

**On Being
Anti-Revolutionary and Christian-Historical
at the Cutting Edge of History
1979-1980**

**An address given by
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**to
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Mr. Chairman, invited guests and friends:

First, a few words by way of introduction. And then permit me, first of all, to extend to leaders and membership of the AR Party of the Netherlands my most cordial personal congratulations on this joyous occasion of your “*eeuwfeest*,” your centennial celebration, and to express the honor I have experienced, but also the joy I feel, at being privileged to be present here and to be a speaker at this International Symposium with which you are marking this event.

I cannot refrain from expressing my feeling of satisfaction that you have chosen to celebrate the occasion in just this way. I am reminded of how the great “Father” of the Western church, Augustine, chose to celebrate his thirty-second birthday, his first after his conversion to Christianity, by discussing in the circle of his friends gathered in the rural retreat at Cassiciacum, near Milan, a central philosophical, nay, religious subject: man’s inherent craving for happiness. It is the first of his preserved writings, the *De Beata Vita*. And what more fitting for a Christian political party than to draw aside to discuss in a week-long symposium the topic “A Christian Political Option.”

I particularly want to commend you on making it an *international* symposium. AR Party, I have been waiting a long time for you to share more fully your political insight and experience, the wonderful vision of your founders and great leaders, with us Christians in other lands, who, starting a century late, and with such urgent business to attend to, have so much catching up to do. In its beginnings, the Reformation associated with the name of John Calvin was a strikingly international movement. There are signs that such a phenomenon is reviving in a new generation, in many very young and exceedingly fragile groups of recently Reformed Christians in the United States and Canada, in England, Australia and New Zealand and I can assure you that in that far-flung English-speaking world – I limit my remarks to that world – there is an as yet limited, but noticeably growing interest in what your party has stood for and

accomplished in these last 100 years. I believe that I speak for all of these, largely young people in extending my congratulations and best wishes to you this morning. I should like to express the hope that your act of going international on this occasion is a harbinger of your reaching out a helping hand to us other Reformed Christians frequently in the future. Or have I come too late for that? Is your existence, like the philosophy of Merleau-Ponty, not characterized by a certain ambiguity?

For it is a fact, it seems, that in these days you are not only making and taking note of God's great deeds in your midst this past century, but you are also having to face up to its being your last birthday as a separate political party inasmuch as you are looking forward to becoming absorbed into the Christian-Democratic Muster or Call to action (my attempt at translating *Appel*) next year. Two things – and the question is as to their complete compatibility – are requiring your concentrated attention: God's glory in your history and your abandonment of your separate existence next year. That makes this not just a joyous moment but also a sobering and poignant one. I did not say "a saddening one." I said "a sobering one." And "sobering" is perhaps the very best kind of "joyous" occasion for a political party that is 100 years old and still making serious Christian claims in our time. To one like me who comes in from the outside, the really crucial question is: Just what is it that is really taking place? Obviously there are many excellent advantages, in a day when everything, including evil, tends to become a world-wide movement, to becoming part of a broad international movement of Christian Democracy. And for this reason too it is fitting that this symposium is international and that Dr. Papini, representing that broad movement of Catholics gathered in the Christian democratic movement worldwide, shares this morning's session with me. What a witness and what a benefit it would be to the whole world if just here in Holland believers from the Catholic tradition and believers from the Reformed tradition could, *in answer to the call of God in His Gospel*, together take political action that would get to the root of the awakening world's misery and its sense of being exploited and oppressed by just the Christian nations of western Europe? At the same time I do want to ask, what does absorption into the CDA

mean? Does it mean that after 1980 there will be no on-going Reformed political reflection and witness and international support in the future? Will it prevent you, at least in any practical sense, from assuming, in a way and to a degree you have not done until now, the task of instructing new and enthusiastic groups of Reformed Christians out of your rich past? Or will it mean full and grateful acknowledgement of what has historically been brought about, and a strengthening of resolve to carry on and live out of the insight – *singular*, not plural – that has been gained in that experience? This is just one of the things I had in mind when I entitled these remarks I am making here today “On Being Anti-revolutionary and Christian-historical at the cutting-edge of History, 1979-80.”

I must ask your indulgence for one last introductory comment, a very personal word that I simply cannot omit. When a moment ago I extended to you my most cordial personal congratulations and spoke of the joy I feel at being privileged to be here, that was not just being done out a speaker’s sense of obligation at such a moment as this. It was not a perfunctory act, something, in other words, that I did just *pro forma*. Quite the contrary, I meant it to be my way of showing the deeply-felt gratitude of my heart for what your party, its history, the witness of its leading spokesmen and thinkers have meant to me, and have meant increasingly, throughout my life. I believe there is almost no one here who will know this, but at a very crucial point in my developing life the bursting in upon my consciousness of an awareness of the existence of the Anti-revolutionary Party, and a first acquaintance with it at the *Kuyperhuis* on an unforgettable day in early 1947, came almost as a moment of revelation. Out of an American church background that was not Reformed I had first embraced the Reformed faith while studying theology, and “Reformed” then meant for me largely my scientific-theological work. By 1947 my studies at the Free University in Amsterdam had convinced me of the importance of a Christian philosophy and the great need for philosophy to be reformed in the light of God’s word-revelation. But it was through my contact with the AR Party, first that spring day of 1947 when I met, among others, Prof. Gerbrandy, Dr. Rutgers and daughter of Abraham Kuyper, that it began to dawn on me in a new way how all of a

piece our life on earth is, and that God's call to man in the Gospel bears on *that life*, and that the issues of life are not, *in the first place*, scientific at all. Then I began to see the men of Patrimonium and the CNV, the men of the Christian school movement, and particularly the founders and builders of the AR Party, as the ones out in the front of that one battle of spirits to which theological and philosophical struggles also belong. The God of life, I came more and more to see, calls us in the undivided unity of our lives to live by every word that proceeds from His mouth, to love Him with everything we've got and are, to walk in His way. Strange that I should have had to learn that, since it is the very heart of the Christian religion. To have had one's view of "Reformed" restricted to scientific theology and philosophy shows how far our scientific arrogance had gone in the West. But enough of that. I have come here to thank God with you for spiritual men of the caliber of Groen and Kuyper and the first "*adjunct-directeur*" of the Dr. Abraham Kuyper Institute, Herman Dooyeweerd, who saw the need of a think-tank before the word came into common use, and so many more, who through faith "*conquered kingdoms, administered justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight foreign armies*" (Hebrews 11:33-34).

The saga of the remarkably rapid development of AR thinking in the second half of the 19th century and well into the twentieth has been a very important influence in my life. I could not help but pass on to my students, and to any others who would listen, what your Party has meant to me. As some of you know, for 17 years I had a rather large club of students at my college, and I persuaded them, back in 1953, to call it the Groen Club, to hold in honor one who, in generations before us, had come to see that faith, far from being moralism or some introverted other-worldliness, is obedience to revelation, a willing listening to the Word of God *which results in acts of faith that relate to our time and situation*, something that involves a probing or testing of the spirits that are in the "phenomena" and movements of our time. I believe that that Groen Club, combined with the immigration of Reformed families, has had

much to do with the newly emerging interest in the AR Party in all those places I have already mentioned.

I wanted to tell you this about myself so that if someone should think me presumptuous in speaking as freely as I do, he would be inclined to forgive me and understand that it is only because of my great love for the builders of your Party and the interests of the Christian cause in the entire world that I speak. And of course you ought to have the interests of all these young groups in mind in your work here. Wherever, on the other hand, I speak out of ignorance, which is not only possible but highly likely, well, I have come here also to listen, to discuss and to learn.

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At the beginning of the 19th century any significant development of distinctly Christian thought or of Christian social or political action must have seemed highly unlikely. The Enlightenment and German *Aufklaerung*, for all their relative good, had shifted men's attention from revelation and faith to autonomous human knowledge and the benefits of culture (*Bildung*) and the sciences. There was a general weakening of Christian faith. Great inroads were made on the Reformation spirit. But the same rationalism and naturalism that affected Protestantism also made its influence felt in Roman Catholic life. George Hermes, a Roman Catholic professor at Bonn (he died in 1831, the same year as Hegel), who taught that man must doubt everything and then accept only that which is acceptable to his reason, that man himself is the last instance of truth and that obedience to God is nothing else than obedience to reason, had a large following. In his *Handbuch der Katholischen Dogmatik*, M.J. Scheeben calls the period from 1760-1830 the "*Epoche des Verfalles.*"

All this, however, was not just the effect of Enlightenment and *Aufklaerung*. The flight from the God Who has revealed Himself and Who calls us back from our rebellion and disorder to His service and the Order of His creation work had long been going on. And although I may seem to be making an unnecessarily long excursus, I must, in connection with my theme, say just a word about it. In the end, I hope, this procedure will work clarifyingly.

In the Enlightenment we can see the continuation of two movements with which the modern era had begun in Europe, both of which enervated the Christian movement. Those two movements were: (1) Classical Humanism, in connection with the revival of the study of classical letters, and (2) the Renaissance proper. Since the Enlightenment is usually related only to the Renaissance, and is indeed closer to it, I shall, briefly, have only this to say. Central to the Renaissance is the idea of reliance upon one's own resources and inherent powers for the renewing of our life. It was a satanic attitude, utterly destructive of the life of Christian obedience. For the other side of the coin was the drive to be free from all external authority and restraint, be it of Church or State or Law of God.

The movement of classical Humanism ultimately has had the same effect. Let me refer to its beginnings in Petrarca's Florentine Academy. In an attempt to get behind the medieval world (the spirit of which was on the wane) to the grandeur of ancient Rome, Petrarch, who had been deeply impressed as a young man by his reading of Augustine's *Confessions*, oriented his thought to an Augustine in whom he saw both Church Father and Roman citizen. It was the freshness and immediacy of the synthesis of ancient classical and Christian thought in Augustine that attracted him. Just imagine a Church Father who had been at home in that great Roman Empire! [Centuries of *acceptance* on the part of the Church of the life and thought and ideals of the classical world are playing their part here.] Is it not significant, therefore, that later in Petrarch's life the place of Augustine was taken by Cicero, an outright pagan, and that Petrarch's most famous pupil, Boccaccio, the next head of the academy, still, after the Rienzi episode, concerned to restore Rome to her pristine grandeur, listed those things which had been foreign importations upon Italian soil and thus prevented contemporary Italy from recovering her ancient splendor, placing the Christian religion from the backcountry of Judaea at the top of the list? Indeed, a spirit was emerging which, having initially failed to discern the opposition (antithesis) of direction between the classical world and the world of Christian faith, led quickly to the swallowing up of the Christian spirit in talk of virtue.

The revival of classical letters took place within the movement of Classical Humanism, and wherever this movement spread the same thing happened. In the North, who will ever be able to estimate the damage the *Erasmian gymnasium* and the *gymnasium* of Johannes Sturm at Bucer's Strasbourg – the model, in general, for Calvin's academy – have wreaked positively, in the training of the clergy in classical letters and, negatively, in the failure to nurture the sound development of an educated Christian mind.

Because of positions that have been maintained in the history of education I fear that my remarks – and my reason for making them here – will surely be mistaken if I do not add a personal comment. In my country, at least, the study of the classical world and of classical thought is not held in high regard generally; only for specialist careerists and even then in but a very few of our best universities. I do not wish what I am saying to be associated with such an attitude. Not only am I *not opposed* to the study of the ancient classics; I am an *ardent proponent* of their study. God in His providence rooted our civilization in the civilizations of Greece and Rome, and any education which neglects these is scarcely worthy of the name. What is needed is not less, but more – in my country far more – *general* education of a solid quality in the meaning of the classical world. For several years I was closely connected with Prof. Werner Jaeger's Institute for Advanced Classical Studies at Harvard University, which was engaged in preparing a critical edition of the collected works of the fourth century Cappadocian Father, Gregory of Nyssa. No; what is wrong is not the study of the ancient classical world, but the *attitude of classical humanism*, which looks upon the Greeks as the fecund source and dynamic of all that is good and noble and just in our Western culture; cultivates an admiration for the Greeks in the minds of the young; and fails to see the alienation from the God of historical covenantal dealing with men and the erection of a world-picture which securely locks that God, the only true God, out of His world, fails to see the mis-taking of the divine LAW-for-His-creation, finding it instead somewhere within this world, mis-identifying God's covenant partner, man, with a rational mind left to its own devices in the present world.

We are talking, you will remember, about the state of exhaustion of the Church, Catholic and Protestant, around the beginning of the 19th century. I said that this was not to be credited solely to the Enlightenment, which only continued the emphasis of the Renaissance on man's autonomous freedom, but found itself strengthened by the discovery of a method, the method of mathematical physics. Classical Humanism contributed much more than has been realized. But the story is as old as the emergence of Christianity as a power in the Roman world. Let me say the rest in a couple of highly condensed sentences.

When the Church entered the Empire it did not perceive the Call (*Appel*) of God in His Gospel as a calling of the monster-state of that time back to the Order God had established in the beginning by His Word. Obviously, such a state was in open conflict with the revelation of the Rule (*basileia*) of Christ in His Kingdom. Instead, the Church *adapted itself* to that form of the state, *except* where it came in conflict with the obligation to confess Christ, and the adaptation was justified by quoting Jesus' words: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's," overlooking the fact that the second member of that sentence spoke not of the pope or of some other ecclesiastical head, but of God, the sovereign over *all* His works.

Likewise, the Fathers of the Church never arrived at a critical theoretical accounting of the Christian's relation to the world of culture they found at hand in the Roman Empire. The classical patristic solution of this problem, arrived at towards the end of the fourth century by men like Basil of Caesarea and Jerome, was more an immediate reaction, a working arrangement pressed from these Christians by the exigencies of their life in the Roman Empire. They were not yet able to come to real grips with the problem. They adapted themselves to a situation instead of critically appraising it in the light of God's *Appel*. The analogy they used of the Israelites' taking the jewels of the Egyptians when they fled Egypt breaks down as soon as one realizes that jewels are not ideas that arise out of their hearts, but belong to God Who made the earth, and *were only found in the possession of the Egyptians*, who, like men at all times, are charged to be responsible stewards of God's earth.

It was this essentially uncritical *modus vivendi* of the *patres* which formed the nucleus of scholastic thought on the problem: classical letters ancillary to the study of theology, and any Christianly-discerning, in the Light of Scripture, of just what it was they had before them, lacking. This attitude of adaptation continued in the Erasmian and Sturmian *gymnasia*, and, I fear, in Calvin's academy in Geneva. Failure to push analysis of the problem Augustine raises in books V (11-21) and XIX (24-26) of *The City of God* to a point of greater clarity accounts, in my opinion, for the eroding effect of the movement of Classical Humanism on Christian life and thought. For, as a matter of irrefutable fact, the life of the Greeks and the Romans, including the thought of their great thinkers, was thoroughly paganistic.

We have to go back still another step. Actually, the failure we have been alluding to antedates the Christian era. That should not surprise us. There was a people of God before Christ came to earth, whom God had chosen to be His special people, in whose midst He chose to dwell, with whom He chose to have fellowship. Implied in that set-up was the Summons (*Appel*) of the Gospel of God to the sons of Abraham to separate themselves from the world and to live lives characterized by reconciliation and shalom in the enlightening and renewing light of the revelation God gave, and continued to give, of Himself. Outside that circle of special revelation men lived in the darkness of their (alienated) understanding. But the Jewish community in Alexandria in the last century or so before Christ, surrounded by the Greco-Roman world and its culture, adapted themselves to it, accepting it in a sense, arguing that Divine Wisdom (*Chokmah*) had illuminated *both* the Hebrew prophets and the Greek philosophers, and thus turned a religious antithesis of direction (Light and Darkness) into a mere *difference of degree of clarity of insight*.

In early Christian circles Justin Martyr did the same thing, attributing the universal enlightenment to the work of the divine Logos "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." The "natural world" was not satanically directed against the reign of God and His Christ; it was simply not complete. It needed to be supplemented by grace.

For just a moment in history the secular spirit of the Renaissance was powerfully stemmed in great areas of Europe by either the Reformation or the Counter-reformation. And the Reformation began, though only here and there, to develop a sounder view of the world of thought and action found in classical letters. But the new divisions in Christendom ended in ceaseless theological and ecclesiastical disputings and in the Wars of Religion, and when the spiritual *elan* began to wane and Europeans generally turned in disgust from all the wrangling, the old spirit of the Renaissance re-emerged, but now reinforced by a marriage with the new, upcoming science and scientific method of Galileo and Newton, in the movement we know as the Enlightenment.

Who, then, in the early decades of the 19th century could have looked forward with any expectancy to a revival of Christian thought and action? And yet it came. A stirring in both Protestant and Catholic wings of Christendom. God's Spirit was striving with man. There yet had to be fulfilled the words of a very ancient prophecy: "that God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem." The loss of Christian faith that is to be witnessed already in the 17th century was accompanied by a rising interest in curious non-European cultures and a downplaying of the uniqueness of European civilization. The loss of confidence in the direction and significance of European civilization in our time is nothing new, only its scale. Its importance remains, however. For it is not something inherent in us who are the West, but it lies concealed in that prophecy of Noah that Japheth would dwell in Shem's tents and thus share in the blessing of Shem, that is, in the salvation of the Christ. Its importance lies, in short, in God's gracious providence. Europe became the main theater of the fundamental battle of spirits. In Europe we see the bottom-line wrestling of the Spirit of Christ with the spirit of the world for the cultural unfolding of creation's possibilities. This struggle is what European history discloses, and in the beginning of the 19th century that struggle was not over.

Who, as late as 1845, could have foreseen the glorious history and remarkable achievements of the Anti-revolutionary Party in these past 100 years, and that we would be gathered here this week in Noordwijkaan Zee celebrating the

“eeuwfeest” of the first political party in Holland to be organized on a national scale?

I choose the year 1845 advisedly. It was the year Groen began giving the lectures *Ongeloof en Revolutie* to a circle of friends in his home. But also, in those lectures he carried his analysis of the Revolution down to the year 1845, Revolution conceived as the casting aside of the divine ordinances. This was also the year that saw the completion of Auguste Comte’s major work, *Cours de Philosophie Positive*, which, with its “Law of the Three Stages,” was to become so influential a power in European culture, especially for the next 75 years. This positivism, with its idea of *progress* from the (1) theological stage of societal development to the (2) metaphysical to the (3) positive scientific, three stages of organization of society arising from three ways in which men explained to themselves the experiences they had, was itself a systematic and aggressive presentation of Revolution in Groen’s deeply religious sense of the word. *L’Ecole Polytechnique* in Paris, where Comte had been a student for a couple of years, stood as the symbol of this third – and final! – stage in the development of human society in which men had finally learned how to use their rational powers maturely and responsibly, the stage of society which scientists and engineers would organize for the improvement of the human condition. Facts, scientific facts, were to guide men, and laws were looked upon as simply more general facts relating particular facts to one another. No, it was not especially a time in which to look for the rise of Christian reflection and action.

Yet there remained a people of God in the world, however unsettled and confused and weakened they might have become as a result of world events and the spirit of the times, and as early as the late 1820’s there were significant stirrings in the Christian world. In 1830, when Comte was just setting out to write his *Cours*, Groen was in the midst of a profound change of position. He was becoming an evangelical confessor of the Gospel. In his *Autobiography* he says that his new Christian-historical ideas were formed and developed in the years 1827-1829. According to a letter he wrote in 1831 his publication of *Nederlandsche Gedachten* brought him to see clearly the main cause of the evil in society, *viz.* the systematic apostasy from Christianity. The Evangelical

awakening, which began with the sudden conversion of the Calvinist Cesar Malan in Geneva in 1816, had reached Amsterdam and a group of prominent men of learning was forming around the converted Portuguese Jew, Isaac da Costa. Bible study and prayer constituted the heart of their gatherings, but articles by Koenen, van Hall and de Clercq in the magazine *NederlandscheStemmen* began to arouse Protestant believers to see the connection between their religious faith and political affairs. For 40 long years Groen developed AR principles and withstood the revolutionary ideas, and by his correspondence gathered a Reformed community, teaching them to think principally about political activity in the light of Revelation. The *Reveil* in Amsterdam had led to the erection of the Anti-revolutionary electoral association "*Nederland en Oranje*" and as other AR electoral associations arose, even though they were independent, they all looked to Groen van Prinsterer as their leader. In this way Groen prepared the way for the organized AR Party.

While all this was going on a similar development was taking place in French Catholic circles. The remarkable career of Hugues-Felicite Robert de Lamennais shows us French Catholics attempting to come to grips with Rousseau and the French Revolution. Although his career suggests, besides his consistent belief that a society cannot recover spiritual and moral health without a sure and well-founded faith in God, something of a capricious lurching in this direction and that, Lamennais represents a whole generation's attempt to come to grips as Catholic Christians with the changed conditions in Europe. One writer has said that the life of Lamennais is a drama in which the history of a whole century is concentrated. He "always stood ... on the frontiers where church and state, church and society, meet and interact." In one respect he was like Groen: he was "a man capable of attracting intense loyalty from some of the leading figures of the period." Groen refers to him numerous times in his *Unbelief and Revolution* and even says that his book *Des Progres de la Revolution et de la guerre contrel'Eglise*, influential also in Belgium, had helped him to see that liberalism was nothing other than the revolutionary theory. That book was published in 1829, and the magazine *L'Avenir* began its short but intense life the following year (1830-1831).

By the 1870's these new stirrings, both Reformed and Catholic, had become clearly discernible movements of the people. In Holland the Reformed movement had seen the emergence of Abraham Kuyper as a great intellectual leader possessed at the same time with unusual organizational talents, and the establishment of the Anti-revolutionary Party (April 3, 1879) in Utrecht. *Patrimonium*, the oldest Christian social organization, an association of working men, was organized a couple of years before then, in 1876.

In the interval a most important event occurred in the Catholic world that had its repercussions in Dutch Catholic circles and prepared the way for the future Reformed-Catholic political coalition in Holland: Cardinal Pecci was elected pope and took the name Leo XIII. He reigned 25 years, dying in 1903 at the age of ninety-three. His eighty-six encyclicals, dealing with a variety of modern problems, constitute the most important single contribution to Catholic teaching since the Middle Ages. In the very first of his encyclicals, *Inscrutabili*, Leo XIII had said that "the cause of civilization lacks a solid foundation if it does not rest on the eternal principles of truth and on the unchangeable laws of right and justice." And speaking of his famous encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (1879), which deals with "the restoring in Christian schools of Christian philosophy according to the mind of the angelic doctor St. Thomas Aquinas," Leo wrote that he could see no safer way to end the war waged against both the Church and society itself, than "everywhere to restore, by the teaching of philosophy, the right principles of thought and action." Etienne Gilson writes in this connection that "the teaching of the Christian philosophy of the Scholastics, especially that of St. Thomas Aquinas, is considered by the Pope a necessary prerequisite to any practical scheme in view of restoring the social order Catholics should not hope to restore any Christian political and social order on any other foundation."

To get back to the situation in Holland, the elections of 1880 showed a marked strengthening of the AR faction. They also brought into the Second Chamber from Breda the 36-year old Prof. Dr. H.J.A.M. Schaepman, who belonged to the more socially progressive Roman Catholics. Prof. Schaepman played an important role in the development of a Catholic political party and worked hard

in the forming of a coalition of Catholics with the Anti-revolutionary Party. In 1883 he published in *De Wachter* an article that has become famous: *“EenKatholiekePartij: Proeve van een Program.”* Schaepman did not envision that this party should be ecclesiastical. “What Catholics want to avoid, what they want to make impossible in the future is just this” that they count in politics as nothing more than followers of the Roman Catholic faith. That is why they want a political program that does not place them over against Protestants but against liberals and conservatives ... a program that is anti-revolutionary to the core, but which yet betrays its own origin, reveals its own color and bears a character of its own.”

The year 1880, besides being in these two ways an important election year, had witnessed a most historic event: the Free Reformed University of Amsterdam had been opened with an address, itself historic, on the subject “sphere sovereignty.”

A decade later, the year 1891 witnessed the First Christian Social Congress, at the opening session of which Kuyper delivered his famous address *Het Sociale Vraagstuk en de Christelijke Religie*. Michael Fogarty, in his book *Christian Democracy in Western Europe, 1820-1953*) calls this “the most remarkable event of its kind in Dutch history.” The speech with which [Kuyper] opened it is read and re-read to this day. “As a statement of Christian social principles and policy,” he writes, “it is worthy of the year which also saw the appearance of *Rerum Novarum*.” This latter is, in the minds of many people, the most important of all of the important encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII, and it strengthened in the Dutch Roman Catholic group the desire to seek for social legislation, a development which greatly helped make possible the political coalition with the strongly socially oriented Abraham Kuyper.

In 1901 we get the coalition cabinet of which Kuyper was prime minister, composed of three AR ministers, three Roman Catholics and two others.

What a change in the cultural climate since the 1820's! Catholic and Protestant political parties, guarding their independence, but also a political coalition brought about by the great leadership abilities and the prudent wisdom of

Schaepman, Lohman and Kuyper. A coalition against the modern spirit of unbelief and the assertion of radical autonomy, but not a fusion.

Since then, in the 20th century, there have been at least two more outstanding developments I should mention: one, the founding of the Roman Catholic University at Nijmegen; the other, the bold plan Dr. Colijn submitted to the national convention of the AR Party in the spring of 1920, the last year of Kuyper's life, which led to the establishing of a party national headquarters, where Herman Dooyeweerd became the first *adjunct-directeur* with the intention of working out in a systematic and scientific way the foundations of a Reformed Christian political position.

Out of these historical developments there gradually emerged a Reformed Christian outlook or "mind" alongside the Catholic "mind" which Pope Leo XIII's *Aeterni Patris* had again encouraged. Both these "minds" became the basis also for the political activities of those who held them. But it is important to say at once that the life of politics is only one dimension of our life. God's Summons to be reconciled to His Order comes to us at that point in the undivided unity of our lives where I am I and you are you.

There is – and every generation will have to confess that anew from the heart – only one reason for Christian political activity and organization, and that is that the Christ of God, according to the promise, came into the world and brought to us men new life out of heaven, the life of the spirit to replace the life of the flesh. Of course, this new life involves a whole new man, a new attitude, a new "mind," a new insight into the nature of the world, of man and his place and role in it, of law in the universal sense of that word, of human society, its pluriformity and its unity, of authority and freedom, of the dynamic of civilization. This new life in Christ is the ultimate ground of Christian political activity. To take hold of that life and to live of it – that is our salvation: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good pleasure ... that you may be blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life."

(Philippians 2:12-13, 15-16a). Let me put in juxtaposition with that one more place in the New Testament, namely Matthew 11:13, 12: “For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.” That is, from John’s days until now the kingdom of God reveals its presence, and this activity is described strikingly as *a display of power* in which we men powerfully engage. Political life is only one of the dimensions of our life in its undivided unity which is a manifestation of that kingdom which is forcefully advancing. The moment we come to regard politics as something in itself, cut off from the life of that kingdom, the moment, for example, that we as Reformed men and women begin to think of a particular political party which has been bequeathed to us by our fathers as our own little bailiwick, a place where we can pursue, realize our own little political careers, judge strategies by counting number, Christian politics has come to an end.

For the Christian, therefore, the appearance of the word “*Appel*” in a political context can only have meaning in the light of the Call that comes to us in the unity of our personal lives and our corporate life to forsake the ways of “the flesh” and to learn a new obedience, the way of the Spirit, Who is guiding our society and our history to their appointed end in Jesus Christ. To the person who has thought about the spiritual struggle of our time it should be immediately clear that the battle is none other than to determine which spirit is to give direction to our civilization as a whole. Christ said, “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” I once wrote, with reference to Evangelicals in my country who were not waging this *total* battle of the human spirit: “A church organization, or a world of Christian theological activity, standing alone within a culture of which all its other activities are directed by an anti-Christian spirit, must remain impotent, and has become irrelevant, and will in time fade away. Even to preserve the organized church, therefore,” I wrote at that time, “we must fight for an integral Christian society.” The same could, on this occasion, be said of the AR Party. Either there will be a quickening of faith in us as persons and as a collectivity, a quickening which senses the unity of life as religion, or there will be a quiet

accommodation, in almost imperceptible stages, to a way of life which is no longer responding to the Word of our God, which alone is life-giving.

It is important to observe that the beginnings of the AR Party lie concealed in the conversion of Groen, a conversion within the community we speak of as the Evangelical awakening, with its rediscovered sense of the universality and radicalness of sin and its desire to develop an alternate Christian life-style. If it had not been for Groen's conversion in that setting, and his subsequent coming to see in the Revolution (not just the French Revolution, but the liberalism that issued from the Napoleonic period, and the revolution of 1830, and the revolutionary year 1848) the satanic will to contest the Reign of the sovereign God in His appointed Office-bearer, Jesus Christ, there would be no AR Party. If it had not been for Kuyper's conversion and rediscovery of Calvin and his emphasis on the sovereignty of God over all His creation, and on the glory of His Law, there would be no AR Party. If there had not been, however quiescent, a Reformed people in the land, Kuyper's beloved "*kleineluyden*," there would be no AR Party. If there had not been Reformed congregations of worship in the Netherlands where the Gospel of salvation by sovereign grace was being preached, there would be no AR Party. The life of men is one, and the life in the Party can only be a reflection of the wider life, which it expresses in a particular way. That is true at any time; it will be true today. Where the life generally is strong, firm, resolute, so will be the life in the Party; where it is uprooted, dislocated, confused, uncertain, so will be the life in the Party.

What now is that specifically Reformed Christian "mind" that developed in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries here in Holland and became the basis of Reformed Christian political activity? In one sense that mind was completely present already in Groen. It was, simply, the desire to "read" reality – all of it, its natural as well as its cultural dimensions, the "world" of things and the "world" of human acts in all their complex interrelationships --, and to live life in its entirety, by the light of God's word-revelation. But in another sense there was development, from Groen to Kuyper to Dooyeweerd, to mention just the main line. From the Groen who rediscovered the central and radical place in life of religion, that is, of faith and unbelief, which implies an integral creation, to the

Kuyper who stressed the divine ordinances and achieved an intuitive grasp of the structures of society grounded in an Order of creation and the Law-word of God (the principle of sphere-sovereignty), to Dooyeweerd, in whose work we find that intuitive grasp theoretically-analytically grounded in our experience. Development that brought implications out clearly, and brought the whole into sharper focus. But also a development that was characterized by a tremendous and sustained effort at self-correction, a struggle to continue to cast off “the flesh” that is always clinging to us all and to our tradition and to become more completely subject to the revealed will of God in both His word-revelation and His act-revelation (acts of creation). For that is how the kingdom or rule of God forcefully advances, and how forceful men lay hold of it. It is not by force of arms, but by faith in the Word of the Living God, itself begotten by that Word, that a discerning insight into the Order of Creation, the creation acts of God (themselves revelation) is engendered that so accords with reality’s structure that it persuades. Always, “the vocation of the Biblical people of God is prophetic discernment,” an American Christian recently wrote, and he added, “What we need to engage in are acts of imagination that penetrate the apparent opacity and aimlessness of the historical present, and reveal how persons and institutions are accomplishing their destinies in relation to the sovereign God of history.”

The intensity of my feeling requires that I break off my story for a moment to introduce another element into the picture. In my country the first sentence of Charles Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities* is often quoted: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” But I must say that these words, and the time they are describing (1775), bad as it was, when judged by present realities seem so “bourgeois,” almost trivial. For we live today in hellish times, and I do not mean just Solzhenitsyn’s Gulag Archipelago, or the Cultural Revolution in China, or the genocide that recently took place in Cambodia, or the Holocaust, or the elemental barbarism that seems to lurk just beneath the surface of events in Iran, or the sudden disappearance of integrity from large sectors of both public and private life in my own country. Solzhenitsyn was getting closer to it in his

Harvard commencement address of last June when he spoke of a disaster “that has been under way for quite some time. I am referring,” he said,

to the calamity of a despiritualized and irreligious humanistic consciousness On the way from the Renaissance to our day we have enriched our experience, but we have lost the concept of a Supreme Complete Entity, which used to restrain our passions and our irresponsibility. We have placed too much hope in political and social reforms, only to find that we were being deprived of our most precious possession: our spiritual life. In the East, it is destroyed by the dealings and machinations of the ruling party. In the West, commercial interests tend to suffocate it. This is the real crisis. The split in the world is less terrible than the similarity of the disease plaguing its main sections.

Part of my assignment here today was to say something, in the light of a Reformed Christian view of the ground of Christian political action, about the possibilities of cooperation between persons from the Protestant and Catholic traditions, and I want to get started on that part of my assignment right now. Our Senator Moynihan recently called attention to a lingering anti-Catholicism in American religious circles, and while I must admit that what he says is true, in wide areas of the more sectarian Evangelical world, it is not true, I think, of the leadership of Reformed Christianity in America, and I personally wish to distance myself completely from such an attitude. I look upon Catholic believers as fellow-Christians in the first place, which, of course, and unfortunately, does not mean that all our problems are solved. When Pope John Paul II delivered his investiture sermon I happened to be sitting in a room alone, and I will confess to you that tears of joy rolled down my cheeks to hear his clear and ringing presentation of the Gospel of Christ (though mixed with some distinctively Catholic features).

I recognize the significant changes the Catholic Church has been undergoing, especially as to its posture in the world and the position it takes on social issues. I know something of the serious study of the Bible that is taking place and of the growth of a Biblical spirituality, though not in all sections of that Church. We

Reformed Christians accept at its full value the recent statement of an outstanding Catholic theologian (Kung), that as we grow closer to Christ, we grow closer to each other.

In the light of the hellishness of so much of our present experience and the loss of a sense of direction in the dominant humanist movements, but also in the light of all the issues that are crowding in upon us in our own world screaming for attention, how could any Christian wish for anything more fervently than that all who know themselves to be Christ's and that the new life they have is a gift of God's grace (carrying with it a new "mind" that enables us to work redemptively in society) be *as united as they can be* in offering mankind an alternative to the dominant trends in our society.

For that reason I can sympathize with your desire to have Catholic and Protestant political traditions here merge next year in the C.D.A. First of all I can understand it as a domestic strategy, a determination to offer the electorate in Holland a strong and significant Christian alternative to the growing power of the parties which even in your land, in spite of Groen's fundamental insight, are called the parties of the Left. Shall the rapid and parallel rise in the second half of the 19th century of Reformed Protestant and Roman Catholic political movements have been for any other purpose than to come, after our common humiliation and defeat often in the modern centuries, to just such a unified witness as our sick and troubled world cries out for? Must we not speak out on the basis of our common acceptance of a redeeming Word that has come from God? Or am I utterly beside the point, and is this not what drives you to your contemplated action?

But it becomes even more understandable when we consider how far the process of world integration has advanced and how world-wide all the important issues have become. For by allying yourself with the world-wide movement of Christian Democracy you have a means of addressing those issues in a manner commensurate with their range. The battle of spirits for the direction of human society is itself becoming ecumenical, to use the word in its original meaning.

Let me just list a few of these issues. High on the list would surely be the continuing struggle for human rights, and here Christians have things of momentous significance to say, generally against any form of collectivism and individualism – for in spite of what Maritain wrote, Protestants may not be individualists ---, but particularly on behalf of the political self-determination of peoples, and this is of the greatest importance since the international community of states we know as the United Nations would appear to tolerate no other domestic political arrangement than majority rule on the basis of one person, one vote. Rousseau seems still to be the energizing spirit there, the spirit of rationalism, be it of a practicalistic kind, which by its view of the commonness of Reason in all men has caused the great “spiritual families” of the past to disappear, to use the language of Stanley Hoffmann in a most significant article in the Winter 1979 issue of *Daedalus*, the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, or to weaken them to the point where they have no relevant future to propose. Mr. Hoffmann is professor of government and chairman of the Center for European Studies at Harvard University. He was born in Vienna in 1928. It is what he says next that bothers me. “What do Christian democrats offer, except a plea for law and order, a spectacle of decay, or a touching faith in European integration as the *deus ex machina*?” For if his assessment has any truth to it, what strength could the AR Party possibly derive from the proposed merger?

There are all the other problems: nuclear energy; the weapons race; world poverty; the control of multinational corporations; the polluting of the air, the oceans, and the inland waterways and the effect of the use of fossil fuels on climate; developments in molecular biology, where we are confronted, it is said, with the eventual possibility of genetic engineering, such a thing as cloning, the development of radically new forms of life, all of them things that cause the most serious and enthusiastic scientists to hesitate and ask themselves whether limits should be set to technological development; computers and computer science, with the suggestion being made by some that if computers can be constructed that think more accurately and to the purpose than we do, would it not be the part of wisdom for national governments, perhaps even the U.N., to

build some and then let the computers make the important policy decisions. Drugs, crime and violence have all gone international and begin to pervade systemically our society and as such require governmental control. But there is also the *systemic* violence that is built into the capitalist system with its “survival of the fittest.” There is the tendency, in my country at least, for farmers to go in for specialization (huge feedlots) because, as Earl Butz, former secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said: “Farming is not a way of life; it is a way to make a living” (a view of man’s life, reducing it to economic meaning). This raises the question of justice not only for the farmers, but for the cows and pigs and chickens as well. The justice of Biblical shalom relates to an *integral* creation.

There is, further, the question of women’s liberation – we’ve just seen its international repercussions in Iran; the breakdown of the family as a basic structure of human society (a recent alarming report in my country shows welfare agencies ignoring the larger family when for some reason it becomes necessary to separate a child from his parents, or preferring to separate a child from his mother to fixing a defective furnace, which would have been much cheaper); the question of abortion on demand.

Enough of that. Certainly it requires no argument that a strong Christian political voice sorely needs to be heard. And for that reason, I am assuming, the AR and CH parties propose to merge with the KVP in the CDA in 1980.

Difficulties and, especially, uncertainties abound with regard to that proposed merger and they have no doubt been agonized over for a long time. But the organizers of this international seminar have asked me, as a man of Reformed conviction coming in from the outside, to say something about them nevertheless, as they have also asked Dr. Papini. As I understand it, that is exactly the purpose of our deliberations this morning. I am of the opinion that that was a very appropriate thing to do. Celebrating one hundred years of remarkable history in this atmosphere both of uncertainty and of great expectation calls for international consultation. For international interests are very much involved. This is a moment of historic decision, and at every new

historical juncture our Christian stewardship must be marked by dependence on the Word and Spirit of Christ. We must not allow fear and the desire to hold on to old securities to govern us if the Spirit is leading into a new and broader upland of Kingdom service. On the other hand, neither must we be swept away by desire alone. We must, at decisive moments of such historic importance, be guided by a sober analysis of the possibilities and by the knowledge that we are to work in a Christian-historical way. What this latter means will become clearer in a moment.

The Reformed “mind” that developed in the course of the 19th and 20th centuries in this land was the result, I have said, among other things of a tremendous and sustained effort at self-correction and of correction of tradition by listening to the Word of God, the result of the struggle, a constant in the Christian life, to cast off “the flesh” that is always clinging to us all, and pervasively to the tradition in which we have been nurtured and in which we function, in order to become more completely subject to the revealed will of God in both His word-and-act revelation. Looking back, we can see that there were two traditions from which especially the Reformed “mind” was in the process of liberating itself, first from the dominant historicist thinking of the 19th century (Groen’s “*erstaatgeschreven, er is geschied*”), where historical actuality was too easily taken for creation structure, but, second, from the much older tradition of scholastic philosophy, and particularly from its theme of Nature and Grace, the way to an acceptance of which had been long prepared by the Church Fathers’ acceptance of ancient classical culture as a positive preparation for Christianity.

I suppose that there is a sense in which we may speak of the line Groen—Kuyper—Dooyeweerd also as a tradition, but then only in the sense of a tradition of *continuing reformation* of life and thought, not in the sense of a received tradition that is generally closed to such reformation. No one can escape tradition. The important thing is that in the midst of one’s tradition one be willing to hear the *Appel* of the divine Word and respond positively to it. Jesus Himself dealt with the matter of tradition, *viz.* the rabbinical tradition, and in Him we see what the Word of God does with tradition. For what He did was

to call the Jews back to the Word of God, to how things were “in the beginning,” to creation and covenant. When He dealt with the Law-traditionalist, i.e. the Pharisees, in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, He went behind the tradition to the fundamental religious (covenantal) meaning of life, to the matter of sin, estrangement, forgiveness and of humble whole-hearted life-service.

The line that unfolds from Groen to Kuyper to Dooyeweerd is a growing acknowledgement that the traditional pattern of Christian thinking was a very inadequate framework for Christian thought and action. That is not a remark directed against our Roman Catholic brethren. It is a judgment on the previous history of Christian experience, including much of the previous history of the Reformation. For it is a known fact that the scholastic synthesis – or *attempted* synthesis, since it is impossible of attainment, that is the very ambiguity of such a synthetic evaluation of culture – of the Christian faith with Aristotelian philosophy became increasingly characteristic of Reformed thinkers after Calvin. But in the line Groen—Kuyper—Dooyeweerd, we see a more adequate response to the *Appel* of the Word of God which comes from beyond our tradition. Here is an example of the principle *Ecclesia reformatareformandaest*, a principle which is generally applied to the life of the instituted church and regarded as something peculiarly Reformed, but is simply the norm of the Christian’s life in this world. It points up the importance of the problem of the relation of Scripture and Tradition, to which I shall return in a moment.

I make some point of this because as I look out on the world of Christian Democracy I see everything being discussed in terms of Thomistic philosophy, or in terms of Maritain’s philosophy, which, I think, does not differ from Thomas in any fundamental way, that is, in any way that relates to the general framework and its meaning. If I read about the movement in Dr. Frey’s Chile, for example, I encounter the pervasive influence of Maritain and of Thomas Aquinas. And likewise elsewhere. That is not to be wondered at in view of the repeated papal statements regarding the philosophy of Thomas. And no one need convince me of the deep Christian *intention* of Thomas, or of Maritain, for that matter, in joining Aristotelian philosophy to the Christian faith so that *all* wisdom might be

made serviceable to Christ the King. I can also understand how in the Europe of the 13th century there was such a strong desire to recover and make Christian use of the work of the last of the ancient Greek philosophers, who reportedly had summed up all of ancient wisdom.

What I *do* have trouble with is how it was possible for a Christian to believe that a pagan, without the renewing work of the redeeming Word upon his heart, could say the truth, albeit only up to a point, about man, the order of the world and the structure of human society. Or how Thomas failed to perceive in the Greek concept of “mind” or “intellect” a pagan distortion of the analytical mode of our experiencing, which came to be substituted for the Biblical revelation of man as a religious being, denoted by the term “heart.” I also have difficulty in understanding how a Christian could accept a Greek view of the state, which is really a totalitarian view, limited now in the synthesis only by the Church as belonging to a supranatural order, or hylomorphism’s teleological arrangement of lower and higher, with the lower only being realized in the higher.

It simply cannot be denied that there is a tremendous clash between this Thomism and the Reformed mind that was developed by the founders and builders of the AR Party. Nothing could possibly be gained by ignoring this fact.

Groen’s determining that there was a natural and necessary connection between unbelief and revolution involved a much larger fund of ideas, some of which were only clearly articulated later. Among other things, it involved that unbelief is less a loss or lack of faith, or a defect, than an active belief that has been misplaced or misdirected, as in the worship of the baalim in ancient Palestine, that we must distinguish therefore between faith in the sense of a structural component of our nature and faith in the sense of the direction it displays. Human nature is a created nature, dependent on the Word and Spirit of God, and religion, the established relation of covenant, is our most fundamental condition, expressed in all our individual and collective acts. The religious or spiritual, in other words, is not something next to, or coordinate with, man’s other functions, but is rather a directionality in which they participate, of which they are manifestations, a force which animates and

activates them in a given direction. That man was created to live “before God” – *coramDeo* – by cleaving with his whole being – “in singleness of heart” to every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God, the Reliable One, and that if he does not cleave to God he will cleave to something or someone else, is being amply demonstrated in our day in the resurgence, for instance, of Islam, and in many other ways. Man is a *believing* creature, and he either believes the Word of God or something he himself substitutes for that. His thinking activity also expresses the religious direction of his heart. Indeed, it is only with the sphere of commitment that he is able to do thorough analytical work.

Thus it gradually became clearer – in Kuyper a bit, and much more so in Dooyeweerd – that “heart” is the way Scripture describes man in the integral religious root of all his life-expression, including his life of thought, and that there is a religious-directional element to his analytical processes of conceptualization. How else explain adequately how men arrived at the concept of Zeus, the chief of the Olympian family of gods representing the culture-religion, or how the Greeks arrived at the notion that the rational soul, superior to the body, tends to the good while the body tends to the evil, except for their commitment to that same culture-religion?

Groen’s position involves distinguishing a creation-*order*, centered in His covenant with man and the whole earth, and the two religious directions denominated by the words Fall or Apostasy and Redemption or Restoration or Renewal (in Christ). Fall and Renewal can both be *radical* only because the creation itself is *integral*, has a religious root-unity. Secularization is not to be understood as a perfectly legitimate attempt on the part of man to assert his humanity in the face of an oppressive authoritarianism; it is, on the contrary, a result of man’s sinful alienation from God. It is an expression of man’s attempt to understand himself and to develop himself and his world independently of God and His revelation. Renewal or restoration does not mean a turning back of the clock to Eden, but is a work that is accomplished in the creation *in its present stage of historical development*. It honors the unfolding of creation through culture, and is therefore not reactionary. Scholarship, for example, as part of man’s creational life, must be renewed, not by a return to the theories of

a bygone age, but by an inner reformation of 20th century learning. And central to such an inner reformation must be an explicit orientation to two realities which the Scriptures consistently teach and which 20th century humanism consistently ignores: the reality of constant creational ordinances (structure) and the reality of a spiritual antithesis (direction).

The recognition of the structure of creation as a God-given law-order was certainly present in Groen, but it becomes much more pronounced in Kuyper, who had rediscovered Calvin. I cannot refrain from quoting the lines from Kuyper that were so appropriately placed at the front of the DeWilde-Smeenk history of the AR Party, *Het Volk Ten Baat*.

“Voor my, eenzuchtbeheerscht mijn leven, een hooger drangdryftzin en ziel.

En moog' my d'ademmeerbegeven, eer 'k aandienhel'gendrangontviel.

't is om Gods heil'ge ordonnantien, in huis en kerk, in school en staat,

Ten spijt van's werelldremonstrantien, weer vast testellen, 'tvolk ten baat,

't is om die ord'ningen des Heeren, waar Woord en Schepping van getuigt,

In'tvolk zoo heldertegraveeren, tot weerdatvolkvoor God zichbuigt.”

The importance of Kuyper was that he saw the connection between the Biblical revelation of creation and the great diversity of kinds of association and relationship that we find in human society. The difficulty with constructing a Christian political or social program is that we must find a *structural* meaning in the central Biblical revelation of creation, religion, covenant, office. A worked-out conception of the structures of society is required if Biblical revelation is to issue in specifically social and political content. Kuyper saw that we must look upon society and its structures as being rooted (despite human distortions) in creation. He saw that since ultimate sovereignty can belong only to God as Creator of everything that exists outside of himself, nothing within creation, including the various spheres of society, can claim an absolute sovereignty for itself. A social sphere is at most characterized by a “limited sovereignty.” The social structures, he claimed, are founded in the creation order but reflect that

order only in one dimension. A plurality of social spheres mirrors the plurality of dimensions in the creation order. On this basis he taught that each distinct social sphere is characterized by a unique inner “life-principle” which conditions it, limits it, and sets it apart from other spheres. This inner principle accords to the respective social bond a measure of power and authority, but only in a limited manner.

What Kuyper saw, and in a grand intuitive grasp formulated in his doctrine of *sovereiniteit in eigenkring* (S.I.E.K – sphere sovereignty) was often not understood very well by his followers, and the phrase sometimes degenerated into being an identifying slogan of the AR’s. But Herman Dooyeweerd was able to give the principle a much more precise theoretical-analytical grounding in our experience. This enabled him to develop a philosophical sociology that is eminently subject to empirical controls. It enabled him, for example, to fix precisely the nature of the State as an all-embracing public community which ought to integrate all of the non-political communities as well as individuals and inter-personal relationships within its territory into a legal relationship of even-handed public justice for all. Christian political action is not to be directed to transforming the state into a church for God by force, but to taking on the form of a servant, so that God may transform our politics into true justice for men through Christian obedience. Christ is the One Who is redeeming and transforming politics by the power of His resurrection, and every group of Christians in every nation ought to act in Christian community for the transformation of public injustice into public justice in the several political communities.

In this Reformed line that we have sketched much too hastily, I have not yet mentioned the important subject of Office. Office suggests the allocation of a particular task by a Sovereign. Office speaks of service in the first place, but with the idea of preserving order in the developing of the creational potentials. It is service of God through an administering of God’s love and solicitude to the creature. Kuyper saw it this way: Christ the second Person of the Godhead possesses absolute sovereignty, but to Him as Mediator has been *given* complete (delegated) sovereignty. He is *the* full and complete Office-bearer.

And because His mediatorial sovereignty is total, such total sovereignty is to be found nowhere else in our earthly life. Total sovereignty cannot exist in two places. Christ, out of the fullness of His delegated authority, has delegated only partial sovereignties to men. In Christ all these sovereignties are united in an undivided service of God that involves no less than the redemption of all of life. Government is one of those partial sovereignties. It sins not only by usurping authority but also when it does not make use of all the authority given to it. The power and authority of the state is constantly limited by that of all the other offices; the state does not stand by itself, but is only one of the links in the great chain which holds all the creation intrinsically together. It cannot interfere in that life which properly belongs to another sphere because God has not delegated it competence therefor. The father, for instance, exercises his proper authority also by divine commission. Government as *office* is an institution of divine origin, quite independently of whether the persons of the government fear God. The grace of God lies in the existence of the governmental authority itself and therefore we must obey it but only within the God-ordained limits of its powers. Thus the state takes its place not *above* but *alongside* all the other spheres. And as for us who are office-bearers in the political arena, Christian politics is our humble effort to obey the divine norm of public justice in the historically unfolding political circumstances of our time, circumstances for the ordered guidance of which we are responsible and accountable to God. Calling is our sensing the need for reformation of a mis-guided creation. We Christians cannot just enjoy the creation as it is. One of the things that is wrong with a liberal arts education is just that peace which it engenders with the creation as it is, without preparing the student for the battle of spirits in which, as a Christian, he will find himself engaged at every point.

Political life is concerned with *the direction taken in the life of the State*, and the State, though only one dimension of the Rule of God, is nevertheless invested with the power of the sword. It has, as Althusius remarks, a certain "*majestas*." This power was bestowed by God, but it can be used wrongly. The power of the sword is indeed something to be feared. It comes into your and my family life, into our church life (think of the *Afscheiding* of 1834), into all areas of our life.

And this power is used. It will be used responsibly or irresponsibly, obediently or disobediently, but *it will be used*. For that is part of the structure of the life God created. Thus the *way* this power will be used, the *direction* the life of the State will take in our time, will depend on the nature of the political action that emerges in the State. In the making, the interpreting and the administering of laws the direction of the State life influences us all daily. The element of direction is simply the basic or central religious drive that is at work in all human cultural life. This is why as Christians together we should be concerned about political life.

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Ladies and gentlemen, some of you may be wondering what all this has to do with today's proceedings. Well, in a word, everything. For every concrete political goal that is even conceived, but then, further, pursued, every political program that men set themselves to realize, every body of positive law arises from an idea about the nature of man and of his place and task in the world, arises from an idea about the order of the world and the structure of society. It may be that as Christians we have many common concerns, that together we sense the need of a powerful common Christian witness in regard to these concerns. But these concerns are turned into formulated issues, tactics and strategies are determined by reference to a basic grid, and the difference in our fundamental schemas is what always impresses me, though, I must add, it causes me great agony and pain.

It is not to the point to argue that the Catholic political parties have become deconfessionalized. It is not Catholic *dogma* here, but the *philosophical schema* of Thomism or of Maritain that is the problem. It would be very good to know just what the status is of Thomistic philosophy in the Catholic Church and the Catholic community. For to the Reformed mind there simply is no such realm of Nature as the Thomistic philosophy talks about, no realm of natural or civil good which grace then supplements, strengthens, perfects, elevates. There is no natural mind that in a normal way, i.e. a properly normal way, relates to an intelligible world. These things to the Reformed man simply do not exist. But

we do not take that to be the private view of Reformed communities. We do not hold to another view because we have need of distinctives to maintain our independence. We believe that what we believe is what the Word of God calls us to believe, that there is only the one Creation of God, revelatory of His own integral oneness, concentrated in a covenantal-religious relation to Him, which outside of Christ, because of the entrance of sin into the world, is not in a normal condition but in a very abnormal one, in a state of rebellious alienation from God, a world which it is necessary for grace to restore to a new communion with the father, as Adam originally walked, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. This is of fundamental importance for political action, for the drawing up of political programs, for political strategy and tactics. What does one see as one looks out upon the world of men: natural virtues, which association with Christian persons can strengthen and elevate and perfect, or a spirit of anti-christ, that is of lawlessness, of apostasy or will-worship, of unwisdom, things that manifest themselves in an unholy standard of conduct (the Playboy-Penthouse mentality, which appeals to the principle of separation of church and state but says nothing of the universal *Appel* of the Word of God to all human hearts), in a misguided Reason and in corrupt desires (e.g. the Me First mentality).

Catholic and Protestant theologians have debated much recently about whether the Catholic Church accepts the doctrine of the *sola gratia*, but, again, that is not the problem for us here. The problem here is the *place* of grace in the Thomistic-framework, the Thomistic view of special grace as a super-endowment or enrichment and perfection of an already existing natural grace, and behind this there is an awful lot of history that goes back to the Synod of Orange of A.D. 529 at least.

The problem concentrates itself in the view one entertains of “natural law.” Prof. Berkouwer, in his book *General Revelation (De Algemene Openbaring)* points up the radical difference between Calvin’s concept of natural law and the schoolmen’s. While their theory is grounded in the rational nature of man, which, according to Rome, *must* always – with the necessity that attaches to being – *strive after the good*, nothing of that is found in the former. Calvin sees

as central the corruption of human nature directed *against* the good will of God in hostility and disobedience. I hope you can forgive a somewhat extended quotation from Berkouwer's book.

"For Calvin," he writes,

the natural man does not live from what remains of real, ontological goodness within the ordinances of God, but he moves within the *witnessing force* and the *evidence* of the divinely ordained good as revelation of His holy will. The predominating aspect in Calvin is not the goodness of human nature, but *the goodness of the law and the ordinances of God* The total depravity of man is indeed present, according to Calvin, but that is, for him, not equivalent to the *absence* of all God's gifts to human nature. For Calvin is convinced that man can manifest his total depravity *with* his gifts and *in* the functioning of those gifts. A profound view of sin is the background of Calvin's thought: one could say, a total-existential view which is *religious* in character and is governed by the question of the attitude of the *heart* of man towards God We find ourselves here in the area of the activity of God in preserving and governing. Therein lies the possibility of the connection between so-called "natural law" and ... *corruptionaturae* It is indeed a strange thing that in the radical aversion of human life from God and His holy will, in its *inability* to subject itself to the law of God, there is nevertheless still present a championing of right and justice, a punishing of evil and a rewarding of good, a valuing of community with one another and of limits set for man in that community, a seeking of truth and science Every man stirs and moves within the superior power of the works of God and of the preservation of his blessing-bestowing law ... and *in* his actions, *in* his conscience, in his judgment with regard to others and in his protest against complete anarchy he manifests the superior power of the work and the law of God To acknowledge this does not therefore involve an optimistic estimate of man. For this man, in the total direction of his existence, is turned *away* from God and moreover can also in his concrete deeds progress continually farther along the road of manifest degeneration. In Romans 2 Paul is not speaking of a constant quality of the heathen (the doing of that which is contained in the law). The process of sin can also so burst forth that there remain only minimal remnants of the power to distinguish. The eye of man can be increasingly darkened with respect to the goodness of God's ordinances, so that he finally has an eye only for the "law" that is pleasing to himself and that protects his own life. Life can develop as Paul predicts it for the last days, *viz.* in almost complete and uncompromising opposition to what the law of God still makes valuable in life. Those are days in which man will even be without natural love. Therein can be manifested the judgment of

God, as it already was revealed in the divine “giving over” of which Paul makes mention in Romans 1 ... one cannot describe the history of humanity from the point of view of human “nature” and its “natural light.” The relation between the general revelation of God, common restraining grace and human life is not a static one, but a dynamic relation, which is completely and utterly tied up with the development of history and with the process of sin.

Whew! That was quite a quotation, but I have included it because it is so much to the point. Berkouwer is discussing what I talked about when I referred to Structure and Direction. Since the creation structure is integral, that is, has a root-unity that is religion or our covenant-walk before God, the direction of life, be it the rebellion of sin or a newly learned obedience to the Word of God in the Spirit, will be radical, that is, will be evidenced in *every* aspect of life.

The patristic and medieval natural law tradition quickly revived after the first stages of the Protestant Reformation, and it quickly led the Protestant world to an accommodation with the rising rationalism. I have described the process in my paper “The development of Calvinism in North America in the Light of Its Development in Europe.” The result was a Modernism which is another religion than Christianity.

Frankly, I was troubled by the comment of Stanley Hoffmann in his *Daedalus* article. And as I look out on the world of Christian Democracy I am impressed with the “secular” appearance of it in so many places. I hear Dr. Eduardo Grey say that Christian Democracy is inspired by its trust in man. Christian Democracy talks a great deal about Christian humanism (vs. autonomous humanism) and about personalism, both of which terms receive their definition from the Thomistic scheme of Nature and Grace, I read in a commentator on the encyclical of Leo XIII which defined Christian Democracy (*Graves de Communi, 1901*) that the movement is simply social Catholicism. Fogarty closes his book by defining it as “that aspect of the ecumenical movement in modern Christianity which is concerned with the application of Christian principles in the areas of political, economic, and social life for which the Christian laity has independent responsibility.” In a similar statement early in his book he again speaks of it as a movement of laymen, engaged on their own responsibility in the solution of

problems in the light of Christian principles ...” But then, after quoting I Corinthians 1, of all places, he goes on: “In the main stream of Christian thought it has always been clear that revelation completes natural knowledge but does not replace it.” And in another place he writes: “... in the face of new developments in natural reasoning ... the church failed to show clearly and forcibly how these developments were relevant to revelation, and revelation to them. It was not quick enough to take up the new threads and weave them into its own pattern of thought. As a result, these developments tended to proceed independently of, and to some extent in opposition to, Christianity.”

Sometimes I get the impression that Catholics and we, somewhere behind the world where the schema is operative, are talking about the same thing. God’s good creation and the sinfulness of man that has affected that world, but always feel that the boundness of the Catholic mind to the Thomistic schema stops him short of seeing the radical integralness of man the creature’s life before God, and of discerning and appreciating the real sinfulness of secular movements.

But is not all this related to that fundamental Thomistic schema of Nature and Grace? And as I tried to show earlier that schema is not unrelated to the Church Fathers’ acceptance of classical humanism’s assessment of Greek and Latin thought and even to the position developed among Alexandrian Jewry towards the world of Greek culture. It sits deep in Christian historical experience, whether or not it adequately accords with the enlightenment of Scriptural revelation., It is significant that Leo XIII, who defined Christian Democracy, is also the pope who, in a letter to Cardinal Parocchi of 1885 wrote: “Perceiving, then, the usefulness of the literature of Greece and Rome, the Catholic Church, which always has fostered whatsoever things are of good report, has always given to the study of the humanities the favor that it deserves, and in promoting it has expended no slight portion of its best endeavor.” My Harvard instructor, the famous Edward Kennard Rand, in his *Founders of the Middle Ages*, after mentioning the pope’s Ciceronian cadences, makes the wry comment: “Nor does His Holiness fail to quote St. Paul, though not the passage about that wisdom of this world which is foolishness with God.”

Was not this traditional view of a normal natural world part of Lamennais's problem? In the end he accommodated himself to the very liberalism which Groen viewed as the continuation of the revolution (though Lamennais did make distinctions). As though the popular democracy of the day could be read as a technical way of satisfying the legitimate longings of the people. Lamennais did not think of the separation of Church and State as something in itself desirable, but as safest for both in modern conditions. In other words, it was a thoroughly pragmatic act that really involved the abandonment of his conviction. A Reformed mind might have found the emergence of the idea of popular democracy to be the finally attained stage of historical development that marks the New Testament believer's maturity in Christ in the communion of the Spirit while the *direction* in which this structural opening up process occurred was antithetical to the direction of Christian obedience. This was what made Groen an anti-revolutionary and set him against the contra-revolutionary ideas of his predecessors Bilderdyk and the da Costa of the earlier years.

In various papal utterances too there appears to be an attempt to separate the "technical" in liberalism or socialism, from the more philosophical drives in those movements. Certain priests, at least in Latin America, approach communism in the same way. The technical, however, I would suggest, exists only as an integral element of the human intention and purpose, which is really a prophetic (religious) statement about man, religion, law, the structure of human society. A good example is the "technique" of one man, one vote and majority election (Rousseau) as opposed to the "technique" of proportional representation. The former "technique" carries with it a whole philosophy, indeed a religious reading of experience.

Lamennais's lunging first in the direction of the State, then of the Church, and then of liberalism suggests another weakness in the Catholic view of nature. He appears to miss any firm view of a creation-*order*, the result of the divine will in the work of creation. The Aristotelian view was that the lesser associations, such as marriage and family and village spring from the instincts of propagation and self-preservation, and that their "end" was life, whereas the "end" of the city-state was the "good life," the life of the mind, and (according to the

Olympian religion of rational form) was thus superior. In the immanent teleology of this hylomorphism, the lower is subsumed under the higher as part to whole. The subordination of the realm of Nature to the realm of Grace in Thomas does not appreciably alter the fact that in the Roman Catholic view of the structure of society, the state is the final organizer and the director of the common good in the domain of nature. (*Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* 1931). Fogarty sees similarities between the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, as it is called, and the Reformed principle of sphere-sovereignty, but that simply is not the case; there is, unfortunately, significant differences between the two views. In Lamennais there was no clear notion of creation ordinances for the various societal associations, and he shows no real appreciation for the variety of offices God has placed in life. Roman Catholic thinking is dominated by the Nature-Grace scheme, and further makes no fundamental Biblical corrections of the Aristotelian view of the natural world. But in our increasingly complex society, there is more need all the time for insight into the God-ordained limits of government. Dooyeweerd's view of sphere-sovereignty or modal irreducibility makes room for a *proper* and *open* "horizontalism," as opposed to the verticalized view of society in terms of a principle of subsidiarity, or to any conception of reality in terms of hierarchical subordination.

So really the question of the status of the Thomistic philosophy, and of Maritain's, in Roman Catholic thinking and particularly the role it plays in the thinking in Christian Democratic circles is very important. The possibility of meaningful cooperation in any fundamental way between Roman Catholic and Reformed Christians, even in concrete political projects (unless they are vaguely and superficially conceived) will at least require, from the very outset, a frank, open-hearted and thorough canvassing of this question. How bound is a Catholic involved in social action to the Thomistic philosophy?

There is the further, but closely related, point in Fogarty's definition of Christian Democracy that the laity have an independent responsibility. Just what does that mean in Roman Catholicism? Even Fogarty's explanation of the three levels of action: that specific to the clergy, Catholic Action and social action appears to

be blurred. He goes on to say that “the lines between the three levels of activity are often uncertain,” that movements which, though directed to economic or social ends, have a particularly high educational content, lie on the margin between the third and the second, “and may even be absorbed into the level of Catholic Action altogether.” The significance of that remark is that in Catholic Action the laity carry on some form of apostolate as auxiliaries of the ecclesiastical Hierarchy; and not merely with the approval of the Hierarchy, but “*under its special mandate, in direct dependence on it, and under rules called for and sanctioned by it.*” (italics mine). The strictly hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church compels us to raise this question as to the independent responsibility of the laity.

The encyclical *Mater et Magistra* of 1961 (sect. 239) states that

Catholics must bear themselves as Catholics and do nothing to compromise religion and morality. When the Hierarchy has made a decision on any point Catholics are bound to obey their directives. The Church has the right and obligation not merely to guard ethical and religious principles, but also to declare its authoritative judgment in the matter of putting these principles into practice.

Fogarty himself, while saying that in social action “the laity take over entirely and act on their own initiative and responsibility,” adds “though within the normal framework of the beliefs, rules and practice of their church.”

Of course, I do not expect a Catholic to be something else than a Catholic. But it is the Catholic Church itself that constitutes the problem. Where the Reformed “mind” sees a difference between the sovereign working of grace on the heart, which changes the direction of all of a man’s life-activities (=the *ecclesia invisibilis*), the evidence of a man’s hearing the Word of God in the changed direction of his various life-activities (= the *ecclesia visibilis*), and the particular activity of worship that has been redirected to God (the instituted church), the Roman Catholic Church is always an Institute, and every activity of a member of the Catholic Church is related to that Institute.

There is a finer point, one that almost brings me to the point of despair. The Catholic sees the relation of Scripture and Church quite differently from the Protestant. The Scriptures, in the Catholic view, arise out of the Church. The Jesuit scholar, Gustave Weigel, writes:

The inspired books, which have God as their author in consequence of their inspiration, are ecclesiastical Instruments for teaching, guiding and exhorting. They are not over the Church, but rather a part of the Church's panoply to be used in her work of accomplishing the task of uniting man to God. It is the Church which teaches, the Church which sanctifies, the Church which builds and vitalizes. The Church is not a fruit of the Book but rather the Book is a fruit of the Church.

Related is the much debated question of the relation of Scripture and Tradition. Again, what troubles is the Roman Catholic idea of the Church of Christ, the single reality of the Body of Christ on earth with doctrinal authority which under the direct presence of the Spirit is endowed with an infallible character (the Magisterium). If the Scriptures arise out of the bosom of the Church and the Church has an infallible on-going teaching authority, then the Church in its historical presence and reality cannot be understood as a response to the Call of God in His Word. How then could appeal ever be made (except to the "pope better informed") to the Word of God as Norm to be obeyed in all our earthly life? How can reformation ever come about?

Our hope is in the fact that the Gospel, God's Call to man, while it has been incorporated into our creation life, is never exhausted in the form it assumed in common with all creatures. It remains always God's sovereign address, with Power to accomplish that for which God sent it into the world, and princes and ecclesiastical hierarchies are responsible for how they respond to that *Appel*. That is the hope for fruitful contact between Catholic and Reformed Christians.

* * * * *

Dear AR friends, I have no intention of expressing an opinion directly on the desirability or undesirability of your proposed merger. That would be inappropriate for one coming in from the outside, and I know that you do not expect that of me anyway. The fact is that I really do not know whether the

merger should take place, because I *am* coming in from the outside. I have spoken of the crying need in our time, if it is feasible, of an enlarged and vigorous Christian political witness. Surely there is no other place in the world where Reformed and Catholic strengths together could make a greater contribution to meeting this need, domestically first, but never forget the possibilities internationally.

I have also attempted to point out what to me appear to be very formidable difficulties in the idea of a merger. It seems to me, as one coming to you from without, that for a time, until the changes that are taking place in the Catholic Church become clearer to us all, and until some of these fundamental issues are clarified, you would be working in a more Christian-historical way to set up a center to discuss these issues and to test the practical political possibilities, Catholics and Reformed retaining their independent identities. I still feel about cooperation and fusion very much as Abraham Kuyper did.

But I may be wrong. The proposed CDA may be more feasible at this point than I imagine. Actually, it all depends on what is going on here, what is taking place in your hearts. It could be that this move for union stems from very worldly considerations, *viz.* to strengthen your power as parties of the Right. Or the desire for merger in broad areas of the AR Party could be an instance of a phenomenon that is occurring in many places and forms in our time, the phenomenon, as Stanley Hoffmann speaks of it, of disconnection with the past, of the past's no longer nurturing us. I will not easily believe that that is what is happening among you. And if your desire is, together with your Catholic colleagues, to let the *Appel* of God come through to men concretely in the political life of this nation in the first place, to men in their awfully tormented lostness, who would dare to say that you do not stand at a new and wonderful frontier, a *terra incognita*. At the cutting-edge of history things are always uncertain. There are no recognizable landmarks. Risks have to be taken. But the God of history is always with His people in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and He has promised victory. The Spirit, driving the creation onward to its appointed End, works mysteriously, beyond the ways our traditional imaginations can conceive. It may be that we have to "fly on instruments," but if the instruments

are the oracles of God, we know that the way to our destination is secure and the landing will be safe.

But given the hard and sobering reality of the deep differences between the Catholic “mind” and world and the Reformed, I urge you not to take lightly God’s great deeds in your midst these past 100 years, but to honor them as the precious heritage (*KostbaarKultuurbezeit*) they are. I urge you to recognize the world-historical importance of what Almighty God saw fit to accomplish in this small country of northwestern Europe, and to cherish what you have received, not as a museum piece, to be safely stored away and taken out only occasionally to be shown to foreign visitors, but as something to be appropriated, talents to be put to use and someday to be accounted for.

As representing those young groups of Reformed people scattered all over the globe, I take the freedom to beg you even in a merger to keep the *Kuyperhuis* as a think-tank for on-going Reformed thought. And do not forget, because of your great blessings here in the past, your responsibility to give of your experience and expertise in the future to us who so sorely need it.

And *whatever* you do, may it reinforce the cry of the ancient prophet: “O Earth, Earth, hear the Word of God and live.”