Christian Social Thought in the Dutch Neo-Calvinist Tradition

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"Neo-Calvinism" is an expression which was first used by Max Weber in his contributions to the sociology of religion. He used it to describe the revival of the social and political teachings of John Calvin which took place, especially in the Netherlands, during the last part of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries.

The roots of that revival lie mainly in the so-called *Réveil* movement, which had its origin in the first half of the nineteenth century in Protestant - not only Calvinistic - circles in Switzerland. That movement stressed the significance of a living Christian faith: biblical studies, and prayer for the reformation of the Church and the renewal of society. The most important Dutch representative of that *Réveil* was Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876). Deeply influenced by German thinkers Von Haller and Julius Stahl, who were primarily within the Romantic tradition, Groen gradually developed his own approach to the social and political problems of his time, although he always remained a true "son of the *Réveil!*" His main published work was a major study of the spirit of the French Revolution, *Unbelief and Revolution*. He saw the Revolution and its ideals as the driving force behind the modern unbelief of his age.

However, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) must be seen as the founding father of Dutch neo-Calvinism. As a theologian, philosopher, journalist and statesman, he elaborated van Prinsterer's princi-[252]-pal ideas, but also refined them - giving them specific accents. On the one hand, he emphasized a Reformed - and especially Calvinistic - doctrine; on the other, he passionately taught the necessity of a practical - and especially organizational - implementation of those ideas.

For example, he founded the Free (Calvinistic) University of Amsterdam, the Anti-Revolutionary Party (the first democratic political party of the Netherlands), and took the lead in the formation of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands. He also deeply influenced the Dutch Christian labour movement in its formative stage. For more than thirty years he wrote daily and weekly columns in the Christian daily newspaper, *De Standaard,* which he himself founded. In addition to his prodigious academic output and his many other activities (political, social, academic and ecclesiastical), he served for many years as a member of Parliament and as prime minister of the Netherlands from 1901-1904.

More than sixty years after his death, one can undoubtedly say that the Netherlands today would be a markedly different nation had Abraham Kuyper not lived. As an illustration, my own life reflects the extent of his impact on Dutch society. Since my birth, I have been a member of one of the Reformed churches; in the sixties I was a Member of Parliament for "his" Anti-Revolutionary Party; and from 1971 to the present, I have been a professor in "his" university. I am an advisor to the 300,000-member Dutch Christian labour movement; if I publish in newspapers, I usually do so in *Trouw - the* direct successor of "his" *Standaard.* A great part of my personal life can therefore be seen as participation in Kuyper's heritage. At the same time, this personal note makes it clear that I cannot give an "objective" view of Dutch neo-Calvinism and its social thought - although I am very aware of the necessity for a critical appraisal or reappraisal of some of its features. Even in my critique, I stand in that tradition, and feel myself co-responsible for it. This is also true of the heritage of the so-called Philosophy of the Cosmonomic Idea, which was born in the inter-war period on the basis of Groen's and Kuyper's thought. This philosophy, developed primarily by D. T. Vollenhoven and Herman Dooyeweerd, can be considered as the dominant scientific tool of Dutch neo-Calvinism, although its contribution has not always been honoured in that way by the practical-institutional wing. Notwithstanding disagreement however, there is a similarity in colour and fla-[253]-vour - even today between this Philosophy, and the many organizations and institutions that sprang from the van Prinsterer-Kuyperian initiative.

In this paper, however, not the entire breadth of the Dutch neo-Calvinist

tradition is under scrutiny, but only its contribution to Christian social thought. For this purpose, I want to distinguish between three themes in Dutch neo-Calvinism which in my Opinion are not only essential for understanding that movement, but are also the most influential in the formation of its social thought: a) the theme of vocation or calling; b) the theme of antithesis and common grace; and c) the theme of an architectonic critique of society.

My plan is to discuss each of these themes. In the concluding pages, I will add some notes about their relevance for a Christian appraisal of our present bewildering, progress-oriented society.

The theme of vocation or calling

The words "vocation" or "calling" *(Berufung* in German) are used often in the teachings both of Martin Luther and John Calvin - more in the former than the latter. In vocation, one notes a reference to someone calling, addressing one "vocally." For both Calvin and Luther, He who calls is the living God.

In medieval times, vocation was also used in and by the Catholic Church but then usually restricted to God's calling of a person to leave his daily work, to enter a monastic way of life or a holy office, for instance. Luther and Calvin, however, did not hesitate to identify very common jobs in daily life with God's calling or vocation, as the "way" in which one is serviceable. Both reformers held that Christ's crucifixion and resurrection from death was a *total* victory and included the salvation of both life *and* nature. In their opinion, natural work is thereby already sanctified - holy - does not require the prior or additional sanctification dispensed by the institutional church through sacraments. Everywhere in natural life, human beings stand and live *coram Deo* directly before the face of the living God - who summons them to be serviceable to Him and to their neighbours by simply doing what they must do as farmers, craftsmen, kings, housekeeper, or merchants. Daily work is vocation; it is giving an answer to the living God and requires no additional "spiritual dimension." Even today, the common words in Germany and Holland for one's [254] job are *beruf* (German), *beroep* (Dutch), both of which mean "being called to…".

Although Luther uses this concept more frequently, Calvin more generally points to the fact that calling also has an institutional dimension. Persons are addressed *as* bearers of an office. This means that a government as such, a church community as such, and a family as such are separate objects of God's calling. Precisely this element in Calvin's thought has inspired Dutch neo-Calvinism's unique view of institutional relations in society, characteristically expressed by Kuyper and Dooyeweerd in the principle of "sphere-sovereignty."

I now turn to a discussion of this principle. To understand its real meaning, its origins must be kept in mind. Two religious insights are at the root of this concept. The first is that because of the universal significance of Christ's redemptive work, there are no longer different degrees of holiness in natural reality. In principle, a basic *equality* exists among the different "spheres" of life in which human beings live and work together. In every "social" sphere of life - the family, state, church, school, also the business enterprise (what I prefer to call the "production-household"), the voluntary associations, such as labour unions - people are allowed to see themselves as directly responsible to God. That insight precludes any institution (whether church, state or any other) from seeing itself as the encompassing institution of society, to which the other "spheres" of life are hierarchically or spiritually subordinated.

The second religious insight is that *within* each sphere of life not only human will, but also God's calling, prevails. This gives the sphere-sovereignty principle a genuinely normative colour. The word "sovereignty", for instance, does *not* point primarily to the significance of "authority" in a specific sphere of life, and it does not point at all to the autonomy of the human will. It points to the sovereignty of God, who has called and still calls upon human beings to be serviceable to Him and to their fellow-men in a variety of ways. Progressing through various "spheres of life", one sees this service typically as follows: in the way of loving care for children within the family and in the schools; in the way of truthful love between husband and wife in marriage; in the way of economic serviceability and stewardship (the characteristic calling of production-households); in the way of providing just, fair treatment of workers in the case of unions; and in the way of bringing public justice to society as a whole as the characteristic norm for the state.

[255] Moderate interventionism

Only if one keeps in mind this double foundation of the principle of sphere-sovereignty can one understand, for instance, the reason why Abraham Kuyper was in favour of some types of intervention by the state in social-economic life, though never acquiescing in the socialist programme of central, state-controlled planning of society. For state socialism would imply the elimination of the specific responsibilities of unions and production-households. Nevertheless, the first type of governmental action (carefully planned government involvement) becomes necessary and fully justified if a business enterprise (or business-life in general) is not loyal to its *own* calling to be a steward of its resources; or if it behaves improperly toward people or groups or abuses nature in such a way, that it violates the general interest from the viewpoint of public justice. If the state intervenes for that reason, it does not violate the sphere-sovereignty of the business enterprise. Quite the opposite, the state would then implicitly honour the business's sovereignty. For, in those cases, governmental action obeys the mandate to bring justice back into public life in the perspective of a normative re-orientation of business-life to its own calling. There is, therefore, no room for unrestrained license in Dutch neo-Calvinism. For the business enterprise there is only a normatively bound liberty within the context of its calling.

What does this approach imply, when dealing with questions of authority and democracy within the state or other spheres of life? What will be the way of dealing with phenomena like political revolution, democracy, or social and economic co-determination by workers in a business enterprise? There is ample and interesting historical material here.

In relation to questions of *authority* and *revolution* Dutch neo-Calvinism has usually stressed the obligation of respect for all God-given authority. Without such respect, society falls into anarchy, and to the idolatry of *ni Dieu ni maître* of the French Revolution. From the beginning, the movement was anti-revolutionary in character, and, although it has maintained a deep awareness of the necessity of political democracy until today, it rejected fully the idea of a people's sovereignty as proposed by Jean Jacques Rousseau for instance. But it has to be said that this is only one side of Dutch neo-Calvinism.

There is also another side.

Revolutionary

That side can be illustrated with the help of a distinction made by [256] Groen van Prinsterer himself, between "anti-revolutionary" and "counter-revolutionary." "Counter-revolutionary" stands for the attitude of the Bourbon Restoration—of resistance to all the fruits of the French Revolution, and a glorification of authority by *droit divin*. "Anti-revolutionary" means being opposed to the *spirit* of the French Revolution. That spirit neglects the fact that for a state as for those in government, there is a divine call to do justice. The consequence of this neglect is that not only citizens,. but also governments can become "revolutionary" in the deepest meaning of that word! A state becomes a revolutionary state when it systematically resists the will of God to use its power in a just, non-discriminating way. If, for instance, a government misuses its power by exploiting a nation or by denying its citizens freedom of religion, then it has become a revolutionary government in this sense of the word. Incidentally, this also implies the "right" of its citizens to resist (an expression already used by Calvin). If "magistrates" - responsible persons who are supposed to lead the nation - try to remove such a government, they should not be seen as revolutionaries. What they may have to do must be seen precisely as another way to honour the real calling of a government. Here we again encounter the second cornerstone of the principle of sphere sovereignty, namely that God's calling must have primacy over the abuse of the human will. Authority has to be honoured, no doubt, but always in the context of its calling. Both Groen and Kuyper follow Calvin in speaking very cautiously about the possibility of a necessary "revolution." There has to be a systematic, deliberate, and cruel abuse of power, and there must be care that a revolt does not lead to a bloodbath. Thus a mere collection of citizens possesses no right to resist. Power should be taken over by those who already have a political responsibility and are able to lead the nation. But in principle the right to resist is acknowledged, for having authority is not more "holy" or more "sanctified" than being subject to authority. Was Christ not among us as one who served? Here the first cornerstone of the principle of sphere-sovereignty comes to the fore: the equality in terms of holiness of all stations in life.

It follows that Dutch neo-Calvinism should also construct its own view of *democracy*. Democracy is highly valued, insofar as it expresses the joint calling of government *and* citizens to the direction of the state. It can and must be a corrective against abuse of power. For example, the choice of Elders in Reformed churches has, since Calvin's time, always been a democratic process: the congregation [257] chooses them. But once they are chosen, their guidance and authority must be respected, unless they misuse their position for their own interests. Then their calling has to have priority, and they must be removed *from* their office.

From the start, the Christian social movement in Holland consisted of a coalition of Catholics and Protestants, although each had their own institutions. Yet it is interesting, for example, that with respect to trade unionism an issue such as industrial co-determination is viewed similarly by both groups. God calls production-households to the service of stewardship. That call is addressed not only to management, but to the whole working community. Of course the daily guidance by management has to be respected, but all have a common responsibility for the *direction* or orientation of the enterprise - just as both government and citizens have a shared responsibility for the direction of the state. And that requires institutional arrangements for co-determination. The owners of the enterprise, the share-holders, must understand that they do not own living persons or a living community. They own only the capital goods of the enterprise. If they receive their financial reward and are given a satisfactory account of what is done with their money, they must be content. They cannot assume command of this living community. To do so would be a violation of the sphere-sovereignty of a living and working human community, in which management and workers, though with different duties, share a God-given calling. If management abuses its power and exploits its employees, it must be removed. For both management and labour are *under* the one law of the Sovereign God as it applies to this part of life. The specific law which applies here has its kernel in the mandate of good stewardship over the resources entrusted to that community *as a whole*.

The theme of antithesis

Christians and non-Christians live together in a single society. Thus the

evaluation of society in terms of "calling" and "sphere-sovereignty" is not generally accepted. How, then, should Christians behave amidst pluralism? Should they try to dictate the actions of non-Christians or attempt to build a theocracy?

In relation to these questions, Abraham Kuyper usually referred to what he called the *antithesis:* the radical distinction between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Darkness. His use of the term, [258] however, did not imply a state of affairs in which Christians are on one side and non-Christians on the other. Christians cannot be seen only as children of light, nor non-Christians only as children of darkness. All human beings are fallen, and God's invitation of redemption is extended to all. Therefore Kuyper - and Dooyeweerd after him - spoke of God's *common grace* given to mankind. God sends his sunshine upon all, and his call is not addressed to Christians alone.

But the concepts of antithesis and common grace do not, by themselves, solve the problem of Christian behaviour within a pluralistic society. The concept of common grace seems to permit Christian and non-Christian to cooperate as far as possible, subject as they are to the same calling and the same sin. But the concept of antithesis between light and darkness would seem to imply that Christians should withdraw into isolated communities, fleeing as far as possible from the realm of darkness. Which way did Dutch neo-Calvinism take in face of this dilemma?

One can say that Groen van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuyper, especially the former, wrestled with this problem throughout their lives. In relation to the public school issue, for instance, Groen originally held that every public school must honour the Christian faith in its whole style of education. In his view, separate schools should be erected for Jewish, Muslim or other minorities. But when it became clear that the only politically feasible outcome was that public schools would teach "generally Christian and human social and moral virtues," Groen rejected this compromise and changed his opinion. He then argued for separate Christian schools, and no longer sought to burden public schools with any religious obligation. Once a society has become secularized, he felt, no other choice can honestly be made.

Starting where van Prinsterer had ended, Kuyper founded many separate Christian organizations and institutions. Like his great predecessor, he could not and would not accept these organizations as "safe hiding-places" for a self-contemplating and complacent Christian segment of the population. He could only accept them as the last line of defense, from which the battle for the heart of the nation would be launched. By means of their own organizations Christians must play an active role within a secular society under God's common grace. For as Kuyper himself once said, "There is no piece of this earthly soil of which Christ has not said: 'It is mine!' "

[259] Otherness

Again we are reminded of Max Weber, who once characterized Calvinism as *innerweltliche askese,* that is, as living *in* this world but not fully being *of* this world. By their nature, Christian organizations embody the "otherness" of Christians but in Kuyper's conception are legitimate only if they fulfill their Christian service *within* the world and *within* existing society. Exactly what is that Christian service? It is to fulfill one's calling! A Christian political party, for instance, is not meant to be a self-centred, closed meeting-place for Christians, nor a missionary undertaking to enforce a kind of theocracy. Its calling is to be a servant of public justice - for this is the meaning of all political life. This means, for example, that all must be treated as *equal* citizens of one state; regardless of their religious convictions. That seems to be a "neutral" activity, but it is not. For in this conception, the doing of justice for all is seen to derive directly from God's Law for the state. *If* Christianity is not to be found in the hearts of the people, the government should not *try* to enforce conformity. To do so would be to misuse the power that legitimately belongs to government. The battle for the heart of the nation can only be fought with spiritual weapons. But in that spiritual battle, a Christian political party can and should play an active role; pointing again and again to the fact that justice Should be done in society, and upholding individual rights, as well as institutional ones, so that calling or vocation can be realized. Thus a Christian political party can play its part in the great struggle on this earth between the Kingdom of God and the realm of darkness: the antithesis.

We can understand why Kuyper would conclude *his* opening speech to

the Free University of Amsterdam with a prayer, in which he asked God to destroy his university if it neglected the liberating Wisdom of God in its concrete *scientific* endeavour. There can be no purpose for a Christian organization or institution, other than in the context of its *specific* calling. Purpose must be specific in terms of the specific norms which hold for the "sphere of life" of which the organization is a part. The norms referred to here are those which, by God's common grace, hold in a general way in the midst of a secular society.

A century later the Christian organizations of Holland are all caught to some extent in an internal crisis. Some have evolved into organizations of Christian-belonging-together with no percep-[260]-tion of their own calling in society. This is true to some extent for the Christian Democratic Appeal, cross-denominational successor of the two Protestant political parties and the Catholic party of the Netherlands. In other cases the organizations have become "open" institutions which can be joined by almost anyone. It has recently been said of Kuyper's life-work, therefore, that it was "a triumph grasped too early." His "cultural optimism" is said to have failed.

Many sincere Christians abandoned the so-called Christian institutions, either because of disappointment, or because they rejected Kuyper's view that Christians should organize separately in crucial sectors of life. What the future will bring is not clear. Will there be a revival of the existing Christian organizations and institutions? It seems improbable. Will smaller groups of Christians form new ones? Perhaps, but they will have to face the fact that, on the one hand, the "old" institutions still exist, and on the other hand, many Christians already have found their way to non-Christian institutions. An era seems to be passing away - and as one who belonged to that era, I have personal feelings of sadness. I only hope that those Christians who find their way to the non-Christian institutions in our present society will not become fully secularized, but will cherish a deep sense of their calling and that of the group, party, or organization which they have chosen to join. This last remark betrays how deeply I myself belong to this Dutch, neo-Calvinist tradition.

The theme of architectonic critique

This picture of the social thought of Dutch neo-Calvinism would not be complete without some account of a third motive: that of a critique of the foundations - the "architectonics" - of present-day society. Kuyper himself coined the word *architectonische kritiek* in a famous speech of 1891 on the condition of the working class in Holland.

Did his commitment to such a critique mean that Kuyper chose socialism? No, his critique had another basis. "Instead of honouring human society as a living organism, the spirit of the Revolution has broken up human society, and in its atomistic mischief has left nothing but the isolated, self-oriented individual." Because of that individualist-ic principle, Kuyper said, "Now in Europe a well-fed bourgeoisie controls an impoverished working population, which has contributed to its capital, and, when incapable of doing so, this bourgeoisie sinks into the swamp of the proletariat. The rich ex-[261]-ploit the poor and the root of the evil is, that man is treated as though he is cut off from his eternal destiny and not honoured as created in the image of God. Our society has knelt down to Mammon, and by the spirit (incentive) of egoism it is now shaken in its foundations." Between the Kingdom of God and capitalism, according to Kuyper, "there is an absolute contradiction." "Where poor and rich stand over against each other, Jesus never chose the side of the rich; he joined the poor."

That aspect of Kuyper's thought does not mean that he approved a bloody class struggle. For such a struggle has its origin "in a hate of those who are rich and a neglect of those who are poor." Jesus did not hate the rich as such; he opposed their mistreatment of the poor and castigated their lust for money and possessions. But Kuyper adds that the position of the rich was enhanced by "a mistake in the foundation of society itself." Therefore, in his opinion the problem is not one of a lack of philanthropy, but a genuinely *social* problem.

What was Kuyper's alternative? "A society which respects the foundations of social life, as laid down by God himself." In his view this meant two things:

   a) *that both state and society had to be honoured as distinctive*

spheres of life, in which society should not be seen as an aggregate of individuals, but as a living organic entity;

b) that the state, as the institution charged with dispensing justice, must intervene in society to safeguard due respect for each sphere of life with its own place and responsibility. No sphere may exercise autonomy, but only responsibility, for "absolute ownership belongs only to God; all our property is only on loan for our use, all our administration is only stewardship" (Kuyper, De Sociale Kwestie, 1891).

This summary makes clear that the conception of society in Dutch neo-Calvinism is not only non-capitalistic, but also differs essentially from the reactionary, corporatist point of view. While the concept of Society is organic, the idea of a state as the natural head of the organic body of society is decidedly avoided. state and society are spheres of life, each with its own distinctive calling. It is only the administration of public justice which may and should bring the state to intervene in society. For instance, if different social spheres collide, as in the ex-[262]-ploitation of employees and their families by business firms, then government must rightly become involved.

Here the primary theme of calling in Dutch neo-Calvinism again comes clearly to the fore. Kuyper's "architectonic critique" is seen to complement the theme of calling. For such a critique is necessary to maintain families in their vocation, to recall production-households to their vocation as communities of stewardship, and to encourage the state in its calling to do justice.

This view of the state in neo-Calvinism, moreover, had concrete results. It caused Kuyper himself to design a general law for labour and working conditions *(Wetboek voor den arbeid),* compelling employers and employees to accept joint responsibilities for direction of the different branches of industry. In Kuyper's view, wages should be the outcome not of the free working of an individualistic labour market, but of negotiation between organizations of employers and employees. After Kuyper's death this came about in the Netherlands.

Relevance for our modern society

Our society is vastly different from that of Kuyper's day. The harsh features of nineteenth century capitalism have been softened by government legislation, and our economic system has changed in many other ways. New social problems have emerged. Yet these changes do not mean that the ideas and conditions that brought about the rise of neo-Calvinism are no longer valid in our time. Three illustrations may be useful here.

(1) Unemployment has grown enormously in recent years. Inflation, too, has become a structural problem. Usually, those problems are seen as temporary - caused by a lack of economic expansion on the one side, and a lack of monetary control on the other. They can therefore be treated technically, almost mechanically. We have tended to treat society like a mechanism which needs "fuel" and "help". One might ask, however, whether by dealing with our economic problems in this way, we are not exacerbating rather than solving the problem. Is unlimited economic expansion the answer to unemployment? Is this the fulfilment of our economic calling, and a proof of responsible stewardship in the use of the means entrusted to us? On the contrary, it may appear that these problems are born of a *neglect* of stewardship. Here we have to acknowledge the reality of sin. To a large extent [263] inflation is a symptom of an acquisitive society. Individuals and organizations are never content, but continually enlarge their desires beyond what is available. Social groups and institutions therefore shift their burdens onto each other. As this continues by means of ever-increasing wage demands, prices and taxes, the burden comes to rest on the shoulders of those who cannot fight back. The process of inflation can therefore be seen as another violation of sphere-sovereignty. Rather than rely upon mechanical devices, the government should go to the root of the problem in its fight for public justice, and discipline powerful pressure groups if they misuse their power in this way.

Unemployment

Something similar is true of growing structural unemployment This problem is connected with the unrestrained progress of production- technology in modern society which has its origin in a worship of the idol of rising living standards. If technological progress generates an annual rise of about *4* per cent in average labour productivity, we need a demand expansion of about the

same amount to maintain employment. As soon as the growth of real demand diminishes, let us say, to a 2 per cent or 0 per cent increase - due, for example, to international factors - unemployment must rise: in this case by 2 per cent or 4 per cent respectively. Those who work in more productive firms and industries drive out of employment those who can be spared: usually the weaker. Here again we observe a violation of public justice in economic life which we have already discussed in connection with Kuyper's notions of sphere-sovereignty and his "architectonic critique." We must ask therefore if our economic system does not lead us astray in this way from our common economic calling. The earth is not entrusted to us to provide an unlimited technologically-led expansion of economic goods. If we make it so, we deplete the earth's resources and limit the economic possibilities of poorer nations and future generations.

Unless we are open to a new architectonic critique of the foundations of our present society, therefore, we shall not be able to cope with the problem of rising unemployment. The idol of ever-growing productivity has to fall if we want to maintain the possibility of working in a useful and serviceable way in times of decreasing demand. That is only possible in turn if society as a whole abandons its pursuit. [265] of the "holy grail" of an always-rising standard of living - what Galbraith has called "the article of faith of modern society". We find here another manifestation of the struggle between light and darkness in our times - of the antithesis as formulated by Abraham Kuyper.

(2) Where Luther and Calvin used the word "calling" in relation to human labour, they were emphasizing its human quality. Not every type of labour deserves that label. The issue here is not the degree of simplicity or complexity of work. Rather, it is whether or not the character of the work displays or conceals the image of God in man. The One who calls us must be honoured in the work we do.

This normative view of human labour implies that every type of work should allow choice and creativity. When God created the world, He expressed something of Himself in the work of his hands. The possibility of expressing something of one's own personality in what one does is a basic human characteristic of labour.

Furthermore, the theme of calling implies that we should have the possibility of co-operating with other human beings, by our labour, and to serve them. Calvin once said that God did not create people with different characteristics in order to show that they are or should be unequal, but rather to make it necessary for them to help and serve each other, and to co-operate in their work. Finally, "calling" implies that work should take place in a context of Shalom - of rest and peace. The Sixth Commandment is the injunction to keep the Sabbath a day of rest, pre-eminent in the week. Only in that context of rest, or Shalom, has our human labour its legitimate place.

Progress

(3) Our society is dominated by the claims of "progress" to such an extent that the spheres of state and private enterprise are intermingled in many ways. Government itself promotes economic growth and technical progress, even sending men to the moon; private business intervenes in political processes by continual lobbying. Sometimes this intervention is welcomed by politicians. Socio-economic decision making has become a joint effort of government, employers and employees [new page] in many countries, in the context of a so-called "consensus-state." A new mass-elite division in society has arisen in this way.

Now there is, of course, nothing wrong with continual contact between government and organizations of employers and employees. Our society is complex, and such contact can be very useful. But each participant has to be aware of his own specific calling. The norm of public justice is violated when government acquiesces in the demands of the most powerful pressure groups. Society is corrupted. Similarly, society is threatened if a government tries to rule according to the principle of "the least pain," exchanging the criterion of justice for that of utility. This may be popular in the short run, but in the longer term it creates many unforeseen problems which reveal the injustice of the act and lead to governmental rescue operations to patch up a sorry situation.

As I believe I have made clear in this paper, it is my conviction that modern society and the institutions of political democracy are deadly sick.

They try to live autonomously, having lost any awareness of God's calling. But now they receive, "in their own flesh," the recompense of their sins. This is the message of neo-Calvinism. It is this that Groen van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuyper sought to explain, and that their present-day successors in Holland and North America hold out for their fellow-Christians of other traditions.

Comment

Irving Hexham

Introduction

Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) discusses Dutch neo-Calvinism in *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (London, 1931, vol. 2, pp. *655,* 660, 676, 879, *935* and 938— 940), and his work is a valuable supplement to that of Max Weber alluded to in Dr. Goudzwaard's paper [new page].

In the context of this conference it is significant that Stahl was a major influence on the thought of Peter Drucker. Stahl's major work, which greatly influenced van Prinsterer, is translated by T. D. Taylor as *The Present-Day Parties in the State and Church* (Blenheim Publishing House, State College, Pennsylvania, 1976). Van Prinsterer's work, *Unbelief and Revolution,* is at present being translated into English by Harry van Dyke and is now available from The Institute for Christian Studies, 229 College Street, Toronto. F. VandenBerg's biography *Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids, 1960) is informative but uncritical.

The Dutch Christian Labour Movement is discussed in a comparative context by M. P. Fogarty in *Christian Democracy in Western Europe* (London, 1957). For a discussion of the development of Dutch society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the context of race relations, see Christopher Bagley, *The Dutch Plural Society* (Oxford, 1973).

The philosophy of the cosmonomic idea, sometimes called the Amsterdam philosophy, is the basis of a growing interest in Dutch neo-Calvinist thought among evangelical Christians in Australia, Britain, New Zealand and North America. The Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto is one institution founded to promote this branch of Calvinism. The best general introduction to the philosophy of Herman Dooyeweerd (l894-1977) is L. Kalsbeek, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy* (Toronto, 1976). Critical studies are to be found in A. L. Conradie, *The Neo-Calvinist Concept of Philosophy* (Pietermaritzburg, 1960) and Vincent Brummer, *Transcendental Criticism and Christian Philosophy* (Franeker, 1961). A recent attempt by a British evangelical to apply the insights of this tradition to social, economic and political issues is Alan Storkey *A Christian Social Perspective* (Leicester, 1979).

The conflict between what Goudzwaard calls the "scientific" and "practical-institution-al" wings of neo-Calvinism can be seen in the less than enthusiastic response of many Christian Reformed Churches in North America to Dooyeweerdian groups like the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. Dooyeweerd originally spoke of his work as "Calvinistic philosophy." Later he

changed this to "Christian philosophy" and spoke modestly about his attempt to revive Christian philosophy. Unfortunately, many of his followers have been more lavish in their claims than either Dooyeweerd or Kuyper both of whom sought to interact with other Christian traditions.

[267] The theme of vocation

An attempt to locate the work of Dutch neo-Calvinist thinkers in the reformation tradition is to be found in William Young, *Towards a Reformed Philosophy* (Franeker, 1952). The suggestion that Calvin saw an institutional dimension to the idea of vocation which gave institutions a calling in society is interesting. Dr. Goudzwaard should have provided more information about this, documenting the development of Calvin's thought in Dutch Calvinism.

It is important to realize the degree to which the Dutch neo-Calvinist tradition rejects mysticism and the sacred-profane distinction. It sees all secular life as holy and all religious life as secular. This is one reason why it is wrong to identify Dutch neo-Calvinism with the Puritans, evangelicals or fundamentalists. In embracing the whole of life as a religious realm the concept of the Kingdom of God is very important in this tradition.

The "principle of sphere-sovereignty" is the key to the development of Kuyper's thought and provides Dutch neo-Calvinism with a means of limiting claims to authority and power. It should be noted, however, that while both Kuyper and Dooyeweerd very dearly rejected racism, some South African thinkers have developed the idea of sphere-sovereignty as a basis for apartheid. Cf. Irving Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid* (Toronto, 1981).

The implications of sphere-sovereignty are complicated and difficult to understand. One of the clearest expressions of the idea is to be found in Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism* (Princeton, 1898) pp. 108-120, where he combines an organic view of society with a mechanical view of the state. In creating his social model Kuyper acknowledges that conflict is an essential part of any human society and argues that the Christian can never hope to abolish social or political conflict but that such conflicts can be minimized when justice is made a goal.

The emphasis on the calling of each sovereign sphere of society is an attempt to relativize the authority of all human institutions before the law of God. In theory this sounds great. The problem comes, however, when one wishes to identify the callings of different social spheres and set their appropriate boundaries. What, in fact, does God's calling mean in practical terms? How can a Christian businessman or labour leader implement this idea in the everyday work situation?

The principle of sphere-sovereignty is said to have a "normative colour and flavour." What does this mean? How do we derive our [268] norms? Are

they arrived at by intuition? By reading the Bible? Or by historical analysis? The problems here are similar to those faced by Karl Mannheim in developing his social philosophy when he faced the issue of relativism in his work *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1952).

Soteriology

The doctrine of the sovereignty of God is basic for this development of Christian social thought. In understanding the development of this doctrine by Kuyper it is worth comparing his view of God's sovereignty with that of the contemporary British Calvinist Charles Spurgeon. For Spurgeon the sovereignty of God was related to soteriology, or individual salvation. Kuyper linked it to the doctrine of creation. Thus for Spurgeon the phrase "Christ is Lord of all" signified Christ's Lordship in terms of man's salvation. For Kuyper the same phrase was a cultural mandate which impelled Christians to take an active role in the state and society. Cf. J. Sills, *An Examination of the Social and Cultural Dimensions of the View of Life Preached by Ct H. Spurgeon,* unpublished M.A. Thesis, Bristol University, 1973.

Kuyper, believed that the state must intervene in society to protect the weak and maintain justice. *Christianity and the Class Struggle* (Grand Rapids, *1950)* is a translation of one of his important Dutch works. Kuyper's political views are discussed by D. Jellema in "Abraham Kuyper's Attack on Liberalism" in the *Review of Politics,* vol. 19, 1957. Socialism, Liberalism and Methodism were dirty words for writers in this tradition, who used them to create identifiable external enemies and thus reinforced the internal unity of the neo-Calvinist community by creating clear intellectual boundaries.

The question of central planning is a difficult one. Kuyper seems far more willing to entertain the idea than many North Americans. This needs further discussion. It is easy to say that the government's mandate is to bring "justice in public life." But what is justice? Marxists would make similar claims. The notion of justice and its practical implementation needs clearer definition and explanation. Similar comments could be made about stewardship. Goudzwaard appears to be an environmentalist.

But the North American neo-Calvinist leader R. J. Rushdoony would oppose many environmental stands supported by Goudzwaard on the basis of a different understanding of the implications of stewardship. What is the definition of "autonomous liberty"? How does this dif-[269]-fer from "normatively bound liberty"? Who decides which is which and how do they make this decision?

The problem of authority and democracy from a perspective close to Dutch neo-Calvinism is discussed in Peter Drucker's book The End of Economic Man (New York, 1939). Drucker raises all the questions addressed by Goudzwaard and Dutch neo-Calvinism in what is for me a far more practical

way. The weakness of Dutch neo-Calvinism is its love of theory and lack of practical application in the modern world. Drucker made his analysis, influenced by Stahl, and then in the Concept of the Corporation (New York, 1946) attempted to provide a solution applicable to modern society. In many ways Drucker's entire work can be seen as an intellectual debate about authority and democracy.

Popular sovereignty

Like authority, the concept of revolution needs more careful definition. For neo-Calvinists "revolution" is a theoretical term with metaphysical implications that must be related to the continual warfare between God and Satan. But while neo-Calvinists may recognize past revolutions as godly or evil I'm not so sure they can analyze the revolutionary situations of today with any clarity. The problem with talk about "respect for every God-given authority" is again the problem of definition and recognition. Were the American revolutionaries acting in a revolutionary way when they revolted against British rule or was their war of independence justified? On the basis of what is said here it would seem that they were fundamentally wrong in their actions. But many American Calvinists would dispute this conclusion. If democracy is not to be based on popular sovereignty, what is it to be based on? Isn't popular sovereignty rooted in the Calvinist tradition? The neo-Calvinist solution of God's sovereignty sounds good but what does this mean in practice? How does a neo-Calvinist or Dutch election differ from a revolutionary, or French election? The choice of elders in Reformed Churches may have been something like a democratic process but who participated in their election? Women and some men, those under a certain age for example, were excluded.

Co-determination is a major theme of neo-Calvinist social thinkers. Its application in the North American context can be seen in the work of the Christian Labour Association of Canada. See: H. D. Ayers, *A Study of the Christian Labour Association of Canada,* unpublished [270] M.C.S. thesis, Regent College, Vancouver, 1979. We are told that government and citizens, directors of companies and their workers, have shared responsibilities. But who decides how these shares are to be allocated? Here again the theory sounds good but how does it work in practice? Further, can these deductions really be made in a consistent way from the theological doctrine of the sovereignty of God, Calvinist theology, or the Bible? Goudzwaard makes a very good point when he says that owners of the enterprises are "not the owners of living persons" only "capital goods." But what does ownership mean? Where do the owners get their goods if not from the labour of others? Here along with Keynes and the whole of modern economics Goudzwaard's position seems weakened by lack of a theory of value.

What does it mean to be "under the law of the Sovereign God?" Are the Ten Commandments being referred to? Or the Law of the Old Testament? Or the Law of Love'? Or what? Again definition is needed and practical examples

are lacking.

The theme of antithesis

The issue of a common society which is pluralistic is one with which few Christian groups have as yet come to terms. In attempting to implement "Christian" policies, Christians face the major problem of non-Christians who do not share their values. This need not be an issue if one believes in Natural Law but for neo-Calvinists who reject this, the antithesis is a major problem.

Anti-revolutionaries claim to appreciate some of the fruits of the French revolution while rejecting its spirit. In this way they hope to avoid becoming reactionaries. However, I fail to see how. One can clearly distinguish between the good "fruits" and the bad "spirit" of the French Revolution. Surely the spirit of the Enlightenment gave birth to the fruits of the revolution. Again the problem is one of definition and the ability to make consistent distinctions. If a state is revolutionary when it fails to use its power "in a just, non-discriminating way" does this mean that the United States government was revolutionary prior to the civil rights legislation of the 1960s and is non-revolutionary today? A "governmental system misuses its power by exploiting a nation" and thus becomes "a revolutionary government." Does it mean that the government of South Africa is revolutionary because it exploits the Zulu and Tswana nations?

[271]

Goudzwaard says that there is a "right *to* resist" when "responsible persons can lead the nation." This would seem to imply that if Chief Gatsha Buthelesi were to lead a resistance of the Zulu nation against the South African government in terms of neo-Calvinist thought he would be justified. It might also be argued that the actions of Nelson Mandela in organizing South African Blacks to resist the white government was also non-revolutionary. Yet in South Africa, Afrikaners who accept the theories of Dutch neo-Calvinism would be among the leading critics of Buthelesi and Mandela both of whom are often accused of being communists. Is neo-Calvjnist theory really useful if it is open to such diverse interpretations? Goudzwaard legitimizes resistance by saying "God's calling must have primacy over the (abuse) of the human will. Authority has to be honoured... but in the context of its calling." How do we agree on what is and what is not a true calling? I find no clear guidance as to when revolution is and when it is not legitimate.

I'm not sure what the discussion about the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness tells us except that we live in a very complicated world. Goudzwaard's recognition that Christians are also "fallen" is reassuring but in practice I suspect most neo-Calvinists tend to trust neo-Calvinist politicians rather than really evaluating their arguments. This may not be the case in the Netherlands but it certainly works that way in South Africa. A similar thing can

be seen in the politics of the new Christian Right in America. Although the 'concept of common grace" may "invite Christians and non-Christians to cooperate," in practice van Prinsterer's dictum, "In isolation our strength" seems to prevail. The neo-Calvinist tradition encourages isolationism.

Dutch neo-Calvinism was politicized by the "public school issue." The same is true of neo-Calvinists in South Africa where the issue of Christian-National education played an important role in the creation of Afrikaner Nationalist ideology. At present this issue is the basis for a revival of interest in politics among evangelicals in North America. What isn't usually realized is that the theories of Dutch neo-Calvinism have been popularized by writers like Francis Schaeffer to provide an intellectual justification for the actions of the new Christian Right. What ultimate impact these writers will have I don't know but it is significant that Schaeffer's book *A Christian Manifesto* (Crossway Books, 1981) sold over 190,000 copies in the six months between Christmas 1981 and July 1982.

[272]

Goudzwaard says that "If Christianity is not shared in the heart of the people, the government should not try to enforce it." Most neo-Calvinists claim to agree with this sentiment, although some like R. J. Rushdoony challenge it. However, it leaves unanswered the crucial question of what enforcement means. Are governments enforcing Christianity when they ban pornography? What about abortion? Many Dutch neo-Calvinists, such as Professor H. R. Rookmaaker, have taken a very liberal stance on these issues. But in North America, distinction is made between enforcing Christianity and upholding Christian values. This issue is far more difficult than the paper implies.

Dutch neo-Calvinist institutions arose as a result of a long social, theological and political struggle. In the first half of the twentieth century they flourished. But now they are in definite decline. Many observers argue that their decline has left the Netherlands a spiritual wasteland where religion is discredited. I would like to hear Dr. Goudzwaard's thoughts on the reasons for the decline of Dutch neo-Calvinism and its impact on Dutch religious life.

The theme of architectonic critique

Dutch neo-Calvinism is presented as making "a critique of the foundations... of present-day society." If this is true then we can all learn a great deal from it. Unfortunately, I do not see this claim working in practice. In the Netherlands neo-Calvinists seem to follow secular thinkers in their analysis of society. Similarly, in South Africa it was liberal and radical critics who exposed apartheid, not neo-Calvinists who have tended to accept the *status quo*. How then can such impressive claims be made?

Neo-Calvinism rejects capitalism and socialism. It sometimes sound

dangerously like fascism. Of course, Dr. Goudzwaard is not a fascist and many neo-Calvinists fought bravely in the Dutch resistance during World War II; but it needs to be remembered that others, including members of Kuyper's own family, joined the Dutch Nazi party.

Relevance for modern society

To describe inflation as "a symptom of an acquisitive society" seems to contradict history. Inflation was around a long time before in-[273]-dustrial society, and the statement says nothing practical about its cure. It seems to me to be rather like saying the Vietnam War was caused by sin. How inflation violates sphere-sovereignty and the ways governments can prevent this I fail to understand. Goudzwaard seems to be calling for tough government action. Kuyper used the armed forces to break a railway strike in 1903. Is this the neo-Calvinist solution to social unrest?

Although he doesn't quite say so, Goudzwaard seems to see technology as essentially evil. If this is so I suggest his neo-Calvinism has strong romantic overtones. Why is a rising standard of living idolatrous? It's easy for academics to condemn labour leaders and businessmen but I'm unconvinced that declining living standards are the answer. In his comments on the depletion of natural resources Goudzwaard echoes the Club of Rome. Here I suggest we are offered a Christian attempt to follow a popular trend rather than an "architectonic critique." Popular fear of industry and environmental concerns have surfaced almost every fifty years since the onset of the industrial revolution. I believe the Club of Rome is wrong in its findings, and it could well be that its scare tactics have done more harm than good.

In attempting to re-introduce labour-intensive work, Goudzwaard wants to reaffirm the value of labour and convince us that production lines and modern methods of manufacturing are inhumane. Unlike Goudzwaard, I spent a significant part of my life in industry. His views do not reflect my own experience of industrial life but rather a popular middle-class image put forward to people who have paid short visits to the workplace. Some workers, fearing the loss of their jobs, may be against technology. But, the vast majority simply want to be sure they have a job and when that is clear, to make it as easy as possible. It seems to me, therefore, that it is a romantic gloss to talk about the meaningfulness of work. There are many jobs which can never become creative or allow the worker to feel he is making a significant contribution to mankind. Yet they need to be done. In such a situation, good pay and as much mechanization as possible seem the only answer.

Objections to Dutch Calvinism

The basic objection I have to this tradition is that its social theory rests on a series of historical contradictions The theory is anti-revolutionary, yet everywhere it gains popularity it does so on the basis of [274] an appeal to a

religious community which has revolutionary roots. The Reformation, the Dutch revolt against Spain, the English civil war, the American Revolution, the Great Trek in South Africa and the rise of modern Afrikaaner Nationalism are all revolutionary movements. Yet neo-Calvinists accept and indeed rejoice in these revolutions. At the same time all progressive measures which can be traced to the French Revolution, the Enlightenment, liberalism or humanism are rejected as un-Christian. All I can conclude is that neo-Calvinism legitimates one revolutionary tradition by attacking another.

Although neo-Calvinists claim to make an architectonic critique of the foundations of society all I see them producing are Christianized versions of secular ideas. Two examples illustrate this. During the late 1960s and early 1970s the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto promoted a magazine, *Vanguard,* as a forum for neo-Calvinist thought. Anyone who examines its articles during this period will see a lack of criticism and tendency to drift along with the latest cultural fad. Similarly, neo-Calvinist criticisms of apartheid in South Africa have lagged behind liberal and radical criticism by about twenty years without making any improvement on them.

Finally, this is a system which is exceptionally complicated and tends to lose itself in jargon. To my mind neo-Calvinism needs a dose of Anglo-Saxon linguistic philosophy to clarify its rather confused concepts.

Valuable Elements in the Neo-Calvinist Tradition

From all I have said it might appear that I am strongly anti-Calvinist. In fact I am not. I personally owe a great deal to the Dutch neo-Calvinist tradition and find the example of Bob Goudzwaard as a Christian thinker and political activist inspiring. The fact that I disagree with many of his premises and conclusions does not mean I do not respect him or the tradition he represents.

Dutch neo-Calvinism represents for me a Christian myth. Abraham Kuyper inspired his followers with a powerful vision [275] of justice in society. His basis was the Calvinism of the Dutch people. For many Kuyper did bring justice and hope. But I'm not sure that his vision can be analyzed in the way Goudzwaard and most neo-Calvinists would like. As soon as one examines a myth it loses its mythic quality and dies. Kuyper's work held together as long as it provided a vision with the minimum of critical analysis, which is not to say that it wasn't intellectually virile and productive.

When transferred to other cultures the vision has taken on different forms. In South Africa justice for Afrikaners in 1902 meant freedom from the devastating effects of British imperialism and led to the development of the theory of apartheid. That this later legitimated the oppression of Blacks is the irony of a complicated situation. In North America the vision is resurrected by religious leaders~ of the new fundamentalism, such as Francis Schaeffer and Tim LaHaye. Here the vision has a new form but for many it offers hope in a

confused and threatening world.

However we react to this tradition, I think we must all agree that it is impressive and powerful in its ability to inspire Christians. Many here may not like its right-wing associations but we must remember that Goudzwaard represents what may be seen as the left wing of this• tradition, which in itself shows something of the tradition's vitality.

Reply

Bob Goudzwaard

The comment of Dr. Hexham on my paper is not only very valuable and informative (I want to thank him especially for many additional bibliographic notes), but also challenging and intriguing.

Hexham states that he owes personally a great deal to the Dutch neo-Calvinist tradition. But at the same time, he continues, he disagrees with many of my premises and conclusions. Obviously therefore, Hexham not only objects to Dutch neo-Calvinism itself, but also, and perhaps even more, to my way of interpreting it. For ex-[276]-ample, he declares, "For many, Abraham Kuyper did bring justice and hope. But I'm not sure that his vision can be analyzed in the way Goudzwaard and most neo-Calvinists would like." Of course my discussant does not suggest here that he understands Dutch neo-Calvinism more profoundly than I. What he wants to make clear is that Dutch neo-Calvinism is a vision of society which hides its essence and flavour as soon as its content is analyzed. This explains the astonishing number of cases in which he asks for more and sharper definitions, descriptions and identifications. He even suggests that neo-Calvinism "needs 'a dose of Anglo-Saxon linguistic philosophy to clarify its rather confused concepts." That seems to me to express his own conviction, that the way to the heart of Dutch neo-Calvinism is not, and cannot be, that of intellectual understanding.

I certainly agree with some of his criticism. Hexham is quite correct for instance in his remark about "love of theory"; sometimes it has even a scholastic flavour. What Kuyper wrote especially is open to a whole range of diverse interpretations. But I refuse to follow Hexham in saying that Dutch neo-Calvinism cannot be analysed at all, from *within*. Hexham seems to suggest that the tradition can only escape being called "a myth," if it is prepared to define not only its *own* concepts (as I did, for instance speaking about sphere-sovereignty), but also to define and identify its "own" idea of generally held concepts such as justice, stewardship, liberty. Here I disagree. And course I can try to make clear that a word like "justice" is used and interpreted quite differently in our tradition. In Marxian usage, for instance "justice" is a class-

oriented concept; and in neo-Calvinism it refers to the basic equality of all human creatures, and to what each person needs for his or her calling. But that is not a definition. For, in my opinion, justice is a God-given norm which precedes all human activity including the activity of the human intellect. In every case in which reference is made to the ultimate norms of life, the movement has to be understood from within.

Context

Let me try to illustrate this. Where I referred to the idea of the meaningfulness of human labour, Hexham's comment is that such an expression reveals "a romantic gloss." But in Dutch neo-Calvinism the totality of life and work is nothing else than a totality in the *context* of normative, God-given *meaning,* which we either accept, [277] reject, or ignore. Even outside this tradition Max Weber referred to the *Eigenwert,* the 'own-value' and dignity of human labour, which has to be recognized whenever production process takes place. Of course, many unpleasant jobs "need to be done" - but the question is, *how* they are done with or without creativity, co-responsibility and mutual cooperation.

This brings me to a second objection. I am sure that my discussant has a deeper insight into the *American* variety of neo-Calvinism than I. Perhaps this is also true of the South African variety, which he studied in his dissertation on the ideological backgrounds of apartheid. But my contribution concerned the original, *Dutch* neo-Calvinism. My impression is that my discussant came to the study of *Dutch* neo-Calvinism after that of the American and South African varieties. Dr. Hexham seems to follow the principle that you can judge a tree according to its worldwide fruits. How otherwise can I explain his strange remark about members of the Kuyper family joining the Nazi party? Or his statement: "Neo-Calvinism rejects capitalism and socialism. It sounds dangerously like fascism?" These comments suggest that he judges Holland with white South Africa in mind. *South-African* Calvinists indeed often spoke favourably of nazism, especially during the Second World War. But Hexham must know as well as I that the strongest protest against nazism and fascism in the Netherlands during World War II came from the Dutch neo-Calvinists. And not by accident, but precisely because of their utterly anti-fascist world-view.

How then are the South African and American versions of neo-Calvinism related to the original, Dutch tradition? As I tried to explain, Groen van Prinsterer and Kuyper used the concept of "sphere-sovereignty" as a kind of short-hand for their belief that in every situation or sphere of life, man lives and acts *coram Deo* (before the face of the living God). Their whole outlook on reality was coloured by their awareness that all - whether in authority or not - who are involved in any social relation or institution are subject to a same commandment of the One Sovereign Lord. That is to promote public justice within the State, to promote *oikonomia* (stewardship) in the firm (or production-household) and to form a community of love and truth in the family. But in the American and South African interpretations of this principle the original insight was gradually lost, and the concept was re-formulated to serve other interests. In South Africa, for instance, the principle was not only misinterpreted and to at-[278]-tach to different races the label of a "separate" sphere of life, but was combined with elements of German idealistic and romantic thought which referred to an original superiority of the white race and of the necessity for every "people" to survive as one Blood on one Soil. But this was and is a total subversion of all the principle stands for. The will to survive at all costs, preserving a white or Afrikaaner identity, takes the place of the original confession, that within a State everyone must be treated according to the same norm of justice.

A different deformation took place in North America. Here it occurred by way of a synthesis with individualism and conservatism. This was made possible by using the expression "sphere-sovereignty" in relation to the "sovereignty" of *individuals,* who have *authority* in one or other sphere of life. For instance, the legitimacy of almost all types of government intervention in the marketplace could be denied. Even co-responsibility of the workers in business enterprise has sometimes been interpreted as a violation of the principle of sphere-sovereignty, as an attempt to lessen the "sovereignty in power" of individual managers or owners of the firm.

Now Hexham could possibly object here that the original concept was so vague and ambiguous that it opened the way for later neo-Calvinists to arrive at these interpretations. I am of a different opinion. No doubt Kuyper lacked clearness in his formulations; especially in his attempted distinction between

the "mechanic" and the "organic" side of society which was open to abuse. But what explicitly motivated him and van Prinsterer was wilfully set aside in later times, even in the Netherlands to some extent.

Conclusion

Let me conclude with a few answers to some of Dr. Hexham's many questions.

(1) What God's calling can mean in practical terms was explained in the twenties in Gerbrandy's book **De Strijd om Nieuwe Maatschappijvormen** (The struggle for new forms of society). Gerbrandy was a true Calvinist of Kuyper's persuasion, and was the courageous prime minister of Holland during the Second World War. I discussed his contribution to some extent in my **Aid for the Overdeveloped West** (Toronto *1975)*.

(2) Real norms are not derived, but revealed in God's Word and in Creation. Groen van Prinsterer described them as "those truths [279] which are written by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the most simple Christian." See also for this question Herman Dooyeweerd, **A New Critique of Theoretical Thought.**

(3) Liberty in the biblical sense is not contrasted with *any* type of human control, but only with enslavement.

(4) A revolution is only acceptable for a Calvinist under extreme conditions: when a government systematically and consciously abuses its power to oppress its own people; and when, at the same time, responsible political leaders (Calvin spoke about "magistrates") can take command without creating chaos. The American struggle for independence was of course justified according to this view.

(5) Popular *sovereignty* is certainly not rooted in the Calvinist tradition. Groen's main work *(**Unbelief and Revolution***)* can be seen as one continued fight against the idea of popular sovereignty.

(6) In my opinion, the government of South Africa is indeed on its way to

becoming a revolutionary government.

(7) The interpretation of Groen's statement is incorrect. He did not mean by isolation a kind of separatism, but the return to one's *zelfstandighejd van overtuiging*, (independence of conviction). See Groen van Prinsterer **Nederlandsche Gedachten** (July 9, 1870).

(8) Enforcing Christianity is different from upholding Christian values and giving them expression in legal principles.

(9) It is not my perception that religion is yet discredited in Holland. Concerning the decline of Dutch neo-Calvinistic institutions, I tried to explain in my paper that they lost much of their original spirituality: mainly because they could not resist the temptation to become self-centred and concerned with their self-preservation

(10) I am sorry I did not convince Hexham of the originality of Kuyper's architectonical critique, nor of its relevance for modern society. Perhaps we differ too much in our view of the problems of society today to come to a common mind. Let me only say that *of course* the desire for a continually rising standard of living can become idolatrous if it becomes the final meaning of life; and *of course* technology is not essentially evil. It becomes an evil only if the hope a better future in terms of peace and happiness is centred on technology.