

Globalization , Regionalization and Sphere-Sovereignty

Introduction

Throughout his life, and especially during his extended public career, Abraham Kuyper maintained an intense and vital interest in international affairs. The Stone Lectures are full of explicit references to events that occurred outside the Netherlands, and it is not hard to find other examples to complement these among his many speeches and publications. His correspondence from an early time shows his strong international connections. Therefore it is most appropriate that the organisers of this symposium have reserved a special place in the program for reflection upon current international developments, with a discussion of globalization and regionalization as its primary focus. Kuyper himself would have greatly enjoyed a debate like this one, I am sure.

But what I am less certain about is what he would have said in this debate. For the world has seen immense changes since his time. Full-grown ideologies, like Communism and Fascism, which were only known to Kuyper in their earliest stages, have since his day not only risen and conquered, they have also subsequently fallen and been completely overthrown.

So, to consider Kuyper's contribution, what now can be said, in this post-modern era, if we were to take as our vantagepoint the principle which he made famous, the principle of Sovereignty in its Own Sphere? I have to remind you that the basic idea of this very Kuyperian notion arose some time before the Enlightenment. But even by its terminology *sphere-sovereignty* reminds us of an epoch long ago, a time when either a sovereign church or a sovereign state could threaten the independent existence of all other *spheres of life*. In our current debate about globalization, it is not the presence of these institutions, but far more their absence, which sets the tone. And very often these days discussion about globalization is dominated by an assumption that we are witnessing the end of the (antiquated) nation-state¹. So how now are we to understand *sovereignty in its own sphere*?

Putting this question in this way, makes it easy for us to feel somewhat embarrassed about our terminology. Still, such a feeling of embarrassment may prove helpful if it reminds us that simple slogans and simplistic solutions will not really help us resolve the problems we face. Our ship has to look for deeper water.

Firstly then, we will need to get beyond a superficial knowledge of the processes of globalization and regionalization. We should try to understand these processes by tracing their spiritual roots from what we can deduce from what is evident to us. And secondly, we also need to renew our understanding of the principle of sphere-sovereignty, by going back and revisiting the Christian roots from which it was originally derived.

¹ Kenichi Ohmae *The End of the Nation State, the Rise of Regional Economies* The Free Press, New York 1996; The Group of Lisbon, *Limits to Competition*, MIT Press, Cambridge Mass., 1995; W Ruigrok and R van Tulder, *The Ideology of Interdependence*, Dissertation Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam 1993; Hazel Henderson, *Building a Win-Win World, Life Beyond Global Economic Warfare*, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco 1996 (see especially pp 49ff); Robert Kuttner, *Everything for Sale , the Virtue and Limits of Markets* Alfred A Knopf, New York, 1997; William Greidner, *One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism* Simon and Schuster, New York 1998.

Only after such a double effort (in the terms of understanding how things have changed since Kuyper's times appreciating the principle to which he appealed - paragraphs 1-3 above) will we be in a position to confront the present trends of globalization and regionalization with an 'actualised' formulation of the principle of sphere-sovereignty (this is the 'deeper water' in which we must sail if we are to avoid the embarrassment we mentioned in paragraph 4). And perhaps we may also detect some traits of its lasting significance .

2. Globalization and Regionalization.

Globalization is one of the most frequently used words of our time. Generally, it is referred to as a process which has a variety of aspects though these aspects are described in different ways. Let me give three examples which illustrate the wide reach of this concept as well as highlighting the deep differences in its interpretation:

1. In their book *Global Dreams*, Barnett and Cavanagh speak of four dimensions of the process of globalization: the rise of global information and images; the emergence of a global shopping mall (the arms bazaar included); the existence of global work places; the impact of global financial markets.
2. For the Group of Lisbon, in its report *Limits to Competition*, globalization is primarily used to describe the rise of mega-infrastructures for world production and services, and the emergence of a global civil society. But the emergence of global styles of governance are now also included, along with new global styles of perception and consciousness. In this last aspect the report bears some resemblance to the analysis of Roland Robertson's *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*.²
3. In her challenging book *Building a Win-Win World, Life Beyond Economic Warfare*, Hazel Henderson interprets globalization as a combination of six processes, which are mutually interactive and therefore accelerate the rise of global interdependence. These processes are (1) worldwide forms and types of industrialisation and their corresponding technologies; (2) work and migration, (3) finance, (4) the human effects on the biosphere, (5) militarism and arms trafficking, and (6) communications and planetary culture.³

Already this brief and incomplete selection⁴ of possible descriptions of globalization makes three things abundantly clear:

- I. Globalization is seen by all authors as a set of interlocking processes and hence is of a very dynamic phenomenon ;
- II. Technological and economic developments are obviously in the centre of this process;
- III The process itself is however certainly not confined to economy and technology, but has from the beginning important social and cultural impacts

² *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* Sage London 1992. Robertson sees globalization as a "compression of the world, a new interdependency, and a transformation of consciousness".

³ Hazel Henderson, op.cit, page 11

⁴ see for instance the sources quoted in 1.

and connotations.

Indeed, all this suggests that on a global scale something new is emerging. Globalization can, to some extent, be compared with a planetary satellite, which of course is launched from an existing platform by regional, national and even sometimes local initiatives, but now it moves, at least partially, under its own momentum. Indeed, *Time* magazine of (3rd February 1997) referred to globalization as a planetary "awakening" of mankind.⁵

This implies that it may be wise to distinguish the term 'globalization' from those forms of internationalization which have preceded it by some decades; where internationalization stands for the growth of international trade, as well the founding and functioning of international organisations like the United Nations, the World Health Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Tarrifs and Trade. Globalization is more than internationalization since it involves global-scale varieties of technological and economic life of its own. Internet is a good example of global technology, and world-wide industrial alliances are a good example of the economic aspect of globalization. The *Report* of the prestigious Group of Lisbon announced: "A mega-machine is growing!"⁶

Regionalization is of a more ambiguous nature. Sometimes it is seen as that specific kind of economic development, in which export-zones and geographic poles (like Hongkong, Singapore, the Sillicon Valley) are crystallizing in the ever-changing fluidity of new world markets. These trade zones or economic regions usually lie within specific countries, but can also cross their borders. Regionalization, understood in this way, is typical of the way globalization has an impact upon us. It is a good example of that growing conviction that the nation state is becoming irrelevant because global economics is no longer geared exclusively by its interests⁷.

Regionalization, however, is mostly understood in a somewhat different international manner, namely as the process of economic-political cooperation between nation-states within one geographic region. These forms of cooperation may vary from a relatively loose free-trade zone (like MERCOSUR in Latin America) to an economic-political federation with decidedly supra-national elements (like the European Economic Community (EEC), which

⁵ *Time Magazine* has published articles which use such terms since at least May 29, 1989 (Lance Morrow "Welcome to the Global Village"). J P A Mekkes, Goudzwaard's teacher, writes: *Time's dynamic consists of two intimately related dimensions. One of them is proper to each of us whether we pause to take note of it or not. It is that of the calendar, the clock and the computer; it is that of the 70 or 80 annual revolutions of our earth about the sun during which the material-movement of our body-cells allows us to think, act, and expect. In the other dimension we are asked, in a continual dynamic, to choose direction in terms of that horizon which delimits our thought, though not our knowing. "Methodology and Practise" Philosophia Reformata 38e 1973 p. 82*

⁶ *op cit* p. 4

⁷ See already mentioned book of Kenichi Ohmae *The End of the Nation State* in particular where he discusses the role of Hong Kong, the Kwansai region around Osaka and Catalonia in Spain. *I will call these units 'region states'. They may lie entirely within or across the borders of a nation state. This does not matter* (p5)

has subsequently become the European Union (EU)). Regionalization, in the latter sense, always has separate political roots. The European Economic Community, for instance, grew out of the deliberate political effort by most Western European countries to prevent by whatever means a new military conflict with Germany. For the countries of the European continent the political element was thus paramount, even in the joint decision to form a common economic market.⁸

Looked at from a wider global perspective, this type of regionalization - primarily a politically-motivated economic union - is exceptional. Recent forms of regionalization occur mainly due to hard economic reasoning. They usually form as a joint inter-state reaction to the growing demands, or claims, of global competition by offering a temporary hiding-place for workers in weaker national economies. In the case of the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) it is Mexico which is being protected. But there is no doubt that the main long-term effect is their contribution towards further globalization, serving as a kind of stepping-stone between the national and the global.

Then there is the so-called process of *triadization*. The TRIAD involves formal cooperation between North America plus Western Europe and Japan. It also often includes negotiations with the "minidragons" of South-East Asia.⁹ *Triadization* is an example of that type of economic regionalization where the political and interstate element is almost entirely absent. It is a typical economically qualified phenomenon, but no less real for that:

*Of the 4.200 interfirm strategic cooperation agreements signed by enterprises world-wide in the period 1980- 89, so states the Report of the Group of Lisbon, 92 percent were between enterprises from Japan, Western Europe, and North America.*¹⁰

Triadization is sometimes seen as the last phase of regionalization: the phase which comes just before the moment of full globalization. But it may be nearer the truth to see it as the Group of Lisbon does, the technological and economic heart of the present form of globalization. It may even be its power-center.

The sources of current "globalization" differ from the effects.. The sources stem primarily from the world of western culture with its own types of technology, economic development, institutions and methods of organisation, which are now indeed adopted almost everywhere.¹¹ English is the standard language of globalization and, in this respect is illustrative of the world-wide dispersion of the symbols of western-style consumption - like

⁸ For England, however, the possible economic benefits were probably more decisive. It joined the European institutions only at a later phase, when the market was already economically successful, and to this day is still reluctant to transfer parts of its political power to the institutions of Brussels and Strassburg..

⁹ *Limits to Competition* p. 2

¹⁰ *Limits to Competition* p. 71

¹¹ William F Ryan *Culture, Spirituality and Economic Development* International Development Research Centre, Ottawa 1995. It states: *The implicit assumption held by many about the universality of the Western scientific and technological culture is blatantly false* (p 4).

MacDonald's fast food, Pepsi and Coke, as well as the phenomena of hit-parades. So, although the effects of globalization are felt world-wide, the process itself is certainly not worldwide in its origins. This suggests the presence and use of powerful forces at work shaping the world according to their religiously driven vision of reality.

The power aspect of the globalization process can be clarified by making a distinction between elements of inclusion and exclusion. *Inclusion* is a matter of being drawn into the 'force-field' of the rapidly increasing global market economy with its corresponding technology - whether as a nation, as a group, or as persons. This usually implies costs as well as benefits. The costs mean taking a share in the sometimes substantial (social and ecological) burdens of modernisation and withstanding the pain of cultural transitions. But on the other hand, there is often the outlook that these costs are outweighed by substantial economic gains that accrue to a country through higher exports and a general rise of productivity. Max Stackhouse observes:

*the NAFTA and GATT agreements of 1993 and 1994 signal the political acknowledgment that worldwide trade by corporations is more necessary to the well-being of more people than protectionist impulses based on nation, class, government or ideology.*¹²

As we reflect on the impacts of these realities, the erosion of existing class and racial barriers should also be kept in mind.

But next to these elements of inclusion, we can also trace substantial elements of *exclusion*. Exclusion refers firstly to those forces which consciously deny specific groups or nations any kind of participation in the real processes of decision-making. But secondly, it can also take the form of an increase in enforced barriers and restraints, hindering access to (old or new) resources. A few examples are needed here to illustrate this in concrete terms:

1. By its very nature, globalization implies that in the field of international trade and capital-transfer only international liquidities are used; local national currencies are of no use if they are not "key currencies". That means in practice, however, that by abstaining from further international monetary arrangements, the nations that are already rich have control over those "key currencies" (dollars, yens, marks, pounds¹³) and thus all standards for commercial evaluation originate from out of the TRIAD zone. The poorer countries - mainly in the South - therefore have no access to the creation of international liquidities. They are, in fact, excluded from that process, which means that they easily fall further into debt, confirming and extending current economic distortions.¹⁴

¹² Max L Stackhouse "Beneath and Beyond the State" in: Stanley W Carlson Thies & James W Skillen eds *Welfare in America* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1996, p.37.

¹³ We can add the EURO to this list, but in 1998, when this lecture was delivered, the EURO had not come into existence.

¹⁴ For a more detailed discussion see Bob Goudzwaard & Harry de Lange, *Beyond Poverty and Welfare, towards an Economy of Care*, Eerdmans,

2. Capital-flows in this era of globalization are in the main of a private rather than a public nature. This implies that they tend to go to the place of highest financial reward. This however has already resulted in the astonishing fact, that the poorest countries in the world - the so called LDC's, with 40% of the world population - now receive in total less than 2% of the world capital flows.¹⁵
3. While the trade-flows are increasing within the TRIAD-zone, the trade with the poorer countries of the world is decreasing. In the export markets of manufactured goods, the poorest 102 countries of the world had a share of 7.9% in 1980, but by 1990 this had fallen to 1.4%.¹⁶
4. There are elements of exclusion, which are strengthened by the prevalent western legal system. These elements come to the fore as soon as this system is also adopted in non-western countries. Over 80 % of the patents in the third world countries are now owned by foreigners.¹⁷ Inhabitants moreover very easily lose their property-rights and their land to foreigners and this is in evidence especially when national economies have to increase their exports to remain viable.¹⁸

The forces of *inclusion* and of *exclusion* go hand in hand in the present process of globalization. Taken together, however, they imply that at least for some countries, groups and persons the total costs or burdens may outweigh the benefits - and indeed they are doing just that.¹⁹ The process of globalization in today's world is therefore more than a story of increasing integration. It is also a story of increasing dispersion and fragmentation in an expanding universe. The benefits and losses due to globalization are distributed in an unequal way. So much so that some especially resource-poor countries in Africa, with a heavy debt burden, look like the Simons of Cyrene of our age, bearing the cross without any real compensation.

Put in this way we are immediately confronted by the question of the possible "spiritual component" of present forms of globalization. Many authors see this whole process as just a neutral phenomenon, as purely a matter of fact; a new phase in the history of

Grand Rapids/ Geneva 1995, Ch 1. In the Canadian edition (University of Toronto Press, Toronto 1995) this material is found in the Introduction and Chapter 1.

¹⁵ *Limits to Competition* p. 25

¹⁶ *Limits to Competition* p. 71

¹⁷ Barnet and Cavanagh op cit p.354

¹⁸ In the South, multi-national corporations do now already possess an estimated 8% of the global assets of land and resources.

¹⁹ The most recent annual Report of the United Nations Development Program (ie 1997) states that the share of the 20% poorest countries of the world in the global income, which in 1960 was yet the extremely low 2.3% had declined in 1991 to 1.4%, and is still diminishing.

mankind which just comes to us in an unavoidable way.²⁰

Such a view is not without some basis. Different from previous times, the synergies or mechanisms of technology and economy have now become so strong that continuous change sometimes seems as if it is the only constant factor in our lives. Change has become a 'factum brutum' for all. Globalization and regionalization seem to have acquired the characteristics of the 'auto-mobile' - they run under their own generated steam. Their causes²¹ and their patterns seem to be self-generated and there is not much we can do about it. And so everyone has to adapt and this is what strongly suggests that we are faced with something that is of universal significance, something that all must deal with, whatever our position or interest. But is globalization merely a matter of fact in that sense? It might present itself as a neutral phenomenon that the entire world has to get used to. But is this really so?

Here it is important to note, that prior to the process we now call globalization, another specifically worldwide phenomenon was presenting itself. The seventies and the eighties were the decades in which a whole range of problems emerged on a global scale: then there was a kind of globalisation in the common concern that circled the globe. Think here of the global debt crisis, of the rise of poverty in the context of the world population explosion, and especially of emerging threat to the global environment (the depleted ozone layer, and the greenhouse effect). Now one could be tempted to think that the present globalisation process is just a reaction to all that - a conscious response to new global problems by all the responsible economic, political and social 'agents' of the global theatre. But that opinion is clearly in error; as far as I know it is not advanced by any author.

So, if globalization did not primarily emerge from a worldwide concern about the need to mobilise global resources to cure those problems, then the intentions of most of its prominent actors will be different. From those acting with the urgency of problem-solvers these intentions often look indeed far more geared to the promotion of their own - private or national - interests, than to the solution of general world-wide problems.

But this then implies the possible existence of globalization's new form of spirituality. Globalization draws its sources mainly from a mentality of liberty and risk-taking, which are both cherished because they are vital in the attainment of self-set goals. Thus globalization is geared to fulfil ends which are primarily of a private economic (or commercial) nature, and thus have to be achieved in a climate of rivalry.

The Report of Lisbon, identifying the driving forces behind globalization, refers to the presence of an "ideology of competitiveness". And at another place it states:

What emerges, is ... a new global world characterized for the time being by a new type of war: the competitive techno-economic war for

²⁰ Kenichi Ohmae *op cit* speaks of a *global logic* p viii.

²¹ In the relevant literature, the following main causes or motors behind globalization are mentioned: liberalization (the removal of barriers for international trade), privatisation (reduction of the role of the public sector), deregulation (esp valid for capital markets), and the technological impulse (which facilitates worldwide communication and information). Because of this four-fold development business firms could indeed start with the formation of interfirm alliances, also between multinational giants.

*global leadership.*²²

Alongside other authors,²³ Hazel Henderson agrees and from her abundant material concludes that the present globalization process should predominantly be seen as a form of economic warfare. The metaphor of war, however, is to some extent misleading. For it cannot be denied, that next to warlike competition for global markets, there are also many forms of worldwide cooperation now emerging. There is the development of codes for good business behaviour by, for instance, the International Chamber of Commerce. But even of greater importance is the rise of what could be called a 'secondary wave' of globalisation. Many NGO's and citizen-groups, varying from **Amnesty International** and the **Green Cross** to **GreenPeace** and **Medicins sans Frontieres** now enter the global scene, increasingly sensitive to the global dimension of the problems which they want to tackle. Sometimes they even work together to build a more responsible global civic society.

All this makes it quite understandable that opinions are still strongly divided about the ultimate value and outcome of globalization, and consequently of most forms of regionalization as well. Will the coming world be one of growing cooperation and of inclusion with shared benefits, or will it be dominated by hard competition and exclusion? In the latter case it will certainly also awaken heavy counter-reactions of an ethnic, nationalistic and even fundamentalistic nature. No wonder that among the countries and groups involved that the reactions vary from an unrestrained applause on the one side, to an outspoken fear on the other side - especially in the hearts of the potentially excluded "thirds", a concept more subtle than merely pertaining to dwellers in the third-world.²⁴

2. Sovereignty in its Own Sphere Revisited.

So we have to ask ourselves: can the authentic reformed principle of sovereignty in its own sphere be of some help as we seek to make a responsible evaluation of globalization and regionalization? We already noticed the apparent inadequacy of this principle, in its historical weakness, its inability to provide an alternative to fascism and communism. And so we have resolved to reconsider its deepest roots.

On the occasion of the opening of the Free University of Amsterdam, held in October 1880, Kuyper gave the Address with the title "*Soeveriniteit in eigen kring*". There Kuyper specifically discussed these deepest roots of the principle. When Jesus, suffered on his cross at Golgotha, the reason for his execution was publicly announced above his head: 'Rex Judei'. And Kuyper continues:

²²

Limits to Competition p.62

²³ See the already mentioned literature (ftn 1) especially William Greider, *One World, Ready or Not. The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism* 1997 and Robert Kuttner, *Everything for Sale. The Virtue and Limits of Markets*, 1997.

²⁴ Dumouchel uses the expression "*l'extoriété des tiers*" in the sense given to it by René Girard, who in his analysis of sources of suffering in modern societies states that the rivalry between two parties usually implies that a third party, especially if it is seen as sin-goat has to bring the real sacrifices. See *L'exclusion, l'état des savoirs* editor Serge Paugam, Editions la Découverte, Paris 1996, page 57, and René Girard, *Le bouc émissaire* Grasset, Paris 1982.

*but that He was the King of the Jews, that is, the Bearer of Sovereignty, that was the criminal arrogance for which he was sentenced to die... It is this sovereignty, the existence or non-existence of the power of the One born of the virgin Mary, around which the thinking minds, the ruling powers, and the kindred nations are as greatly agitated today as in the first three centuries.*²⁵

What strikes us here from the words of Kuyper is not only an outspoken spirituality, which denies all forms of neutrality, but it also gives expression to a remarkable difference with the common interpretation of the word 'sovereignty' as that is usually used when making an appeal to this principle. The common interpretation stresses primarily the rights of 'office-bearers' in their own realm, whose rights ought to be respected by everyone. For Kuyper, keeping in harmony with the teachings of Calvin, the basic question however was about whether the Authority of the living God and his Messiah is to be honoured and respected. That's what the principle is about.²⁶

From its initial formulation at the time of the Reformation, "Sovereignty in its own Sphere" has been a principle which asks for obedience to the ways of God. It questions the prevalent *orientation* of man and society by confronting the whole inhabited world with a question concerning Who or What it wants to serve in all the fulness of its life, in all aspects of its life. The principle of sphere sovereignty can therefore not be characterised in terms of any kind of human goal-achievement. Its primary concern is that the Ways of Someone Else be followed.

It is strange to me that discussion of normative principle - how we should take the next step on the way - is so often neglected in discussions about sphere sovereignty. Consider the concept of a 'sphere'. It is itself derived from a base that controls what it should be and how it should move. Kuyper, for instance, explains that no circle or sphere can exist without its own centre; and that this centre, pin-pointed with a firm radius ("getrokken met een vaste straal") is the Law or Principle of the sphere, as it is given by God in His creation.²⁷ Human science,

²⁵ Abraham Kuyper, "Soevereiniteit in eigen kring" published in W.F de Gaay Fortman, *Architectonische critiek, Fragmenten uit de sociaal politieke Geschriften van Dr A Kuyper*, Amsterdam 1956 p 41 and translated in James W Skillen and Rockne M McCarthy eds *Political Order and the Plural Structure of Society* Scholars Press Atlanta 1991 p.258.

²⁶ That principle of sphere-sovereignty has indeed nothing to do with any type of glorification of those who exercise power as "leaders" of churches, families, governments or enterprises. This was made clear once and for all in the following statement by prof Gerbrandy (the Anti-Revolutionary Prime Minister of the Netherlands during the second world war: *"The principle of sovereignty in its own sphere, pre-eminently christian, pre-eminently reformed, is being violated in the life and thoughts of people to a kind of sovereignty of the patron, which excludes the rights of expression to others; while the most characteristic of this idea is the sovereignty of divine ordinances in each sphere of life, for whom master and servant, government and people have obediently to bow together"* P.S Gerbrandy, *De strijd om nieuwe maatschappijvormen*, 1927, page 107.

²⁷ Kuyper, *Soevereiniteit in eigen kring*, op cit page 44 (in Skillen and McCarthy eds pp.260-261).

for instance , is made possible by the living God under the supreme Authority (opperhoogheid) or Sovereign (with a capital "S"!) of the principle of Truth.²⁸ The spheres, to say it another way, are for Kuyper realms of God's rule, administered by living and binding commandments²⁹ as radiations of the One Lordship of Christ.

From the outset of our consideration of creation's law-order, it is important to keep the eschatological dimension in mind. One day, we have been assured, this Sovereign will come back to re-claim the universe in all its parts under his Headship, according to the Design - the *oikonomion*³⁰ - outlined for us in Ephesians 1. Seen in this light, the normative orientation in the principle of sphere-sovereignty can indeed be rightly understood as a continuous Divine invitation to all people in all the domains in their lives to bring all of their own life-sphere involvement to *disclosure*, a term from Dooyeweerd's philosophy referring to the created developmental processes that belong to God's good creation. Creation is not destined to be, or to become, an end in itself, with all the restrictions that that implies, but has to become a multi-coloured answer to the coming One, the coming Lord. In the same way, power, seen as a goal in itself, becomes destructive, but when it is seen as a "way", a path on which to take a step because we are called to follow, it can become an answer to the Lord when justice is done. Likewise, sexuality is destined not to be an end in itself, but as a "pathway" is given to us to become the vehicle of sincere marital love between wife and husband. Further, economic resources should not be dealt with in a restrictive as means to an end, as goals in themselves, but ought to be part of our lives on the path of God's *oikonomion*, via our careful and fruitful administration of what He has entrusted to us. In Kuyper's view of business corporations, the principle of sphere-sovereignty is a call to become serviceable to the human community through acts of genuine stewardship:

*The truth is this: absolute property belongs only to God; all of our property is on loan from him; our management is only stewardship. Therefore, on the one hand, only the Lord our God can discharge us from responsibility for that management; on the other hand, under God we have no right of rule except in the context of the organic association of mankind, and thus also in the context of the organic associations of its possessions.*³¹

²⁸ *ibid* p. 55

²⁹ Groen van Prinsterer, the leader of the Dutch Reveil movement, spoke in a similar fashion as quoted by H Smitskamp *Wat heeft Groen van Prinsterer ons vandaag te zeggen?* Den Haag, Daamen 1945, p 68.

³⁰ It is an interesting fact that the first meeting of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948 choose *oikonomion* (Design) from Ephesians 1 as the basis to confront the existing economic systems during and after the war. It's central theme was: **Man's Disorder and God's Design.**

³¹ from Abraham Kuyper, *Het Sociale Vraagstuk en het Christelijke Religie* Amsterdam 1891 published as *Christianity and the Class Struggle* (trans Dirk Jellema) Piet Hein, Grand Rapids, 1950 (the passage corresponding to that quoted above is at pp.53-4). This quote is taken from *The Problem of Poverty*, edited by James Skillen, Baker Grand Rapids 1991, page 66-67.

We can summarize by saying that the principle of sphere-sovereignty calls forth a re-orientation in our world-view with the authentic demand it makes of us to make room for a responsible *differentiation* of social relationships. This demand follows immediately from the centrality of God's Authority over the whole of life in all its fullness. For if God Himself is Lord in all the dimensions of creation, and if we confess that we live and work in all these dimensions or spheres of life directly before His Face or Countenance (the reformational credo of "coram Deo") then no human power that we have is entitled to place itself between this Lord and His servants as a kind of intermediary or supervening authority. But there is more. It is also that life in *all* of its realms calls forth service and each dimension of the service of God should have its own room or space. Firstly, it needs the space just to be there in its own way. Second, it needs room to develop itself according to the life- principles which God choose for that domain. This then is "disclosure". So in that sense all spheres of life can begin to give a multi-coloured answer together to the living Word which stands as the Alpha and the Omega at the beginning and the end of history.

Professor T.P.van der Kooy of the Free University of Amsterdam once coined a beautiful expression to explain this. He referred to the "simultaneous realisation of norms". The norms or ways of justice, love, human community, justice and *oikonomia* are given to us in a coherence that is sure. Together these norms give us a way to discover a balanced and multi-dimensional path for developing a healthy social life.³²

Does all this actually help us as we deal with ultra-modern processes like globalization and regionalization? Yes, I think it does. Let me explain how.

3. Globalization , regionalization and the principle of sphere sovereignty.

The principle of sphere sovereignty honours economic and technological development. These are certainly inalienable dimensions of our calling in God's good creation. It is worth emphasizing that there is nothing in this reformational principle which either forbids economic development or suggests that technology cannot take on global characteristics.³³ But on the other hand, this principle also suggests the need for a normative orientation that recognises the complex differentiation between economy and technology, public policy, family-life and culture generally. What then are the implications of such an approach?

Let us begin by considering how differentiation requires sufficient social space.

(a) globalization, regionalization and the criterion of a responsible differentiation.

At first sight the principle of sovereignty in its own sphere seems to be completely antiquated. The supremacy of state and church over other domains of life is not at all typical of present trends in globalization and regionalization. But as a principle it is not directed solely to church and state disputes, however important these may have been in our past. At

³² T P van der Kooy *Over economie en humaniteit* Wageningen 1954 and *Op het grensgebied van economie en religie* Wageningen 1953.

³³ In the later part of his life Kuyper defended a somewhat different position , namely in his Lecture for the Anti-Revolutionary Party meeting in Amsterdam, in which he attacked the dogma of free trade *in which the nation has to make place for general humanity*. Abraham Kuyper, *Heilige orde* (Holy Order), lecture of 13 May 1913.

this point, we recall the origins of the principle of sphere sovereignty as discussed above. These origins are certainly not confined to the dominion of state and church as such. They imply the rejection of *every* totalitarian force or power in control of the formation of human society in whatever social sphere. Consider, for example, how the sovereignty of family economic life in its own sphere has so obviously been violated by the over-reaching power of the church (especially in mediaeval times) or of the domination by the state (especially in the time of Fascism and Communism). I suggest that it must be possible to speak of real or potential violations of the sovereignty of the family sphere and other spheres of social life by the intrusion of a market economy. And today there are indeed a variety of signals, that not only tell us that the sovereignty of culture and family-life is being violated, but also that the sovereignty of the state may be threatened by over-reaching dynamic private economic interests. For indeed the principle itself leads us to ask some very frank questions, like:

- Is the impartiality of government endangered because of over-reaching business interests?
- To what extent have the demands of financial interests gained influence or control over our democratic political processes?
- Is not the repeated prediction that the nation-state is coming to its historic end indicative of the fact that economic forces have already gained far too much control of the way people interpret political processes?
- In globalization, and some types of regionalization, elements are present that show an increasing commercialization of life. Do not these forces threaten the inner workings of the family as a community of mutual love and support? (think of the way in which the re-introduction of a 24-hour economy has an impact upon people's lives - consider the impacts of aggressive marketing campaigns on the freedom we have to develop our life-styles).
- To what extent do the present forms of globalization show a real respect for the integrity of other cultures, and for the value of nature?
- Is there not a link between present globalization and the exploitation of young children in this world?
- And what about the influence of commercial interests on those domains of life which originally had nothing to do with big business (consider charity, sport, sexuality, medical and nursing care and such possibilities as the transfer of human organs)?

This is not the place to go into detail and to attempt to answer all these questions separately. It suffices to say, that indeed serious questions can be asked relating to possible violations of God's sovereignty over all other spheres of life by economic forces . Therefore the processes of globalization and regionalization should be investigated by us with a critical eye. How far do they leave real room for ways of living that are not merely economic or technical?

But to the extent that these violations do occur, the same principle can also help us find concrete ways in which these irksome tendencies can be challenged if not totally avoided. The principle of sphere sovereignty has always had an explicitly practical side; as a

life-principle it is meant especially to guide Christians in a sinful world, to help them make responsible decisions. So let us look briefly at some possible avenues or possible solutions which flow directly from this principle. At least three avenues come into sight.

The *first* is to work hard for the strengthening of the role of public authorities, especially in the international realm. This is especially important in instances where clear forms of economic or technological domination of other spheres of life are taking place. This is the avenue by which new forms and institutions of international justice are built, a way which was also suggested by Kuyper. In his view every "organic" development - and we could include international economic developments here - had to be accompanied by a corresponding capacity of the state to ensure justice, just as a growing plant may need a stake next to itself to maintain its growth.

With respect to this we can suggest that the implementation of the United Nations declaration on the rights of children be strengthened, specifically in relation to national labour-codes and in the policy and actions of international institutions like the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation and the World Bank. The need for such regulation and enforcement is obvious.

The *second* avenue that we should consider is suggested to us by the sphere sovereignty principle itself. This involves the further "disclosure" of economic life. We have noted already that the institutions of economic life are called by God to render good and serviceable stewardship of all that has been entrusted to them. Power and profit are not to be viewed as ends in themselves. They are resources and, as such, have a part to play in protecting health and the environment. They are made available for the purpose of contributing to the fulfillment of basic human needs. So it is with this plea for a further disclosure of economic life that we must enter the debate about the social and ecological responsibilities that are enclosed within business responsibility. These responsibilities require "disclosure" for the benefit of all. To the degree that multinational enterprises are prepared to develop global styles of stewardship and are willing to discipline themselves by rendering a regular public account of their conduct, to that extent many bad practises that exclude vulnerable and marginal people will also diminish. This is a development that needs to be promoted by global NGOs and international public organisations like the **Green Cross**, the **International Labour Organization**, the **World Health Organization** and **Amnesty International**. The "simultaneous realisation of norms" that we have referred to earlier comes much nearer to fulfillment in this way.

There is also an interesting *third* avenue which can help us find a more responsible differentiation of social life. This will involve the development of responsible regionalization as a way by which national communities can maintain their traditions and characteristics over against any overwhelming claims that arrive on our doorsteps thanks to globalization. Regionalization of this type asks for a strong adherence to the principle of public justice and the development of open communities where people are accountable to each other for the way they live out their lives.

Each of these three ways, or paths, can be strongly recommended on the basis of the principle of sphere sovereignty. But let us be frank. None of these three paths present themselves to us without serious hurdles and limitations.

The first avenue, that of the strengthening international law, would require many nations to come to a common mind and make decisions when in fact they often have entirely

different interests. This state of affairs is already creating extremely difficult situations. But this problem intensifies when, as now, independent public authorities are so easily undermined by economic forces which are all too eager to provide further evidence that the end of the nation state is at hand. So we have to work in a situation where the nation state is being undermined at the very time it is most needed to help build responsible regional and global public authorities. The painful question has to be faced: is the present form of globalization taking away the very public and legal foundations on which such regional co-operation could rest? In this context we note how the *Limits to Competition* of the Group of Lisbon States explains globalization by blurring the already thin demarcation-line between governments and business:

*The enterprise is a de facto privatizing and internationalizing of the role of the state for its own purposes.*³⁴

But we should add that the second and third pathways also present hurdles and restrictions of their own. Of course, every sign of disclosure, of the broadening of responsibilities in economic life, should be applauded. But one should not forget that business organizations will always maintain, and even should preserve, their own economic character and qualification. One should not ask them to act as charity organisations as well as institutions of stewardship any more than we should expect them to become regulators of public justice. And after all, the disclosure of economic life can only fulfill a partial role in the positive development of human society.

And as for the third path - the way of further regionalization - there is every reason for more scepticism. Too often good plans at the beginning are bent in a wrong direction. This is also true for the present process of European integration. When the EEC was inaugurated in 1957 by the Treaty of Rome, it was the economic aspect which undoubtedly took the lead. Political dimensions were only added in so far as the efficient functioning of the common market demanded such intervention. The recent Treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam, concerned with the realization of an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), are good illustrations of this; they follow the path by which it is necessary to create a new hard currency, the Euro, in the global arena.

To conclude this section, we can suggest that it is not just a matter of promoting a good and responsible differentiation of society. It is also true that the kind of orientation adopted within our societies which will be decisive for its future. This then brings us to the major point of our contribution.

b) Globalisation, regionalization and the criterion of orientation.

At the outset of my lecture I noted by reference to the Kuyperian tradition, the seeming weak link between our present forms of globalization and the solutions that are offered in the name of "sphere sovereignty" to urgent global problems. We saw that in its roots globalization is more geared to the promotion of private self-interest than to the service of this world's real needs. Consequently, globalization shows many signs of a cruel exclusion of people from what is their due as our fellow human beings. This suggests that the present form of globalization in its basic orientation clearly falls short of what would be asked of it if we could bring the biblical principle of sphere sovereignty to "disclosure". For this principle

³⁴

Limits to Competition p.70.

confronts all of economic life with God's norm of *oikonomia* - we are called to disclose good care for all of this creation and all of the needs of all of its peoples. But, restrictiveness, rather than disclosure, seems to characterise the present process of global economic decision-making.

And so, here an important question arises. It is fundamental for economic theory. Has the primary orientation to self-interest always been the leading characteristic of economic life? And where this was (and is) the case, did it nevertheless function well in the interest of all? Or, said in another way: is it not possible that, in spite of the presence of intentions that are sometimes evil, or at least a-normative, that good outcomes can nevertheless be attained?

It is a question which is no doubt intriguing and demands an answer? Did not Abraham Kuyper suggest that, despite the fact that economic life in many of its aspects is corrupted by sin, it could nevertheless contribute to the good of mankind, as when, for example, necessary corrective measures are taken by the State. Is not State intervention in the economy like that famous stake (a mechanical aid) which is placed besides the (organic) plant to help it to grow and flourish?³⁵ So this question indeed requires separate and careful attention.

Firstly, it has to be said that any and every attempt to legitimise economic actions by their supposed final results raises ethical doubts from the outset. Such a position is a typical product of Enlightenment thought, in which ethics are simply human constructions and therefore can be adjusted when it is deemed necessary to do so. Such an approach to ethical decision-making could only have been reached by way of Utilitarian presuppositions or by an attempted expansion of the liberal doctrine of Natural Law.³⁶ It is a position which looks even impossible from any authentic reformed Christian view of society. God no doubt can and may use human imperfect action to reach his ends. But that is no argument why human actors should endorse action based upon sinful - in this instance, mammonistic - intentions. For if the whole earth is the Lord's domain, then also economic life has been redeemed to take its holy place as human action, directly subject to the mandate of good stewardship.

Now at first sight it may look as if Kuyper may have said something different. But in fact this was not so. It is when economic subjects engage in unjust actions, which distort their own mandate, that the State has grounds for intervention and corrective action. So it is also Kuyper's basic presupposition that economic life has to listen to the inner normativity of its own sphere, and this means it is bound by the demands of stewardship, *also in its intentions*.

³⁵ *And over these States God appointed governments. And thus, if I may be allowed the expression, it is not a natural head, which organically grew from the body of the people, but a mechanical head, which from without has been placed upon the trunk of the nation. A mere remedy, therefore, for a wrong condition supervening. A stick placed beside the plant to hold it up, since without it, by reason of its inherent weakness, it would fall to the ground.* Abraham Kuyper, "Calvinism and Politics" (3rd Stone lecture). *Lectures on Calvinism* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1931 p.93. In this context, we also find the statement: *a sinful humanity, without division of states, without law and government, and without ruling authority, would be a veritable hell on earth, or at least a repetition of that which existed on earth when God drowned the first degenerate race... the institution of the State ... is indeed indispensable* (p.81).

³⁶ Gunnar Myrdal *The Political Element in the Development of Economic Theory* Routledge, London 1953 passim

But there is also a second, historical, element which has to be considered. The history of the last two centuries of Western civilization has taught us that both Capitalism and Communism are ideologically of the sacrificial type. The one is geared to salvation by the market, the other to salvation by the central plan.³⁷ When an economic path is justified in terms of its supposed beneficial outcomes - whether by free market forces or by the plan - then the journey down that path will involve a deep and 'faithful' trust in the happiness-creating power of such a market - or plan.³⁸

And so such tunnel-like societies emerge (and have emerged), which in their self-chosen ways seek the daylight of material abundance and so are intensively oriented to the unhindered infinite expansion of economic and technological forces, that the shadowsides of this development are immediately valued as necessary sacrifices. Now it is not difficult to see, that globalization is also to a large extent oriented to a such a closed, tunnel-like vision of society. It stems primarily from western culture, and upholds an "ideology of competition". The elements of exclusion which we have already mentioned point in a similar direction, namely that sacrifices are too easily enforced in order to realise a further material expansion - especially for and by those who are already on the rich side of the street. Let us remind ourselves how Kuyper described the spirit of modern life in his sixth and final Stone lecture:

*The spirit of this **modern life** is most clearly marked by the fact that it seeks the origin of man not in creation after the image of God, but in evolution from the animal. Two fundamental ideas are clearly implied in this: (1) that the point of departure is no longer the ideal or the divine, but the material and the low; and (2) that the sovereignty of God, which ought to be supreme, is denied, and man yields himself to the mystical current of an endless process, **a regressus and processus in infinitum**.*

And somewhat further in the same lecture he asserts:

*And the end can only be, that once more the sound principles of democracy will be banished, to make room this time not for a new aristocracy of nobler birth and higher ideals, but for the coarse and overbearing **kratistocracy** of a brutal money power.³⁹*

It is a warning which comes to us here and now from a century ago. And it makes it abundantly clear, that the choice between God and Mammon will remain with us till the end of times as a choice, not only for us as private persons, but also for the whole of human

³⁷ The image of a tunnel society stems from John Maynard Keynes, who wrote in his *Essays in Persuasion* New York 1963 the following awful statement: *For only they can lead us out of the tunnel of economic necessity into daylight* (p 372).

³⁸ See expansion of this in Bob Goudzwaard *Capitalism and Progress: a Diagnosis of Western Society* Wedge, Toronto & Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1982 (1997 reprint, Paternoster, Carlisle UK).

³⁹ Abraham Kuyper "Calvinism and the Future" Chapter 6 in *Lectures on Calvinism* Eerdmans, Grand Rapids 1931 pp. 178 & 179-80. The italics are from Kuyper.

society.

But this does certainly not imply, that all factual dimensions of the current processes of globalization and regionalization have to be opposed as sinful in themselves, or characterised as part of the works of Evil. For markets in themselves should be viewed, in principle, as good and useful economic institutions. But then this is something quite different from choosing them as infallible compasses guiding us to a better future. To accept economic growth and technological innovation when they are needed to fulfill real human needs, is very different from the idolatry and madness of an endless material progress in a situation of fundamental natural or ecological scarcity.

Therefore our final conclusion has to be, that summoned by the principle of sovereignty in its own sphere, we have indeed a responsibility to distinguish between at least two basic types of globalization: a good one and a bad one. The bad one is the sacrificial type, which orients all cultures and the whole of this world to the necessity of an unconditional obedience to the rules of a rapidly expanding tunnel-economy, in which future ends always prevail over present life-and-work situations, and where the common belief is that "There Is No Alternative" (TINA). The other type of globalisation could be called the healing type. It is oriented to the Design (*oikonomion*) of a coming Sovereign, who as good Shepherd is asking us all to work with compassion against the diminishing exclusion of the weak in our economies, for preventive care in relation to creation, and for a deep respect for the richness of other cultures. These things in the long run are only possible on the basis of true wealth that has come to us because it is a gift, given to us. When we affirm TATA - there are a thousand alternatives - we take a path along which we will be saturated with God's gifts.⁴⁰

Christians should therefore not withdraw from our world in this time of globalization. They are called to stay in this world, but in the way of what Max Weber called an inner-worldly asceticism, loyal in all their responsibilities to the style of globalisation of the Kingdom in the preparation of the return of its Sovereign.

⁴⁰ See Herman Daly *Free Trade, Capital Mobility and Growth versus Environment and Community* Lecture, Institute for Social Studies, The Hague 1996.