ontically). The future is present in people’s new existence, in their being, in their actions and decisions, in their love and care for others, in their worship of God by their discipleship and service, but also in their political and cultural activities. In these ways the kingdom of God is already present. Their new existence is an anticipation of the kingdom that is coming. It is clear that Van Ruler uses the words ‘anticipation’ (anticipatie) and ‘realisation’ (in the sense of actualisation), interchangeably with reference to the coming kingdom of God and they denote its presence in our midst in an anticipatory manner or proleptic forms.

f. Expectation

Did Van Ruler consistently always use the word ‘anticipation’ in an ontological sense? It is clear that he did not. When he used the word ‘verwachting’ (expectation), as he did in his dissertation, it was in a noetic sense. The English use of ‘expectation’ is always in a noetic sense. Often Van Ruler speaks of ‘the kingdom of God’, meaning that the kingdom of God can only be expected from the future, for it is found in the future of God. As stated earlier, the category of the ‘future of God’ belongs to a description of the being of God. This indicates that it is necessary to understand words as ‘expectation’ (verwachting) in relation to the futurity of the kingdom and God, as is clear in what follows:

It is not because of the non-presence of salvation (heil), that in biblical teaching there is expectation (verwachting); thus it is not disappointment, dissatisfaction or poverty, that make us reach for compensation in the future. Rather, it is because of the abundance of the present salvation, which cannot be received and possessed in present forms … that faith is [also] expectation.

137 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 38.
138 Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 55-56. It could be argued that Van Ruler accentuated this difference in later writing. Cf. Van Ruler, ‘De categorie realisering,’ Van Ruler stresses the difference between the two anticipations, because in the anticipation of the eschaton the goal is this world becoming the kingdom.
Van Ruler is saying: that the super-abundance of ‘heil’ is so great that it cannot be fully contained in the present except in humble form, in the signs and seals of the sacrament! Often he speaks of the ‘super-abundance’ of ‘heil’, which is present and so full, so rich, that it cannot be contained in the signs or prefigurations of the kingdom. Van Ruler is confusing here, because he does not clearly distinguish between the different terms he uses and the two different senses but, as the quotation above shows, he does have a strong sense that the (future) kingdom and its (future) salvation are already present realities.

Arguably, in the course of his theological development the ontic sense of anticipation became more pronounced.\textsuperscript{139}

A much clearer example is found in a later work by Van Ruler. In his exposition of 1 Corinthians 15 he states that humanity lives from the resurrection of Christ and towards the future. This future includes the world, the earth, the cosmos. “Now already we live under the waving of the first fruits [at the altar]. We are ripening on the field. The harvest is coming.”\textsuperscript{140} Here Van Ruler uses the Old Testament image of the priest at the altar, raising the sheaf of the harvest before the Lord to indicate that believers are already in the harvest while anticipating the full coming of the harvest i.e. the coming of the Lord at the last day. Proleptically the eschaton (the harvest) is already here.

Here a clear ontic sense of anticipation is intended.

\textsuperscript{139} In Van Ruler’s early writings the notion of ‘ontology’ has a rather negative connotation. Cf. Van Ruler, \textit{De Vervulling van de Wet},\textsuperscript{73}, where he writes: “… het inzicht (is) gegeven, dat men over de waarheid der vervulling, hoe plerophorisch en realistisch men er ook over mag spreken, toch nooit ontologisch en definitief mag spreken. [… the insight is given that we cannot speak, in relation to the truth of fulfilment (vervulling), it does not matter how plerophoric and realistic, one cannot speak of it ontologically and definitively].”

\textsuperscript{140} Arnold A Van Ruler, \textit{De dood wordt overwonnen; 1 Corinthen 15 in morgenwijdingen} [Death is Conquered; 1 Corinthians 15 presented in morning devotions], 2 ed. (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1972), 51. Van Ruler here makes reference to the Old Testament Leviticus 23: 10, 11, that on the celebration of the ‘Passover’ the priest would ‘wave’ (NIV) or ‘raise’ (NRSV) the first fruits of the harvest. They were moved in all directions over the altar as a promise and prophecy of the rich harvest to come. It was the Old Testament anticipation of the harvest.
The ontological element of anticipation is underlined when Van Ruler says: “We already taste the powers of the coming age.”\textsuperscript{141} In this anticipation also the Holy Spirit is involved. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit means that believers are temples of the Holy Spirit. This does not come to perfect expression as yet, but believers are nevertheless aware of its reality, even though it is still hidden. The Holy Spirit is an eschatological reality. “This means that we experience ourselves as being lost, but also as resurrected creatures.”\textsuperscript{142} In other words, the future salvation may not always be evident, but is nevertheless present in our lives. The above example, of ‘tasting’ the powers of the coming age, indicates that the future is very much a present reality.

In summary, the kingdom of God is the kingdom of glory, which is to be fully realised in the eschaton. Yet, it is possible to see already, in the present world, in our existence and in our church life, some realisation, some pre-actualisation and some pre-figuration – an anticipation - of what is to come. The kingdom coming from the future is more than a shadow. It is a real presence, which proleptically is here by virtue of the believer living out, i.e. being already, the image of God,\textsuperscript{143} the image of Christ, and representing – and also presenting – Christ and his kingdom in the world. Therefore, this present world can truly be understood to be an anticipation of the world to come. What is anticipated is the perfected kingdom; already, proleptically, the creation is giving form to what will be unveiled in the eschaton. Perfection and the totality of the kingdom, the consummation, are not present yet; this will take place in the eschaton, when

\textsuperscript{141} Van Ruler, \textit{De dood wordt overwonnen}, 117.
\textsuperscript{142} Van Ruler, \textit{De dood wordt overwonnen}, 121.
\textsuperscript{143} Cf. earlier chapter 5.7 ‘The image of God’ and 5.8 ‘The contents of the image’. 
the ‘proton’ will be restored and renewed. Yet, it will also bring greater glory and not simply be identical with the proton. If it were identical to the proton, the whole of history would have lost its point. There is movement in the realisation of the kingdom; there is a development in the process of realisation. This realisation is dynamic, not upward towards God, not vertically, but horizontally, through time. It is a historical realisation of the kingdom. Van Ruler writes:

All reality as such has something of the nature of ‘anticipation’. That is already present in the creation … The kingdom of glory is not to be seen as identical with the original creation. There is movement, development, progress in the world process. The realisation is dynamic. This dynamic process goes through guilt and atonement. But it happens horizontally, not upwards towards God, but through time before God’s eyes.144

It is clear that, although Van Ruler is not always clear in which sense he is using ‘anticipation’, Van Ruler did use the concept of anticipation in its strong ontic sense, though he frequently used the two senses (ontic and noetic) together.

g. Anticipation

It has been shown that Van Ruler uses different terms to express what is meant by the concept of anticipation. At times he used the terms in both the ontic and/or noetic sense and did not always distinguish them clearly. It is now necessary to show how Van Ruler actually used the term ‘anticipation’ and in which context.

144 Van Ruler, ‘De categorie realisering’, 77.
The two strongest indications that Van Ruler used the concept of ‘anticipation’ in his theology come from his lectures on Pneumatology.\textsuperscript{145} Speaking about the Holy Spirit, he claims that our relationship in the present with the kingdom of God is the gift of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{146}

We taste the powers of the future world. The Spirit is the Advocate of the Father and the Son with us and thus our Comforter. In both senses the issue is what the Spirit does in relation to the world: that we should learn to experience it as God experiences it or wants it to be experienced by us. ... Already the creation, the created reality, everything that is and that really exists, is anticipation of the eschaton.\textsuperscript{147}

Van Ruler indicates that the kingdom of God takes on different forms and that these different forms are with us as pre-actualisations of the eschaton. Here the sense of ‘anticipation’ is clearly ontic. The kingdom is in our midst, it is present. In fact, it is already possible to taste it. Taste cannot always easily be defined and sometimes the taste is present before we have taken the food into our mouth. Then our mouth waters in anticipation. The watering may commence because we are expecting the food, but it can also be an actual tasting already of what is to be presented. And so in an ontological sense the kingdom of God is present amongst us, not only in the church, but also in the world.

In a posthumously published book, one article is called ‘The Changes’.\textsuperscript{148} Here, as he speaks about tradition and change, about history and contingency, we

\textsuperscript{146}A fuller exposition of Van Ruler’s writings on the Holy Spirit and his eschatological role are given in chapter 5.
\textsuperscript{147}Van Ruler, ‘Hoofdlijnen van een pneumatologie’, 24. Here we find Van Ruler using the word anticipation (\textit{anticipatie}).
\textsuperscript{148}In: Arnold A Van Ruler, Blij zijn als kinderen [Happy like children], (Kampen: Kok, 1972) .
clearly see the wide context in which Van Ruler places the coming kingdom. In this context he asserts that ‘new’ things happen; they are the ‘creative’ moments. These ‘new events’, these contingencies are in some sense already ‘anticipations’ of the eschaton. Van Ruler says that the kingdom is not just waiting for us at the end of time. The kingdom is in motion, it is happening, it is moving and humanity is part of this movement.

Now we could perhaps say that the new, which constantly appears in the mystery of the creative moments in the tradition, is the form of appearance of the eschaton. The kingdom of God, the final purpose of the historical process, is not just waiting for us at the end. It is in motion. It is coming towards us. It presses itself towards us. It appears in the form of the new in the midst of the old.\textsuperscript{149}

He stresses here that the kingdom includes the new, new inventions, new discoveries. Not just Jesus Christ and all that he has brought, nor what the Spirit imparts to us, but renewed aspects of the creation offer a realisation and pre-actualisation of the kingdom. He then continues:

\begin{quote}
The New Testament says: Jesus the Christ \textit{is} the kingdom of God on earth and in time. But he is not the only form of the kingdom. From the whole of the Bible we have to say: that already the whole of created reality as such is one great anticipation, a reaching towards the eschaton. The historical nature of reality, which is marked by the peculiar appearance of change, makes us say: in every creative moment, in which something new arrives, there is an anticipation of the kingdom of God, because this kingdom of God presses itself towards us.\textsuperscript{150}
\end{quote}

The quotation above illustrates Van Ruler’s use of the strong ontic sense of ‘anticipation’.

Van Ruler is making a huge claim for the kingdom of God. Sometimes in doing so he overstates his point. Not everything in creation is waiting for the kingdom of God. Evil has not been expunged from the world as yet; there are powers of

\textsuperscript{149}Van Ruler, \textit{Blij zijn}, 48.\textsuperscript{150}Van Ruler, \textit{Blij zijn}, 48.
darkness at work in the world which are not an ‘expectation’ or an ‘anticipation’ of the kingdom. But his strong use of the concept of anticipation is especially clear.

In summary, Van Ruler says that the whole creation, the created reality, is an ‘anticipation’ of the kingdom of God. In the anticipation of the kingdom God’s people are reaching towards the eschaton. The shadows of the future are already falling on the walls of our present existence. It can happen in contingencies, in the ‘creative moment’ when something new happens, but it cannot be limited to those moments. According to Van Ruler, it is the whole creation that is in movement towards the eschaton and is, in some way, anticipating the eschaton. Therefore ‘anticipation’ in its ontic sense, can be a new form, a new ‘gestalt’, of the kingdom. The expectation and anticipation of the kingdom demonstrates itself in many different forms. Many times, Van Ruler used the idea of ‘anticipation’ of the kingdom and expressed it in many different ways and by using different terms, more often describing the concept rather than using it with conceptual precision. Van Ruler speaks of a proleptic presence. That proleptic presence is the presence of the kingdom in anticipatory form, a future reality already present.

6.4 Realisation in the sacraments

Once more it is necessary to return to the question: What is realised in the realisation, what is pre-actualised or anticipated? A very prominent example in Van Ruler’s theology is found in the sacraments. The sacraments are signs and seals of the salvation obtained in Christ. Mostert, quoting Pannenberg says that:

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151 Cf. Van Ruler, De Vervulling van de Wet, 287. Van Ruler likes speaking of the shadow of the coming things. He uses this in regard to the Law, but not only the Law.
“…the essence of anticipation is that the sign is a ‘real instance of something’s occurring in advance. The anticipated future is already present in its anticipation.”152 In the Eucharist therefore, believers are ‘actualising’, ‘realising’ or ‘pre-figuring’ in their lives, in their community, in their faith, in body and soul, something that will take place fully in the eschaton. By receiving the broken bread and the poured out wine, believers are in communion with God through Christ, who is remembered and whose presence and future coming are celebrated. It that way the salvation of ‘being in Christ’ is actualised in sacramental form as a reality in a pre-actualised form. Although Christ is absent in a human, physical manner, he is a present reality in the celebration and life of the believers. This remembering is not only a noetic experience; the believer is experiencing the reality of future communion as something already truly present. The believer is already ‘tasting’ the fellowship, the peace, joy and reality of the communion which is to follow in the eschaton. Van Ruler says: “…the sacrament is no longer vocation, not a moment in the tradition, it is a moment in the eschaton.”153 Thus, the sacrament of the Eucharist not only points to what will happen in the future; already the believer’s communion with God, to be perfected in the future, is a present reality. This is not an imagined possibility but a present reality.

The celebration of the Eucharist is not only a symbol or sign pointing to what will happen, it is more than that. It is also a shadow154 and image of what takes place in the process of salvation. Salvation comes to the believer from Christ

154 Van Ruler often uses the image of the shadow. Van Ruler, *De Vervulling van de Wet*, 518 “The shadows of the coming things (already) fall along the walls of the (present) existence (existentie).” It could be remarked that shadow also suggests darkness and therefore the metaphor only works partly.
(extra nos), but also is appropriated by the believer. This happens through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit takes salvation from Christ and applies it to the believer. Believers also accept it, and it remoulds their life and being. Through conversion, repentance and faith they are changed through the work of the Holy Spirit and the application of the benefits of Christ. But the Holy Spirit does more: through the Spirit the future reality comes into the present. There is not only intellectual assent by the believer, but there is also ontological change. The applicatio salutis has become also the applicatio subjectiva. Through the Spirit the future is proleptically actualised in the believer.

All this is demonstrated in the celebration of the Eucharist. Believers celebrate the anticipated joy and peace, by way of the communion. They ‘realise’ that what is promised in the eschaton is already being realised or actualised. It has become a present ontological reality. Van Ruler says:

The sacrament is not just a moment in the tradition, in which salvation is imputed to me. Rather, it is located in the eschaton, in which salvation is possessed, where God himself and I myself – having found each other – are together. The sacrament is the form of this.

We could add that it is also an anticipation and realisation of the communion into which God is inviting us, an actualisation here and now of what the kingdom of God promises in fullness and perfection. The future is experienced already proleptically: it has become a proleptically present reality. Van Ruler emphasises this even more, when he says,

One has to see the mystery of the unio mystica cum Christo in its totality. It encompasses not only the mystery of the praesentia realis (real

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155 Van Ruler, ‘De vocacione’, 250.
156 Van Ruler, ‘De vocacione’, 269.
presence), but just as much the great mystery of the appropriation of Christ and his salvation (heil) by a person on the one side and of the incorporation of this person in Christ, on the other, also, on the basis of both of these, the outworking (uitwerking) of Christ and his salvation on us and in us and from us, by which salvation actively becomes the full human reality of life (levenswerkelijkheid) and Christ receives form (gestalte) in us.  

The above shows the correlation between the work of Christ and the work of humankind with the assistance of the Holy Spirit. Human beings need to appropriate Christ’s work and make it their own, by which it becomes a true reality in the life of believers.

In summary, Van Ruler does not use the word ‘anticipation’ directly for the sacraments, but uses the word ‘realisation’ to describe what takes place in and through the sacraments. The sacrament of the Eucharist is a good illustration of what he means by anticipation, for it offers us a future reality in an anticipatory form. We experience the presence of the future by way of being in communion with Jesus Christ; we are taken up in the communion of the Son with the Father. The sacrament exemplifies what a pre-actualisation or anticipation of the eschaton is. Although Van Ruler speaks about the sacraments in general and the Eucharist in particular, he does not say much about the sacrament of baptism.

Mostert does this more clearly in his lecture, ‘Baptism as effective and anticipatory’. He states: “Baptism is regarded as an effective but anticipatory sacrament; it looks ahead to the effecting of the reality it signifies; it is not instantaneous.” Or again: “Baptism effects what it signifies, but not

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159 Arnold A Van Ruler, Reformatorische opmerkingen in de ontmoeting met Rome [Reformed remarks in the meeting with Rome] [Reformational remarks in the encounter with Rome], (Hilversum: Paul Brand Paperbacks, Hilversum, 1965), 205.
instantaneously. It unites us with Christ, but it anticipates our living in union with him. It draws us into the faithfulness of God, but it also anticipates our faith in God." The anticipatory aspect of baptism is especially, but not only, applicable to the baptism of infants.

Pannenberg acknowledges both sacraments as signs: “Baptism and the Supper are significatory acts, ‘signs of the nearness of God.’ Both, as signs, effect what they signify. But they do so only in the form and on the level of signs.” Pannenberg also mentions ‘anticipation’ in relation to baptism, first in regard to Jesus’ baptism and death and secondly in relation to the baptism of believers and their children. “The story of the life of Jesus between his own baptism and death is something that what is anticipated in the sign of baptism is to imitate. In terms of baptism of the Christian, life is a process of dying with Christ, and at the same time, by the Spirit, the new humanity, the resurrection life, is already at work in Christians (Rom.6:9ff).” And: “The anticipation of the future death of the baptised relates baptism to their whole future life, as is indicated already by the thought of appropriation through this act.” The above gives a clear indication that Pannenberg relates the concept of ‘anticipation’ to baptism and the future reality which it anticipates.

In a long section on the sacraments as signs, Pannenberg again speaks of the tension between present and future reality. “The significatory nature of the

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164 Cf. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* Vol.2, 331. Where he says: “From the presence of the rule of God in believers… it follows that thereby believers also participate already in eschatological salvation.”
sacramental presence of Christ and God’s kingdom in baptism and the Supper is an expression of the ‘not yet’ of our Christian life in tension as we move on to the eschatological consummation of salvation.” ¹⁶⁵ Not only does the sign point to that which is signified, but “… with the enacting of the sign the thing signified is itself present as well.” ¹⁶⁶ It is clear that Pannenberg not only relates the sacraments and the kingdom in their anticipatory nature, but that their anticipatory nature also constitutes a presence of what is signified.

In summary, this chapter has shown that Van Ruler made significant use of the concept of anticipation in connection with the kingdom of God, using the term ‘fulfilment’ (vervulling), but also terms like ‘realisation’ and ‘pre-figuration’. The idea of anticipation permeates the whole of his theology. It is clear that for Van Ruler there is present already a pre-actualisation of the reality which the eschaton will finally reveal. More will be said about this in the final chapter.