

REASON’S DEAD END IN DAVID FAURE:

WHY THE CAPE’S EARLIEST LIBERAL MINISTER EMBRACED SPIRITUALISM

1. Early professional life	2
2 Faure and Huet.....	3
2.1 Unexpected friendship	3
2.2 Disillusioned with Christian faith	3
2.3 Failing Liberalism	4
3 Human reason	4
3.1 Reason replaced Bible.....	4
3.2 “Law and Universe”	5
4 Failure of reason	6
4.1 Calling in Spiritualism	6
4.2 Countering orthodox Christianity	6
4.3 Countering Materialism	6
4.4 Impotence of modern theology	7
5 Lectures on modern theology	7
5.1 Their background	7
5.2 Doctrines not necessary for salvation.....	7
5.3 Immortality soul maintained	8
5.4 New theological standard.....	8
5.5 Envisaging to no longer walk with Jesus	8
6 Disillusioned	9
6.1 Failed theology.....	9
6.2 The liberal lie	9
6.3 Positive discrimination for Spiritualism.....	10
7. Epilogue: Faure and the “New Reformation”	11

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Abstract

This article deals with nineteenth century liberal thought in South-Africa and the Netherlands. It argues that both orthodox rationalism and liberal reason failed to provide a satisfactory source and standard for theological thinking. As a basis for this conclusion about the life of David Faure, serves an exchange of thought between this liberal free thinking minister and a former evangelical preacher and poet. Towards the end of their respective ministries, both the Rev Mr Faure and Huet evidence high hopes regarding communications with the spirits of deceased. This article concludes that although Faure sincerely tried his best to base his theological thinking on human reason only, he arrived at a dead end. Revelation was needed, in one way or another, but sooner rather than later. His theological framework collapsing, Faure looked to Spiritualism for answers. The collapse of his theological thinking reflects unpromising on the present Nuwe Hervorming ("New Reformation") movement in South Africa.

1. Early professional life

David P Faure was born in colonial South Africa, but studied theology at the faculty of Leiden University in the Netherlands. There he embraced the teachings of professor, author of an influential book on Dutch Reformed doctrine. Using the traditional terms and words, he introduced very different theology.¹ Although this professor had started out as a more or less conservative theologian in his first congregation Meerkerk, this soon changed. It may also have been keeping up appearance to survive in a reformed working environment. In Leiden Scholten discarded the possibility of special revelation and subsequently denied the main tenants of the Christian faith.² It would take two hundred years for the "New Reformation"-movement in South Africa to catch up. They, however, would not be the first to deny the validity of core Christian doctrines. As early as the 1860's David Faure, son of the Cape, would do so fervently on his return to the colony as candidate for the ministry in the Dutch Reformed Church.

His first sermon in the Groote Kerk in 1866 would also prove his only one. His preaching was received with stunning silence and the customary thanks and handshaking were not forthcoming. Not one of the elders or ministers came to greet or thank him after the service. Why not? In his sermon Faure had implicitly denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. He only spoke about the Lord as a human religious teacher, but not as the Son of God. As Faure read the signs of the times in the Cape, he concluded that his honest liberal feelings were not compatible with the local Dutch Reformed Church, which was at that stage still committed to a literal approach of the Bible. It was clear after this experience that the door to ministry in the DRC in South Africa was closed. Asking entry would only be asking for trouble.³ As Faure contemplated other means of living, he commenced lecturing on modern theology in

¹ H Berkhof & O de Jong, *Geschiedenis der Kerk, Callenbach, Nijkerk 1973*, p.271; G van der Zee: *Vaderlandsche Kerkgeschiedenis, Deel 3: van de Hervorming tot heden*, Kok, Kampen, year of publication omitted, p.222-223.

² TN Hanekom: *Die liberale Rigting in Suid-Afrika, 'n kerkhistoriese studie, deel 1*, CSV Maatskappy, Stellenbosch 1951, p.53-55.

³ A Morrees: *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika 1652-1873*, SA Bybelvereniging, Kaapstad 1937, p.976.

Old Mutual Hall in Cape Town. A competitive series to counter these was delivered by the Rev Andrew Murray.⁴ Finally a Free Protestant Church was established.⁵

2 Faure and Huet

2.1 Unexpected friendship

The story that craves the interest of this article begins in Anno Domini 1887 when an unexpected friendship shapes up. We find two theologians, Faure and Huet, involved in an important exchange of thought by letter. Both of them had consciously drifted away from their roots. Not only Faure had done away with the traditional approach of Christianity, the formerly fervent evangelical preacher and poet Huet as well. Although he had been less pronounced about his changed convictions, Huet had travelled a similar road as Faure, ending up having high hopes of Spiritualism. The change that had taken place in Faure's friend was remarkable. Twenty years ago was a renowned adversary of liberal theology. He was widely known as a reformed evangelical. Spiritual revivals in 1860 and 1861 he publicly considered as a preparation for "the fierce battle against unbelief".⁶ With this he pointed to the struggle against liberal theologians, which had started at the 1862 Synod of the Dutch Reformed Churches.

As a writer Huet built quite a reputation, which would earn him numerous references in the Standard Dictionary of the Dutch language (*Handwoordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*). Also as a poet he took a strong stand against the liberal theologians. Huet even stated that "the modern theology is unable to build up anything".⁷ One day, now, by 1887, in a distant past, he had even composed a strikingly religious poem:

"Consolation, consolation to my people; your guilt of sin has been atoned; the Lamb who's body was broken; who's side a spear had pierced; fulfilled all your punishment and strife."⁸

Twenty years later these eloquent words had become empty shells.

2.2 Disillusioned with Christian faith

On the 24th of April 1887 this Peter Huet wrote a personal letter to David Faure, which measured against his former standards, proved nothing less than shocking in the change of thought it revealed.⁹ This private correspondence shows that Huet had converted to Spiritualism, though outwardly he continued as a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. This letter gives evidence that Huet gave up his former theological standards by literally discarding the central beliefs of orthodox Christianity: the Trinity, the atonement by Christ and the Bible as the Word of God.

⁴ A Murray: *Het Moderne Ongeloof, dertien leerredenen*, Hofmeyer & Co, Kaapstad 1868; A Murray: *Die moderne Ongeloof*, Christen Studentevereniging van S.A., versamelde werke deel II, Stellenbosch 1942.

⁵ J du Plessis: *Het Leven van Andrew Murray*, Zuidafrikaanse Bijbelvereniging, Kaapstad 1920, p.241-242.

⁶ P Huet: *Eenvoudige Meededelingen over Zuid-Afrika*, Utrecht 1868, p.4-5.

⁷ P Huet: *Eenvoudige Meededelingen over Zuid-Afrika*, Utrecht 1868, p.30.

⁸ P Huet: *Afrikaansche Gedichten*, H Höveker, Amsterdam 1868.

⁹ DP Faure: *My Life and Times*, Juta, Capetown 1907, p.130.

By this time, Peter Huet no longer lived in South Africa where he used to minister for a season. He had moved back to the Netherlands and now lived in Goes, a town in the province of Zeeland.

In Huet's mind it had been the teachings of Spiritualism that led him to depart from his former orthodoxy. The Dutch minister wrote his South African colleague:

"The popular Trinitarian doctrine, the popular Atonement doctrine, the identification of the words "Gods Word" and "Scripture", to say nothing about the dogma of Predestination, I had gradually learnt to discard. But for the rest, my Spiritualism has not shaken my faith..."¹⁰

One year before this letter, Huet had revealed his feelings in the magazine "Life Eternal" (*Het eeuwige Leeven*). This was not really a surprising choice since he happened to be the editor of this periodical. In this article Huet endeavoured to explain why he did not really care about revelation through the Bible any longer and tried to pave the way for his new insights for living. He proposed a mystical religion, devoid of doctrine. The Rev. P. Huet stated that the real thing that had always appealed to him was the so called "*unio mystica*," the mystical relation with God. One had to be in a relationship of life and love with Christ. "But this has nothing to do with religious systems or dogma's... God and Religion are the same everywhere," according to Huet.¹¹ The orthodox theologian had become a spiritualist, and perhaps to some extent a follower of Schleiermacher. To those who were unaware of his adventures in Spiritualism, this may have come as a surprise, but for those who knew Huet's change of mind was not by accident.

2.3 Failing Liberalism

In 1887 the two ministers meet at this station of Spiritualism. Huet had lost his orthodoxy as a consequence of embracing Spiritualism. Faure arrived at the same through using a slightly different route. It was his liberalism that had left him unfulfilled. As a result he started looking for answers in Spiritualism. The ancestral and familiar spirits might shed light on questions that his modern theology had never been able to meet satisfactorily.

Why had it failed to do so? What was lacking in this modern rational modernism that so many sons of the 19th Century embraced? To answer this question, one must have a look at Faure's view of God, revelation and its implications.

3 Human reason

3.1 Reason replaced Bible

We write 1907. In Cape Town the first edition of the autobiography of the Rev. David P Faure was published, bearing the title "My Life and Times." These memoirs were fresh from the nineteenth century, characterised by an optimistic worldview and a profound belief in the ability of mankind to understand and control its world.

In 1907 Faure also reflects on what happened fifty years earlier, when he abandoned his more or less orthodox Christian upbringing during his studies in the Netherlands. He mentions the influence of "his" professor JH Scholten (1811-1885). As a result

¹⁰ DP Faure: My Life and Times, Juta, Capetown 1907, p.130.

¹¹ DP Faure: My Life and Times, Juta, Capetown 1907, p.131.

Faure had concluded that the Bible, the miracles, a personal God, the existence of the Holy Ghost and the divinity of Christ actually belonged to the realm of myth and fairy tales. Although he allowed that the Bible contained genuine expressions of Christian faith, these were of course limited by time and culture. They had a certain value as human religious experience, but not as trustworthy revelation from the realms of glory. Scripture was an interesting source of religious information, but no longer a standard of truth.¹² Human reason had demanded that place.¹³

As a result Faure erased the supernatural from his Bible. The witness of the Holy Ghost was equalled to the voice of human reason. Scholten had added a check and balance by the sentence “in the morally pure person.” In practice though, the distinction between source and standard became rather vague.¹⁴ Reasonable conscience became the standard for truth. This is shown when Faure deals with anticipated objections against his stance against supernatural revelation:

“What a dangerous doctrine!, shouts or sighs one of my hearers. Must I believe that corrupted reason is my source for truth? No, my brother, you need not believe that. She is not the source of truth, but the instrument by which man learns to recognise the revelations of God, His outer revelation in nature and history, His inner revelation right within you. Reason has the same relation to revealed truth, as the eye to the things it perceives. Just like the eye cannot see anything, if there is nothing to be seen, likewise reason is not able to recognize the truth, if it is not revealed to her by God.”¹⁵

3.2 “Law and Universe”

The obvious next step for Faure would have been disconnecting God from his rational views altogether, as the foundation for this inclusion of the Biblical God lay in a concept of revelation now discarded. Both Scholten and his pupil, however, just stopped short at a worldview without God. Why? On a moral level He was still necessary. One sees the influence of the philosopher Wilhelm Kant and his Critic of the practical Reason. But for all practical purposes, God could be left out of the equation in formulating scientific theories.

God was reduced to a set of moral laws and a force of material causality in the universe. Consequently Faure did not hesitate to call Him “the reign of Law in the Universe”.¹⁶ The two capitals that he used are striking: “Law” and “Universe”. They are a summary of his theology.

Did this, however, satisfy Faure’s sense of theology and reason? Was this the outcome he had hoped for? At first glance the liberal minister certainly seemed happy enough. Although the evidence of real joy is not overwhelming in his writings, one could say that he defended his liberal position with intense commitment. It was with seemingly confident sarcasm that he ridiculed orthodoxy. David Faure was committed. He had devoted his money, time and life to modern theology. But how sure was he really?

¹² AJ Rasker: De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk Vanaf 1795, haar geschiedenis en theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw, JH Kok, Kampen 1974, p.117.

¹³ TN Hanekom: Die liberale Rigting in Suid-Afrika, ‘n kerkhistoriese studie, deel 1, CSV Maatskappy, Stellenbosch 1951, p.32.

¹⁴ A Murray: Het Moderne Ongeloof, dertien leerredenen, Hofmeyer & Co, Kaapstad 1868, p.8-9.

¹⁵ DP Faure: De Moderne Theologie, dertien toespraken gehouden in de Mutual Hall Kaapstad, Juta, Kaapstad 1868, p.37, translated from Dutch origin.

¹⁶ DP Faure: My Life and Times, Juta, Capetown 1907, p.128.

4 Failure of reason

4.1 Calling in Spiritualism

At closer look even this vocal liberal still had not found what he was looking for. In 1907 Faure writes that his last religious hopes are not set on modern theology, but Spiritualism:

“I can see no reason why the adherents of the new school of thought should be prejudiced against Spiritualism; on the contrary, it would seem that they have every reason for wishing it to be true, to bestow their blessing upon it, and wishing it Godspeed. In the first place, it would supply absolute proof of the immortality of the human soul, which proof cannot be, or rather has not yet been supplied from another source.”¹⁷

Behold the failure of mere human reason as the operational centre of theology!

4.2 Countering orthodox Christianity

Faure was forced to the conclusion that reason - left to itself - is not enough. Liberal theology had no proofs for the doctrines that she had left intact, the immortality of the soul being one of these. Reason also proved an incomplete foundation for the moral values that Faure continued to cherish. Consequently the committed rationalist admits that some things need to be revealed to man in order to know for sure. Faure wants revelation to silence his doubts about immortality. It would be the ultimate weapon against his old archenemies: the philosophy of materialism and Christian orthodoxy. Faure expects Spiritualism to disprove both, one by proving that there is more to life than the here and now. Spiritualism would also show that the Biblical teachings about the afterlife are invalid, if spirits of deceased declared that the orthodox tenants of reward and punishment and the presence of God in the afterlife are wrong.

“We may have hope and faith in Immortality -as I trust we have- but that after death we retain our individuality, our self-consciousness, survive under new conditions, we cannot know, unless we know that at least one has actually returned from “that bourne,” whence Shakespeare believed “no traveller returns.”¹⁸

At this stage Faure has become a ship passing in the night, nearly touching the roots of the Church, which puts its trust in the One who actually did return. But the liberal minister was no longer able. His heart was too hardened to arrive at the same conclusion as Peter: “To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

4.3 Countering Materialism

Modern theology also failed Faure on the subject of Materialism. To his mind it could as well be that everything that we think and do is a temporarily result of matter only. No spirit and God are required in that case. Faure’s rational theology did not offer anything to a challenge this line of reasoning. He sincerely hoped that Spiritualism would provide him with the necessary answers:

“Spiritualism means death to Materialism. If the truth of the Spiritualistic theory is established, Materialism has no *locus standi*, the theory that matter is but the manifestation of spirit, then becomes an axiom.”¹⁹

¹⁷ DP Faure: My Life and Times, Juta, Capetown 1907, p.129.

¹⁸ DP Faure: My Life and Times, Juta, Capetown 1907, p.129.

¹⁹ DP Faure: My Life and Times, Juta, Capetown 1907, p.129.

4.4 Impotence of modern theology

David Faure reveals something else here. Ever since he returned from his *cum laude* examinations in 1866, the liberal minister had been confronted with orthodox Christianity in one way or another. Although trying very hard, he had never been able to deal it the final blow that would satisfy his reason. Towards the end of his life Faure admits that modern theology alone was not strong and convincing enough to end orthodox Christianity and logically force its termination:

“And, in the third place, the verification of Spiritualism, is death to orthodoxy. If the dead can return and communicate with their friends -entirely irrespective of the description they give of the future life- the orthodox views of heaven and hell, and the scheme of salvation of the popular theology, become demonstrably untenable.”²⁰

5 Lectures on modern theology

5.1 Their background

Faure considered orthodoxy a threat to his religious system and he could not keep quiet about it. This had been the case since his return to South Africa when he decided to introduce the intellectuals of the Cape Colony to modern theology, by means of a series of lectures.²¹ For this purpose he rent the Old Mutual Hall in Cape Town, initially on his own expenses. Happily, this turned into a lucrative business through taking collections in which the Cape elite showed their appreciation also in a monetary fashion. By these Sunday lectures Faure revived and engaged theological thought in the Cape, perhaps in a way that did not have its equal in the earlier history of the Colony. Faure started his lectures in 1867. In March 1868 they were published in Dutch.²² An English translation followed in February 1869, with three added lectures about Easter, Ascension and Pentecost.²³

5.2 Doctrines not necessary for salvation

About the life and resurrection of Jesus, and other things contained in the Apostolic Creed, the liberal minister stated:

“Never did Jesus make man's salvation dependent on faith in doctrines like that, a child can understand this. According to Jesus, religion did not consist of belief in doctrines, whatever they may be, but of life; religion as he understood it, was a state of the heart, loving God and people.”²⁴

The New Testament only provided us with nice illustrations for dogmatic and philosophical opinions of human reason. In Faure's case these were the principle of loving your neighbour with a few other virtues. Again this was not completely original as his tutor Scholten had a similar approach.²⁵

²⁰ DP Faure: *My Life and Times*, Juta, Capetown 1907, p.129.

²¹ DP Faure: *My Life and Times*, Juta, Capetown 1907, p.36.

²² DP Faure: *De Moderne Theologie*, dertien toespraken gehouden in de Mutual Hall Kaapstad, Juta, Kaapstad 1868.

²³ DP Faure: *Modern Theology*, sixteen discourses held in Mutual Hall Cape Town, Van de Sandt de Villiers, Capetown 1869.

²⁴ DP Faure: *De Moderne Theologie*, dertien toespraken gehouden in de Mutual Hall Kaapstad, Juta, Kaapstad 1868, p.288, translated from Dutch original.

²⁵ AJ Rasker: *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk Vanaf 1795, haar geschiedenis en theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, Kok, Kampen 1974, p.119.

5.3 Immortality soul maintained

In his address on Easter, the minister still showed a firm belief in the immortality of the human soul. Faure compares this immortality with the ‘foolish’ belief in a bodily resurrection:

“We attach no value to the bodily resurrection of Jesus; nor do we believe that our dear ones, who are dead and gone, and that, that which constitutes our humanity, is immortal, and will live on in all eternity -this we do believe, this we believe as firmly as we believe in God, in a God not of the dead, but of the living. Death deprives us of nothing, save our material body, -the spirit dies not... Eternity is mine!”²⁶

5.4 New theological standard

How did Faure’s new theology, his own wording invites one to speak about an alternative or ‘eternal Bible’, function?

“The two characteristics of the eternal Bible (as Faure used to call his alternative) are, in the first place, that it must cover and include all truth which concerns the life and the welfare of man, and in the second place, it must be for ever being written and never completed.”²⁷

This new Bible became as relative as the authority of human experience that had to support it. Initially Faure isn’t able to quench his enthusiasm about this:

“These are the real chapters of the eternal Bible which are being written age after age as the result of human experience -a Bible not yet complete, a Bible in which each new truth is a sentence, and each new grand discovery a chapter.”²⁸

But God was still necessary. He was the ultimate justification for the ever-changing courses of human reason, the divine stamp on human thinking.

“Or would the good Father of us all have given us the human reason, in order to throw us in destruction? Then he would not be God, but the Devil.”²⁹

5.5 Envisaging to “no longer walk with Jesus”

Fifty years later, Faure’s hopes are set on Spiritualism to prove what is precious and dear to him in his religion, as his liberal theology has not been able to. It was not as though Faure had not recognized the fallibility and limitations of human reason fifty years ago. He saw this problem, but at the time tried to make provision for its consequences by the stressing the task of human conscience. This had failed. The lecture about Pentecost shows already very early in his minister Faure wrestled with Orthodoxy and Materialism in 1868:

“The revival must come, will assuredly come! And it is our task to bring it about! And if we do not lay the foundation of that new temple, it cannot, will not be constructed! Materialism will not build it:

²⁶ DP Faure: *Modern Theology*, sixteen discourses held in Mutual Hall Cape Town, Van de Sandt de Villiers, Capetown 1869, p.209.

²⁷ DP Faure: *The Truth about the Bible*, discourses delivered in the Free Protestant Church, Argus, Capetown 1893, p.57.

²⁸ DP Faure: *The Truth about the Bible*, discourses delivered in the Free Protestant Church, Argus, Capetown 1893, p.59.

²⁹ DP Faure: *De Moderne Theologie*, dertien toespraken gehouden in de Mutual Hall Kaapstad, Juta, Kaapstad 1868, p.38, translation from Dutch original.

it will destroy all temples, old and new. Orthodoxy will not construct that new one: it is satisfied with the old, and that is quite good enough.”³⁰

Faure also states that to be filled with the Spirit, is to strive for human virtues. At that stage he still believed in a Supreme Being giving moral guidance to his creatures.

“But God planted a feeling in our inner man for everything that is true and good, and you must give heed to the voice of conscience, you cannot do otherwise. You cannot silence her, and if you listen to that conscience, and follow its prescriptions, then you are guided by God himself, then you walk on his hand, and He shall not mislead His child!”³¹

6 Disillusioned

6.1 Failed theology

Fifty years later, Faure doubts most of the liberal doctrines that he confidently asserted in his Mutual Hall lectures on modern theology.

He perceived that if moral and religious standards are founded in man, they will consequently change with culture and time. He had discarded revealed truth and God as their guarantee. Everything had become subject to reasonable conscience and this conscience changed with circumstances. This is why Faure had to say, even in 1868:

“And as long as we have the conviction, as long as Jesus remains the supreme phenomenon in the religious realm, as long as Jesus remains the best that we know, for that long we will remain true to him, and will call ourselves Christians. If the time comes, when it appears to us that we may find a better religion than his elsewhere, if a man stands up who appears to be a greater hero in religion than he was, then we shall go and no longer walk with Jesus...”³²

These words Faure also spoke in Mutual Hall, a few weeks after his last formal lecture about modern theology. It is particularly striking that they were part of a sermon about John 6:66-69. The very thing that this passage condemns is recommended by the *verbi divini* minister! If circumstances and human reason press for it, we will no longer walk with Jesus! It is therefore not strange, that concept of Jesus left to Faure in 1907 no longer offered any certainty about eternal life.³³ This shows that when reasonable conscience gets the position of a final authority, many things become relative.

6.2 The liberal lie

On the outside the liberal minister of the Free Protestant Church always remained optimistic about his modern theology. In 1893 he reassured others that reasonable conscience was surer than any other foundation:

"Many who no longer found it possible to retain their religion's faith, if it had to be associated with and based on the theory that the Bible, and every word of the Bible, is the Word of God Himself, have

³⁰ DP Faure: *Modern Theology*, sixteen discourses held in Mutual Hall Cape Town, Van de Sandt de Villiers, Capetown 1869, p.230.

³¹ DP Faure: *De Moderne Theologie*, dertien toespraken gehouden in de Mutual Hall Kaapstad, Juta, Kaapstad 1868, p.37-38.

³² DP Faure, *De Moderne Theologie*, dertien toespraken gehouden in de Mutual Hall Kaapstad, Juta, Kaapstad 1868, p.290, translated from Dutch original.

³³ DP Faure: *My Life and Times*, Juta, Capetown 1907, p.129.

been helped out of the difficulty, and their religion's faith now rests on a surer foundation which cannot be shaken."³⁴

By 1907 Faure had come to realise that this was a lie. Against all initial expectation, this foundation was now thoroughly shaken and Faure was desperately looking for answers.

6.3 Positive discrimination for Spiritualism

It is quite remarkable that Faure eventually granted Spiritualism all the supernatural room that he denied to Biblical Christianity. In what could be described as an almost desperate attempt to cling to Spiritualism as a last hope for answers, Faure stated:

“But the most determined foes of Spiritualism are to be found among the thoughtful men and women, who have discarded belief in the supernatural, and are fully persuaded of the stability of the laws of nature, which are never broken, and from which there is no departure. Belief in miracles they regard as childish, and their very faith in a God ruling the Universe would be shaken if they were convinced that the immutability and constancy of the laws of nature were fictions and fables. Now if it was certain that Spiritualistic phenomena were in reality infringements of natural law, they would have to be placed in the category of ‘miracles,’ and believing, as I do, in the reign of Law in the Universe, which leaves no room for the miraculous, I would, without hesitation, reject the Spiritualistic theory. But the correct definition of a miracle is that it is a violation of the laws of nature known or unknown. Hence Spiritualistic phenomena, however much they may conflict with known laws, may yet be subject to laws as yet unknown.”³⁵

One has only to replace Spiritualism with Biblical Christianity, to ascertain this shift in thinking. Faure, however, was not prepared to grant Orthodoxy the same chance. Nonetheless he needed the concept of revelation from the realms of the unknown, as reason by itself was on a dead track. Mere Reason could not prove immortality, nor disprove that everything visible and spiritual was just a product of matter and circumstances.

In short, Reason was no longer able to provide a foundation for Faure’s liberal theology. It had arrived at a dead end. If only a spirit would return and give some revelation about a possible state after death, “then we shall go and no longer walk with Jesus”³⁶...

Christian orthodoxy, on the other hand, suggested that someone had actually returned from the death, providing many answers long ago. Faure, however, was no longer prepared to listen. It was a notorious woman who had visited him at a theological faculty where he prepared for ministry of Jesus Christ. She took Faure by the hand and quietly walked him away from his rightful Master. The reformer Martin Luther also knew her. He used to refer to her as ‘that old witch, Lady Reason’. While Faure kept up the appearances of confident liberal theology, Reason guided him to a dead end. There he committed the logical fallacy to grant Spiritualism room for revelation, an opportunity that he had disallowed Christianity.

³⁴ DP Faure: *The Truth about the Bible*, discourses delivered in the Free Protestant Church, Argus, Capetown 1893, preface.

³⁵ DP Faure: *My Life and Times*, Juta, Capetown 1907, p.128-129.

³⁶ DP Faure: *De Moderne Theologie*, dertien toespraken gehouden in de Mutual Hall Kaapstad, Juta, Kaapstad, 1868, p.290, translation from Dutch original.

7. Epilogue: Faure and the “New Reformation”

The spiritual inheritors of Faure’s are the theologians who recently presented themselves as the “New Reformation” (*Nuwe Hervorming*). Sharing many of Faure’s prepositions about human reason and the invalidity of core Christian doctrines,³⁷ it should be concluded that theirs is not a new reformation. It is substantially old, even in South African terms it dates back to the 1860’s. Like Faure’s theology and other predecessors from the 19th century, the ‘New Reformation’-movement in South Africa is bound to collapse in a similar way. Its object of faith, like Faure’s, is human reason. The life and times of Faure provide a stimulating example. His church no longer exists, but his thinking has been revived. The outcome of Faure’s theological concepts suggests that these newly revived concepts are not likely to enhance the wellbeing of Church and Theology in South Africa two centuries later.

³⁷ Like Faure, the *Nuwe Hervorming* doubts the Bible as reliable Word of God, Jesus’ Divine nature, the existence of the devil and the miracles described in the Bible. Prof Julian Müller writes: “Dit is binne hierdie vakuum dat die NH tot stand gekom het en vra na ’n nuwe spiritualiteit waarin vanselfsprekende dinge in die bestaande spiritualiteit bevraagteken word. Dinge soos die vasstelling van die kanon, die goddelike natuur van Jesus, die bestaan van die duiwel, die onwetenskaplike aansprake oor wonders en natuurverskynsels, ensovoorts.” (Referaat gelewer by Teologiese Dag, opening van Fakulteit, Pretoria. 3 Feb. 2003). Cf. e.g. online: <http://www.nuwe-hervorming.org.za/>