From John Vriend

8/1

Introduction

"'Let my People Go':
Abraham Kuyper's Christian-Historical Political Imagination"

To me there is no past or future in art.
If a work of art cannot live always in
the present it must not be considered at all.
---Pablo Picasso

Time present and time past
And both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.

If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
---T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton"

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.

A people without history
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern
Of timeless moments.
---T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding"

In the history of the human quest for liberty, two symbolic events spaced two hundred years apart frame the modern political era. On November 10, 1793, as the Jacobin Reign of Terror was winding down, the Paris Commune of the revolutionary National Convention planned a Festival of Liberty "to celebrate the victory of philosophy over fanaticism."[1] After seizing Notre Dame Cathedral---rebaptized the "Temple of Reason"---the revolutionaries "dechristianized" the former sanctuary by engaging in a public liturgy that celebrated, in the words of deputy Thuriot de La Rozière, the new "moral order of the Republic, of the Revolution, . . . that will

[1]George Lefebvre, *The French Revolution: From 1793 to 1799*, trans. John Hall Stewart and James Friguglietti (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul and New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), 78.

make us a people of brothers, a people of *philosophes*."[2] The cult of "liberty and holy equality" was celebrated thus: "In the interior [of Notre Dame] a gimcrack Greco-Roman structure had been erected beneath the Gothic vaulting. A mountain made of painted linen and papier-mâché was built at the end of the nave where Liberty (played by a singer from the Opéra), dressed in white, wearing the Phrygian bonnet and holding a pike, bowed to the flame of Reason and seated herself on a bank of flowers and plants."[3]

Similar cultic festivals of dechristianization and public affirmation of the new revolutionary civic order took place throughout France. Fueled by the fiery rhetoric of newspaper editor Jacques René Hébert and led by revolutionary enthusiasts such as the former priest Joseph Fouché, a violent iconoclasm erupted, stripping churches, cemeteries and other public space of all Christian symbols. Liberty trees replaced crucifixes, celebrants engaged in blasphemous parodies of Holy Communion, and sang antihymns "to words by Fouché celebrating `Reason as the Supreme Being.'"[4] With such *fête de Raison*---crowned by the exaltation of the Goddess Reason/Liberty--- becoming the order of the day,[5] the French Revolution at the same fulfilled Voltaire's wish to *écrasez l' infame* and Rousseau's insistence on a new secular, civil religion.[6]

If 1789 represents the beginning of the modern political era, then, so it has been argued, 1989 may represent its end since "within the bounds of these two centuries, an *ideological worldview* has arisen and fallen, come and gone."[7] In addition to the

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[2]Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 776.

[3]Ibid., 778. Another historian describes the event thus: "Relays of patriotic maidens in virginal white paraded reverently before a temple of philosophy erected where the high altar had sttod. From it emerged, at the climax of the ceremony, a red-capped figure representing Liberty. Appreciatively described buy an official recorder of the scene as `a masterpiece of nature', in daily life she was an actress; but in her symbolic role she ledd the officials of the commune to the Convention, where she received the fraternal embrace of the president and sectretaries." (William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989], 261.)

[4]Schama, *Citizens*, 779; for a detailed description of the Reign of Terror, see pp. 126-92.

[5]For another detailed account of such a festival, see Philip Dawson, ed., *The French Revolution* (Edgewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), 119-127.

[6]Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. Maurice Cranston (Middlesex, GB and New York: Penguin, 1968), 176-87 (Book IV, ch. 8, "The Civil Religion").

[7]Thomas C. Oden, *Two Worlds: Notes on the Death of Modernity in America and Russia* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992), 32. Oden states his thesis clearly:

> The duration of the *epoch* of modernity is now clearly identifiable as a precise two-hundred year period between 1789 and 1989, between the French Revolution and the collapse of communism. Such dating of historical periods is always disputable, but this one cries out with clarity, since it was announced with such a dramatic beginning point (the storming of the Bastille), and closed with such a precise moment of collapse (the literal fall of a vast symbolic wall in Berlin). The analogies between the revolutions of 1789 and 1989 will intrigue historians for centuries to come.

important symbolic significance of breaching the Berlin Wall, the massive protest of Chinese students in Beijing's Tiananmen Square also qualifies as a premier symbol of the 1989 Revolution. Of Tiananmen's important visual symbols, the most pregnant was under-reported by the American media. The remarkable photo of the lone protester facing a phalanx of government tanks---advancing on the tragically ironically named "Avenue of Peace"---on June 5, 1989, is more or less indelibly imprinted on our minds. Yet, more importantly, six days earlier, "just as it looked as if the demonstrations would fade away, to be resumed perhaps only after the summer holidays, the white plaster statue of the Goddess of Democracy was wheeled into the square in three sections and erected, facing the huge portrait of Mao that was hanging over the south gate of the Forbidden City. . . . The statue, `like the students themselves, seemed immovable, indestructible, and permanent.'"[8] It was at this point, when "it must have looked to [Chinese leader] Deng as if the demonstrations would never stop, . . . [that] it was decided to order the army to clear out the square."[9]

The Chinese students' peaceful protest---symbolized by the 33-foot, white Goddess of Democracy statue---was suppressed by brutal state violence against the protesters and the destruction of their symbol. What did the statue represent that precipitated such a major response? The official loudspeaker broadcasts directed at the students in the square called it "a foreign thing," and, "calling attention to the Goddess's resemblance to the Statue of Liberty," proclaimed: "This is China, not America."[10] The significance of the American connection was underscored five years later at the unveiling, in a small park at the edge of San Francisco's Chinatown, of a bronze statue modeled after the original Goddess of Democracy. On that occasion Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi said:

> The world witnessed the brutal suppression of individual freedom and liberty in Tiananmen Square. The brave men and women who demonstrated did so in the spirit of our forefathers. They quoted Thomas Jefferson, and built a Goddess of Democracy fashioned after our own Statue of Liberty.[11]

The temptation to draw universal, meta-narrative historical conclusions at this point is almost irresistible. Two revolutions, two hundred years apart, symbolizing a defined era. With 1789 representing the initial triumph of atheistic, secular, totalitarian and bloody ideology, 1989 then represents its pathetic end and the ideological, if not yet fully political, triumph of the American experiment. This conclusion in fact has been drawn in the realm of speculative philosophy of

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[8]Jonathan Mirsky, "The Empire Strikes Back," *The New York Review of Books*, 37 (February 1, 1990): 22-3.

[9]Ibid., 22.

[10]Ibid.

[11]*The New York Times NATIONAL*, Sunday, June 5, 1994, p. L, 38.

history,[12] as well as in more sober, empirical, historical accounting of the twentieth-century's trajectory.[13] In an example of the latter, political historian David Fromkin summarizes the conclusion of his work as follows, along with appropriate cautionary notes about premature closure on history's end:

> It was a fast and unexpected finish. Coming only a half-century after the United States seemingly solved the problems of German and Japanese expansionism, and less than forty years after America helpd to push the countries of Western Europe into releasing their overseas colonies, the sudden and dramatic collapse of the last remaining empire---that of the Soviet Union---was so tidy and satisfying as an ending that it is tempting to think is *was* one; that history is a novel, and this is its last page. For someone trying to make sense of what happened, the challenge is to tell what the plots and subplots were, in other words, that led to the end of empires and the emergence, for the time being, of the United States as the sole global power.[14]

If Abraham Kuyper, a little more than seventy-five years after his death in 1920, were able to read the portrait sketched above of the century's end, he would be pleased. Aside from the tiny reference toThomas Jefferson in one of the quotations, he would judge the events of recent world history to be a vindication of his own religious sense of world history's providential unfolding. To begin with, Kuyper passionately opposed the spirit of the French Revolution while, of course, fully recognizing its historical importance: "The history of our times," he contends, "starts from the *unbelief* of the French Revolution:"[15]

> In 1789 the turning point was reached.
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> Voltaire's mad cry, `Down with the Scoundrel,' was aimed at Christ himself, but this cry was merely the expression of the most hidden thought from which the French Revolution sprang. The fanatic cry of another philosopher, "We no more need a God," and the odious shibboleth, "No God, no Master," of the Convention;---these were the sacreligious watchwords which at that time heralded the liberation of man as an emancipation from all Divine Authority. And if, in His impenetrable wisdom, God employed the Revolution as a means by which to overthrow the tyranny of the Bourbons, and to bring judgement on the princes who abused *His* nations as *their* footstool, nevertheless the principle of that Revolution remains thoroughly *anti-*

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[12]Most famously by Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

[13]Eg., David Fromkin, *The The Time of the Americans: FDR, Eisenhower, Marshall, MacArthur---The Generation that Changed America's Role in the World* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1995).

[14]Ibid., 537.

[15]Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures in Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 25; block quotation that follows is from p. 10.

> *Christian*, and has since spread like a cancer, dissolving and undermining all that stood firm and consistent before our Christian faith.

In sharp contrast, the American Revolution, Kuyper told his American audience at Princeton University in 1898, was signally different; its liberty was not grounded in atheistic rebellion against God but in an appropriate, Calvinist-inspired rejection of tyranny. Liberty was a political good, hardwon by Dutch Calvinists in their struggle against Spain as well as by Americans from Great Britain. This liberty and the political experiment that ordered it was a beacon for the future of world history. "America," Kuyper contended that same year, in a Grand Rapids, Michigan address to Dutch-American fellow Calvinists, "is destined in the providence of God to become the most glorious and noble nation the world has ever seen. Some day its renown will eclipse the renown and splendor of Rome, Greece, and the old races."[16] Providentially-led world history had, in Kuyper's view, a clear and certain telos and its world stream, for the most part fed by the religious springs of Calvinism, was to follow a clearly marked channel:

> There is but one world-stream, broad and fresh, which from the beginning bore the promise of the future. This stream had its rise in Middle Asia and the Levant, and has steadily continued its course from East to West. From Western Europe it has passed on to your Eastern States, and from thence to California. The sources of this stream of development are found in Babylon and in the valley of the Nile. From thence it flowed on to Greece. From Greece it passed on to the Roman Empire. From the Romantic nations it continued its way to the Northwestern parts of Europe, and from Holland and England it reaches at length your continent.[17]

What Kuyper adds at this point is particularly striking from our vantage point at the close of the twentieth century and its developments (recall he is writing this in 1898!):

> At present that stream [of world history] is at a standstill. *Its Western course through China and Japan is impeded; meanwhile no one can tell what forces for the future may yet lie slumbering in the Slavic races which have thus far failed of progress.* But while this secret of the future is still veiled in mystery, the course of this world stream from East to West can be denied by none.[18]

The American experiment, in other words, is holy, the providentially destined "end of history."

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[16]*Grand Rapids Herald*, October 29, 1898; see Appendix B, "Abraham Kuyper's Grand Rapids' Address."

[17]Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 32.

[18]Ibid., 33; emphasis added.

Such unabashed faith in the holy inevitability of the American experiment in ordered liberty is hardly the common conviction of Americans themselves today. Rather, the very existence of American civil religion and belief in America's manifest destiny is seen as a significant moral and political problem. Thanks in good measure to 1960s countercultural attacks on "Amerika," a profoundly antiAmerican spirit is often expressed in the American academy and the media. Multicultural enthusiasm for "diversity," often arising out of concern that traditional American "founding myths" are exclusionary and oppressive of minorities,[19] has led to the "reinventing of America."[20] For some evangelical Christians this cultural spirit repudiating the "myth" of America's founding as a "Christian nation" and the consequent conviction about providential purpose is reenforced by concerns about the "idolotry" of civil religion.[21] At the same time, it is particularly evangelical Christians---the so-called "New Christian Right"---who are increasingly becoming the defenders of the idea and ideal of America.[22] It is not necessary at this point to elaborate on the question concerning the health of America's soul except to say that Americans are seriously divided about the present condition and future hope of the American experiment. Stated differently, America is involved in a *Kulturkampf,* a culture war about its very identity as a nation.[23] Public debates about multiculturalism, public education--particularly the teaching of history and literature---and the role of religion in public life more broadly, not to mention the battles about race, immigration, affirmative action, welfare, abortion, euthanasia, gay rights and so forth, all point to a crisis of national moral identity. The question we raise here is this: Supposing the claims about a crisis in the American soul to be correct, how does a nation go about repairing its soul? How does one go about healing a national community's wounds. What political actions are required to bring this about? And, recognizing that they faced similar cultural and social ennui, what

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[19]See, eg., Leslie Bekowitz et. al., eds., *America in Theory* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[20]See, eg., Robert Royal, ed., *Reinventing the American People: Unity and Diversity Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1995).

[21]Eg., Robert D. Linder and Richard V. Pierard, *Twilight of the Saints: Biblical Christianity and Civil Religion* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1978).

[22]Eg., Pat Robertson, *America's Dates With Destiny* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986); Rus Walton, *One Nation Under God* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987).

[23]The literature is vast. Among the important titles are James Davison Hunter *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991); William Bennett, *The Devaluing of America: The Fight for Our Culture and Our Children* (New York: Summit Books, 1991); Richard John Neuhaus, *America Against Itself: Moral Vision and the Public Order* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992); Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1992); Robert H. Bork, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah: Modern Liberalism and American Decline* (New York: HarperCollins,1996); Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); Pat Robertson, *The Turning Tide: The Fall of Liberalism and the Rise of Common Sense* (Dallas: Word, 1993).

did earlier Christian social transformers such as Abraham Kuyper do to achieve political and moral change? Or is politics not the answer? Put differently, how can an unbelieving (secular) civilization be saved? We find a surprising answer from yet another foreign source, the Russian emigré writer Alexander Solzhenitsyn.

"Beauty will save the World"[24]

To transform the world, so modern man believes, one needs the right politics. Politics, in this viewpoint, refers primarily to political platforms, programs, and campaign strategies--in short, political technique.[25] But what about the "vision" that governs the technique? What about the political imagination that provides passion for ideals such as liberty and energy for the hard political work required for success? How is political vision communicated and passed on from generation to generation? Does literature play a role here? Can art in general make a *political* contribution to a nation, to its civic identity? Why do iconographic works of art such as the French revolutionaries' Goddess of Reason or the Chinese students' Goddess of Democracy generate such passion in their devotees as well their detractors?

In his *Nobel Lecture* Alexander Solzhenitsyn addresses the political significance of art by calling attention to its dual religious possibilities. He picks up a point made by already by Aristotle about the formal neutrality of art [rhetoric], by noting that while "art will remain" even though "we will die," there are two kinds of artists in the world. "One kind of artist imagines himself the creator of an independent spiritual world and shoulders the act of creating that world and the people in it, assuming total responsibility for it---but he collapses, for no mortal genius is able to hold up under such a load. Just as man, who once declared himself the center of existence, has not been able to create a stable spiritual system."[26] In contrast to this Protagorean, if not Promethean, vision of art, Solzhenitsyn sketches a portrait of the artist as servant-apprentice: "Another artist acknowledges a higher power above him and joyfully works as a common apprentice under God's heaven, although his responsibility for all that he writes down or depicts, and for those who understand him, is all the greater. On the other hand, he did not create the world, it is not given direction by him, it is a world about whose foundations he has no doubt."[27] Thus, two kinds of people, two kinds of art. Solzhenitsyn probes the spiritual depth of this

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[24]For this phrase from Dostoyevsky via Solzhenitsyn as well as the inspiration for the following discussion of Solzhenitsyn's moral, artistic vision, I am indebted to Edward E. Ericson, Jr., *Solzhenitsyn: The Moral Vision* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), and *Solzhenitsyn and the Modern World* (Washington, D. C.: Regnery Gateway, 1993); cf. Gregory Wolfe, "Beauty Will Save the World," *The Intercollegiate Review*, 27/1 (Fall, 1991): 27-31.

[25]For a summary and critique of this view see Jacques Ellul, *The Political Illusion*, trans. Konrad Kellen (New York: Knopf, 1967).

[26]Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Nobel Lecture* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 4.

[27]Ibid., 4-5.

duality with profound sensitivity by elsewhere pointing to "the line of good and evil" that "cuts through the heart of every human being."[28]

The religious and political significance of art arises from the recognition that technical reason is insufficient for human life in community. Moral visions precede and serve as a foundation for political strategy and action. The goddess Reason, for example, cannot herself supply the reasons why we should trust her. "There is no point asserting and reasserting what the heart cannot believe." But art does have the capacity to warm "even an icy and depressed heart, opening it to lofty spiritual experience. By means of art we are sometimes sent---dimly, briefly--- revelations unattainable by reason."[29] Why is art then needed, especially today? Because in a global village where modern communication systems help us leap over the old barriers of nation and language, we encounter an intense conflict of values. The crisis of our one-world civilization is that there can be no one world when there are a multitide of sets of values. "Given six, four, or even two scales of values, there cannot be one world, one single humanity: the difference in rhythms, in oscillations, will tear mankind asunder. We will not survive together on one Earth, just as a man with two hearts is not meant for this world."[30]

What can be done about this division? Solzhenitsyn asks: "Who will coordinate these scales of values, and how? Who will give mankind one single system for reading its instruments, both for wrongdoing and for doing good, for the intolerable and the tolerable as they are distinguished from each other today. . . . Who is capable of extending such an understanding across the boundaries of his own personal experience. Who has the skill to make a narrow, obstinate human being aware of others' far-off grief and joy, to make him understand dimensions and delusions he himself never lived through?" In other words, how can we get along? How can we together come to a common undrstanding and vision of ourcommon humanity when the pressures of tribalization are so strong? Is there any way to transcend them? Solzhenitsyn is certain the tactics of the old order will not do it: "Propaganda, cocercion, and scientific proofs are all powerless. But, happily, in our world there is a way. It is art, and it is literature."[31] Solzhenitsyn shares the judgment that "the decadence of the West" cannot "be turned around through politics and intellectual dialectics . . . [and] that authentic renewal can only emerge out of the imaginative visions of the artist and mystic." This conclusion is rooted in a "conviction that politics and rhetoric are not autonomous forces, but are shaped by the pre-political roots of culture: myth, metaphor, and spiritual experience as recorded by the artist and the saint."[32]

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[28]Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, I (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 168.

[29]Alexander Sozhenitsyn, *Nobel Lecture*, 7, 6.

[30]Ibid., 16.

[31]Ibid., 16-17.

[32]Gregory Wolfe, "Beauty Will Save the World," 27.

The reason for Solzhenitsyn's hope in the socially and then politically redeeming value of art is that art has the capacity to "overcome man's unfortunate trait of learning only through his own experience, unaffected by that of others." We learn from mistakes; we repeat disastrous mistakes when we fail to learn from others. "The only substitute for what we ourselves have not experienced is art and literature." Literature in particular also "transmits condensed and irrefutable human experience . . . from generation to generation. It thus becomes the living memory of a nation. . . . Thus literature, together with language, preserves and protects a nation's soul." Solzhenitsyn does not share what he regards as the currently fashionable enthusiasm for the waning of national identities: "Nations are the wealth of humanity, its generalized personalitites. The least of them has its own special colors, and harbors within itself a special aspect of God's design." He then issues a stern prophetic warning: "But woe to the nation whose literature is cut off by the interposition of force. That is not simply a violation of `freedom of the press'; it is stopping up the nation's heart, carving out the nation's memory; it loses its spiritual unity---and despite their supposedly common language, fellow countrymen suddenly cease understanding each other."[33]

Even if one grants the noble role of art and literature in promoting human understanding, how do they help resist the forces of violence, that stalked and still stalk our cruelly bloody twentieth century? How can words help "oppose the onslaught of a suddenly resurgent fang-baring barbarism"?[34] What is the role of the artist, the writer? After all, they "send off no rockets, do not push even the lowliest handcart, are scorned by those who respect only material power. Would it not be natural . . . to retreat?" The writer, says Solzhenitsyn, does "not have even this way out. Once pledged to the WORD, there is no getting away from it."[35] How? "What can the writer do against the pitiless onslaught of naked violence?" Answer: Never "forget that violence does not and cannot flourish by itself; it is inevitably intertwined with LYING. Between them there is the closest, the most profound and natural bond: nothing screens violence except lies, and the only way lies can hold out is by violence. Whoever has once announced violence as his METHOD must inexorably choose lying as his PRINCIPLE." The only antidote is the courageous act of not taking part in, of not supporting lies. But, "writers and artists can do more: they can VANQUISH LIES! In the struggle against lies, art has always won and always will. Lies can stand up against much in the world, but not against art."[36] Dostoyevsky was right: "Beauty will save the world!" Even more direct is the Russian proverb: "ONE WORD OF TRUTH OUTWEIGHS THE WORLD."[37]

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[33]Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *Nobel Lecture*, 17-20.

[34]Ibid., 24.

[35]Ibid., 27.

[36]Ibid., 32-3.

[37]Ibid., 34; cf. the lines from Martin Luther's *Ein Feste Burg*:

And though this world with devils filled,

Solzhenitsyn's contention that the work of artists can save the world is illustrated by his own example as a writer, particularly in his *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* and *The Gulag Archipelago*. He also makes the point explicitly about the Soviet Union, and illustrates it with reference to other writers, in his memoir, *The Oak and the Calf*. "Looking back," he writes, "even a fool would have been able to predict it today: the Soviet regime could certainly have been breached only by literature. The regime has been reinforced with concrete to such an extent that neither a military coup nor a political organization nor a picket line of strikers can knock it over or run through it. Only the solitary writer would be able to do this. And the younger Russian generation would move on into the breach."[38] Zolshenitsyn's claim is also echoed by American Conservativism's great man of letters, Russell Kirk, who refers to the "armed vision of the poets",[39] as the *sine qua non* for restoring "a living faith to the lonely crowd," for reminding "men that life has ends."[40] Kirk underscores the important caution that "society's regeneration cannot be an undertaking wholly political." In fact, "No less than politicians do, great poets move nations, even though the generality of men may not know the

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should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God has willed
his truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo! His doom is sure;
one little word shall fell him.

[38]Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Oak and the Calf: Sketches of Literary Life in the Soviet Union*, trans. Harry Willetts (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 10. In addition to Solzhenitsyn's own political signficance as a writer, note should be taken of the significant role played by such twentieth-century writers as South Africans Alan Paton and J. M. Coetzee in inspiring political change. Among nineteenth-century writers mention needs to made of the Russian Ivan Turgenov (*A Sportsman's Notebook* [1854]) and the important American novel of Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). On these and the role of fiction in inspiring political change see Michael Hanne, *The Power of the Story: Fiction and Political Change* (Providence, RI and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1994). **(Cf. Denisovitch, Gulag, along with Valladares, Nien Ching and other prison literature; others?-Latins? Asians? Other Africans? Liberation theology?).**

[39]Here and in what follows, I shall be using the term "poetry" ("poet") as a broad shorthand to refer to those who use words in the service of *imagination* rather than *reason*, *stories* rather than *ideas*, *rhetoric* rather than *dialectic*. All the qualifications and nuances made in the previous section of this chapter must not be forgotten, yet the use of "poetry" in this broad sense rather than restrictively to the literary genre of verse is characteristic of Plato in his *Republic* as well as Philip Sidney, *In Defense of Poetry* and Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Defense of Poetry*, ed. Albert C. Cook (Boston: Ginn & Co., 1903). **(Coleridge? Eliot?)**

[40]Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot*, 7th revised edition (Washington, D.C. Regnery, 1986), 491-2. It is noteworthy that a volume dealing with the "conservative *mind*" nonetheless concludes with the *poetic* testimony of T.S. Eliot, among others.

poets' names." How? "It has been a chief purpose of good poetry to reinterpret and vindicate the norms of human existence." The poet is "no mere defender of the establishments of the hour, the poet is loyal to norms not to factions. . . . Every age is out of joint, in the sense that man and society never are what they ought to be; and the poet senses that he is born to set the time right---not, however, by leading a march to some New Jerusalem, but by allying his art to the permanent things." There is hope, therefore, "if men of affairs can rise to the summons of the poets" for then "the norms of culture and politics may endure despite the follies of the time."[41] It is fitting, therefore, that we conclude this section with the words of America's great twentieth-century poet:

> For, dear me, why abandon a belief
> Merely because it ceases to be true?
> Cling to it long enough, and not a doubt
> It will turn true again, for so it goes.
> Most of the change we think we see in life
> Is due to truths being in and out of favor.
> As I sit here, and oftentimes, I wish
> I could be monarch of a desert land
> I could devote and dedicate forever
> To the truths we keep coming back and back to.
>
> Robert Frost, "The Black Cottage"[42]

But, from whence does this power of poetry come? Why and how do words change the world?

The Power of Words

Unlike the weather cliche---everyone talks about it but nobody does anything about it---those who effect significant change in human affairs tend to be both talkers and doers. Perhaps it is more precise to say that talking is one of the most important forms of political action. To a large extent historical transformation is accomplished by effective, performative speech.[43] Capturing public imagination through persuasive rhetoric is essential for mobilizing movements that bring about significant and lasting change. For great historical change-agents such as John

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[41]Kirk, *The Conservative Mind*, 492-500, passim.

[42]Cited by Kirk, ibid., 492-3.

[43]The term "performative" is used here in the more general sense of language that has some action as its goal rather than information or reporting. In a more strict sense "performatives" are words, such as legal acts of a legislature, that actually accomplish an act by their mere utterance. See G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 20-25. The pioneer in what has come to be known as "speech-act theory" is the English language philosopher J. L. Austin (*How to do Things With Words*, J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975 (1962)]; cf. Reed Way Dasenbrock, "J. L. Austin," *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition*, Theresa Enos, ed., (New York and London: Garland, 1996), 53-4.

Winthrop, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore and Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and Ronald Reagan, their words as much as their deeds live after them. In many cases--- "city on a hill," "all men are created equal," "new birth of freedom," "for us the living," "of the people, by the people, for the people," "speak softly, carry a big stick," " nothing to fear but fear itself," "blood, sweat and tears," "iron curtain," "ask not what your country can do for you," "I have a dream," "content of character," "evil empire"---the remembered word *is* the deed that lives on and continues to inspire and effect change. To the list here we need to add what are likely Abraham Kuyper's own most-quoted words, used to motivate Christian action: "There is not a square inch [Dutch: *duimbreed*=thumb's breadth] of our human experience about which Christ the Sovereign of all does not say, `It is mine!'"[44]

It is important to reflect on the reason for this. Why do words have such power and how does the power of words compare with other forms of social power? The Greek orator Isocrates already in the fourth century B.C. recognized that a functioning political society---one that involves its citizens in a deliberative process to establish the laws by which it is governed---requires a healthy level of public discourse. To be opposed to the eloquence of rhetoric, says Isocrates, is to fail to appreciate "that power which of all the faculties that belong to the nature of man is the source of most of our blessings." The use of speech to persuade is precisely the distinguishing mark of our humanity's social capacity. "For in the other powers which we possess we are in no respect superior to other living creatures; nay we are inferior to many in swiftness and strength and in other resources; but, because there has been implanted in us the power to persuade each other and to make clear to each other whatever we desire, not only have we escaped the life of wild beasts, but we have come together and founded cities and made laws and invented arts; and, generally speaking, there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish."[45] **(Image of God-speech?)**

Does all speech accomplish this or only specific kinds of speech? Is verse---for example, the epic poetry of Homer---a suitable and useful vehicle for public, political discourse? According to historian Daniel Boorstin, it was the historical *prose* of Herodotus that signaled the future shape of politics in the West. Rather than a chronicle of heroic and "lonely Solomons keeping their own counsel," politics became "a history of councils, of senates, parlements and parliaments---of men trying to persuade one another, their fellow governors, and the people whom they governed. In politics there was neither time nor opportunity for epics elaborating messages into verse. Prose, the language of everyday life, would be the

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[44]Abraham Kuyper, *Souvereiniteit in Eigen Kring* (Kampen: Kok, 1930), 32; this address was delivered on October 20, 1880 at the opening of the Free University of Amsterdam.

[45]Isocrates, "To Nicocles or the Cyprians," 5, 6, trans., George Norlin (London: William Heinemann and New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928), vol. I, 79; I am indebted for this citation to Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Creators: A History of Heroes of the Imagination* (New York: Random House, 1992), 220.

vehicle of persuasion. And the new art of rhetoric would provide the techniques, define the standards, and shape the style of the message." Thus, "the arts of prose became essential to the arts of governing" and, derivatively, "prose was associated with the earliest hesitant moves toward democracy," because "the rise of prose as an art and rhetoric as a discipline is plainly connected . . . with wider public participation in government."[46]

However, the new emphasis on prose rhetoric also had a shadow side. Rhetoric that persuaded and moved men did not have to be true and thus Plato, in his *Gorgias*, "denies that rhetoric is an art and defines it as species of flattery, a sham counterpart of justice."[47] Rhetoric, like advertising in the twentieth century, is here seen as an "artifice of persuasion," the "shadow of politics."[48] Thus, along with its association "with the earliest hesitant moves toward democracy," the rhetoric of the Greek Sophists in particular also became allied "with opposition to Plato's pursuit of absolutes" and "with appeal to expediency rather than to truth as the guide of political life."[49] In this construction, an antithesis is posited between the poetic/rhetorical use of words---particularly the metaphorical use of words---to delight and inspire, and the rational, philosophical use of words to determine, define, and display truth.[50] A fundamental antithesis, in a number of variations, between the

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[46]Boorstin, *The Creators*, 221.

[47]George Kennedy, *The Art of Persuasion in Greece* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 15; the reference to the *Gorgias* is 463a6 ff.

[48]Gary Cronkhite, *Persuasion: Speech and Behavioral Change* (Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969), 19. Increased sophistication in comunications technology (and especially in the *control* of such technology) in the twentieth century have also heightened awareness of persuasion through deceit and illusion, of propaganda. See Jacques Ellul, *Progaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, trans. Konrad Kellen and Jean Lerner (New York: Knopf, 1965); idem., *The Political Illusion*, trans. Konrad Kellen (New York: Knopf, 1967).

[49]Boorstin, *The Creators*, 221.

[50]In addition to Plato, other characteristic rationalist critiques of rhetoric include those of John Locke and Immanuel Kant:

> Locke: I confess, in discourses where we seek rather pleasure and delight than information and improvement, such ornaments as are borrowed from them can scarce pass for faults. But yet if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mis lead the judgment; and so are perfect cheats.

> Kant: Rhetoric, so far as this is taken to mean the art of persuasion, i.e., the art of deluding by means of a fair semblance [as *ars oratoria*], and not merely excellence of speech (eloquence and style), is a dialectic, which borrows from poetry only so much as is necessary to win over men's minds to the side of the speaker before they have weighed the matter, and to rob their verdict of its freedom. . . . Force and elegance of speech (which together constitute rhetoric) belong to fine art; but oratory [*ars oratoria*], being the art of playing for one's own purpose upon the weaknesses of men (let this purpose be ever so good in intention or even in fact) merits no *respect* whatever.

poetic and rhetorical arts on the one hand and the philosophical methods of searching for truth on the other, has been a fixture of the Western intellectual tradition from Plato's *Phaedrus* and *Gorgias* to C.P. Snow's twentieth-century lament about the divide between *The Two Cultures.*[51] In Boorstin's words: "Ever since Plato's time the arts of persuasion have been associated with popular institutions, with the pursuit of compromise and the acceptance of relative and temporary solutions instead of the pursuit of Truth, of the utopian and the ideal."[52]

The general contrast between rhetoric and philosophy should not be exaggerated and must not obscure the important role of rhetoric itself in "the transition from *mythos* to *logos* (i.e., from a mythopoetic theogony to a naturalistic cosmology) as [different] ways of understanding the world. Rhetoric, as both an art of public argument and a theory of civic discourse, was made possible in the fourth century by the development during the Archaic period of rational rather than mythopoetic uses of language. Essential to the theory and technique of rhetoric as these were conceived by Aristotle (whose treatise on the art is the first systematic account and the fullest expression of its Classical theory) are argument, proof, and probability."[53] According to George A. Kennedy, "Aristotle was the first person to recognize clearly that rhetoric as an art of communication was morally neutral, that it could be used either for good or ill."[54] Aristotle's analysis of successful, persuasive rhetoric led to the conclusion that three things were essential: "The truth and logical validity of what is being argued [*logos*]; the speaker's success in conveying to the audience the perception that he or she can be trusted [*ēthos*]; and the emotions that the speaker is able to awaken in an audience to accept the views advanced and act in accordance with them [*pathos*]."[55]

It is necessary, therefore, to draw two important and different contrasts with respect to rhetoric and the rhetorical tradition. One the one hand, in terms of genre, rhetorical prose needs to be distinguished from poetry, notably the epic poetry of someone such as Homer. On the other hand, since rhetoric depends on *pathos* and

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(Cited by Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy: The Humanist Tradition* [University Park, Penn.: and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980],18-9; the citations are from Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, vol. 2, bk. 3. Ch. 10, sec. 34 and Kant's *The Critique of Judgment: Part I, Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, sec. 53.

[51]C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959). For an illuminating account of this conflict in the Renaissance humanist tradition see Ernesto Grassi, *Rhetoric as Philosophy*, especially ch. 2, "Rhetoric and Philosophy." **(Kimball, education)**

[52]Boorstin, *The Creators*, 221.

[53]Christopher Lyle Johnstone, "Introduction: The Origins of the Rhetorical in Archaic Greece," *Theory Text, Context: Issues in Greek Rhetoric and Oratory*, ed. Christopher Lyle Johnstone (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 9.

[54]George A. Kennedy, *Aristotle on Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), ix.

[55]Ibid.

effective use of imagery and metaphor as well as *logos* and reason, it can also be distinguished from the rationalist, philosophical tradition that sometimes distrusts the metaphorical use of language.[56] Rhetoric is thus sometimes distinguished from poetry and associated with the more logically ordered prose tradition and, at other times, associated with poetry and contrasted to philosophy and reason. Stated somewhat differently, bearing in mind that Aristotle wrote two classic works on composition, the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetic*,[57] the distinction between those two terms "connoted two fields of composition, two habits of conceiving and ordering, two typical movements. The movement of the one the ancients saw as primarily intellectual, a progress from idea to idea determined logically: that of the other, as primarily imaginative, a progress from image to image determined emotionally."[58] To complicate matters further, there is, in addition, an important distinction between a mythopoetic consciousness that "sees in the world the work of divine personalities whose caprices, contests, and couplings have created the [often unpredictable] history in which human beings are caught up," and a rational, naturalistic worldview "ordered according to an in-dwelling, singular self-consistent [rationally knowable] principle." In the latter, "the *kosmos* is ordered by a *logos*."[59]

For our purposes in this chapter, in order to bring the contrasts sketched above into the orbit of contemporary debates, we shall use a broad brushstroke contrast between two different strategies for arriving at foundational convictions about human life in society---and for resolving the crises facing a given civilization---under the labels of *mythos* and *logos*.[60] The former is rooted in a more or less pessimistic view of human nature and man's ability to know and do the good, and thus relies on revelation, on shared human experience, on tradition expressed through myth, narrative, and history, to ameliorate the worst in humanity and encourage the best. It is suspicious and even fearful of rationalist, utopian schemes to fix the world. The latter has a more rosy view of human nature, regards whatever

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[56]In addition to note 7, above, see Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 10-14.

[57]Charles Sears Baldwin, *Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic* (New York: MacMillan, 1924), 1:

> On the one hand, the ancients discerned and developed an art of daily communication, especially of public address, τέκνη ῥητορική, *ars oratoria*, rhetoric; on the other hand, an art of imaginative appeal, τέκνη ποιητική, *ars poetica*, poetic.

[58]Ibid., 3.

[59]Ibid., 10. **(But Aquinas etc. Christian as well as logos/order; attraction to Stoicism)**

[60]For what follows in this paragraph I am indebted to Stanley Parry, "Reason and the Restoration of Tradition," in *What is Conservativism?* ed. Frank S. Meyer (New York, Chicago, San Francisco: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1965), 107-32. For a variant on the clash between two worldviews, one rationalist and utopian, the other traditional and realist, see Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles* (New York: William Morrow, 1987). The elitist, gnostic character of contemporary, socially ameliorative utopianism is neatly described in Sowell's *The Vision of the Annointed: Self-Congratulation as a Basis for Social Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 1995).

intransigencies to human communal progress that still remain after well-intentioned, well-thought out reforms, to be irrational vestiges of flawed structures or institutions (racism, sexism, militarism), and eminently remediable by appropriate (i.e. rational) and concerted education (or therapy).

The rationalist view and strategy is parasitic; it depends on a commonly accepted moral order established by healthy tradition. The difficulty thus in a situation of civilizational crisis is that "reason operates effectively in its own right when it moves within the context of a healthy tradition" but "becomes helpless when it has no context of tradition within which to operate."[61] The reason why reason is utterly unable to solve the problem of a civilizational crises "rests essentially on the fact that in all moral reason there is a necessary element of subjectivity." Reason only has available the method of persuasion but "the basic precondition" for effective persuasion "is a commonly accepted moral order." Thus, "in a collapse of tradition, i.e. of a commonly accepted moral order, reason becomes helpless."[62] For us moderns specifically the problem is this: Because the Enlightenment sought to solve the problem of moral truth in the same "objective scientific" manner as it pursued data about the natural universe, it deliberately discarded the pattern of traditional moral judgments made in particular, historical communities "as pure pre-rational preferences without foundation in objective reality." The Enlightenment ideal "was to formulate moral principles apart from the insights of moral man"[63] and its project of justifying morality, according to Alasdair MacIntyre, therefore, "had to fail."[64] By itself, reason cannot provide the reasons why we should look to reason for the foundation of our moral life. This foundational unity, "the organizing principle of the tradition [of a community], its root perception, is held by way of belief, of faith, rather than by way of a ratiocinative establishment of truth."[65] Poetry, in other words, is seen to trump philosophy.

Where, we now need to ask, does Abraham Kuyper fit in the tradition of word users, orators, rhetoricians, particularly in his own life-long argument against Enlightenment rationalism? There is little debate about the important role of the early nineteenth-century Dutch spiritual-literary renewal movement, the *Réveil*, on

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[61]Parry, "Reason and the Restoration of Tradition," 108-9.

[62]Ibid., 109-10.

[63]Ibid., 110; for a fuller account of this development and the crisis of Enlightenment morality, see Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

[64]Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, ch. 5, "Why the Enlightenment Project of Justifying Morality had to Fail." Technical reason, MacIntyre observes, "can speak only of means. About ends it must be silent. Reason cannot even, as Descartes believed, refute scepticism; and hence a central achievement of reason according to Pascal, is to recognize that our beliefs are ultimately founded on nature, custom and habit" (p. 54).

[65]Parry, "Reason and the Restoration of Tradition," 116.

Kuyper and the rise of neo-Calvinism.[66] Included here are two important *literary* figures, the poets Willem Bilderdijk (1756-1831) and Isaac da Costa (1798-1860), both of whom, as we shall see later in this chapter, profoundly influenced Kuyper. For now we simply call attention to Bilderdijk's own understanding of the postive relation between poetry and politics reflected in two of Bilderdijk's written works: A prize essay published 1783 entitled "Exploration of the Relationship Between Poetry and Rhetoric to Philosophy" (*Verhandeling over het verband van de dichtkunst en welsprekendheid met de wijsbegeerte*) and another prize work, this time in verse, "The Influence of Poetry on Government" (*De Invloed der Dichtkunst op het Staetsbestuur*).[67] To set the stage for considering Kuyper's use of political poetry to create and sustain a new Christian-democratic political movement and party, we shall first consider two illustrative examples of political rhetoric in actual practice---one in the parliamentary career of the British orator and writer Edmund Burke,[68] and the other in the sermonic form, the jeremiad, as used by American preachers.[69] This will be followed by a summary of Alexis de Tocqueville's discussion of the role played by art and literature in a democracy like America.[70] The jeremiad and Tocqueville's discussion will help us to see significant linkages between Kuyper's vision of liberty and the American experiment.[71]

Political Rhetoric in Action: Edmund Burke; the American Jeremiad.

To counter the common charge leveled by contemporary advocates of multicultural ideology that the traditional canon of Western literature reflects an oppressive, hegemonic order privileging a dominant ruling class of European white males, Daniel Ritchie considers the Indian writings of British statesman and political theorist Edmund Burke (1729-1797). Ritchie judges that these writings serve as a clear literary counter-example to an ideological multicultural approach. Best known

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[66]All textbook treatments of Kuyper and neo-Calvinism begin with a discussion of the *Réveil*. See H. Algra, *Het Wonder van de Negentiende Eeuw*, 6th ed. (Franeker: T. Wever, 1979 [1966]); A. J. Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795*, 2nd rev. ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1981 [1974]).The standard scholarly treatment of the *Réveil* is M. Elisabeth Kluit, *Het Protestantse Réveil in Nederland en Daarbuiten 1815-1865* (Amsterdam: Paris, 1970).

[67]The former was republished in Amsterdam, 1836; the latter appears in Willem Bilderdijk, *De Dichtwerken van Bilderdijk*, 16 vols. (Haarlem: A. C Kruseman, 1858), VIII, 3-20.

[68]For this example of Burke I am especially indebted to Daniel E. Ritchie, "From Babel to Pentecost: Burke's India, Ideological Multiculturalism, and a Christian Poetics," *Christianity and Literature* 43/3-4 (Spring-Summer, 1994): 393-414.

[69]My primary source here is Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).

[70]Tocqueville discusses this in the second volume of *Democracy in America*, Part I, chs. 9-21. Citations given in the text are to the translation by George Lawrence and edited by J. P. Mayer (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

[71]The place of Kuyper's own work in the long tradition of Dutch Calvinist jeremiads is considered in Joris Van Eijnatten, *God, Nederland en Oranje:Dutch Calvinism and the Search for a Social Center* (Kampen: Kok, 1993), esp. pp. 258-95.

for his writings on the French Revolution,[72] Burke's parliamentary career was distinguished particularly by his opposition to what he regarded as the tyrannical behavior of India's British Governor-General Warren Hastings, finally leading up to the ultimately unsuccessful impeachment proceedings against Hastings in 1786-87. Ritchie suggests that a *literary* study of Burke's India writings opens new vistas into their *political* significance, specifically that "a literary analysis of structure (the structure of `sympathy') and of allusion (classical allusion) will produce new knowledge of Burke's achievement."[73] Ritchie's concern is to show, via Burke's India writings, "that traditional literary study can deal with the very real existence of political oppression without adopting current ideological criticism."[74]

In the thousands of pages Burke wrote, along with the numerous speeches he gave, on Britain's colonial involvement in India, "Burke realized that his main difficulty . . . was to create sympathy in his audience for a different culture."[75] It was here that Burke's own earlier work on aesthetics[76] helped him. "In his early *Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* Burke noted the empirical fact that human beings enjoy viewing the calamities of others as long as their terrors are somewhat removed. But the great speaker does not want painful descriptions to arouse enjoyment but rather sympathy in his audience."[77] According to Burke, human beings are created so that "we should be united by the bond of sympathy, [and the Creator] has strengthened that bond by a proportionable delight; and there most where our sympathy is most wanted,---in the distress of others." Thus, "the sympathetic pain one feels in `real calamities prompts us to relieve ourselves in relieving those who suffer.'" "Sympathy is therefore a bridge between the pains of others, fictional or real, and oneself: the words of poetry and `eloquence' succeed (where simple verbal descriptions fail) in raising sympathy for the sufferer by placing the `sublime' and terrible possibilities of suffering before the listener or reader." And from this follows social obligation and political action: "The sublime, in Burke's theory, was always associated with the possibility of pain, but in the case of real as opposed to fictional pain the listener's pleasure in the sublime comes in sympathetic identification with the sufferer and in providing relief from that suffering."[78]

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[72]Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (London and New York: Penguin, 1982 [1790]).

[73]Ritchie, "Burke, Multiculturalism, and Christian Poetics," 401.

[74]Ibid., 399,

[75]Ibid., 401.

[76]Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, J. T. Bolton, ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958 [1757]).

[77]Ritchie, "Burke, Multiculturalism, and Christian Poetics," 401.

[78]Ibid.. Burke citations are from *Enquiry*, I.xiv, xv.

According to Ritchie, Burke put this theory into good practice in his India speeches and writings. "The word `sympathy' occurs frequently in the Indian speeches, particularly where Burke's rhetoric is most urgent."[79] Burke shows himself to be committed to the rhetorical tradition (in distinction from the philosophical/rational tradition) when he indicates his preference for descriptions that "affect rather by sympathy than imitation, [those that] display rather the effect of things on the mind of the speaker, or of others, than to present a clear idea of the things themselves" (*Enquiry,* V.v). It needs to be noted that Burke thus links the aesthetic with the political. In Ritchie's words: "It is highly significant, and rarely noted at present, that the *Enquiry* joins the work of *speakers*---presumably including Parliamentary orators---with that of poets; he unites the appeal of political rhetoric with that of tragedy. Burke's theory connects the literary, historical, and political aspects of the objects of sympathy. He believed that God had created humanity for the exercise of sympathy, but that the works of human art had to elicit sympathy for its proper use."[80] In his appeals for sympathy, for the British to act more justly in India (and---in other speeches---in Ireland), Burke recounted stories of oppression and drew significant historical parallels that would affect his English audience, such as referring to an important India bill before parliament as the "*Magna Charta* of Hindostan."[81] Ritchie also notes that Burke used numerous classic allusions (Roman Senate, Cicero) as "a key resource to arouse his audience's horror at the structure of British imperialism." Such allusions work on the presumption of "a universal human nature, stretching from Rome through Britain to India, and provides [for Burke] a means for judging contemporary British politics against its own literary inheritance."[82] It is here that the tradition of Western literature makes possible the West's own self-criticism.[83]

The use of rhetoric and poetic imagination to nurture social and political transformation change can also be seen in the sermonic form of the jeremiad, "or the *political sermon*, as the New England Puritans sometimes called this genre,"[84] a prominent perennial in American life from the colonial days to the present. The jeremiad is a clear example of the function of rhetoric in a culture to "both reflect

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[79]Ibid., 402.

[80]Ibid.

[81]Edmund Burke, "Speech on Mr. Fox's East India Bill," in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke in Twelve Volumes* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1901), V, 441 **check vol.**. This speech is also remarkable for its many stories of injustice and its eloquent descriptions and numerous allusions that evoke sympathy.

[82]Ritchie, "Burke, Multiculturalism, and Christian Politics," 404.

[83]A possibility closed off to ideology, according to Ritchie: "Ideological multiculturalism lacks the inner resources to restrain its own cultural power and criticize its own excesses, for it cuts off the tradition of self-criticism, founded on the presupposition of moral and religious duty, that western literature often displays" ("Burke, Multiculturalism, and Christian Poetics," 412).

[84]Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, xiv.

and affect a set of particular psychic, social, and historical needs."[85] According to Bercovitch, the American jeremiad was "a mode of public exhortation that originated in the European pulpit, was transformed in both form and content by the New England Puritans, persisted through the eighteenth century, and helped sustain a national dream through two hundred years of turbulence and change." He adds that it "was a ritual designed to join social criticism to spiritual renewal, public to private identity, the shifting 'signs of the times' to certain traditional metaphors, themes and symbols." Finally, he argues "that the jeremiad has played a major role in fashioning the myth of America," and that this identity must therefore be seen "in literary and historical terms. Myth may clothe history as fiction, but it persuades in proportion to its capacity to help men act in history." Total fictional myth is inadequate for shaping public, social, identity. "Ultimately, [a myth's] effectiveness derives from its functional relationship to facts."[86]

The jeremiad is addressed to a covenant people who are favored by God and for that reason have special obligations. John Winthrop on the Arbella told the first shipload of emigrants in the Exodus from England that they were to be "a city on a hill; the eyes of all peoples are upon us" and in his 1630 sermon, "A Modell of Christian Charity," spelled out the covenantal consequences of being called to be the "New Israel" with an "Errand into the Wilderness":

> Thus stands the cause between God and us: we are entered into Covenant with him for this work, we have taken out a Commission. The Lord hath given us leave to draw our own articles. We have professed to enterprise these Actions upon these and these ends [and] we have hereupon besought him of favor and blessing. Now if the Lord shall please to hear us, and bring us in peace to the place we desire, then hath he ratified this Covenant and sealed our Commission [and] will expect a strict performance of the Articles contained in it. But if we neglect the observance of these Articles which are the ends we have propounded, and dissembling with our God, shall fall to embrace this present world and prosecute our carnal intentions, seeking great things for ourselves and our posterity, the Lord will surely break out in wrath against us [and] be revenged of such a perjured people and make us know the price of the breach of such a covenant.[87]

The covenantal understanding and the jeremiad sermon form came from Europe but, according to Bercovitch, had in America from the beginning its own different content. The European jeremiad was a "lament over the ways of the world" and "decried the sins of 'the people'---a community, a nation, a civilization, mankind in

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[85]Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*, xi.

[86]Ibid.

[87]In Edwin S. Gaustad, *A Documentary History of Religion in America to the Civil War*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 107.

general---and warned of God's wrath to follow."[88] It was different for the American Puritans. Believing that theirs was a special mission from God, that they had been chosen "not only for heaven but as instruments of a sacred historical design," their theocratic community was not only "a model to the world of Reformed Christianity" but also "a prefiguration of New Jerusalem to come." For this reason, though "they asserted [the threat of divine judgment] with a ferocity unparalleled in the European pulpit," they also qualified it by considering God's judgments as corrective rather than destructive."[89] The laments about community sin, the threats of judgment, the calls for repentance were framed in the basic conviction that America's history was prophetically destined for greatness; the errand into the wilderness by the New Israel would eventually lead to Canaan, to the New Jerusalem.[90] It was this conviction that accounts for the persistence of the Puritan jeremiad through the transformations effected in it by the First and Second Great Awakenings, the westward expansion and visions of imperial manifest destiny, right through the civil rights movement and the rise of the religious right in the second half of the twentieth century. America, Bercovitch notes, was "a country that, despite its arbitrary territorial limits, could read its destiny in its landscape, and a population that, despite its bewildering mixture of race and creed, could believe in something called an American mission, and could invest that patent fiction with all the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual appeal of a religious quest. Here was the anarchist Thoreau condemning his backsliding neighbors by referring to the Westward errand; here the solitary singer Walt Whitman, claiming to be the American way; here, the civil rights leader Martin Luther King, descendent of slaves, denouncing segregation as a violation of the American dream; here an endless debate about national identity, full of rage and faith; Jeffersonians claiming that they, and not the priggish heirs of Calvin, really represented the errand; conservative politicians hunting out socialists as conspirators against the dream; left wing-polemics proving that capitalism was a betrayal of the country's sacred origins." The prophetic question "When is our errand to be fulfilled?" "How long, O Lord, how long?" And the answers, again as in the Puritan jeremiads, invariably joined lament and celebration in reaffirming America's mission."[91]

In the many mutations and permutations of the American ideal, it was the activity of the poets and preachers (and, as we shall see, landscape painters) using the old and powerful (mostly biblical) metaphors (exodus, errand into the wilderness, New Israel, frontier, providential destiny), that shaped and sustained the national identity

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[88]Ibid., 7.

[89]Ibid., 8.

[90]The classic treatment of the "errand" metaphor is Perry Miller much-discussed essay "Errand into the Wilderness," in *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956), 1-15.

[91]Ibid., 11.

and vision. Exodus metaphor used by Hawthorne, Martin Luther King Jr., Reagan. Alexis de Tocqueville knew America as a democracy needed literature.

Alexis de Tocqueville on the Democratic Imagination

Tocqueville begins the second volume of *Democracy in America* with the observation that though Americans pay little attention to the formal study of philosophy, there does exist "a uniform method and rule for the conduct of intellectual inquiries." This universal method Tocqueville judges as Cartesian; "each American relies on individual effort and judgment." However, the Cartesian method is followed by Americans with singular lack of self-consciousness; Cartesian intellectual self-reliance is habitual not reflective. "Of all the countries in the world, America is the one in which the precepts of Descartes are least studied and best followed" (429). The pedigree of this attitude, according to Tocqueville, goes back to the Protestant Reformation's emphasis on the individual priesthood of all believers: "Luther, Descartes, and Voltaire all used the same method, and they differed only in the greater or lesser extent to which they held it should be applied" (431). The extension of the Reformation principle to more radical questioning of everything became possible only when the conditions of equality for all people increased. More thorough independence of mind requires conditions of general equality (432-33).

At the same time, however, the independence of mind and intellectual liberty that Tocqueville considers a defining characteristic of the American mental habit has not led to anarchy. In fact, in seeming contradiction to it, intellectual self-reliance is accompanied by strongly-held communal religious convictions that are also relatively unexamined; they are "believed in without discussion."[92] The strength of America's spiritual heritage is the crucial factor here. "In the United States religion is mingled with all the national customs and all those feelings which the word fatherland evokes. For that reason it has peculiar power." Thus, while there are "an infinite variety of ceaselessly changing Christian sects" in America, "Christianity itself is an established and irresistible fact which no one seeks to attack or to defend." This has had a profound effect on the moral character of American society, on its habits of the heart. "Since the Americans have accepted the main dogmas of the Christian religion without examination, they are bound to receive in like manner a great number of moral truths derived therefrom and attached thereto" (432). The end result of this is a growing readiness to trust and live by mass public opinion which "becomes more and more mistress of the world." The shadow side is that a different kind of tyranny then becomes possible, a "despotism of the majority": "So, in democracies public opinion has a strange power of which aristocratic nations can form no conception. It uses no persuasion to forward its beliefs, but by some mighty pressure of the mind of all upon the intelligence of each it imposes its ideas and makes them penetrate men's very souls" (435). In this way, Tocqueville fears that

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[92]For a more contemporary take on this phenomenon see Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963 [1962]).

"democracy might extinguish that freedom of the mind which a democratic social condition favors" and "the human spirit might bind itself in tight fetters to the general will of the greatest number" (436).

Religious beliefs are thus the exception to the rule about generalized public opinion prevailing as a habit under conditions of equality. Tocqueville judges this to be a good thing. For while it is true that all societies require "dogmatic beliefs, that is to say, opinions which men take on trust without discussion" (433), it is even more true for democratic and equal societies that encourage independence and indvidualism. "In times of enlightenment and democracy the human spirit is loath to accept dogmatic ideas and has no lively sense of the need for them, *except in the matter of religion*" (445, emphasis added). A free and open inquiring mind can only be free to roam intellectually if the most fundamental questions about human life are settled. As Tocqueville concludes:

> It is therefore of immense importance to men to have fixed ideas about God, their souls, and their duties toward their Creator and their fellows, for doubt about these first principles would leave all their actions to chance and condemn them, more or less to anarchy and impotence. (443)

These fundamental beliefs "are therefore the ideas above all others which ought to be withdrawn from the habitual action of private judgment and in which there is most to gain and least to lose by recognizing an authority" (443). This point is so crucial in Tocqueville's judgment that he summarizes it with one of his famous either/or epigramatic phrases:

> For my part, I doubt whether man can support complete religious independence and entire political liberty at the same time. I am led to think that if he has no faith he must obey, and if he is free he must believe (444).[93]

From a purely human point of view, religion is useful for societal well-being, and "the great usefulness of religion is even more apparent among egalitarian peoples than elsewhere" (444). This utility of religion is recognized even by the unbeliever, according to Tocqueville:

> The unbeliever, no longer thinking religion true, still considers it useful. Paying attention to the human side of religious beliefs, he recognizes their sway over mores than their influence over laws. He understands their power to lead men to live in peace and gently to prepare them for death. Therefore he regrets his faith after losing it, and deprived of a blessing whose value he fully appreciates, he fears to take it away from those who still have it. (299)[94]

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[93]Earlier in the first volume Tocqueville had made a similar point: "Despotisms may be able to do without faith, but freedom cannot" (294).

[94]For an eloquent statement of the same sentiment by a contemporary atheist (and socialist!) see Michael Harrington, *The Politics at God's Funeral: The Spiritual Crisis of Western Civilization* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1983).

However, aside from brief comments about the importance of few external ceremonies and the need for religions to limit themselves to their "proper" spiritual sphere, Tocqueville does not give many clues about *how* these fundamental and essential basic beliefs are to be passed on and nurtured. He does suggest that the most successful religions will be those that clearly distinguish central doctrines from secondary ones and hold them firmly (447), those that best respect majority public opinion and encourage the democratic instincts that are not hostile to the religious particular beliefs, as well as those that take concern for this life as well as the life to come (449). In terms of content, Tocqueville also judges that conditions of equality tend to foster religious conceptions of "a single God who imposes the same laws on each man and grants him future happiness at the same price." In other words, "the conception of the unity of mankind ever brings them back to the idea of the unity of the Creator" (445). Because under conditions of equality "the concept of unity becomes an obsession," Tocqueville thinks that democratic societies incline toward pantheism and notions of the indefinite perfectability of man (451-3).

But hints about the *content* of religions that are friendly to freedom and democracy does not answer the *how* question. If we take our departure from our earlier consideration of Solzhenitsyn's argument for beauty saving the world, we could expect Tocqueville to appeal to the role of art and literature as the proper means by which a democratic people transmit and nurture their ideals. If art more broadly points to the permanent things, to the basic transcendent points of reference for human life in society, then the human quest for beauty (and, through it, truth) is a crucial component in maintaining the habits of the heart necessary for life in a democratic community. When we add to this Tocqueville's concern about the social utility of religion, we are led to some notion of civil religion supported by salutary "social myths" which could then be propagated by civic art and literature as well as civic pageantry and ritual.[95]

Tocqueville does make an appeal to art (though not civic art to serve social myths) but in an indirect manner. Tocqueville defines poetry as "the search for and representation of the ideal" and, like Solzhenitsyn,[96] contends that it is "not the

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[95]This claim about salutary social myths (minus the reference to art) is in fact made by Jack Lively, *The Social Thought of Alexis de Tocqueville* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 196-97 and Marvin Zetterman, *Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy* (Stanford, CA: Standford University Press, 1967), 120-24. Catherine Zuckert's critique of Lively and Zetterman is persuasive since both rely on phrases such as "is a litle more than. . . " (Zetterman) and "it is only a short move from. . ." (Lively) and neither cites passages from Tocqueville that come close to a notion of "salutary social myth. See Catherine Zuckert, "Not by Preaching: Tocqueville on the Role of Religion in American Democracy," *The Review of Politics* 43/2 (April 1981): 259-280; I am indebted to Zuckert's article for the references to Lively and Zetterman.

[96]For a significant comparison between Tocqueville and Solzhenitsyn see Stephen Baron, "Morality and Politics in Public Life: Tocqueville and Solzhenitsyn on the Importance of Religion to Liberty," *Polity* 14/3 (Spring 1982): 395-413. Though Baron's key contrast between Tocqueville's instrumental/utilitarian understanding of religion as a limitor for democratic man and Solzhenitsyn's notion of religion's role in spiritually and morally transforming the person is clearly spelled out, he,

poet's function to portray reality but to beautify it and offer the mind some loftier image" (483). But before he comes to that point he makes a number of telling observations about the possibility of art and literature in a democracy. He notes that though there is a paucity of intellectual and artistic activity in the United States, "that few of the civilized nations of our times have made less progress than the United States in the higher sciences or had so few great artists, distinguished poets, or celebrated artists" (454), this is an accident of exceptional historical circumstance and not a necessary consequence of the democratic stituation. Though Americans have a greater taste for the useful than they have love for beauty because "democratic peoples . . .cultivate those arts which help to make life comfortable rather than those which adorn it" (465), the artistic impulse is not dead in America. Conditions lead to the expansion of artistic quantity while quality declines (468). "Democracy not only encourages the making of a lot of trivial things but also inspires the erection of a few very large monuments" with "nothing at all between these two extremes" (469). Lacking the leisurely opportunities of aristocratic classes, a democratic people "with but short time to spend on books [will] want it all to be profitable. They like books which are easily got and quickly read, requiring no learned researches to understand them. They like facile forms of beauty, self-explanatory and immediately enjoyable; above all they like things unexpected and new" (474).

Tocqueville is not reluctant to be specific about the range of subjects that serve a democratic imagination. Whereas aristocratic climates encourage poetic inspiration to range into the transcendent and supernatural, to celebrate what is old and fixed, and dwell on gods and heroes, "the spread of equality over the earth dries up the old springs of poetry." With the loss of the great themes and subjects, "poets first turned their eyes to inanimate nature. Gods and heroes gone, they began by painting rivers and mountains." Tocqueville disagrees with those who judge that "this poetry embellishing the physical and inanimate things that cover the earth is the true poetry of democracy," . . . and instead regards "it only as a transitional phenomenon." He concludes: "In the long run I am sure that democracy turns man's imagination away from externals to concentrate it on himself alone. Democratic peoples may amuse themselves momentaritly by looking at nature, but it is about themselves that they are really excited. Here, and here alone, are the true springs of poetry among them" (484). In addition, the democratic imagination is future rather than past-oriented, and is likely to celebrate the nation as a whole more than individual subjects, and link the nation's destiny to "include the destiny of the whole human race" in its scope. If poets "strive to connect the events they commemorate with the general designs of God for the universe, and without showing the hand of the Supreme Governor, reveal His thought, they will be admired and understood, for the imagination of their contemporaries is following the same road." (486). In Tocqueville's own summary:

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ike most interpreters of Tocqueville, overlooks the role of art and the artist.

> Among a democratic people poetry will not feed on legends or on traditions and memories of old days. The poet will not try to people the universe again with supernatural beings in whom neither his readers not he himself any longer believers, not will he coldly personify virtues and vices better seen in their natural state. All these resources fail him, but man remains and the poet needs no more. Human destiny, man himself, not tied to time or place, but *face to face with nature and with God*, with his passions, his doubts, his unexpected good fortune, and his incomprehensible miseries, will for these peoples be the chief and almost sole subject of poetry. . . . Equality, then, does not destroy all the subjects of poetry. It makes them fewer but more vast. (487)

Tocqueville's observations were prescient. The landscape art of Hudson Valley painters such as Thomas Cole and his pupil Frederick Church celebrated nature and nature's God. In fact, art Historian Barabara Novak, notes, "by the time Emerson wrote *Nature* in 1836, the terms `God' and `nature' were often the same thing and could be used interchangeably. . . . If Nature was God's Holy book, it *was* God."[97] Nineteenth-century landscape art had mass appeal and served religiously and metaphorically to place America in the broader narrative of universal providential history. As art critic Robert Hughes notes, "The wilderness, for nineteenth-century American artists, is mostly stress-free. Its God is an American God whose gospel is Manifest Destiny. It is pious and full of uplift. No wonder it was so quickly absorbed as a metaphor of religious experience by the first mass audience American art was to reach. It dovetailed so well with the pieties of its time."[98] The painters became the new priests of a national nature religion nurturing a new spiritual community. "In painting the face of God in the landscape so that the less gifted might recognize and share in that benevolent spirituality, they were among the spiritual leaders of America's flock."[99] One nineteenth-century writer, linking the sublimity of nature with the providential errand that was so foundational to the jeremiad, described the new nationalist iconographic spirituality this way:

> God has promised us a renowned existence, if we will but deserve it. He speaks this promise in the sublimity of Nature. It resounds all along the crags of the Alleghanies. It is uttered in the thunder of Niagara. It is heard in the roar of two oceans, from the great Pacific to the rocky ramparts of the bay of Fundy. His finger has written it in the broad expanse of our Inland Seas, and traced it out by the mighty Father of Waters! The august TEMPLE in which we dwell was built for

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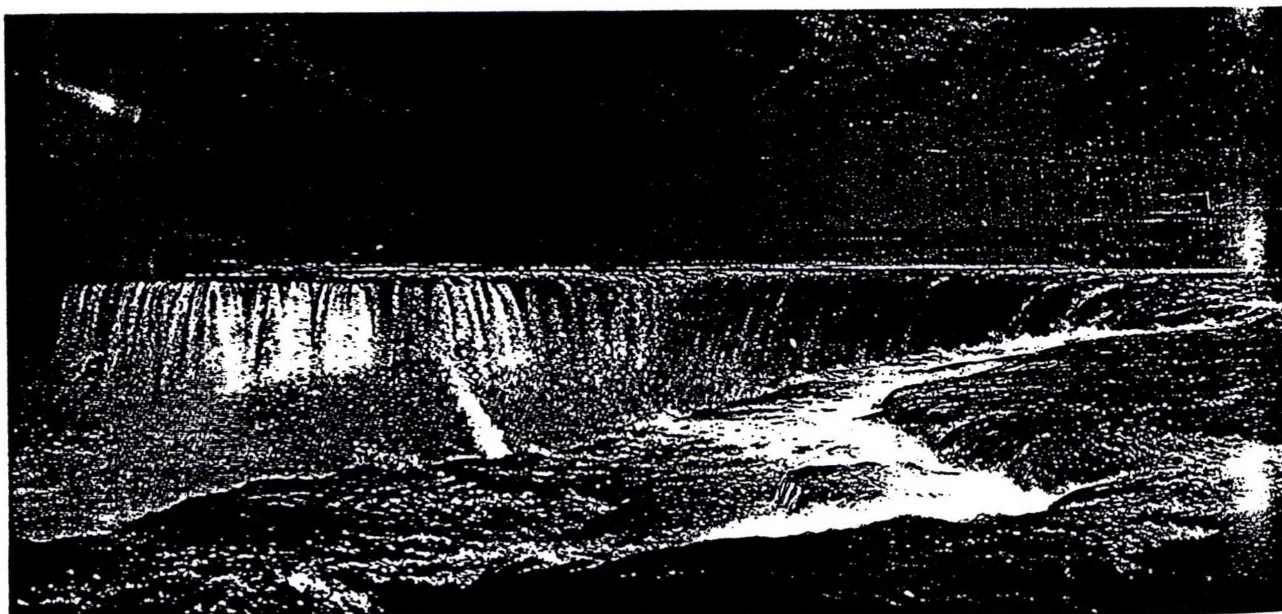
[97]Barabara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1875* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 3.

[98]Robert Hughes, *American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 140-41.

[99]Novak, *Nature and Culture*, 15.

loftypurposes. Oh! that we may consecrate it to LIBERTY and CONCORD, and be found fit worshippers within its holy wall![100]



94. Frederick E. Church, *Niagara*, 1857. Oil on canvas, 42¼ × 90½" (107.3 × 229.9 cm). The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.; museum purchase.

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[100]James Brooks, *The Knickerbocker*, 1835; quoted by Novak, *Nature and Culture*, 15

From this it is can be seen how the artistic representations of America's natural riches---viewed as God's blessings on his chosen people---served the needs of national identity and purpose for the new country.[101] In Novak's judgment, "Christianity and nationalism, two forms of hope, two imprimaturs of destiny, continually emerged from the face of American nature."[102]

Thomas Cole's nature nostalgia, reflected in his *Falls of Kaaterskill*, also led him to express artistically his anxiety about impending storms of doom as human culture, technological domination, and the general human lust for power and wealth threaten the idyllic harmony of nature. In his five-painting *Course of Empire Series*, Cole metaphorically traces the cyclical pattern of decline from Wilderness to Garden to Imperial Consummation to Destruction and, finally, to Desolation.[103]

88. Thomas Cole, *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow*, 1836. Oil on canvas, 51½ × 76" (130.8 × 193 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; gift of Mrs. Russell Sage, 1908.

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[101]"Perhaps it is safe to say that despite its international complexion, nineteenth-century nature worship was more strongly nationalistic in America than elsewhere. For nature was tied to the groupdestiny of Americans united within a still-new nation, 'one nation, under God.' This is perhaps a key explanation for the acceptance of immanence by the religious orthodoxy." (Novak, *Nature and Culture*, 16-17.)

[102]Ibid., 17.

[103]See Hughes, *American Visions*, 147-50; Novak, *Nature and Culture*, 10-13.

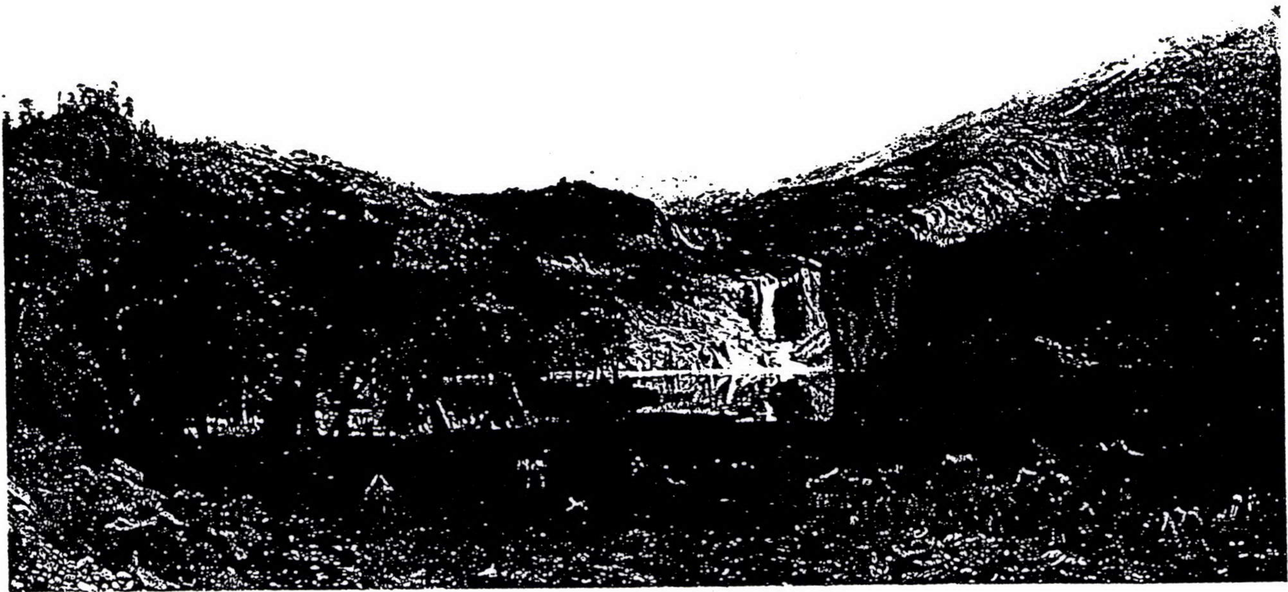
87. Thomas Cole, *Falls of Kaaterskill*, 1826. Oil on canvas, 43 × 36" (109.2 × 91.4 cm). The Warner Collection of Gulf States Paper Corporation, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

Others saw the American march westward over nature and native in a more historically-grounded biblical-metaphorical light: as an Exodus into the promised land. George Caleb Binham's *Daniel Boone Escorting Settlers through the Cumberland Gap*, joining the Exodus motif with the flight into Egypt, reflected a more widespread image of Daniel Boone the warrior against savage Indians (also see Enrico Causici's sandstone sculpture, *Daniel Boone Struggling with the Indian*) as a Moses figure.

116. George Caleb Bingham, *Daniel Boone Escorting Settlers Through the Cumberland Gap*, 1851–52. Oil on canvas, 36½ × 50¼" (92.7 × 127.6 cm). Washington University Gallery of Art, St. Louis, Missouri; gift of Nathaniel Phillips, Boston, 1890.

111. Enrico Causici, ***Daniel Boone Struggling with the Indian,*** **1826–27. Sandstone sculptural relief in the rotunda of the United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.**

The culmination of this vision of American expansionism as providentially inevitable is artistically portrayed in such works as Albert Bierstadt's *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak* and with spectacular obviousness by Emanuel Leutze's visual representation of the heliotropric myth, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way (Westward Ho!).*



118. Albert Bierstadt, *The Rocky Mountains, Lander's Peak,* 1863. Oil on canvas, 73½ × 120¾" (186.7 × 306.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Rogers Fund, 1907.

117. Emanuel Leutze, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way (Westward Ho!)*, 1861. Fresco, 20 × 30′ (6.09 × 9.14 m). Mural in the United States Capitol Building, Washington, D.C.

It also needs to be noted that shadow side of manifest destiny was not ignored by painters. Bierstadt's and Leutze's vision must be set next to the more somber look out over the Pacific in Tompkins Harrison Matteson's haunting *The Last of the Race*.

114. Tompkins Harrison Matteson, *The Last of the Race*, 1847. Oil on canvas, 39¼ × 50″ (101 × 127 cm). The New-York Historical Society, New York.

Kuyper as Poet

We have already taken note earlier in this chapter of Kuyper's clear affirmation of America's providential destiny. But how, we now ask, does his own passion for the cause of Calvinist cultural and political revival tie in with the thread we have been exploring about the role of art and literature in such renewal? Does Kuyper conceive art as an essential ingredient in his programmatic strategy to emancipate a marginalized group such as the orthodox Dutch Calvinists of later nineteenth century? Or, considered from another perspective, where does one place Kuyper on the continuum of rhetorical versus philosophical critique? Does his passionate opposition to the French Revolution translate into partisanship for the rhetorical and poetic tradition *against* the *philosophes*?

A few superficial points of comparison here before dealing with the broader issue. In his Stone Lectures on Calvinism Kuyper devoted one complete lecture (the fifth

of six) to "Calvinism and Art."[104] It is worth noting that, in line with Tocquevillian appreciation, Kuyper does not disparage the democratizing of art in the nineteenth century. Though he "admits" that "the homage of art by the profanum vulgus must necessarily lead to art corruption, nevertheless, "in this cold, irreligious and practical age the warmth of this devotion to art has kept alive many higher aspirations of ur soul. Which otherwise might readily have died, as they did in the middle of the last century" (142-43). In keeping with his general purpose in the Stone Lectures, namely to celebrate the contributions of Calvinism as well as encourage its further development, Kuyper points to the role that Calvinism played in the advanced of three areas, poetry, painting, and music. Concerning poetry he notes with regret that he can say no more because he would "have to disclose to you the treasures of our own Dutch literature," and that is impossible because "the narrow bounds within which our Netherland language is confined have excluded our poetry from the world at large" (164). However, in words that are similar to those we encountered earlier in this chapter from Solzhenitsyn, Kuyper notes that unlike the limitations of language, "the *eye* is international, and," he adds, "music heard by the ear is understood in every heart" (165).

In terms of content, Kuyper points to the democratic character of the great seventeenth-century Dutch masters like Rembrandt who "no longer considered worthy of notice [only those] who were superior to the common man, *viz.*, the high world of the Church and of the priest, of knights and princes.[105] But," says Kuyper, "since then, the people had come of age, and under the auspices of Calvinism, the art of painting, prophetic of a democratic life of later times, was the first to proclaim the people's maturity" (165). In all of this "it was seen that non-churchly life was also possessed of high importance and of an all-sided art motive." It was not only in aristocratic societies that art could flourish. In fact, the new found liberty born out of Calvinism created "a field on which free art could flourish" and "Calvinism alone was able to plough that field." Kuyper allows his democratic sympathies full reign at this point: "Having been overshadowed for many centuries by class-distinctions, the common life of many came out of its hiding-palce like a new world, in all its sober reality. It was the broad emancipation of our ordinary earthly life, and the instinct for liberty, which thereby captured the heart of the nations and inspired them with delight in the enjoyment of treasures so long blindly neglected" (166). The elevation of the ordinary was rooted in the theological conviction that the world was the theater of God's glory; that creation bears the image of divinity (θειότης).[106]

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[104]Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 142-70; page references that follow in the text are to the Stone Lectures. For a helpful critical interpretation of this lecture see Peter Heslam, Abraham Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism*, 293-335.

[105]On Kuyper's understanding of the democratic character of Calvinism's influence on art also see Abraham Kuyper, *Het Calvinisme en de Kunst* (Amsterdam: Höveker & Wormser, 1888), 24 -5.

[106]Ibid., 11.

It is here that Kuyper's views again approach the description given by Tocqueville and the practice of American nineteenth-century landscape artists whose work, in the judgement of art historians such as Barabara Novak, is not unrelated to the work of seventeenth-century Dutch landscape artists.[107] Also, as we shall explore more fully in the third chapter, Kuyper's reflections provide an interesting comparison with the theological understanding of beauty in America's great Calvinist theologian, Jonathan Edwards. We now turn to a more general consideration of Kuyper's political and social imagination.

To begin with, there is much in our earlier discussion of Solzhenitsyn and the role of beauty in saving the world that would resonate well with Kuyper. Both the appeal to "permanent things"[108] as well as the Augustine-like description of the spiritual conflict dividing humanity into two that Solzhenitsyn describes in his *Nobel Lecture*, would have struck a deeply sympathetic chord with Kuyper and his profound sense of divine law and the *antithesis* in human experience.[109] When describing the spiritual battle "in which I myself have been spending all my energy for nearly forty years," Kuyper speaks of Christianity and modernism as "two *life-systems* wrestling with one another in moral combat." Furthermore, his characterization of the two combatants is almost identical to Solzhenitsyn's: "Modernism is bound to build a world of its own from the data of the natural man, and to construct man himself from the data of nature while, on the other hand, all those who reverently bend the knee to Christ and worship Him as the Son of the living God, and God himself, are bent upon saving the `Christian Heritage.'"[110] Modern man is Promethean man and the Christian servant-apprentice artist is his mortal enemy.

When we move beyond this basic spiritual frame and consider the details of Kuyper's career and its ongoing significance as a model for Christian cultural and political discipleship today, matters become more complex. Unlike Solzhenitsyn's singular vision and career as a writer, Kuyper's career was multifaceted[111]---

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[107]Novak speaks of certain works offering "such conclusive visual evidence that it is hard to believe that they do not result from a direct (Holland) or indirect (Holland via England) cause and effect." Novak also observes that "the social similarities between the Dutch republic of the seventeenth century---with its Protestantism, its respect for humble things, its middle-class citizens---and the American republic of the nineteenth century indicate basic affinities that require further study." (*Nature and Culture*, 233-34).

[108]Kuyper unceasingly spoke of "divine ordinances," simply a more theologically framed way of referring to the permanent things. For a helpful anthology of essays inspired by T.S. Eliot's (via Russell Kirk) concern about art and the permanent things see, Andrew A. Tade and Michael H. McDonald, eds., *The Permanent Things: Toward the Recovery of a More Human Scale at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

[109]So too would appeal to literature as the "living memory of the nation" and the "woe" directed at those who by force cut off a nation's literature and thereby stop up its heart, carve out its memory, causing it to lose its spiritual unity.

[110]Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 11.

[111]Augustijn, (German article on AK). Romeyn.

emancipator of a marginalized national minority,[112] church reformer, university builder and professor,[113] theologian, politician and party leader, and above all---journalist. When we ask what provides a unity to his life and thought and what made him an effective leader of the neo-Calvinist transformation of Dutch life at the close of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, and what it is about him that makes him an ongoing inspiration to Christian political activists today around the world, a number of alternatives come to mind. Kuyper's self-understanding was essentially a theological one rooted in historic Calvinism. "In Calvinism," he said, "my heart has found rest. From Calvinism have I drawn the inspiration firmly and resolutely to take my stand in the thick of this great conflict of principles."[114]

Yet, important as theological conviction is for understanding Kuyper's thought, it does not adequately explain Kuyper the man of remarkable activism or what it was that resulted in his creating a folk-movement that indelibly shaped Dutch society for a century. Orthodox Calvinist theology obviously played an important role in the church reform, secession, and union movements of the late nineteenth century Dutch Reformed Churches. Furthermore, Kuyper's own theological virtuosity is amply documented in his major works, notably the *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*[115] and the *Dictaten Dogmatiek.*[116] Yet Kuyper's effective appeal to his constituency of broader Dutch Calvinist common folk (the *kleine luyden*), depended less on his sophisticated ability to trot out arguments from Calvin's *Institutes* or important theological textbooks such as the Leiden *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* than it did on Kuyper's remarkable *rhetorical* and journalistic ability to use history, Dutch national mythology and imagery to move and persuade his audience. In view of our preceding discussion of Solzhenitsyn's *artistic* and *literary* moral vision as well as Tocqueville's observations on the democratic imagination, we shall here to consider Kuyper in terms of his profound and lasting ability to capture people's imagination with words and images and move them to action. In other words, Abraham Kuyper as rhetorician, as poet more than as philosopher; Kuyper as a man of letters, as a man of *mythos* more than a man of *logos.*[117]

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[112]See Jan Hendriks, *De Emancipatie van de Gereformeerden* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Samsom, 1971).

[113]See J. Stellingwerf, *Dr. Abraham Kuyper en de Vrije Universiteit* (Kampen: Kok, 1987).

[114]Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 12.

[115]3 vols., 2nd ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1908). The second volume was translated into English by J. Hendrik De Vries, *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology: Its Principles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons and London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1898); rpt. as *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965).

[116]5 vols.,

[117]The comparitive ("more than") is deliberately chosen over any adversitive ("rather than," "instead of"). The point here is not that Kuyper should be seen as a Romantic opponent of all *logos*, but that viewing him primarily in terms of *mythos* is helpful in accounting for the shape and tenor of his career as a neo-Calvinist visionary.

This means that the primary category or frame by which we shall have to consider Kuyper is imagination. This is not the way Kuyper is usually viewed, especially by his followers. As James Bratt has observed, "Kuyper's North American followers have largely read him as a theologian and cultural philosopher---that is, as a man of ideas."[118] Kuyper also saw himself as involved in a spiritual battle of ideas, of worldviews, of life-systems. It is "because Calvinism claims to embody the Christian idea more purely than could Romanism and Lutheranism," he notes, that its worldview alone could be rallied to do battle against the destructive life-system of modernism. In his programmatic Stone Lectures on Calvinism he summarized this conflict of ideas thus:

> From the first, therefore, I have always said to myself,---"If the battle is to be fought with honor and with a hope of victory, then *principle* must be arrayed against *principle;* then it must be felt that in Modernism the vast energy of an all-embracing *life-system* assails us, then also it must be understood that we have to take our stand in a life-system of equally comprehensive and far-reaching power. . . [T]his principle is given us in *Calvinism.* In Calvinism my heart has found rest. From Calvinism have I drawn the inspiration firmly and resolutely to take my stand in the thick of this great conflict of principles.[119]

From this it is not surprising that Kuyper's interpreters have also seen him primarily as a man of ideas, an intellectual, a philosopher mightily tilting against the intellectual windmills constructed by Enlightenment autonomous Reason. Thus we inherit a rich legacy of scholarship about Kuyper the theologian,[120] church

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[118]James D. Bratt, "Abraham Kuyper's Public Career," *Reformed Journal*, 37/10 (October 1987): 9.

[119]Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures in Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931), 11-12, 17.

[120]E.g. P.A. Van Leeuwen, *Het Kerkbegrip in de Theologie van Abraham Kuyper* (Franeker: T. Wever, 1946); W. H. Velema, *De Leer van De Heilige Geest bij Abraham Kuyper* ('s-Gravenhage: Van Keulen, 1957); Henry Zwaanstra, "Abraham Kuyper's Conception of the Church," *Calvin Theological Journal* 9 (1974): 149-81.

historian,[121] culture critic, [122] man of science, [123]political activist, [124]and social theorist.[125] There is little here about Kuyper the man of letters, the rhetorican, the poet. Even when reference is made to Kuyper and art, it is primarily Kuyper's *theoretical aesthetic,* as articulated, for example, in the fifth Stone Lecture,[126] that is discussed rather than Kuyper's own imaginative, rhetorical use of language.[127]

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[121]H. J. Langman, *Kuyper en de Volkskerk* (Kampen: Kok, 1950); L. Praamsma, *Abraham Kuyper als Kerkhistoricus* (Kampen: Kok, 1946).

[122]A. A. Van Ruler, *Kuypers Idee Eener Christelijke Cultuur* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1940); S. J. Ridderbos, *De Theologische Cultuurbeschouwing van Abraham Kuyper* (Kok: Kampen, 1947); Peter S. Heslam, "Abraham Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism,*" Ph. D. Dissertation, Oxford University, (forthcoming from Eerdmans as *Creating a Christian Word-View: Abraham Kuyper's Lectures on Calvinism*) ; Edward E. Ericson Jr., "Abraham Kuyper: Cultural Critic," *Calvin Theological Journal* 22 (1987): 210-27.

[123]H. Dooyeweerd, "Kuypers Wetenschapsleer," *Philosophia Reformata*, 4 (1939): 193-232; Delvin L. Ratzsch, "Abraham Kuyper's Philosophy of Science," *Calvin Theological Journal*, 27 (1992): 277-303.

[124]McKendree Langley, "Emancipation and Apologetics: The Formation of Abraham Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party in the Netherlands, 1872-1880," Ph. D. Dissertation, Westminster Theological Seminary, 1995; idem., *The Practice of Political Spirituality* (Jordan Station, Ont.: Paideia, 1984); C. Augustijn et. al., eds. *Abraham Kuyper: Zijn Volksdeel, Zijn Invloed* (Delft: Meinema, 1987). Kuyper's biographers also tend to focus on his political career: P. Kasteel, *Abraham Kuyper* (Kok: Kampen, 1938); H. De Wilde, *Dr. A. Kuyper als Leider van het Volk en als Minister* ('s-Gravenhage: Nederbragt, 1905); Frank Vanden Berg, *Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950); L. Praamsma, *Let Christ Be King: Reflections on the Life and Times of Abraham Kuyper* (Jordan Station, Ont.: Paideia, 1985).

[125]D. Th. Kuiper, *De Voormannen: Een Sociaal-Wetenschappelijk Studie over Ideologie, Konflikt en Kerngropevorming binnen de Gereformeerde Wereld in Nederland tussen 1820 en 1930* (Meppel: Boom and Kampen: Kod, 1972); Dengerink, Wayne A. Kobes, "Sphere Sovereignty and the University: Theological Foundations of Abraham Kuyper's View of the University and its Role in Society," Ph.d. Dissertation, Florida State University, 1993; James W. Skillen, "From Covenant of Grace to Equitable Public Pluralism: The Dutch Calvinist Contribution," *Calvin Theological Journal* 31 (1996): 67-96; Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, Abraham Kuyper and the Cult of True Womanhood: An Analysis of *De Eerepositie der Vrouw*," *Calvin Theological Journal* 31 (1996): 97-124. Perhaps the most influential single item of Kuyper's social writing translated into English is his 1891 address to the Dutch Christian Social Congress: trans. and ed. James W. Skillen, *The Problem of Poverty* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991).

[126]Abraham Kuyper, "Calvinism and Art," *Lectures on Calvinism*, 142-70. Kuyper's theological aesthetics, as well as that of his neo-Calvinist successors (Herman Dooyeweerd, Hans R. Rookmaker, and Calvin Seerveld), is discussed in some detail by Jeremy Begbie, *Voicing Creation's Praise: Towards a Theology of the Arts* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), 81-166. Begbie makes the remarkable claim that there are only two signficant exceptions to the bleak picture Protestant theological aesthetics in the twentieth century: "One is the German theologian Paul Tillich, the other is is the Dutch Neo-Calvinist tradition stemming from the nineteenth-century scholar Abraham Kuyper. Both . . . make a serious and rigorous attempt to come to terms with the arts theologically" (xvi).

[127]Heslam comes closest in his discussion of "worldview" (p. 126); AK notion of worldview is not a theoretical, scientific one but essentially a rhetorical one.

Peter Heslam in fact contends that "in the realm of art Kuyper spoke as one not directly involved, and as one who showed little sign of artistic creativity."[128] Contrasting Kuyper's views on art with those on science, Heslam notes that Kuyper does not speak of human consciousness as the starting point for art as it is for science and that Kuyper does not antithetically speak of "two kinds of people, two kinds of art" to complement his notion of "two kinds of science."[129] Furthermore, he fails to plead for a specifically Christian art.[130] Heslam concludes that all this "seems to suggest that Kuyper was aware that, in terms of social change, politics and science [topics of two other Stone Lectures] held more of a leading role than the arts. . . . no-one [in the nineteenth century] proposed that arts could provide a radically new order and a means of solving all manner of problems in human society."[131] In my judgment, Heslam is largely[132] correct about Kuyper's *theory* but most certainly not about his *practice*. Kuyper, I would argue---as rhetorician, as preacher, as journalist, as parliamentarian, as political poet---was a creative artist and used his artistry self-consciously to effect significant social and political change. This may also be seen indirectily in the artistic celebration of Kuyper's own personal narrative and significance at the various fetes honoring his accomplishments[133] as well as in a recent commemorative, visual biography of his life and work.[134]

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[128]Heslam, Abraham Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism*," 293.

[129]Ibid., 324.

[130]Ibid.

[131]Ibid., 326.

[132]Largely, but not entirely. When Kuyper speaks of art as a "gift of the Holy Ghost and as a consolation in our present life, enabling us to discover in and behind this sinful life a richer and more glorious background," and further, that art also points to "the splendid restoration by which the Supreme Artist and Master-Builder will one day renew and enhance even the beauty of His original creation" (*Lectures on Calvoinism*, 155) he is in fact pointing to the socially transformative character of art as well. Patrick Sherry (*Spirit and Beauty: An Introduction to Theological Aesthetics* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992], 161-2) thus rightly notes significant parallels between Kuyper and one of his twentieth-century spiritual heirs, Nicholas Wolterstorff: "Wolterstorff, like Kuyper, sees art as an instrument in our struggle to overcome the fallenness of our existence, and, by the delight which it affords, anticipating the *shalom* that is to come; he calls on Christian artists to share in the task of witnessing to God's work of renewal and to work for the greater glory of God: 'Paradise is forever behind us. But the City of God, full of song and image, remains to be built.'" (Citation is from Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980], 199.)

[133]Notably the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of Kuyper's editorship of the Antirevolutionary Party's daily newspaper, *De Standaard*, on April 1, 1897: *Gedenkboek: Opgedragen door he Feestcomité aan Prof. Dr, A. Kuyper, bij zijn viij en twintigjarig jubileum als hoofdredacteur van* ***"De Standaard"*** (Amsterdam: G. J. C. Herdes, 1897).

[134]J. De Bruijn, *Abraham Kuyper: Leven en Werk in Beeld* (Amsterdam: Passage, 1987).

One example---the public celebration of Kuyper's seventieth birthday on October 29, 1907---illustrates this poetic practice well.[135] Kuyper responded to the gifts and well-wishes offered to him on this ocassion with this revealing word-play on his own name (*kuiper*=cooper):

> I know how the cooper creates his barrels. The art is to bow the individual staves to one side. He achieves that by putting them in a circle and subjecting them to a small inside fire. The heat pulls the drying wood inward and when all the staves are bowed it is easy to place them inside the band and unite them into a barrel.[136]

The essayist---Dutch historian Jan Romeyn--- who cites this passages explains it as follows: "The fire was the spirit of Abraham Kuyper, the staves were the orthodox [Reformed] people [*kleine luyden*], the barrel became the Anti-Revolutionary Party."[137] Romeyn cites this passage not only to indicate a key characteristic of Kuyper as an important "testator of [Dutch] civilization" but also as an specimen of what he calls Kuyper's "seldom equalled literary ability," an ability so intensely urgent (*dringend*) that it "traced symbols---the underlying unity of things---everywhere, even in places where others hardly saw the individual things."[138] In short, a poetic imagination.

Thus we see that not all interpreters of Kuyper regard him purely as a man of ideas. His literary legacy, for example, has been noticed by a few others. The great contemporary Dutch historian and Americanist[139] Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt, no mean poet himself,[140] finds the poetic (*dichterlijke*) dimension of Kuyper to be the redeeming and humanizing element in the great man's often irritating eccentricities. Though Kuyper's language was often bombastic, Schulte Nordholt contends, he nonetheless had a wonderful capacity to bring images together.[141] From the more specifically rhetorical angle, observing that a scholarly apparatus (footnotes and

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[135]*Kuyper-Gedenkboek 1907* ('s-Gravenhage: n.p., 1908). This event and the volume commemorating it---like similar Kuyper *fêtes* and *festschriften*---is striking in the important role played by creative visual and written art (poetry).

[136]Cited by Jan Romein at the beginning of his essay, "Abraham Kuyper: De Klokkenist der Kleine Luyden," in Jan and Annie Romeyn, *Erflaters van Onze Beschaving*, vol. IV, *Negentiende Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Em Querido, 1947), 145. I have not been able to confirm this quotation in an original source.

[137]Ibid.

[138]Ibid.

[139]See, for example, Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt, *The Myth of the West: America as the Last Empire* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

[140]See, for example, Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt, *So Much Sky*, trans. Henrietta Ten Harmsel, foreword by Frederick Buechner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

[141]"Interview with J. W. Schulte Nordholt," in G. Puchinger, *Gesprekken over Hondred Jaar Vrije Universiteit* (Delft: Meinema, 1980), 68. On Schulte Nordholt's assessement of Kuyper's America portrait see chapter 2, pp. XXXXXXX.

bibliographies) is sometimes thin in Kuyper's writing, Peter Heslam contends that he portrays the ideas of others in a "highly impressionistic and polemical" manner for specific strategic, political ends. "His ideas were formulated and presented not so much to contribute to reasoned academic debate but to stimulate activity and to produce practical results. It is only, therefore, by establishing the practical motives behind Kuyper's ideas . . . that his world of thought can be properly understood."[142] In considering specifically Kuyper's struggle in the 1870s for legal recognition of Christian schools and the related necessary reform of the National church, Heslam notes that Kuyper's move from Utrecht to Amsterdam in 1870 was decided largely for strategic purposes. "His experience in Utrecht had taught him that church reform could proceed successfully *if public opinion had first been aroused and informed, and this would be carried out more effectively from the country's capital city.*"[143] Heslam also views Kuyper's Princeton Stone Lectures as the culmination of this rhetorical, persuasive, journalistic and polemical activity. "They were written by someone who, although learned in scholarship, was a journalist to the very core, and one who was well versed in the art of polemics and propaganda."[144] Stated more positively, this suggests that it is not out of order to consider Kuyper as a master of the *rhetorical* tradition.

James Bratt comes to a similar conclusion when he notes that "Kuyper never let himself be a man of pure ideas," adding significantly, "not that he lacked the ability." Rather, "it was as a newspaper editor that Kuyper burst onto the national scene, and by his newspapers that he forged a consituency that remained undyingly loyal to him." Bratt characterizes Kuyper as a "movement leader, an instituiton builder, as well as an intellectual. Better, he was an intellectual *as* movement leader. . . . Put simply, Kuyper's ideas emerged in the process of identifying, organizing, and pushing a grass-roots consituency to action." Bratt compares Kuyper to Jerry Falwell in this regard: Both "undertook the same twofold mission: to awaken a culturally disinherited and despised constituency from its pietistic slumbers and to turn its power against liberal, secularistic, or humanistic hegemony in church and state. Both promised that the venture would return their nations to godly foundations and vanished glory. . . . Both began with local congregational renewal and ended up trying to transform the nation; and both built the same steps in between---Christian lower education, grass-roots political networking, a Christian University."[145]

Bratt also draws another interesting comparison, especially for Americans: Kuyper and Martin Luther King Jr. Both were charismatic national leaders, personally and permanently identified with the emancipatory movements they started, with similar goals for their groups: "Full voting rights, equitable schooling,

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[142]Heslam, "Abraham Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism*, 17-18.

[143]Ibid., 49; emphasis added.

[144]Ibid., 53.

[145]James D. Bratt, "Abraham Kuyper's Public Career," 9-10.

and an end to slurs and prejudice." Kuyper and King also "shared commonalities of biography and style" and "both had first- rate minds which they subordinated to a popular cause." Their legacy? Among other things, a literary one: "Their books survive them." Bratt notes that, for King, what may seem in written form "to be a rhetoric of banality. . . was something else when originally *spoken* to a packed house in the deep South." Similarly, "by all accounts Kuyper was at his best as an orator, which requires that we read him with the memory of a King speech in mind." "It is striking in this connection," Bratt adds, "that King's final address followed Kuyper's favorite strategy. Recounting the history of the West in bold, symbolic strokes, King led his audience to see that they, Memphis garbage workers, stood at the cutting edge of time, agents called of God to lead the redemption of the nation. Rarely did either of these Samsons fail to bring the house down."[146]

Thinking of Kuyper as a journalistic rhetorician, a poet, a myth-maker, also matches the judgment of his contemporaries, including his political opponents. In 1897 Kuyper was feted on the anniversary occasion of his twenty-five years as editor of the Antirevolutionary daily newspaper, *De Standaard.* The leader of the Roman Catholic Party, Msgr. H. J. A. M. Schaepman, as well as Kuyper's alienated former colleague, Jhr. Mr. A. F. De Savornin Lohman, both delivered glowing tributes to Kuyper's ability as a journalist. Though Lohman increasingly and vigorously disagreed with Kuyper's views he observed that "this need not and must not hinder us in honoring the extraordinary talents which have allowed the editor [of *De Standaard*] to take up a place of honor, or rather *the* place of honor among our journalists."[147] As Peter Heslam summarizes: "Even among his opponents, Kuyper's journalistic and literary skills were acknowledged."[148] It is also worth noting that Kuyper concluded his response to the tributes received on this occasion with a rare (for him)[149] verse paraphrase of the influential nineteenth-century Dutch poet Isaac Da Costa:

> For me, one passion rules my life,
> One higher desire compels my mind and soul.
> And may my breath fail me
> Before I would evade that sacred obligation.
> It is this: Notwithstanding the world's remonstrances,
> To re-establish God's holy ordinances
> In home and church, in school and state,

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[146]Ibid., 11-12.

[147]*Gedenkboek*, 89-90; translation, with adaptation of American spelling, is from Peter Heslam, "Abraham Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism*," 77-8.

[148]Heslam, "Abraham Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism*," 78.

[149]According to De Bruijn this was one of the few poems written by Kuyper and was later put to music by P. Anders (*Abraham Kuyper: Leven en Werk in Beeld*, 214).

For the welfare of the nation.
To engrave the Lord's commands,
To which Word and Creation testify,
On the nation's [conscience] so clearly,
That before God they once again will bend their knee.[150]

It was on that same occasion that Kuyper's fellow neo-Calvinist titan, the great Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck,[151] provided a perspective on Kuyper the poet as seen by sympathetic fellow-Calvinists.[152] Bavinck praises Kuyper in one breath with the Dutch poets Willem Bilderdijk (1756-1831) and Isaac Da Costa (1798-1860), as well as statesman Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-76), as opponents of the "spirit of the age"[153] and standard-bearers of Calvinism and liberty inextricably joined together. Such opposition, Bavinck noted, naturally fosters resistance and *De Standaard*, like the three literateurs it emulates, also received its fair share---a *kulturkampf* became inevitable. But, he added, all these men had and used only one weapon in the battle: the power of the *word*. "The depth and strength

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[150]*Gedenkboek* (1897), 77:

Voor mij, één zucht beheerscht mijn leven,
Één hooger drang drijft zin en ziel.
En moog' mij d'adem eer begeven,
Eer ik aan dien heil'gen drang ontviel,
't Is om Gods heil'ge ordonnantiën,
In huis en kerk, in school en staat,
Ten spijt van 's werelds remonstrantiën,
Weervast te setten, 't volk ten baat.
't Is om die ord'ningen des Heeren
Waar Woord èn Schepping van getuigt,
In 't volk zóó helder te graveeren,
Tot weer dat volk voor God zich buigt.

For this new translation of Kuyper's poem I was greatly helped by the previous efforts of J. Hendrik De Vries ("Introduction" to Abraham Kuyper, *To Be Near Unto God* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1925], 7), and Peter Heslam, "Abraham Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism*," 77, as well as my Calvin Seminary colleagues Carl Bosma and Henry De Moor..

[151]Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) was born into a leading family of the Secession Christian Reformed Church (*Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*) that split from the Dutch national Reformed Church in 1834, and taught in its Seminary at Kampen from 1883 to 1902. After Kuyper's own break from the national Church in 1886, Bavinck became the prime force in the secessionist community for union with the Kuyper faction, a union that was accomplished in 1892. Bavinck succeeded Kuyper as Professor of Theology at the Free University of Amsterdam in 1902 when Kuyper had become the Dutch Prime Minister. His major work is the four-volume *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, first published in the 1890s with a revised version complete by 1911.

[152]What follows is taken from *Gedenkboek* (1872), 44-7.

[153]Noteworthy is da Costa's tract, *Bezwaren tegen der Geest der Eeuw* (1823), a vigorous critique of the principles of the French Revolution.

of their conviction made them all eloquent" in a rich diversity of style. Bilderdijk's "vigorous verses" brought to light the "muscular power" and "inexhaustible riches" of the Dutch language. Da Costa "wreathed [words] with an Oriental hue, with the glow of Old Testament prophecy." Groen van Prinsterer "fashioned images of his ideas in the style of marble block, independent and solid as a rock."

Nonetheless, the language of *De Standaard,* Bavinck judges, surpassed each of these predecessors in "range of emotion, vividness of representation, richness of imagery, in dramatic action, in the power to stir and carry along [the reader]." Bavinck describes Kuyper's style in detail: "It is built up of sentences that are armed with light and approach the foe deftly and movingly, joyfully and courageously, with song and music, either to attack or defend, advancing or retreating, but always alert, preferring to be found at the center of the heat of battle." *De Standaard* articles, according to Bavinck, were "often scintillating improvisations on paper, gems of thought and language. With one image, one sentence, a portrait was drawn of the character of a foe, the nature of the battle, the position of the parties. A single expression---suddenly a word that takes flight on every lip---was sufficient; the matter became transparent to everyone's eye. *De Standaard* never provided arrid argumentation or lengthy deductive reasoning; the heart and soul of a *man* was always in the word." And then Bavinck makes this judgment about Kuyper the *rhetorician*: "And that man did not *write* to us on paper, he *spoke* to us and reached out through that word to our understanding and will, our heart and conscience, not satisfied until he knew what he had in us." Lest one conclude that Bavinck was a mere Kuyper sycophant, it is important to include here his own acknowledgment of Kuyper's lapses. "I do not want to deny," Bavinck said, "that in the heat of battle the blows on occasion fell too sharply and that in the haze of gunpowder a clear distinction between friend and foe was not always made." One final illustration of how his contemporaries viewed Kuyper can be seen in the printed program of Kuyper's visit, during his 1898 American tour, to Cleveland where "Cleveland's Welcome to Holland's Foremost Citizen" describes him as "Statesman, Theologian," and, *nota bene*!, "*Literateur.*"[154]

How does this description and interpretation of Kuyper as a poet, as well as Bratt's suggestive comparison of Kuyper and King, square with Kuyper's own understanding of rhetoric, poetry and art? Kuyper explicitly affirmed the value of art. Though he acknowledges in part the validity of the reputation Calvinism has as an iconoclastic religion,[155] and even downgrades aesthetic, symbolically rich *religious*

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[154]Reprinted as plate 14 in George Harinck and Hans Krabbendam, eds., *Sharing the Reformed Tradition: The Dutch-North American Exchange, 1846-1996* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1996), 109, emphasis added.

[155]Two interesting anecdotes are appropriate here. In recognition of his twenty-five year editorship of *De Standaard,* Kuyper was presented with an elaborately sculpted silver statue, rich in national-historical significance (see *Gedenkboek* (1872), 53; J. De Bruijn, *Abraham Kuyper: Leven en Werk in Beeld*, 217). In his response Kuyper said that his first reaction at the unveiling of this gift was: "Well, it appears that the Calvinists have once again learned to appreciate and value art." Charmingly,

life as inferior---"a lower level"---he also lauds art as a distinct and fully legitimate "sphere" of human activity along with the "intellectual, ethical, [and] religious."[156] Furthermore, utilizing one of his favorite---i.e. organic---metaphors, he contends that "art also is no side-shoot on a principal branch, but an independent branch that grows from the trunk of our life itself, even though it is far more nearly allied to Religion than to our thinking or to our ethical being."[157] Kuyper's concluding challenge: "Understand that art is no fringe that is attached to the garment, and no amusement that is added to life, but a most serious power in our present existence, and therefore its principal variations must maintain, in their artistic expression, a close relation with the principal variations of our entire life."[158]

Christian-Historical Imagination

Where does one go to begin understanding Kuyper as a political poet and what are the categories that interpret his particular imagination? The answer is remarkably simple: We begin where he himself began, namely with the literary heritage of nineteenth-century Dutch Calvinism itself, particularly the work of Willem Bilderdijk, Isaac da Costa, and Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer.[159] But first some prior definitions and distinctions.

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the text of Kuyper's speech includes the parenthesis that this remark generated applause. Furthermore, "the elegant form and the purity of the imagery chosen demonstrates that the days are behind us when many among us despised outward form and had no feeling or appreciation for how an aesthetically sensitive eye elevates" (*Gedenkboek* [1872], 62. A second anecdote: When the Free University was officially opened on October 20, 1880, the ceremonial mace of the new university had at its head a silver statue of Minerva, the Roman goddess of Wisdom/Reason. The Secessionist weekly journal, *De Bazuin*, sharply criticized this, calling it "heathen." Kuyper responded by calling this reaction "iconoclastic fanaticism" and noting that major seventeenth-century Dutch Reformed Theologians such as Gisbert Voetius (1589-1676) had also used Minerva as a symbol of scholarship (J. De Bruijn, *Abraham Kuyper: Leven en Werk in Beeld*, 142). On a less aesthetically elevated topic, the same article criticized the opening celebrations of the Free University because wine was served at the banquet. Kuyper responded by citing another who insisted that "Calvinists were not the sort of people who put water in their wine," and added, "one does not nurture a generation of hardy Calvinists with milk chocolate and water" (ibid.).

[156]Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 144-50; cf. idem., *The Antithesis Between Symbolism and Revelation* (Amsterdam & Pretoria: Höveker and Wormser, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d.).

[157]Ibid., 150.

[158]Ibid., 151.

[159]Both Kuyper and his neo-Calvinist co-laborer Herman Bavinck produced works on Willem Bilderdijk (1756-1831): Abraham Kuyper, *Bilderdijk in zijne Nationale Beteekenis* (Amsterdam & Pretoria: Höveker & Wormser, 1906); Herman Bavinck, *Bilderdijk als Denker en Dichter* (Kok: Kampen, 1906). Kuyper, it should be noted, in addition to his *theological* lectures at the Free University, also gave lectures in the faculty of letters, in the areas of linguistics and aesthetics (De Bruijn, *Abraham Kuyper: Leven en Werk in Beeld*, 157). A helpful study of Bilderdijk's relation to international literary and intellectual currents of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries is Walter Lagerwey, "Bilderdijk and the German Enlightenment," Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 1958.

What imagination is, is not altogether a mystery.[160] Philosopher Immanuel Kant's definition is as good as any: "*Imagination* is the faculty of representing in intuition an object that is *not itself present.*"[161] What imagination does, therefore, is to take whatever is not temporally or spatially present to a person and make it present through images. Imagination is thus tied to the metaphorical use of language whereby we creatively transfer words from one context to another or, in Nelson Goodman's delightful metaphor, "teach an old word new tricks."[162] In itself that makes imagination a neutral human faculty, capable of use for good or ill. Kuyper, himself, in fact, made that very point in his Stone Lectures in a discussion about the theater. "In itself," he noted, "there is nothing sinful in fiction---the power of the imagination is a precious gift of God himself. Neither," he added, "is there any special evil in *dramatic* imagination."[163] Thus, neither rationalism's congenital suspicion of imagination in favor of concepts[164] nor the anxiety in North American evangelical Christianity about New Age visualization,[165] should be permitted to deter Christians from a proper understanding, appreciation, and use of human imagination. Imagination is no more or less tainted than any other human faculty. As Colin Gunton has noted: "There is nothing godlike about the reason that elevates it above other human faculties, for it is the source of demonic pride as much as of illumination. All our intellectual, aesthetic and moral endeavors fail unless they take place in due repentance and subordination to the truth."[166] A Christian imagination is not an oxymoron.

What then is a Christian imagination? One attempt to define it links it directly to the notion of promise.

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[160]Volumes on imagination are increasing in our postmodern world. The most thorough and balanced treatment of the subject, in my judgment, remains Eva T. H. Brann, *The World of the Imagination: Sum and Substance* (Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1991).

[161]Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), B 151; cited by Garrett Green, *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 62.

[162]Cited by Colin E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 28.

[163]Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 74. Nonetheless, Kuyper judged, "the *moral sacrifice* demanded of actors and actress for the amusement of the public" to be sufficient reason for abstinence by Christians. "The prosperityof Theaters is purchased at the cost of manly character, and of female purity," he judged (ibid., 74-5).

[164]Colin Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, 39; also see note 7, above.

[165]See among others Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon, *The Seduction of Christianity: Spiritual Discernment in the Last Days* (Eugene, Ore. Harvest, 1985); Constance Cumbey, *The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow* (Shreveport, La.: Huntington House, 1983); Tex Marrs, *Dark Secrets of the New Age* (Westchester, Ill.: Crossway, 1987). For helpful critiques of excessive "new- age conspiracy" theories among American evangelicals, see Douglas R. Groothuis, *Confronting the New Age* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1988); Bob and Gretchen Passantino, *Witch Hunt* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1990); Gregory Wolfe, "Beauty Will Save the World."

[166]Colin Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, 39.

> The Christian imagination is essentially an imagination of promise, an openess to the present because of the possibilities that it unfolds, a refusal to seek escape from the ravages of time through any subterfuge---either through nostalgia for the past or by flight into the timeless world of aesthetic or "religious" experience. The Christian imagination is grounded in history, aware of the irreversibility of time, anxious for the fulfillment of its dreams.[167]

This is a helpful definition, also for the fences it puts up as protection against the possibilities of a corrupt imagination. Imagination that seeks escape into fantasy, that seeks to evade the realism taught by history, is not a Christian imagination but---likely---a gnostic one. It is this emphasis on historical awareness that helps resist the temptation nostalgically to imagine past golden ages or, in revolutionary fashion, to imagine creating future utopias. It is possible to specify this more clearly.

William Kilpatrick, borrowing from Irving Babbitt and Edmund Burke, distinguishes a *moral* imagination from an *idyllic* one. Simply put, "the moral imagination works within the limits of reality and the idyllic imagination does not. The moral imagination holds up an ideal that is attainable, alhough only through hard work; the idyllic imagination holds up an ideal that can never be attained in reality, but can easily be attained in fantasy or feeling." And, most importantly, "the moral imagination takes guidance from external reference points which are considered binding: either God, natural law, or tradition."[168] The moral imagination thus respects and takes its rootage in some form of revelation. Kilpatrick's distinction here is reminiscent of Solzhenitsyn's "two kinds of people, two kinds of art."[169]

What Kilpatrick calls the idyllic imagination can be broken down into two related but nonetheless distinguishable forms: the utopian imagination and the ideological imagination. Utopian dreams, according to a recent thorough study, are rooted in "two ancient beliefs---the Judeo-Christian faith in a paradise created with the world and destined to endure beyond it, and the Hellenic myth of an ideal, beautiful city built by men for men with the assistance and often in defiance of the gods."[170] Simply put, "utopian thought [is] belief in an unspoiled beginning and attainable

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[167]John R. May, *Toward a New Earth: Apocalypse in the American Novel* (Notre Dame, Ind. and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1972), 1.

[168]William Kilpatrick , *Why Johnny Can't Tell Right from Wrong: Moral Illiteracy and the Case for Character Education* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 208-9; cf. Irving Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919); Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in Russell Kirk, ed., *The Portable Conservative Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 22.

[169]See above, p. 7.

[170]Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979), 1; see further the discussion of utopian literature in relation to the "new world," chapter 2, pp.

perfection."[171] Utopian thought is the dream of an improved, more just society that "seems to haunt the human imagination ineradicably and in all ages."[172] Historically, utopian imaginations have not been satisfied with literary achievement or future heavenly fulfillment; they seek actualization on earth and often become embodiments of ideological imaginations. It is best not to use the term "ideology" in "its widest sense to denote any complex of ideas whatsoever" but restrict it "to bodies of doctrine that present themselves as affording systems of belief so complete that whole populations may live by them alone, that are made known and interpreted by leaders ostensibly possessed of special genius or by organized elites-not unlike priesthoods, that claim exclusive authority as representing something like revealed truth, and that consequently require the suppression of whatever does not conform."[173] The ideological imagination, therefore, is the revolutionary imagination, and the triumph of the French Revolution is the real beginning of ideology.[174]

The smoke of fury and war thus usually accompanies ideologies, described by Russell Kirk as "fanatic political creeds, often advanced by violence." "By definition," observes Kirk, "'ideology' means servitude to political dogmas, abstract ideas not founded upon historical experience. Ideology is inverted religion, and the ideologue is the sort of person whom the historian Jacob Burckhardt called `the terrible simplifier.'"[175] The utopian imagination is riddled with contradictions. It is both pessimistic and optimistic at the same time; "pessimistic about individual human nature, but optimistic about the ability of man's social nature, as embodied in society, to overcome the recalcitrance of the individual." Since overcoming that recalcitrance may require considerable coercion, utopians paradoxically also combine a belief in "unconstrained freedom" with a passion to "so thoroughly organize freedom that they turn it into slavery."[176] Focused on destruction of the present evil order and fixated on "constructing an imaginary community and world order," the utopian, "as thinker, is irrational and logical at the same time. Once he constructs his imaginary commonwealth (sometimes even an imaginary world with laws of physics different from ours), once he takes the big leap into another system of thought, he proceeds with strict logic, leaving nothing to chance. His human beings behave, or are made to behave, like automata; the organization of their lives

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[171]Thomas Molnar, *Utopia: The Perennial Heresy* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967; rpt. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1990), 6.

[172]George Orwell, "Arthur Koestler," in *The Collected Essays: Journalism and Letters of George Orwell,* 4 vols., ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979), III, 274; cited by Krishan Kuamr, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 2.

[173]Louis J. Halle, *The Ideological Imagination* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972), 5-6.

[174]Ibid., 7.

[175]Russell Kirk, *The Roots of American Order* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1991), 9.

[176]Thomas Molnar, *Utopia: The Perennial Heresy*, 7-8.

never changes as they perform with clocklike precision the tasks assigned by the central authority." Often borrowing their philosophical anthropology from mechanistic models of science, utopian planners seek to create a people who "are no longer bound by human nature and its rich variations." The citizens of utopias are people who have had "their umbilical cord with mother earth and ordinary humanity severed;" they have become "puppets, quazi-zombies, lacking historical dimension, bereft of freedom and choice."[177] The utopian-ideological imagination is thus fittingly described by T.S. Eliot as the "diabolical imagination."[178]

By contrast, a Christian moral imagination, even in visionary` form, is determinedly historical. Historical consciousness, "is the cultivation of an attitude of respect and reverence towards what cannot be seen, towards the invisible sources of meaning and authority in our lives---towards the formative agents and foundational principles that, although no longer tangible, have made possible most of what is worthy of honor and esteem in our day. . . . The tutelage of historical consciousness teaches us what it means to walk by faith, and not only by sight."[179] Historical consciousness is not the same as the academic study of history. "Historical consciousness means learning to appropriate into one's own moral imagination, and learning to be guided by, the memories of discerning others, memories of things one never experienced firsthand." Historical consciousness is a prime example of the "sword of imagination" that alone can give lie to the modern, positivistic belief "that we live in a world of inert facts to which we impute values." Rather, as historical, remembering creatures we participate in shared memories, we are members of a "community of memory" connected "to all who are bound together by remembrance of, and involvement in," the same story. "Indeed, communities, and nation-states, are ultimately constituted and sustained by shared memories, narratives of foundation, conflict, and perseverance." In sum, "historical consciousness draws us out of a narrow preoccupation with the present and with our `selves,' and ushers us into another, larger world---a public world that `cultures' us."[180] This sense of "meaning" is not arrived at through deduction and ratiocination, it comes through apprehension, "a mysterious form of participation that is . . . something very different from mere subjectivity."[181]

It is this historical consciousness, combined with a Christian providential conviction, that was the basis for the political poetry that shaped Abraham Kuyper's public theology and characterized the three Dutch literary figures who influenced him. The Calvinist political movement of the nineteenth century self-consciously

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[177]Ibid., 8-9.

[178]T. S. Eliot, *After Other Gods*

[179]Wilfred M. McClay, "History and Memory," *The University Bookman* 35/4 (Winter 1995), 19.

[180]Ibid., 21.

[181]Ibid.

described itself as "Christian-historical," or "anti-revolutionary."[182] The background for this terminology is twofold: The intellectual revolution brought about by the eighteenth-century Enlightenment with its emphasis upon the autonomy of Reason, and the political "revolution" during the last decades of the same century that introduced French-inspired, revolutionary, popular sovereignty into the Netherlands. The latter helped produce the revolutionary Dutch "patriot" movement in the 1780s, the much-despised Batavian Republic from 1795-1805,[183] and influenced the Belgian revolution of 1830 as well as the more general outbreaks of European revolution in 1848. It was in opposition to this "spirit" that Bilderdijk, da Costa, and van Prinsterer exercised their literary genius to set forth an alternative Christian-historical, anti-revolutionary vision.

Over against the dominant rationalism Bilderdijk appealed to the the sense of duty that arises from the heart. Reason itself cannot provide the reasons for moral obligation.

> No, the law that governs us
> In this imperfect life,
> Does not depend on reason's light.
> I feel it speaking in my bosom,
> Seeking vengeance on my neglect;
> It is God who is in command.

The attack on Reason is not a repudiation of all reason or even of philosophy[184]:

> Only a treacherous Reason
> That, dissatisfied with God's command,
> Thus combats his inspired direction,
> And because of this delusion,
> Imagines it can suppress
> That which The Almighty

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[182]The two terms were used interchangeably. Groen van Prinsterer explained this as follows: "'Christian-historical' denotes our positive program, but 'anti-revolutionary' reminds us of the polemical stance we must take in our time, out of self defence" (Harry Van Dyke, *Groen Van Prinsterer's Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution* [Jordan Station, Ont.: Wedge, 1989], 192). For the history and use of the terms see, in addition, J. C. Van Der Does, *Bijdrage tot de Geschiedenis der wording van de Anti-Revolutionaire of Christelijk-Historische Staatspartij* (Amsterdam: W. Ten have, 1925); I. A. Diepenhorst, *Historisch-Critische Bijdrage tot de Leer van den Christelijken Staat*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1943).

[183]See Simon Schama, *Patriots and Liberators: Revolution in the Netherlands, 1780-1813* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992 [1977]).

[184]On Bilderdijk's philosophical allegiances see H. Bavinck, *Bilderdijk als Denker en Dichter*.

Has indelibly engraved on us mortals.[185]

Over against the fragmentation, disorder and social anarchy resulting from rationalist individualism and revolutionary ideology, Bilderdijk passionately craved and promoted unity, order, harmony along with creational diversity. Unity was the key feature of his worldview according to Bavinck. The goal of all understanding, he claimed, was "always unity, unity that is found in God and that he has imprinted on creation. Unity in the moral, the natural, the spiritual realms; and from this unity spreading out to all spheres and orders."[186] Yet Bilderdijk clearly distances himself from Romantic pantheism as the following (didactic!) verse makes clear as it mockingly takes the monistic standpoint:

Yes, everything is one indeed;
  But reality diversifies as it approaches perfection.
Even pagans distinguish stones from shrubs;
  One is more complete, the other less;
Such distinctions are hidden in all that is.
  We are a little more complete,
Garlic cloves a bit less;
  And mushrooms still a little more less;
With ginger snaps even more less.
  All this in a descending slope
But we, we are the most
  With nothing higher,
No God nor Spirit.
  Yet our exaltation must strive for yet greater loftiness;
  Just read Kant and Fichte,

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[185] Neen, de wet ons voorgeschreven
In dit onvolkomen leven,
  Hangt aan redens inzicht niet.
'k Voel haar in mijn boezem spreken,
Haar verzuiming op mij wreken;
  God is 't, die in haar gebiedt.
't Is alleen de valsche Reden
Die, met God's bestel t' onvreden,
  Dus Zijne inspraak wederstreeft,
En in de oorzaak waant te dringen
Van het geen ons, stervelingen,
  De Almacht ingegriffeld heeft.
Cited by Herman Bavinck, *Bilderdijk als Denker en Dichter* (Kampen: Kok, 1906), 34-5.

[186] Ibid., 42.

They will prove it to you.[187]

By contrast, Bilderdijk's own cosmology is clearly theistic, rooted in a Creator/creature distinction that acknowledges the creature's utter dependence.

Thou, one, eternal *being*
Origin of all that is and appears to be;
Whose power we read in the universe, in our existence,
In night and daylight!
Almighty, Eternal, Incomprehensible, Worldfounder,
Who embraces all, fills all.
. . . .
If you should cease to shine your will on our existence
We would be as if we never had been;
Your creating is our being,
Your Spirit alone gives us breath.[188]

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187 Ja, alles is wel één; maar 't stof is onderscheiden,
Naar 't meer volmaakt is. Steen of heesters aan de heiden
Verschillen; 't een is meer volkomen, 't andere min;
Daar schuilt dit onderscheid van wat bestaan heeft, in.
Wij zijn wat meer volmaakt; wat minder knofleekscheuten;
Iets minder, champignons; nog minder, pepemeuten.
Dat gaat zoo dalende af; doch wij, wij zijn het meest;
En hooger is er niet, geen Godheid en geen Geest.
Maar onze hoogheid moet gestaâg nog hooger stijgen;
Lees Kant en Fichte slechts, die zullen 't u bewijzen.

Cited by Bavinck, ibid., 56. Bilderdijk's use of the French "champignon" here might be doubly ironic in view of his intense opposition to the Gallicanization of the Dutch language (see Bavinck, ibid., 145 for Bilderdijk's passion about the independence and purity of the Dutch language).

188 Gij, oorsprong van wat is, van alwat schijnt te wezen,
Maar eening, eeuwig *zijn*;
Wiens almacht we in 't heelal, in heel ons aanzijn lezen,
In nacht en zonneschijn!
Almachte, Oneindige, Onbegripjpbre, Warelstichter,
Die 't al omvat, vervult.
. . . .
Houdt Ge op, ons door Uw wil het aanzijn toe te stralen,
Wij zijn also nooit geweest;
Uw scheppen is ons zijn, en, zoo wij ademhalen,
't is werking van Uw geest.

Cited by Bavinck, ibid., 53.

This religious sense of unity is apprehended only by the heart---not reason---and language, particularly the language of poetry, gives expression to it. "In the same way that God's thoughts are expressed in the created reality he fashioned after his own image, so the human being reveals his or her inner soul in the works of human hands, particularly in the words expressed in human language. As all creation is a mirror of the spiritual, so human language is a parable, an impression, a revelation of the human spirit. Language is born from the human soul . . . and a nation's language an expression of a national soul,"[189] to be treasured as a spiritual gift. Poetry expresses the unity of the soul better than any other form of language; it is a divine gift, lit by a divine spark that reveals a higher and better world.[190]

Bilderdijk's passion was the Dutch *national* soul; his poetic imagination was rooted in Dutch national history, particularly the religious and political emancipation struggle of Dutch Calvinists to obtain freedom from Roman Catholic Spain during the Eighty Years War. A profoundly committed monarchist, Bilderdijk's ideal was a "government led by a regent who passed beneficial laws, held the reins of power with a firm hand, so that citizens could lead a peaceful and pious life as in the days of Israel when every man lived under his vine and fig tree."[191] Such a ruler governs the nation like a father rules his household, not directed by the sovereign will of the people but by a conscience subject to God's will.[192] Bilderdijk's love of the Netherlands is inseparable from his devotion to the House of Orange.[193] This love was not fully reciprocated by the new monarch and the failure of the post-1813 Restoration of the Dutch monarchy to live up to his ideal was a profound disappointment to Bilderdijk.[194] Bilderdijk served as a literary John the Baptist, preparing the way for the work of his pupils Isaac da Costa and Groen van Prinsterer and the Dutch literary-spiritual renewal movement known as the *Réveil.*[195]

The *Réveil* was an international, evangelical, literary-spiritual, artistocratic-nationalist movement, deeply influenced by romanticism and its passionate historical interest and consciousness as well as its emphasis upon feeling and religious

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[189]Ibid., 138, 44.

[190]Ibid., 158-68.

[191]Van der Does, *Anti-Revolutionaire of Christelijk-Historische Staatspartij*

[192]A. J. Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk Vanaf 1795*, 2nd ed. (Kampen: Kok, 1981), 78.

[193]When the French liberators overran the Netherlands in 1795, Stadtholder Willem V was forced into exile in England and Bilderdijk, upon his refusal to take an oath of loyalty to the new regime (his conscience forbade him to subscribe to the included "Rights of Man"), also fled to London (Lagerwey, *Bilderdijk and the German Enlightenment*, 7).

[194]Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormded Kerk vanaf 1795*, 76-78.

[195]On the *Réveil* see M. Elisabeth Kuit, *Het Protestantse Réveil in Nederland en Daarbuiten, 1815-1865* (Amsterdam: Paris, 1970); Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795*, ch. VI, VII; H. Algra, *Het Wonder van de Negentiende Eeuw: Van Vrije Kerken en Kleine Luyden*, 6th ed. (Franeker: T. Wever, 1979), ch. VII.

experience.[196] The strong literary character of the movement was reflected in a devotion to national literature and culture as well as the study of the Bible.[197] Both interests come together in the person of the Amsterdam Portugese Sephardic Jew, Isaac da Costa. Having enjoyed a high degree of religious freedom in seventeenth-century Netherlands, the Jewish community achieved full civil emancipation on condition of their successful assimilation into Dutch life, during the Napoleonic era. This enabled the young Isaac to receive a superb education, achieve a solid reputation as a poet, and become part of a select group of students (along with Groen van Prinsterer) privately being tutored in law, language, and Dutch history (*Vaderlandsgeschiedenis*) by Willem Bilderdijk. This encounter brought about a spiritual crisis in da Costa as he wavered between his Jewish past and Christian claims. With the benefit of twenty-five years hindsight he described this crisis as follows: "At that time I still remained (rather, I first truly became) an Israelite; and then, thanks to the grace of the God of my fathers and Savior, I confessed Christ."[198] He was baptized in the Reformed Pieterskerk of Leiden on October 20, 1822.

Thanks in part to his identity struggle between Judaism and Dutch Calvinism and a desire to be a home in two worlds, da Costa began to develop bold analogies between Israel and the Netherlands, King David and the House of Orange. One commentator described it thus: "Da Costa remained as much a Jew as a Christian; the chosen people moved from the Jordan to the Amstel River, and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, became the God of the Netherlands."[199] That this was no exaggeration is clear from one of da Costa's poems:

> O Netherlands, once again you shall
> Become the Israel of the West!
> God will encircle your church with light,
> Your Kings with David's glory.[200]

"This analogy, full of eschatological expectation with messianic perspectives, also included a look backwards, a longing for an idealized past that needed to be restored."[201]

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[196]Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795*, 71.

[197]M. Elisabeth Kluit, *Nader over het Réveil* (Kampen: Kok, 1977), 134.

[198]Cited by Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795*, 79.

[199]Cited by Rasker, ibid., 80.

[200] O Nederland, gij zult eens weer
het Israël van het Westen worden!
God zal uw Kerk met licht omgorden,
Uw Koningen met Davids eer.
Cited by Rasker, ibid.

[201]Ibid.

Now, the attention given to Israel was a characteristic of the international *Réveil*,[202] and this specific analogy between Israel and the Netherlands was not new. During the Eighty Years War the Calvinist preachers of the so-called "Second Reformation"[203] were responsible for creating this national mythology, drawing parallels between the bondage of Pharoah's Egypt and that of Catholic Spain. As historian Peter Geyl has noted, "Calvinism undoubtedly ranked among the principal cultural forces in the North. With its conception of a `chosen people', of the Netherlands as a second Israel, whose history embodied the profoundest sense of the grace of God, it gave style to a larger body of opinion than that of its profesed adherents."[204] What was remarkable is the revival of the Israel/Netherlands-as-God's-people analogy in the second decade of the nineteenth century; nothing could be farther from the Spirit of Enlightenment rationalism and political secularist individualism. Da Costa's vision was a direct protest against the spirit of the age, and one half year after his baptism he published his controversial and influential counter-cultural tract, *Bezwaren tegen den Geest der Eeuw* (Grievances Against the Spirit of the Age).[205]

For our purposes here we need to take note of da Costa's fourth brief chapter, "Schoone Kunst" (Beautiful Art). According to da Costa, Enlightenment rationalism is strikingly impoverished in terms of its art. Art can flourish only when the spark of native genius is lit by God's spirit (32). Europe's great art---poetry, painting, architecture---was produced before the age of science, before the onslaught of French materialism and German neologism. Since then---major artistic disaster! (33). This consequence is no surprise to da Costa. All art---even that of the pagans---is the fruit of divine inspiration; it cries out "There is a God in us! See it in our artistic ability!"(33) But the Enlightenment banished God, shut him out. "In the past, poets, painters, architects and builders, worked out of faith and to praise [God]; today, to indulge their own luxury and create reputations for themselves. In the past [art pointed us] to a holy heaven; today [it celebrates] a fallen world." (34) Da Costa ends by pointing to the arrival of a new spirit in Dutch poetry, "a spirit of worship, of dependence on a higher reality that alone can provide art with true beauty. As such, poetry is part of heavenly-led army, that will soon restore everything and whose approach is already announced from many different angles. Yet, [he asks] is

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[202]Kluit, "Israel: Knooppunt van het Internationale Réveil," in *Nader over het Réveil*, 134-63.

[203]The "Second Reformation" refers to a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century flowering of Reformed Spirituality and Theology in the Netherlands, in many respects analogous to English Puritanism. See Joel R. Beeke, "The Dutch Second Reformation (*Nadere Reformatie*)," *Calvin Theological Journal* 28 (1993): 298-327.

[204]Pieter Geyl, *The Netherlands in the Seventeenth Century, Part One, 1609-49* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1961), 209. A thorough description of the role of Calvinist preachers in shaping this Israel-Netherlands mythology can be found in G. Groenhuis, *De Predikanten*, #23, Historische Studien (Groningen: Wolters-Noordhoff, 1976).

[205]Leiden: L. Herdingh en Zoon, 1823; page references which follow in the next paragraph are to this work..

this advance of poetry valued by our age? I think not. Nonetheless, this poetry challenges all the fundamental assumptions of the age and has placed before it an entirely different vision. It does not belong to the spirit of the nineteenth century in which it has historically appeared." (35)

Da Costa's protest was accompanied with specific political proposals. In a famous letter to the leadership of the Dutch Reformed Church he answered the oft-repeated "what do you Christians want?" question in this way: "That the king---in the fear of God and according to his Word--- acts as a king. However, we also think that it is possible, desirable, even necessary, that this take place in a constitutional form that is contemporary. We absolutely do not want an absolute monarchy. . . .We want a constitution, but one that is grounded on the principles of faith and history."[206] It was not, however, da Costa but his contemporary and fellow student of Bilderdijk, Groen van Prinsterer, who, through his influential *Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution*[207] as well as his political activity in the anti-revolutionary movement, began to translate the Dutch political poetry of the early nineteenth century into political and social change. Yet, da Costa's poetic-eschatological, Christian-historical imagination was essential to the eventual success of the Calvinist political program. On this score, da Costa's own preference for the term "Christian-historical" over "anti-revolutionary" is worth noting. In an 1854 open letter to Groen, [208] da Costa stated that "the name `Christian-historical' characterizes our party better than the name `anti-revolutionary.' The hallmark of our party is not found in the repudiation of *all* revolution (i.e. reversal of affairs in church and state); there are good revolutions. Even if we limit our rejection of revolutions to that of 1789, even then we are not consistently anti-revolutionary. We would not want to return to the pre-1795 or pre-1848 conditions. We don't want to go backwards, but forwards."[209]

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[206]Cited in Van der Does, *Geschiedenis der Wording van de Anti-Revolutionaire of Christelijk-Historische Staatspartij*, 61-62.

[207]For an English translation see Harry Van Dyke, *Groen Van Prinsterer's Lectures on Unbelief and Revolution* (Jordan Station, Ont.: Wedge, 1989), 293-540.

[208]Is. da Costa, *Brief aan Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer bij zijn aftreding uit de Tweede Kamer der Staten-General* (Haarlem: A. C. Kruseman, 1854).

[209]Cited in Van der Does, *Geschiedenis der Wording van de Anti-Revolutionaire of Christelijke-Historische Staatspartij*, 72-3. A similar assessment of the two terms is given by Herman Bavinck:

> Whereas conservativism shuts its eyes to all social change and radicalism has no firm foundation in the flux of change, a reformation that proceeds from a Christian foundation unites in itself both being and becoming, the absolute and the relative, the unity of the divine will and the wonderful guidance of Providence. Both elements are united in the the name "Christian-historical," and the term "anti-revolutionary" adds to this that the Christian-historical principles must be applied in the practice of life through reformation that preserves the good rather than by means of a radical revolution.

(Herman Bavinck, "Christelijke Beginselen en Maatschappelijke Verhoudingen,"in *Verzamelde Opstellen* (Kampen: Kok, 1921), 150.

A Christian-historical imagination, therefore, is one that is rooted in divine revelation, honors the past not by slavishly seeking its repristination but by reappropriating its "truth" through creative application to the present, with a vision of future blessing. We conclude this section with a brief look at Kuyper's own understanding of the Christian-historical imagination as it is reflected in an address he gave in 1906 at the unveiling of a commemorative bust of Willem Bilderdijk at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.[210]

Kuyper begins by pointing to Bilderdijk's role in restoring the Dutch national soul at a time of major decline. Maintaining the vitality of distinct and independent nations, Kuyper adds, is necessary for the well being of humanity as a whole. The Dutch nation's past is honored for its sense of liberty, its artistic genius, its intellectual prowess and its moral health (6). Yet, it is a mark of national decline that the Dutch failed adequately to honor its artistic noble spirits. Even Rembrandt's glory had diminished to the point that it was Bilderdijk in 1806 who cried out: "Raise Rembrandt from his ashes before my adoring eyes" (7). What changed this situation, and rescued Rembrandt from undeserved obscurity, was international recognition and, above all, international *money*. But, while "the palette speaks an international language," poets sing to a narrow audience and do not get a listening ear beyond narrow national boundaries. British poet Robert Southey noted the same in his "Epistle to Cunninghame":

> "And who is Bilderdijk?" me think thou sayest
> A ready question; yet which, trust me, Allan,
> Would not be asked, had not the curse that came
> From Babel, clipt the wings of Poetry,
> Napoleon asked him once, with cold fixed look,
> "Art thou then in the world of letters known?"
> And meeting his imperial look with eye
> As little wont to turn away before
> The face of man, the Hollander replied:
> "At least I have done that whereby I have
> "There to be known deserved".
>
> . . . .
>
> True lover of his country and his kind;
> In knowledge and in inexhaustible stores
> Of native genius rich; philosopher,
> Poet and sage. The language of a state

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[210]A. Kuyper, *Bilderdijk in Zijne Nationale Beteekenis* (Amsterdam & Pretoria: Höveker & Wormser, 1906). What follows in the following paragraphs is taken from this address; page references to direct quotations will be cited in the text.

Inferior in illustrious deeds to none
But circumscribed by narrow bounds, and now
Sinking in irrecoverable decline
Hath pent within its sphere a name, with which
Europe should else have rung from side to side.[211]

This international as well as national neglect notwithstanding, Kuyper insists "it is nonetheless the case that gifted poets are of much higher importance [than visual artists] for elevating a nation spiritually." Even when poetry is not popular, the glow of rich poetry touches the heart; the poet's genius is a spark from Above, "from the Father of lights,"[212] and the appropriate memorial for great poets is not *dead* marble but ongoing memory of the poet's genius affecting the nation's *life* (7).

What is ignited by the spark of poetic genius? Feeling? Emotion? Imagination? Language? Rhythm? Rhyme? Of course, all of these, says Kuyper. Who could be a poet without them? "But the poet still reaches deeper; through the rough, tough, superficial externality of things to a world that lurks beneath, behind, beyond it, to the ideal world that sheds light upon and provides fresh air for our anxious reality. The poet conjures up a unity in the midst of brokenness, profusely spreads rays of sunshine to warm the chills of our fear. We become reconciled with our hard and harsh reality by having it placed in the framework of a higher, eternally beautiful necessity" (12). It was this inspired sense of divine purpose that characterized the heroic Dutch Sea Beggars in their revolt against Spain in the sixteenth century, and continued into the seventeenth-century period of Dutch national greatness. The success of the Dutch nation in its Golden Age was rooted in the conviction of divine providential purpose and propagated as well as celebrated by *poetry*. "Then," says Kuyper, "there *was* poetry in our [national] song of deliverance, but there was also poetry in our navy captains, in the priests of our art, extending even to our merchant marine and to the skill[213] of our merchants. In the eighteenth century this glorious national vocation was corrupted, by epigones of the descendents of epigones, who frittered away their time and energy in hairsplitting and magpie-chattering pamphleteering, into a spirit-less Calvinist sense of duty and guilt. "Concerned only with winning pamphlet wars they buried high principle in a mountain of gray, dead ash" (12). By Bilderdijk's day, the nation's soul was directionless and despondent and easily taken captive by a vacuous and conceited Enlightenment, resulting in a life characterized by "mechanical conventionality, teary sentimentality, if not by epicurean lewdness" (13). "There was," observes Kuyper, "too much money. . . .

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[211]Cited by Kuyper in an endnote, p. 55-57.

[212]Reference is to James 1:17, a favorite--perhaps the most often quoted--- text of Kuyper's fellow Dutch neo-Calvinist, Herman Bavinck; see, *inter alia* Herman Bavinck, "Common Grace," trans. Rayomnd C. Van Leeuwen, *Calvin Theological Journal* 24 (1989): 41, idem., *Our Reasonable Faith*, trans. Henry Zylstra (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,1956), 19.

[213]Kuyper plays on the Dutch word "kunst" which can mean art in the more formal sense as well as ability, talent or skill.

Weakened by luxury, the floodgates could not hold. . . . The ocean's waters sought out Holland's flag" (13).[214]

Kuyper continues, demonstrating his mastery of Dutch language and its history, by heaping scorn on the effort to rescue the nation through artificial cultural refinement. A new and, according to Kuyper, nonsensical word entered the Dutch national vocabulary: *beschaving,* from the root *schaaf,* a (wood) plane. "Unlike organic words such as *Bildung*, *Kultur*, or *Civilisation*, [this meant that] everything had to be planed smooth." But surely, adds Kuyper, a plane is only put to work on a *dead* plank and not on the core of a living tree. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment ran roughshod over the living national branch, planing away the concrete and organic particularities of Dutch life. The result was a barren chaos, "a chaos over which rationalism spun its web of ideas, and in the center of that web sat the proud rationalist on his trembling throne" (14). It was in opposition to that evil spirit and its consequent atomism and individualism that Bilderdijk invested his heart, soul, and mind and reminded the nation of the holy, organic, permanent things.Unity was to be found in

> The holy order of this world
> Through the scepter that holds sway
> In each turn from night to day.[215]

What is crucial here is that Kuyper calls attention to Bilderdijk deliberately not turning the tactics of the Enlightenment---i.e. theoretical, rational, scientific argumentation--against itself. Rather he took his stand in his *feeling* of primordial *being*, in the reality of his own heart, in his *sensus divinitatis* (15-16). "Only God *is*, and *his* word, *his* will created all that exists in an organic whole." One does not grasp that unity by deduction from its component atoms; only by instinct or intuition, by artistic imagination, can one approach the "one incredible work of art produced in an unfathomable unity"(17). In fact, Kuyper avers, had Bilderdijk indeed written a theoretical-philosophical treatise against the Enlightenment, "preferably in German--`*eine Philosophie des organisch Einen*'"---no firestorm would have come down on his head. "The public generally allows philosophers their idiosyncracies." Instead he fought with all his prophetic, poetic might against that which was foreign and for that which was authentically, traditionally, historically Dutch. Thanks to Bilderdijk the poet---poetry being the highest form of art (31)---Dutch language, history, and the national (Calvinist) soul were restored and renewed.

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[214]See Simon Schama's lavishly illlustrated overview of the Dutch seventeenth century: *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987).

[215]Kuyper, *Bilderdijk*, 18: "Het was al saâmgevat in

> De heil'ge orde dezer wereld
> Die den scepter van't gezag
> Over nachbeurt voert en dag.

The Israel-Holland-America Line

To see Kuyper's Christian-historical imagination in action---creatively appropriating the past, looking to the future, and placing it all in the narrative frame of divine providence---we can take a sneak preview of our fuller discussion in Chapter 2 of his 1898 visit to America to deliver the Stone Lectures at Princeton University.[216] Kuyper began his first lecture by describing himself as "a traveller from the old European Continent," overwhelmed by the New World. Drawing a contrast between "the almost frostbound and dull" old stream of Europe and "the eddying waters of your new stream of life," Kuyper spoke grandly about the possibilities of the New World with its rich "store of surprises for the future."[217] Kuyper's Christian-historical imagination focused on the place of liberty in America and on America's place in the providential ordering of freedom in history. "America," said Kuyper, "lacks no single liberty for which in Europe we struggle."[218] This freedom, according to Kuyper, is historically the fruit of Calvinism; particularly Dutch Calvinism which "liberated Switzerland, the Netherlands, and England, and in the Pilgrim Fathers has provided the impulse to the prosperity of the United States."[219] "The `free life of free citizens' appeared to [Kuyper] as the fruit of Calvinism."[220] Like many advocates of a "Christian America,"[221] Kuyper was also certain that America would continue to play an important providential role as a beacon of liberty in world history. "America," he contended, in a Grand Rapids, Michigan address to Dutch-American fellow Calvinists, "is destined in the providence of God to become the most glorious and noble nation the world has ever seen. Some day its renown will eclipse the renown and splendor of Rome, Greece, and the old races."[222]

But, if the plant of America liberty had been transplanted from Europe---from Calvinistic The Netherlands, to be specific---what was the situation in Kuyper's own homeland in the nineteenth century? What was the status of liberty for Dutch citizens? Simply, it had been significantly curtailed thanks to the inroads of Enlightenment secularism and the spirit of the French Revolution that acknowledged *ni Dieu, ni maitre* (no God, no master). To once again transform The Netherlands

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[216]Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1931).

[217]Ibid., 9.

[218]Abraham Kuyper, "Calvinism: The Origin and Safeguard of our Constitutional Liberties," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 52 (1895): 391.

[219]Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 14-15.

[220]P. Kasteel, *Abraham Kuyper* (Kampen: Kok, 1938), 289.

[221]See Mark A Noll, Nathan O. Hatch, George M. Marsden, *The Search for Christian America*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard, 1989 [1983]); Robert T. Handy, *A Christian America: Protestant Hopes and Historical Realities*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

[222]*Grand Rapids Herald*, October 29, 1898; see Appendix B, "Abraham Kuyper's Grand Rapids' Address."

into a free and prosperous nation, the spirit of the age had to be opposed with the spirit of the gospel, with biblical truth and morality. The glorious past of Calvinist Holland had to be reappropriated by recapturing the imagination of the Dutch people for the gospel with Dutch history (*Vaderlandsgeschiedenis*) and biblical imagery as the chief vehicles. Furthermore, the appeal of a better future had to be *historically* realistic (rather than mere utopian fantasy).[223] Kuyper's visit to America and his report back home[224] about the American experiment were a crucial component of his efforts to revitalize a politically active, culture-transforming Calvinism in the Netherlands. He had to have a living, working model of the civic order he was proposing for his own nation. His strategy for capturing the imagination of his fellow Dutch citizens, however, was decidedly a *Dutch* Christian-historical strategy.

Kuyper realized early on that a new, anti-revolutionary political movement could not succeed without an effective organ of mass communication. And so the path was cleared for a newspaper that would not only encourage party members but also interpret the world and national news from an anti-revolutionary point of view. In later reflections on this, Kuyper noted that since the Dutch press of the late nineteenth century was openly hostile to the Christian faith, a weapon used against the gospel and the Christian nation, he became convinced that the same weapon had to be used *for* the gospel and the Christian nation. (Allegations of media bias and efforts by marginalized Christians to establish alternative avenues of communication are not new to the twentieth century.) "And so," said Kuyper, "the conviction grew in me that the Christian people in the Netherlands had to have their own daily newspaper, a paper that articulated what was in their heart."[225] Building on previous smaller efforts by others such as Groen van Prinsterer, a society was formed in 1870 to publish a paper with its explict goal stated in the corporation's statutes as "the cultivation of a public mind (*volksgeest*) in a Christian-national direction."[226] Supporting members of the corporation were expected "to acknowledge the Word of God as the foundation for life in the church and the nation." A weekly paper, *De Heraut* (Herald) was published with the following motto on its masthead: "The Herald for a free church and a free school in a free Netherlands."[227]

And then, on April 1, 1872, a new *daily* newspaper, *De Standaard,* was launched. The date was deliberately chosen for symbolic purposes: it was the 300th anniversay of the Sea Beggars' successful capture of the Dutch port of Brill (Briel).[228] The

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[223]On the repudiation of a "Calvinist utopia" see Abraham Kuyper, *Ons Program*, 4th ed. (Amsterdam and Pretoria: Höveker & Wormser, n.d.), 477-8.

[224]Abraham Kuyper, *Varia Americana* (Amsterdam and Pretoria: Höveker & Wormser, n.d.).

[225]*Gedenkboek* (1897), 66.

[226]"De bewerking van den volksgeest in Christelijk nationalen zin" (*Gedenkboek* [1897], 9).

[227]Ibid.

[228]"On 1 April 1572, six hundred Gueuz, recently explelled from the English channel ports . . . siezed the small port of Brill which had been temporarily left without a Spanish garrison." The Great Revolt, "triggered by the Sea Beggars," was under way." (Jonathan I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its*

entire country was poised to celebrate the day, the "day of Dutch liberation, a day that represented the breakthrough of the Calvinist spirit."[229] The opening lines of Kuyper's lead editorial in that first issue quoted William of Orange's address to the Sea Beggars: "Because the first concern is the glory of God and the poor believers in the Netherlands, let each of you set aside all personal ambition and egoism." Kuyper added that this "noble advice from the father of our nation should also govern our Christian nation in its national celebration."[230] What was missing from the current festivities, according to Kuyper, was William of Orange's profound conviction that "this work was from God, not from man." He missed, in the festivities, "the honor, praise, thanksgiving, and humility before God."

But, with that important foundation missing, the national spirit, "breathed into the nation's heart and conscience by God," also deteriorates. Among the casualties: "freedom of conscience, the freedom to serve the God of the Fathers in church and school" as well as the crucial "moral vocation of the nation, the sense that the Netherlands is chosen by God to be the standard-bearer of freedom of conscience." Yet, Kuyper's editorial encouraged: "A remnant that retains this historical treasure remains. Though a small band,[231] remember, 'The fleet of the Sea Beggars was also small! The calling of this [small band] is so glorious! To engage in battle, not only for oneself and one's children, but also for one's fellow citizens, even for Europe, for humanity---so that *Justice* remains, *freedom of conscience* is not smothered, and the Prince's rallying cry once again ring true: 'for the glory of our God!'" Kuyper concluded with a prayer that the God of history might use the commemorative occasion to renew the Dutch nation. It was the privilege of this new venture in journalism, he added, "to once again raise the standard of his Word for Dutch Christians," and it was his prayer that this would be done in full dependence on the God "who had created and saved our Fatherland."[232]

The emancipatory-historical imagination---the God-Israel-Netherlands-Orange linkage--- that launched *De Standaard* in 1872 was also prominent in the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the paper in 1897. In addition to several references at these festivities to the symbolic significance of the launch date, as the guest of honor and his wife were escorted into the banquet hall, the assembled 5000 sang verses from the Dutch versification of Psalm 68 with its vigorous martial imagery[233]:

Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 170.

[229]*Gedenkboek* (1897), 13.

[230]Ibid., 28-9.

[231]Kuyper was fond of referring to himself and his band of marginalized nineteenth-century Dutch orthodox Calvinists as a "Gideon band." **(Passages from Van Eijnatten, Van Weringh)**

[232]Ibid., 14-15.

[233]Verses 14 and 17 from the Dutch Psalter, corresponding to Psalm 68:28-31, 34-35. I have cited the entire passage, Psalm 68:28-35, since the metrical version in the Dutch Psalter rather loosely translates and incorporates paraphrase summaries of key idea in neighboring verses. The NEB captures the tone best in superb poetic form. (*Gedenkboek* [1897], 27)

O God, in virtue of thy power---
that godlike power which has acted for us---
command kings to bring gifts to thee
for the honour of thy temple in Jerusalem.
Rebuke those wild beasts of the reeds, that herd of bulls,
the bull-calf warriors of the nations;
scatter these nations which revel in war;
make them bring tribute from Egypt,
precious stones and silver from Pathros;
let Nubia stretch out her hands to God.

All you kingdoms of the world, sing praises to God,
sing Psalms to the Lord,
to him who rides on the heavens, the ancient heavens.
Hark! he speaks in the mighty thunder.
Ascribe all might to God, Israel's High God,
Israel's pride and might throned in the skies.
Terrible is God as he comes from his sanctuary;
he is Israel's own God,
who gives to his people might and abundant power.
Blessed be God. (Psalm 68: 28-35, NEB)

Later that same evening, after Herman Bavinck's tribute to Kuyper was concluded with spirited and extended applause (so the offical record pointedly notes!), the guests sang a well-known religious-patriotic song composed by Isaac da Costa and laden with martial if not crusading imagery:

They shall not get it,
Our old Netherlands!
Through all the trials [of the just],
It remains our father's trust.

They shall not get it,
The gods of this age!
God has not liberated it for us,
To provide a legacy for *them*. (Repeat last 2 lines.)

Or is there a different age,
God is reserving for us?

A darker destiny,
From which we shall be saved?
Still, you shall not have us,
You gods of this age!
Even in decline, we remain
Devoted to our father's God.[234]

Similarly, the first article of the newly-founded Anti-Revolutionary Party (1879) makes the same mythopoetic, religious-national consciousness the very basis for its politcal vision.

> The anti-revolutionary or Christian-historical movement embodies, so far as our nation is concerned, the key-note of our national identity, as this received its imprint around 1572, under the leadership of Orange and under the influence of the Reformation. [We] desire to develop this, with all due consideration of the nation's circumstances, in a manner that does justice to the needs of our age.[235]

Kuyper's historical imagination, however, as we have already noticed, was not limited to the Netherlands and to the House of Orange. Not only did he repeatedly claim, during his 1898 visit to the United States, that the future of Calvinism (and the political liberty inextricably linked to it) was in America,[236] he also held to the "heliotropic myth" that the entire course of human civilization follows the movement of the sun from East to West.[237] "This belief, present in our world for centuries as almost self-evident, reached its zenith in the nineteenth century," had a significant following in The Netherlands, "and it became a factor in the nineteenth-century immigration to America" led by Dutch Reformed Separatist preachers Albertus Van Raalte and Hendrik P. Scholte.[238] Once again, it was a poet---well-known to Van Raalte, Scholte, and Kuyper alike---who had given the myth a popular force by putting it into verse. Isaac da Costa's poem, *Wachter, wat is er van den Nacht?*

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[234]*Gedenkboek* (1897), 51.

[235]Abraham Kuyper, *Ons Program*, 4th ed. (Amsterdam and Pretoria: Höveker & Wormser, n.d.), xv.

[236]In his address at Holland, Michigan on October 27, 1898 (at a banquet in his honor, on his sixty-first birthday!), he explicitly linked America's future to Calvinism, and vice versa:

> America looks forward toward a great future but it needs the principles of Calvinism to strengthen its backbone [. . .] The future of the development of Calvinistic principles is no longer in Europe but in America.

(*Holland Daily Sentinel*, 28 October 1898; cited by Peter Heslam, "Abraham Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism*, 96.)

[237]See Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt, *The Myth of the West: America as the Last Empire*, trans. Herbert H. Rowen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

[238]Ibid., x, 90.

(*Watchman, What of the Night?*), included in its description of the world's political situation a lengthy reflection on America, and the notion of a westward journey for human civilization to and then from America eventually to Russia was central to it:

> The world was turned around, the west became the East
>
> Of a new era, which would comfort all our woes.
>
> The son of Western shores will meet the Easterner
>
> And free America encounter Russia's powers.[239]

For Kuyper, the "stream of civilization" in its three successive pre-Calvinist formations---Paganism, Islamism, and Romanism---had followed and would follow a clear course Westward. Though the Calvinist phase "is now denied [a] leading influence by Modernism, the daughter of the French Revolution," and the "secret of the future is still veiled in mystery," he contended, "the course of this world-stream from East to West can be denied by none."[240] Providentially-led world history is of one piece:

> There is but one world-stream, broad and fresh, which from the beginning bore the promise of the future. This stream had its rise in Middle Asia and the Levant, and has steadily continued its course from East to West. From Western Europe it has passed on to your Eastern States, and from thence to California. The sources of this stream of development are found in Babylon and in the valley of the Nile. From thence it flowed on to Greece. From Greece it passed on to the Roman Empire. From the Romantic nations it continued its way to the Northwestern parts of Europe, and from Holland and England it reaches at length your continent.[241]

As one commentator has observed: "In a Kuyperian view of cosmic East-West progress from Sumeria to Silicon Valley, the Spirit follows predetermined channels in the material fabric of culture. In such views of the universe, common to much nineteenth and twentieth-century apologetics---in that grand mixture of religion, materiality and myth called *God, Nederland en Oranje*---it was generally claimed that God operates via such national channels."[242] The stream of Kuyper's own poetic mythmaking thus followed channels dug by others. For our purposes another

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[239] Des werelds loop keerde om. Dat Westen werd ons 't Oosten

Eens heilstijds, die onze aard van al de smart moet troosten.

De Zoon der Westerkust den Oosterling ontmoet,

En 't vrije America 't vrijmachtig Rusland groet?

(Cited with translation by J. W. Schulte Nordholt, *The Myth of the West*, 90-91.)

[240] Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 33.

[241] Ibid., 32.

[242] Joris van Eijnatten, *God, Nederland en Oranje: Dutch Calvinism and the Search for a Social Centre* (Kampen: Kok, 1993), 265,

question arises: Where do we find the American analogues to Kuyper's American mythology?

Kuyper's Surprising American Allies

Locating Kuyper's vision within the narrative of American social and political developments is not easy. Kuyper did not have an easy time of it himself as can be seen from his notion---with the benefit of historical hindsight, obviously mistaken---that at the close of the twentieth century California would represent the flowering of the Calvinist principle.[243] From early on in his career of public writing he "cast American politics in the Neo-Calvinist matrix of `Gospel vs. Revolution.' His single greatest mistake on American ground," according to James Bratt, "was to translate that into Republican vs. Democrat, more simply into Hamilton vs. Jefferson."[244] The irony here, Bratt notes, is that Kuyper's attempted to root the American "Christian" political party in "a figure (Hamilton) who resembled his own *bêtes noires*---the Amsterdam regent, ambitious and worldly, and British Prime Minister Joseph Chamberlain, imperial and ruthless." In Bratt's judgment, revolutionary-age Christians such as Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams would have been better choices, but Kuyper, for his own political program, needed exemplary "nation-builders" and "bearers of lasting power" rather than "Christian popular agitators."[245]

Searching for American parallels for Kuyper becomes even more complex when the religious/confessional/denominational dimension is factored in. Kuyper was invited to the United States by Presbyterian Princeton University. Yet, their mutual appreciation notwithstanding, Princeton stalwarts Benjamin Warfield and Geerhardus Vos had significant theological differences with Kuyper, the former with Kuyper's commitment to distinctly Christian scholarship and presuppositional apologetics,[246] the latter with Kuyper's antipathy to "biblical theology."[247] Perhaps even more important was what Mark Noll has called "the Old Princeton weakness in cultural analysis and the concomitant lack of effective Christian outreach in society." Concern Princeton's Charles Hodge and the emancipation of slaves, Noll

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[243]Unless Robert Schuller's "new reformation" does represent the flowering climax of Calvinism. See Roberrt S. Schuller, *Self Esteem: The New Refomration XXXXXXX*

[244]James D, Bratt, "Abraham Kuyper, American History, and the Tensions of Neo-Calvinism," in George Harinck and Hans Krabbendam, eds. *Sharing the Reformed Tradition: The Dutch-North American Exchange, 1846-1996* (Amsterdam: VU Uitgeverij, 1996), 103.

[245]Ibid., 105.

[246]See Benjamin B. Warfield, "Introduction" to Francis R. Beattie, *Apologetics: or the Rational Vindication of Christianity* (Richmond, Va.: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1903); idem., review of Herman Bavinck's *De Zekerheid des Geloofs [The Certainty of Faith]*, in *Princeton Theological Review*, 1 (January 1903): 138-43.

[247]See Richard B. Gaffin Jr., "Geerhardus Vos and the Interpretation of Paul," in E. R. Geehan, *Jerusalem and Athens: Critical Discussion on the Theolgy and Apologetics of Cornelius Van Till* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1971), 228-37. For further details on Old Princeton theoogy, including some key differences between Princeton and Dutch Reformed theology, see Mark A. Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology: 1812-1920* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983).

observes that "it was never clear how he linked his tentative positions on this social evil to the foundations of his theology." And on the matter of urbanization, industrialization, and the problems of the urban poor, "Hodge's heart was in the right place here, but his intellectual cupboard was bare."[248] On each of these the difference with Kuyper is striking.[249] Kuyper's enthusiasm for Calvinism and liberty suffered the same fate among the "moral elite of the American establishment" as Bratt describes the reception of his Stone lectures: "little noticed in the Protestant Press, much less in the broader American world. . . . The Protestant mainline praised Kuyper for his energy, marveled at his talents, but passed over his substance and forgot about him in short order."[250]

If Kuyper was not completely accepted (or even understood) by the Presbyterian and broader Protestant elite of the American Northeast, what about the Reformed Dutch in America? Bratt judges that "Kuyper's legacy in Dutch America was different---different also from what he expected. Kuyper's expectations, like most of his contacts, lay with the leaders of the Reformed Church in America, but soon after his American trip was over those closest to him passed from power. Their successors had less use for Kuyper precisely because they inclined toward the American identity he had prescribed, from which vantage Kuyper seemed at best `old world.' . . . Kuyper's influence instead flowed largely in circles within the Christian Reformed Church, the younger and less prestigious of the Dutch-American denominations."[251] But in the cultural engagement with American culture, Kuyper's closest followers, though using his epistemology, his emphasis on distinctly Christian scholarship and social action, end up rejecting his "historical baptism of America." In Bratt's summary: "Kuyper's American disciples, in short, owned the master by discarding his Americ-picture for his Netherlands method."[252]

Yet there is an American Calvinist theological tradition with a well-articulated social and political vision rooted in attempts to think Christianly that Kuyper himself explicitly repudiated and his commentators have overlooked: the Southern Presbyterian tradition represented theologically by James Henry Thornwell (1812-62) and Robert Dabney (1820-98). Furthermore, the Southern conservative political

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[248]Mark A. Noll, "The Spirit of Old Princeton and the OPC," in Charles G. Dennison and Richard C. Gamble, eds., *Pressing Toward the Mark: Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), 241. Noll refers here to Willaim Barker, "The Social Views of Charles Hodge: A Study in 19th-Century Calvinism and Conservativism," *Presbyterion: Covenant Seminary Review*, 1 (Spring 1975): 1-22 and David Murchie, "Morality and Social Ethics: The Thought of Charles Hodge," Ph. D. Dissertation, Drew University, 1980.

[249]To take the last issue, poverty, as an example, see Abraham Kuyper, *The Problem of Poverty*, trans. and ed., James W. Skillen (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991).

[250]Bratt, "Abraham Kuyper and the Tensions of Neo-Calvinism," 108.

[251]Ibid.

[252]Ibid., 110.

tradition not only has many explicit parallels with Kuyper's social theology, but is carried primarily by a literary tradition, by a Christian-historical imagination that stands in opposition to the very same revolutionary, individualistic humanism that Kuyper opposed. A few brief, preliminary comments about this parallel must suffice here.[253]

Kuyper tended to "magnify New England into the United States as whole," overlooking the fact that "the South dominated national policy for over half a century after independence."[254] He put it starkly: "The Southern States, with their stamp of aristocracy, and slave element in their economy, have never been amalgamated by the *real, genuine, people of the Union*, not even to this day. . . . In 1793 the South, under Jefferson, took sides with France, and the real Union, under Washington, undertook to disarm Jefferson and render harmless his sympathies for France."[255] The result is clear for Kuyper: "In this threefold constellation of unlimited political liberty, strictness of morals, and faithful devotion to Christianity, the Union points back directly to its puritannical origin, to the invincible spirit of the Pilgrim fathers and to the spiritual descent from Calvin."[256]

Whatever the merit of the case for Calvinism's influence on America, Kuyper dismissal did not do justice to the alternative "Southern tradition" and its distinct mode of imagination, an "impressive native-born critique of our national development, of liberalism, and of the more disquiteing features of the modern world."[257] This Southern tradition appeals to "history in order to interpret the Old South as a religiously-grounded society" and emphasizes the moral use of myth and poetry to portray "an aesthetic vision of an older Christian view" of an organic, corporate society rather than a "bourgeois, individualistic" one. The twentieth-century Southern Agrarians such as "Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, and their colleagues shared with William Butler Yeats, T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, and other leading poets of our century a passionate desire to restore myth to its proper place in literature."[258] A good part of this emphasis on the rhetorical and mythical rather than the dialectical and rational flows from a desire to express "man's yearning for a nation that embodies ethical and spiritual ideals which can involve his deepest feelings."[259] The key here is a historical and social imagination

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[253]The primary inspiration for this parallel is Eugene D. Genovese's *The Southern Tradition: The Achievement and Limitations of an American Conservativism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).

[254]Bratt, "Abraham Kuyper and the Tensions of Neo-Calvinism," 102.

[255]Abraham Kuyper, "Calvinism: The Origin and Safeguard of our Constitutional Liberties," 393 (emphasis added).

[256]Ibid., 397.

[257]Genovese, *The Southern Tradition*, 2.

[258]Ibid.

[259]Ibid., 3; the citation is from Lillian Feder, *Ancient Myth and Modern Poetry* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1971), 398.

that is organic and not individualistic. M. E. Bradford put it this way: "All our social myths presupposed some version of the corporate life---that man is a social being, fulfilled only in the natural associations built upon common experience, upon the ties of blood and friendship, common enterprise, resistance to common enemies, and a common faith."[260] Southern Presbyterian theologian Thornwell stated it thus:

> The human race is not an aggregation of separate and independent atoms, but constitutes an organic whole, with a common life springing from a common ground. There is unity in the whole species; there is a point in which all the indivduals meet, and through which they are all modified and conditioned. Society exerts even a more powerful influence upon the individual than the individual upon society, and every community impresses its own peculiar type upon the individuals who are born into it. This is the secret of the peculiarities of national character. There was one type among the Greeks, . . . the Englishman is easily distinguished from the Frenchman. . . . In the same way there is a type of life common to the entire human race in which a deeper ground of unity is recognized than that which attaches to national associations or the narrower ties of kindred and blood. There is in man what we may call a common nature. . . Birth consequently does not absolutely begin, but only individualizes humanity.[261]

What is being suggested here is that the distinctive American Southern literary, rhetorical, poetic tradition has suggestive points of parallel with Kuyper's vision and further comparisons of Kuyper's antistatism with Southern political objections to federalist centralization by such thinker-activists as John Randolph and John C. Calhoun is warranted.[262]

Making this comparison is uncomfortably risky since it runs the danger of further targetting of Kuyper's thought as incorrigibly racist.[263] Already tarred with the charge that his social theory is the theoretical rationalization for the horrendous practice of South African apartheid,[264] links with defenders of slavery such as Thornwell and Calhoun place Kuyper in the unrescuable camp of the unredeemably

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[260]M. E. Bradford, "Is the American Experience Conservative?" in *The Reactionary Imperative: Essays Literary and Political* (La Salle, Ill.: Sherwood Sugden, 1990), 140; cited by Genovese, *The Southern Tradition*, 3.

[261]James Henry Thornwell, *Collected Writings*, vol.1, *Theological* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974 [1875]), 349-50; partly cited by Genovese, *The Southern Traditon*, 15 **(add note about negro?)**.

[262]This suggestion must be properly understood. Neither Randolph nor Calhoun were Presbyterians (though Calvinists? **see Kirk**) and the Southern tradition was distinctly far too hierarchical and aristocratic for Kuyper's more democratic tastes. That point he at least had right.

[263]For a sane account of racism in Dutch Neo-Calvinism see Dirk Th. Kuiper, "Theory and Practice in Dutch Calvinism on the Racial Issue in the Nineteenth Century," *Calvin Theological Journal* 21 (1986): 51-78.

[264]See Irving Hexham's study.

racist. But Kuyper's emphasis in the Stone Lectures on the "*commingling of blood* as, thus far, the physical basis of all higher human development," his repudiation of "pure race" notions, and his praise of the American assimilation/melting pot of races "in one higher unity,"[265] all suggest otherwise.[266] Genovese's point that though it is true that "historically, [the Southern tradition'] viewpoint has often accompanied racism, it has no necessary connection to it,"[267] should also be applied to Kuyper. Though his views have sometimes been used in supporting racist structures such as apartheid that connection is not essential. It is important to make this point so that we can be open to considering why Kuyper's public theology continues to attract American evangelicals in their own political pilgrimage.[268] What, if anything does the Dutchman Abraham Kuyper have to say to American Christians one hundred years after his famous trip to America? To answer that question we must first of all reflect on how America itself has changed since 1898. What has happened to Christian America in those one-hundred years?

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[265]Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 36-7.

[266]This is also the conclusion reached by Peter Heslam, "Abraham Kuyper's *Lectures on Calvinism*," 92-3; Hexham?

[267]Genovese, *The Southern Tradition*, 27.

[268]Though the charge that the Religious Right is itself racist (because Southern and white?) must be considered. See ch. 1.