

Appendix1. Kuiper on Bilderdijk

Where did the sparks of his genius land? On feeling, emotion, imagination? On language, rhythm, rhyme? On all these too, of course, for who could be a poet without them? Yet the poet strikes deeper, in and through this crude, hard surface of things, to a world which lies hidden beneath, behind, above it all; to the world of his ideal, which can brighten and enlighten our anxious reality and conjure up unity among its crumbled fragments . . . But precisely from that world our nation drew no inspiration whatsoever in the eighteenth century. That inspiration had been there in the period of national splendor. The belief in a divinely foreordained world order (heilige determinatie) coursed through our Calvinist veins during the Dutch Revolt. It was the firm solidity born of this basic conviction that triumphed in spiritual freedom on what was then the battlefield of Europe. It was the intense embrace of this soul-moving force which transformed us as if by magic, despite the most unmanageable system of government, into a major power among the states of Europe . . . As long as this awareness of the divine world order held its ground and no atomism crumbled our national vigor into so many pieces, we excelled. Faith in a world of law set by God has always been a source of strength and greatness. Who is Pelagius when compared with Augustine, what is Scotus in comparison with Thomas. And now that more empirical science is coming into bloom, on what else does it rest than on fixedness? Laws of nature, heredity, statistics, the conservation of energy - what else do they mean to proclaim than the fixedness of order and the necessity of relationships? But precisely that reassuring, that rousing conviction was what our nation, our people lacked entirely in the days of Bilderdijk. At most it wound itself about the faith-less hearts in the form of a Stoic notion of virtue.

The guilt of Calvinists especially cries here for vengeance. All spirit had gone out of them. They wasted time and effort in hairsplitting and magpie-chattering. Any trace of the consciousness of a higher calling could no more be found with them . . . Veetius, for all his erudition, at last lapsed into an arid scholasticism which makes his works unreadable, and the rest of the theologians either simply plagiarized Calvin or else expended themselves in questions of the second or third order, continuing their studies only, and that usually on a narrow footing, in polemics with dissenters. But what must especially be decried is that the mere attempt to develop the principles of Calvinism in a more general sense was undertaken by no one, not even by our, at least nominally orthodox, Reformed jurists and philosophers of that day. Evidently for many Dordt had signalled the end of the battle of principles. No one so much as sensed that the confession of predestination harbored the principle of a world view

possessing organic fixedness and necessity which, if adopted as starting-point and applied universally, could have produced the most brilliant results. For that, however, no one had an eye. Predestination was considered only an isolated theological problem, hence it was left to the theologians, who were almost exclusively intent on maintaining their ecclesiastical-political prestige.

It was therefore the Calvinists who in the eighteenth century had delivered the inglorious and defenseless generation of Bilderdijk's day over to an ignoble and vainglorious Enlightenment, to a convention which renders all of life mechanical, to a tear-jerking sentimentalism, if not to an Epicurean sensualism Reality was abandoned. The organic relationships of life were torn apart, cut up, filed smooth, crumbled to pieces. It all turned into chaos, and across this gaping chaos rationalism spun its philosophical web, and in this cobweb the proud man of reason sat on his shaky throne. Association, convention, social contract would subsequently restore unity, but first everything that was organically fixed and rooted had to be unraveled and uprooted, pulverized through endless atomism and individualism.

It was this fundamental evil that Bilderdijk opposed. It was to the fight against this grinding to powder of the one organic life that he devoted his whole soul and all his intellectual powers, all the days of his life. With wrath he flung the mortar along with the pestle into the abyss, and proceeded to spend the rest of his life in a mighty, unsparing, uncompromising defense of a world fashioned together into a divine order deriving its unity from the will of God, in a defense of the organic structure of all that lives or has being.

(Bilderdijk in zijne nationale beteekenis, pp. 12-14, 53.)

2. "In ons isolement ligt onze kracht."

This wise maxim bred of lifelong experience has become a meaningless saw echoed in season and out of season. What Groen meant by it was that coalitions, especially informal ones, are treacherous. Often Christians want to join other groups because they fear the impotence of their own little number. But their temporary allies gravely weaken their witness by diluting it beyond recognition, and precisely when you need them, at critical moments where it counts, they desert you, as Groen and his comrades so painfully found out in 1857 and again in 1866, because they do not draw their strength, their program, their consistency and steadfastness, from the principle you hold and are therefore easily persuaded by the opposition camp to join them, thus becoming, in effect, your enemies. "Dare to stand alone! Identify yourself only with those who share your principle!" is Groen's strategy. He applied this in the thick of battle. Farthest from his mind was a withdrawal into one's own private group for mutual self-edification.

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This has not always been understood. In 1880 some students of the Calvin Theological School requested one year's leave of absence in order to learn English. Curatorium referred the matter to Synod, who refused. Commenting on this incident, the Rev. G.D. de Jong writes in 1926: "In this case there was certainly lack of progressiveness. And yet the decision may be vindicated. Whether it was by intuition or by reasoning, we shall not say, but in these years it was safe to follow the saying of the statesman Groen van Prinsteren: "in ons isolement ligt onze kracht". (Cf. "The School in Parsonage and Upper Room", Semi-Centennial Volume: Theological School and Calvin College (Grand Rapids, 1926), p. 27f.)

3. Gerald Ford is reported to have fought for federal aid to parochial and private schools on the floor of the House of Representatives. It is perhaps not too early to predict with safety that Ford is not likely to become another Groen. But if he is, if he is able to muster up the courage necessary to base his arguments on the power of principles and not on the power of votes, if he is able to lay bare the apostate religious principles that undergird the opposition's stand on this and other matters, if he is able to bring up enough stamina to posit a distinctively Christian solution to a host of other crucial problems with which Congress has to deal, then he too will be driven into isolation by his erstwhile colleagues, will be ridiculed in party conclaves, will be forced to appeal to the convictions of the voiceless minority scattered throughout the country, will be forsaken by friend and foe. Or do you think that the Republican Party, which even now will barely put up with the humanistic, individualistic (and therefore in fundamental agreement with the Republican philosophy) theories espoused by a certain Goldwater under its banner, do you think that such an organization will long tolerate a positive Christian witness to be proclaimed from its midst?

4. Groen's own "isolation".

In Groen's personal archive are found letters which he had received from Prince Albert of Prussia, Matthew Arnold, (2), George Bentley, Thomas Chalmers, King Frederick William IV of Prussia, F.P.G. Guizot (4), J. Lothrop Motley (8), Lord Palmerston, A.C. van Raalte, H.P. Scholte (16), L. von Ranke (4), F.J. Stahl (2), and several members of the Dutch royal family.

We also have copies of letters written by Groen to the Boers of South Africa, Thomas Carlyle, Queen Louise of Sweden, Steinmetz, and to the Dutch kings William I, II, and III (26 in all to the last three alone).

5. Thorbecke's opposition: "Your mistake is that you make of Christianity a party matter. Keep your sectarian prejudices out

of politics. The public school is religious, unless you are so narrow-minded as to call only that religion which is contained in this or that book and certain creeds."

Green's retort: "That's how narrow-minded we are! We still hold to certain formulairies that summarize the simple, evangelical faith of the Christian. Our catechism does not ask: How many religions are there? but: What is your only comfort? We still hold to Holy Scripture, which says: No one cometh unto the Father but by Me. For us exclusivists there is but one religion, revealed in the Book of books."

Protestantism's Reawakening to the Problem of How to Reform Culture: Nineteenth-century Holland.

I. Preliminary Remark

To those who oppose transplanting Dutch culture onto North American soil the point must be conceded that the organizing of political and other consortings along confessional lines (verzuiling) arose in the Netherlands under peculiar circumstances which were uniquely Dutch. In the Netherlands of the 1850's the immediate occasion that brought things to a head was education. In twentieth-century Canada and the United States, on the other hand, the only problem supposedly on which Christians might possibly disagree with the world is education. In the Netherlands the burning problem was whether the state should subsidize only the public schools or also separate schools. In our countries, by contrast, a leading issue is whether there should be across-the-board government aid to education, to all schools, irrespective of religious affiliation.

Well, perhaps those Dutchmen back there one hundred years ago did not have problems that were quite so unique. Perhaps we can learn something from their peculiar response to their not-so-peculiar challenge. Perhaps we can, but many of us simply won't. All of which goes to show that if we would understand the reasons for the emergence of separate Christian organizations in the Netherlands, and be convinced of the correctness of this method, we must concentrate not so much on the incidental details of the Dutch scene as on the underlying principles that gave rise to this unique manner of cultural involvement on the part of Christians.

II. Prologue

It is a dark night. The wind howls and the rain clatters on the pavement. The streets are empty; even the stray

dogs have gone into hiding. Here and there a door opens and a student leaves the shelter of his heated rooms. Huddled in a big overcoat, he hastens to the place of gathering. Soon a small group of them is found sitting in a circle, listening to the words of their adopted master.

He is a passionate speaker, this man. His eyes glow with zeal, his arms wave in the air, and in his eagerness his tongue trips over words. His message radiates inspiration and strikes his hearers with great urgency. The students hang on his lips, for they wouldn't want to miss a word. This is their private professor, their prophet.

True, their other professors speak of him only with ill-concealed hostility or veiled contempt. Yet these students, some already won over, others half critical, return regularly to hear him. His word is a word of life to them. As the months progress, they begin to sense that he has something which no one else can give them, something of crucial importance, of central significance. Caught up in a middle-class milieu of pleasant and refined religiosity, growing up in a complacent society that prides itself on its tolerance, humaneness, decency, rationality, civility, these young men absorb with growing enthusiasm and conviction what is here brought to their attention in no uncertain terms: the radical nature of the Christian religion, the historic struggles of their spiritual forebears, the insidious character of democratic humanism, and the demand that comes to Christian students to prepare for a life of witnessing to the Truth, both in the world of learning as well as in the everyday practice of life.

The above phenomenon has gone down in history as the "Nachtschool van Bilderdijk". Our little story is set in Leyden in the winter of 1822. Some of the students at this time are Isaac da Costa, Abraham Capadose, Jakob van Lennep, and Wim Groen. Unable to get a position at the university Bilderdijk gives private lectures at his own home. Before the century is over some of his students will have left an indelible mark for the good on the public life of their country.

III. Introduction

After the Napoleonic Era two English dissenters, the Haldane brothers, happen to visit Geneva. Here they find rationalism in the saddle and theology students hungry for something better. Extended stay results in a group of awakened students who return to the Scriptures and the heritage of the Reformation. Thus begins a religious revival on the Continent.

Soon there appear such roaring preachers as Monod and Malan, who bring the spirit of the Reil among the aristocrats who invite them into their salons. In Holland a few of the well-to-do start with private devotional evenings.

The Reveil, for all its overemphasis of the emotions, was vibrant and alive. It would not tolerate mere intellectual assent to the Gospel. It demanded the involvement of the total person, with all his talents and activities. Above all, the love of Christ constrained them. Its adherents knew what it was to "love mercy, do justly, and walk humbly with their God." In their respective stations they did what they could to put Christian charity into practice. At the same time, although they could not put it in so many words, they began to sense something of the cosmic significance of Christ's redemptive work. The salvation of the individual soul was indeed central in their thinking, but gradually the sovereignty of God and the glory of His Name engrossed their attention. As the secularization of society around them grew apace, they began to realize that the mere preaching of a reduced gospel was not enough, that they had a calling to fulfill in the public life of the nation. As Dutchmen they never failed to avail themselves of the opportunity to point to their nation's birth and golden age, which had coincided with the revival of true Christianity and its dominance in public life. Most of them, to be sure, were content, as their fellow Christians in so many other countries, to limit their cultural contributions to stimulate poor relief and jail reform, to crusade for the abolition of slavery and better treatment of the insane. What makes Dutch developments unique at this time, however, was that a few were found who struck deeper, whose vision was broader, whose obedience to the Gospel did justice to its all-inclusiveness.

In principle the Christian religion is the panacea for all ills, for all woes, for all social problems and economic perplexities. If you don't start by heeding the commandments of God, you don't even begin to rectify the situation. A nation enters upon the path of a wholesome restoration of life only via the adoration of the Name of the Lord. For there is no other Name given under heaven by which men may be saved - saved in all their societal relationships, sanctified in all their dealings with one another, redeemed in their cultural life together in God's world.

Such was the understanding of the Gospel among these men. Nor did they fall prey to the relativism that says, "You do it your way and I'll mine, so long as we both serve Christ". The text, "He that is not against us is for us" may not be used to condone the individualistic splinter movements in the body of Christ that sends Christians scurrying off in all directions, giving a personal witness, laudable in itself, but never quite able to change on whit the conditions of concrete states of affairs and the direction which actual developments are taking. The children of darkness are often wiser than the children of light; they know that the battle of the spirit in a highly organized society requires unity, closed ranks, a central commander, "solidarity forever". And the Head of the new mankind, Christ Himself, prayed:

They are not of the world, even as I
am not of the world.
As Thou has sent Me into the world,
even so have I also sent them into
the world.
And the glory which Thou gavest
Me, I have given them; that
they may be one, even as We
are one:
I in them, and Thou in Me, that
they may be made perfect in
one; and that the world may
know that Thou has sent Me, and
has loved them, as Thou hast
loved me. (John 17:16,18,22-23)

The world is One structure, revelation is One truth, Christ is the One way. And the spiritual leaders that grew up out of the Reveil had the courage to draw the conclusion that there is but One way in which Christians should go about reforming culture, which in a secularized society leads to the formation of separate Christian organizations. The triumph of this insight is the true significance of Dutch history in the nineteenth century.

IV. Who was Bilderdijk?

Our private lecturer from Leyden was no fool. He had command of all the major European languages as well as Hebrew, Arabid, Sanskrit, Persian, etc. He studied mathematics, astro-~~nomy~~, military science, the art of drawing, law, history. At one time he was offered a chair at the University of Moscow, and for several years he served as private tutor to King Louis, a brother of Napoleon.

Born in the same year as Mozart and a contemporary of Goethe and Wordsworth, Bilderdijk marks the transition in the history of Dutch literature from classicism to romanticism. He himself, however, belongs to neither. True, he reacts strongly against the Age of Reason. He complains that in the schools of the land reason is replacing revelation. In jurisprudence he is Hobbistic, holding that the state arises from the needs of man and favoring a kind of sanctified enlightened despotism. But his real importance lies in the fact that he becomes the unofficial poet laureate of that broad class of simple folk who had remained true to the faith of the fathers.

While the whole world believes in progress and human virtue, Bilderdijk recognizes total depravity and the need of a Savior to renew all of life. He loudly proclaims man's deep dependence on God, and sees the French Revolution in the final analysis as a revolt against God. The division between church and secular history he regards as invalid, since all history is redemptive history. Reacting against rationalism, he does not

fall into the excesses of romanticism. Throughout his works he argues that beauty does not allow of being reduced either to the rationally analyzable or to the emotionally sensible. Above all he posits, next to the variety, the unity of creation: everything is organically relation. (See Appendix, 1.) We also find with him statements to the effect that the heart liest at the root of our existence.

He deploras the introduction of pagan philosophy into the early Church, for thus the Christian faith was polluted and robbed of its strength. As for the Netherlands of his time, he fulminates against the presence of deist and unitarian teachers in the Reformed Church; in 1810 he goes so far as to call upon the true Reformed to separate from the State Church. Yet he opposes conventicles, for they can easily lead to heresy and immorality. He writes pamphlets calling on the Roman Church to renounce certain doctrines in order to make ecumenical union possible. The Bible for Bilderdijk is the general, central rule for faith and the practice of life.

V. One of Bilderdijk's spiritual sons: Da Costa

Isaac da Costa was born the son of an Amsterdam merchant of Portugese-Jewish extraction. As a lad his gift for writing poetry gets him an introduction to Bilderdijk, and soon he becomes his private pupil. This leads to his conversion in 1822, when he is baptized in the Reformed Church in Leyden. The following year he publishes his Objections against the Spirit of the Age in which he attacks everyone of the popularly accepted ideas of the time, from the immediate abolition of slavery to the desirability of constitutional government. Gradually, however, he distantiates himself from such negativism, and from a counter-revolutionary in theory he becomes an anti-revolutionary, laying bare false principles and opposing only those of its fruits that are evil.

What his time needed expecially was the warning da Costa constantly gave against the danger of having a Christianity without Christ. Nor does this converted Jew permit Christianity to be viewed apart from the historic creeds of the Christian Church. Foremost among his weapons is his voluminous poetry, stiff and pompous, yet captivating, and above all prophetic.

VI. Secession

The Revolutionary Era in Holland had maltreated all denominations as equal. In 1816 the State Church was re-established, this time the weight of authority lying on the side of the civil government. There was an appointed Synod and a Ministry of Worship. The traditional Reformed creeds of the sixteenth and seventeenth century, long since fallen in disrepute, were not revived as arbiter in ecclesiastical disputes. Doctrinal freedom ensued; higher criticism dominated pulpit preaching.

In Leyden at this time a certain group of theology students, among whom Brummelkamp and Van Raalte, belong to what is contemptuously referred to as the "Club van Scholte", after the name of one of its chief members who later is to found Pella, Iowa. Scholte regularly attends the conventicles at the home of Da Costa, and he is also personally acquainted with the aging Bilderdijk. The Club is in constant contact with a certain baron who has lived in Geneva as a member of the Free Church there.

Once having become pastors in the established church, these men are offended by the lack of discipline in their church. Appeals to higher assemblies is of no avail. On top of that they meet with opposition because of their orthodox preaching. All this leads to the Secession of 1834. Immediately liberal, tolerant Holland becomes the scene of religious persecution. The seceders' worship services are disrupted, troops are quartered in their houses, heavy fines are levied, followed by confiscation of goods and imprisonment for debt. Yet their number grows, and throughout the land little churches spring up where the Gospel is brought free of cold orthodoxy or liberal heresy. Others there are, however, who feel that schism is unwarranted and that protracted attempts must be made to reform the Reformed Church from within.

VII. Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer

More the soul of movement than the head of a party, Groen is the chief historical figure of the nineteenth century. He summons the Christians to their task with respect to a modernistic church, a humanistic school, a democratic state. And in his own life he set an example.

Groen did not contribute a system, a theory, but he laid foundations. Amid the confusion of opinions he introduces a new way of thinking. Human life is at bottom an expression of faith. There are two kinds of faith: belief and unbelief. The defenders of the true faith must not waste their energies combatting the outward fruits of apostasy. Rather they must get down to the heart of the matter. Principle must be pitted over against principle.

Thus Groen entered the lists against the growing secularization of society. In the face of misunderstanding, suspicion, abuse, ridicule, hatred, he remained steadfast in the battle of defending, preserving and revitalizing the Christian character of Dutch culture. He rails against the pietistic individualization of the Christian faith. Consequently his biggest battle is against his own co-religionists, the majority of the Protestants, called "ethisch - irenischen". Ethical - e.g. Christianity is a matter of the individual soul expressed outwardly at most in a kind of moral influence. Irenic - i.e. Christians should be peace-loving and accommodating, even if this means abandoning public life to secularism. Instead of hiding his candle under a

bushel of other-worldliness, Groen carries the torch of reformation into the everyday world. At first he bases his actions on the historic right of the Reformed faith to predominate in Dutch society, hence in the public schools, in missions to the colonies, in political affairs, etc.; but by 1862, as we shall see, he accepts the neutral (pluralistic) state, "as an evil necessity, from fear of worse". Never does he give up the right and duty of Christians to put their stamp on public life. "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

Such a stand evokes opposition. The battle of the spirits is deepened. Superficial political maneuvering makes way for profound deliberation and realignment of forces. "Happy the land that is divided," said J.P.A. Mekkes, once, and how true it is. For then men know where each one stands and what really divides them. By the time the 1860's roll around, little Holland is on the way towards a new conception of politics, of organizations in general, and, most important, of the duty of Christians with respect to culture.

In the United States at this time, Lincoln has been assassinated and the South is smarting under carpetbaggers and scalawags. Canada has just been led to Confederation under Sir John A., and its leaders are bickering over whether to build a railway or not. In Britain, Disraeli and Gladstone are playing musical chairs with the office of prime minister over the issue of extending the franchise to the fourth state. The popularity of France's Napoleon III is waning, and he is looking for glory in foreign ventures. Bismarck is leading Germany onto the road of power politics, robbing Denmark, obliterating Austria, and scheming for a war with France. But the history of Holland at this time can be quickly dismissed, as my high school history text did, by saying that "here all attention was taken up by struggles between religious factions". Precisely! What is little in the eyes of the world can be great in God's kingdom. The Netherlands is the scene of a meaningful development of the national cultural life. Thanks to Groen.

VIII. Groen's Growth

The very year that Bilderdijk embarks on his private lectures, in 1817, Willem Groen enrolls at the University of Leyden at the age of 16. In January, 1820, Groen writes home that he has for the first time attended one of Bilderdijk's sessions. His father writes back, encouraging his son to continue doing so, but warning him to be on guard against the man's "peculiar ideas". The months pass. Then we find Groen presenting a paper, in Latin, to a student club, in which he defends Bilderdijk's main ideas, at the same time severely criticizing his youthful followers for misrepresenting their master or quoting his strongest statements out of context without being able to back them up themselves when challenged. On December 17, 1823, Groen brilliantly defends two dissertations to qualify for a doctorate in law and one in classics.

He establishes a law practice in the Hague, which he quits when appointed to the private council of the King. With him he resides at Brussels, where he attends the services led by Merle d'Aubigné, Reveil preacher and author of a classic on this history of the Reformation. The Gospel he now hears is something new for Groen, who has been brought up in a typical Dutch aristocratic family and who, despite his contacts with Bilderdijk and Da Costa, still sees the essence of Christianity in its civilizing, refining influence. In Brussels Groen also works his way through the volumes of Von Haller, reactionary Swiss jurist, and Edmund Burke, conservative English statesman. Gradually his eyes are opened to the real nature of the French Revolution. At the same time he is an on-the-spot observer of the turbulences leading up to the Belgian Revolt of 1830. With consternation he sees the Catholics, for the sake of freedom of education, join up with the liberals, so that the South forms a more or less solid front of opposition against the King. Keen observer that he is, Groen also perceives the importance of the King and the North, because, sharing the same ideas of social contract and popular sovereignty, they haven't a leg to stand on against a consistent application of these ideas. Thus Groen comes to re-appreciate Bilderdijk's ideas, and he concludes that "where liberalism prevails, revolutions are to be expected."

In 1833 Groen falls ill and undergoes a grave spiritual crisis. After some months he arises from his sickbed a new man, fully committed to a living Christian faith.

IX. Groen and Primary Education

Groen's livelihood was assured when he accepted a post for which he was admirably suited by natural talent and predilection: supervisor over the royal archives, which entailed editing and publishing some three centuries of personal correspondence of the House of Orange. This task enabled him to earn his spurs as an historian, while it also allowed him to devote time and energy to issues of national interest. Not in the last place because of his views on the school question did he incur the revilement of being referred to as a sly, unscrupulous, cunning, ruthless, hypocritical, power-hungry and sophistical upstart, in short, "that Protestant Jesuit".

By a law of 1806 the education of Dutch youth was wrested from parochial control and turned over to the state. Steop by step the instruction given became more indifferent, in some places even hostile, to Christianity, and parents were powerless to do anything about it. Complaints increased from year to year. In 1840 a royal commission is charged to investigate school grievances. Groen is one of its members, and in a minority report he points out that, despite morning prayers and Bible stories, the public school is unchristian, nay antichristian, because it inculcates the notion of access to a Supreme Being without the need of a Mediator, and, ignoring the chasm of sin that

separates us from God, it teaches a Heavenly Father of us all. In parliament, meanwhile, Groen argues that education belongs to the parents, and therefore he would like to see constitutional guarantees of the freedom of separate schools. This proposal is so foreign to the ears of his colleagues that it is passed over without a word.

At last, in 1855, the issue comes to a head. Three views on education now clamor for recognition.

The Liberals under Thorbecke want a neutral school pure and simple. The nation is to have only one school, where no positive Christian teachings may have a place. After all, the morals and customs generally held in the land are so permeated with Christianity that the national school will be automatically Christian.

The broadly-Protestant Conservative party feels somewhat different. Since our way of life is based on Christianity, at least "commonly accepted" Christian doctrines are to be taught in the public school. But any precise dogmas are out. No religion may be offended. Nor should the state sponsor any other school. Separate schools will lead to extremism: they will produce fanatic little orthodox-Protestant and help the Catholics train little papist inquisitors and stake kindlers.

Groen loathes both proposals because they would create an artificial unity. In his newspaper, De Nederlander, begun in 1850 by taking over a languishing Utrecht daily, the staunch battler argues that the false community ideal, boasting of its broad-minded tolerance, really practices intolerance towards minorities. Parents should have a choice of schools and not be forced to violate their conscience. It is no freedom when parents are allowed to set up private schools if at the same time they have to share in the cost of the public school. If the state is to sponsor education, it should allow the public school to be split up into separate schools for Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Rather than fear the production of extremists from such a system, we ought to fear the present general school where a watered-down gospel is brought which leads the children towards indifference and thus prepares the way for unbelief and superstition. In all this, Groen's strongest supporters are the Roman Catholics.

At this time a bill is introduced in the Second Chamber that would make the common public school the rule, private schools rare exceptions. There follows prolonged debate about some of the subdivisions and minor regulations of the bill. Meanwhile Groen, who has lost his seat in 1854, uses his press to denounce the bill as highly unpractical. As if a generalized gospel will be palatable to parents who take their respective religions seriously! And as for the suggestion that religious instruction should be reserved for after-hours outside the classroom, "this palliative is based on a misconception of the true nature of religion." Fortunately Groen is returned to parliament by the Hague in a by-election. In his first speech he pleads

for a principial debate. In the interest of the nation members should temporarily forego their harangues about all the fine details of the education bill now before the house. He then proceeds to explain why he rejects the bill as a whole and why he proposes splitting the public school into separate schools for the three major religions.

Like most people brought up in a humanistic-democratic milieu, however, the Dutch at this time are quite content to limit their thinking and debate to pragmatic considerations. Their principle is that there should be no devisive principles. And therefore everybody has to conform to their principle. Which is, of course, a highly unpragmatic stand as well as an unpractical one. For in the first place dissenters are suppressed, and in the second place, by glossing over real differences, contentions issues are never satisfactorily and permanently disposed of.

Groen is opposed on all sides; a caricature is made of his proposal: In some communities there are as many as 17 different denominations; are there then to be 17 different schools? Outside parliament Groen even fails to find support among his fellow Protestants. He is treated with total indifference. Though his style of writing is by no means propular, he rightly complains that he has received no response of any kind, either positive or negative, from any of his spiritual kin. The publication of his newspaper is discontinued. "In such a vacuum it is not strange that the pen drops from one's hand and one loses one's power of speech."

Curiously enough, strong opposition arises from another quarter. The radical Liberals will be satisfied with nothing less than an absolutely neutral, secular school. They are supported in the press by the higher critics of the Reformed theology department of the University of Groningen. In the face of such opposition the minister of the interior hastily withdraws the bill and tries to railroad through a revised one before the dissolution of parliament for the coming elections. The new bill, however, proposes to make the public school completely non-religious, teaching nothing that might offend anyone. Such boldness arouses the sleepy nation which still prides itself on being Christian. In streams a flood of petitions. Time runs out, and when the voters go to the polls in the next general election, the school question still begs a solution.

The new administration is formed by the Christian Conservatives. Whether by express agreement or through misunderstanding is not clear, but Groen expects partial, if not full, concession to his proposed educational policy. But what happens? The Conservatives endorse the Liberal stand; they introduce and get a bill passed which in effect, under the mask of "training in all Christian and social virtues", establishes a neutral public school without the Bible. Immediately Groen resigns his seat in protest.

Experiences like this harden Groen in his resolve "to maintain our independence, for therein lies our strength". In future anyone who wants to represent the Anti-revolutionary party must know its principles, break all ties with other groups or ways of thinking, and refuse to compromise on issues that count." (See Appendix, 2.)

Five years later Groen returns to the Second Chamber. He has changed his tactics. He now accepts the neutral state. I parents are to have the freedom of providing a Christian education for their children, the private school must be encouraged. Let the public school be strictly neutral as the law stipulates, and let not the content of the education vary from place to place and from teacher to teacher, as happens at present. In this way the public school will become somewhat serviceable for the purpose it is meant to serve: namely, to please everybody. This will, moreover, show up its true poverty and emptiness and remove from it the semblance of being Christian. Furthermore, let the public school drop its monopoly on state subsidization. Remove the obstacles of red tape and high costs that make it impossible for parents to exercise their right to set up free private schools.

Again Groen's demands fall on deaf ears. He is opposed, especially by his fellow Christians, the "ethisch-irenischen". Freedom of education is not to be achieved in his lifetime.

X. Groen's Political Significance

As will be evident by now, many of Groen's battles take place in parliament. Though sometimes assisted by a few men who share his idea, Groen is usually alone. His point of departure for everything that he says to his fellow M.P.'s boils down to this: You people may belong to different party groupings. But basically you are all birds of a feather that will ultimately flock together. I, I only am different.

Whence this arrogance? Groen motivates it as follows: "The great variety of opinions found among our politicians can, upon closer examination, be reduced to the simple contrast between divine truth and human invention." By human invention Groen means the belief in the autonomy of reason which dictates revolution against Christian society and denies the divine right of government, the limited role of the state, and the relevance of Revelation to political life.

What is meant here by revolution? The eighteenth century, by undermining the Christian faith, had culminated in the turbulent French Revolution. Although the Restoration after 1815 brought back the old political institutions, the spirit that had initially upset them was retained. And this spirit, the spirit of Voltaire and Rousseau, of Locke and Montesquieu, is fundamentally hostile to Christianity, to divine norms for justice and

order. This revolution-spirit can be summarized in the one word unbelief. To combat the practical impact of unbelief, in organizational form or otherwise, the Christians, one and all, must strive to exert an opposite political influence. "Over against the Revolution the Gospel!"

By taking his stand squarely on the Gospel, Groen is led to reject the available choices in politics between left, right, and middle-of-the-road. For all three represent or embody unbelief in their legislative practices. In the unchristian state freedom and authority can never be successfully combined, but always causes government to oscillate between dictatorship and anarchy, individualism or collectivism, laissez faire or Welfare State. Writes Groen in 1848: "The Minister of Justice has said that there are three parties on the political stage: the conservatives, the moderate progressivists, and the radical progressivists. I say this is a false picture. Our country has but two parties. The one puts into practice the doctrine of revolution, the other combats this doctrine in all its manifestations and modifications. The doctrine of revolution has it that men are by nature good and perfectible, originally free and equal, who have combined in a social contract to erect states and institute governments deriving their just powers from the consent of the sovereign people." In a pamphlet of the same year Groen takes to task the revolution's slogan, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity". To those who advocate democratic levelling Groen retorts with Romans 13:7: "Render therefore to all their dues: fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor". To those who favor a brotherhood of all men on the common basis of hatred against all those placed in authority Groen answers with I Peter 2:17: "Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King."

Such views have practical implications. In 1840 steps are taken to revise the constitution. Groen presents a brief to the King in which he offers a draft for a new constitution and advocates the re-adoption of the "unchangeable principles that have been rejected by the Revolution.". In the Double Chamber or constitutional assembly of the same year, Groen defends freedom of conscience and education, defines what the proper role of the opposition should be, pleads for a strong parliament and responsible government, denounces laissez faire and warns against a centralized bureaucracy.

By 1848 three men besides Groen are found in parliament voicing anti-Revolutionary principles: they welcome the extension of the franchise, but not on the basis given. The people is not sovereign. The government's first loyalty is to God, If this be forgotten, the government will lose its sense of direction and its awareness of a higher calling, and anarchy will ensue. Meanwhile Groen himself pleads for toleration. Since we are committed to different religious principles, no real unity exists among us. Only by mutual respect for each other's convictions can fruitful government be carried on.

In 1853 Groen declares that the unofficial Anti-revolutionary party is prepared to support the administration, but only when "the distinctiveness of its own principle" will permit it. Thus a separate Christian political party slowly takes shape. The most bitter, distasteful yet necessary, battle is directed against the Conservatives, who claim to be Christian but at crucial moments leave the Christians in the lurch, as happened in the school struggle of the mid-1850's. During the election campaign of 1864 Groen demands a clear statement of all candidates on their stand with respect to the Education Act, so that Anti-revolutionaires may know for whom to vote. The aim is to preclude the Conservatives' getting votes under false pretenses.

In the colonial question, however, Groen considers himself incompetent to have specific ideas on measures to be taken. For this reason he tends to lean yet towards the Conservatives. At the same time he presents basic considerations to be kept in mind. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" should be the guideline also in colonial policy. Therefore not Mohammedanism but Christianity should be encouraged by the colonial authorities. The goerner-general should not have the power to decide which missionaries may or may not enter his domain. Exploitation stands condemned. Not the needs of the mother country but the needs of the natives come first. A state-controlled economy should be abolished as soon as feasible. A program of emancipation of slaves must be initiated. Ask not what Java can do for us, but what God would have us do for Java. Groen is willing to accept the White Man's Burden, to bring Western Civilization to the orientals. But remember: "Only that civilization which is founded on the recognition of Christ as the Son of the living God and which seeks to serve Him is pleasing to God and beneficial to mankind."

As for practical programs for the colonies, Groen sides with the Conservatives. But the sad experiences of his ally Keuchenius with the Conservatives in parliament changes his mind even on this question. In 1869 he renews with vigor his determination to form a separate party in everything, to work out answers to problems from out of the peculiar Anti-revolutionary, Christian-historical principles. When the elections of 1871 roll around, he distantiates himself, in his revised periodical Nederlandsche Gedachten, from all Conservatives and urges his spiritual kin to support only the three A-R candidates: Keuchenius, Van Otterloo, and Kuyper. Forget about numerical strength, he exhorts. Our strength lies in principial distinctiveness.

XI. Groen's Ecclesiastical Significance

A strong aversion is found in Groen for "the caesaropapistic organization of the Reformed Church; by which he means the appointed Synod imposed on the church by the state. Its evil fruits have already been mentioned: historic creeds were relativized and discipline was called outmoded and intolerant. The worst product of the system was the encouragement of doc-

trinal freedom or the propagation from the pulpit of the heresies of the Groninger School in theology, which turned Christ the redeemer of sinners into Christ the educator of humanity.

Tireless is Groen in fighting for the rights of the orthodox to control their own church. No one more than he champions the validity of the demand that preaching should conform to Scripture as explained by the formularies. Although in agreement with the doctrinal position of the Seceders, he terms the Secession illegitimate for Christians, whose duty it is to stay inside the fold and turn out the wolves. Nevertheless he argues for the good right of the Seceders to their own church formation and worship services. A full decade before Seceders begin to emigrate to America, Groen defies official policy and public opinion by publishing a masterly refutation of the alleged constitutionality of the current religious persecutions. He demands tolerance for the dissenters, admonition for what is wrong, respect for what is right. In this manner Groen is once again, as in the political arena, pushed into an isolated position. By witnessing to the truth he causes all the adversaries to rise up in arms against him and to make a separate party out of him and his fellow witnesses.

Since the virtual union of the church with the state is proving so disastrous for the faith, the state ought to renounce its supervision and administration of the church. Never yielding an inch on the public rights of the several religious persuasions in the nation - to be recognized, honored, implemented - Groen argues that in the given historical situation there should be separation of Church and State. For the autonomy of the church in ecclesiastical matters must be maintained at all cost. The church is not a private association requiring legal status from the state. Hardly. It is the concrete manifestation in history of the Body of Christ.

By putting the matter in this way, Groen, despite his inability to free himself from inherited ideas which fail to distinguish clearly between the different offices of magistrate and believers in general, nonetheless puts his finger on the undeniably indispensable point of departure for a future Christian philosophy of culture. But the time is not ripe for a system to be worked out. Never a man of precise theory, Groen is a trailblazing prophet. The Christian state is and remains mandatory. "The state which tears itself loose from Christianity is antichristian, not neutral."

Keenly aboservant of the trend of the times, Groen warns reactionary Christians against the futility of longing for the resurrection of an old order of a bygone era. With apocalyptic vision he marks the transition from Christendom to a pluralistic society. He does not seek the Antichrist in Rome, but directs attention to the spirit of revolution at work in man's heart and mind, in the nation's organizations and institutions. He is not optimistic. Eschatology is not strange to him. This student of the Bible, this child of God is simply willing to answer the cal-

ling that comes to him as a Christian, wherever he may find himself. A Christian state, somehow, but not a theocracy. Pushed from its position of dominance by modern secularism, the body of Christ must remain on the offensive. And the sword of the spirit will be its weapon. "I believe that Protestantism is called upon to bid farewell to all the advantages which the support of the state once gave it. Once more it is going to become what it was at its inception: to wit, a mission in this superstitious world. I believe that Christianity is in the process of returning to what it was at the time the start: namely, a sect The future belongs to free churches!" Thus Groen announces Kuyper's dictum: "A free church in a free state."

XII. Developments in the Field of Labor

Somewhat outside Groen's purview lies the economic sector of life. Here more than anywhere else it comes to be shown that organizations, if not based on positive Christian principles, will become antichristian both in their theory and in the practices. Unlike their American counterparts, which have called themselves "brotherhoods" from the beginning, Dutch labor organizations at this time are more subtle: they adopt the name of "general trade unions". But also here the inevitable takes place relatively early in modern Dutch history: the Antithesis organizes itself. The Christians of the land, awakened by the clash of principles in other areas of life, soon come to realize that you call your neighbor a brother only on the basis of his being a creature of God subject to the same law as you are, and not on the basis of his also wearing a blue collar, needing bread and butter, and therefore hating all employers.

As in other countries, so in the Netherlands there appear societies of Christian employers who seek to improve conditions for the wage earners. In the 1850's the laborers themselves form unions; these are scattered throughout the country, have no connection with one another, and have as sole principle: opposition to all forms of socialism. In 1869 the activity of the First International results in a Dutch "local". Because this organization is openly communistic, most Christians shy away from it. Two years later an organization is started in Utrecht which seeks to promote harmony and mutual assistance among working men and states its general opposition to actions that might run counter to Christian principles. This basis is called "too narrow" by a rival that springs up in the same year. This rival is the A.N.W.B., which prides itself on being "general" and expresses its desire to promote observance of the Lord's Day. Many Christians flock to it.

Meanwhile the A.N.W.B., organized nation-wide, is based on the idea of the class struggle, the propagation of which becomes increasingly more evident. Christians begin to feel uneasy. Perhaps opposition to Sunday labor is not all that is required of labor in order to be conformable to God's ordinances. In 1873 a simple but faithful Christian, K. Kater by name, openly breaks with the bricklayer's union affiliated with the A.N.W.B. This act is

vindicated in the following years as the A.N.W.B. begins to agitate for retention of the neutral public school and adopts the program of the German Social Democrats. At last, in 1876, the formation of "patrimanium" becomes a fact. This national Christian labor organization bases its program squarely on the Word of God and proposes to strive for co-operation between employers and employees.

XIII. Changing of the Guard

As Groen approaches the end of his life, things look far from rosy. Christian politicians don't get the votes, the Christian Church is still infested with modernists, Christian schools are still being discriminated against. Addressing a meeting of the international Evangelical Alliance in Amsterdam, the aging Groen requests in a weak and treampling voice: "Brothers and sisters, when you have returned to your respective countries, pray for Holland, pray for her erstwhile faithful church where at present blasphemy tolerates the Gospel on condition that the Gospel tolerate blasphemy. Pray for Holland, pray for the resurgent energy of her evangelicals in order that she may be delivered from a law which forces Christian parents to send their children to schools where the Bible must needs be banned, where our national history is distorted, where Christian instruction is considered sectarian."

"Resurgent energy"? Yes, for a new star is appearing on the horizon.

Among Groen's inherent weaknesses was his lack of organizational talent and his inability to communicate to the simple folk who were his brothers in the faith and his natural allies. This he recognizes, and he welcomes the providential appearance of a younger man to take his place and build on the foundations he has laid. Writes Groen: "I withdraw from the fray of battle without anxiety, now that the banner of our party has been planted in the midst of our adversaries with such skill, talent, and compelling logic. To discuss and influence the events of the day has been the task of the press I have directed. It is now the task of the Standard."

The editor of the Standard is Abraham Kuyper.

He is to force the weapons that will lead to victory.

But that is another story.

Harry Van Dyke

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