A Twist to Apologetics

An explorative and systematic study on 'embodied knowing'
as a complementary approach to apologetics in a secular society

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Church and Mission in the West

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“The act of knowing transforms me.
I am myself in a deeper way.”

Esther Lightcap Meek

PREFACE

‘Having an opinion’ matters in academic disciplines. Yet, the writing of this thesis has made it very clear to me that it may even be more important to value processes of growing and groping towards new insights. That it is not only the end result that matters, but also the process of discovery.

The topic I have chosen for this thesis - what we can learn from ‘embodied knowing’ for contemporary apologetic approaches - many times seemed too simple, almost naïve. At the same time, however, it is strangely complex. It is about basics, that somehow no longer seem so basic at all.

With this thesis I complete the master Church and Mission in the West at the Theological University of Kampen. I would like to thank my supervisor, prof. dr. Stefan Paas, for what he taught me about being Christian in a secular culture and for his open-minded, positive and realistic approach toward complex issues. He encouraged my curiosity while helping me to keep focus. Also, I would like to thank prof. dr. Hans Schaeffer, who helped me appreciate the formative power of ecclesial practices, and dr. Gert-Jan Roest, who contributed to my exploration of epistemology and missiology.

Before embarking on my master I completed a bachelor of Theology at the Christian University of Applied Sciences (CHE). I would like to thank dr. Bert Roor and dr. Sake Stoppels of the Lectorate of Theology of the CHE for allowing me to contribute to their lectorate research about sensemaking in new faith communities, and for stimulating me to pursue an academic theological study.

Not in the least, I would like to thank my church community, especially the people I worked with in various committees over the past few years. What I learned from them, through listening to their stories, inspired me to write this thesis.

Evelien van Duffelen
Nijkerk, 7 December 2022

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INTRODUCTION

One night, in the Summer of 2022, I was talking about the future of my local church with people from two different committees. One group had thought for almost two years about 'church after corona'. Their biggest concern was: 'Will people come back?' Another group had been thinking for almost two years about the mission of our church. Their biggest concern was: 'How do we get people enthusiastic about mission?' During this specific night, we realized that we did not know how to continue the processes we started. We all felt as if we were facing a 'crisis'. It seemed a bit depressing to even admit the thought. Yet we did, and as we shared our questions, doubts, and desires, we realized that perhaps we had forgotten to address the most important question: why be a Christian anyway? Where do we even begin to explain the significance of our belief for our daily lives?

One of us shared that he used to know all the 'supposedly' right answers in his head. He knew the catechisms and creeds by heart. He cognitively knew what he was expected to believe and how he was supposed to defend his faith. Yet he was not sure anymore whether believing such cognitive truths actually matters. His deepest desire was to live as a Christian in his ordinary, daily life and to show what he believes through his deeds. He had become utterly tired of all the words. When I listen to the stories of people around me, he is clearly not the only one. During various meetings in my church (a modern, Reformed church with approximately 500 members) over the past few years, I have noticed that people get quite nervous, or even upset, when we start talking about mission, and express feelings of discomfort, resistance, or insecurity. Gradually, the question arose whether the way we provide theological answers to nonbelievers in our missionary endeavors still matches today's questions of 'ordinary' people. This made me curious to explore our apologetic approaches and underlying theories.

In classic apologetics the focus appears to be on *universal*, *theoretical*, *propositional* knowledge to defend the existence of God and the rationality of the Christian faith. In contemporary philosophical theology, religious epistemology, practical theology and social sciences, however, an increasing appreciation seems to emerge for what people learn through participating in a community: *local*, *practical*, '*embodied' knowing*. What explains this 'gap'? What explains the heightened interest in this practical and 'embodied' knowing? Might 'embodied knowing' be a reasonable additional ingredient to the apologetic enterprise? And if so, would insight in 'embodied knowing' lead to more 'missional resilience' for Christians who experience resistance or uncertainty when it comes to mission through words?

Role as researcher

Apart from this personal perspective that originates from my involvement in a local church, the topic of this thesis also relates to a research program of the lectorate Theology at the Christian University of Applied Sciences (CHE-Ede).[1] The goal of the lectorate is to find new ways for communicating the Gospel in our secular society, through investigating theologies and processes of sensemaking in emerging faith communities. I participated in the lectorate research group for three years (2019-2022) under the supervision of dr. Sake Stoppels, and in the practical-theological lectorate research *Does it make sense to participate? A practical theological investigation into the significance for participants of*

[1] Christelijke Hogeschool Ede. "Zingeving in nieuwe geloofsgemeenschappen", accessed November 9, 2022, https://www.che.nl/lectoraten/zingeving-geloofsgemeenschappen.

participating in Christian pioneering initiatives.[2] Stoppels describes the overall goal of the lectorate research as follows: "[i]f all kinds of classical interpretations of the Gospel no longer resonate in our culture, how can we look for new approaches through which the Gospel can existentially 'land' in people's lives?"[3] With this thesis, I hope to contribute to searching for an answer to this question.

Problem statement

Traditionally, apologetics focuses on defending the truth of religious beliefs through systematic argumentation and discourse.[4] This indicates that classic apologetics can be seen as a 'debating activity' about the truths of our beliefs. Is this debating style the most appropriate means for communicating the Christian faith in a secular, post-Christendom society?

I believe this question is important for four reasons. First, because I have observed how many, if not most people in my own congregation cry out for 'doing' instead of 'talking' or 'theorizing' when it comes to sharing their faith. Second, because contemporary missiological literature addresses the religious 'speechlessness'[5] that people (inside as well as outside the church) run into. Third, because recent surveys about religiosity in the Netherlands indicate that "the church and Christianity are gradually disappearing from Dutch collective awareness (…) [and] three quarters of the respondents say they feel that churches are not able to answer the most important spiritual questions of the day".[6] Fourth, because this same research also states we must distinguish between 'converts' (people who have chosen for a well-defined religion), and 'pilgrims', who see themselves "primarily as individuals who are on a journey, seeking more significance, seeking meaning that has actually been *experienced* (…) In an age when all manner of traditional religious institutions are crumbling, the latter model is becoming ever more important. [For 'pilgrims' it] is not so much about conforming to the rules of an organisation or attending mass ritual gatherings in a fixed and prescribed rhythm, but more a matter of a personal spiritual journey of discovery and *sharing the emotional and religious feelings* associated with that".[7]

If we consider this focus on doing, the growing speechlessness, the fading collective memory about Christianity, and the increasing interest in experiencing, emotions, and feelings, as well as the emerging interest in 'practical knowledge', I believe it is appropriate to explore alternative apologetic approaches. Additionally, in a recent research project in New-Zealand with the title *Our doing becomes us* (2019), Lynne Taylor found that 'pre-conversion' engagement in spiritual practices – 'embodied

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[2] Bert Roor and Evelien van Duffelen, *Heeft meedoen zin? Een praktisch-theologisch onderzoek naar de betekenis voor deelnemers van het meedoen in christelijke pioniersinitiatieven* (Ede: Christian University of Applied Sciences). Expected publication date: January 2023. English translation of the title: *Does it make sense to participate? A practical theological investigation into the significance for participants of participating in Christian pioneering initiatives.*

[3] Christelijke Hogeschool Ede. "Zingeving in nieuwe geloofsgemeenschappen", accessed November 9, 2022, https://www.che.nl/lectoraten/zingeving-geloofsgemeenschappen.

[4] Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "Apologetics," accessed July 20, 2022, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apologetics; Wikipedia Encyclopedia, s.v. "Apologetics," accessed July 20, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apologetics.

[5] Cf. Stefan Paas, *Pilgrims and Priests. Christian Mission in a Post-Christian Society* (London: SCM Press, 2019), 12. Paas indicates: "[t]heologians and other intellectuals point at the growing 'speechlessness' with regard to religiosity in general and Christianity in particular"; cf. Stefan Paas, "Religious Consciousness in a Post-Christian Culture: J.H. Bavinck's Religious Consciousness and Christian Faith (1949), Sixty Years Later" In *Journal of Reformed Theology* 6 (2012): 53.

[6] Joep de Hart, Pepijn van Houwelingen, en Willem Huijnk, *Religie in een pluriforme samenleving. Diversiteit en verandering in beeld. Deel 3: Buiten kerk en moskee* (Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2022), 153.

[7] De Hart et al., Buiten kerk en moskee, 165 (italics added). The distinction between 'converts' and 'pilgrims' was developed by Danièle Hervieu-Léger (1999), a French sociologist of religion.

knowing' through participating in a faith community – "was a crucial element of non-Christians journeys towards the Christian faith".[8] Taylor argues that "one reason why Christians fail to notice the potential of spiritual practices ('embodied knowing') to form faith in non-Christians is the Western, post-reformation emphasis on propositional belief systems. It is generally presumed that one first embraces Christianity cognitively: essentially *deciding* to become a Christian. However, those [Taylor] interviewed *realized*, more than *decided*, that they had become Christians".[9] Taylor therefore argues that "rather than emphasizing belief as giving cognitive assent to specific truths, prioritizing and resourcing engagement in spiritual practices, including among non-Christians, can be a fruitful model for Christian witness".[10] I believe it is worthwhile to explore in more depth how participating in Christian practices may help nonbelievers to (re)assess the plausibility and relevance of the Christian faith.

Research objective

In this thesis my theoretical aim is to explore whether apologetic approaches might be enriched by what people learn from involvement or participation in a faith community - an 'embodied' approach - next to the alleged traditional propositional method. This assumes that apologetics does not yet address this topic. This presupposition is based on preliminary conversations and literature study, and will be further investigated in this thesis. I will take a philosophical starting point, based on the conviction that "philosophy is needed to answer real questions, thrown up by our ordinary, embodied lives"[11] (*theoretical relevance*). My practical aim is to contribute to creating more 'missional resilience' with regard to apologetic approaches in our secular, fast-changing post-Christendom society, by offering insight in perspectives on 'embodied knowing' (*practical relevance*).

Figure 1 Resilience

[8] Lynne Taylor, "Our doing becomes us: performativity, spiritual practices and becoming Christian." In *Practical Theology* 12, no. 3 (2019): 332-342, accessed July 20, 2022, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1756073X.2019.1595317; Cf. "Lynne Taylor: Reflecting on life and spirituality", accessed July 20, 2022, http://lynnetaylor.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Our-doing-becomes-us-accepted-manuscript.pdf, 4 (quote references are taken from the PDF).
[9] Taylor, 15-16.
[10] Taylor, 18.
[11] Louise M. Antony, "Embodiment and Epistemology" In *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 475; Cf. Esther Lightcap Meek, *Loving to Know. Covenant Epistemology* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers / Cascade Books, 2011), who in a similar way argues that "[i]f people actually live responses to philosophical questions such as how we know, then philosophical proposals should be expressed for ordinary people as their audience" (Meek, xiii).

Main question

The main question for this thesis is:

> *What is the contribution of 'embodied knowledge', gained through participation in faith communities, to the apologetic explication of the Gospel in a secular society?*

Sub questions

I will answer the main question through exploring the following four sub questions:

1. What recent insights from a practical theologian, a philosopher, a scientist-apologist and a missiologist help to understand why 'embodied knowing' is an emerging topic of interest?
2. How is the topic of 'embodied knowing' (based on the outcomes of sub question 1) addressed in three contemporary apologetic approaches (Tim Keller, Francis Spufford, and Willem Jan Otten)?
3. What is the role of 'embodied knowing' in the philosophical theology of Esther Lightcap Meek (epistemological perspective) and Nicholas Wolterstorff (liturgical perspective), and how does this relate to defending the Christian belief in a secular society?
4. What can we learn from 'embodied faith experiments' from pioneers (interview with theologian Rikko Voorberg & philosopher Jan Huijgen)?

Definitions

Embodied knowing: in this thesis, embodied knowing is understood as a form of knowing that follows from personal, experiential involvement, participation, or embeddedness in a tradition or community. Embodied knowing includes a focus on what we learn from our practices, praxis, enactment, action, performance, and through our senses.

Faith community: in this thesis, a faith community is every form of community (no matter what size) aimed at seeking God and learning to live faithfully to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Apologetics: from the Greek ἀπολογία, 'speaking in defense'. Traditionally, apologetics focuses on defending the truth of religious beliefs through systematic argumentation and discourse. In this thesis, apologetics is taken as a broader methodological concept that is about finding approaches, fitting for the times in which we find ourselves, to explicate Christian beliefs and practices to nonbelievers in ways that help them to (re)assess the plausibility and relevance of the Christian faith.

Gospel: from the Greek εὐαγγέλιον, 'good news'. In the New Testament, 'gospel' refers to the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. In this thesis, salvation is understood as "everything that furthers or restores the physical, mental, spiritual, social and/or societal wellbeing of people and offers them a hopeful perspective, her and now and/or in the hereafter".[12]

Secular society: secularization is a 'collection of theories'.[13] In contemporary discussions at least five definitions are in use: 1) differentiation (separation church and state), 2) rationalization (church as

[12] Roor and Van Duffelen. Definition as used (and theologically substantiated) in the CHE-research report *Does it make sense to participate?* Expected publication date: January 2023.
[13] Stefan Paas, „Post-Christian, Post-Christendom, and Post-Modern Europe: Towards the Interaction of Missiology and the Social Sciences." In: Mission Studies 28 (2011): 3-25.

specialized institute, operating in a 'market situation', "leaning on scientific insights (…) separate from religious norms"[14]), 3) privatization (withdrawal from public life, shift to the subjective, private realm), 4) pluralization (loss of ecclesiastical monopolies, multiplication of alternatives), and 5) individual loss of faith.[15] It is difficult to disentangle these, as the various approaches flow from and influence one another. The topic of this thesis follows primarily from 2) and 5).

Research method

This thesis is a qualitative, explorative, and systematic study on 'embodied knowing', primarily based on literature study (desk research) and interviews (field research). The choice of my topic emerges from what I have observed in practices in my own church and what I see confirmed in broader research and missiological literature (see problem statement). This thesis follows up on a preliminary explorative study on rationality, religious experience and developments that take place within the theory of knowledge.[16] In an introductory chapter, I will first summarize the main insights this preliminary study provides in the heightened interest in 'embodied knowing', to justify my research method and choice of theory for this thesis. Then, second, I will explore whether and how the topic of 'embodied knowing' is addressed in popular contemporary apologetic literature. In the third place, I will explore alternative approaches to 'embodied knowing' from a philosophical entry point. I have chosen a philosophical, analytical approach because, according to practical theologian Bonnie Miller-McLemore, what is often missing 'on the ground' "is a dynamic analysis of how theory functions in practice (…) [despite the] implications for faith and ministry in concrete contexts".[17] Someone who specifically addresses such implications for our practices, is philosopher Esther Lightcap Meek. Another philosopher with deep compassion for practices, is Nicholas Wolterstorff. In this thesis, I will assess their theories with regard to their usefulness in apologetic approaches, through a pattern-seeking approach. As a fourth step, I will compare my findings with the experiences of two pioneers who try to create more awareness with regard to 'embodied knowing'. I will present the outcomes of this explorative research through defining lessons.

During my research, I will adhere to the Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2018).[18] With respect to validity and trustworthiness, I will pursue to work transparently and methodically precise, including and correlating various perspectives to increase reliability.

[14] Paas (2011), 7. Paas writes: "Churches had to obey the new rules: they had to rationalize".
[15] Paas (2011), 7-8.
[16] This preliminary study was based on analyzing the following books: William P. Alston, *Perceiving god. The Epistemology of Religious Experience* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Alister E. McGrath, *The Territories of Human Reason. Science and Theology in an Age of Multiple Rationalities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Harold Netland, *Religious experience and the knowledge of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2022); Stephen Toulmin, *Return to Reason* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001); Howard Wettstein, *The Significance of Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). In addition, as a further preliminary study for this thesis, I read Paul K. Moser, *Oxford Handbook of Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) and Michael Stenmark, *Rationality in Science, Religion and Everyday Life. A Critical Evaluation of Four Models of Rationality* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame Press, 1995).
[17] Bonnie Miller-McLemore, "The theory–practice distinction and the complexity of practical knowledge." In *HTS Teologiese Studies* 72, no. 4, a3381 (2016). Accessed June 15, 2022, http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i4.3381.
[18] Netherlands Code of Conduct for Research Integrity. Code of Conduct (Den Haag: Dutch Research Council / Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek NWO, 2018).

Structure of thesis

In chapter 1 I will first 'set the stage' by providing an overview of why I believe 'embodied knowledge' is a relevant topic to explore for mission in the West. I will summarize the findings of a preliminary explorative study on changes within epistemology, referring to the work of Bonnie Miller-McLemore, Stephen Toulmin, Alister McGrath, and David Bosch, who each in their own way point at the need for and revaluation of alternative ways of knowing (sub question 1). I will summarize the key concepts for 'embodied knowing' they put forward and end this chapter by providing an illustration, as well as a justification for my choice of literature for further exploration.

In chapter 2 I will offer a brief review of three contemporary approaches to apologetics, and describe in what ways the authors - Tim Keller, Francis Spufford, and Willem Jan Otten - pay attention to the topic of 'embodied knowing' (sub question 2).

In chapter 3 and chapter 4 I will further explore the key concepts from chapter 1 by analyzing two alternative and potentially complementary perspectives on 'embodied knowing' (sub question 3): an epistemological perspective by Esther Lightcap Meek (chapter 3), and a liturgical perspective by Nicholas Wolterstorff (chapter 4).

Chapter 5 offers two field perspectives, based on interviews with a philosopher (Jan Huijgen) and a theologian (Rikko Voorberg) who both take their starting point in 'not knowing' and focus in their pioneering work on learning from 'embodied experiences' (sub question 4).

In the final chapter (chapter 6), I will answer the main question and translate my findings in lessons for enhancing missional resilience (practical aim) and enriching apologetic approaches (theoretical aim).

“It takes intentionally persistent effort, first to identify, and then to overcome, a defective outlook.”

Esther Lightcap Meek (470)

1. WHY 'EMBODIED KNOWING'?

Something is changing. A new interest emerges in what we learn through our 'doing' and practices. In this opening chapter I will provide a brief overview of changes that are taking place in epistemology according to a practical theologian, a philosopher, a scientist-apologist and a missiologist. These changes may illustrate why people seem to get tired of words and theories, and become more interested in 'embodied knowing' instead.

1.1 Setting the stage

An essay on academic theology and practical knowledge by Bonnie Miller-McLemore[19] instigated me into various explorative conversations with theology professors and lecturers[20] and a preliminary study of 'embodied knowing' in (religious) epistemology and rationality. Miller-McLemore analyzes shifts in approaches to knowing in practical theological literature since the 1980s and recommends further exploration. This chapter is based on this recommendation and a selection of the literature I studied: the work of Alister McGrath[21] and Stephen Toulmin[22] on philosophical developments, and the theory of David Bosch[23] on paradigm shifts in the theology of mission.

In this chapter, I will start by briefly summarizing the main lessons I learned from those authors and the key concepts they bring forward with respect to 'embodied knowing'. In §1.2 I will illustrate how these key concepts align with the outcomes of a recent research project about a change in the use of our language. In §1.3 I will explain why - after a first and fruitless attempt to investigate the concept of 'embodied knowing' in the *Oxford Handbook of Epistemology*[24] - I selected two alternative sources for my further exploration in this thesis. In §1.4 I will summarize my findings in a chart (table 1). This chart will function as a 'compass' for the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

1.1.1 Bonnie Miller-McLemore: exploring alternative ways of knowing

Key concepts → intelligible force of practice itself, knowledge emerges in practices.

Practical theologian Miller-McLemore explores how various theologians between the 1980s–2010 address epistemological changes, and points at "the growing list of action-oriented, quotidian-centered objectives attached to theology - theology as practiced, lived, embodied, operative, everyday, ordinary, and popular".[25] She refers to the fact that only a few decades ago "a prominent dictionary defined systematic theology as that 'form of specialism which seeks … a *rational* and *orderly* account of the content of Christian belief'. Today, by contrast, one can buy a whole series of books on theology as practices with gerunds as titles (*traveling*, *working*, *playing*, *shopping* etc)".[26] Miller-

[19] Bonnie Miller-McLemore, "Disciplining. Academic Theology and Practical Knowledge." In *Christian Practical Wisdom. What it is. Why it matters* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 175-231.
[20] This concerns conversations with professors and lecturers from the Theological University Kampen, the Protestant Theological University Amsterdam and the University of Applied Sciences Ede, mainly in the period April – June 2022 (including conversations with key note speakers at two international theological conferences).
[21] Alister E. McGrath, The Territories of Human Reason. Science and Theology in an Age of Multiple Rationalities (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).
[22] Stephen Toulmin, *Return to Reason* (London: Harvard University Press, 2001).
[23] Bosch, David. Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011).
[24] Paul K. Moser, Oxford Handbook of Epistemology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[25] Miller-McLemore, Disciplining, 228.
[26] Miller-McLemore, Disciplining, 178 (italics added).

McLemore argues that a better understanding of the rise of ways of knowing largely suppressed within modernity ('mind over matter') may lead to a better understanding of the nature of practical, 'embodied' knowledge. Therefore, she pleads for a continued exploration of alternative ways of knowing to enrich (theological) knowledge as a whole.[27] Also, she observes that "people today across many settings have greater appreciation for (…) the 'intelligible force of practice itself' or the knowledge that emerges within practices (…) even if theologians are still uncertain about exactly how or what theological knowledge is created or fostered through practice".[28]

1.1.2 Stephen Toulmin: redressing the balance[29]

Key concepts → practical roots of all knowledge, pragmatic view on theorizing, knowledge as habituation and discovery, revaluation of accumulated experience of our practical lives.

Miller-McLemore refers to the work of philosopher Stephen Toulmin, who states that "now is the time for the ascension of practical reason as the 'neglected half of the philosophical field'".[30] In his book *Return to Reason*, Toulmin writes that until the 16th century "theoretical axioms stood firm only where their roots rested on *practical*, non-verbal support and went deep into *pre-theoretical experience*".[31] After wars on religion in the 16th and 17th century, the traditional task of religion "to reconcile people to the contingencies of experience [in everyday life]"[32] was given to philosophy. From the 17th century onward, Enlightenment 'dreams of rationalism' inflicted on human reason a wound "from which we are only recently beginning to recover".[33] The worldview of modernity "stood knowledge on its head"[34]: it turned the logical order upside down and created a rational superstructure (or: 'top growth') that replaced the 'practical', substantive roots of all knowledge.

In the 20th century, scholars have been preoccupied with the concepts of rationality and certainty "to the point of obsession".[35] At the heart of the current debate about rationality, Toulmin points out, is the idea that rationality and 'method' are tightly connected. However, to conform method to a specific set of procedures (such as a single *scientific method*), is to narrow it down. Also, we have come to understand the concept of 'theory' as an overarching rational framework.[36] Yet, according to Toulmin, a theory "is not a foundation on which we can safely construct practice; rather, it is a way of bringing our external commitments into line with our experience as practitioners".[37] Toulmin therefore argues that we need to rethink our ideas about 'method' and "employ a multiplicity of procedures which depends on the multiple tasks we set ourselves in the course of all our different enterprises"[38], and we additionally need to accept an alternative, 'pragmatic view on theorizing'[39].

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[27] Miller-McLemore, Disciplining, 177-186, 228-231.
[28] Miller-McLemore, The theory-practice distinction, 5 (reference to Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in history and society*).
[29] This section is an adaptation of a previous essay I wrote on *Rationality, Religious Experience, and Missiology* (master Church and Mission in the West, Theological University Kampen, May 2022).
[30] Miller-McLemore, Disciplining, 180 (reference to Stephen Toulmin, "*The Recovery of Practical Philosophy*").
[31] Toulmin, 207 (italics added).
[32] Toulmin, 209.
[33] Toulmin, 12, 214.
[34] Toulmin, 207.
[35] Toulmin, 1.
[36] Toulmin, 137, 209-210.
[37] Toulmin, 133.
[38] Toulmin, 29, 86.
[39] Toulmin, 173.

In the late 20th century, practitioners have turned the tables, for a large part due to specific issues of human values and professional ethics about the 'edges of life'. This resulted in renewed interest in embodied knowledge and concrete, practical wisdom.[40] This transition creates room for the 'tacit dimension' of knowledge, which allows for *habituation* rather than *explanation.*[41] Also, Toulmin argues that a more balanced view of rationality ('reasonableness'), "will allow any field of investigation to devise methods to match its problems, so that historical, clinical, and participatory disciplines are all free to go their own ways".[42] According to Toulmin, the future belongs to "reflective practitioners who are ready to act on their ideals".[43] He pleads for a revaluation of the accumulated experience of our practical lives, as well as to "give way to a less dogmatic point of view, which leaves the discovery of the preconditions for everyday 'certitude' - so different from mathematical 'certainty' - to be achieved bit by bit, as we go along (…) [and to] get back in touch with the experiences of everyday life, and manage our lives and affairs a day at a time".[44] This view has not yet been generally accepted in the academy.[45]

1.1.3 Alister McGrath: rational consilience[46]

Key concepts → beliefs as person- and situation-relative, interpretative framework, distinct knowledge, reconceptualizing reason as 'embodied activity', turn to practice, mystery, consilience.

In his book *The Territories of Human Reason*, Alister McGrath, a scientist and theologian, offers a meta-perspective on the relation between science and religion and explains why we need to take into account our 'embodiment' or 'situatedness' with regard to knowing. McGrath points at the growing realization that communities produce their own distinct knowledge and states that "the rationality of particular beliefs and actions is generally person- and situation-relative".[47]

According to McGrath, rationality takes the form of a spectrum of practices, and is best framed in terms of being able to explain the world, as "an informing perspective, and interpretative framework, which enables us to discern how events and experiences fit into broader patterns".[48] Reason, he argues, is an 'embodied activity' and an 'operational concept',[49] and a theory is "a coherent description, explanation and representation of observed or experienced phenomena".[50] Finding explanations or frameworks for what we observe and experience, is what McGrath calls 'sense-making'.[51]

[40] Toulmin, 136.
[41] Toulmin, 178 (italics added, reference to Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*).
[42] Toulmin, 83.
[43] Toulmin, 214
[44] Toulmin, 207, 213.
[45] Toulmin, 2.
[46] This section is an adaptation of a previous essay I wrote on *Rationality, Religious Experience, and Missiology* (master Church and Mission in the West, Theological University Kampen, May 2022).
[47] McGrath, 53.
[48] McGrath, 145.
[49] McGrath, 32-35.
[50] McGrath, 97-98 (quote from Susan Lynham, "Theory Building in the Human Resource Development Profession", 162).
[51] McGrath, 124.

To make sense of the world, the general sciences and theology make use of similar forms of reasoning. As "[w]hat men consider reasonable or unreasonable alters"[52], McGrath suggests that "both the natural sciences and Christian theology might enrich their grasp of our immense and complex universe, including ultimate questions of meaning, value, and purpose, through interaction and dialogue".[53] This thought, however, falls on "many deaf ears within both the scientific and religious communities".[54]

McGrath argues that for such a quest, we need to move away from an 'outdated' notion of a single rationality to which all disciplines should conform, to a range of multiple situated rationalities.[55] Also, these quests should not be restricted to the world of what can be *proved* to be rational, as we then "needlessly confine ourselves within an intellectual prison of our own making".[56] Instead, these quests need to be located in the 'turn to practice' (…) [which] involves moving beyond the traditional conception of reason as an innate mental faculty and reconceptualizing it in terms of practice".[57]

McGrath additionally highlights that "[l]ife is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived".[58] To speak of aspects of our world as a 'mystery', is to recognize "that some aspects of our complex world may lie beyond our capacity to grasp them fully".[59] A shared stimulus for the exploration of "the rationality of the universe is a sense of wonder at its immensity, beauty, strangeness, and solemnity".[60] In its non-religious sense, a mystery is seen as a temporary inexplicability and designates the domains of the uncomprehended and the unexplained; the solution to a mystery then lies in the discovery of a higher-order theory that allows what seems incomprehensible or incoherent to be seen in a new way. According to McGrath, a mystery is not something that is contradicted by reason, but rather "something that exceeds reason's capacity to discern and describe - thus *transcending*, rather than contradicting, reason".[61] He therefore pleads for 'rational consilience': linking principles from different disciplines to form a comprehensive, interwoven, cohesive, reconciled theory".[62]

The Christian epistemic community, "grounded and shaped by the narrative of Jesus Christ"[63] is (as other epistemic communities) under an 'epistemic obligation' to defend its own distinct rationality, in terms of demonstrating that it can offer either the best explanation of the world, or at least a coherent or adequate account[64] that even allows to foster personal growth and development.[65] Providing such framework is "an attempt to understand and to do justice to our experience of Christ (…) [as] embodied, enacted, and transmitted through the community of faith, and expressed at different levels in its creeds and public worship".[66]

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[52] McGrath, 21.
[53] McGrath, 55.
[54] McGrath, 56
[55] McGrath, 87, 222.
[56] McGrath, 186.
[57] McGrath, 38.
[58] McGrath, 192 (reference to Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*).
[59] McGrath, 202.
[60] McGrath, 154.
[61] McGrath, 194.
[62] McGrath, 211.
[63] McGrath, 92.
[64] McGrath, 110, 150-151.
[65] McGrath, 152.
[66] McGrath, 99.

1.1.4 David Bosch: a transition period

Key concepts → from focus on thought-reason to focus on being-action, belief as source of all knowledge, fiduciary framework, humble witness, commitment, 'epistemology of participation'.

In his book *Transforming Mission*, missiologist David Bosch points out that we find ourselves in a transition period between the modern Enlightenment paradigm and an emerging postmodern, ecumenical paradigm.[67] He argues that to "appreciate the scope of the present challenge and to be able really to understand the world today and the Christian response to its predicament"[68], we need the (epistemological) perspectives of the past. The Enlightenment paradigm has deeply influenced *all* disciplines, including theology. However, nowadays "there is a growing sense of disaffection with the Enlightenment and a quest for a new approach to and understanding of reality".[69] Although for Christians "any paradigm shift can only be carried out on the basis of the gospel and because of the gospel (…) [and the] epistemological priority of (…) the Scriptures"[70], they will nevertheless experience the effects of the paradigm shifts, even to the point of 'theological schizophrenia'. Bosch argues that this is something "which we just have to put up with while at the same time groping our way toward greater clarity (…) [as] there is no way in which we can evade the demands made on us".[71]

The 'Enlightenment paradigm' is characterized by Bosch as the 'critical', 'analytical', and 'mechanistic' epoch. The current, emerging paradigm is characterized as a 'post-critical', 'holistic', and 'ecumenical' epoch.[72] Bosch argues that the contemporary world therefore challenges us to practice "a theological response which transforms us first before we involve ourselves in mission to the world".[73] The new paradigm challenges the "Enlightenment's thesis of the priority of *thought* to *being* and of *reason* to *action*".[74]

Bosch mentions seven characteristics of the postmodern paradigm. In this thesis, I will take three of these characteristics as key concepts for my further exploration.[75]

- *The expansion of rationality*: Bosch indicates that 'true rationality' includes experience.[76] "The narrow Enlightenment perception of rationality has (…) been found to be an inadequate cornerstone on which to build one's life (…) [and] had a crippling effect on human inquiry; it has led to disastrous reductionism and hence to stunted human growth"[77]. Bosch emphasizes that "there is no longer any room for the massive affirmations of faith which characterized the missionary enterprise of earlier times, only for a chastened and humble witness to the ultimacy of God in Jesus Christ".[78]

[67] Bosch, 185-186. Bosch refers to Hans Küng, who proposes that the history of Christianity can be subdivided into six major 'paradigms', each revealing "a peculiar understanding of the Christian faith (…) [and] of Christian mission".
[68] Bosch, 193.
[69] Bosch, 189.
[70] Bosch, 191.
[71] Bosch, 192.
[72] Bosch, 192.
[73] Bosch, 193.
[74] Bosch, 359 (italics added).
[75] Bosch, 359-361. The other characteristics include challenges to the subject-object scheme, the teleological dimension, progress thinking, and a call for chastened optimism (a road beyond Enlightenment optimism and Enlightenment pessimism).
[76] Bosch, 361.
[77] Bosch, 360-363.
[78] Bosch, 363.

- *The emergence of a 'fiduciary framework'*: Bosch refers to the work of Michael Polanyi, who "advocates the view we should once again recognize *belief* as the source of all knowledge and consciously embrace a 'fiduciary framework'".[79] The Enlightenment ideal of 'objectivity' (as often attributed to the 'exact' sciences) has proved to be a 'delusion' and a 'false ideal': "[t]he objectivist framework has imposed crippling modulations on the human mind".[80] Bosch also refers to spokespersons from the Third World, who pointed out that "science, far from being unbiased, was built on the cultural and imperialist assumptions of the West".[81] Scientific based ideologies functioned as 'substitutes for religion', which illustrates that "nobody (…) is really completely without a commitment".[82]
- *Toward interdependence*: Bosch argues that we need to retrieve what is 'essentially human'. In the first place, "we must reaffirm the indispensableness of conviction and commitment (…) [and in the second place] "we need to retrieve togetherness, interdependence, 'symbiosis' (…) We live in one world (…) [and] only *together* there is salvation and survival (…) The 'psychology of separateness' has to make way for an 'epistemology of participation'".[83]

1.2 Illustration: a change of language in sciences

A recent research article in the field of Psychological and Cognitive Sciences (*The rise and fall of rationality in language,* 2021) illustrates how changing views on rationality have become visible through our use of language. Researchers of Wageningen University & Research and Eindhoven University in the Netherlands, and Indiana University in the US, investigated how our use of language has changed. Through a *Google Ngrams* data analysis of language used in millions of books over the period 1850 to 2019, they found that words associated with reasoning have increased systematically since the 1850s.[84] However, this pattern has been reversed over the past 40 years. Since the 1980s, words related to the human experience, such as 'feel' and 'believe', were increasingly used (figure 1).

Co-author Ingrid van de Leemput indicates that "[w]hatever the causes, our results suggest that the 'post-truth' phenomenon, in which (public) opinion is based less on facts and more on emotion and belief, is related to a historical seesaw between two fundamental ways of thinking: *reasoning* versus *intuition*. If true, it may be impossible to reverse the reversal we are signaling. Instead, societies may need to find a new equilibrium, explicitly recognizing the importance of intuition and emotion, while at the same time making the best use of the much needed power of rationality and science to tackle subjects in their full complexity".[85]

[79] Bosch, 367.
[80] Bosch, 367 (reference to Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*).
[81] Bosch, 367.
[82] Bosch, 367-368.
[83] Bosch, 370-371.
[84] Marten Scheffer, Ingrid Van de Leemput, Els Weinans, en Johan Bollen, "The rise and fall of rationality in language." In *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118, no. 51 (2021). Accessed August 18, 2022, https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2107848118.
[85] Scheffer et al, 7; Wageningen University & Research, "'Wij concluderen' of 'ik geloof'? Rationaliteit decennia geleden al afgenomen", accessed August 18, 2022, https://www.wur.nl/nl/onderzoek-resultaten/onderzoeksinstituten/environmental-research/show-wenr/wij-concluderen-of-ik-geloof-rationaliteit-decennia-geleden-al-afgenomen.html (italics added).

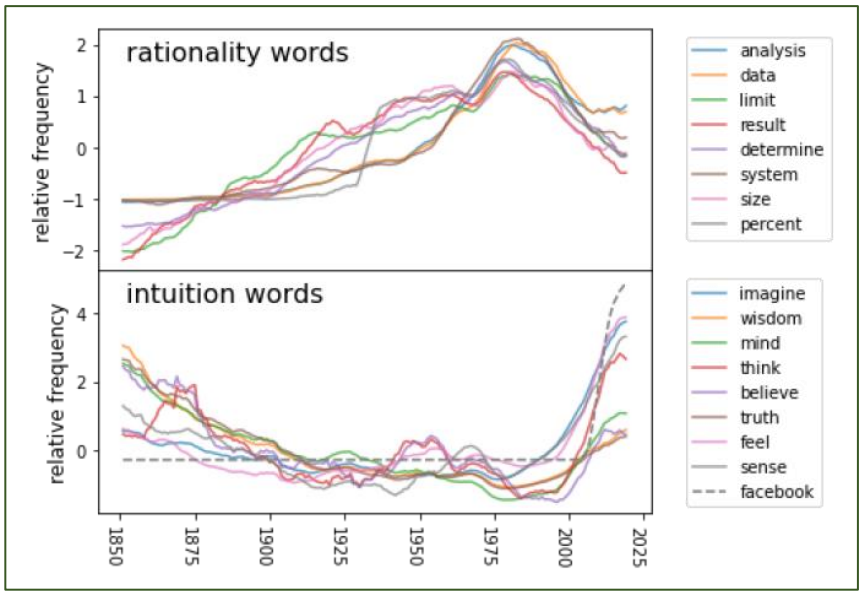

Figure 2
The rise and fall of rationality in language. Source: Wageningen University & Research.

1.3 The need for alternative approaches

Where to start exploring alternative ways of knowing (Miller-McLemore)? How to redress the balance (Toulmin)? How to work toward a coherent (McGrath) or fiduciary (Bosch) framework? How to retrieve what is essentially human (Bosch)? How to find a new equilibrium (WUR-research)?

Based on what I learned from Miller-McLemore, Toulmin, McGrath and Bosch, the first step in my research was to look at how 'embodied knowing' is addressed in traditional epistemology. In the *Oxford Handbook of Epistemology,* Paul Moser indicates that the Enlightenment view of knowledge in the tradition of Plato (427-347 BC) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) - which represents a focus on *propositional* knowledge - still remains influential. However, he also acknowledges that "[r]ecent epistemology has included controversaries over distinctions between [species of knowledge]".[86]

To value the broad and growing diversity in epistemology, Moser argues that there can be a 'common rationality'[87] in the face of differences about concepts and standards in epistemology. He refers to the "human cognitive predicament"[88] that all our reasoning falls prey to some form of 'circular reasoning' and pleads for 'reasonable divergence' or 'epistemic tolerance' (cf. Toulmin, §1.1.2). According to Moser, the best we can do is "to avail ourselves of a kind of instrumental epistemic rationality that does not pretend to escape evidential circularity"[89], and to accept that we are unified by our common desire to explain "the different general positions and species of positions in circulation"[90] in the field of epistemology. In practice, this means that we can pursue a variety of epistemic subgoals using a variety of concepts, while still being united ('common rationality') by our overarching aim to explain the position we choose.

[86] Moser, 3 (examples of 'species of knowledge': propositional knowledge, empirical (a posteriori) propositional knowledge, non-empirical (a priori) propositional knowledge, non-propositional knowledge, knowledge of how to do something).
[87] Moser, 9.
[88] Moser, 14.
[89] Moser, 15. Moser calls this 'meta-epistemic instrumentalism'.
[90] Moser, 9.

It is this point of view, that contributed to my current and extended exploration into 'embodied knowing', as I believe that instrumental epistemic rationality also creates room - or at least more tolerance - for the rationality of the sensemaking framework that Christianity offers. A framework we may come to know and understand, through participation in a faith community.

Despite Moser's 'epistemic tolerance', however, it seems striking that in the *Oxford Handbook of Epistemology* only one chapter (the shortest one, even shorter than the introduction) specifically deals with embodiment and epistemology.[91] In this chapter, Louise Antony argues that "it matters very much to our knowledge-seeking that we are embodied beings, and *how* we are embodied".[92] Her focus is primarily on the socio-cultural aspects of 'embodied knowing'.[93] She emphasizes that "the Cartesian attempt to treat essentially embodied agents in a disembodied way leads pretty surely to a disengaged epistemology - to a way of studying epistemology that sees knowledge only in abstract terms". [94] She ends her essay by emphasizing that "it should never be forgotten that [abstraction] is not all we need (…) [and that] philosophy is needed to answer real questions, thrown up by our ordinary, embodied lives".[95] Therefore, I have decided to look for alternative sources that pay attention to the ordinary processes of *how* we come to know.

1.4 Key concepts for further exploration

The sub question behind this chapter was: 'What recent insights from a practical theologian, a philosopher, a scientist-theologian and a missiologist help to understand why 'embodied knowing' is an emerging topic of interest? Based on §1.1.1 - § 1.1.4 I summarized the key concepts the various authors bring forward. I have divided these key concepts in two categories: aspects of how we come to know through practice in *general*, and aspects of how we come to know in *specific* practices (table 1).

Table 1 Summary of key concepts

KEY CONCEPTS 'EMBODIED KNOWING'	
Generic aspects → How we come to know	**Specific aspects → How we come to know**
▶ Intelligible force of practice itself (§1.1.1) ▶ Practical roots of all knowledge (§1.1.2) ▶ Pragmatic view on theorizing (§1.1.2) ▶ Revaluation of the accumulated experience of practical lives (§1.1.2) ▶ Reconceptualizing reason as 'embodied activity' (§1.1.3) ▶ 'Turn to practice' (§1.1.3) ▶ From thought-reason to being-action (§1.1.4) ▶ Belief as source of all knowledge (§1.1.4)	▶ Knowledge emerges in practices (§1.1.1) ▶ Knowledge as habituation (§1.1.2) ▶ Beliefs as person- and situation-relative (§1.1.3) ▶ Interpretative framework (§1.1.3) ▶ Distinct knowledge (§1.1.3) ▶ Fiduciary framework (§1.1.4) ▶ Humble witness (§1.1.4) ▶ 'Epistemology of participation' (§1.1.4)

[91] Louise M. Antony, "Embodiment and Epistemology." In *The Oxford Handbook of Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 463-478.
[92] Antony, 474.
[93] As an example, Antony mentions the difference of Greek-influenced versus Chinese-influenced societies: East-Asians tend to be more *holistic*, making relatively little use of formal logic, while Westerners are more *analytic*, using rules and formal logic. Another example is the tendency of the privileged to normalize themselves (Antony, 466-467).
[94] Antony, 475.
[95] Antony, 475.

In addition, the authors point at basic attitudes for processes of 'embodied knowing':

- discovery (§1.1.2);
- mystery (§1.1.3); and
- commitment (§1.1.4).

Also, the authors call for altering our convictions about what 'counts' as knowledge and highlight the need for:

- enrichment (§1.1.1);
- revaluation, restoring balance (§1.1.2);
- consilience, interaction and dialogue (§1.1.3); and
- tolerance (cf. §1.3: 'epistemic tolerance' or 'conceptual divergence').

Finally, recent research illustrates how since the 1980s these changing views already become visible through our use of language: a *decrease* of words of associated with reasoning, and an *increase* of words related to the human experience (§1.2). This calls for finding a new equilibrium to understand the 'full complexity' of this change.

The authors in §1.1.1 - §1.1.4 mention as an overall response to this change:

- 'uncertainty among theologians' (MillerMc-Lemore);
- 'not yet generally accepted' (Toulmin);
- 'falls on many deaf ears' (McGrath);
- 'theological schizophrenia' (Bosch).

In chapter 2 I will first look at three contemporary books on apologetics, to explore in what ways 'embodied knowing' (based on the key concepts as brought forward by the authors in question 1 and as summarized in table 1) is addressed by the authors. In chapter 3 and 4 I will explore the role of 'embodied knowing' through analyzing two alternative views on how we come to know: an epistemological and a liturgical approach. My overarching aim is to gather insights for an 'embodied' apologetic approach that is fitting for the times of transition in which we currently find ourselves.

2. THE ROLE OF 'EMBODIED KNOWING' IN APOLOGETIC LITERATURE

In this chapter I will look at the role of 'embodied knowing' in contemporary apologetic approaches. I have selected three authors who each engage, in quite different ways, in a conversation between the Christian tradition and contemporary culture. I have selected these books because these are written for 'ordinary' believers, attempt to (creatively) address contemporary questions, and were published within the past ten years.

I will first look at a classic and systematic, traditional approach by Timothy Keller.[96] Then I will look at two alternative approaches, one starting from the human emotions by Francis Spufford[97], and one starting from Christian practices by Willem Jan Otten[98]. For each author I will follow a similar structure: I will first summarize the aim of the author, followed by background perspectives, the overall approach (including structure and soteriological language), and references to 'embodied knowing'. For the latter, I will use as a 'compass' the key concepts as summarized in chapter 1, table 1.

2.1 Tim Keller: *Making Sense of God*

Keller has been a Christian minister in New York for over thirty years. He writes for "the most skeptical who may think the [Christian] 'good news' lacks cultural relevance".[99] In 2009, Keller wrote his book *Reason for God*, in which he provided "a case, a set of reasons, for belief in God and Christianity".[100] For many people, he writes, the book did not begin "far back enough".[101] In the book *Making Sense of God*, his aim is "to bring secular[102] readers to a place where they might find it (…) *sensible* and *desirable* to explore the extensive foundations for the truth of the Christianity".[103] To achieve this aim, Keller "compares the beliefs and claims of Christianity with [those] of the secular view".[104] His views are thoroughly substantiated: a fifth of his book consists of footnotes (69 pages).

2.1.1 Background perspectives

Keller provides two overarching background perspectives. First, he mentions that secular people will not even begin to explore Christianity, because many do not feel the need for religion, nor see the relevance of Christianity, and assume "it will die out".[105] As a response, Keller points at the worldwide growth of Christianity in the non-Western world and additionally argues that secularization in the West mainly leads to a decline of *inherited* religion; "[w]hat is not declining in modern societies is *chosen* religion, religion based on (…) personal decision".[106] Second (and largely based on Charles Taylor's cultural analysis in *A Secular Age*), Keller addresses cultural background beliefs with regard to reason and rationality, as well as related assumptions about the Christian faith.[107] Keller states that these beliefs and assumptions are so strong, that "even many Christian believers (…) find their faith

[96] Timothy Keller, *Making Sense of God. Finding God in the Modern World* (Westminster: Penguin Random House, 2016).
[97] Francis Spufford, Unapologetic. Why, Despite Everything, Christianity Can Still Make Surprising Emotional Sense (London: Faber and Faber Limited / Bloomsbury House, 2012).
[98] Willem Jan Otten, *Zondagmorgen. Over het missen van God* (Middelburg: Uitgeverij Skandalon, 2022).
[99] Keller, 2.
[100] Keller, 4.
[101] Keller, 4.
[102] Keller defines secularism as the belief of individuals that "everything (…) has a scientific explanation" or the characteristic of a culture "in which all the emphasis is on the *saeculum* (…) without any concept of the eternal" (Keller, 2-3).
[103] Keller, 216 (italics added).
[104] Keller, 2.
[105] Keller, 4.
[106] Keller, 26.
[107] Keller, 30-31.

becoming less and less real in their minds and hearts".[108] As a response, Keller argues that "believers and nonbelievers in God alike arrive at their positions through a combination of experience, faith, reasoning, and intuition".[109] Therefore, we need to 'restore the balance'[110] as "reason and faith always work together".[111] Keller defines faith in general as a "comprehensive framework that determines all life choices"[112] and secularism as a "set of beliefs"[113] starting from "tacit knowledge"[114].

2.1.2 Approach: a comparative competition

Based on this introduction, Keller argues that "[n]either religion nor secularity can be demonstrably proven".[115] Instead, he looks at which view of reality "is the most logically consistent (…) [and] makes the most sense emotionally, culturally and rationally".[116] Keller acknowledges that in today's world the use of providing 'cases for God' "should be targeted but modest".[117] His approach of comparing and contrasting nevertheless conveys a competitive style and reveals an 'us' versus 'them'-approach. Keller frequently uses the language of 'proving', 'making a case', 'evidence', 'argument', or 'warrant'[118], and argues that the secular narratives, although often 'partially right', "are not self-evident and are attended by a host of difficulties".[119]

Structure

Keller compares secular and Christian points of view through describing six emotional and cultural 'givens' "we cannot live without"[120]: meaning, satisfaction, freedom, identity, hope, and justice. He then provides a survey of six classic apologetic arguments for the reasonableness of belief in God: 1) cosmic wonder, 2) perceived design, 3) moral realism, 4) human consciousness, 5) the human ability to reason and 6) the argument of beauty as experiencing transcendence[121], and adds the 'Jesus argument' to demonstrate the reasonableness of Christianity[122].

Soteriological language

Keller highlights that Jesus' life was "the most beautiful life of humanity".[123] To understand his impact, we must look at his *life*, his *words*, and his *actions.*[124] Keller points out that Jesus "was putting himself *into* our lives"[125], enabling us to live 'committed' lives[126], but also emphasizes that Jesus is a 'substitute'

[108] Keller, 5.
[109] Keller, 2.
[110] Keller, 41 (reference to Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*).
[111] Keller, 41 (reference to Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, who in turn refers to Saint Augustine's *Confessiones*).
[112] Keller, 3.
[113] Keller, 31.
[114] Keller, 36 (reference to Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*).
[115] Keller, 215.
[116] Keller, 215.
[117] Keller, 228.
[118] Cf. Keller, 53, 216, 228.
[119] Keller, 216.
[120] Keller, 216.
[121] Keller, 216-227.
[122] Keller, 228-246.
[123] Keller, 237.
[124] Keller, 229.
[125] Keller, 76.
[126] Keller, 210.

and 'representative'.[127] Keller uses a primarily 'legal' soteriological vocabulary: debt, sin, punishment, penalty, paying the price, sacrifice, obedience.[128] The latter emphasis overshadows the first.[129]

2.1.3 References to 'embodied knowing'

Keller emphasizes that secular and religious views are both to be seen as a 'set of beliefs', and as a 'comprehensive framework' ('interpretative' or 'fiduciary' framework). In his assessment of secularism and Christianity, Keller does refer to aspects of 'embodied knowing', yet without explicitly following up on these references. I will provide two examples:

- **Personal choice and discovery** - Keller emphasizes that people in the secular West *choose* or *create* their own religion, while Christianity provides inherent meaning that we *discover*.[130] Also, he emphasizes that "[t]he world is more *mysterious* than comprehensible".[131] Nevertheless, his aim is "to *bring"*[132] secular readers to a different place by convincing them through arguments that Christianity will provide what they are looking for.

- **Lived experiences** - Keller provides one example of how a nonbeliever shared that "[a]fter a number of months of attending [a] congregation (…) faith in God was looking much more plausible to him".[133] He also provides an example of someone who 'de-converted' from the Christian faith after moving from a small, conservative town to New York and came to realize that his tacit beliefs about nonbelievers ('handed down' stereotypes, prejudices) were "found to be wrong through new lived experience"[134]; this led him to urge Christians to "stop thinking they can win the field strictly through rational proofs and arguments. 'If you can begin to pull your religion out of that abyss, there's no telling what a powerful countercurrent it might become'".[135] Keller, however, does not explicitly follow up on these examples and their apologetic value.

2.2 Francis Spufford: *Unapologetic*

Spufford is an English writer who came back to the Christian faith "after twenty-odd years of atheism".[136] He has written his book *Unapologetic* as a personal statement instead of a traditional *apologia*[137]*,* and as a report "from the inside of his head"[138] without doing any research. His own process toward the Christian faith originated in a religious experience.[139] Spufford wants "to talk back at some of the loudest and most frequent contemporary reactions to belief".[140] These reactions

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[127] Keller, 137.
[128] Keller extents this use of language to how he approaches nonbelievers: "If there is no God, you will have to turn some created thing into a god to worship, and (…) it will punish you with inner fears, resentment, guilt, and shame if you fail to achieve it" (Keller, 112).
[129] Keller indicates that "Jesus did not come primarily to teach or show us *how* to live (though he did that too) but to actually live the life we should have lived, and die in our place the death (…) we should have died" (Keller, 136).
[130] Keller indicates that "[i]f we were made by God for certain purposes, then there are inherent meanings that we must accept" (Keller, 65).
[131] Keller, 206 (quote from Richard Bauckham, "Reading Scripture as a Coherent Story", 47-48).
[132] Keller, 216 (italics added).
[133] Keller, 38.
[134] Keller, 51.
[135] Keller, 53 (reference to David Sessions, "What Really Happens When People Lose Their Religion?").
[136] Spufford, 75.
[137] Spufford defines *apologia* as "a technical term for a defense of ideas" (Spufford, 23).
[138] Spufford, 224.
[139] Spufford, 57-65
[140] Spufford, 17.

include that people who go to church are perceived as people with "a nervous resistance to reality"[141], as "touting a solution without a problem"[142] and as embarrassing, weird, inexplicable, or awkward.[143] Based on his own experience, Spufford's aim is "to extricate for people (…) what Christianity feels like from the inside".[144]

2.2.1 Background perspectives

Spufford explains the complexity of communicating the Christian belief by mentioning two overarching obstacles. The first obstacle is the religious vocabulary: in our culture, inherited Christian terms often 'float free of their context' ("origins all forgotten"[145]) and are 'repurposed' with "new meanings generated by a new usages; meanings that make people think they know what believers are talking about when they really (…) don't".[146] An example is the word 'sin', which has become reduced to the "atmosphere of *desire* (…) [and] always encodes a memory of ancient *condemnation*".[147] As a response, Spufford creates his own acronym for the word sin: 'HPtFtU' – which means: "the human propensity to fuck things up"[148] and positions Christians as a "counter-cultural"[149] community of "acknowledged fuck-ups".[150] The second obstacle he describes is that for many a religious experience is "not compatible with an instinctual sense"[151] of the world around us: "the bare, disenchanted, unmediated, uncoloured truth delivered by the scientific method".[152] As a response, Spufford argues this is not science, but "a cultural artifact created by one version of the cultural influence of science, specific to the last two centuries in Europe and North America".[153]

2.2.2 Approach: a defense of Christian emotions

Spufford argues that "from the outside, belief looks like a series of *ideas* about the nature of the universe for which a truth-claim is being made, a set of propositions that you sign up to".[154] From the inside, however "it makes much more sense to talk about belief as a characteristic set of *feelings*, or even as a *habit*".[155] His book is a "defense of Christian emotions - of their intelligibility, of their grown-up dignity".[156] Spufford argues that although we cannot prove there is a God, "it can feel as if there is one".[157] Therefore, it makes emotional, hopeful and realistic sense to proceed as if there is a God.

For Spufford, "[s]tarting to believe in God is a lot like falling in love."[158] For himself, the starting-point is that he will only get to faith by a process separate from proof and disproof, and only because "in some way that it is not in the power of evidence to rebut, *it feels right*".[159] Spufford wants people who read

[141] Spufford, 6.
[142] Spufford, 5.
[143] Spufford, 14.
[144] Spufford, 221.
[145] Spufford, 43.
[146] Spufford, 24 (italics added).
[147] Spufford, 25.
[148] Spufford, 27-28.
[149] Spufford, 221.
[150] Spufford, 52.
[151] Spufford, 69.
[152] Spufford, 70.
[153] Spufford, 70.
[154] Spufford, 18 (italics added).
[155] Spufford, 18.
[156] Spufford, 23.
[157] Spufford, 222-223.
[158] Spufford, 67.
[159] Spufford, 67-68 (italic added).

his book to arrive at God "as people do in experience: not as philosophical proposition, and abstract possibility, but as the answer to a need".[160] His thesis is that the feelings are primary[161], based on the secondary[162] conviction that "the universe is sustained by a continual and infinitely patient act of love (…) [in which] God is continually present everywhere (…) undemonstratively underlying all [of life]".[163]

Structure

Although his style is different from classic apologetic approaches[164], the structure of his book follows a quite traditional structure and deals with: God's absence, the problem of pain, the story of Jesus, the meaning of the church, virtues and morals. Additionally, Spufford explains how the church is formed in and influenced by a culture, and vice versa, and acknowledges 'internal disasters' within the history of the church (e.g. anti-Semitism, Christians as body-haters, the hell business, power issues).[165]

Soteriological language

Spufford refers to God as 'the God of everything'.[166] God (He, She, It[167]) "must be manifest *in* everything (…) [and] equally present *for* everything".[168] If you believe, "you're perceiving a state of the universe".[169] For God being worthy of worship, it is important that we find a response that is compatible with the human experience of suffering and Jesus death on the cross, while also "keeping God's love recognizable".[170] For Spufford, we find this response in the acknowledgement that "the world is not as God intended it to be"[171], and that "creation is not the same as the creator".[172] Spufford argues that "[w]e don't have an argument (…) but we have a story".[173] In practice, we do not look for a 'philosophically complicated'[174] "creator who can explain Himself"[175] but "for comfort in coping with [the world] as it is".[176] The story of Christianity is one "that takes the existence of suffering seriously".[177] Jesus can "take from us - take over for us - the guilt and fear, so that we can start again free, in hope".[178]

2.2.3 References to 'embodied knowing'

Spufford's whole method of transferring and explaining the 'feel' of his own experience is in fact an embodied approach. He regards science as situation-relative ('a cultural artifact') and takes for granted the primacy of feelings and habits in belief-formation (person-relative). Spufford refers to knowledge

[160] Spufford, 54.
[161] Spufford , 19. Spufford also states that "you can't disprove the existence of a feeling" (Spufford, 68 in added note).
[162] Spufford, 20, 21.
[163] Spufford, 20.
[164] Spufford writes as a "this-worldly Christian" (165) and frequently uses 'popular' language (e.g. his acronym HPtFtU, or his telling *blind obedience* and *authority* to "sod off" (74).
[165] Spufford, 173-188.
[166] Spufford, 81.
[167] Spufford, 80, 82, 84.
[168] Spufford, 81-82.
[169] Spufford, 77.
[170] Spufford, 100.
[171] Spufford, 100.
[172] Spufford, 104.
[173] Spufford, 107.
[174] Spufford, 107.
[175] Spufford, 104-105.
[176] Spufford, 104-105.
[177] Spufford, 164.
[178] Spufford, 166.

as a discovery and emphasizes that 'being-action' (exploring, experiencing) comes before thought-reason (reflecting). I will give one example:

- **Personal experience and discovery** - According to Spufford, our experiences are 'elusive', yet also function as a 'foundation'.[179] He states that the first time "the organized material of religion can come into the picture"[180] is *after* a religious experience. "You do not assent to doctrine because authority tells you to (…) You begin to think you might be willing to go along with an idea because it seems to you to translate into a statement something that has passed the test of feeling".[181] Based on curiosity and discovery, you "find out about it".[182] Arguments about God often follow as a 'rationalization' afterwards.[183] When you accept the Christian faith, you become 'transformed' and "make faith your vantage point, your habitual place to stand [and] (…) get used to the way the human landscape looks from there: reoriented, reorganized, difference".[184] Spufford indicates that defining the starting point of coming to belief something is "tricky (…) Maybe [it starts] when you hope at all, in this direction".[185]

2.3 Willem Jan Otten: *Sunday Morning*[186]

Otten is a Dutch writer who has "swum into the trap of faith"[187] twenty years ago. His book *Sunday Morning* is a series of personal, poetic reflections about the liturgical year of the Catholic church. His focus is on what he missed when he missed the Eucharist services due to the Covid-lockdowns.[188] Otten points at the 'sentimentalization of society' ("gradually we have come to believe in our emotions and sentiments, as in a cult, with accompanying symbols that are becoming increasingly powerless"[189]), as well as the 'effects of science' ("science and statistics have kind of become kind of a state religion"[190]). His (implicit) aim is to retrieve awareness and appreciation for 'the art of symbolic thinking'. [191]

2.3.1 Background perspectives

Otten offers two overarching perspectives. First, he compares the liturgical year with a 'work of art', a 'scenario', or a musical 'score', and states that what happens at the Eucharist "needs to be interpreted".[192] During the Eucharist we remember the death and resurrection of Jesus, an act "through which Jesus took on himself the sins of the world".[193] Otten indicates that to a modern

[179] Spufford, 73.
[180] Spufford, 73.
[181] Spufford, 74-75. Spufford adds: "In terms of commanding blind *obedience* (…) we are now in the valuable position of being able to tell authority to sod off" (Spufford, 74).
[182] Spufford, 75.
[183] Spufford, 69.
[184] Spufford, 208.
[185] Spufford, 85.
[186] Otten's book is published in Dutch; no English translation is available. In this chapter, all quotes are my own translation. Behind each footnote I will therefore add an additional reference in parentheses; these refer to Appendix B where I will provide the original Dutch text for each quotation.
[187] Otten, 18 (1).
[188] Otten, 10 (2). Another word for the Eucharist is the Holy Mass; the Dutch word for Mass is 'mis'. Otten creatively plays with this word 'mis' and the expression of 'missing' someone or something.
[189] Otten, 71 (3).
[190] Otten, 71 (4).
[191] Otten, 66 (5).
[192] Otten, 10, 11 (6).
[193] Otten, 12 (7).

human being there is little more distressing than the 'terrible concept' of sin.[194] The 'paradox' of Jesus death "intensifies the mystery for a believer, but magnifies annoyance and alienation for the doubter".[195] This paradox is like a "knot that you have to go right through, without untangling it".[196] Second, Otten indicates that the 'language of faith' (when used outside the Christian rituals and prayers) continuously contributes to the feeling of "overplaying your hand and saying more than you can understand"[197] and requires to use words that "refer to something that *is,* more than that you can *articulate* it"[198], as well as using words from the handed down vocabulary of faith, which "you will may wish to abolish, but not the *desire* of which they consist"[199]. Otten's book is not an attempt to provide reasons or clarifications.[200]

Structure

Otten chronologically follows the liturgical year of the Catholic Church. He describes his personal experiences through reflecting on themes that emerge from the liturgical calendar: Easter time, Resurrection Weeks, Holy Spirit Weeks, Parable Weeks, Road to Jerusalem Weeks, End Times Weeks, Advent Season, Prophets Weeks, and Lent. He concludes with his memoirs during the Silent Week.[201]

Soteriological language

Otten mentions that his focus is more on the 'mystery of the Son', than on the 'judgement of the Father'.[202] He describes Jesus as "an inspiring, death-defying power (…) a companion for all people"[203] and a 'continued presence' "that envelops and accompanies us"[204]. Otten uses 'mystical' and 'poetic' language. Characteristic sentences are, for example: "surrender yourself to the superior power of the mystery"[205], "[e]verything is revealed and yet remains misunderstood"[206].

2.3.2 Approach: a declaration of love

For a long time, Otten could not bring himself rationally to believe that Jesus was risen from the dead. Intellectuals, he argues, often think they need to become 'convinced' first.[207] For Otten, however, his coming to faith was not primarily a rational, 'articulatable' event, but a physical experience: a moment that he unexpectedly went on his knees, overwhelmed by tears, seeing an image of Jesus on the cross. He mentions: "[h]ow certainties and prejudices are broken down is a notoriously difficult process to reconstruct".[208] He discovered that faith is not about "monopolizing the truth"[209], but about succumbing[210] or surrendering[211] and more like a "road (…) a process (…) an efficacy".[212] Otten

[194] Otten, 12 (8).
[195] Otten, 12 (9).
[196] Otten, 18 (10).
[197] Otten, 18 (11).
[198] Otten, 18 (12) (italics added).
[199] Otten, 18 (13) (italics added).
[200] Otten, 18 (14).
[201] Otten, 17 (15).
[202] Otten, 85 (16).
[203] Otten, 16 (17).
[204] Otten, 45-46 (18).
[205] Otten, 210 (19).
[206] Otten, 11 (20).
[207] Otten, 28 (21).
[208] Otten, 39 (22).
[209] Otten, 39, 40 (23).
[210] Otten, 28 (24).
[211] Otten, 29 (25).
[212] Otten, 40 (26).

describes his own essays as a 'declaration of love'[213]: "[y]ou don't come to faith by decision. It's something that happens to you, not quite unlike how you fall for someone."[214]

2.3.3 References to 'embodied knowing'

Otten's book is itself an example of an 'embodied approach', taking as a starting point his experiences of following the liturgical year. Otten refers to science as a 'state religion', and (implicitly) refers to the 'intelligible force of practice itself' and its efficacy. He has come to value distinctive knowledge through habituation and receptivity for mystery (symbols) over 'thought-reason'. I will give two examples:

- **Personal experience and receptivity** – Otten describes a believer-to-be as "a believer that is fascinated, yet still shrinks back".[215] He refers to his own "years of shrinking back, when [he] wanted nothing more than to get down on his knees".[216] It took him five years of almost weekly attending the Eucharist to reach that moment. Looking back, he wonders "if he had ever been more religious than during those [preceding] years".[217] Faith "is something that actually permanently only begins to dawn."[218] He describes how the process of coming to believe was "to go against the intellectual climate of your upbringing"[219] and "[t]o go against your own thinking"[220] and how he was "longing for (…) a 'sign of presence'"[221].

- **Symbols and mystery** - In our present world we have "forgotten the art of symbolic thinking".[222] According to Otten, "[t]here is good reason to put yourself in the practice of going to mass: you cultivate a receptivity to symbols - which mean more than you will comprehend".[223] During the liturgical year, you will "cultivate symbolic, symbol-sensitive muscles".[224] Characteristic words: mysterious, experience, desire, passion, incomprehension, inexpressible.

2.4 Evaluation of key concepts

I have read the three books in random order, as presented in this chapter. In comparing the three approaches, Keller's argumentative approach and legalistic language (especially with respect to sin), seems to find a reaction in Spufford's focus on the primacy of feelings and popular language, as well in a rejection of authority and a rejection of reducing sin as referring to desire and condemnation. In turn, Spufford's focus on feelings and emotions seems to find a reaction in Otten's mystical approach and poetic language, his point of view that 'sentiment' (feelings) has become a powerless 'cult' in our culture and his stimulus to retrieve of the 'art of symbolic thinking'

Aspects of 'embodied knowing' are present in the approach of each of the authors. All three mention the focus on (Keller) or importance of (Spufford, Otten) personal choice and discovery or receptivity.

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[213] Otten, 10, 15 (27).
[214] Otten, 178 (28).
[215] Otten, 228 (29).
[216] Otten, 115 (30).
[217] Otten, 115 (31).
[218] Otten, 52 (32).
[219] Otten, 118 (33).
[220] Otten, 225, 244 (34).
[221] Otten, 96 (35).
[222] Otten, 66 (36).
[223] Otten, 71 (37).
[224] Otten, 71 (38).

In addition, Keller refers to 'lived experiences', yet without explicitly acknowledging their 'formative' capacity. In contrast, Spufford builds his defense on his own emotions and experiences and looks for the most early stages of belief-formation, suggesting it might start as early as a 'hope' in a certain direction. For Otten, the most important is to revalue the 'art of symbolic thinking', which has been a defining factor in his own process of coming to faith.

Specific aspects

Although aspects of 'embodied knowing' are thus visible in the approach of each of the authors, their focus is mainly on the *specific* aspects of how we come to know: situation-relative and person-relative (Spufford), interpretative-fiduciary-comprehensive framework (Keller), distinct knowledge and habituation (Otten). Spufford values 'being-action' and Otten 'mystery-symbols' over 'thought-reason', yet both do so based on an account of their specific personal experience and attitude, not as a generic aspect of how we come to know.

Generic aspects

All three authors agree on 'belief as a source of all knowledge' and reveal an underlying conviction of revaluing what counts as knowledge. With regard to science-religion, Keller regards both as a 'set of beliefs', Spufford and Otten regard science respectively as 'cultural artifact' or a 'state religion'. None of the authors, however, intentionally reflect on generic aspects of how we come to know.

In the next chapter I will therefore look at the work of a philosopher who reflects on processes of coming to know. I studied *Loving to Know*, written by epistemologist Esther Lightcap Meek. She aims to provide a generic, epistemological perspective and thoroughly explores a variety of views on how we come to know. She argues that knowing is a transformative, 'embodied' experience that originates in ordinary, daily life (chapter 3).

“If you wait for an airtight rationale,
you will never plunge in and
you will never discover.”

Esther Lightcap Meek (32)

3. THE ROLE OF 'EMBODIED KNOWING' IN PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY (1)

In this chapter I will look at the role of 'embodied knowing' in the philosophical theology of Esther Lightcap Meek. Meek has written the book *Loving to Know* (2011) as an epistemology "for people considering Christianity and struggling with questions about knowing".[225] She is convinced that we are in need of 'epistemological therapy', because "[s]omething has infected our knowing that thwarts it, yet it is something people generally do not recognize".[226] Meek's aim is to provide a generic philosophical proposal about how we come to know that accords with Scripture.[227] My aim is to explore whether her theory provides insights for a complementary approach to apologetics. Although Meek aims to write an epistemology for 'ordinary knowers', her approach is quite abstract; she integrates at least ten different underlying theories.

I will start this chapter with explaining why Meek develops an alternative epistemology (§3.1 and §3.2). Then I will summarize how Meek develops her epistemological proposal (§3.3 and §3.4). I will end this chapter with an overview of the implications of her theory for apologetic approaches, and the correlation of her theory with the key concepts from chapter 1 (§3.5).

3.1 Epistemological therapy: Esther Lightcap Meek

Meek argues that we need "to replace faulty habits of knowing with healthy ones".[228] We all have acquired 'a subcutaneous epistemological layer': hidden, yet influential presumptions about what knowledge is, "something operating from 'under the skin' of our knowing (…) a way we are preset to function. This default needs to be reset".[229] According to Meek, we have fallen prey to an "almost precritical commitment to knowing itself as impersonal and detached".[230] This becomes visible in our quest for certainty and objectivity, as well as in our views on rationality as a 'cognitive attribute' related to thinking and detached from action and practice, the tactile and physicality.

In our Western philosophical default setting - originating in the Platonic and Cartesian tradition - knowledge involves sharp distinctions and dichotomies. Knowledge is associated with *facts, reason, theory, science, objectivity, the neutral public sphere, the mind, and reality* instead of *beliefs, opinions, interpretation, values, morals, faith, emotion, application, action, art, imagination, religion, authority, subjectivity, the body, and the way things appear*.[231] According to Meek, this default has deeply infected the Protestant church. She argues that the resulting mind-body distinction is especially severe among Christian believers in the global north[232], where many Christians espouse a specific, powerful, version of the dichotomy:

> There is 'absolute' truth, or there is no truth. Absolute truth consists of a complete set of rational propositions about everything. 'Absolute' truth's only alternative is relativism, subjectivism, or skepticism, Christians often think. Many Christians are convinced that if you do not believe in 'absolute'

[225] Esther Lightcap Meek, *Loving to Know. Covenant Epistemology* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock / Cascade Books, 2011), xv-xvi.
[226] Meek, xiii.
[227] Meek, 150.
[228] Meek, 3.
[229] Meek, 4-5.
[230] Meek, 15.
[231] Meek, 8-9.
[232] Meek, 19-20. Meek adds a personal note: "[g]rowing up as a Protestant Christian, I presumed the dichotomies, and thus struggled, as many people considering Christianity do, to figure out whether my faith is rational or not, certain or not, and which of these is in fact preferable."

> truth, you cannot be a Christian. These Christians do not see their own subcutaneous epistemic layer, and nevertheless have equated it with Christianity (…) Unaware of these operative dichotomies, we nevertheless remain tormented by their implications. They actually impede us from following through on positive, human, healthy, effective approaches to knowing.[233]

3.2 Retrieving 'embodied knowing'

According to Meek, the 'disembodied mind' gained the supreme position in knowing. As a result, Christians "struggle to value anything material - despite professing the doctrines that God created the world and that Jesus became flesh".[234] If this is a struggle for people in the church, "how can we expect it to be anything other for people outside it?"[235] Meek therefore deliberately integrates sources other than traditional ones for building her theory: "we must look elsewhere for guidance to move beyond what has come to be a stranglehold of epistemological 'orthodoxy'".[236]

Meek's *Loving to Know* is the theoretical explication for her 'covenant epistemology', in which she aims to retrieve 'embodied knowing' by revaluing pre-theoretical commitments in knowing and by offering a "complementary alternative to (…) current [epistemological] approaches in Christian scholarship".[237] For Christian believers, her aim is to rebalance the mind-body divorce, and to counter the idea of 'reason as opposed to faith' as well as the tendency to believe that 'information' precedes 'application'.[238]

3.2.1 Effects of 'disembodied knowing'

According to Esther Lightcap Meek, our epistemic default of 'disembodied knowing' leads to:

- **Boredom** – because if we think knowledge is "dispassionately gleaned information, dispassionately conveyed and dispassionately apprehended, [this] (…) suggests that knowledge has little to do with what is meaningful in life".[239]
- **Hopelessness** – because a "proclivity to dichotomies"[240] leads us to think it is 'all or nothing'.
- **Betrayal** – because knowledge as information has been exalted, other things have been "marginalized damagingly"[241] (e.g. people, relationships, justice, environmental care).
- **Cluelessness** – because "[i]f knowledge is information, what is wisdom or understanding?"[242]

[233] Meek, 11-13.
[234] Meek, 18.
[235] Meek, 19-20.
[236] Meek, 44-45.
[237] Meek, 61.
[238] Meek, 62.
[239] Meek, 11-12.
[240] Meek, 13.
[241] Meek, 13.
[242] Meek, 15.

3.3 Building blocks for covenant epistemology

According to Meek, her approach to epistemology "makes a radical and healing sense of how we actually go about knowing when we are knowing well, whether we know [God] explicitly or not."[243] Based on what Meek learned from writer Annie Dillard, she became interested in the relation between our behavior (patience, humility, commitment) and our discoveries. Based on what she learned from missiologist Lesslie Newbigin, she became interested in relational knowing ("at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ is not truth as a mere proposition so much as Truth as a personed event"[244]). And based on the theory of educator Palmer Parker she became interested in truth as personal commitment ("knowing something is to have a living relationship with it"[245]).

Meek's proposal for 'covenant epistemology' is composed of three building blocks, which I will review in this section. She integrates Polanyian epistemology (see §3.31 on *knowing as transformation*), a theological motive and vision based on the biblical covenant as relationship (see §3.3.2 on *knowing as covenantal*), and a cluster of theses about 'interpersonhood' (see §3.3.3 on *knowing as interpersonal*).

3.3.1 Building block 1: knowing as transformation

This first building block consists of interweaving the theory of the Jewish scientist and philosopher Michael Polanyi (1891-1976) with the theory of James Loder (1931-2001), who was a professor at Princeton University with expertise in theology, education and psychology (human development). I will summarize what both thinkers contribute to Meek's covenant epistemology.

Michael Polanyi

Polanyi brings the "central mechanism of knowing"[246] to Meek's epistemology and recasts knowing in science and religion as "fundamentally similar"[247]. Polanyi began by arguing that "epistemology should focus on its *efforts*, not on accounting for knowledge that we have already achieved by offering adequate rational justification for our claims (as western philosophy has done predominantly), but on accounting for *acts of coming to know* – discoveries".[248] Knowing should be construed, not on the prevailing model of explaining but rather on the model of discovery as "the more appropriate setting in which to find characteristic features of knowing".[249] Meek accepts this point of view and holds that in defining what we consider 'knowledge' we must begin in a different place. Instead of working from the idea of knowledge as statements and proofs and "tacitly complying with the epistemic paradigm of certainty"[250], we should begin with our experiences of coming to know, noticing and accrediting the "personal commitment and the tacit, lived, involvement by which we sustain them as true"[251]. In this view, two concepts are central: subsidiary-focal integration and transformation.

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[243] Meek, 148; Cf. Meek, 150 where Meek refers to Reformed Epistemology as developed by Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff as a 'theology-inspired philosophical proposal' that "raised awareness widely that such an approach can be rationally and helpfully taken.
[244] Meek, 39 (quote from Lesslie Newbigin, *Proper Confidence*, 10).
[245] Meek, 40 (quote from Palmer Parker, *To Know as We are Known*, xv).
[246] Meek, 67.
[247] Meek, 94.
[248] Meek, 68 (quote from Polanyi in his lecture *Tacit Dimension*, 24-25).
[249] Meek, 68-69.
[250] Meek, 69.
[251] Meek, 69.

The first key concept in Polanyi's approach is subsidiary-focal integration. All knowing, according to Polanyi, "is the active shaping of clues to form a pattern, to which we submit as a token of reality".[252] Clues can be seen as 'particulars': puzzling and apparently unrelated aspects, matters, or experiences that we derive from three sectors: the *world* (situations or circumstances)[253], our lived *body* ('skilled knowing', 'lived body knowing', the body as 'an instrument in use')[254], and normative *words* (worldview, directions, methodology, articulation, ideals, goals, and 'authoritative guidance' through tradition or apprenticeship[255]). Integration is the result of skilled, creative, and responsible 'groping' towards the not-yet-known. It involves relating in a new way to the particulars: "relying on them, or attending *through* them or *from* them, to comprehend a deeper pattern. The shift to identifying a coherent pattern is a moment of insight in which "[t]he pattern becomes *focal*: we focus on it".[256] In this integrative act, the particulars shift to become subsidiary clues: we come to indwell or interiorize them. The separate particulars become clues with 'joint meaningfulness' and are thus transformed, as well as transformative.[257] Instead of seeing our acts of coming to know as deductive and linear, Meek suggests they all human knowledge is integrated and transformative, and "at its roots, *subsidiary* and *tacit*".[258] The clues form our 'Point A' and start with a longing to know or understand as a 'driving dynamic'. The process to 'Point B' is the integration towards the focal point, which Meek also describes as "the never-ending adventure of coming to know".[259]

The second key concept is transformation. Meek argues that our default, our 'false ideal of explicit knowledge', "privileges the focal and blinds us to the ever-present, ever-palpable, ever-unspecifiable subsidiary awareness which alone allows us to sustain knowledge".[260] If we privilege focal knowledge, we forget the 'subsidiary rootedness' of all our acts of coming to know and thus detach 'explicit' knowledge (facts, information, objectivity) from the point where it started. Meek additionally argues that in a discovery, the knower experiences the possibility of other 'indeterminate future manifestations'. Our knowing demonstrates a form of 'open-endedness'; it "stretches from indeterminacy to indeterminacy"[261] and demonstrates a form a 'reciprocity'. In other words: if we focus on what is focal, we limit knowledge to the information we achieve as the 'end result'. This, in her view, is only "the tip of the iceberg".[262] In our discoveries, Meek argues, we encounter reality in a way that transforms us: we can feel "the grace of reality's self-disclosure".[263] This makes a discovery like an encounter with something 'personal' and the knowing event itself a 'living' and dynamic act: a "reciprocity of growing understanding and involvement".[264] In Polanyi's thought, this experience is considered an *ontological* aspect of our knowing. Meek therefore refers to reality as 'the real' and to 'the real' as "metonymously personal".[265]

[252] Meek, 69 (reference to Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* and *Tacit Dimensions*).
[253] Meek, 76-77.
[254] Meek, 78.
[255] Meek, 79-80.
[256] Meek, 69-70.
[257] Meek, 70.
[258] Meek, 70 (reference to Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*).
[259] Meek, 75.
[260] Meek, 74.
[261] Meek, 96-97.
[262] Meek, 413.
[263] Meek, 97.
[264] Meek, 100.
[265] Meek, 396.

James Loder

As a next step, Meek integrates and aligns what she learned from Polanyi with the approach of James Loder, who also focuses on the transformative aspects of knowing. Loder challenges prevailing 'canons of reason' (e.g. induction, deduction, objectivity) as well as the standard account of rationality, arguing that "reason refuses to acknowledge the role of the *imagination* and of the *personal* in knowing (…) [which is] 'a fundamental error of thought' that 'eventually cuts off reason from its substance'".[266] As a result, "it covers over the transformative dynamism that is only possible in connection with the imagination".[267] According to Loder, rational processes have a subordinate role, "having more to do with ordering, examining and communicating truth then bringing it to being or discovering it in the first place".[268]

Knowing, in the theory of Loder, is primarily an *event*.[269] He affirms the personlike reciprocity of the knowing event between knower and known. His study of Polanyi led him to believe that 'the logic of transformation' corresponds to the nature of scientific discovery and is applicable to human knowing in general. In general, our knowing involves a five-step sequence: 1) an apparent rupture in our knowing context (*conflict in context*), 2) indwelling this conflicted situation and searching methodologically for a clue to its resolution (*interlude for scanning*), 3) an *insight* felt with intuitive force (creating a new, more comprehensive context of meaning), 4) *repatterning* (opening up to the resolution), and 5) working with the new vision to relate it back to the original conflict and to gain its acceptance with the public (*interpretation*).[270]

"The core drive, the generativity of the human spirit, is (…) akin to 'the intuitive and effective ways we know each other in acts of love and compassion'".[271] For Loder, therefore, mutuality and reciprocity is involved in knowing. Meek indicates that Loder - as a theologian - subsequently argues that all human knowing unfolds the way it does because it taps into our humanness, is rooted in human development and "prototypes, anticipates, and actually *is* (…) an instance of our being graciously known by the personal God of Holy Scripture".[272]

Based on what Meek learned from Polanyi and Loder, she engages with the theory of two theologians who connect the biblical covenant with 'responsive knowing' and 'relational knowing' (building block 2). Before doing so, she explains why she believes it is acceptable to interweave theological themes in an epistemological theory that intends to have 'generic' importance. I will therefore first summarize her 'normative' point of view, before continuing with building block 2.

Intermezzo: theological themes in epistemology

Building block 1 illustrates that Polanyi's subsidiary-focal integration can be seen as 'unfolding triangulation' between three sectors where we find our clues to knowing (*world*, *body*, *words*). Our process of coming to know may start at each of these sectors. Meek argues that the sector of *words* is where our 'normative shaping' takes place. She indicates that from the nineteenth century onward, "people begin to acknowledge, as operative forces shaping knowing, pre-theoretical commitments,

[266] Meek, 127 (italics added).
[267] Meek, 128.
[268] Meek, 127 (reference to James Loder, *The Transforming Moment*).
[269] Meek, 124.
[270] Meek, 124-126.
[271] Meek, 128.
[272] Meek, 123.

traditions, communities, prescriptive features such as rules, power, narrative, emotions, virtues, metaphors, values".[273] Although "many people still believe that these features operate from outside the realm of knowledge, and thus are detrimental to knowledge, Polanyi's work shows that these features are *integral* to knowing".[274] Based on this point of view, the biblical covenant takes the form of the normative dimension in Meek's epistemology. She is convinced that this theological theme allows a 'generic' application: it is not a requisite "to embrace Christianity in order to understand and reap the benefits of its epistemic implications".[275] Meek argues:

> [o]ften the riches of biblical and theological themes and motives remain locked within parochial (…) ecclesial enterprises (churches and seminaries) and within the topical confines of religion. Often people outside those structures, rejecting the structures, preclude the possibility of profiting from concepts originating from within them. On the other side, often religious people do not know how to identify and mine the epistemological riches of their own commitment".[276] "Most Christians (…) incline to outlooks stemming from (…) western philosophy: that the disembodied soul matters to God, and that physical matter is intrinsically sub-par, evil, of no interest and value to God, that salvation is of the soul not the body and 'this world is not my home'.[277]

Meek aims to subvert these tendencies and believes the motive of covenant is "well suited for elucidating a full-orbed vision of human and knowing".[278]

3.3.2 Building block 2: knowing as covenant response

The second building block consists of interweaving the theory of theologians John Frame (philosopher and Calvinist theologian with a focus on epistemology, systematic theology and ethics) and Michael Williams (professor in Old Testament Studies at Calvin Theological Seminary). Their conceptual frameworks both position our knowing as *creationally* and *covenantally* situated. I will review Meek's analysis of their core concepts, as well as how she integrates their theories with Polanyi's key concepts of subsidiary-focal integration and transformation.

John Frame

Frame aims to offer an overarching epistemological framework of how human knowledge of God implies an understanding of human knowing in general. Key features of knowing in Frame's theory are the creator-creature distinction, God's Lordship, and 'servant thinking'. With regard to the creator-creature distinction, Frame states that "Scripture affirms at the outset that reality comes in two sorts: God, who is ontologically (…) independent, and creation, which is ontologically dependent on God".[279] Everything exists by virtue of a covenant relationship to the Lord of all; the covenant thus "expresses the person-like way in which God the Lord is both transcendent and immanent".[280] This can be seen as normative, in the sense of "involving a rule, standard, or pattern" of how humans come to know. God's Lordship means that God is *initiator*, and creation is [servant] *response*.[281]

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[273] Meek, 85.
[274] Meek, 85 (italics added).
[275] Meek, 149.
[276] Meek, 148.
[277] Meek, 206.
[278] Meek, 148.
[279] Meek, 151, 153.
[280] Meek, 154.
[281] Frame "follows in the Calvinian tradition of saying all people in some sense know God intimately" (Meek, 155).

On this scheme, the way we come to know follows the 'normative' covenantal pattern: "[i]f all our knowing is knowing God, occurring, like everything, in the covenantally constituted context of God's Lordship, we should be able to look at what we do when we know and find aspects that conform to this".[282] A specific feature that illustrates this aspect of Frame's thought is his triadic approach, based on God's Lordship, and consisting of God's *control* (situational), God's *presence* (existential), and God's *authority* (normative). In Frame's view, this aligns with other familiar triads: prophet, priest, king or Father, Son, Spirit.[283] Meek, in turn, connects this triad with Polanyi's clues: world, body and word.[284] In figure 2, I have integrated the various triads:

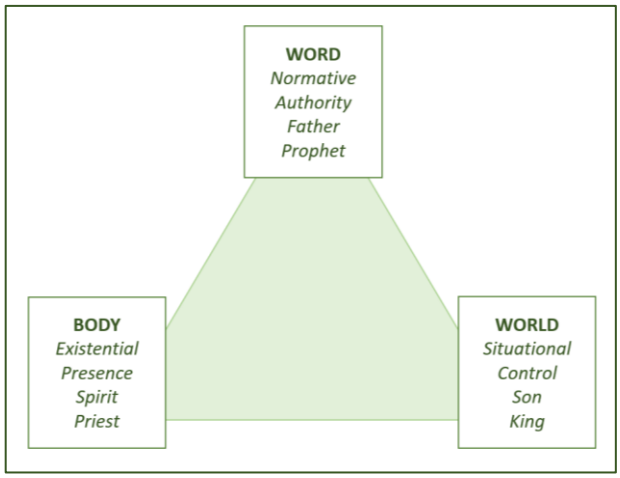

Figure 3 Triadic approach to covenantal knowing[285]

In Frame's thought, these three aspects are correlative or 'perspectivally related'; this follows from accepting that "created reality reveals God"[286] and "God is intimately present with his creation" (covenant solidarity).[287] Each aspect can be a starting point for coming to know (cf. Polanyi's 'Point A'), is impacted by its covenant relationship, and implies God's Lordship over all of reality.[288] If we accept - as a presupposition - that the covenant shapes our knowing, then we may also regard all knowing to be a form of (implicitly, anticipatively, unfolding) knowing God, or of being on the way to knowing God. This way, our acts of coming to know are responsive, creaturely stewardship.[289]

According to Meek, Frame's theological triad can be seen as an explication of Polanyi's 'generic' subsidiary-focal integration. Polanyi showed that our presuppositions (our 'starting points') work like tools, we use them almost 'automatically', like how we use a hammer or ride a bike. Meek argues that we *all* commit ourselves to presuppositions – regardless whether they originate in word, body or world - and use them as an interpretive framework.[290] "Everybody 'gets religious' about their own presuppositions, that is, they hold them so intimately that they are a part of themselves, and they are

[282] Meek, 176. In a separate section, Meek emphasizes this is not a form of 'common grace' (Meek, 185).
[283] Meek, 171.
[284] Meek, 159.
[285] Model created based on Meek, 158-164. Father is connected to word, because "the Father gives the Law"; the Son brings the word into the world (Meek, 159).
[286] Meek, 161. She adds that Frame calls this 'generic Calvinism': "the world reveals God as authoritatively as Scripture does".
[287] Meek, 154.
[288] Meek, 148, 162.
[289] Meek, 156.
[290] Meek, 167.

in no way 'objective' about them."[291] This illustrates that commitment (Polanyi's 'indwelling subsidiaries') "is part and parcel of 'reason', rather than opposed to it. Our beliefs are not 'over against reality', but in deference of reality.[292]

Michael Williams

In Williams' approach, the overarching dynamic of covenantal knowing is about 'being in communion' with God.[293] Williams offers an understanding of biblical covenant as "dynamic and storied".[294] The covenant is "a dynamically unfolding interpersonal relationship"[295] and "an unfolding historical drama with personal and earthly dimensions that are often overlooked"[296]. According to Williams, Scripture itself should be regarded as a way of knowing: "a specimen of the paradigmatic, ultimate ontological context; the interpersonal relationship between Yahweh, the covenant Lord, and his creation and his people"[297], and as "God's unfolding and covenantal self-disclosure to his loved people"[298]. The goal of the covenant is "intimacy, friendship, communion, the richest of interpersonal relationships, in which persons are persons to full, as is the communion between them"[299]. Therefore, relationship always *precedes* and *provides* the context of our knowing.[300] A defining characteristic of this relationship is the 'descent' of God: "[t]he pattern of redemption (…) is the descent of God".[301] God descends to 'dwell' with his people. The descent of God "indicates what knowing reality will be like. We can expect it to *invade* and *transform* the knower. We can expect it to unfold an abundance of surprising future manifestations".[302] Based on the Old Testament notions of the covenant, another important aspect that Meek highlights, is that we have been called "to seek the Shalom of the world".[303]

Meek connects Williams' theory of God's descent with the insights of Polanyi who concluded "that the paradigmatic case of scientific knowledge is the knowledge of an approaching discovery (…) [and] the scientist navigates by 'groping or scrabbling' guided by a 'sense of increasing proximity to the solution'".[304] Our acts of coming to know are transformative processes over time and in our knowing we are 'in the middle of the story'. Meek interweaves these insights by concluding that "[t]he impetus for knowing is "longing, desire, for future insight, and (…) anticipation of it".[305]

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[291] Meek, 166.
[292] Meek, 169-170.
[293] Meek, 157.
[294] Meek, 193.
[295] Meek, 194.
[296] Backflap text of Williams' book *Far as the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2005).
[297] Meek, 196-197.
[298] Meek, 196.
[299] Meek, 198.
[300] Meek, 203.
[301] Meek, 200.
[302] Meek, 209 (italics added).
[303] Meek, 473.
[304] Meek, 175 (quotes from Polanyi, *Tacit Dimension*, 25; Polanyi, "*Creative Imagination"*, 85-93).
[305] Meek, 208.

3.3.3 Building block 3: knowing as interpersonal

In this third building block, Meek interweaves six theories on personal knowing and focuses on "personhood as it pertains to human knowing".[306] In building block 1, Meek defended that all our knowing - or coming to know - displays a personlike, transformative character, and that reality can be seen as 'metonomously personal'. In building block 2, Meek argued that the notion of the covenant also "metonymously references"[307] to aspects of personhood that precede and provide the context of our knowing. In our defective default, Meek argues, "when it comes to knowledge and knowing, we overlook persons in any epistemic act".[308] Therefore, she additionally explores the concept of personhood in relation to human knowing, because the prevailing paradigm of knowledge as impersonal is "what leads us to overlook these personal, interpersonal dimensions of knowing".[309]

Meek subsequently argues that "we should see personhood itself as interpersonal, or interpersoned; and that we should see this interpersonhood as the *context* and *central nerve* of human knowing".[310] She emphasizes that considering the covenantal as normative (see intermezzo) "begs the larger interpersonal context (…) [and] compels us to explore the interpersonal and endeavor to understand how it and knowing are integrally related".[311]

As, within the scope of this thesis, I cannot discuss in detail the six theories Meek integrates, I provide a schematic overview (table 2). I have structured Meek's insights in three layers: theories on existential experiences of knowing as a 'personal encounter' (layer 1), a psychological theory (layer 2), and theories on trinitarian and ontological theology (layer 3). For each theory I will provide the name of the author and source, key elements and a characteristic quote. According to Meek, all six theories "imply interpersoned dimensions of all knowing"[312] and offer "the very context and core of knowing that we seek"[313] over against our disembodied, impersonal, default mode.

[306] Meek, 216.
[307] Meek, 217, 395.
[308] Meek, 219.
[309] Meek, 129.
[310] Meek, 216 (italics added).
[311] Meek, 216.
[312] Meek, 395.
[313] Meek, 217.

Table 2 Six theories on 'knowing is interpersonal' (§3.3.3)

AUTHOR | SOURCE	KEY-ELEMENTS	QUOTES
Layer 1 - *Existential experiences of knowing as a personal encounter*		
John Macmurray *Persons in Relation* (1991) *The Self as Agent* (1991)	Move away from 'egocentric predicament' and abstract concepts. From 'self-as-Thinker' to self-as-Agent'. Knowing as interpersonal action and capacity, starting in I-You relations. Theoretical standpoint as 'de-personalized' and 'not original'.	"We need to transfer the gravity in philosophy from thought to action."[314] "Basic knowledge is personal knowledge (…) impersonal theorizing (…) isn't meant to be taken as ultimate."[315]
Martin Buber *I and Thou* (1970)	Principal epistemic event is knowing as an I-You or I-It encounter. I-It as 'theoretical standpoint' (cf. Macmurray); I-You as lived actuality and 'involvement in the world'.	"Virtually all of what is commonly deemed knowledge (…) is I-It (…) [yet] it is only as I-It is set within the larger and deeper relation of I-You that it remains good and fruitful."[316]
James Loder *The Transforming Moment* (1989)	Four dimensions of humanness: *world* (situatedness), *self* ('in' and 'transcending' the world), *void* ('threat of non-being'), and *holy* ('the Presence of being-itself'). The 'face of the Other' as key factor in human knowing and development. Convictional knowing (as 'normative aspect, see intermezzo).	"Every act of coming to know is at least prototypically (…) a grappling with the third dimension of humanness and an embracing of the fourth."[317] "From the standpoint of Christian conviction (…) we do not have to be afraid of plunging in ourselves, for he [God, the *holy,* the face of the Other] is there, and has changed reality."[318]
Layer 2 - *Characteristics of healthy interpersonal relationships*		
David Schnarch *Passionate Marriage* (1997)	Differentiation, maturity, and mutuality in knowing. Truth as *trust* instead of propositional *information*.	"If knowing is (…) interpersonal and relational, then (…) dynamics of healthy interpersonal relationships should also positively impact knowing."[319]
Layer 3 - *Trinitarian and ontological theology*		
Colin Gunton *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (1993)	Focus on dynamics of interrelationship. Need of a 'philosophy of engagement' with reality (relationality and particularity). Perichoretic dynamism in the universe: relation of perichoretic *knowing* (epistemology) and *being* (ontology).	"Where persons and nonhuman creation link profoundly as equally perichoretic and in perichoretic relation with God, the two are no longer opposed but may relate healingly."[320]
Philip Rolnick *Person, Grace, and God* (2007)	Reality as gift. Our very being is given; 'gift' as ontological reality and as epistemological motive. Interrelations between gift, giver and given.	"[T]he concept of personhood must inform every Christian doctrine (…) 'If everything important about us can be explained naturalistically, then person becomes a fictional access'."[321]

[314] Meek, 222 (quote from Macmurray, *Persons in Relation*, 11, 12).
[315] Meek, 234 (cf. Meek, 371: "an epistemology of knowledge as theoretical has (…) marginalized the personal as non-epistemic").
[316] Meek, 250-251.
[317] Meek, 280.
[318] Meek, 282.
[319] Meek, 310.
[320] Meek, 346.
[321] Meek, 371, 372 (quote from Peter Rolnick, *Person, Grace, and God*, 57).

3.4 Covenant epistemology: knowing for shalom

The content of the three building blocks forms the contours of Meek's 'covenant epistemology', which she considers to be an understanding of knowing that "puts together all the dimensions of our lives"[322] and accords with Scripture. Meek brings the contents of the three buildings blocks down to six core elements (§3.4.1) and additionally provides five basic attitudes or 'knowing practices' (§3.4.2).

The core elements of covenant epistemology are:

- **Transformation** – If we take seriously that all knowing is *coming to know*, we must see ourselves as 'pilgrims on the way' and "accredit the journey itself as epistemic".[323] Covenant epistemology is about "continually transforming and continually catalyzing transformation"[324].

- **Restoration** - Healthy knowing should resonate with, or disclose, God's intents in creation and covenant. Knowing not only transforms, but also restores the knower as well as the known. "In knowing, what comes to be known is a new thing."[325]

- **Communion** - We should place the idea of knowing within the paradigm of interpersonal relationship. Knowing is not about knowing all there is to know about reality, but we know as a 'covenant partner': "the very realizable, yet grace-filled and joyful, goal is communion."[326]

- **Descent of God** - "Covenant epistemology rejects the idea that human knowing is one-way (…) [and] constituted in a linear, methodical way by the knower. Instead, what we experience is that reality breaks in."[327] This 'breaking in' it is akin to the descent (self-disclosure) of God and becomes visible in creation, incarnation and ongoing transformation and restoration.

- **Humility** - To learn to know well is "to put oneself in the way of knowing (…) [and] to give one's epistemic efforts way to the coming of the Other."[328] This is a 'humbling experience'[329] and illustrates our need for the coming of God and his new world.

- **Shalom** - Covenantal knowing is "stewardly action in the world to bring it to its full flourishing in presentation to God."[330] We have been called to covenant mediation, seeking the s*halom* of the world. "Shalom means peace (…) [and] contains rich hints of redeemed restoration to health, safety, rest, completeness, wholeness, welfare, perfection, blessing, harmony."[331]

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[322] Meek, 469.
[323] Meek, 472. Although covenant epistemology hopes to provide a healing corrective to our distorted default, this image of 'being on the way' also accredits that we live with the noetic effects of sin and "the impact that human brokenness has on our knowledge" (Meek, 475). At this side of the renewal of all things "our efforts are thwarted and poisoned (…) But that does not require that in our epistemology we may not live in light of the ideal" (Meek, 209).
[324] Meek, 473.
[325] Meek, 474.
[326] Meek, 209.
[327] Meek, 208.
[328] Meek, 476.
[329] Meek, 209.
[330] Meek, 474.
[331] Meek, 51, 473.

3.4.1 Epistemological etiquette

If we reconstruct knowledge as arising from personal commitment, and as situated and grounded in the interpersonal (see §2.1.3) we must also "revamp our idea of good knowing practices"[332], move beyond the restrictions of the reigning default mode with regard to what counts as knowledge and respect how we actually go about knowing. Meek therefore provides an 'epistemological etiquette', consisting of five overlapping *loci*: desire, composure, comportment, strategy, culmination.[333]

- **Desire** is about how knowing embodies *longing* (a passive dimension) and *love* (an active dimension) as a starting point for all knowing. Knowledge "begins not in a neutrality but in a place of passion within the human soul".[334]

- **Composure** is about 'becoming most fully ourselves'. In a theological vision it entails human's "composure before, in presence of, within the gaze of, God"[335]. In a more generic vision, it entails a "deference of reality"[336] (respect, awe, submissiveness).

- **Comportment** is about relating to the 'yet-to-be-known' and is akin to virtues as commitment, accepting guidance, trust, obedience, humility, patience, and expectancy or anticipation. "It takes apprenticeship to make us trained and properly positioned knowers."[337]

- **Strategy** is about active investment, techniques, or artistry ("planting yourself in the path of knowing"[338]). It involves active perception, active listening (including listening beyond categories, openness to 'otherness'), active indwelling ("climb into the clues"[339]), and connected knowing ("looking to understand"[340], imagination, sensemaking, seeing).

- **Consummation** is the continual development (*semper transformanda*[341]) and unfolding of relationship with reality. In a theological vision, being-in-communion is its culmination, with the Eucharist as a paradigm.[342]

3.5 Evaluation of key concepts

My aim has been to look at the role of 'embodied knowing' in the theory of Esther Lightcap Meek. In this section, I will summarize what I regard the most important insights in Meek's theory, how these correlate with the key concepts for 'embodied knowing' from chapter 1 and how they may enrich our apologetic approaches and enhance missional resilience.

As stated in the introduction of this chapter, Meek's overarching aim is to provide an epistemology for people considering Christianity and struggling with questions about knowing. Through

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[332] Meek, 247, 426.
[333] Meek, 428-468.
[334] Meek, 432 (quote from Palmer Parker, *To Know As We Are Known*, 7).
[335] Meek, 437.
[336] Meek, 169-170.
[337] Meek, 208.
[338] Meek, 454.
[339] Meek, 459.
[340] Meek, 461.
[341] Meek, 473.
[342] Meek, 467. The Eucharist, as 'embodied activity', "equips us profoundly for knowing by modeling knowing, and by forming us to be in the way of knowing."

intentionally starting from the Western default and our 'subcutaneous epistemic layer', Meek aims to restore the balance in how we look at knowledge and knowledge creation, recasting processes of knowing in science and religion as fundamentally similar. This is her first, fundamental, overarching contribution. Second, and equally important, she connects epistemology to the theological concept of shalom, originating from the concept of the covenant. In doing so, she provides a theological 'bridge' between creational, incarnational, revelational, sacramental or trinitarian approaches to knowing that I consider of great importance for the broader field of theology.[343]

Meek revalues knowledge as a process of discovery that originates in commitment and allows for mystery. I will highlight four aspects that I consider the most important lessons for enriching apologetic approaches, and enhancing missional resilience: knowing as 1) *interpersonal*, as 2) *involvement*, as 3) *situated* and as 4) *integration and transformation*. For each of these topics, I indicate the correlation with key concepts of chapter 1. As Meek aims to provide a generic epistemological approach, I will limit myself to correlate her theory to the *generic* aspects I distinguished in table 1 (summary of key concepts):

1. KNOWING AS INTERPERSONAL → critiques: 'knowing as impersonal'

Correlation with generic aspects:

- Reconceptualizing reason as 'embodied activity' (§1.1.3)
- Revaluation of the accumulated experience of practical lives (§1.1.2)

Esther Lightcap Meek	Consequences for apologetic approaches
Correlation with attitude: commitment (§1.1.4)	
• Knowing is covenantally constituted: all knowing displays 'personal', responsive features. • Knowing as personal: all knowing is fraught with 'interpersoned relationship'. • Knowing as relational: all knowing is 'knowing with' (role of guides and traditions). • Regarding reality as 'metonymously personal'.	• Knowing displays personal features and processes of 'relation' or 'relatedness'. • Knowing as communal and reciprocal: we come to know through contact with the o/Other. • Knowing displays (perichoretic) contours of unfolding, interpersonal relationship (reciprocity, friendship, apprenticeship).

2. KNOWING AS INVOLVEMENT → critiques: 'knowing as detached'

Correlation with generic aspects:

- Revaluation of the accumulated experience of practical lives (§1.1.2)
- From thought-reason to being-action (§1.1.4)
- Beliefs as source of all knowledge (§1.1.4)

Esther Lightcap Meek	Consequences for apologetic approaches
Correlation with attitude: commitment (§1.1.4)	
• Knowing as commitment, originating in passion or desire (longing, love).	• Coming to know always requires personal involvement.
• Taking the covenant as normative implies allegiance, obligation and humility (cf. *composure* in 'epistemological etiquette').	• Responsible stewardship (creaturely, servant knowing of word, self, and world): revaluation of people, relationships, creation care, justice.

[343] Various models are in use with respect to the normative status of practice. I believe Meek's model will be very valuable for the field of practical theology (methodology) and missiology.

3. KNOWING AS SITUATED → critiques: 'knowing as objective'

Correlation with generic aspects:

- Intelligible force of practice itself (§1.1.1)
- Pragmatic view on theorizing (§1.1.2)
- Belief as source of all knowledge (§1.1.4)
- Turn to practice (§1.1.3)

Esther Lightcap Meek	Consequences for apologetic approaches
Correlation with attitude: discovery (§1.1.2)	
• Knowing is never linear or guaranteed. • Knowing is about 'inviting' rather than 'accessing' (insight comes upon us). • All acts of coming to know require submission to the yet-to-be-fully-known and are acts of faith.	• The source of knowing is the 'gracious intrusion of the Other'. • If everything that exists is covenantally charactered, it has defining features we may uncover (expectancy, 'approaching discovery').
• Clues from world, body, words are starting point for our knowing. • Knowing is embedded in culture, tradition, community, history ('embodied root').	• Coming to know God may start in each of the three 'sectors' (integration of the situational, the existential, and the normative).
• Integration always involves a normative aspect (e.g. authoritative tradition, worldview).	• We encounter normative aspects within our community (habituation).

4. KNOWING AS INTEGRATION & TRANSFORMATION → critiques: 'knowing as facts and information'

Correlation with generic aspects:

- Practical roots of all knowledge (§1.1.2)
- From thought-reason to being-action (§1.1.4)
- Revaluation of the accumulated experience of practical lives (§1.1.2)

Esther Lightcap Meek	Consequences for apologetic approaches
Correlation with attitudes: discovery (§1.1.2) and mystery (§1.1.3)	
• Information is only the 'tip of the iceberg' and follows from subsidiary-focal integration. • Focus on experiences, efforts and discoveries (cf. *strategy* in 'epistemological etiquette')	• Some dimensions of knowledge may be known in the sense of the felt/lived, and not yet 'known' in the sense of the articulated (cultivating receptivity).
• Knowing is transformation. Being on the way as 'epistemic': knowing as a process, action, or trajectory of coming to know; not as a 'quest for certainty' but as pilgrims on the way.	• Refocusing on coming to know as a meaningful, dynamic, mutual and communal sense-making process (restoration).
• Focus on 'indeterminate future manifestations': open-ended, not a quest for 'absolute truth': knowledge includes retrospective and anticipative aspects.	• Way out of 'all-or-nothing' attitude • Transfer of the question 'Does God exist?' from the field of the theoretical into the field of the personal.

“An important part of getting your epistemology to resonate with the Christian faith is understanding and experiencing that Christian faith.”

Esther Lightcap Meek (468)

4. THE ROLE OF 'EMBODIED KNOWING' IN PHILOSOPICAL THEOLOGY (2)

In the introduction I referred to the research of Lynne Taylor, who points out that Christians fail to notice the potential of spiritual practices to form faith in nonbelievers, due to the emphasis on propositional belief systems. In chapter 3 I offered an epistemological perspective on knowing based on the theory of Esther Lightcap Meek who integrates features of the biblical covenant and generic processes of how we come to know. Meek argues that knowing starts from desire, composure and comportment and is about transformation through active investment, active perception, active listening and active indwelling of clues that bring us on the path to knowing (§3.4.1). Based on this view, Meek argues:

> "[i]f knowing is transformation, then sacramental and liturgical practice, and faithful Christian discipleship both make sense and shed light on knowing. They involve inviting that transformation and being formed in truth".[344]

Therefore, next to an epistemological perspective, I have included a liturgical perspective.[345] In this chapter I will look at the role of 'embodied knowing' in the philosophical, liturgical theology of Nicholas Wolterstorff. In his book *The God We Worship* (2015), Wolterstorff states: "[t]o be inducted into the Christian liturgy is to acquire a certain understanding of God".[346] He argues, therefore, that liturgical theology should have a normative status, next to biblical and conciliar-creedal theology.

Wolterstorff aims to contribute to the self-understanding of the church[347] by identifying implicit theological understandings in liturgical acts. His intent is to uncover the theological meaning implicit in the liturgy and "to translate what is expressed by the language of worship (…) into the language of theology".[348] My aim is to explore how his 'translation' provides insight in how believers and nonbelievers, through participating in a faith community, may come to specific knowledge that may enrich apologetic approaches and enhance missional resilience.

I will start with explaining why Wolterstorff focuses on the liturgy and how his approach contributes to retrieving 'embodied knowing' (§4.1 and §4.2). In §4.3, I will review four implicit understandings in the liturgy that Wolterstorff makes explicit. In §4.4 I will summarize conclusions and their usefulness with respect to Christian apologetic approaches. I will conclude this chapter by correlating Wolterstorff's theory to the key concepts of 'embodied knowing' as mentioned in §1.4.

4.1 Liturgical theology: Nicholas Wolterstorff

Wolterstorff indicates that "[a]ll the evidence points to the fact that the early Christian liturgies (…) emerged and developed organically, mainly from two sources: the readings and prayers of the Jewish synagogue, and what transpired in the Upper Room when Jesus ate his Last Supper".[349] He argues that "[n]o one who has composed a liturgy has ever done anything more than compose a revision of [those] liturgies".[350] Also, Wolterstorff emphasizes that "[w]hen the church assembles for communal

[344] Meek, 62.
[345] Cf. §2.3 where Willem Jan Otten provides a personal example of the formative power of enacting the liturgy.
[346] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *The God We Worship: An Exploration of Liturgical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Publishing Company), 163.
[347] Wolterstorff, 3.
[348] Wolterstorff, 15 (reference to Alexander Schmeman, *For the Life of the World*).
[349] Wolterstorff, 13.
[350] Wolterstorff, 13.

worship, she does what she was called into existence to do. The church exists to worship God in Christ. It is in this sense that, in enacting the liturgy, she actualizes herself; and in actualizing herself, she manifests herself".[351] The liturgy is thus "best thought of as one species of acts of Christian worship".[352]

Wolterstorff explicitly focuses on 'scripted' liturgies (a set of rules, specified in liturgical *text*, and found in liturgical *culture* and liturgical *bodily actions*) as found in Orthodox, Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran, and Reformed churches. As I use a broad definition of faith communities in this thesis, many of such communities may not apply such 'scripted' liturgies, but rather look for alternative, contemporary, creative liturgies. Wolterstorff argues, however, that "in discussing the theological implications of the acts to be found in the traditional liturgies we are also discussing the acts to be found in these alternative contemporary liturgies, since there are none to be found in the latter that are not to be found in the former".[353] Wolterstorff is critical toward alternative liturgies, as he states that these often follow the preferences of the pastor, and do "not represent a fresh burst of liturgical creativity but (…) instead the stripping out from the traditional liturgies of almost all their components".[354] This may sound quite 'off-putting' with respect to faith communities that aim at creativity. Although I disagree with Wolterstorff on this point, I do believe his findings are deeply encouraging for missionary and pioneering endeavors, as they point us toward aspects of God that are not often emphasized and may contribute to creating missional 'resilience'.

4.2 Retrieving 'embodied knowing'

Wolterstorff's book *The God We Worship* (2015) has been written as a revision of a series of lectures for the *Kantzer Lectures in Revealed Theology*.[355] The Kantzer lectures intend to be the evangelical equivalent of the *Gifford Lectures in Natural Theology* (where Michael Polanyi was a lecturer[356]) and aim to address a crisis of theology in the church: "[a]ll too often, biblical and theological doctrines have been displaced, discarded, or forgotten in favor of therapeutic, relational, or managerial knowledge drawn less from the canonical Scriptures than from the canon of contemporary popular culture".[357] The Kantzer lectures "confront the powerful (…) prejudice that theology is *irrelevant* and *unrelated* to *real life*. They do this by showing how the knowledge of God derived from revealed theology is indeed *practical*".[358] Although Polanyi's naturalistic approach takes a central place in Meek's epistemology, she intentionally connects his theory to doctrinal features of the covenant, which, in my opinion, is a creative integration that aligns well with the aims of the Kantzer Lectures.

4.2.1 Authority: out of the shadows

Wolterstorff distinguishes three interacting dimensions of the tradition of the church: its *Scriptural* tradition (in which "the church hands on its understanding of God as presented in Scripture"[359]), its *conciliar-creedal* tradition (in which "the church hands on what it has officially declared that it

[351] Wolterstorff, 11.
[352] Wolterstorff, 8.
[353] Wolterstorff, 20.
[354] Wolterstorff, 19-20.
[355] Wolterstorff, xi.
[356] "The Gifford Lectures," accessed July 20, 2022, https://www.giffordlectures.org/lecturers/michael-polanyi.
[357] Wolterstorff, ix.
[358] Wolterstorff, ix (italics added).
[359] Wolterstorff, 165.

believes about God"[360]), and its *liturgical* tradition (in which "the church hands on the understanding of God implicit in its worship"[361]). Mostly, especially among Protestants, authority is derived from the first two forms of the tradition.[362] However, according to Wolterstorff, the distinct character of the liturgical tradition also has authority, for two reasons. First, "because traditional liturgies have stood the test of time by massive numbers of Christians"[363], and second, because but "much of what it highlights, the others place in the shadows"[364]. Based on this viewpoint, Wolterstorff argues that liturgical theology should have more influence on 'constructive' theology. Scriptural, conciliar-creedal, and liturgical theology are forms of 'church-reflexive' theology.[365] Constructive theology is about formulating views and thoughts about God. Often, Scripture and the conciliar-creedal declarations carry considerable weight in constructive theology. Wolterstorff's view is that the liturgical tradition should do as well. He states that constructive theology in the West has been powerfully shaped by the concern that it measure up to the requirements for being a respectable academic discipline, and to the requirements for it to "have, and be shown to have, secure epistemological warrant for the claims it makes about God (…) [This also explains why] "the prolegomena of so many constructive theologies is a discourse on revelation (…) [or] on how we know God".[366] Liturgical theology poses a challenge to this traditional approach[367] and I believe it may therefore provide valuable insights for the question whether 'embodied knowing' might enrich our apologetic approaches.

The next section (§4.3) make explicit what we implicitly (come to) understand about God when we enact the liturgy. This section highlights four aspects of God that often remain 'in the shadows'.

4.3 Implicit understandings of God in Christian liturgy

What do we come to know through enacting the liturgy, what has often remained 'in the shadows'? Wolterstorff analyzes a variety of 'scripted' liturgies (e.g. the Trisagonian Hymn, The Lord's Prayer, Penitential and Blessing rites, Eucharist and Thanksgiving prayers) and highlights four different implicit understandings of God, offering valuable insights in what people may come to know about God when they start participating in a faith community.

4.3.1 Implicit understanding 1: an act of worship

As stated in §4.1, the liturgy can be seen as an act of worship. The first and overarching implicit understanding of God in enacting the liturgy, is that "[f]acing God, [Christians] acknowledge God's unsurpassable greatness in a stance of *awed*, *reverential*, and *grateful* adoration".[368] Christians do not enact the liturgy to "focus on the benefits that supposedly accrue to the participant"[369] (e.g. to placate God, keep oneself in God's good grace, or to 'center' oneself). "When we assemble to participate in an enactment of the liturgy, we do so in order to worship God".[370] If an "alteration in

[360] Wolterstorff, 165.
[361] Wolterstorff, 165.
[362] Wolterstorff, 166.
[363] Wolterstorff, 166.
[364] Wolterstorff, 166-167.
[365] Wolterstorff, 167.
[366] Wolterstorff, 168.
[367] Wolterstorff, 169. Wolterstorff adds that liturgical theology is probably 'the least' within this threefold tradition.
[368] Wolterstorff, 26.
[369] Wolterstorff, 22.
[370] Wolterstorff, 23.

ourselves that we expect or hope for comes about, it does so as a *consequence* of our engaging in worshipping God".[371]

Table 3 Attitudinal stances in the liturgy

AWE	REVERENCE	GRATEFULNESS
For: God's glory	**For: God's holiness**	**For: God's love**
"God is unsurpassably great in *creational* and *redemptive* glory."[372]	God's holiness follows from his *otherness* and his *transcendence.*	"[O]our response to God's love for us (…) that seeks to promote the flourishing of the other."[373]

4.3.2 Implicit understanding 2: an act of vulnerability

The second implicit understanding Wolterstorff brings forward, is that of God being vulnerable. According to Wolterstorff, participating in the liturgy is a scripted social practice. He adds that a social practice "always has, for those who engage in it, a certain normative status".[374] Enacting the liturgy is not 'just a good thing' to do for the church, it is also obligatory. If it is obligatory to enact the liturgy for the worship of God, then the church wrongs God if it fails to do so. Thus, "[t]he normative status for the Church of enacting the liturgy presupposes that God is vulnerable to being wronged".[375]

Although we may at first sight consider obligation incompatible with the love of God, Wolterstorff states that love "incorporates obligation (…) [and] typically goes beyond obligation".[376] If we have the right understanding of love, obligation, and the relation between both, we will come to understand that "[a] component of God's unsurpassable excellence is that God has chosen and allowed God-self to be vulnerable".[377] The appropriate (and additional, see §4.3.1) attitudinal response to God being vulnerable to being wronged and resisted, is amazement.[378]

Table 4 Liturgical acts that illustrate God's vulnerability

CONFESSION	INTERCESSION	BLESSING GOD
God has issued commands for the living of our lives.	**In the living of our lives, we are faced with brokenness.**	**In the liturgy, we also bless God.**
"[By] giving us the freedom to obey or not obey, God made Godself vulnerable to being wronged by us".[379]	Until God's kingdom has fully arrived, "God has allowed resistance".[380] God is not 'out of control', bus has made himself vulnerable to such resistance.	We can bless God in a *declarative* mood (praising God), and in an *optative* mood; then it equals asking for the full coming of God and his kingdom[381] (see 'intercession').

[371] Wolterstorff, 23.
[372] Wolterstorff, 33 (italics added).
[373] Wolterstorff, 37.
[374] Wolterstorff, 41.
[375] Wolterstorff, 44.
[376] Wolterstorff, 43.
[377] Wolterstorff, 51.
[378] Wolterstorff, 52.
[379] Wolterstorff, 48.
[380] Wolterstorff, 49.
[381] Wolterstorff, 50-51.

4.3.3 Implicit understanding 3: enacting mutual address

Through many formulations in the liturgy, God is addressed with second-person pronouns[382] ('You'-perspective). The third implicit understanding follows from liturgical acts of addressing God. Although every act of addressing God takes a particular form (e.g. the form of praise, confession, intercession) that corresponds with a particular understanding of God, *all* those forms presuppose an understanding of God implicit in the act as such of addressing God. Addressing someone is "to expect or hope for a certain reciprocity of orientation".[383] However, according to Wolterstorff, when we are participating in the liturgy "we are naturally more aware of the *content* of our address to God (…) then we are of its *basic structure* (…) Add to this that liturgy is primarily sermon for many people. These factors conspire to make us overlook (…) God as one who can and does listen to us and is capable of responding favorably to what we say".[384] Wolterstorff therefore emphasizes that the understanding of God as listener, hearer and speaker is fundamental and the most prevalent in the Christian liturgy:[385] we enact the liturgy "*in order that* mutual address and listening may take place".[386]

Univocal, equivocal or analogical

This third implicit understanding has three different aspects: God as listener, hearer and speaker. Before I review these aspects in the next three sections, it is important to understand whether - when we say that God literally listens, hears and speaks - this is only a *figure of speech* (and thus not 'real'), or a way of thinking *anthropomorphically* (and thus too 'creaturely') about God. Neither needs to be the case. Wolterstorff differentiates between speaking about God and humans *in a univocal way* (with similar meaning), an *equivocal way* (with different meaning) or with *analogical extension* (with related meaning). He argues we should use the latter.[387]

To illustrate what this means, Wolterstorff refers to the concept of knowing: "God is vastly beyond our comprehension. We have no idea, none at all, as to how God creates (…) Quite clearly creation does require something rather like knowledge".[388] This knowledge is often referred to as the 'wisdom of God'. As humans, we are created in the image and likeness of God. "Our capacity for knowledge is a central component in our personhood (…) [However,] "what we call knowledge in us is an *image* of something that is a good deal like that in God".[389] Therefore, we may use the term 'knowing' (and thus also words as 'listening' and 'speaking') literally to humans, and only with analogical extension to God.

God as listener

Implicit in our liturgical actions of addressing God is "that God is one who can and does listen to us and one who can respond favorably to what we say".[390] This reveals something about Gods *nature* (God is capable of listening to what we say and is free to do so or not) and his *disposition* (God is one who does listen). According to Wolterstorff, there is no literature on God as listener. He argues that it

[382] Wolterstorff, 54.
[383] Wolterstorff, 60 (with reference to Martin Buber's I-Thou relationship).
[384] Wolterstorff, 62.
[385] Wolterstorff, 57, 146.
[386] Wolterstorff, 66.
[387] Wolterstorff, 106.
[388] Wolterstorff, 104.
[389] Wolterstorff, 105.
[390] Wolterstorff, 60-61.

is not only astonishing that God listens to us; it also presupposes that God takes an interest in us. "If God does in fact listen, then there is a reciprocity of orientation (…) [that] brings into existence an I-Thou relationship between God and us."[391] His listening to us "is to treat us as worth listening to, to honor us, to pay us the honor of listening to us (…) In humbling himself by taking on our nature, Christ exalted us: we now have the dignity of having the same nature as Christ".[392]

Wolterstorff highlights that addressing God is quite different from passively assuming that God knows all our thoughts: our addressing God is "important to us, 'right and proper', crucial to our Shalom (…) and [our] flourishing".[393] Additionally, he points out that addressing God presupposes a life-style of acknowledging God: what we do *outside* the liturgy should be consistent with what we acknowledge *within* the liturgy.[394]

God as hearer

In its liturgy, "the church has followed the lead of the Psalmist" [395] as an invitation to us to address God and to ask God to hear us favorably. To explain the implicit understanding, Wolterstorff refers to the Lord's Prayer. This paradigmatic prayer is "framed by the [opening] petition that God's Kingdom come, and by the closing declaration that the Kingdom is God's".[396] All the other things we ask of God in this prayer occur *within* this frame. This means that the understanding of God implicit in our asking God to hear us is that of God "as actively engaged in bringing about the full manifestation of God's Kingdom".[397] It also means that, in general, our prayers "are not to consist of asking God for things in addition to the coming of God's Kingdom (…) [but are] to be understood as the church's concrete expression of her longing for the full manifestation of God's Kingdom."[398] Based on this starting point, Wolterstorff makes explicit two different underlying understandings of the kingdom that illustrate 'a striking gap' with 'massive consequences':

TWO UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE KINGDOM[399]

- Focus on the eternal → the *creeds* focus on 'consummation of the kingdom' and go straight from 'incarnation' to 'crucifixion' (the eternal, the heavenly, outside our time and space).
- Focus on the here-and-now → the *four gospels* focus on Jesus' inaugurating kingdom work on earth (the 'then and there', the earthly).

The consequences for our present times of how the creeds were articulated are that "Christians to this day find it so hard to grasp what the gospels were [were] really trying to say"[400], and that we need to let go of our picture of Jesus as the 'teacher of timeless truths', and even of the picture of Jesus as the announcer of the 'timeless call for decision'.[401] Wolterstorff refers to the work of N.T.

[391] Wolterstorff, 60-61 (italics added).
[392] Wolterstorff, 77.
[393] Wolterstorff, 85-86.
[394] Wolterstorff, 83.
[395] Wolterstorff, 108.
[396] Wolterstorff, 110.
[397] Wolterstorff, 111.
[398] Wolterstorff, 111.
[399] Wolterstorff, 113-114.
[400] Wolterstorff, 114 (quote from N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 12).
[401] Wolterstorff, 114.

Wright[402] who explains that "the creeds were the outcome of intense and extended controversaries in the early church over the nature of the Incarnation and the Trinity. Nothing that Jesus was reported as having done or said between his birth and his death proved particularly controversial in the early centuries of the church. Hence 'no need to mention the central substance of the gospels in the creeds'".[403]

Wolterstorff therefore emphasizes that we must to go back to understanding the concreteness of Jesus being the fulfillment of Israel's hope for shalom: Israel's story was "was coming to its decisive climax in his own words and works. 'He believed that it was his own task not only to announce, but also to enact and embody, the three major Kingdom themes, namely, the return from exile, the defeat of evil and the return of YHWH'".[404] Based on Jesus' life on earth, this requires playing our own role with respect to these three Kingdom themes (see table 5). "In what we do in our daily lives, and in our enactment of the liturgy, we align ourselves with God's bringing about of God's Kingdom; in our prayer, that God hear favorably what we say, we give voice to our longing for the coming of God's kingdom."[405]

Table 5 Embodiment of the three kingdom themes

A WAY OF LIFE	CLIMAX OF A CAREER	RETURN OF YHWH
Israel's true exile lay in "its way of life alienated it from God".[406]	**Jesus defeated the power of evil, by his agenda of 'restoration'.**	**The focus on Jesus life on earth needs to be retrieved.**
Israel was called again "to being a light for the nations (…) living an entirely new way of life, a new *praxis:* love of the neighbor (…) offering forgiveness (…) pursuing justice (…) showing no partiality".[407]	"The earliest Christians regarded Jesus achievement on the cross as the decisive victory over evil. But they saw it, even more, as the climax of a career in which active, outgoing, healing love had become the trademark and hallmark."[408]	We find in early Christianity not only a focus on the *futurity* as 'covenant purpose of the creator', but also a firm belief in the *presentness* of the kingdom.[409]

God as speaker

"In listening to the reading of scripture, the preaching of the sermon, the greeting, the absolution, and the blessing, the people are listening to God's address to them".[410] Implicit in the liturgical actions of the people listening, is also the understanding of God as one who speaks. Wolterstorff highlights two different understanding of God as speaker in the views of John Calvin and Karl Barth:

[402] Wolterstorff, 113, note 3: Wolterstorff refers to N.T. Wright as his 'guide' and has used Wright's books *Jesus and the Victory of God* (1996) and the popular presentation of the same material *How God Became King* (2012).
[403] Wolterstorff, 114.
[404] Wolterstorff, 117-118 (quote from N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 481).
[405] Wolterstorff, 125.
[406] Wolterstorff, 119.
[407] Wolterstorff, 118-119 .
[408] Wolterstorff, 121 (quote from N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 607).
[409] Wolterstorff, 122-123.
[410] Wolterstorff, 66.

TWO UNDERSTANDINGS OF GOD AS SPEAKER

- **Calvin** → minister as a deputy or tool, instrument, ambassador, representative.[411]
  "[H]e or she speaks on behalf of God, in the name of God, so that his or her speaking counts as God here and now saying something to these particular people".[412]
- **Barth** → minister - as well as the prophets and the apostles - as a witness.[413]
  This follows from Barth's focus on Jesus as the only Word of God: "the preacher (…) presents to the congregants that Word of God, namely, Jesus Christ. The preacher does not speak on behalf of God; conversely, God does not speak by way of the preachers speech".[414]

Although Barth's development of the idea of God as speaker "was and remains enormously influential"[415] in Protestant circles, Wolterstorff has three major points of critique:

- **God's creational glory and the words of Jesus**
  Wolterstorff points out that Barth, due to his focus on God's unique turning toward us in Jesus, does not deal with 'God's creational glory'[416] and makes "remarkably few references to what Jesus actually said" [417]. Wolterstorff argues it is not justifiable to *limit* God's revelation to God himself being revealed in Christ, nor to *neglect* of the revelation of God in creation.[418]

- **Not one, but three biblical story-lines**
  Wolterstorff critiques Barth's claim that everything in the Bible is a story with one single story-line of which "all its parts point, in one way or another, to Jesus Christ".[419] Wolterstorff rather distinguishes "three independent but interacting story-lines as to how the triune God relates to all that is not God: the story-line of creation and preservation; the story-line of redemption, and the story-line of consummation".[420]

- **God has something new to say**
  Wolterstorff argues that Barth's view that "God's speech is confined to what God says in the person and words of Jesus Christ"[421] is 'biblically untenable' because the implication of this position is that *no* human being (except Jesus) speaks on behalf of God; the prophets, apostles and preachers only point to (present) Jesus Christ. Also, he considers Barth's position as inconsistent as Barth himself argues that a preacher "is to go *beyond* presenting, in words that the listeners can grasp, the 'general truth' spoken by God to humankind in general in Jesus Christ, namely, 'God with us' (…) [and] is to *apply* that general truth to the specific situations of the particular people before him or her".[422] According to Wolterstorff, in this 'going beyond' the preacher says

[411] Wolterstorff, 128, 139.
[412] Wolterstorff, 128.
[413] Wolterstorff, 133-135; Cf. Wolterstorff, 137: "[t]he role of the prophets and apostles is primary: they were witnesses of the revelation. The role of the preacher is secondary: his or her presentation of Jesus Christ is dependent on, and governed by, their witness."
[414] Wolterstorff, 139.
[415] Wolterstorff, 129-130.
[416] Wolterstorff, 131.
[417] Wolterstorff, 133.
[418] Wolterstorff, 132.
[419] Wolterstorff, 135.
[420] Wolterstorff, 135 (reference to David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology*).
[421] Wolterstorff, 141.
[422] Wolterstorff, 144 (italics added).

something *new;* Barth himself also claims that 'God always has something specific to say to each [human being], something that applies to [that person and to that person] alone'".[423]

I have summarized the three main outcomes of the implicit understanding of God as listener, hearer, and speaker in the next chart.

Table 6 Implicit understandings in 'mutual address'

God as LISTENER	God as HEARER	God as SPEAKER
Implicit lessons:	**Implicit lessons:**	**Implicit lessons:**
▶ Reciprocity of orientation (I-You relation). ▶ God humbles himself ('descent of God'). ▶ Addressing God is crucial to our Shalom and flourishing.	▶ Aligning our practical lives with God's kingdom; ▶ Jesus life as embodiment and enactment of three kingdom themes (table 5). ▶ Giving voice to longing for the concreteness of the kingdom.	▶ God still speaks: 1) through creation; 2) through Jesus' life; 3) through the preacher; 4) through liturgical acts.

4.3.4 Implicit understanding 4: the embodied Jesus

For a fourth implicit understanding, Wolterstorff analyzes the enactment of the Eucharist (or: the Lord's Supper) and focuses again on the concreteness of Jesus work on earth (cf. *God as hearer*, §4.3.3). For this analysis of the Eucharist, he has limited himself to the views of John Calvin (as the 'father' of the Reformed tradition). He argues that Calvin's analysis "has been afflicted by stereotyped descriptions that obscure what he actually thought and wrote"[424] and adds that Calvin's view on the Eucharist is controversial.[425]

Based on Paul's letters, the Eucharist is to be seen as a memorial of Jesus.[426] Wolterstorff emphasizes that "Christ does not just 'accomplish' our salvation by his incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, it then being up to us to grab hope by faith of what he has accomplished".[427] He aims to retrieve the significance of the earthly symbols of 'bread' and 'wine' and of our liturgical actions of eating and drinking – symbols and actions that illustrate that "the once-and-still embodied Jesus"[428] dwells and works within us. He reviews three aspects of Calvin's analysis:

- **Partaking is not 'mere knowledge'**
  According to Calvin, "some define eating of Christ flesh and drinking of his blood as (…) nothing but to *believe* in Christ'".[429] However, the words 'eating' and 'drinking' illustrate that "no one should think that the life we receive from [Jesus] is received by mere knowledge".[430] The "central signifying phenomena"[431] are the liturgical action of the preacher offering bread and wine (as Jesus, during his last supper, invited his disciples to take, eat and drink), and the congregant's action of receiving and ingesting the bread and wine (as the disciples did take, eat and drink) - and

[423] Wolterstorff, 145.
[424] Wolterstorff, 147.
[425] Wolterstorff, 160.
[426] Wolterstorff, 149.
[427] Wolterstorff, 161-162.
[428] Wolterstorff, 156.
[429] Wolterstorff, 151 (italics added).
[430] Wolterstorff, 151 (quote from Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.xvii.5; 1365).
[431] Wolterstorff, 150.

not the bread and wine as such. Calvin reflects on the function of eating bread and drinking wine for keeping and sustaining physical life and uses this as an analogical model for understanding our partaking of Christ body and blood: "by true partaking of him, *his life passes into us and is made ours*".[432]

- **The once-and-still embodied Jesus**

  With respect to the Eucharist, Calvin emphasizes our partaking "of the once-and-still embodied Jesus Christ".[433] A fundamental presupposition of his theology of the Eucharist, is that "the ascended Christ retains human nature (…) a human body - glorified, but still human".[434] The implication is that "it is not only a matter of being partakers of his Spirit; it is necessary also to partake of his humanity (…) [f]or when he gives himself to us, it is in order that we possess him entirely".[435] This means that we also partake of the life Jesus lived on earth (the "flesh-and-blood Jesus Christ"[436]) and are led "to himself even by (…) [the] earthly elements [of bread and wine]".[437] This is more than 'proclamation': "Jesus offers himself to us – offers to dwell within us"[438] and to make us into creatures that "reflect back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness".[439]

- **Communion and indwelling**

  Enacting the liturgy is, according to Wolterstorff, a form of mutual address between God and humans; the liturgy is "the site of communion between God and God's people"[440] (see §4.3.3). In mutual speaking and listening, however, a distance remains. The communion between God and his people "attains its highest form in the Eucharist (…) God (…) does not only stoop down to listen to us, to hear us, and to speak to us; God stoops down to dwell and work *within us* in the person of Jesus Christ through the action of the Holy Spirit".[441]

4.4 Liturgical theology: not mere knowledge

According to Wolterstorff, "[t]o be inducted into the Christian liturgy is to acquire a certain understanding of God".[442] This understanding is mostly implicit, and therefore it is not often articulated; it is a form of knowing that often stays 'in the shadows'.

Wolterstorff argues that the implicit understandings we find in enacting the liturgy should gain a more prominent (normative) place in our 'constructive theologies', to which I also count apologetics. Our starting point, he argues, shapes the overall configurations of our theology. Wolterstorff states that liturgical theologians have not discussed God as listener, or God as vulnerable.[443] The reason for this

[432] Wolterstorff, 154 (quote from Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.xvii.10; 1370, italics added).
[433] Wolterstorff, 156.
[434] Wolterstorff, 156 (reference to Calvin, *Institutes*, IV).
[435] Wolterstorff, 156 (quote from Calving, "Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper", 146-147).
[436] Wolterstorff, 156.
[437] Wolterstorff, 158.
[438] Wolterstorff, 158.
[439] Wolterstorff, 160 (reference to C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*); Cf. 161-162 where Wolterstorff adds that the Christology implicit in Calvin's analysis, "is a Christology that comes to expression in the gospel of John and in certain of Paul's letters", e.g. John 6:53-56, John 15:5, Romans 8:9-11.
[440] Wolterstorff, 161.
[441] Wolterstorff, 161.
[442] Wolterstorff, 163.
[443] Wolterstorff, 170.

neglect, he argues, could be because they have been influenced by "[t]raditional philosophical theology [that] begins by asking what God has to be like given the way the *world* is"[444], or responded from a concern "to measure up to the requirements for being a genuine *scientia* or *Wissenschaft* (…) [with] secure epistemological warrant for the claim it makes about God".[445] The starting point in philosophical or theological reflection, "perhaps with some bits of modern science thrown in"[446] has led us "to conclude that it is ontologically impossible that God would [speak or] listen".[447] Wolterstorff emphasizes, however, that "[t]he understanding of God arrived at in the philosophy classroom is profoundly different from that which appears to be implicit and explicit in Torah and in the prayers".[448] Therefore, he takes the liturgy as his starting point.

Through analyzing the implicit understanding of God in the liturgy, Wolterstorff highlights that by enacting the liturgy ('embodied knowing') we come to know that God makes himself vulnerable, humbles himself ('stoops down'), participates in mutual address (listening, hearing, speaking), seeks communion and dwells and works within us through the ('once-and-still') embodied Jesus. Additionally, by going back to where the liturgy originated (§4.1) Wolterstorff retrieves an understanding of the concreteness and presentness of kingdom and illustrates how certain articulations in the creedal-conciliar tradition of the church have led to a one-sided understanding with unintended consequences. This made us overlook Jesus' embodiment and enactment of the kingdom as a way of life ('praxis'), his death as being both a victory over evil and the climax of a career of restoration, and God's presentness (communion and indwelling) as covenant purpose (§4.3.2).

Although taking an epistemological and a liturgical perspective may seem two too different disciplines, both Meek and Wolterstorff 'correct' our approach to knowing by retrieving the notion of the covenant and its relevance tor our understanding today. Wolterstorff even suggests that going beyond the categories we have become used to - for example, "beginning from Christ's present indwelling in believers"[449] - would lead to significantly different theological (Christological) configurations.

4.5 Evaluation of key concepts

My aim has been to look at the role of 'embodied knowing' in the theory of Nicholas Wolterstorff. In this section, I will summarize what I regard the most important insights in Wolterstorff's theory, how these correlate with the key concepts for 'embodied knowing' from chapter 1 and how they may enrich our apologetic approaches and enhance missional resilience.

The overarching and most important aspect of Wolterstorff's approach, I consider the fact that he offers a corrective to traditional philosophical theology. He emphasizes that his liturgical approach and traditional 'constructive theology' are not necessarily incompatible, but the first highlights aspects that the latter has neglected[450] (offering a form of 'liturgical therapy'; cf. Meek's 'epistemological therapy'). For this reason, I believe that Wolterstorff's approach provides an

[444] Wolterstorff, 168.
[445] Wolterstorff, 168.
[446] Wolterstorff, 68.
[447] Wolterstorff, 70.
[448] Wolterstorff, 69.
[449] Wolterstorff, 162.
[450] Wolterstorff, 169.

enrichment to traditional approaches in apologetics and may contribute to enhancing missional 'resilience', as it brings systematic theologies, liturgical practices an daily life closer together.

Additionally, Wolterstorff's focus contributes to (re)discovering the *formative* power of liturgical practices. To be inducted into the liturgy, is to acquire a certain understanding of God, as well as to acquire a certain understanding of the faith community itself. This understanding might be opposed to what people in a secular society 'remember' about Christianity or the church, that is: if they have such memory at all.

As Wolterstorff provides a specific approach and focuses on the liturgy, I limit myself to correlating his theory to the *specific* aspects I distinguished in table 1 (summary of key concepts). Through indicating the 'overlap' with Meek's theory, the relation with *specific* aspects also becomes visible:

1. LITURGICAL KNOWLEDGE AS NORMATIVE & FORMATIVE

Correlation with specific aspects:

- Knowledge emerges in practices (§1.1.1)
- Distinct knowledge (§1.1.3)
- Interpretive, fiduciary framework (§1.1.3, §1.1.4)

Correlation with Meek's theory:

- Transformation (§3.4)
- Strategy (§3.4.1)

Nicholas Wolterstorff	Consequences for apologetic approaches
Correlation with attitudes: discovery (§1.1.2)	
• To be inducted into the liturgy, is to acquire a certain understanding of God and of the Christian community. • The Christian community teaches not 'mere knowledge'[451], but a specific outlook, authority, attitude, and practice. • Normative authority of the liturgical tradition (next to biblical and conciliar-creedal tradition).	• Liturgical practices have a formative power. This is a quite different starting point than the argumentative discourse. • For our understanding of the liturgy, we must go back to where it originated: the Old Testament expectation of shalom and Jesus Last Supper. • Sometimes our interpretation of the Christian tradition needs to be corrected (e.g. focus on Jesus' life; embodiment of the kingdom).

2. LITURGICAL KNOWLEDGE AS 'HUMBLE WITNESS'

Correlation with specific aspects:

- Humble witness (§1.1.4)
- 'Epistemology of participation' (§1.1.4)

Correlation with Meek's theory:

- Descent of God, humility (§3.4)
- Composure (§3.4.1)

Nicholas Wolterstorff	Consequences for apologetic approaches
Correlation with attitudes: mystery (§1.1.3) and commitment (§1.1.4)	
• God is worthy of worship.	• Participating in the liturgy reveals an attitude of awe, reverence, thankfulness, and amazement.
• God is vulnerable of being wronged. • God 'stoops down' to dwell and work within us.	• Participating in the liturgy may restore Enlightenment images of a 'distant', 'silent' or 'perfect' God with images of God being vulnerable, communicative, and responsive.

[451] Wolterstorff, 159; Cf. 151.

3. LITURGICAL KNOWLEDGE AS HABITUATION

Correlation with specific aspects:

- Knowledge as habituation (§1.1.2)
- Beliefs as person-/situation-relative (§1.1.3)
- Fiduciary, interpretive framework (§1.1.3, §1.1.4)

Correlation with Meek's theory:

- Restoration, communion (§3.4)
- Desire, comportment, consummation, strategy (§3.4.1)

Nicholas Wolterstorff	Consequences for apologetic approaches
Correlation with attitudes: discovery (§1.1.2), mystery (§1.1.3) and commitment (§1.1.4)	
The Christian community is a community of 'beings-in-communion' ('mutual address', responsiveness): • God's *hearing*: the Christian community lives in hope and longing for the concreteness of the coming kingdom of God and 'embodies' this hope through aligning its practical, daily way of life to this hope (presentness of the kingdom). • God's *speaking*: through creation, Jesus's life, preacher, liturgical acts. • God's *listening*: dignity of having the same nature as Christ. • Eucharist is partaking of 'once-and-still embodied Jesus' (not only focus on individual salvation, but empowerment for practical outworking).	• Focus on the connectedness of enacting the liturgy and living our daily life: bringing together community, communion, reciprocity, (belonging); concreteness, praxis (behaving); and hope, anticipation, outlook (believing). • Participating in the liturgy is crucial to our flourishing and shalom: through his analysis of the liturgy Wolterstorff restores a too individualistic approach to salvation (focus on communion, concreteness, embodiment, praxis, partaking, rebalancing revelation in Christ and creation, rebalancing kingdom 'expectation'). • The Christian community learns through 'the embodied Jesus': not in a defensive mode, but by enacting and embodying the Gospel.

Fresh understandings

Wolterstorff is very critical towards contemporary liturgies. I believe, however, that his own project of making explicit what often remains implicit, could be a stimulus for pioneering communities to help nonbelievers understand the meaning of Christian liturgical practices in fresh ways. Also, I believe that his own illustration of how articulations in the Christian tradition may unintendedly lead to a 'gap' in our understanding, can serve as a stimulus for constantly going back to our own sources and critically and constructively reflect on them. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will look at what we may learn from 'embodied experiments' of two pioneers.

Knowledge “begins not in a neutrality
but in a place of passion within the human soul.”

Esther Lightcap Meek (432)

5. THE ROLE OF 'EMBODIED KNOWING' IN PIONEER EXPERIMENTS

My aim for this thesis is to contribute to creating more missional 'resilience', through investigating whether traditional approaches to apologetics need to be enriched by including an 'embodied' approach to knowing. First, I have explored the topic of 'embodied knowing' through four theoretical chapters (desk research). In this final chapter, I will compare and enrich my findings with the stories of two practitioners (field research).

In this chapter I will first describe my methodological approach (§5.1) and then provide a comparative summary and evaluation of both interviews (§5.2). The interview format and the transcripts of both interviews are added as appendices:

- Appendix C: interview format;
- Appendix D: transcript interview 1;
- Appendix E: transcript interview 2.

5.1 Method field research

Selection of respondents

First, I interviewed Jan Huijgen (JH), a farmer-philosopher who is on the brink of building a 'silence chapel' on his farmland. Second, I interviewed Rikko Voorberg (RV), a theologian and founder of the PopUp Church in Amsterdam and co-author of a book on radical theology. I selected these two pioneers primarily because of their intentional focus on revaluing cognitive knowledge and their advocacy of embracing forms of 'embodied knowing'.

Consent and privacy

Approximately two weeks before the actual interview, I approached both pioneers and asked if they would be willing to cooperate. Both agreed to being interviewed for this thesis and gave consent for audio recording the interview. The interviews were performed and transcribed in Dutch, and then translated into English. I sent the full English text to the respondents for their consent and processed their additional input. Both gave their written consent for the use of their names, for using the content of the interviews in this thesis, and for attaching the full text of the interview as an appendix to this thesis.[452]

Method and content

In advance, I told the respondents the interview would be about the topic of 'embodied knowing' (what we come to know through participation in a faith community) as an putative enrichment for apologetic approaches. Both interviews lasted approximately 75 minutes. The first interview was at the farm of the respondent, the second interview was online via a Teams Meeting.

My intent was to gain insight from a practitioner's perspective in processes of coming to know and the contribution of a Christian pioneering community to these processes. For the content of the interviews, I followed the structure of my thesis. I conducted semi-structured interviews, based on the following themes:

[452] Rikko Voorberg gave consent for the use of his name and attaching the full transcript of the interview for the assessors of this thesis. For distribution of this thesis to third parties, asking additional consent is required.

- Apologetics
- Resilience
- Faith-science relation
- Knowledge
- Knowledge creation
- Theology (‘implicit focus’)
- Liturgy
- The role of Jesus
- ‘Metonomously personal’
- Normativity

See appendix B for the full interview format. This format also serves as a preliminary ‘analysis chart’ (deductive coding frame): for each theme I included insights that emerged from chapter 1-4 to check similarities, differences or additions in the analysis of the interviews.

Analysis and coding frame

In analyzing the data, the themes mentioned above were used as a broad, deductive frame. My first step was to summarize the data in a comparative chart according to these themes. As a next step, I iteratively went through the interviews again using an inductive approach to connect related themes. The category ‘faith-science relation’ has been integrated in the category ‘knowledge’ for both interviews. The category ‘metonomously personal’ has been integrated in the category ‘theology’ in the summary of JH (because this concept quite naturally ‘merged’ with his own theological vision), and in the category ‘knowledge creation’ in the summary of RV (as this aligned with his view on where knowledge starts).

Also, I added one extra category during the analysis: ‘focus pioneer’s initiative’. I did not ask directly about the goal of this initiative, as I was interested what would come up spontaneously with respect to how we come to know. With regard to the topic ‘theology’, I did not directly ask about theological convictions, but referred to a poem that is included in the promotion material for the pioneer’s initiative (JH), or to an observation from a recently published book (RV), hoping to find theological themes related to process of coming to know.

My approach was to ask open questions about apologetics and missional resilience (based on the introductory chapter and chapter 1 and 2, followed by questions about knowledge and knowledge creation (based on chapter 2 and 3), and about liturgy, the role of Jesus, and normativity (based on chapter 4). The word ‘normativity’ was not defined sufficiently in the interview; hence the quite different responses.

Presentation and evaluation

I have chosen to present the results in two columns, as this enables comparing the answers. I will present the outcomes in three thematic sections: 1) introduction and motivation, 2) epistemological perspectives, and 3) liturgical perspectives. I will present my evaluation directly after each section, with specific focus on lessons about ‘embodied knowing’.

5.2 Interviews: philosopher Jan Huijgen & theologian Rikko Voorberg

5.2.1 Part 1: Introduction and missional motivation

Interview 1: philosopher Jan Huijgen	Interview 2: theologian Rikko Voorberg
BACKGROUND Jan Huijgen is a farmer and philosopher and since 1993 owner of the *Eemlandhoeve,*[453] an organic farm and Inspiratiehuys (Inspiration House) in Bunschoten. His dream is to build a 'silence chapel' on his farmland (see appendix D for photos). He recently received the building permissions for the *Nature Observatory* – the formal name under which this dream will be realized. Thirty years of thinking, hoping, searching, and lobbying preceded this moment. The *Nature Observatory* will be build in 2023.	**BACKGROUND** Rikko Voorberg is a theologian and founder of the PopUpKerk (PopUp Church) in Amsterdam, where he has been actively involved since it was founded in 2013. Rikko searches for creative and innovative ways to make Christians and non-Christians think about the meaning and consequences of the Christian faith in a secular society. He is one of the authors of a book on radical theology[454] and one of the founders of Platform Thomas[455], an online forum on radical theology.
APOLOGETICS Jan Huijgen starts with the observation that most people no longer know who God is, what the message of Jesus was, or how Christianity works. This means that we are again entering a time where we have to find new language: we are in need of conscious, playful attitudes to respond to existing 'frames' or 'convictions'. This requires new receptivity.	**APOLOGETICS** Rikko Voorberg takes the criticism on the church and classical forms of theology as a starting point in his observation. He argues that we need an attitude of learning instead of a 'defense'. He considers the defensive mode as problematic: "[i]f you believe that God has made this world, the criticism has something to offer, a 'new' gospel to discover together."
RESILIENCE The cognitive rationality of the Enlightenment turns us into 'cold' people who will dwindle if we are not seen in our full humanity. Today, many people start to face doubts about *what* to believe or *why* to believe. These two developments reinforce each other; this may lead to 'existential doubts' and a loss of a 'sense of calling' (effect on *how* we live the Christian life).	**RESILIENCE** Many people no longer believe in claims of truth or authority. Therefore, we need new forms of education and formation to (re)discover value and worthwhileness of the Christian faith. This requires interaction and listening to dissenting voices: God speaks through critique on our own story. Credibility is about bringing *Christian beliefs and practices*, and the *practices of our daily life* together.

[453] For more information, see https://www.eemlandhoeve.nl/ (only in Dutch).
[454] Rikko Voorberg, Gerko Tempelman, and Bram Kalkman, *Onzeker Weten. Een inleiding in de radicale theologie* (Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum, 2022). Not available in English (translation of the title: *Uncertain knowing. An introduction in radical theology*).
[455] An online Dutch forum on radical theology. For more information, see https://www.platformthomas.org/.

FOCUS PIONEER'S INITIATIVE

Renewing or re-establishing connections between God (the divine, the transcendent), earth (nature, the secular), and humans.

- Staying close to the sources of faith: offering a 'sense of hope' by creating monastic, liturgical spaces where earthly, personal, social desires and God's gifts (his abundancy) come together. Offering 'oasis' of rest to find new perspective or insight amidst uncertainty or anxiousness.
- Holding up a mirror as Jesus did by asking the question: who or what do you serve in these times of daunting, radicalizing powers in societal systems and structures?
- Reconnecting people (through meals, sharing narratives, offering 'space').

FOCUS PIONEER'S INITIATIVE

Constant need to redefine theology if we can no longer explain the story that has been handed down in existing words and imagery; if it is not understood as good news.

- Not transferring knowledge through a monologue, but pastor as 'coach', guiding a learning process. Exploring "(new) meaning in the Christian heritage of texts and dogmas [and old forms] by turning them inside out and upside down".
- Holding up a mirror as Jesus did by putting our current ways of living and thinking, and current (societal) structures under critique.
- All gatherings are centered around a 'set table' (as a new, theatrical 'dogma': focus on form, not starting with content).

Evaluation part 1

With respect to apologetics, both emphasize that we need new *forms* (expressions) and new *language*. Both mention the importance of responding in fresh ways to current convictions, frames, or criticism of nonbelievers. Both connect this to changes in our society (effects of Enlightenment and claims of truth and authority). With respect to resilience, they emphasize the importance to reconnect *what*, *why* and *how* we believe to rediscover a 'sense of calling' (JH), or to bring together the practices of faith and practices of daily life to restore credibility (RV). In practice, JH choses a *holistic* approach, focusing on re-establishing connections between God, earth and humans through offering 'liturgical spaces' (oases). RV choses a *disruptive* approach, focusing on exploring, redefining and rediscovering the content of the Christian faith.

5.2.2 Part 2: Epistemological perspectives

Interview 1: philosopher Jan Huijgen

KNOWLEDGE

According to Jan Huijgen, people are exploring the limits of knowing ("rational securities we have long taken for granted, are gradually falling away"), and rediscover the value of our bodies and experiences. Knowing requires:

- an 'open mind', receptivity;
- keeping the *existential* (sociology/ cosmology), the *anthropological*, and the *transcendental* (theology) together, otherwise they become abstractions;
- looking at the whole of our being (not just cognition).

Interview 2: theologian Rikko Voorberg

KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge has become fragmented and is no longer about a total, overarching argument (search for *the* truth, 'scientism'). All kinds of things happen in our culture (e.g. individualism, culture of emotion, from 'big' to 'small' stories).

- Sometimes a 'fixed mindset' (closed system) is still visible in how people respond.
- We need to rediscover our own traditions (many sciences are not directly factual).
- Biblical knowledge includes the senses (head *and* body).

KNOWLEDGE CREATION

Characteristic sentences: "[t]here is something empirical in knowledge" and "there is a certain 'organic' movement in learning". Phases:

1. **Empirical starting point** in the 'practices of existence', the 'primary, naïve world of experience':
   - an interest, encounter, the 'disruptiveness' of the world, unforeseen developments.
2. **Responsiveness**
   - element of surprise, amazement, receptivity, wonder, a question, a puzzle.
3. **Deepened frame**
   - ruminating, processing, reflection maturation, integration, abstraction. This generates a form of authority, a foundation or substantiation ('eye opener', 'deepened frame').
4. **Back to original experience** and the practices of life.

N.B. I have generalized JH's description of the process of coming to know. His responsiveness often takes the form of *reading* and *studying*. He deliberately sought to let go of theological constructs that determined his understanding for a long time (see interview, question 5).

KNOWLEDGE CREATION

Characteristic sentence: "[k]nowledge does not start with solving a problem, but with entering into a problem". Phases:

1. **Experience** of 'not knowing' or 'not understanding' **as a starting point** (source):
   - an encounter, a felt 'discrepancy', a vulnerability, a place where you 'get stuck' in your life (the 'pain' or need).
   - you cannot "receive knowledge, if (…) love [or: interest] does not precede it".
2. **Inquiry into learning**
   - dwelling *in* and *on* the experience ('immersion'); process of making, creating, discovering.
3. **New perspectives**
   - finding new ways (perspectives) to look at something (healing, transformation);
   - objectification as "a way of testing if we really grasp it (…) in order to 'know' something, you have to get close" (establishing relationship).
4. **Enrichment and incorporation**
   - focus on process, no guaranteed result.

N.B. For RV, an important aspect in the process of coming to know is to integrate what he learned from *theater makers* and *artists.* Instead of transferring theological 'truths' (constructs), he chooses to embrace 'not knowing' (see interview, question 5).

Evaluation part 2

The most striking is that both pioneers have deliberately sought new ways to approach knowledge, away from (theological) 'constructs'; this brought forth a new vision about knowledge creation. Both resonate with Meek's views of knowing as subsidiary-focal integration and transformation (§3.3.1). The connection to the biblical covenant, however, did not come up spontaneously.

- Both views resonate strongly with knowing as 'situated' (§3.5, aspect 3). Additionally, JH's views strongly correspond with the triadic approach in Meek's theory (§3.3.2, figure 2).
- Both also resonate with Meek's conclusion that knowing is 'personal' (§3.5, aspect 1). For RV, this becomes visible in relational aspects of knowing (love, establishing relationship). For JH, this resonates primarily with the concept of reality as 'metonomously personal' (§3.3.1). For JH, see also 'implicit theology' for an elaboration on this aspect.
- For both, knowing also entails 'involvement' (starting point in 'lived experiences') and 'integration & transformation' (responsiveness, or inquiry leading to deepened frame, or new perspectives). See §3.5, aspect 2 and 4.

5.2.3 Part 3: Liturgical perspectives

Interview 1: philosopher Jan Huijgen	Interview 2: theologian Rikko Voorberg
ROLE OF LITURGY A 'public service' that illustrates who you serve, and who or what you are dependent on. Aspects of liturgy: • sacramental, sacred practice of reverence; • learning to live with uncertainty; accepting 'not-knowing'; 'mystical aspect'; learning receptive openness; • letting go of our ego-structures, surrender (Eucharist, 'human reality of the Lord'); • need for (innovative) rituals, reflection; • formative power of symbols (e.g. 'compost cross', creating 'open spaces', 'oasis'); • liturgical dimension of encounters • 'show' and 'tell'.	**ROLE OF LITURGY** Liturgy is the work of people, it is the doing of people in their quest to connect with God, with the divine, in their search to find a unity with God, or in attempts to find wholeness, peace, healing, forgiveness, a place to be in the world. • Liturgy as search for God: "[t]o search God, is to worship God"; "the search for what, who, where and if God is, is in itself the honoring, the love of God. For that search, liturgy is the tool." • "I think there can be no predefined God when entering the liturgy". • Liturgy "is not about the doing of God or even about reaching out to a certain God."
THEOLOGY (IMPLICIT FOCUS) Characteristic quotes: "In the church, I still experience a lack of attention for the importance of our bodies, our experiences"; "People are spiritually hungry and in need of a 'moral compass'. • Immanent and transcendent presence: "the reality of creation is also the place of God's presence"; "God is much more intimately and delicately present than we often think"; God is present in creation, in humans, and "a 'presence' in a sacramental world"; poem: 'the earth is brimming with heaven' • Beyond ability of reason: "language falls short"; "God's communication style is much broader than what we have made of it"; God as "eloquent" (e.g. rainbow). • Inspiring sources: biblical stories of Moses, Joseph; Jesus' parables taken from daily life situations; God's presence in nature; literature, songs and poetry.	**THEOLOGY (IMPLICIT FOCUS)** Characteristic quotes: "The hope of the church lies in critique on our own, human functioning"; "[t]he church should connect people at the level of their hunger for a new world." • Shared humanity: the basis for community (connection) should not be our shared theological convictions, but our shared humanity in a sometimes difficult world. • Dogma as 'research material': "is a dogma a 'non-questionable premise' or 'research material'?"; "existing dogma's can no longer be taken or defended as a common point of reference"; "we get a better understanding of a dogma when we start working with it." • Inspiring sources: stories of Jesus, approaches of artists, theatre makers (e.g. Malcolm Guite).

ROLE OF JESUS Good news of the kingdom of God: • Jesus' way of life; • the 'human reality of the Lord'; • holding up a mirror: 'who or what do you serve?" • offering hope, perspective, and confidence. Jesus' death: "Jesus fulfilled everything" • Jesus death as overcoming evil, intimidating powers, structures, and systems, and death; • Jesus persevered, remained obedient to his calling "in the midst of the powers of evil"; • "It remains a mystery I cannot fully grasp. This is why I practice the liturgy" (see also: 'aspects of liturgy'). • "It is too big for me"	**ROLE OF JESUS** Jesus is the 'lens' through which we understand creation: • Jesus puts structures, ways of thinking and living, and habits constantly under critique ('destabilizing'). • Jesus shows a new way of life though his embodiment of the Gospel. "We are being invited to take part in that." • Jesus offered glimpses of another world "so change can come about". Jesus' death: "Jesus died *because of* our sins".[456] • Transfer of the concept of sin to an individual is complicated and problematic. • Focus on "the unmasking of the systems of sin, the mirror (…) Sin, as far as I am concerned, is primarily and first a collective concept" (tendency, nature, inclination). • "Jesus Victor approach is much more appealing today."
NORMATIVITY 'EMBODIED KNOWING' Focus on 'moral compass': people are spiritually hungry, and we have lost the ability to listen and to be present. We need to learn patience, presence, vulnerability, long-term perspective amidst short-term choices.	**NORMATIVITY 'EMBODIED KNOWING'** When symbols change, doctrine changes alongside. "Practical theology should be the source for systematic theology, or the source for modifying conceptualizations of systematic theology."

Evaluation part 3

With respect to the liturgy, both respondent accentuate the 'not knowing'. In the 'not knowing', our worship takes place (§4.5, aspect 2; cf. (§4.3.1, table 3). For JH, this primarily is about a practice of *reverence*, embracing the mystery, and 'learning to live with uncertainty'. JH refers to God's redemptive and creational glory (*awe*). He seeks and connects the flourishing of the other and of creation (*gratefulness*). For RV, to search God is to worship and honor God. Although RV emphasizes that we cannot 'predefine' God (*God's otherness; reverence*), Jesus teaches a new way of life to bring change (relatedness to flourishing of the other and the world). God's vulnerability (§4.3.2) is not mentioned during the interviews.

[456] In Dutch: "Jesus is aan onze zonden gestorven", in plaats van "Jezus is voor mijn zonden gestorven".

With respect to Wolterstorff's focus on the liturgy as 'mutual address' (§4.5, aspect 3; cf. §4.3.3, table 6), JH highlights God's presence, broad communication style, and eloquence and uses the word 'receptivity'; this relates to the speaking of God. RV focuses primarily on 'asking questions' as a way of coming to know God. Although the 'addressing God' did not specifically come up during the interviews, RV's focus on 'dwelling in and on the experience' in the liturgy relates to 'habituation'. Both respondents focus on the importance of the connectedness of enacting the liturgy and our daily life and bring forward the importance of Jesus way of life (enacting and embodying the gospel; cf. §4.3.3, table 5) and accentuate the importance of 'holding up a mirror' (indirectly acknowledging Wolterstorff's mention of the 'resistance' God has allowed, as an aspect of his vulnerability (§4.3.2, table 4). Wolterstorff's mention of 'flourishing' and 'shalom' I see return in JH's focus on offering hope, perspective, confidence, and in RV's focus on 'bringing about change'. Both struggle to understand the meaning of Jesus's death and how his victory over evil powers in *society* and *creation* relates to *personal* redemption. In their praxis, both focus on broad aspects of restoration (JH focusing on 'fulfilment' and re-connecting earth, body and God's immanent and transcendent presence, RV focusing on the importance of 'critique').

With respect to the normative, authoritative character of the liturgy (§4.5, aspect 1), JH focuses on the need for a 'moral compass' to which participating in a liturgy contributes, and RV focuses on the fact that we need new expressions and/or interpretations of texts and dogma's and regards this as a source for systematic ('constructive') theologies.

In comparing JH and RV with the apologetic approaches in chapter 2, JH is closest to the approach of Otten (§2.3), and RV closest to the approach of Spufford (§2.2).

6. CONCLUSION AND LESSONS: A TWIST TO APOLOGETICS

In this thesis, I investigated whether traditional approaches to apologetics may be enriched by including an 'embodied' approach to knowing, to enhance missional resilience. This topic originated from personal observations in my own church, where I noticed an increased focus on sharing the Christian faith by *doing*, as well as from the growing religious 'speechlessness', a fading collective memory of Christianity, an increasing interest in experiencing, emotions, and feelings, and an emerging interest in 'practical knowledge'. From a professional perspective, the topic is related to CHE-lectorate research into processes of sensemaking in (new) faith communities, to learn new ways of communicating the Gospel in a secular society.

The main question for my thesis was:

> What is the contribution of 'embodied knowledge', gained through participation in faith communities, to the apologetic explication of the Gospel in a secular society?

In this thesis, I explored the topic of 'embodied knowing' through four theoretical chapters (desk research) and compared and enriched my findings with the stories of two practitioners (field research). The answers to the sub questions are given in the evaluative sections of each chapter (§1.4, §2.4, §3. 5, §4.5 and §5.2). An additional summary of the main conclusion of each chapter is provided in appendix A.

For understanding how we may communicate the Gospel, I did not start with questions about God, but with questions about knowing (epistemology). It is not uncommon to start in epistemology for apologetics. Some theologians even state that "one can only deal with apologetics today if he has studied analytic Anglo-Saxon philosophy for a few years".[457] However, in chapter 1 of this thesis I have set the stage by giving insight in why, according to a practical theologian, a philosopher, a scientist-theologian, and a missiologist, we need to alter our convictions of what 'counts' as knowledge, and why we need a return from previous, massive affirmations. All four advocate consilience, tolerance, or a revaluation of alternative approaches to knowledge to regain balance. Also, all four acknowledge that 'embodied knowing' is becoming an important, though still not generally accepted, area of interest. Approaches to knowing have been deeply influenced by the Enlightenment and twisted our understanding of knowledge itself. This influence has run so deep that we need to restore our understanding of the *roots* of knowing.

Another, and related reason why I choose to start with approaches to knowing was that I wanted to come to a better understanding of the relation between practices and theory. I observed a 'gap' between a desire for and focus on *practical* Christian living and doing as a means of sharing the Christian faith, in combination with discomfort, insecurity and even resistance to *theoretically* and cognitively defending the faith. The pioneers I interviewed observed how these two developments reinforce each other, eventually resulting in a loss of a 'sense of calling' (§5.2.1). This aligns with Meek's observation that the prevailing epistemic default of 'disembodied knowing' results, among other things, in feelings of 'hopelessness' or of 'betrayal' (§3.2.1).

[457] I retrieved this quote (my translation) from a recent Dutch manual for Christian apologetics (Henk A. Bakker, Maarten J. Kater, and Wim van Vlastuin, *Verantwoord Geloof. Handboek Christelijke Apologetiek* (Kampen: Brevier uitgeverij, 2014), 20 (reference to William Lane Graig).

6.1 Main conclusion

Based on the outcomes of my research, my main conclusion is that 'embodied knowing' is not only a reasonable contribution to the apologetic enterprise, it needs to have more weight. I have come to the conclusion that 'embodied knowing' cannot be other than the *starting place* for apologetics. However, it is not just a matter of replacing one approach with the other. It is more complicated than that. There's a twist: to restore balance, we first need to understand and accept that we lost balance. As we are in the midst of change, we are still in a process of discovery. This is why this thesis is an exploration, starting from the aim to enrich apologetic approaches in order to contribute to restoring missional resilience. In my view, this restoration begins with recognizing that there is a twist to apologetics.

The authors in chapter 1 illustrated that we need to ask questions that demand 'twists of thinking': we need to revalue our understandings of what counts as knowledge. The authors in chapter 2 acknowledge this need, yet without translating this into generic lessons of how we come to know. A 'twist' may mean to take a different course: to bend, turn, divert, or to take an unexpected route. This is what both Meek (chapter 3) and Wolterstorff (chapter 4) do. Meek points at a theologically grounded, covenant-based theory of knowledge, returning knowing to experiences and patterns of our daily life. Wolterstorff points at the normative character of the liturgy and the connectedness between enacting the liturgy and the concrete embodiment of kingdom themes in our daily lives. Both pioneers (chapter 5) also take an unexpected route, adding their own distinctive 'twist' to the ecclesial landscape. Their approaches resonate strongly with Meek's theory of knowledge, and both create new liturgies to retrieve what they consider a 'lost' heritage.

My overarching aim was to gather insights for an 'embodied' apologetic approach that is fitting for the times of transition in which we currently find ourselves. Based on the outcomes of the five explorative chapters on 'embodied knowing' and my main conclusion that 'embodied knowing' should not only be a contribution but the starting place for apologetics, I have distilled six lessons for enhancing missional resilience that I will present in the next section.

6.2 Missional resilience: lessons from 'embodied knowing'

For the lessons that I draw based on the outcomes of this explorative research, I have selected six metaphors for new apologetic approaches:

- **EMBRACE**: missional resilience begins in embrace, not in defense.
- **ROOT**: missional resilience begins with going back to the roots and rootedness of knowledge.
- **MIRROR**: missional resilience begins with looking in the mirror, before holding up a mirror.
- **SHAPE**: missional resilience begins in the normative and formative power of practices.
- **INVOLVE**: missional resilience begins with planting yourself in the path of knowing.
- **OFFER**: missional resilience begins with receptivity, humility, and stewardship.

EMBRACE

Missional resilience begins in embrace, not in defense.

- **Embrace the uncertainty the current transition brings**

  It is not only impossible to reverse the reversal we are going trough (WUR-research), going through this process is essential to reverse 'crippling modulations' of previous ideologies (Bosch) that resulted in 'stunted human growth' (Bosch) and a 'subcutaneous epistemic layer' (Meek). If we long to fall back on the power of practices, yet simultaneously feel obligated to explain the faith cognitively, without knowing how to bridge the gap, this may lead to 'existential doubt' (interview 1, JH) and to realizing that faith becomes less real in our minds and hearts (Keller). It takes intentional and persistent effort to recognize what is happening (Meek), and to find new balance (Toulmin).

  - Characteristic 'from-to-movements' in the current transition:
    thought-being, thinking-action, reason-intuition, information-transformation, critical-holistic, universal-local, theoretical-pragmatical, mind-body, mind-matter, propositional-embodied, rational-reasonable, orderly-lively, abstract-concrete, singularity-multiplicity (in method, rationality), explanation-habituation, clinical-instinctual, proofs-feelings, facts-senses.

- **Embrace our shared humanity**

  The struggle we are going through, is a struggle for people in our Western culture that affects believers and nonbelievers alike. To restore balance (Toulmin), we need to pay attention to our *full* humanity (interview 1, JH), start from our *shared* humanity (interview 2, RV), and respect what is *essentially* human: our commitments and our interdependence (Bosch). We need to work together toward human *flourishing* (Meek, Wolterstorff), learning through interaction, dialogue, and reciprocity (McGrath), based on the accumulated experience of our practical lives (Toulmin) and based on recognizing defining patterns of the biblical covenant (Meek, see also 'root').

- **Embrace vulnerability and mystery**

  McGrath highlights the importance of remembering that life is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived. Some dimensions may be known in the 'felt' or 'lived', but not yet known in the sense of the 'articulated' (Meek). As an aspect of this mystery, Wolterstorff emphasizes God's vulnerability to being wronged and resisted, as well as his transcendence and otherness. In enacting the liturgy and our daily lives, we give expression to our longing for the full coming of his kingdom (see also 'root'). In the liturgy, we learn to live with mystery through learning receptive openness (JH, interview 1) and asking questions (RV, interview 2), beginning from the 'pain' or 'disruptiveness' we encounter in this world (JH and RV). Meek emphasizes that anticipation and not-yet-understanding is part of healthy process of knowing: knowing starts not with solving a problem, but with entering a problem (RV, interview 2).

ROOT

Missional resilience begins with going back to the roots and rootedness of knowledge.

- **We have stood knowledge on its head and need a return to the roots of human knowing**
  We need to get back in touch with the experiences of everyday life (Toulmin), the intelligible force of practice (Miller-McLemore) and reconceptualize reason as embodied activity (McGrath). Knowing is a process or trajectory and our being on the way - as pilgrims on a journey (see introduction) - *is* epistemic (Meek, RV, JH). Our knowing begins with finding clues in world, body, word (Meek), from where we start a transformative process toward focus and integration (Meek; JH, interview 1; RV, interview 2). We need to holistically reconnect earth, humans, and God: the existential, the anthropological, and the transcendent (JH, interview 1).

- **We need to go back to the roots of covenantal and liturgical knowing**
  Healthy knowing aligns with biblical knowing. Based on covenantal patterns (Meek) we may come to know God through his immanent as well as transcendent presence (Meek; JH, interview 1). All knowing is covenant response: we are constantly being addressed through all dimensions of life: world, word, body (Meek), and live as a community of 'mutual address' (Wolterstorff). Enacting the liturgy, also brings us to the roots of knowing. The Eucharist may be seen as the paradigm of restoring our being-in-communion (Meek). In the Eucharist we become partakers of the embodied Jesus (Wolterstorff) and the 'human reality of the Lord' (Wolterstorff; JH, interview 1; RV, interview 2), to live out ('embody') and give voice to our longing for the concreteness, presentness and praxis of the kingdom (Wolterstorff).

- **We need to respond to the 'double loss' of religious roots**
  RV (interview 2) brought to the fore that it is *common sense* that knowledge starts form having a certain 'relation' to it: we start learning, or exploring, when something captures our interest. When people in our secular society suffer from 'religious speechlessness' and a loss of 'collective memory' with regard to the church and Christianity (introduction), and at the same time feel that the church has nothing to offer in answering spiritual questions of today, the church may be the last place where they start their journey as pilgrims (introduction). However, both Meek and Wolterstorff point at the importance of *formation* through the liturgy, Wolterstorff even emphasizing its *normative* character.

  During this research I came to understand that - although the formative power of the community is and part and parcel of our Christian heritage - this may have become a common sense we no longer trust, because we have come to believe we need to explain (defend) our faith primarily along another 'standard' (chapter 1). An additional factor is that certain articulations in our Christian tradition have resulted in a 'gap' with massive consequences (Wolterstorff). This may also explain the gap we experience in what we desire (doing, enacting, embodying), and our 'critical voice' that we should respond otherwise, resulting in 'existential doubt' (JH, interview 1).

MIRROR

Missional resilience begins with looking in the mirror, before holding up a mirror.

- **We need to transform first, before we can guide transformation** (Bosch)
  To look in the mirror, comes in many shapes. In this thesis, Meek holds up an epistemological mirror, Wolterstorff a liturgical mirror, the pioneers a holistic and disruptive mirror, Keller a comparative mirror, Spufford an emotional mirror, Otten a receptive mirror. All of them went through a transformation themselves (for Meek: see footnote 223; for the pioneers: see appendix C and D; for Keller, Spufford and Otten: see §2.1, §2.2, and §2.3.2; Wolterstorff refers in his book to his own 'shortcoming'[458] with respect to his previous approach in philosophical theology). Before we can hold up a mirror, I believe we need to have gone through some form of transformation ourselves, so that we can start from humility (see 'receive') and embrace (see 'embrace'), as there is no longer room for the massive affirmations of faith which characterized the missionary enterprise of earlier times (Bosch).

- **Holding up a (prophetic) mirror to contribute to human flourishing**
  In this thesis, I have given various examples of how people hold up a mirror. We may hold up a mirror to our own tradition (RV, interview 2; JH, interview 1; Wolterstorff), learning from the critique from dissenting voices (RV, interview 2), and to broader world around us, offering 'oasis' and a 'moral compass' (JH, interview 1), and places to explore together (RV, interview 2). This requires 'reflective practitioners' (Toulmin), that help people discover through guides or coaches. This also hold up a mirror to the design of what we now call our 'traditional' church, where transferring knowledge through monologue (RV, interview 2) still is the dominant expression.

SHAPE

Missional resilience begins in the normative and formative power of practices.

- **Christian practices as formative means in knowledge creation**
  In this thesis, the formative means of knowledge creation has come up in almost all the chapters. McGrath mentions that the Christian epistemic community fosters personal growth and development as an attempt to do justice to the experience of Christ: embodied, enacted, transmitted through the community of faith, its creeds and its liturgy. Meek's whole covenant epistemology is about the transformative power of 'embodied knowing': we need to 'plunge in and discover'. Wolterstorff pleads for the authority of liturgical theology, through which we acquire a certain understanding of God. Spufford and Otten testify how a liturgical, mystical experience initiated their process of conversion (Spufford: transformation; Otten: capitulation, falling in love). JH and RV both offer spaces where people may become 're-formed': where

[458] Wolterstorff, 169.

dogma's may be reformulated through performativity and through reconnecting them to questions from daily life (RV, interview 2), or where people may learn to reconnect with God, with the earth as a place where He is 'intimately present', and with our fellow human beings (JH, interview 1). Doing so, triggers integration (Meek), as well as habituation (Toulmin). The latter, also finds expression in the specific aim of both pioneers to gather around a 'set table' and 'narratives' (JH and RV, interview 1 and 2).

INVOLVE

Missional resilience begins with planting yourself in the path of knowing.

Knowing begins in a place of passion

Knowing often begins from love, longing, or desire, from a puzzle, a question, or pain, from wonder or surprise (McGrath; Meek; JH, interview 1; RV, interview 2). In the liturgy, we worship God, starting from awe, reverence, gratefulness (Wolterstorff). Knowing starts in an encounter (Spufford; Otten; Meek; JH, interview 1; RV, interview 2) and from the contingencies of our life (Toulmin). Planting yourself in the path of knowing requires active investment, active perception, active listening, openness to 'otherness', active indwelling (dwelling *in* and *on* something), and looking for connected knowing, understanding (Meek; cf. JH, interview 1; RV, interview 2). Knowing starts with involvement (Meek, Wolterstorff) and with commitment (Bosch) and is achieved bit by bit, as we go along (Toulmin). It requires anticipation and reciprocity, friendship and apprenticeship, as we come to know through contact with the o/Other (Meek).

Learning from the passionate way of Jesus

Involvement with the world is connected to our involvement in the liturgy, where we learn about the passionate way of Jesus.[459] Wolterstorff highlights that the Christian community learns through partaking of 'the embodied Jesus', not in a defensive mode, but by enacting and embodying the Gospel and through aligning what we practice in the liturgy with the living of our practical lives and our hope for the full coming of the kingdom. Both pioneers take as a starting point that people are 'spiritually hungry' (JH, interview 1) or 'hungry for a new world' (RV, interview 2). God's comes to us, humbles himself, stoops down to us in mutual address and dwells and works within us (Wolterstorff). Meek focuses on this 'descent of God' as an epistemological, covenantal pattern: the 'gracious intrusion of the Other' or the 'approaching discovery', and aligns covenantal knowing with responsible stewardship (care for people, justice, creation).

[459] In this thesis, my focus is on offering an epistemological perspective, not a soteriological. The emphasis falling on the life, enactment, embodiment of Jesus appears to be a correction to a too individualistic approach to salvation. It lies beyond the scope of this thesis, however, to draw soteriological conclusions about the interpretation of Jesus's death.

OFFER

Missional resilience begins with receptivity, humility, and stewardship.

- **All our knowing is a gift**
  To know well, is to give your epistemic efforts way to the coming of the other; we are dependent on the coming of God and his new world (Meek). Because God offers himself to us (Wolterstorff, Meek), we have something to offer (RV, interview 2). Covenantal knowing is about seeking the shalom of the world: restoration to health, safety, rest, completeness, wholeness, welfare, perfection, blessing, and harmony (Meek). Addressing God, is crucial to our shalom and flourishing (Wolterstorff). This is not something we can achieve by ourselves; we need an attitude of receptivity, humility, and stewardship. "The heart of the regular assembly of Christian believers, is to invoke the Lord's coming, and to find that he does. All worship is response to this."[460]

It is my hope that this thesis, and the six lessons I distilled from this explorative research, will contribute to an understanding of 1) how traditional apologetics and 'embodied' approaches to knowing have grown apart and 2) how we may reconnect practice and theory, so that we may enrich apologetic approaches (theoretical aim) and enhance missional resilience (practical aim) to answer today's spiritual questions of 'ordinary' people in a secular society.

6.3 To be continued

Back to where I started: a committee meeting in my local church. One of the outcomes of our conversations is that we will start an experiment in 2023. For six months, each fourth Sunday of the month will be 'given back' to the community to create an explorative liturgical meeting in small groups. The overall aim is to worship God through using our creativity, through reconnecting, through discovering, through becoming vulnerable, through searching and sharing together how we may better connect our faith and our daily life. It might be a next research project to investigate what happens if we start from a broad variety of 'clues' (Meek) trusting that 'insight may come upon us' as we submit ourselves to the yet-to-be-fully known, through enacting our liturgies (Wolterstorff).

[460] Meek, 477.

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Images

The images on the cover and page 8 and 18 contain a hyperlink to trace the original web source. The images in appendix C were provided by the respondent.

Appendices

Appendix A - Summary of the chapters

Chapter 1
In this thesis, I have used chapter 1 and the answer to sub question 1 ('What recent insights from a practical theologian, a philosopher, a scientist-theologian and a missiologist help to understand why 'embodied knowing' is an emerging topic of interest?') as a 'compass' to analyze all other chapters. Based on the insights of Bonnie Miller-McLemore, Stephen Toulmin, Alister McGrath and David Bosch, I selected generic and specific *key concepts* for 'embodied knowing', as well as characteristic *attitudes* and *convictions* to value processes of embodied knowing. Also, I gave insight in general *responses* to the changes that are taking place. See §1.4 for this overview.

Chapter 2
In chapter 2 I investigated how the topic of 'embodied knowing' (based on the outcomes and key concepts of sub question 1) is addressed in the contemporary apologetic approaches of Tim Keller, Francis Spufford, and Willem Jan Otten (sub question 2). The three authors subsequently provide an argumentative-legalistic, emotional-popular, and mystical-poetic apologetic approach. See §2.4 for a more detailed evaluation, and §2.1.3, §2.2.3, and §2.3.3 for an evaluation of 'embodied knowing' for each author. In correlating the three approaches to the key concept of chapter 1, my conclusion was that although each author offers insight in *specific* aspects of 'embodied knowing', none of them specifically addresses the *general* aspects of knowledge creation.

Chapter 3
Chapter 3 entered into an alternative epistemological approach that does address these generic aspects of knowledge creation. I analyzed the role of 'embodied knowing' in the philosophical theology of Esther Lightcap Meek (sub question 3, part 1). Meek argues that we need 'epistemological therapy', as well as a new 'epistemological etiquette', to restore our default setting with respect to knowledge and knowledge creation. Meek's covenant epistemology restores missional resilience by returning knowing to the experiences of our daily life. Her theory connects our being in the world (situational), questions of authority (normative), and 'lived body' experiences (existential), based on a thoroughly worked out theological theory of the covenant, honoring the unity between the Old and the New Testament and uniting creational, incarnational, revelational, sacramental and trinitarian approaches to how we come to know. My main conclusion was that her theory retrieves knowing as *personal*, as *involvement*, as *situated* and as *integration* and *transformation*. See §3.5 for an evaluation of her theory, the correlation with key concepts from chapter 1 and the consequences for apologetic approaches.

Chapter 4
Meek highlights in chapter 3 that liturgical practices shed light on knowing and involve inviting transformation. Therefore, in chapter 4, I analyzed the role of 'embodied knowing' in the liturgical theology of Nicholas Wolterstorff (sub question 3, part 2). Wolterstorff argues that liturgical theology should have a normative status, as it offers a specific understanding of God and of the Christian community. His analysis of four implicit understandings in the liturgy might be defined as 'liturgical therapy'. He returns to where the first liturgies originated: the Old Testament expectation of the

concreteness of the coming kingdom, shalom and human flourishing, and the significance of Jesus' Last Supper and our 'addressing God'. My main conclusion was that liturgical knowing is *normative* and *formative*, a form of *humble witness*, and *habituation* (connected to the living of our practical lives today: our enacting and embodying of the Gospel). See §4.5 for an evaluation of his theory, the correlation with key concepts from chapter 1 and Meek's theory in chapter 3, and the consequences for apologetic approaches.

Chapter 5

In chapter 5, I related compared my findings in chapter 1 to 4 with what we can learn from the pioneering 'embodied faith experiments' of a farmer-philosopher and a theologian (sub question 4). Both are passionate to reconnect faith to the practices of our daily lives, to restore a 'sense of calling' and 'credibility' by holding up a critical mirror. Both strongly resonate with Meek's approach to knowing, although the theological notion of the covenant did not come up spontaneously. Both turn away from previous theoretical 'constructs', either choosing a *holistic*, monastic approach, focusing on reconnecting God, earth, and humans - God's immanent and transcendent presence - through offering 'oasis' of hope (respondent 1), or a *disruptive*, theatrical approach, focusing on theological dogma's as 'research material'. I presented my comparison and evaluation in three comparative sections: views on apologetics, resilience and missional motivation, epistemological perspectives, and liturgical perspectives (§5.2).

Appendix B - Original Dutch quotes Willem Jan Otten

Otten's book is published in Dutch; no English translation is available. All quotes in §3.2 are my own translation. Behind each footnote an additional reference is added in parentheses; these correspond with the number of the following chart.

(1)	" … twintig jaar geleden in de fuik van het geloof (…) gezwommen."
(2)	"De serie kreeg een titel: de mis die we missen."
(3)	" … langzaamaan zijn we gaan geloven in onze emoties en sentimenten, als in een cultus, met bijbehorende, steeds krachtelozer wordende symbolen."
(4)	"Waar wetenschap en statistiek zo'n beetje staatsreligie zijn geworden …"
(5)	"… een wereld die (…) de kunst van het symbolisch denken heeft verleerd."
(6)	"Het kerkelijk jaar is een omvangrijk (…) kunstwerk (…) vergelijkbaar met een partituur, of een scenario: [de missalen] moeten vertolkt worden."
(7)	" … de formulering die Jezus' dood en de verrijzenis van oudsher begeleidt ('die wegdraagt de zonden der wereld'."
(8)	"Want er is voor een modern, geëmancipeerd mens weinig achterlijker, benarder dan zondebesef (…) Wat is dit vreselijke begrip?"
(9)	"Ze intensiveert voor een gelovige het mysterie zeker, maar ze vergroot voor de geloofsbetwijfelaar (een gestalte die zich vaak ook In het brein van belijdend gelovigen ophoudt) de ergernis en de vervreemding."
(10)	"Dat je uiteindelijk dwars door die knoop heen moet gaan, zonder hem te ontwarren."
(11)	" … de kwestie van de geloofstaal, die je, telkens wanneer je haar buiten rituelen en gebeden om bezigt, het gevoel geeft dat je je hand overspeelt. Dat je meer zegt dan je begrijpt."
(12)	" … die verwijzen naar iets wat meer bestaat dan wat je kunt aanwijzen."
(13)	Ook zul je woorden uit het overgeleverde geloofsvocabularium gebruiken, grote woorden, die (…) je wel kunt willen afschaffen, maar niet het verlangen waaruit ze bestaan."
(14)	" … dit boek doet geen poging om (…) te beredeneren."
(15	"Dit boek begint met de eerste mis na Pasen, met de periode van de verrijzenisweken, gevolgd door de Heilige-Geestweken, de gelijkenisweken, de weg naar Jeruzalem-weken, de eindtijdweken, de adventstijd, de profetenweken, en de vastentijd - af te ronden met de Goede (ook wel: Stille) Week."
(16)	"Jouw nadruk ligt minder op Oordeel van de Vader dan op Mysterie van de Zoon."
	Jezus "zou, zei hij, in ieder leven afzonderlijk aanwezig blijven, ook in de levens van mensen die hem niet gekend hadden (…) [a]ls een inspirerende, dood-trotserende macht (…) een 'metgezel voor alle mensen'."
(18)	" … dat hij een wolk wordt, verdampt, en ons omhult en vergezelt."
(19)	"Je neerleggen bij de overmacht van het mysterie."
(20)	"Alles wordt geopenbaard en blijft toch onbegrepen."
(21)	" … zij denken 'overtuigd' te moeten worden."
(22)	"Hoe zekerheden en vooroordelen worden afgebroken is een notoir moeilijk te reconstrueren proces."
(23)	"… de waarheid in pacht hebben."
(24)	"Hoe leg je uit dat het om *bezwijken* gaat?"

(25)	“Misschien is aanvaarden nog een te rationele term (…) [J]e gaf je over.”
(26)	“… het gaat om een weg (…) het procesmatige dat geloven is, de werkzaamheid.”
(27)	“ … liefdesverklaring …”
(28)	“Tot geloven kom je niet per beslissing. Het is iets wat aan je gebeurt, niet helemaal ongelijk aan hoe je valt voor iemand.”
(29)	“… een type gelovige in spe (…) De gefascineerde die wel wil maar nog deinst.”
(30)	“ … deze *deinsjaren*, toen je niets liever wilde dan op de knieën.”
(31)	“Achteraf ben je nooit geloviger geweest dan tijdens deze *deinsjaren*.”
(32)	“Geloof is iets wat eigenlijk permanent alleen maar daagt.”
(33)	“… tegen het intellectuele milieu waarin je bent opgegroeid.”
(34)	“Tegen jezelf indenken.” / “Dit tegen jezelf indenken ... ”
(35)	“Waarom anders ben je in de kerk, dan uit verlangen naar (…) een ‘teken van aanwezigheid’ (…) ”?
(36)	“In onze huidige wereld zijn we “de kunst van het symbolisch denken (…) verleerd.”
(37)	“Het is een gegronde reden om jezelf de oefening van de misgang op te leggen: je kweekt er ontvankelijkheid voor beelden - die meer betekenen dan je zult bevatten.”
(38)	“Tijdens een kerkelijk jaar kweek je symbolische, symbool-bewuste spieren.”

Appendix C - Interview format

In the left column I highlight the themes that follow from the structure of this thesis; this column also serves as a preliminary 'analysis chart' (deductive coding frame). In the right column I have added the questions that return in the transcripts of the interviews. As I conducted semi-structured interviews, the following order of the questions differs in each interview.

GENERAL BACKGROUND CONVICTIONS	
THEMES	**RIKKO VOORBERG & JAN HUIJGEN**
Personal motivation	Throughout the interview I hope to discover underlying 'motives' for the pioneer's initiative → *what is the 'trigger' for the pioneer's focus?*
Apologetics • Check similarities/differences with respect to description in introductory chapter. • Check similarities/differences with respect to three approaches (chapter 2).	1) What is your association with the word apologetics? How would you define the term?
Resilience, transition • Check if relevance of practical aim is recognized/denied. • Check if the four reasons (see introductory chapter) return in answers of respondents: *observation in my church – speechlessness - collective memory - spiritual journey ('pilgrims') and/or if other factors are brought forward.*	2) With my thesis I hope to contribute to missionary 'resilience'. I start from the observation that people have grown tired of words when it comes to defending their faith, and increasingly focus on practices and 'doing' as a way of demonstrating their faith. Do you recognize this observation and if so, would you reflect on that?
Faith-science relation • Check 'convictions' (chapter 1): *revaluation - consilience - tolerance*. Overlap with: **knowledge, knowledge creation**	3) Religious beliefs are often compared to sciences, or with some scientific 'norm'. What developments do you see when it comes to the faith-science relationship?
Knowledge • Check 'response' to current changes (chapter 1): *uncertainty - not generally accepted - deaf ears - theological schizophrenia*. **Knowledge creation** • Check theory Meek: *subsidiary-focal integration*. Overlap with: **faith-science relation**	5) Would you share a bit more about this view on knowledge and knowledge development?

THEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND CONVICTIONS		
THEMES	**RIKKO VOORBERG**	**JAN HUIJGEN**
Theology (' implicit focus') • 'Implicit theology': focus in interviews is apologetics and processes of coming to know. • Check similarities/differences with Meek's theory (chapter 3). Covenant epistemology incorporates: a. *creation – covenant – incarnation – communion;* b. *world (situational) – body (existential) – words (normative).*	6) In your book *Onzeker Weten* you seem to focus primarily on the actions and performance of Jesus during his time on earth, and less on, for example, creation, the trinity, his ascension. Am I correct in my observation, and if so, could you explain this focus on the 'embodied' Jesus?	6) In the flyer about the Nature Observatory, you have included the poem Burning Bush by Elizabeth Barret Browning. What is the significance of this poem for you?
The role of Jesus • Check what specific aspect do the pioneers bring forward about the 'meaning' of Jesus?	6) In your recent book you write that you have difficulty to relate to the sentence: 'Jesus died for my sins'. Could you say a little more about that?	8) What is the meaning of Jesus in your pioneer dream? Could you elaborate on that a bit more? ➢ *Follows up on answer question 5.*
Metonomously personal • Check theory Meek: coming to know as a *responsive, transformational process, covenantal patterns (chapter 3).*	7) For my thesis, I read Esther Lightcap Meek, who develops a view on epistemology that starts from the covenant. She concludes that our reality, and thus our knowledge creation, is 'metonomously personal'? What is your response to this?	
Liturgy • Check whether the respondent bring forward the 'implicit understandings' Wolterstorff highlights (chapter 4).	8) For my thesis, I also read a book by Wolterstorff on liturgy. In your new book, you write: 'All around us is liturgy'. Could you explain a bit more what you mean by 'liturgy'?	3) For my thesis, I read Nicholas Wolterstorff's book about liturgical theology. Could you explain a bit more what you mean by 'liturgy'? ➢ *Follows up on answer question 2, spontaneous use of "my liturgy".*
Normativity • Check theory Wolterstorff: authority of liturgical tradition (chapter 4).	4) Does this also mean that what we learn from this exploration may have a 'normative' status and can influence, for example, our systematic theology? ➢ Follows up on answer to question 3.	9) Do you believe that 'embodied knowing' (what people learn by participating, for example, in a liturgy) may have a 'normative status'?

Appendix D - Interview Jan Huijgen

Jan Huijgen is a farmer and philosopher and since 1993 owner of the *Eemlandhoeve*[461], an organic farm and Inspiratiehuys (Inspiration House) in Bunschoten-Spakenburg. We talk about the realization of his dream to build a 'silence chapel' on his farmland. He recently received the building permissions for the *Nature Observatory* – the formal name under which this dream will be realized. Thirty years of thinking, hoping, searching, and lobbying preceded this moment. The *Nature Observatory* will be build in 2023.

During a conversation in Africa in 2015 with an African woman who had suffered deeply, Jan suddenly realized he had become addicted to his ratio, his cognitive knowledge. "All my rational certainties fell away". This confrontation led him to a spiritual, inward journey, an exploration and discovery of his heart and soul. By building a chapel, he gives expression to his longing to create an 'oasis of peace', and his concurrent desire to help others to feel 'grounded' again. Additionally, he hopes to hold up a mirror to 'earthlings' regarding prevailing materialistic and rationalistic powers in our Western culture.

Figure 4 Eemlandhoeve and the island for the *Nature Observatory* (upper right corner)

Figure 5 Nature Observatory | Chapel Eemlandhoeve

[461] For more information, see https://www.eemlandhoeve.nl/ (only in Dutch).

1) What is your association with the word apologetics? How would you define the term?

"First, it evokes associations with the early church during the Roman era. Christians were perceived as a 'sectarian club' and had to defend themselves against the mainstream culture. In later times, specifically during the Enlightenment, Christians also had to defend themselves according to prevailing beliefs. Apologists have traditionally adapted their language to the standards of their time. The Church Fathers also sought and found language to articulate their beliefs and convictions, in a language that was fitting for their time.

Today, we are once again entering a time where we have to find new language. Most people in our society do no longer know who God is, what the message of Jesus was, or how Christianity works. We have to find new ways to enter into a conversation. Apologetic approaches can be defensive or offensive. They can take scientific arguments as a starting point or arise from a more social repertoire, or from actions, experiences, or practices. For example, when you start from the question whether you are 'crazy' if you believe, you take a psychological approach. In our Dutch society, the Christian faith is often seen as something that does not correspond with what we consider 'normal'. It requires conscious, considerate, and even playful attitudes to respond, to deal with such convictions. Often the approach or conviction of the other, determines your response – you may feel like 'being drawn into' the argumentative structure of the other. Instead, you may also say: this is a specific 'frame', a way of talking, of characterizing. You can contrast that with another frame. For example, you can try to turn the conversation around and start to explain from you 'heart' why your faith is important to you, what it means to you (quote Blaise Pascal: 'the heart has its reasons, which reason does not know'). I will give you two examples of how I try to do this in my own life:

- In the farming industry, it is often about more, bigger and better. My neighbor - who is also a farmer - and I have completely different farms and quite different ideas about farming. I have started to organize excursions where we invite people to visit and compare both our farms.[462] Such excursions presuppose mental openness for differences, maintaining moral respect, not 'attacking' each other. To me, such encounters even have a 'liturgical' dimension. I am a Christian. When I go to church, I must keep quiet, be still, wait. It is only when I can accept the 'not-knowing' of faith, I can become receptive to receive - as a 'gift' - what God has to say to me, what he wants me to do. That is my apologetics. The ritual of going to church is a practice to learn receptivity, a place where I learn to live with 'uncertainty' in the midst of all that happens within our society.
- Another example is that I developed a new concept of 'Food culture'. All religions have spice laws; I hope to educate people about food, environment, agriculture, and health. I have called this program FOLLOW.[463] Anyone with a Christian background will recognize the Christian concept of 'following Jesus' in this word. I try to keep my three worlds together: the social , the moral, and the liturgical, and to look for new language to connect them."
  Addition JH: I also organize practices which people can join: sharing meals, telling narratives, re-connecting people – key elements of Christian community life.

[462] For more information, see https://www.eemlandhoeve.nl/portfolio/excursie-grootste-en-breedste-boer/ (only in Dutch, also in Englisch available).
[463] In Dutch the name of this program is VOLG, an acronym based on the words **v**oedsel (food), **o**mgeving (environment), **l**andbouw (agriculture), and **g**ezondheid (health).

2) With my thesis I hope to contribute to missionary 'resilience'. I start from the observation that people have grown tired of words when it comes to defending their faith, and increasingly focus on practices, on 'doing' as a way of demonstrating their faith. Do you recognize this observation and if so, would you reflect on that?

"Karl Rahner wrote, "the Christian of the future is a mystical Christian, or no Christian at all". In this quote you already notice something of the discovery that we have been deeply influenced by the Enlightenment and its strong emphasis on rationality. If we always focus on the cognitive, the rational, this will turn us into 'cold' people who eventually dwindle, because we are not seen in our full humanity. As a result, I can imagine that Christians display the tendency to say: "Enough is enough. I want to show my faith in action, in being, in doing." At the same time, however, this requires that you know what you stand for, what you believe. Today, however, more people start to face their own doubts: "What do I actually believe?" or "Why believe anyway?" If this happens, a kind of 'existential doubt' arises. If you are not sure about what you believe yourself, yet at the same time feel you must be able to rationally defend your convictions, you have 'no leg to stand on'.

Postmodernism is a departure from the Enlightenment, through its discovery that reason is limited. We are rediscovering the value of our bodies - also neurologically, physiological and hormonal – the living body. Many of our physical reactions cannot be explained rationally. Rational 'securities' we have long taken for granted, are gradually falling away. In the church I still experience a lack of attention for the importance of our bodies, our experiences. In our society, if you have questions about the psychological dimension of being human, you go to a psychologist, not to a pastor or a church. I believe this is a missed opportunity. Calvin already emphasized that self-knowledge and knowledge of God belong together. We cannot have theology without anthropology. In my opinion, you cannot 'incarnate' if you disconnect these areas; it makes the 'inward journey' impossible and you lose a very characteristic way of how God works in our lives: through experiences, emotions, relations. If we disconnect theology and anthropology and even cosmology, the focus on and understanding of your task in this world - our 'sense of calling' – gets lost. If this happens, while – at the same time - you realize that people consider Christians to be 'a crazy kind' in this world, this can be paralyzing.

Addition JH: I see three journeys: inward, outward, upward – and with this: downward – incarnate on the place where you have been called.

In a certain way my farm - and my approach to farming - is a way of creating a domain of my own to deal with this complexity. I have created a space where I can 'live' (show) and 'explain' (tell) very concretely what my 'liturgy' is in the middle of this world. I think that finding such a concrete form or 'expression' helps non-Christians to understand what I aim for, what I hope for, from what underlying convictions of beliefs I do what I do. I have thought a lot about what Jesus did; as a farmer I was moved by his 'peasant and fisherman' stories. Jesus walked around with a dream about the kingdom. Through his words and deed, He illustrated what the Gospel is about, but people thought He was crazy. Thirty years ago, I also walked around with a dream. In the church where I used to belong to, and in my own village community, that dream was not understood, nor accepted. I have had to exercise a lot of patience in my life..."

THE DREAM OF JAN HUIJGEN

"Today the existing powers are founded on money, greed and power. A new form of slavery is being imposed on ordinary people (…) who have become dependent on the entertainment industry. I am deeply disturbed by the lack of moral compass in our contemporary society; something the monasteries offered in the past. No one champions the moral codes now, challenging the super-powers and 'holding up a mirror'."[464]

- *"I would like to create new oases in this moral wilderness with high ethical standards and an active role for the Christian faith. With these oases, I want to challenge the super-powers in a way that is appropriate for our time. I am also hoping to create new links with businesses and organizations via the global network of the Internet in order to witness about God's power, which is a real and present healing power. Is the time right to let this vision grow? Can these visions be shared?"*[465]

3) For my thesis, I read Nicholas Wolterstorff's book about liturgical theology. Could you explain a bit more what you mean by 'liturgy'?

"For me, liturgy is serving God. In ancient Roman culture, liturgy stood for the public service to the ruler. The term was adopted by the church in later times, but originally came from the *saeculum*. Today, it is a concept that people identify with a church service. I want to bring this concept back into the world – the *saeculum* - to hold up a mirror to people and to make them think about who or what they serve. Who or what have they become dependent on? I believe we live in 'occupied' territory, we can see oppressive, damaging forces at work. We need new rituals to learn how to respond differently, to reflect on what is happening with us, or around us. I see such rituals as a liturgical dimension in all encounters: it is about a 'way of life', about finding 'open space', about being - or becoming - receptive again, about living with 'not-knowing', surrendering, letting go of structures that may 'imprison' or captivate us. I want to create new spaces - 'oases' - where we can learn this. Therefore, based on the dream I had thirty years ago, I created an island on my territory twenty years ago – and now this dream is finally going to be realized! For me, liturgy is 'receptive openness'.

Not so long ago I was allowed to give a lecture at the Protestant Church of Bunschoten-Spakenburg. I talked about 'dreaming' and asked if anyone ever took his or her dreams seriously. People responded with an open mind and I got reactions that deeply moved me. People are searching, they are becoming increasingly open to the experiential … Five years ago, positive reactions like this, would not have been possible. The uncertainty of the present time, creates new opportunities."

4) What developments do you see when it comes to the faith-science relationship?

"People are increasingly exploring the limits of knowing. True scientists always did realize the limits of knowledge; they were aware of their choices, presuppositions, constructions. I have read all Tomáš Halík's books. He manages to find religious language to respond to secular questions, especially for agnostics and those who believe in an unspecified 'something', and sometimes also for the atheists of our time. He manages to have open and innovative conversations. I consider him a contemporary apologist. I also see that in Erik Borgman, or Kees van Ekris.

Myself, I have chosen deliberately to read about social discourse, from a desire to relate faith and theology, or discussions about faith and science, to societal developments. I try to do that with the receptivity of a child, but also through learning from the narratives Jesus used when he entered

[464] Stijn Postema en Tjirk van der Ziel (editors). *Cityside oasis or how to bridge the gap between city and countryside* (Eemlandhoeve, 2008), 16.
[465] Ibid.

conversations and confrontations in the society of his days. At the Floriade Expo[466], Jos Bregman had placed a cross made of compost. He had 'hacked' the cross as a Christian symbol and re-used it as a symbol with a non-Christian interpretation: a 'gospel of compost'. I now have that 'compost cross' on the island where the Nature Observatory will be built. In turn, I want to re-use it as a symbol for conversations about the 'dying' of our ego-structures through a story of how nature works (e.g., the 'transformation process' by fungi and bacteria, creating fertile compost out of 'dead' material)."
Addition Jan Huijgen: The symbol of the compost cross can be an illustration of the re-birth for a new fruitful life – not only natural, but also personal transformation process – creation and re-creation together.

5) What associations do you have with the term 'knowledge'?

"I have always had a deep-felt urge, a longing for knowledge, for books. I love to read. But there was a time when I became addicted to thinking and studying. I decided to stop reading for a certain time. To overcome my reading addiction, I started to 'color by number'. Now, I can read again with an open mind. I still have a deep longing to know: to understand society and the world, to understand myself, to learn about God. It is about those three dimensions that I read: sociology (or: cosmology), anthropology and theology. I believe it is important to hold these three dimensions together, as they allow us to look at the whole of our being in this world. Being human is not just about our cognition. Integrating those three dimensions gives depth to my knowing, my understanding. I keep my knowledge about these three dimensions up to date. About society and trending issues. About human beings, their physicality, their trauma's, their relationships. And about religion and theology. In Jonathan Sacks' commentaries, these perspectives are brought together in a beautiful way. For example when he writes about Joseph, someone with a dream and leading capacities. Josef was falsely accused and thrown out of the system, became imprisoned, until the Pharaoh got a dream about the food supplies. Joseph was appointed to realize this dream. How impressive to read about the deep emotional pain Joseph felt when seeing his family again when he was viceroy of Egypt. "What pain!" Yet, God had something bigger in mind. An *ex-hodos* - a way out. I try to translate stories like these into today's tasks and responsibilities and to connect perspectives about humanity, God, and society.

I came from a strict Reformed tradition, with a very structured ministerial reality. Through Romano Guardini's wonderful book *The Lord*, I learned about the 'human reality of the Lord', about Jesus' life and suffering. During his life, Jesus faced resistance - his work was not a *linea recta*. Jesus did not walk away from the pain. He went straight through the depths of darkness - the way of suffering and dying. I am learning much from 'mystics', for example *The Dark Night of the Soul* by Saint John of the Cross, who was a Catholic priest and mystic. For a long time, my reading was determined by all the theological constructs in my head, but now I read again with an open mind. The 'human reality of the Lord' ... that sentence touches me deeply, beyond my ability of reason. We *need* to be connected to our bodily experiences: 'the body keeps the score' of our past, of our trauma's. When I celebrate the Holy Communion in church, chewing the bread, I literally 'grind' the bread – it gets pulverized. Am I willing to let go of my own 'ego structures' in a comparable way – am I willing to imitate Christ, even when my ego gets 'pulverized' in the process of following him?"

[466] For more information: see https://floriade.com/en/.

How do believe we create knowledge? How does 'knowledge creation' work?

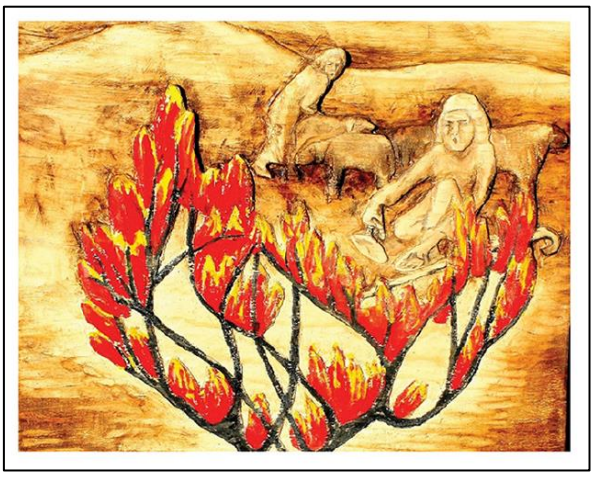
"Where is knowledge created? There is something empirical in knowledge. I read a lot. However, what I choose to read, always follows from an encounter, from the 'disruptiveness' of the world, from developments I cannot foresee. My reading is a form of responsiveness to the empirical reality. What I experience in my ordinary life, is deepened by the theory I read. In the encounters, there is often a form of surprise, amazement, receptivity - which then begins to form a starting point. It helps me to deepen that with a theoretical component, yet the primary starting point follows from where I am in my life, from the practices of my existence. This can be a diversity of practices, a variety of situations where questions arise. So, knowledge starts with wonder, a question, a puzzle ...

For example, I fought a 'mental battle' with my mother in my childhood. What happened? What does that experience tell me about who I am? Why did I react the way I did? With this type of questions I turn to psychology. My reading and studying thus follows from the primary, naive world of experience. I actively participate in our society; I meet lots of people. That is where the questions arise. Reflection or abstraction is a next step, another level. I am very eager to learn and to acquire knowledge. If knowledge is allowed to mature, to reach a form of integration, it generates something of authority – a foundation or substantiation, that I can take back to the original experience, to come to better or deeper understanding. It works as a 'deepening frame': theoretical knowledge becomes an eye-opener. So, there is a certain 'organic' movement in learning; from concrete situations, I start reading, ruminating, processing. And what I have learned, I take back into the practices of my life."
Addition JH: At the moment we experience the levels of: data, information, (abstract) knowledge very strong, but next 'levels' are: *insight* and then the ultimate *wisdom*. Biblical knowledge has the high level of insight and wisdom – we need to recognize these levels of deeper knowledge in our short term living data, information and (abstract) knowledge.

6) In the flyer about the Nature Observatory, you have included the poem *Burning Bush* by Elizabeth Barret Browning. What is the significance of this poem for you?

"I am a farmer. I see the wonder, the power of creation, constantly around me. For example, at the birth of a calf, or when the cows 'dance' into the fields in spring. I see beauty in the character of the animals, whether they are stubborn, or brave, or fearful. My wife often says that for her, there need not be a roof on the silence chapel. She experiences God's presence very strongly in nature.

I can imagine Moses walking around, discouraged, having been a shepherd in the desert for forty years, constantly knowing his people are still struggling in Egypt. Forty years of patience! That must have been a process of maturing, an intense time of training. I can imagine he was deeply impressed by a burning, flowering bush, so full of glory. Calvin called nature 'the theater of the glory of God'. I believe that this moment, the encounter of Moses with God in nature, brought together human knowledge, cosmology, and knowledge of God in an astonishing way. At that moment, God told Moses the time had come to act. The divine, the secular, and the profoundly human came together.



Burning Bush[467]
"Earth's crammed with heaven,
and every common bush afire with God,
but only he who sees takes off his shoes;
the rest sit round and pluck blackberries."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861)
From: Aurora Leigh, Book Seven (1856)

I used to think that I had to reform the church, but I was kicked out. I had to learn a different way, learn to persevere, learn to exercise patience. When you experience the reality of God like Moses did - the *kabod YHWH*: God's transcendent holiness - as an almost physical experience, a real and overwhelming power, language falls short … Sometimes language just stops.

The reality of creation is also the place of God's presence. Imagine yourself being Moses, imagine his 'soul'. Moses experiences God's presence from his specific context: his family background, his culture, the structures in which he grew up. God comes to Moses and touches him in the state of his 'soul' – his state of being – of that specific moment, a *Kairos* moment. We have pulled apart cosmology, anthropology, theology ... yet in this poem we see how God's presence in creation, and in Moses, and God's involvement in our worldly reality come together."

7) What is the meaning of Jesus in your pioneer dream (see answer question 5)? Could you elaborate on that a bit more?

"What I find especially inspiring about Jesus, is his way of life and his parables. He tells 'tailor-made stories', peasant-stories (for example, about a grain of wheat, or a lost sheep), stories with which he relates to people's daily lives at that time. While doing so, he was aware of other 'forces' determining the playing field. Tom Wright describes how the religious elite felt threatened by Jesus. Jesus undermined the religious system and was going against political agreements made with the Roman regime. In that 'zeitgeist', Jesus tells the story of the kingdom of God - in such a way, that it touches people's hearts, inspires them, puts them back in control by asking: who or what do you serve?

What a power play there is in the handling of money in our times! What daunting, radicalizing powers are to be found in our systems and structures! It can 'crush' people. So, how can we, today, present something of that joyful story of the Gospel - the good news of the kingdom? In dealing with these questions, the person of Jesus is particularly important to me, his 'human reality'. How did he deal with comparable questions in a context that did not understand him? How did he tell his good news to those around him? He did not engage in direct confrontation. He went first to Galilee, his own territory. So, I first built my farm, here, sheltered behind a row of large trees. I stayed in the shadows, literally and figuratively. At the same time, however, I started developing ideas, trying to

[467] Internal publication Eemlandhoeve ©; English translation downloaded from https://quotepark.com/quotes/823575.

think creatively, looking ahead. I have gone back to the sources of my faith - my foundation - from which I draw courage and strength. That is why I personally long for the 'chapel of silence' to be built: to create a place to find rest and to constantly remind myself that He who is with me, is stronger. That is faith: staying close to the source. God will provide strength, and language.

In Jesus' death on the cross - in the midst of the powers of evil - he persevered by faith. There was really something at stake. He did not allow himself to be intimidated, he remained obedient to his calling. The Son of God truly died, he overcame evil, broke the intimidating powers. As a result, we can find to power to trust, find joy and abundance. Death no longer keeps us captive – Jesus fulfilled everything. For me it remains a mystery that I cannot fully grasp. This is why I practice the liturgy: the sacramental, the sacred, a practice of reverence. It is too big for me. I have encountered only a little bit of it: if I am prepared to follow him, even through suffering, I may also share in His glory. I often experience what I do – my work as a farmer-philosopher – as a lonely road. However, often I also realize: what blessing! I may not be the richest farmer, but I certainly am the most blessed. Although, at times, it remains difficult to accept and see the good..."

A sense of hope

"So, apart from renewing or re-establishing the connection with nature, self, and God, I hope that building the *NatureObservatory* will contribute to offering younger generations a 'sense of hope'. Many people in our time are anxious and faced with uncertainty. I want to create an 'oasis' where they can reconnect with themselves, with God and with the world. A place to gain new insight, new perspectives. I am in touch with several monasteries that have a similar desire. Sometimes, I see myself as a kind of Jeremiah, who support the Jewish people of Babylon: buy fields, plough it and live from it -- even though circumstances seemed unfavorable. Especially in a restless, fearful, uncertain world, I long to offer hope and confidence by holding up a mirror to people that things can be different."

Addition JH: I even bought my farming neighbor for building the Mansholtcampus.nl – in such a difficult times for restoring our Regional Food Culture.

8) For my thesis, I also read Esther Lightcap Meek, who develops a view on epistemology that starts from the covenant. She concludes that our reality, and thus our knowledge creation, is 'metonomously personal'? What is your response to this?

"If you pull apart the three dimensions I mentioned: the existential, the anthropological and the transcendent, they may run the risk of becoming abstractions. I have to think of my cows, how they communicate with me. Once, I was cooperating with a group of farmers to get our one-year-old calves into a barn. We did not exchange a word among ourselves; each farmer knew exactly what he had to do and how our calves would respond. That is a level of communication without words; a knowing, an understanding, a form of being to which the animals 'resonate'. I consider that is quite similar to the beauty in the poem of the *Burning bush* (see question 7). "The earth is brimming with heaven" ... God is intimately present. Sometimes, He is so eloquent - for example through a rainbow, or for Moses in the burning bush. I cannot ignore that presence. Those moments are transcendent *and* immanent experiences at the same time and last a lifetime. The communication style of God is so much broader than what we have made of it. "At night, my kidneys teach me", teach the Psalms. That too, is a way of being (an ontology as well as an anthropology) that resonates with how God works. He is much more intimately and delicately present than we often think: a 'presence' in a

'sacramental' world. Our rationality has taken away the ability of looking at reality with a receptive, sacramental approach. A song by *Sela* articulates the different dimension: God is a hidden presence, unmentionably present, breathtaking, and movingly nearby.[468] That's not 'ratio' language, is it?"
Addition JH: It is experiential, covenantal, living body speech without words - expressed in rituals, narratives, prayers in a communal liturgical setting.

9) Do you believe that 'embodied knowing' (what people learn by participating, for example, in a liturgy) may have a 'normative status'?

"In our society, our mind is constantly occupied – 'possessed'. The liturgical space, practicing silence, receptivity, 'not-knowing' ... we are in tremendous need of such practices at this time – as a kind of 'moral compass'. We have largely lost the ability to listen and to be 'present'. We need places to learn and practice that again: patience, presence, vulnerability, long-term perspectives to accompany the many short-term choices we have to make. People struggle and stumble, are spiritually 'hungry'. We often try to push 'pain' away from our lives. I believe it is incredibly important to reshape the liturgical space - a liturgical, monastic place where heaven touches earth. A place where earthly, personal, social desires and the heavenly gifts of God - his 'abundance' – can come together. A Dutch song that articulates my desire for the church community, is: *Dit huis, Een herberg onderweg* (in English: 'May this house be a refuge on the way'[469])."

[468] Own translation. Original Dutch text: verborgen aanwezig, onnoembaar aanwezig, adembenemend, ontroerend dichtbij. See also: https://www.sela.nl/liederen/103/ik-zal-er-zijn.html (in Dutch only).
[469] See also: https://www.kerkbladvoorhetnoorden.nl/index.php/2990-dit-huis-een-herberg-onderweg (in Dutch only).

Appendix E - Interview Rikko Voorberg

Rikko Voorberg is a theologian and founder of the PopUp Church in Amsterdam, where he has been actively involved since it was founded in 2013. Rikko searches for creative and innovative ways to make Christians and non-Christians think about the meaning and consequences of the Christian faith in a secular society. He is one of the authors of a book on radical theology[470] and one of the founders of Platform Thomas[471], an online forum on radical theology.

1) What is your association with the word apologetics? How would you define the term?

"Apologetics has become a 'defense'. I think this is problematic. If you defend something, you are no longer open to learning. There is a risk there. My father was - like me - educated at the Theological University in Kampen. Sometimes, he summarized his education in one single phrase: 'Why our story is right'. I do not believe it works that way; it should not work that way. It is not fair, nor interesting to face the world from that starting point, especially not if you consider all the criticism on the church and on classical forms of theology that Christians faced over the past decades. If you choose to defend, you end up in warfare. I am convinced that if you believe that God has made this world, the criticism has something to offer, a 'new' gospel to discover together."

Does this mean that you see apologetics primarily as a 'defense'?

"That is a common definition, which I think is also still the most familiar one: apologetics as refutation, or systematic argumentation. Personally, Francis Spufford's approach in *Unapologetic* appeals to me. For me, apologetics involves all forms of interaction with people who are absolutely not convinced of the meaningfulness of the Christian story. The interaction is what makes it beautiful and exciting. Listening to dissenting voices, from the assumption that the God you seek speaks through critique on your own story - that seems to me to be a good Christian starting point. In the Bible, the religious community is constantly criticized by prophets and preachers, and not in the least by Jesus himself. The hope of the church lies in this critique on our own, human functioning. This is a central theme in the Bible; I believe this theme of criticism, is why the bible has become a holy book."

[470] Rikko Voorberg, Gerko Tempelman, and Bram Kalkman, *Onzeker Weten. Een inleiding in de radicale theologie* (Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum, 2022). Not available in English (translation of the title: *Uncertain knowing. An introduction in radical theology*).
[471] An online Dutch forum on radical theology, see also https://www.platformthomas.org/.

2) With my thesis I hope to contribute to missionary 'resilience'. I start from the observation that people have grown tired of words when it comes to defending their faith, and increasingly focus on practices and 'doing' as a way of demonstrating their faith. Do you recognize this observation and if so, would you reflect on that?

"Absolutely! I think this has been going on for years. I can imagine this is one of the reasons why people appreciate my and our work within the Christian world. We need new forms of formation and education. For me, this has everything to do with our credibility as Christians. The search for THE truth is no longer the most relevant, because many no longer believe in claims of truth or authority. Therefore, we need something else. The search for new forms and practices is about discovering value and worthwhileness. If we succeed to bring our Christian beliefs and practices and practices of our daily life together, we may discover credibility in and through the process."

3) Religious beliefs are often compared to sciences, or with some scientific 'norm'. What developments do you see when it comes to the faith-science relationship?

"It is interesting when you put it that way: comparing to sciences. This very much depends on how you look at science. It is my view there are many sciences that are not directly rational factual, empirical, or mathematical. For example, theology, philosophy, or theatrical science. For the Christian faith, for a long time a degree of 'scientism' was sought, a kind of rational deduction from an overarching scientific framework. All kinds of things are happening right now in our culture. We are dealing with an increasing degree of individualization, and the emergence of a culture of emotion. Both have huge impact on how we believe. We no longer say, 'This is how it is', or 'this is the foundation of the system'. The big stories have had their day; in our present time the small stories are a decisive for trustworthiness and form an important factor for whether we want to listen to someone or not. It is no longer about a 'total' or overarching argument. Knowledge has become fragmentary. I believe this fragmentation matches well with what the Bible offers; our current times may lead to rediscovering our own traditions. The Bible is extremely fragmentary (a collection of letters, poetry, gospels), which is especially good for postmodern reading. Within the Christian tradition, however, many still work from a 'closed system', or a 'fixed mindset'."

Could you give an example of that?

"I want to be careful with interpreting, yet I encounter this sometimes in how people react to what I do in the PopUp Church. A lot of people that come to our community, had no direct interest in believing, or came to us precisely because we do not focus on fixed structures, beliefs, or dogma's. We believe that – based on what happens in our culture - existing dogmas can no longer be taken or defended as a common point of reference. Instead, we try to find new meaning in the Christian heritage of texts and dogma's by turning them inside out or upside down (as our logo points to). We have turned the existing inside out and mainly: upside down. Knowledge and certainty are no longer leading; the unknowing and the outsiders are leading the way to a new way of organizing and interpreting the formerly 'untouchable'. We love to explore the meaning of Christian concepts and have – half joking – replaced the dogmas in our church with dogma's that are not systemizing content but systemizing form: 'in a PopUp Church everything that happens is centered around a table set for dinner' – that is truly a dogma in our church.

For example, I once got into a conversation with a woman attending the PopUp Church who said, 'I get what you're doing, but can't we at least say that Jesus is the son of God?' I could not do anything

else than reply with asking: ‘What does it mean to say this? Is it about a political meaning, or a statement about the dogma of the Trinity – and what does this dogma mean to you? Or are we talking about a Mother and Father God that have begotten a Son – if so, then we are in a whole other conversation? This was not an easy exchange, as through our discussion we lost our ‘connection’, the feeling that we were, despite all new approaches, people ‘on the same side’. Often, what connects people in the church is based on theologically dogmatic convictions. We, together, believe at least this or that. In my opinion, this should not be the basis of a community: that you feel at home somewhere because what is happening 'fits' your own opinions. Then, connection follows from recognition in beliefs and dogmas, not from our shared experience of being human in a sometimes difficult world, longing for justice or something that is worthwhile.

Is a dogma a 'non-questionable premise' that we put on the wall in a gold frame? Is doing Christian things about ‘doing good things to other people’ together within that frame? Or is dogma ‘research material’? In the second case, you explore together the contents of dogmas or Christian texts and ideas: how to understand it, how to turn it inside out and upside down – the main question always is: do we need this line, this idea, or can we do without? A great inspiration for us has been the quote of Rowan Williams: ‘The church should connect people at the level of their hunger for a new world’. In that light we try to dig deep in all the material at hand: dogma’s text, images. I believe we get a better understanding of a dogma when we start working with it, practicing with the material, rather than putting it in a showcase; a ‘museum approach’. In my opinion, we need to learn a different way of finding the power of the content of a dogma. This is what I learn from theater makers and artists.

When a psychologist or coach talks about marriage, he strives to provide guidance for a good marriage. If a playwright only puts the image of a ‘good marriage’ on stage, everything goes wrong. We fall asleep! A playwright trusts that if you put the pain on stage - what can go wrong - the audience may be healed or transformed. By going there where no one goes (the pain), healing and new language is created to take people away from the places they do not want to be, from where they got stuck in their lives. Do we ‘showcase’ the pain, the impossibility, the dark – or the light and the hope and the way-to-go.

My point is not that one approach is better than the other. They can coexist. You can only criticize an existing something - a concept, theory, a phenomenon - if others hold on to it. In other words, examining the dogma can only take place because others preserve and guard the dogma. The critic, the investigator, the ‘uncertain-maker’ needs the existing dogma, but this is also true the other way around.”

4) Does this also mean that what we learn from this exploration may have a ‘normative’ status and can influence, for example, our systematic theology?

“Yes, it should! I greatly appreciate Ben Witherington III's books on baptism and the Lord's Supper.[472] His exegesis takes into account the social context and he explains that when symbols change, doctrine changes alongside. An important moment in history that illustrates this, is when Christians no longer organized their gatherings in their own homes but started to create a special building for their meetings. That development arose from purely practical considerations but led to a change in

[472] Ben Witherington III, *Making a Meal of It: Rethinking the Theology of the Lord's Supper* (2007); *Troubled Waters: Rethinking the Theology of Baptism* (2010).

doctrine. This is how practice works. You can compare it to how we deal with LGBTQ+: the moment we personally know people who are queer or gay, we respond differently, compared to when we do not have this personal experience. Often, we feel a reluctance to let people – or: 'subjective human experience' - determine what the doctrine should be, but in practice this is exactly how it works.

With my father, I have exegetical, hermeneutical conversations about whether the Bible is its own interpreter. Originally, the idea was that the Bible must be explained by other Bible passages, contextual material is interesting but cannot be decisive: Sola Scriptura. After reading N.T. Wright, I think it may be just the other way around: the Bible is relevant insofar it *differs* from similar texts that were produced at the same time and context. For example, Wright analyzes Paul's letter to Philemon about the runaway slave Onesimus. He compares Paul's letter to a similar letter someone else wrote about a runaway slave. These letters show minor differences; yet it is precisely in those differences where the heart of the message is found. Also consider the creation story: the major difference from the story in Genesis is that God created the world out of love. Other creation stories, on the contrary, are about struggle and contest. So, the criticism that comes to us from the Bible – the critique that holds up a mirror – often originates in those points of difference. Perhaps this is a far-reaching statement about how we learn and discover: it does not start with the text, but with the context."

5) Would you share a bit more about this view on knowledge and knowledge development?

"I have learned about 'embodied learning' from artists and theater producers in particular. They know things, and possess certain knowledge, but what they know is not considered to be the most relevant or interesting. After all, what you already know is boring. What do you *not* yet know? That is where the inquiry into learning, making, and creating begins. Let us say, for example, that you discover: 'I believe that God exists, yet I see so many bad things happening in the world'. I believe that we should not try to solve that felt 'discrepancy', but this is where we find a source for learning. The 'not knowing' or 'not understanding', is exactly where everything interesting starts.

I remember I once had a discussion with my father about preaching. We talked about what you hope to bring or communicate when you preach. He is a type of preacher that says: 'You bring what you *know*. Working out your doubts and questions, is what you do in you study room'. He said: 'What I do not know, I leave behind in my study room when I preach'. I replied to him by stating: "What you leave behind, *that* is the Gospel'. I deeply believe that, although it was a bit of a 'teenager way' to put it to him that way. This means that I also need a very different approach to knowledge. For me, knowledge does not start with *solving* a problem, but with *entering* into a problem.

I will give you an example. Biblical knowledge, I believe, is a form knowledge that also involves our senses. It is not just about your what is in your head, but also about your body. I remember a friend asking me a year back whether we could create a place for mourning in the public square. She asked this question because her baby had died only two days after she gave birth. You may write beautiful things about grief, but the quickest way to learn is to make a physical place for grieving. I first suggested to build something like a 'grief wall', but we realized that this wouldn't give enough safety. Finding a suitable form that would enable people to express their grief, required a process of mutual learning for her and me. It is only when you begin to create, you discover what aspects are important. For example, she explicitly told me: 'Do not tell people that this will be comforting'.

Initially, that seemed to go against all I had been taught as a pastor. We are trained to provide comfort. From her, I learned that she actually needed people who would stop comforting through well-intended words. By looking for a different form to express her grieving, pieces began to fall into place. In such a creative process, pieces of theoretical knowledge, things you have experienced, things you have taught yourself - everything comes together while simultaneously you create something new from there.

Another example. If people are tired of praying, I believe that the norm ‘you must pray’ is not helpful. In fact, it deprives people of the opportunity to learn. It is more important to discover what we can learn – how we can become enriched - by dwelling *on* and *in* the experience itself and discover why someone has grown tired of prayer, and how we may find new ways that incorporate both the unwillingness to prayer and the longing for prayer, for both are present in people that are weary of prayer and come to a pastor to say so.

In the church, we are not yet used to an approach like that. In schools, however, this approach to learning is quite normal: teachers act primarily as coaches. Students must figure things out on their own, work together in groups, co-operate. The teacher guides the process, instead of transferring knowledge through a monologue that you must reproduce during a test.

I think the reason we do not yet do this in church, is partly because of habits we developed, habits that we have become normal to us at an existential level. We have learned, for example, that you must have something to say. Maybe this is also evolutionary, the urge to solve something. However, nearness, being there for another, is a more basic human need. We want to be noticed. To *see* someone, only requires to really *look* at someone. When I wanted to help in refugee situations, I discovered that sometimes the 'wanting to help’ became the problem; it contributed to maintaining a system. Unintendedly, you became part of unhealthy structures. Later, therefore, I deliberately and literally visited refugees 'empty-handed'. That was the total opposite of what I had been taught: 'You do not go on a visit ‘empty-handed'. However, when that becomes a norm, then – at least in my personal experience - true knowledge arises by doing the opposite. Sometimes it is only after you have done or tried something, that you begin to understand. That goes against the Dutch conception of ‘usefulness’, and perhaps even against the western ‘soul’.

Theology and the arts can make a powerful combination – not in the way that a theologian in his or her study finds out ‘truths’ by an analytical approach and then ‘raids the world of the arts for a quick illustration of this preconceived idea’ (Malcom Guite). Instead, for a fruitful interaction, the theologian should pause her or his beliefs and join the artist in the process of making of writing. After this process important notions will stand unshaken, but other ones are shaken of gone. So, in StroomWest we invited our visitors always on the theater floor, to immerse them in an experience that might result in new insights or perspectives with no guaranteed result. We search for ‘embodiment’. For many people, what Jesus lived out – his performance - was so difficult and elusive to grasp, that we preferred to crucify him. Once something becomes ‘embodied’ - as in a theatrical performance - it is no longer controllable, and thus it generates vulnerability. With his actions, Jesus 'destabilized' the existing world. That is the gospel. The existing world is in trouble, trouble between people, countries, between people and nature, so many things. It is hard to keep this in mind, so we make peace with injustice. Jesus comes to destabilize that peace – so change can come about.”

6) You seem to focus primarily on the *actions* and *performance* of Jesus during his time on earth, and less on, for example, creation, the trinity, his ascension. Am I correct in my observation, and if so, could you explain this focus on the 'embodied' Jesus?

"For me, the life of Jesus is the 'lens' through which we understand creation, the patterns in nature, but also how the lens to understand how the Spirit is at work. I think that looking at the world through this lens is very important. If you only look at creation, or at the work of the Spirit, or at the trinity, then this creates room to build a system that leaves people out, while we need constantly be reminded of how Jesus puts our structures under critique. If you focus on creation, how, for example do you interpret what love is? For me, love becomes visible in *how* Jesus lived, in all his actions. It is about how Jesus himself is the connection between God and people and world. The trinity, you could almost say, is created by Jesus coming to earth. Before his incarnation, there was an understanding of the plurality of God, but this became concrete and visible through Jesus of Nazareth, through the Spirit that emanated from him, through his conversations with the Father. I have no idea how to get to an understanding of the Trinity without that concrete, lived story. Where else would you start? Jesus is the theater, the performance, through his actions we see glimpses of the transcendent. The healings that Jesus performed, were not primarily about healing people, but they gave people a glimpse of another world that was possible. Otherwise, Jesus would have built a health system. Apparently, something had to be triggered in people's imagination. I do not know exactly what that is, but Jesus opened a hatch to a new and different world. He pulled away a curtain, by questioning - and putting under critique - our current ways of living. I believe that our theology should do the same. Therefore, we constantly need to redefine our theology."

In your recent book (see footnote 1), you write that you have difficulty to relate to the sentence: 'Jesus died for my sins'. Could you say a little more about that?

"A familiar text is John 3 verse 16: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life' (NIV). Often when this text is quoted, the subtext or interpretation is: For God so love YOU that he gave his only sone. Or 'God so loved the Church' …' This is *not* what the text says! We have come to interpret it that way. I find the transfer of the concept of sin to someone, to a specific person, very complicated, problematic even. I think the 'Jesus Victor' approach is much more appealing today: Jesus died because *of* our sins. Perhaps, the meaning of Jesus death on the cross is that my unconscious inclination toward evil and the effects of this inclination in the world is being unmasked ('critiqued'), and that I am being saved from this tendency toward evil by being shown a new way of life through Jesus' 'embodiment' of the Gospel. We are being invited to take part of that. According to N.T. Wright, through our 'transfer' to the scope of the individual, we have twisted the text to: "God so hated the world, that he killed his Son.

This is exactly why I believe practical theology should be the source for systematic theology – or the source for modifying conceptualizations of systematic theology. If I can no longer tell the story that has been handed down to me, if I can no longer explain it in existing words and imagery, something goes wrong. Sometimes, it feels as if the church and theology have traits of a salesperson telling the customer what he needs: everyone is a potential customer even though they do not know that yet. That almost is a form of 'capitalism'. It should be the other way around: we should be asking the

world: what is ‘good news’ for them? Where is the real need? Do we have resources to help, not on our terms but graciously, wholeheartedly?”

7) For my thesis, I read Esther Lightcap Meek, who develops a view on epistemology that starts from the covenant. She concludes that our reality, and thus our knowledge creation, is ‘metonomously personal’? What is your response to this?

“It seems to me to be very adequate representation of reality: to suggest that we find relational aspects or patterns in how we approach reality. In fact, it is a basic structure of how scientists operate. Our science is not rational in a sense that is only about facts: I have to *love* what I do, even, for example, when it comes to mathematics. I have to love it first, and only then do I go as deep as I go in learning more about it. You cannot know, or receive knowledge, if such love does not precede it. I do not know if that is *common sense*, but in my opinion, you often start something from some kind of interest, or liking, at the least, especially if it is a study. Also, I believe the phase of 'objectification’ follows from that same love: we objectify or abstract something, to understand more, to see the bigger picture. It is still love, a wish to understand. So, objectification is a way of testing if we really grasp it, if we really understand. In order to 'know' something, you have to get close. It is difficult to get close to something, without establishing a relationship with it.”

8) For my thesis, I also read a book by Wolterstorff on liturgy. In your new book, you write: ‘All around us is liturgy’.[473] Could you explain a bit more what you mean by ‘liturgy’?

“Liturgy is the work of people, it is the *doing* of people in their quest to connect with God, with the divine, in their search to find a unity with God, or in attempts to find wholeness. I think that for some people a walk in the woods can be a liturgical act, a mystical experience, an alignment between your soul, body, and mind. But I think this quest can also take place in a pub, when you have drinks with friends and share what is happening in life, or in church. Peter Rollins says that faith resides in everything we do: in the hope that things will work out, sometimes magically relying on a book, a course, or, for example, that you will become an attractive person by having a nice car or a certain type of body. And that - if you are attractive - you have achieved something or are a good person.”

Does this mean that liturgy is more about man's searching, and less about the worship of God?

“That is a complicated question if you believe you cannot know who or what God - He, She or It is. I think there can be no predefined God when entering the liturgy. Liturgy, in the eyes of radical theologians, is also the ‘work of the people’ that gives god-like characteristics to other people, to objects, to experiences. So, it is not about the doing of God, or even about reaching out to a certain God, it is the doing of man to find wholeness, peace, healing, forgiveness, a place to be in the world. For those who are looking to worship God, I would say the search for what, who, where and if God is, is in itself the honoring, the love of God. For that search, liturgy is the tool. It is about participating, without knowing if you love God, or if you even want something from that God. To search God, is to worship God. I would not want to propose any other requirements or demands beforehand, no (pre)knowledge, recognition of authority, than the will to participate - that willingness, is already worship.”

[473] Voorberg et al., 2. Original Dutch tekst: “Overal om ons heen is (…) liturgie”.

Do you mean to say that God - or the concept of God - is completely open to you?

"No, but it is very relational. I cannot define my wife (conceptually or rationally), but I can love her. If I am not open to new understandings, to changing my mind, to not-knowing in the relationship, it is not a relationship. If, as an illustration, I approach my wife in our relationship assuming that I already know how and who she is, this can turn out to be very unpleasant, and even get the relationship into trouble rather than it having a positive effect. You can still say, 'God is good', or 'God is love', just as I can say these things about my wife. But exactly *what* that means may change over time, because I also do change and may have different needs in new circumstances. You can only learn about the other, by going 'on a journey' together. So, learning about God, is quite like the way of a marriage, which is also full of rituals and liturgy."

To what extent is it necessary for the liturgy to follow a certain framework, for example, what we learn from the Bible? In your answer it seems like you are starting 'from scratch'.

"I would say there are two answers: phenomenologically you can say that liturgy is hidden in every action: any desire for wholeness, redemption, whatever. To achieve this, we may look at others, gurus, gym, stuff. Radical theologians invite you to step back from that, to deconstruct that desire. This does imply a certain destruction, because you start actively and consciously questioning the things you do unconsciously to bring about that sense of redemption. But then you do this *as* liturgy. So, it is not 'from scratch', but you take the old forms, see the superstition in the forms, look for what is an actual need in them and then redesign them. For example, the Lord's Supper can have become a definition of who belongs and who does not; you must dare to face that. In doing so, it loses its charm. Then you ask yourself again: for what was it meant? From there, you 'reassemble' it in different forms: an open meal of absolute inclusion with the outsiders and/or a meal where we put our 'pain' on the table. Or a place where we have a real meal together for once."

9) **Your answer to question 6 reminded me of Wolterstorff's view on the Eucharist. Based on Calvin's interpretation, he argues that in the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine, we take part of the 'once-and-still-embodied' Jesus, highlighting that Jesus death on the cross was not only his victory over evil, but also the climax of Jesus' 'earthly' career. What is your reaction to this interpretation?**

"That is exactly what I live out of, what I live with, what I believe in! When it comes to the bread and wine, the blood of Christ, the idea is that his blood - the life that flows through him - that we receive that life into ourselves. The resurrection was the acknowledgment of the climax by God, some say. The climax was staying on the path in ultimate belief/obedience and trust. We desperately need that in the world. So, if we mix his life with our life, we may enter into a way of living as his way of life. That is absolutely what it is about. But I do not know if that has anything to do with that phrase: 'he died for *my* sins'. The phrase 'because of our sins' is the unmasking of the systems of sin, the mirror. To disarm evil by telling the truth to ourselves about who we sometimes are and do not any more want to be. Sin, as far as I am concerned, is primarily and first a collective concept. A tendency, a nature. Like the economic systems of exploitation are. The concept of sin is too heavy to put on the individual, and yet impossible to renounce in its entirety. Its unmasking is an important matter: protesting against the systems that perpetuate it, and breaking away from it by small acts of resistance."